"Measured Feet and Jingling Lines" : The Poetry and Poetic Attitudes of Nathaniel Hawthorne

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"MEASURED FEET AND JINGLING LINES":
The Poetry and Poetic Attitudes of Nathaniel Hawthorne
by
David L. Evans

A Thesis in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in the Field of English

May 1972
Each person whose signature appears below certifies that he has read this thesis and that in his opinion it is adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree Master of Arts.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. ORIENTATION: ISSUES AND RESOURCES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HAWTHORNE THE POET</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. HAWTHORNE THE POET CRITIC</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. HAWTHORNE THE PROSE POET</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 111
I
ORIENTATION

The Issues in Brief

Nathaniel Hawthorne's earliest recorded attempts at literary creation are poems, not prose works. But the small yet interesting body of poetry Hawthorne produced lies neglected in rare document collections, unnoticed within the chapters of his early works like Fanshawe, or buried in obscure religious poetry anthologies. Scholarly opinion has virtually left Hawthorne's poems untouched in its preoccupation with the prose masterpieces. To the extent that the significant critical works have concerned themselves with Hawthorne's haunting care for significant human qualities like the consequences of sin and guilt, man's artificial efforts at reform, the imposition of past obligations on the present, and so on, these scholarly pieces have maintained a clear perspective. But a man's early or less sophisticated works can also offer insights into the development of creativity, and we avoid them only at the risk of understanding less completely the mature artist and his sterling masterpieces.

This thesis, then, fills a gap. Chapter Two investigates Hawthorne's poetry as artistic productions in their own right and in relation to the 19th century creative milieu in which Hawthorne worked. Further, the poetry allows minor but significant glimpses into a lighter, more satiric and optimistic side of Hawthorne's personality often not seen in the intense, mature prose and often avoided in biographical studies of the allegedly "reclusive" Hawthorne. And perhaps most important, Chapter Two explores the relation of Hawthorne's poetry to his mature prose, outlining
important themes and ideas that found early, incomplete expression in the poetry before taking on complex and profound proportions in the finished prose.

But Hawthorne, despite his attempts at verse, worked almost exclusively in prose. Why Hawthorne turned away from poetry in an experimental age in which newer and freer forms of poetry were enlivening the literary scene becomes an integral part of the "poetic" study of Hawthorne, because it helps trace the issues involved in the change from the amateurish poet Hawthorne to the prose master Hawthorne. And it provides us, too, with an interesting excursion into the relationship between form and content in one man's art and into the strong forces that compel an artist to reject one form and select another. Also, Hawthorne's critical attitudes toward contemporary poetry once he had made this form-content decision lie within the domain of the third chapter, "Hawthorne the Poet Critic," fundamentally a study of the adult Hawthorne's response to the poetry of his day and the relationship of that response to his creative development.

Finally, Hawthorne's contemporaries liked to think of him as a "poet," even though he had long before decided to abandon poetry as his dominant creative mode. Men like Oliver Wendell Holmes, William Dean Howells, Henry James, and Henry Longfellow all called him a "poet," one even suggesting that he was a kind of "Wordsworth in prose." To completely understand Hawthorne the poet then, it is also necessary to understand what these distinguished artist meant by the term "poet," how Hawthorne conformed to that, and how they may have misevaluated Hawthorne or rather loosely applied the term poet to him. These are the concerns of the final content chapter, "Hawthorne the Prose Poet."

Topically separate but intimately related, the three content chapters,
"Hawthorne the Poet," "Hawthorne the Poet Critic," and "Hawthorne the Prose Poet," thus complete the scope of this minor and admittedly limited contribution to the great bulk of current Hawthorne research. But beyond making related suggestive comments, passing notations, or brief introductions to the verses, other critics have not yet attempted such an exploration of the issues involved in a fairly integrated picture of the "poet" Hawthorne. While it may be eminently perishable, such a study yet can contribute to a "fully rounded" view of a complex man, providing a contribution that hopefully can assist us in evaluating the primary works with a broader perspective.

Methodology and Resources

The meager amount of Hawthorne's poetry available--only about three dozen poems have been preserved--might make such thesis research seem amazingly simple and narrow. Quite the contrary is true. Indeed, perhaps the greatest personal usefulness such a specific study can offer the graduate student is the comprehensiveness of sources involved in such a paper. An analysis of the poetry is obviously essential, but the study cannot stop there; the thematic and stylistic relationships of the poetry to the mature works and the relationship of both of these to the 19th century necessitates a study of Hawthorne's more enduring productions, too. Thus, unlike many master's theses, the student here is unable to limit himself to a neglected literary cellar or attic but must, in some way, deal with the whole man. Further, what Hawthorne's contemporaries said of his poetry or his "poetic" mind becomes invaluable in such research, compelling the student to root out the 19th century secondary sources that comment on Hawthorne and that preserve what Hawthorne said about his contemporaries' poetry. Periodicals like The Galaxy, Century, Atlantic Monthly, the old
New York Times, all well-preserved in the University of California, Riverside, library and the microfiche American Civilization Series, allow the student to immerse himself in 19th century journalism and critical opinion circulating during Hawthorne's life and shortly after his death. In the same way, a study of the 19th century major critical texts which help define the term "poet" is needed. Also, to appreciate the climate of the Romantic period and to be able to evaluate the poetry and poetic attitudes in relation to the literary milieu of the times, a study of general critical works on Romanticism and the philosophical backgrounds of American literary thought in the 19th century is essential. A look at both primary and secondary historical sources is useful, too, to see how Hawthorne's poetic development was influenced by the activities of his life, schooling, reading, etc. And selected recent critical studies, while they usually do not deal directly with the thesis area, indirectly contribute to its conclusions. Harold Blodgett's study of Hawthorne as poetry critic in American Literature, for example, demonstrates that Hawthorne could offer an accurate and candid opinion on one long traditional verse, even if, as Blodgett does not bring out, he more frequently failed to appreciate poetry as such and could not understand many of his contemporaries' poetic attempts. Other recent studies dealing with such things as Hawthorne's reading, his literary theory, and his association with some of his contemporaries must also be considered.

Thus, a full arsenal of scholarly resources can be marshaled, helping to justify the project as viable graduate research while at the same time making it a useful professional experience for the researcher. The integration of these resources and the written expression of this learning "experience" begins in "Hawthorne the Poet," the first content chapter starting on the following page.
II

HAWTHORNE THE POET

On the subject of composing poetry for an album, "I fear I shall be unable to write anything worthy of the immortality of such a record" (1825).

The poetry of Nathaniel Hawthorne is much like the early works of many writers and artists who subsequently distinguish themselves with important human productions. It is immature, generally unrepresentative, and of little permanent value in itself. But a study of his almost completely neglected poetry, and later of his attitudes toward poetry and of some of the language qualities of his prose as they relate to poetry, can offer valuable insights into the literary metamorphosis of the man and can fill a minor gap left by other Hawthorne investigators. Indeed, a critic is almost as foolish to avoid entirely the earlier and mostly juvenile products of an author as he is to neglect the giant masterpieces. Both tell us something about the man, about his age, and about the fascinating growth of creativity.

Consider this verse:

THE CHARMS OF SWEET MUSIC

The charms of sweet Music no pencil can paint.
They calm the rude Savage, enliven the saint,
Make sweeter our pleasures, more joyous our joy.
With raptures we feel, yet those raptures n'er cloy. 1

The poem is crudely simple and sweet, although rather hollow and immature to be sure. But despite its somewhat forced and artificial rhymes, for an eleven-year-old boy the poem exhibits a vocabulary dexterity and knowledge of language structure beyond what one would expect in so young
a versemaker. Perhaps he wrote earlier verse, but this is the oldest
Hawthorne poem that survives in manuscript. And it, like many of his
poems, is distinguished from his prose works by a good humor and playful-
ness, which will be noted later in more detailed surveys of the verses in
appropriate parts of the paper.

Growing up in a family which earnestly believed in reading poetry to
its children, Hawthorne apparently became saturated early with the thoughts
of the old masters of verse. One of Hawthorne's publishers, James T. Fields,
says that when Hawthorne was a little child, and almost as soon as he began
to read, he delighted most in Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Pope, and Thom-
son. The Castle of Indolence was a special favorite with him during his
boyhood. The first book that he bought with his own money, Fields says,
was a copy of the Faerie Queene. 2

When he was scarcely able to speak plainly, members of the family
recall that the little Nathaniel would go about the house, repeating with
vehement emphasis and gestures certain stagy lines from Shakespeare's
Richard III, which he had heard from older persons about him. One line
in particular apparently made a great impression upon him. At the most
unexpected occasions he would start up from his chair, fling his arms out
wide, and shout in his loudest and most expressive tone, "Stand back, my
lord, and let the coffin pass." 3

In Hawthorne's day the minds of babes in the more cultivated social
classes were systematically exposed to the works of men that continually
dismay graduate students today, and Hawthorne could not have failed to
respond to and be influenced by this cultural bombardment.

Perhaps this early soaking in the great poetic masters is why his
earliest recorded attempts at creation are poetry, 4 and why his sister
I wrote, in commenting upon the poetry written in his late childhood and early teens, "Except for letters, I do not remember any prose writings of his till a much later period." At any rate, two years after he wrote "The Charms of Sweet Music," the thirteen-year-old's thoughts and language had apparently matured a little and he wrote:

**MODERATE VIEWS**

With passions unruffled, untainted by pride,  
By reason my life let me square.  
The wants of my nature are cheaply supplied,  
And the rest are but folly and care.  
How vainly through infinite trouble and strife,  
The many their labours employ,  
Since all that is truly delightful in life,  
Is what all if they please may enjoy.

Admittedly, the work is merely a simple sentiment expressed with structural evenness and clarity in an almost mold-like form. But while the poem defies mature critical analysis, the tendency toward mental maturity involved in a preoccupation with the consoling power of reason and a recognition of a value structure beyond materialism is significant, especially in view of Hawthorne's later disenchantment with external reform or purely material progress implied in works like *Blithedale* and "The Celestial Railroad." Also, the verse reflects a simple confidence and certainty so often missing in the prose masterpieces.

The teenage Hawthorne also enjoyed responding satirically to the kind of sentimental love poems commonly appearing in the newspapers of his day. His friends note that he relished writing parodies of these poems like "Lady Fair" and "Do Not Bid Me Part," composed when he was thirteen and fifteen, respectively.

**LADY FAIR**

Lady fair, will you not listen  
To my ardent vows of love?  
Love that in my eyes doth glisten,  
And is firm as Heaven above.
DO NOT BID ME PART

Oh do not bid me part from thee,
For I will leave thee never.
Although thou throw'st thy scorn on me,
Yet I will love forever.

There is no heart within my breast,
For it has flown away,
And till I knew it was thy guest,
I sought it night and day.

The avenues through which this early interest in verse flowered took some curious forms. On September 28, 1819, Hawthorne sent "Earthly Pomp" to his sister with the remarks: "Though these are my rhymes, yet they are not exactly my thoughts. I am full of scraps of poetry; can't keep it out of my brain. . . . I could vomit a dozen more pages if I were a mind to turn over."9

EARTHLY POMP

Oh, earthly pomp is but a dream,
And like a meteor's short-lived gleam;
And all the sons of glory soon
Will rest beneath the mould'ring stone.
And Genius is a star whose light
Is soon to sink in endless night,
And heavenly beauty's angel form
Will bend like flower in winter's storm. 10

Apparently they were not exactly his thoughts, for, anxious to procure some of the "earthly pomp" that he denounced in the poem, Hawthorne began editing his private, satirically-oriented newspaper, "The Spectator," the first issue appearing on August 21, 1820. A prospectus issued earlier declared that the paper would cost twelve cents per annum, payable at the end of the year.11 Readers, however, were not so enthusiastic about the teenager's efforts, and the paper folded after six issues. Nevertheless, the last page of each issue of the innocent journal contained poetry written by the editor, and "The Spectator" provides the greatest single source for Hawthorne's early verse.
The sentiments that he expressed later that year (1820) to his sister, though, while he was studying under Ben Oliver in Salem and expecting to become a merchant, are not completely accurate. He wrote: "I have almost given up writing poetry. No man can be a book-keeper and a poet at the same time." He entered Bowdoin College in Maine in 1821, and during his four years there he was instrumental in establishing and probably wrote the "Constitution" for the Pot-8-Oh Club, at whose functions each member had to recite his own verse. The first word of the Club's name was pictorially illustrated on the Constitution's cover by a large cast-iron pot. Articles Six and Seven of the document read: "Some one of the members at each meeting shall read an original dissertation or poem and if he omit to perform the same, after receiving due notice, he shall pay a fine of a peck of potatoes. The original dissertation or poem shall consist of, at least, fourteen lines." Fellow club member and classmate Henry Longfellow, among others, praised Hawthorne's Latin translations and English verse that he read at the meetings. Regrettably, no verses written explicitly for the jovial Pot-8-Oh Club survive. Composed in an academic environment, they might have provided some of the best linguistic examples of Hawthorne's early poetic style.

The poem "The Ocean," however, was probably written very near this time, and it is this poem that is Hawthorne's first professionally published work, appearing on the front page of the Salem Gazette on August 26, 1825, predating Fanshawe, Hawthorne's first prose publication, by some three years.

THE OCEAN

The Ocean has its silent caves,
Deep, quiet and alone;
Though there be fury on the waves,
Beneath them there is none.
The awful spirits of the deep
Hold their communion there;
And there are those for whom we weep,
The young, the bright, the fair.

Calmly the wearied seamen rest
Beneath their own blue sea.
The ocean solitudes are blest,
For there is purity.
The earth has guilt, the earth has care,
Unquiet are its graves;
But peaceful sleep is ever there,
Beneath the dark blue waves.

Hawthorne's interest in the ocean was both geographical, because of his home, and personal: his father, a sea captain, left on a voyage to Surinam in the Dutch Guineas in 1808 and never returned. Like his early pirate stories which his sister says he burned, the poem deals with one of Hawthorne's life-long loves, the sea. As such, it is like "The Billowy Ocean," one of the earlier "Spectator" verses.

THE BILLOWY OCEAN

The billowy Ocean rolls its wave,
Above the shipwreck'd Sailor's Grave,
Around him ever roars the Deep,
And lulls his wearied form to sleep,
Low in the deep Sea's darkest dell.
He hears no more the tempest swell.

Additionally, two years before Fanshawe, the poem "Moonlight" was printed in the Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot, giving Hawthorne a professional publishing record of two poems before the 1828 novel, which is inaccurately alluded to as Hawthorne's first publication.

MOONLIGHT

We are beneath the dark blue sky,
And the moon is shining bright.
Oh, what can lift the soul so high
As the glow of a summer's night,
When all the gay are hushed to sleep,
When they that mourn forget to weep,
Beneath that gentle light?
Is there no holier, happier land
Among those distant spheres,
Where we may meet that shadowy band,
The dead of other years,
Where all the day the moonbeams rest,
And where at length the souls are blest
Of those that dwell in tears?

Oh, if the happy ever leave
Their bowers of bliss on high,
To cheer the hearts of those that grieve
And wipe the tear drop dry,
It is when the moonlight sheds its ray,
More pure and beautiful than day,
And earth is like the sky.18

Relatively few poems survive from the period after Hawthorne's Bowdoin College days, although some of those that do represent his best efforts and are of significant interest in relation to his mature prose. Perhaps he experimented extensively with poetic forms during his apprenticeship in the "chamber under the eves" at his mother's house in Salem, where he spent twelve reclusive years reading, writing, and pondering his literary career. How much poetry he wrote and exactly why he chose to reject poetry and work almost exclusively in prose during an age in which many of the major writers like Emerson, Melville, and Poe skillfully handled both remain questions with only conjectural or embryonic answers, although Chapter Three of this paper, "Hawthorne the Poet Critic," suggests some tentative ways of partially answering the latter puzzle. His remaining poetry, consequently, appears irregularly and undoubtedly represents only a small, suggestive portion of what he actually produced.

Some of it debuts, for example, as part of his prose works. Two of the characters in Fanshawe gleefully "effuse" these light-hearted, "extemporaneous productions" in one of the most fascinating scenes in the tale:

THE WINE IS BRIGHT

The wine is bright, the wine is bright;
And gay the drinkers be:
Of all that drain the bowl to-night,
Most jollily drain we.
Oh, could one search the weary earth,—
The earth from sea to sea,—
He'd turn and mingle in our mirth;
For we're the merriest three.

Yet there are cares, oh, heavy cares!
We know that they are nigh:
When forth each lonely drinker fares,
Mark then his altered eye.
Care comes upon us when the jest
And frantic laughter die;
And care will watch the parting guest—
Oh late, then let us fly!

A JOLLY DRINKER

I've been a jolly drinker this five and twenty year,
And still a jolly drinker, my friends, you see me here:
I sing the joys of drinking; bear a chorus, every man,
With pint pot and quart pot and clattering of can. (XI, 134, 136)19

Now seldom reprinted with the story, another poem likewise appeared with
"The Three-fold Destiny," published in the American Monthly Magazine in
1838.20

THE DOWNWARD GLANCE

Oh, Man can seek the downward glance,
And each kind word—affection's spell—
Eye, voice, its value can enhance;
For eye may speak, and tongue can tell.

But Woman's love, it waits the while
To echo to another's tone,
To linger on another's smile,
Ere dare to answer with its own.

Then, in 1845, during a period of his life when Hawthorne was writing
Puritan stories that exhibited a vast amount of ambiguity and ambivalence
toward Puritanism, collected in such books as Twice-Told Tales (1842),
two strictly orthodox Christian poems of his were published in a Christmas
gift book edited by Rufus Griswold. In the same book, illustrated with
"tasteless and rudely executed woodcuts," appeared poems by Milton, Long-
fellow, and Whittier.21 Critically discussed along with "The Star of
Calvary" later on in the paper (p. 32), "Walking on the Sea" illustrates
a sound and simple Christian certainty that finds more complex and ambiguous expressions in some of the mature stories:

WALKING ON THE SEA

(A passage from John 6:16-21 precedes the poem)

I When the storm of the mountains on Galilee fell,  
   And lifted its waters on high;  
   And the faithless disciples were bound in the spell  
   Of mysterious alarm—their terrors to quell,  
   Jesus whispered, "Fear not, it is I."

II The storm could not bury that word in the wave,  
   For 'twas taught through the tempest to fly;  
   It shall reach his disciples in every clime,  
   And his voice shall be near in each troublous time,  
   Saying, "Be not afraid, it is I."

III When the spirit is broken with sickness or sorrow,  
   And comfort is ready to die;  
   The darkness shall pass, and in gladness to-morrow  
   The wounded complete consolation shall borrow  
   From His life-giving word, "It is I."

IV When death is at hand, and the cottage of clay  
   Is left with a tremulous sigh,  
   The gracious forerunner is smoothing the way  
   For its tenant to pass to unchangeable day,  
   Saying, "Be not afraid, it is I."

V When the waters are passed, and the glories unknown  
   Burst forth on the wondering eye,  
   The compassionate "Lamb in the midst of the throne"  
   Shall welcome, encourage, and comfort his own,  
   And say, "Be not afraid, it is I."

And during the early 1860's, when Hawthorne was in his late 50's, he occasionally took the time to write limericks or lightly satiric verse, including this series of banters penned when he was 58, the first poem a gentle jibe at Fruitlands Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott, who ate only "aspiring" vegetables that grew upward:

THE SAGE OF APPLE SLUMP

There dwelt a Sage at Apple Slump  
Whose dinner never made him plump;  
Give him carrots, potatoes, squash, parsnips, and peas,
And some boiled macaroni without any cheese,
And a plate of raw apples to hold on his knees,
And a glass of sweet cider, to wash down all these;
And he'd prate of the Spirit as long as you'd please,
This airy Sage of Apple Slump!

THERE WAS AN OLD BOY

There was an old boy, with a new coat and breeches,
Who jumped over fences and tumbled in ditches,
While the mud and the mire spattered higher and higher,
Till he went to the fire, and, as he grew drier,
Burnt great holes in his new coat and breeches.

AN OLD LADY OF GUESSME

There was an Old Lady of Guessme,
Who talking did greatly distress me;
She talked of the nigger,
And still she grew bigger,
This tiresome Old Lady of Guessme!

A YOUNG MAN WENT TO COLLEGE

There was a young man went to college
Inflamed with a thirst after knowledge
But was hazed so severely
That he saw very clearly
That he'd better have not come to College.

The last poem that survives, finally, was written about one year
before Hawthorne's death in April, 1864. Both natural human sentiment
and the poor quality of the poem make the reader happy to see a short
note, written by Hawthorne's daughter Una, accompanying the poem: "Verse
that Papa and I composed together for fun."

OH SNOW THAT COMES
WHEN VIOLETS OUGHT TO BLOOM

Oh snow that comes
When violets ought to bloom!
Oh thunderous drums
That lead men to the tomb!

Oh doleful robin,
Come from warmer climes!
Oh wretched bobbin',
Suiting alone my rhymes!
Oh heat that vainly strives
To dry up mud!
Oh myriad of young and happy lives,
Untimely quenched by rebel hands in blood.
So must the virtuous look
To higher sphere,
Although the little brook
Be swelled with tears! 23

Written over a period of forty-eight years and appearing in such varied media as letters, an experimental newspaper, a long tale and a short story, inspirational poetry anthologies, professional newspapers, and scraps of paper found in Hawthorne's belongings, the twenty-nine poems that survive tackle equally varied subject matter: traditional tributes to Christ, satirical and limerick jibes, moonlight lyrics, love parodies, et al. And this brief chronological survey suggests a number of important questions about the significance of Hawthorne's verses, even though many of the best or the most historically significant poems are not reproduced in the survey but in the subsequent discussion sections of the chapter. Not the least important of these questions is the relationship of Hawthorne's verse to some of the literary concerns associated with the rising Romantic spirit in America and England.

While any literary historical pegging of an artist as a Romantic or neo-classic is arbitrary and accurate only in a general way, saying little if anything about the permanent human qualities of his literature, while no literary figure ever epitomizes the whole scale of characteristics generally attributed to certain movements, and while the American Romantics softened the booming English Romantic individualism with the self-restraint demanded in a young and struggling nation, discussing Hawthorne's verse in terms of Romanticism--English and American--is useful nevertheless, to see how an artist used the stimuli of his age, to see how he responded to and helped create certain values, and to provide a background for a better understanding of the quality of the poetry. And Hawthorne's poetry is, in fact, a strange and rather ineffective blend of Romanticism and neo-classicism.
The "atmospheric" quality of many of the poems moves Hawthorne into one tent of the Romantic camp. "The Star of Calvary," for example, reproduced and discussed in more detail in the subsequent discussion on the quality of the poems (pp. 32-36), rejects a realistic interpretation of the crucifixion in favor of a subjective concern with unusual natural phenomena surrounding the event. Hawthorne creates, thus, blood-red discs, bats threading the olive trees, and milky mist floating on the horizon. Hawthorne parallels here the atmosphere of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* or Poe's "Ulalume," in which the ghoulish woodlands of Weir find sympathetic company with the shadowy characters in another Hawthorne poem, "The Dead Their Vigil Keep":

**THE DEAD THEIR VIGIL KEEP**

I

The moon is bright in that chamber fair,
And the trembling starlight enters there
With a soft and quiet gleam;
The wind sighs through the trees around,
And the leaves send forth a gentle sound,
Like the voices of a dream.

II

He has laid his weary limbs to sleep;
But the dead around their vigil keep,
And the living may not rest.
There is a form on that chamber floor
Of beauty which should bloom no more,—
A fair, yet fearful guest!

III

The breath of morn has cooled his brow,
And that shadowy form has vanished now,
Yet he lingers round the spot;
For the pale, cold beauty of that face,
And that form of more than earthly grace,
May be no more forgot.

IV

There is a grave by yon aged oak,
But the moss-grown burial-stone is broke
That told how beauty faded;
But the sods are fresh o'er another head,
For the lover of that maiden dead
By the same tree is shaded.24

As such, Hawthorne reflects the growing tribute paid to the individual
imagination, a tribute finding its most elegant systematization in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and *On the Principles of Genial Criticism*. The essays clearly illustrate the movement away from an objective interpretation of reality to a concern with the "reinterpretation" of external reality by the individual imagination, charged and informed by the inner light of the emotions. Indeed, Coleridge argues, the reality one notices with the passionless senses finds a counterpart in the individual heart, making nature and the emotions truly brothers. Thus, whatever helps to charge and excite the depth of man's emotions helps him also to see reality more clearly. And the individual, subjective experience of the artist is valuable because it is correlated with the processes of outer reality. The essence of reality, then, appears in art as an interpretation of this reaction between the external world and the inner counterpart of the emotions, an operation seen throughout Wordsworth's *Prelude*. 25 So, in "The Star of Calvary," for example, Hawthorne is not so anxious to present the immediate objective reality of the crucifixion as to create "atmospheric" qualities that might appeal to the imagination and emotions of the reader and aid him in "reinterpreting" the experience of Christ's death subjectively, unlike the closer imitation goals of the classical writers. The trembling starlight, sighing wind, and dream-voiced leaves of "The Dead" also help certify that the poem will be more an emotional experience than a quest for an objective reality in the classical sense.

Further, Hawthorne shows sentimental interest in nature and a belief in its therapeutic qualities. "The Ocean" (p. 9) emphasizes the sleepy balm offered the weary seamen who lay beneath its waves. Even in death nature comforts her own, providing them with a peaceful protective tomb
far away from the turbulent surface where "the earth has guilt, the earth has care." And, in life, "Moonlight" (p. 10) hushes men to sleep, wipes dry the angry tear, and ceases the weeping of those that mourn. Bryant, too, saw this inspirational force of nature in his "To a Waterfowl" and Burns was cheered by the lowly mouse in his "To a Mouse," to say nothing of the exuberant tributes to nature's comforts and healing expressed in Shelly's "To a Skylark" and Wordsworth's "Unremitting Voice of Nightly Streams."

Some of the poems, too, exult in the wild, unregulated aspects of nature rather than the neat order and control of the neo-classic ideal. The sea in "The Billowy Ocean" (p. 10) roars and rolls above the deep. And the poet of "In Rapture" is equally impressed with the commanding expressions of nature's energy:

**IN RAPTURE**

Oh I have roam'd in rapture wild,
Where the majestic rocks are pil'd,
In lonely stern magnificence, around
The troubled Ocean's stedfast bound.
And I have seen the storms arise,
And darkness veil from mortal eyes,
The Heavens that shine so fair and bright
And all was solemn, silent night.
Then I have seen the Storm disperse
And Mercy hush the whirlwind fierce
And all my soul in transport own'd.
"There is a God, in Heaven enthron'd." 26

But unlike Whittier, whose sustained "Snow-Bound" description of the "unsymmetrical" outbursts of nature leads to a homey view of common rural life, and unlike Wordsworth, whose "Her Eyes are Wild" prompts a sympathetic sorrow for the lowly, for the wild-eyed, demented and deserted woman, Hawthorne overtly moralizes, drawing out a neat little lesson, moving him, perhaps, farther away from the more suggestive or organic didacticism of
many American Romantics or from the mostly confessional aspect of some English Romantics, points discussed more later.

Moreover, since the Gothic elements of horror, death, and the unusual had an air of mystery, exciting the emotions, and a sense of exclusion from objective reality, prompting a "heart" interpretation, they appealed to the Romantics, and Hawthorne contributed his share of verses to the "spirited" tradition. From the sustained ghoulishness in "The Dead" (p. 16) to the "awful spirits of the deep" in "The Ocean" (p. 9) to the buzzing bat of "The Star of Calvary" (p. 32), Hawthorne maintains his interest in the macabre in the poems, the theme of death appearing in nearly half the poems, though the style and tone is not so intense or controlled as in many of the masterpieces of the Gothic, like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Lewis' The Monk, or the American representation in the stories and poems of Poe, and, earlier, some of Irving's works.

On the other hand, in the realm of "didacticism" Hawthorne's verses both resist and conform to ideas important to English and American Romantics. Poe, for example, records a disinterest in the didactic elements of poetry in his The Poetic Principle. Nodding approval to sentiments against the "teaching" role of poetry, important in neo-classicism, and seeing poetry rather as a form of individual expression, Poe alludes to the "heresy of the didactic," the view that every poem should inculcate a moral. Rather, he says, a poem is merely the "rhythmical creation of beauty," arousing in the reader a "shivering delight." Such a theory had found some currency in the more exuberant expressions of English Romantics like Byron and Shelley, in whom the personal, confessional aspect of the verse frequently overshadows any objective moral that the poets intend. The importance of imaginative expression and personal
response, then, can obscure any overtly didactic interest. But in America, Poe's esthetic concerns gained little acceptance in the first half of the 19th century, becoming significant only briefly in the "art for art's sake" movement at the end of the century. The American poets in general softened the exuberant, confessional tones of men like Byron and maintained a didactic nature. Emerson, shaped by his Unitarian background, believed in art for morals' sake, and his poems, like "Each and All" and "The Rhodora" often assume an important moral idealism, the "morality" unobstructed by the first person point of view. Bryant, too, though reflecting Romantic interests in therapeutic nature, moralizes about his "Waterfowl." And even Whitman emphasizes the didactic in such poems as "When I Heard the Learned Astronomer." Hawthorne's concern in his verse with the didactic, then, displays a basic conformity to the poetic ideals of his contemporaries. Still, a substantial difference between Hawthorne's verses and those of his contemporaries exists. The moral lessons of the poetry of Whitman, Emerson, and Bryant more frequently have greater suggestive qualities, the moral growing more naturally out of the whole poem. Whitman's "Astronomer" merely suggests the message rather than stating it; the lesson of "To a Waterfowl" does not seem intrusive when it appears at the end; and when Emerson says in "Each and All" that "I yielded myself to the perfect whole," this transcendental observation seems a fairly smooth and natural finale for the poem. Hawthorne, however, frequently seems compelled to preach rather than to suggestively and organically express in his verses, combining "atmospheric" detail with too-obvious didacticism, a combination he seldom handles effectively:

GO TO THE GRAVE

Go to the grave where friends are laid,
And learn how quickly mortals fade,
Learn how the fairest flower must droop,
Learn how the strongest form must stoop,
Learn that we are but dust and clay,
The short-lived creatures of a day.
Yet do not sigh—there is a clime,
Where they will dwell through endless time,
Who here on earth their Maker serve,
And never from his precepts swerve.
The grave to them is but a road,
That leads them to that blest abode.

The approach is simply too hard and direct to interest or convince. He spoils, in this way, the "magnificence and wildness of nature" theme by moving from an emotionally charged first stanza in "In Rapture" (p. 18) to a final descent into overt preaching, reinforced by quotes: "There is a God, in Heaven enthron'd." And in his last poem, "Oh Snow That Comes" (p. 14), a lyrical stanza, outlining how death and destruction so often appear when life and growth would logically be expected, is followed with the implied injunction, "And now gentle reader, pay attention to this":

So must the virtuous look
To higher sphere,
Although the little brook
Be swelled with tears!

While Hawthorne may have been both like his American contemporaries in this emphasis on didacticism and unlike them in the relative skill in handling that didactic quality, he clearly shows a lack of sensitivity to the Romantic movement's diversification of poetic form in his poems' dependence on a very limited range of forms, stanza patterns, and rhyme schemes, even though the content varies a great deal. The couplet is used most extensively, followed by the simple abab quatrain. Now, with more appropriate subjects like the epigrammatic critical poem such as the "Essay on Criticism" or the satiric ode like "Hudibras," "Rape of the Lock," or Lowell's "Fable for Critics," such a form is effective and almost essential. But as Coleridge notes in commenting on the "organic" theory of form, an
idea with considerable weight in the Romantic movement: "The true ground of the mistake lies in the confounding regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material. . . . The organic form is innate . . . it shapes . . . from within. . . . Such as the life is, such is the form." Pope, one remembers, created a literary curiosity when he translated the capacious Iliad of Homer into neo-classic heroic couplets. At its Romantic ultimate, the organic form Coleridge defines reaches impressive heights in Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," the sense organically developing through a form that catches the rhythms of the sea and of natural conversation, and in Poe's swift and varied "Bells." Hawthorne's poetry, however, responded poorly to this rising organic interest. Thus, in "wilder" subjects demanding a freer form, Hawthorne uses couplets, as in "The Billowy Ocean" (p. 10). And when the narrative nature of the poem demands a form that will facilitate a free continuity, Hawthorne sticks with couplets:

MY LOW AND HUMBLE HOME

I left my low and humble home,  
Far from my Father's fields to roam.  
My peaceful cot no more had charms,  
My only joy was War's alarms.  
I panted for the field of fight,  
I gaz'd upon the deathless light,  
Which o'er the Hero's grave is shed,  
The glorious memory of the dead.  
Ambition show'd a distant star,  
That shed its radiance bright and far,  
And pointed to a path which led  
O'er heaps of dying and of dead;  
Onward I press'd with eager feet,  
And War's dread thunder still would greet  
My recklessears. Where'er I trod,  
I saw the green and verdant sod,  
Turn red with blood of slaughter'd foes,  
And Fury veil'd in smoke arose.
I gain'd the envied height; and there,
I sigh'd for that lone cottage where
The early hours of life flew by,
On wings of youthful ecstasy.
Too late I found that Glory's ray,
Could never bring one happy day.30

The "rocking horse," start-stop-begin-again rhythm of the couplets fails to catch the flowing journey of the man, making the meaning of the poem more artificial and forced than it need be. The use of the paired rhymes encourages the reader to think of the action as a series of abrupt units rather than the unimpeded process that it is. A more epigrammatic poem or a poem that needs this balanced regularity, like one developing philosophy, satire, or wit, might effectively use the couplet when each pair of rhymes generally expresses a complete unit of thought. But "My Low and Humble Home" needs a totality of effect and a freedom of movement rather than a monotonous "unit construction" forced on it by the couplet. More complete or better handled enjambment could have provided this "processive" tone even with the couplets, perhaps, but the run-on line is sparse here. Further, the paired rhymes link thoughts or sentence patterns that ought not to be so joined. Thus the thought "I gaz'd upon the deathless light/Which o'er the Hero's grave is shed" is a logical unit, but the couplet pairing forces these lines to be connected more with corresponding rhyming lines than with each other. While some polished couplet writers could perhaps simulate the progress of a narrative journey like this, the begin-end, begin-end, begin-end movement of these couplets impedes the travel effect. Hawthorne improves the rhythmic quality somewhat by removing the fifth foot present in the heroic couplet, giving the poem greater "speed," but the arbitrary couplet choice as such seems an inorganic one.

This "formal" limitation and restriction must be added to Hawthorne's
general failure to respond to the Romantics' increased poetic interest in common language and natural conversation. The poem, Wordsworth records, ought to be a "selection of real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." And Norman Foerster observes that "by the time of Emerson and Longfellow, this 'blood-warm' manner of writing was common. Poetry was much closer to the currents of real life, its language more concrete, its verse form freed from the stylized heroic couplet and diversified to serve many ends." Hawthorne, however, stays dominantly with couplet and quatrains, while employing traditional poetic diction devices like foreshortening of words (twin'd, wither'd, e'en, claim'd) and a formalized vocabulary. The last couplet of "Sweet Music" (p. 5) reduces a simple poem with simple words to formal artificiality by its last line: "With raptures we feel, yet those raptures ne'er cloy." The same thing occurs in "Address to the Moon":

ADDRESS TO THE MOON

How sweet the silver Moon's pale ray, 
Falls trembling on the distant bay, 
O'er which the breezes sigh no more, 
Nor billows lash the sounding shore. 
Say, do the eyes of those I love, 
Behold thee as thou soar'st above, 
Lonely, majestic and serene, 
The calm and placid evening's Queen? 
Say, if upon thy peaceful breast, 
Departed spirits find their rest, 
For who would wish a fairer home, 
Than in that bright, refulgent dome? 

The simple power and suggestiveness of the trembling, sighing, lashing, and soaring is nearly eliminated by the jarring "refulgent" of the last line. Further, against the tide moving away from the personification of abstractions, a technique Wordsworth found particularly appalling, Hawthorne writes his "Darken'd Veil":
THE DARKEN'D VEIL

Oh could I raise the darken'd veil
Which hides my future life from me,
Could unborn ages slowly sail
Before my view—and could I see
My every action painted there,
To cast one look I would not dare.

There poverty and grief might stand,
And dark Despair's corroding hand,
Would make me seek the lonely tomb
To slumber in its endless gloom.
Then let me never cast a look,
Within Fate's fix'd mysterious book.

Naturally, even Wordsworth violates his scruples now and then and employs poetic diction or personified abstractions, as Hawthorne has preachingly done here, and some of the more formal, more neo-classic poetic devices were employed by the 19th century Romantics. Whittier's "Snow-Bound," for example, gets amazing mileage out of the limited couplet form by using a simple and precise vocabulary. Yet Hawthorne depended heavily on these forms, and seldom tried to experiment with more "organic" possibilities.

In the end, perhaps all one can say about the "Romantic" poet Hawthorne, then, is that he is an "atmospheric formalist." He was strangely influenced by the emotional, imaginative, subjective possibilities of poetry but felt this content could be molded into set, pre-established forms. Men like Wordsworth, or even early Romantics like Bryant, whose life like Hawthorne's somewhat straddled two general movements in American literature, adapted these forms to the needs of the content. Bryant, for example, was heavily influenced by and freely imitated the Augustans as a boy. He studied Augustan themes and mastered the heroic couplet early. As he says himself, he studied "Johnson deep," "Addison refined," and "Pope's Celestial Fire." Editor Tremaine McDowell notes that "When Cullen Bryant prayed that he might receive the gift of poetic genius and write
verses that might endure, he was petitioning the deity to make him a small Augustan." His first works, thus, are modeled after neo-classic patterns and thoughts. His "Embargo," for example, is a satire attacking Jefferson in heroic couplets and employing stock literary borrowings and diction. But, feeling the influence of early Romantics like Southey, Cowper, and Thomson and then later of Wordsworth and Byron, Bryant sympathetically responded to the new sentimental interest in nature, common life, the "noble savage" and the power of original imagination. Newer subjects prompted newer, more flexible forms, he insisted. The balanced regularity and limited verse forms "allowed just as much play and freedom to the faculty as a pair of stilts allows the body," Bryant says. His new interest in freer forms appears in his blank verse "Thanatopsis" and "Forest Hymn" and his experimental attitude toward verse forms. Still using the couplet on occasion ("Green River"), Bryant yet moved into numerous forms of the quatrain ("Rural Maids"), pioneered in the sonnet usage in 19th century America ("Mutation"), employed the Spenserean stanza ("To a Friend on His Marriage"), developed six varieties of the six-line measure, and so on. He even translated the Iliad and Odyssey into blank verse. Strongly influenced, then, by 18th century verse tastes as a boy, Bryant nevertheless by age sixteen or so (1810) had learned to modify his verse forms more to suit his new concerns with nature ("To a Waterfowl"), death ("Thanatopsis"), natural "Rural Maids" and Indians ("The Indian Girl's Lament"), etc. Like Hawthorne, Bryant never became a profound Romantic poet, but, unlike Hawthorne, Bryant became a rememberable poet by being willing to modify his verse forms and respond in both content and form to Romantic stimuli. Hawthorne, however, lacked this flexibility, perhaps because he began writing in the early 19th century when 18th century
formal tastes yet seeped into a growing Romantic climate, and he saw no reason, unlike Bryant, to experiment with newer verse forms and poetic language, perhaps because he lacked the interest in the technical aspects of poetry, writing verse only as a hasty diversion. Of course it is difficult and dangerous to judge the literary classification of a man's verse when only a small body of it survives, even though the generalizations and supporting elements presented above are consistent with what exists. At any rate, such a study of his verse's "placement" in literary history points up the rather arbitrary nature of historical pegging, for, while Hawthorne's prose works helped define the term "Romantic" and give it moral substance, his poetry remains inert to the exciting possibilities for form and content in 19th century verse revealed by men like Whitman and Poe and by Wordsworth and Keats.

However nebulously difficult or meaningless it is to categorize Hawthorne's poetic Romanticism or neo-classicism, assessing the quality of his verse is easier. At worst, Hawthorne's poetry is embarrassingly poor; at best, it is yawningly mediocre.

On a general level, one of the greatest weaknesses of the poet is his inability to suit form to content. "My Low and Humble Home" (p. 22) as previously noted, needs continuity and flow but employs instead the epigrammatic jolting of couplets. In a solemn, potentially suggestive poem like "The Ocean" (p. 9) the rhyme and meter need to roll as smoothly as the ocean depths, but instead irregular, disrupting word choices, as "The Ocean has its silent caves,/Deep, quiet, and alone," weaken the watery flow. On the other hand, the limerick forms need the regularity of rollicking, jumping rhythm to obtain the maximum satirical effect, but in "A Young Man Went to College" (p. 14) Hawthorne imposes this imbalanced
and rough closing line in an effort to echo his first line, failing in the process to provide the monotonous symmetry necessary for the simple satire: opening line--"There was a young man went to college"/closing line--"That he'd better not have come to college." The whole poem surely must have been dashed off in an "irregular" minute as an amusement for an aging man. He molds nearly all matter into couplets and quatrains when the content demands a freer, flowing verse form or one that is not so end-stopped. And when he needs regularity for satirical effect, as in "Young Man," he frequently fails to remove the literary rocks that impede the reader's progress.

A stilted or formal vocabulary, too, destroys the effect of some promising language, as when the closing "refulgent" spoils the subtle sounds of his active, simple verbs in "Address to the Moon" (p. 24). This same harsh mixture of the simple and natural with the formal and stilted appears in "Sweet Music" (p. 5) with its curious end rhyme, "cloy," removing what "joy" the reader previously felt about this youthful effusion. Further, the rhymes are too frequently inappropriate or incomplete, suggesting that the verse was written quickly with no real intent to "create" or to preserve. Observe such glittering distractions as soon/stone ("Earthly Pomp"), alone/none ("The Ocean"), disperse/fierce ("In Rapture"), jest/quest ("The Wine is Bright"), by/ecstasy ("My Low and Humble Home"), Guessme/me/Guessme ("An Old Lady of Guessme").

The hastiness implied by such lack of polish appears also in occasional contradictions within the poems. "In Rapture" (p. 18) offers the reader a rising storm and a "solemn, silent night" occurring at the same time, for example. And in the parody "Do Not Bid Me Part" (p. 8) a suitor whose heart has been rejected by a lady says he searched for his
heart day and night until he found it was the lady's "guest," forcing the inconsistent and unintended conclusion that the heart is both entertained and refused.

The lack of unity produced by his frequent shift in mood from the "atmospheric" or emotional to the sermonizing, church pew lesson approach destroys some of the more suggestive possibilities of the poems. Hawthorne is not content to gaze up in silent wonder at the stars, as Whitman might, but must boom away, after some promising, exuberant, natural description, with "There is a God, in Heaven enthron'd" ("In Rapture"). He is not content to describe the heaving graves of the dead and through implication let the reader conclude what he will about life's mutabilities. Instead, he must be strongly told that men are "The short-liv'd creatures of a day" ("Go to the Grave"). Little is ever implied; few attempts are made to suggest rather than state or to let a moral naturally and slowly arise rather than tacking it on the end; the lesson must be driven home explicitly. And this lack of subtlety is all the more amazing since so many of the details, symbols, natural descriptions, etc., in his prose lead the reader below the surface meaning to their unspoken implications. The letter "A" in The Scarlet Letter develops multiple meanings, providing this unifying symbol with depth. Just the way a man laughs in Blithedale, "Ethan Brand," and "My Kinsman" reveals something about his personality. The kiln in "Brand" becomes more than a furnace, assuming symbolic proportions as a raging heart and finally a circular, all-encompassing, universal figure of a type of hell. But in the poems everything is blue sky and visibility unlimited, leaving the imagination only the irregular rhymes and forced forms to ponder.

And this superficiality is perhaps the most inclusive weakness in the
poems. Little subtlety in meaning, almost no mature irony or literary ambiguities, one-level interpretation, few implications or "iceberg" effects, and few well-controlled stylistic qualities like internal rhyme or alliteration demonstrate a want of polish and conscious artistry that move the poems out of the realm of mature analysis.

The poems do, however, have some promising, praiseworthy qualities. The wit and advanced vocabulary and language dexterity of the poems written in youth provide interesting glimpses into the creative development of the artist. Hawthorne must have taken a fiendish delight in writing his clever (but contradictory) parody of love poems in "Do Not Bid Me Part" (p. 8). The very fact that a teenager has the critical apparatus to notice and correctly judge the sentimental nature of these newspaper outpourings and respond to them satirically is significant. Further, only a student with an advanced language background could pour out a mature, though unpoetic vocabulary in even his earliest poems, complete with "refulgent" domes, "hallowed" tombs, and "cloying" charms. And the fifteen-year-old lad was already acquainted with the yew tree as the symbol of mourning in this lyric, indicating a laudatory sensitivity to language and literature at a very young age:

WHERE GENIUS LAY

I saw where in his lowly grave
Departed Genius lay.
And mournful yew trees o'er it wave,
To hide it from the day.37

And occasionally Hawthorne demonstrates the ability to match form with meaning very effectively. The limerick satire needs monotonous repetition to nail the jibe most fully, making the structure as silly as the object satirized. In "The Sage of Apple Slump" (p. 13) such a convincing
form-content pairing occurs. All the rhymes except the first, second, and last are alike, while the plopping sound of the slump/plump/slump reinforces the banter's effect. On a more serious level is stanza IV of "Walking on the Sea":

When death is at hand, and the cottage of clay
Is left with a tremulous sigh,
The gracious forerunner is smoothing the way
For its tenant to pass to unchangeable day,
Saying, "Be not afraid, it is I."

The abaab rhyme provides the variety and stream of language necessary for the "movement" in the poem's meaning. The stanza is smooth, fast-moving, and well-controlled, catching the spirit of the "religious" passage from life. The appropriate cottage metaphor, reinforced with alliteration, is extended in the "tenant" reference at the end, clinching the unity. Nothing profound arises, it is true, but the verse achieves an effective coupling of structure with meaning.

While Hawthorne is occasionally good with minor elements, like his convincing intermixture of the fury of the waves with the lulling quiet of the deep in "The Ocean" (p. 9), he shines more with natural details that create a shadowy or strange atmosphere or mood. In "The Dead" (p. 16), for example, the "trembling starlight" steals into the cottage while the "wind sighs" and the "leaves send forth a gentle sound like the voices of a dream."

At his worst, then, both in youth and age, Hawthorne whipped off abysmally simple, totally perishable poems any freshman composition teacher would ho-hum over had they been written by one of his students:

THOMAS

Then, oh Thomas, rest in glory!
Hallowed by thy silent grave,—
Long thy name in Salem's story
Shall live, and honour o'er it wave.
Irregular and saying little, the poem can prompt no comment except, perhaps, that it has a bit of "energy" to it.

A YOUNG MAN WENT TO COLLEGE

There was a young man went to college
Inflamed with a thirst after knowledge
But was hazed so severely
That he saw very clearly
That he'd better have not come to College. 39

Maybe the aging Hawthorne chuckled as he rattled this one off, but he could have at least shown us that he knew the rudiments of comic effect by bringing that last line in tune with the tone of the first two, providing the kind of monotony and jingle that this sort of satire needs.

Thus, Hawthorne's poetry is, by and large, more "at his worst" than "at his best," which is mediocre, accompanied by slight glimmers of real promise. A close analysis of one of Hawthorne's best pieces may illustrate these qualities more convincingly.

"The Star of Calvary," originally written for Rufus Griswold's Christmas book in 1845, is reprinted in Edmund Clarence Stedman's An American Anthology, 1787-1900, and the editor says "It is worth its place in the book." 40

THE STAR OF CALVARY

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth. --St. Luke xxiii. 44.

I It is the same infrequent star,--
The all-mysterious light,
That like a watcher, gazing on
The changes of the night,
Toward the hill of Bethlem took
Its solitary flight.

II It is the same infrequent star;
Its sameness startleth me:
Although the disc is red as blood,
And downward, silently,
It looketh on another hill,--
The hill of Calvary!
III Nor noon, nor night; for to the west
  The heavy sun doth glow;
  And like a ship, the lazy mist
  Is sailing on below;
  Between the broad sun and the earth
  It tacketh to and fro.

IV There is no living wind astir;
  The bat's unholy wing
  Threads through the noiseless olive trees,
  Like some unquiet thing
  Which playeth in the darkness, when
  The leaves are whispering.

The first four stanzas provide a haunting atmosphere, showing not so much a classical interest in the objective reality of the crucifixion itself but in how the event becomes colored and "reinterpreted," as it were, by the individual emotions. Complete with touches of the line and color of the Ancient Mariner, the stanzas emphasize the subjective, imaginative interpretation of the artist as he adds a bizarre collection of natural events surrounding the crucifixion: a disc red as blood, lazy mist sailing on the horizon, the unholy wing of a bat. Hawthorne thus sets an effective Gothic stage for the subsequent description of the crucifixion itself.

Stanza IV, with the sinister evil of the crucifixion foreshadowed in the bat, is one of Hawthorne's best stanzas. The whispering leaves and the threading rapidity of the bat's wing buzzing along like some--not noisy--but "unquiet" thing provide an effective contrast with the still, silent trees, suggesting to the hypersensitive a movement of Satan around the cross. The bat's blackness is productively superimposed on the dull, glowing redness of the sun and the lightness of the "tacking" mist on this unusual night within day. Hawthorne has captured the emotional spirit of this oddity in his haunting details, contrasting sounds and lights, and his uncommon but here appropriate rhyme scheme: abcbdb. This freer, more
experimental form gives the poem movement and expansiveness, allowing more variety and not jarring the reader with the rocking closures of the frequently-used couplets. Just enough rhyme is used to make the lines memorable. And the two unrhymed lines allow flexibility and a cleaner flow of thought. Even the "-eth" endings catch the Biblical mood well when used selectively here, as they are in Mariner.

Then, suddenly, in V-XI the tone and spirit change, becoming more intense, whereas previously the atmosphere was brooding and quiet, setting the macabre stage.

V Mount Calvary! Mount Calvary!
    All sorrowfully still,
    That mournful tread, it rends the heart
    With an unwelcome thrill;
    That mournful tread of them that crowd
    That melancholy hill!

VI There is a cross, not one alone,
    'Tis even three I count,
    Like columns on the mossy marge
    Of some old Grecian fount;
    So pale they stand, so drearily,
    On that mysterious Mount.

VII Behold, O Israel! behold,
    It is no human One,
    That ye have dared to crucify.
    What evil hath he done?
    It is your King, O Israel!
    The God-begotten Son!

VIII A wreath of thorns, a wreath of thorns!
    Why have ye crowned him so?
    That brow is bathed in agony,
    'Tis veiled in every wo;
    Ye saw not the immortal trace
    Of Deity below.

IX It is the foremost of the Three
    Resignedly they fall,
    Those deathlike drooping features,
    Unbending, blighted all:
    The Man of Sorrows, how he bears
    The agonizing thrall!
X 'Tis fixed on thee, O Israel!
  His gaze!—how strange to brook;
But that there's mercy blended deep
  In each reproachful look,
'T would search thee, till the very heart
  Its withered home forsook.

XI To God! to God! how eloquent
  The cry, as if it grew,
By those cold lips unuttered, yet
  All heartfelt rising through,—
"Father in heaven! forgive them, for
  They know not what they do!"

Now frequent repetition reinforces the changed mood: Mount Calvary!
Mount Calvary!/Behold, behold/to God, to God. Another kind of repetition
heightens the artistry of the language with the sustained and varied
alliteration of mournful . . . melancholy, mossy marge . . . mysterious
mount, brow . . . bathed, deathlike drooping, unbending . . . blighted
. . . bears. And though the poem returns now to a religious context and
message, the emotional intensity is maintained, never descending into the
tacked-on moral approach of many of the other poems. The "paleness" and
loneliness of the trinity of crosses find a dignified expression in the
unusual metaphor of the white Grecian columns on a mossy hill. The through-
the-eyes-of-Christ manner of viewing the crucifixion, trite enough as it is,
is saved somewhat by Hawthorne's metaphorical transfer to the individual's
heart, seen wrenched and flying from its "withered home" under the power-
ful gaze.

Also, the more open verse form allows the poet to rise smoothly in
the last stanza to the climactic forgiveness cry, the cry itself proceed-
ing evenly from the previous four lines, a continuity essential in order
to capture the building intensity of the Saviour's scream. Hawthorne stops
the poem at the cry, a wise choice, thus maintaining the climactic pitch
of emotions, rather than providing a denouement with a subsequent discus-
sion of the dead Christ.
A great poem? Not by a metaphorical mile, to be sure. The message is common enough, and the content is only superficially developed with little subtlety or enduring depth. And at times, Hawthorne reveals his common structure problem in a forced and weak line like "His gaze!—how strange to brook." But the control of verse form, haunting and atmospheric stage setting, greater command of literary techniques like contrast, alliteration, and metaphor than one usually sees in his poems, and his conscious interest in prompting an emotional response all suggest a spark of promise that is generally absent in the other poems. But the effort, one should not forget, though one of his best, is at only a promising level of mediocrity, nevertheless.

Though Hawthorne's poetic quality scale might run from the abysmally embarrassing to the promising but mediocre, a study of the poetry is not invalidated in the process, of course. Seeing how Hawthorne responded to a medium with which he felt uncomfortable and eventually chose to reject as a major creative form is historically and biographically significant, as is the previous survey of how his poetic efforts compared with some of the other Romantic writers, themes, and critical opinions. Both help us appreciate and understand the creative development of a respected artist. Beyond this, moreover, studying his poetry reveals sides of the artist's personality and attitudes frequently ignored in critical studies or misunderstood by students. While some of his early poems display seriousness unnatural for a teenager and suggest his preoccupation with the dark elements in life so powerfully seen in his mature prose, the mood of "Days of My Youth," for example, should not be seen as "The Essential Hawthorne":

DAYS OF MY YOUTH

Days of my youth, ye fleet away,
As fades the bright Sun's cheering ray,
And scarce my infant hours are gone,
Ere Manhood's troubled step comes on.
My infant hours return no more
And all their happiness is o'er;
The stormy sea of life appears, A scene of tumult and of tears.

Nevertheless, this side of Hawthorne, often erroneously seen as The Man has sometimes been so inordinately emphasized in his life and fiction as to give a distorted view of the humanity of Hawthorne, a view that can sometimes jeopardize the interpretation of his works. Both Hawthorne's foes and friends have emphasized this dark reclusive aspect of the man. Arlin Turner, who takes a glowingly favorable position in regard to Hawthorne's artistic ability, says: "Isolation is one of his major themes. It might not have appeared so often in his works if it had not been so prominently illustrated by his father before him and by his mother and sisters, but he thought of himself early as a creature of seclusion both in temperament and in practice." Indeed, Turner continues, "In keeping with his habit of seeing mankind represented in himself he exaggerated the depth of his isolation as a sort of metaphorical statement of his views on men."

The sharp pen of Vernon Parrington in his influential Maincurrents series spares no blows on Hawthorne, and it is difficult to avoid believing his biographical study of Hawthorne affected his critical estimate:

The isolation in which he chose to brood over the problem, seeking to take the solution by surprise in unguarded moments, was the natural consequence of his temperament and his habits. He lived singularly remote from common interests. . . . He had a habit of sliding into symbolism and allegory . . . from the narrowness of his emotional life and the restrictions of his sympathies. . . . Hawthorne's dearth of Romantic interest and ideas was rooted in a poverty of human experience, a turning inward that stifled him. . . . He was the extreme and finest expression of the refined alienation from reality that in the end palsied the creative mind of New England.

And a totally different sort of critic, Frederick Crews, implies in
his psychoanalytic *Sins of the Fathers* that the basis for Hawthorne's preoccupation with human sin and guilt partially rests in his own guilt over his ancestors' involvement in the witchcraft trials.\(^{45}\)

Surely, it is easy for students, too, to misinterpret a man who spent twelve reclusive years in his mother's home after college and subsequently wrote stories and novels of often unrestrained dark, moral intensity. Even Hawthorne himself desperately wanted to think that his *House of the Seven Gables* was somehow more pleasant than *The Scarlet Letter*.

A study of the poetry can help encourage balance in such areas. His bantering parodies of newspaper love poems display a healthy awareness of and response to his childhood surroundings. And later, even near the close of his life, limericks and light satires appear with a pleasantly jovial attitude toward himself and other men. Most of the poems, in fact, are far lighter in tone and express a greater confidence in life's essential meaning and purpose than one finds in most of the brooding, ambiguously complex prose works. This consistent and direct appreciation of traditional Christian beliefs is what one especially notices. As noted in the poems earlier, the "lessons-at-the-end," though disappointing poetically, display an unreserved certainty about God's guidance. And the devotional poems "Star of Calvary" and "Walking on the Sea" unflinchingly commemorate Christ's saving power and willingness to aid men. The views towards Puritanism reflected in stories and novels written before or near the time of these devotionals (middle 1840's) become far more complex and ambiguous (in the literary sense). In *The Scarlet Letter* the human destructiveness of the Puritan restrictions is highlighted, although the artist always implies that men must face the consequences of their moral decisions. The Puritan emphasis on guilt keeps the minister in the black veil separated
from men, but it makes him a more effective pastor. And interrupting the
jollities of the Maypole company, the Puritan Endicott reminds the celebra-
ted couple that the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic
gaiety, while the writer seems to side with the fresh and spontaneous
affection of the young pair. Indeed, Hawthorne's attitudes toward Puritan
religion become far more tricky and intricate in the prose, giving them
much of their maturity and value. In this context, the simplicity and
certainty of the poems become all the more interesting and useful as con-
tributing touchstones in assessing Hawthorne's attitudes toward religion.

Those who cannot envision the collegiate Hawthorne sitting in a smoky
room enjoying a cigar and a glass of fine red wine while playing cards
would probably refuse to see the autobiographical significance of the
Fanshawe poems "The Wine is Bright" (p. 11) and "The Jolly Drinker" (p. 12),
both of which were partially rooted in Hawthorne's own Bowdoin experiences,
biographers say.46 Both of them, despite their "want of polish," as the
Fanshawe "class poet" Edward apologizes, might be "charitably taken" as
brief but descriptive glimpses into another side of a man who was cer-
tainly not incapable of an occasional mirthful indiscretion.

So the jovial, active, and cheerier Hawthorne, the bantering satiri-
cal Hawthorne, the confident and traditionally Christian Hawthorne must
be paired with the reclusive and brooding Hawthorne, the Hawthorne of the
involved Puritan tales of sin and guilt. The poetry, then, can encourage
this balance. And providing balance, while not a profound task, is a
necessary one, nevertheless.

But even if the poems did not contribute to this balance, even if
they did not say something about his linguistic development and his re-
sponse to some of the literary ideas of his time, even if they did not
illuminate some of the different literary corners an artist gropes in before finally crystallizing his mature style, they would still have a useful function, for they demonstrate some interesting thematic relationships with the prose works. Hawthorne apparently developed certain thematic loyalties and clung tenaciously to them throughout his life, sticking them into the poetry in skeleton form and then filling out and maturing them later.

His early sentimental interest in the therapeutic quality of moonlight and its haunting suggestiveness, expressed in "Moonlight" (p. 10) and "Address to the Moon" (p. 24), for example, later found more significant expansion in his comments on the tender glow of moonlight as it related to the "stuff of romances" and the necessity of the partial suspension of reality in dealing with his romances. In his preface to The Scarlet Letter he notes:

Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly,—making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility,—is a medium the most suitable for a romance writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests. . . . Thus, therefore, the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and the faery world, where the actual and the imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other. Ghosts might enter there without affrighting us. . . . Then, at such an hour, and with this scene before him, if a man, sitting all alone, cannot dream strange things, and make them look like truth, he need never try to write romances (V, 55-56).

In The House of the Seven Gables preface, too, Hawthorne reiterates this atmospheric essential related to moonlight when he insists that a romancer must "manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen or enrich the shadows of the picture" (III, 13). When he begins The Blithedale Romance, he decries the fact that America has no "Faery Land" for the romances to work in (V, 322), leading him in the
Marble Faun preface to praise Italy, which was so unlike America. No writer, he continues in this preface, can imagine how difficult it is to write a romance where there is "no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong. . . ." (VI, 15). Moonlight aptly appealed to Hawthorne as the subtle combination of light and shadow. It cast over everything an aura of unreality and of fusion of the fantasy world with the real world. He proposes that the romance is, thus, not a strict, objective interpretation of reality but a coloring of reality with the imaginary, the illusive, the quiet, shadowy things in men's lives and hearts, all symbolized by the filtering moonlight. He needed a "fairy precinct," either in ancient customs or the old Puritan past where the moonlight of imagination softens the harsh glare of reality and objective living. These moonlight poems, then, as well as other atmospheric poems like "Star of Calvary" (p. 32), "The Ocean" (p. 9), and "The Dead" (p. 16), foreshadow his later metaphorical preoccupation with things like moonlight as the symbolic representatives of the necessary ingredients of the Romance.

The hero in "My Low and Humble Home" (p. 22) takes a journey many of Hawthorne's later characters were to also take. Leaving his humble cottage to answer the appealing call of battle, he matures after viewing the senseless waste of war, recognizing bitterly the futility of external, artificial efforts to obtain personal satisfaction. Disillusioned, he yearns to return to his lost home, coming full circle in his quest for maturity. Young Goodman Brown goes on a similar journey, an initiation into a world of evil. Against Faith's pleas, he journeys into the forest where, confronted with the hypocrisy and humanness of people he had thought innocent, he learns that evil is the nature of mankind, a knowledge that shatters him and makes his dying hour at home only "gloom" (II, 89 ff.). Ethan Brand
sets out, too, on a journey to find the unpardonable sin. With noble and naive ambitions, he begins his artificial and futile search, like the hero of "Humble Home," but his quest consumes his heart and he, too, comes full circle, only to find that the closest thing to the unpardonable sin he can find is a sinner who refuses to be pardoned. But, like the poem's hero, his trip has disillusioned him and has destroyed other men in the process or has otherwise isolated him from them (III, 477 ff.). Robin's journey in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" simulates in some respects perhaps the whole coming of age of America in the revolutionary days. But on the more important, more convincing, individual level of interpretation, the trip forces Robin to overcome his naivete by meeting authority figures, sexual temptation, strange multicolored devils, and finally the tarred and ridiculous figure of his kinsman, seeing in him now no easy answer for his security needs. He has learned the complexity of good and evil, but it has meant losing his innocence and the initial joyous buoyancy of his search (III, 616 ff.). "The Man of Adamant," "Roger Malvin's Burial" and numerous other stories present this motif also, one of Hawthorne's favorites and one that found early expression in the poetry.

As such, the journey into experience theme is related to Hawthorne's disgust with men's destructive, misdirected efforts to gain personal goals by misusing others, an idea expressed in "Form of Heroes":

FORMS OF HEROES

Ye forms of Heroes slumb'ring here,
Beneath these tombstones cold and drear,
On which the moss of age has slept,
Since one find heart has o'er you wept,
Oh tell me, if a Mortal's prayer,
Can ever wake your spirits, where
They sleep the dark dread sleep of death.
Tell me if now the laurel wreath,
Which Glory twin'd around your head,
Can wake amid the silent dead,
One glance of that proud martial blaze
Which led your feet in slaughter's ways.

The selfish manipulation of men abounds in Hawthorne's prose characters. Chillingworth preys on Dimmesdale, attaining his ends by destroying others. Hollingsworth in Blithedale abuses Zenobia, Priscilla, and anyone in his reach in the name of an ironic dream of social reform at the Blithedale farm. Dr. Rappaccini cares "infinitely more for science than for mankind" (II, 116), while Alymar's obsession with external defects leads him to destroy Georgiana in "The Birthmark" (II, 47). In some cases Hawthorne's disdain for external reform appears in the poetry even after the stories and romances gave it significant content, as in his gentle jibes at Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott's dietary extremes in "The Sage of Apple Slump" (1862). Earlier, more intense and serious criticisms of this artificial foolishness appeared in the ironically destructive schemes of the Blithedale community, in the "Celestial Railroad" (1843), an acute satirical criticism of what Hawthorne saw as the easy road of transcendental salvation (II, 212), and in separate vignettes in the romances, like the inability of Clifford and Hepzibah to escape their past and their obligations by scooting off on the new-fangled railroads in The House of the Seven Gables. "The Sage of Apple Slump" (p. 13), "Forms of Heroes," and "My Low and Humble Home" (p. 22) all take this dim view of men obtaining any significant progress through artificial or selfish efforts, just as poems like "Earthly Pomp" (p. 8), "Days of My Youth" (p. 36), and "Go to the Grave" (p. 20), for example, point up the related theme of man's mutability and the essential transitory nature of any purely external changes or advances we make. That "inward sky," those soft juices of the heart, as Coverdale might put it, these are where the real transformations
of men take place, Hawthorne continually implies, and the early poetry seems to foreshadow that decision.

But perhaps the most interesting thematic relationship is in the ironic juxtaposition of death with life, illustrated in "The Oak" (cf. "Oh Snow the Comes When Violets Ought to Bloom," p. 14), written for "The Spectator" at age sixteen:

THE OAK

I have seen the oak in its strength and pride,
When its leaves were green, and boughs spread wide,
And a wild vine twin'd round its stately form,
And claim'd a shelter from the storm.
I have seen the oak when its beauty was gone,
And the wither'd trunk was left alone,
Yet still the wild vine twin'd luxuriant there,
And the oak e'en in age with its verdure was fair.

These ironic opposites, these symbiotic relationships between life and death appear frequently in the prose. Just as the dead and ponderous oak supports the wild and innocent vine and the vine in turn mollifies the dark gloom of the dead oak, so in the prose innocence appears with evil, life with death; the evil informs the naively innocent of the nature of reality, and the "evil" experience thus appears rather "fortunate" for these people, its nature taking on educative as well as destructive qualities. In The Marble Faun, against the heavy background of accumulated evil in a culture, appear such innocents as Donatello, who must learn somehow to live with the presence of evil. On top of the decaying aged timbers of the seven-gabled house is a patch of life, a small token of hope in the plot of Alice's posies. Surrounding monstrous manipulators like Hollingsworth are such innocents as Priscilla, who ultimately becomes both a burden for and the salvation of the misguided reformer. Within an intolerant Puritan society Dorothy and Tobias are willing to tolerate and love the gentle Quaker boy, Illbrahim, a little patch of life within a
narrow society. Throughout the prose, this complex interaction of the Oaks with the Vines occurs. Hawthorne continually places things with their opposites and observes them in the subsequent fusions or adjustments that result. We need to consider, Hawthorne seems to insist, the ambiguities of things, the complexities involved in mediating between life and death, good and evil, and come to some kind of decision, not tolerating or conforming to evil or death but learning to adjust to its existence as the vine survives by adjusting to the tree.

Naturally, one can carry these thematic correlations too far. The youthful poet undoubtedly had no such extended symbolic intentions in his simple "Oak" poem. But the ironic juxtaposition of life-death elements is present, nevertheless, and finds obvious analogues in the prose. And the poet may have simply been writing common adventure stories about war and heroism in some of the journey poems, just as he may have been simply parroting trite truisms in the mutability verses. But whether or not these verses contain embryonic thoughts that would achieve full, live birth later, they nevertheless, at the very least, represent interesting, analogous parallels with certain themes in the mature prose.

Whatever conclusions about the history of Hawthorne's poetry "career," his poetry's relationships with Romantic attitudes, the quality of the poetry, the sunnier sides of his personality, or the thematic correlations of verse and prose that this perishable study draws, at least this much must be affirmed: the limited body of poetry surviving and the limited amount of historical material available relating to the poetic Hawthorne make the conclusions all very tentative. The discovery of additional manuscripts may reveal that Hawthorne was far more of a poet than now assumed, or it may verify the more likely assumption that he never really
treated contemporary Romantic poetry as a serious art form worthy of supporting significant thoughts.

For the time being, Hawthorne's son is not incorrect in saying that "Hawthorne's boyish contributions to literature took the form of sentimental little poems of no originality or value." Still, the verses serve a literary historic value in illuminating personality facets usually ignored in Hawthorne, suggesting themes later developed in prose, and providing insights into the linguistic and ideological formation of the artist. None of the verses represents the maturity of thoughtful poetry, and praising Hawthorne's poetry in any absolute way would be ludicrous. True, his poems show a glimmer of great Romantic promise in such lines as "The bat's unholy wing/Threads through the noiseless olive trees,/Like some unquiet thing/Which playeth in the darkness," from "The Star of Calvary." But by and large the verses defy close critical analysis. The poems generally fit into molded, rigid structures employing little experimentation, making them a rather nebulous composite of what are now called Romantic and neoclassic characteristics. But the poems demonstrate a vocabulary range, though stilted at times, and a knowledge of basic language structure, though formal and stiff, beyond that which would be expected in a young versemaker. As Julian says about one of his father's death poems: "Though the form and versification and the vein of sentiment is hackneyed enough, there is considerable felicity and severity in the choice of words. At the same time the composition helps us to see that its author could never have been a genuine poet. Had Poe at the same age treated such a subject, he would have thrown his whole heart and earnestness into it, and he would have produced something . . . that must have held a place in literature." Why Hawthorne did not throw his whole heart into poetry when other prose
writers did and why he turned from poetry are questions that lead into
Chapter Three, "Hawthorne the Poet Critic."

Perhaps Hawthorne himself uttered what might be the most fitting
words for his verse. On the subject of composing poetry for an album,
he said prophetically in a letter to his sister the year he graduated from
Bowdoin (1825), "I fear I shall be unable to write anything worthy of the
immortality of such a record." No one would argue with him on that.
NOTES

Chapter Two

1 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Poems, ed. Richard Peck (University of Virginia Bibliographic Society, 1967), p. 1. Original manuscript and approximate date of composition: C. Walter Barrett Collection, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. ca. 1815. After a poem has been reproduced in the paper, subsequent references to that poem will often include a page number in parentheses, directing the reader to the complete poem in the thesis. The Poems edition itself contains a brief but helpful introduction, some of the points of which are integrated into the thesis.


3 Fields, pp. 43-45.

4 Poems, pp. vi-vii.


7 Poems, p. 3. MS: Rare Books and Special Collections, University of California, Berkeley. Elizabeth Hawthorne, letter of December 20, 1865; ca. 1817.


9 Quoted in Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 106.


20. (March 1838), 234.


27. Bate, pp. 352 ff.

29. Bate, p. 392.


31. Bate, p. 345.


38. Poems, p. 6. MS: Rare Books and Special Collections, University of California, Berkeley. Elizabeth Hawthorne, letter of December 20, 1865. ca. 1817.


43. Turner, p. 35.


46 See Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I.


49 Julian Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Philosophy," Century Magazine, 32 (May 1886), 86.

50 Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 103.

"I wish the poets now-a-days would not sing in such devilish queer measures; it bothers me horribly; and as regards these poems, I cannot understand a tenth of them."

--Letters to William D. Ticknor, I, 102.

That great artists comprehensively support great art might be an easily accepted, convenient, and comforting theory. After all, Coleridge created great Romantic poetry and still had the time and vision to summarize theories about all the literary arts in his Biographia Literaria, On the Principles of Genial Criticism, Imagination, and other eclectic essays. Wordsworth's Preface illustrates, too, that a great lyrical artist could formulate some broad, positive assumptions about literary art in general. And Emerson's essays like "The Poet" reveal an interest not simply in the type of poetry Emerson himself wrote but in a universal concept of the creating artist in general. Producing both significant poetry and haunting short stories, Poe, furthermore, took the time to outline his views about literary art in his The Poetic Principle and in scattered periodical essays and reviews. Even the spirited and brief life of Shelley found room for an overview of the arts in The Defence of Poetry, just as Keats did in his Letters. And when Shelley concludes, after his distinctions between the synthesizing imagination and the analyzing reason, that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," he encompasses within his term all synthetically imaginative artists. The tolerant and flexible inclusiveness toward art forms reflected here might lead one to
generalize about the "brotherhood" and equality of all literary art forms in the eyes of the major Romantic representatives. Such a generalization must admit some careful qualifications, however, for Nathaniel Hawthorne must be selectively excluded from the Romantic club that looked kindly on the important value of all the modern literary arts.

Indeed, however interesting his poetry is in a 20th century perspective, his own meager attempts at Romantic verse did not imbue Hawthorne with general respect for fellow poets. Of course, though he probably wrote little poetry after his college graduation from Bowdoin in 1825, Hawthorne might be accused of a continuing wish to be a great poet and of a disappointment in his inability to become one. "Did he not write this letter to his fiancee Sophia Peabody on December 5, 1839?" one might ask.

Dearest, I wish your husband had the gift of making rhymes; for methinks there is poetry in his head and heart, since he has been in love with you. You are a poem, my Dove. Of what sort, then? Epic?--mercy on me,--no! A sonnet?--no; for that is too labored and artificial. My Dove is a sort of sweet, simple, gay, pathetic ballad.²

Men suffering from the flaming intensity of fresh love must be forgiven temporary lapses of logic or intentional distortions of the truth. The fact is, Hawthorne throughout his adult life fairly consistently scoffed at contemporary poets and poetry, seldom appreciated modern experimental efforts in poetic form, and was rather indifferent to the creative importance of the contemporary poetic medium in general.

Never an eclectic theoretician on art, writing few reviews and no really major critical studies, Hawthorne mingle his critical views in letters, in his extensive prose works, in brief sketches, and in journal entries. Writing in his notebooks on September 2, 1842, he mockingly describes the poet Ellery Channing as "a queer . . . young man" with "nothing peculiar about him--some originality and inspiration in his
character, but none, or very little, in his intellect" who "looks upon his own verses as too sacred to be sold for money. Prose he will sell to the highest bidder; but measured feet and jingling lines are not to be exchanged for gold—which, indeed, is not very likely to be offered for them" (IX, 321).^3

During Hawthorne's consular duties in 1855 in England, the young poet William Allingham urged him to read his poems. Hawthorne apparently recognized the value in some of them and forwarded a few presentation copies to William D. Ticknor, his publisher, in Boston, saying, "I wish you would have them distributed to people tinctured with poetry and other nonsense." And he adds, "There is great merit in some of the pieces... I can't say I have read them all, for I dislike poetry."^4 He would send other men's poetry to his publisher, not so much because he felt the works important, but because he wanted to get the poets off his back.

Ticknor himself notes some cases of this disinterest in contemporary poetry or new poetic movements: "He [Hawthorne] says of 'The Angel of the House': 'I thought it very good, always excepting the measures, which have something of the lame-dromedary movement which poets nowadays seem so partial to.' Of Browning he says: 'I have tried to read him but without much success. I wish the poets now-a-days would not sing in such devilish queer measures; it bothers me horribly; and as regards these poems, I cannot understand a tenth of them. There is something in the English atmosphere and diet that unfits a man for this comprehension and enjoyment of all transcendentalisms and of whatever passes a certain limit of common sense.'"^5

As a youth Hawthorne read Scott avidly, finding particular pleasure in his novels. But he knew his poetry, too, and in a letter to his sister in
1820 he mentions that he had just bought *The Lord of the Isles*, which he admired as well as any of Scott's poems. But by 1845 Hawthorne's estimate of Scott's poetry and the general approach his prose had taken had diminished considerably. In a statement expressing an attitude similar to the one he took toward many Romantic poets, Hawthorne depreciated Scott because "the world nowadays [1845] requires a more earnest purpose, a deeper moral, and a closer and homelier truth than he was qualified to supply it with" (II, 416).

"P's Correspondence," an odd selection in *Mosses from the Old Manse* included selected pieces of criticism of Romantic English poets presented through the mouth of "P." An American literary aspirant gone mad in England, "P" lets his fancies run wild, hypothetically projecting dead Romantic writers into middle age and explaining how they do as older poets. Despite the guise in which they are couched, one might reasonably assume that the sentiments expressed are Hawthorne's own. Thus, in discussing Shelley as a "middle-aged" poet, "P" says: "I consider the productions of his maturity superior, as poems, to those of his youth. They are warmer with human love. . . . The author has learned to dip oftener into his heart, and he has thereby avoided the faults into which a too exclusive use of fancy and wit are wont to betray him. Formerly [everything he really did] his page was often little more than a concrete arrangement of crystallizations, or even of icicles, as cold as they were brilliant" (II, 420). Such was Hawthorne's sly method of criticizing the too fanciful exuberance he thought so prevalent in much early English Romanticism. But even Shelley was preferable, he adds in "Earth's Holocaust," to the "fitful and lurid gleams and gushes of black vapor that flashed and eddied from the volumes of Lord Byron" (II, 447-448).
Though he met Longfellow at Bowdoin and became warm friends with him in 1837, Hawthorne's artistic temperament was not especially compatible with the poet Longfellow's. He is "no more conscious of any earthly or spiritual trouble than a sunflower," Hawthorne quips. About ten years later, one must admit, Hawthorne wrote a cordial review of Evangeline, as will be noted later in some balancing comments about the criticism. But another contemporary poet received even more summary dismissal. While serving as consul in Liverpool in the mid 1850's, Hawthorne was asked by an English citizen for a list of American works he would endorse. In his response, which recommended some Thoreau, Hawthorne cautions his correspondent that "Whittier's book [Literary Recreations (1845)] is poor stuff. I like the man but have no high opinion of his poetry. . . ."8

The flighty and somewhat contemptuous attitude Hawthorne took toward contemporary poetry and poets in general is illustrated in the use he makes of poets in his notes and stories. "An examination of wits and poets at a police-court," starts one idea sketch, "and they are to be sentenced by judges to various penalties or fines, the house of correction, whipping, etc., according to the moral offense of which they are guilty."9 Among the group in "The Canterbury Pilgrims" talking to the Shaker couple is a poet, a "varse-maker" with an "air of sublime superiority" (III, 521-523) who gives himself up to "a sort of vague reverie, which he called thought" (III, 523) and who finally leads the pilgrims into the Shaker community "chanting a drear and desperate stanza" (III, 530). One of the party of adventurers searching for "The Great Carbuncle" was a man "who lacked a name, which was the greater pity, as he appeared to be a poet. He was a bright eyed man, but woefully pined away, which was no more than natural, if, as some people affirmed, his ordinary diet was fog, morning mist, and
a slice of the densest cloud within his reach, sauced with moonshine, whenever he could get it. Certain it is, that the poetry which flowed from him had a smack of all these dainties" (I, 175). When asked what he will do should he find the precious stone, he replies: "I shall hie me back to my attic chamber, in one of the darksome alleys of London. There, night and day, will I gaze upon it; my soul shall drink its radiance; it shall be diffused throughout my intellectual powers, and gleam brightly in every line of poesy that I indite. Thus, long ages after I am gone, the splendor of the Great Carbuncle will blaze around my name" (I, 180). Unfortunately all he locates is "a great piece of ice, which he found in a sunless chasm of the mountains, and swore that it corresponded, in all points, with his idea of the Great Carbuncle. The critics say that, if his poetry lacked the splendor of the gem, it retained all the coldness of the ice" (I, 190).

In comments with more profound implications, Coverdale in Blithedale is a minor poet of the Transcendental school, partially unhumanized, purposeless, and incapable of responding to human affections with anything but icy investigation. While being a poet has not made Coverdale this way, it is still interesting to observe that being a poet rarely denotes good in Hawthorne's fiction (V, 313 ff). Peter Goldthwaite, that "crack-brained simpleton" who systematically demolishes his own house, might have cut a very brilliant figure in the world "had he employed his imagination in the airy business of poetry, instead of making it a demon of mischief in mercantile pursuits" (I, 43). Only the poet in "The Great Stone Face" survives as an admirable figure under Hawthorne's Muse-less scythe, and even he is not granted the honor of immortalization on the stone (III, 436).

The "poets" cited above are generally mocked as living insubstantial lives, performing deeds of little significance, being out of touch with
reality, or exploiting irrational schemes to achieve useless ends. Naturally not all contemporary poets or poetry appeared exactly this way to Hawthorne in reality, as noted later. But the poses assumed by the poets in his prose highlight Hawthorne's inclination to avoid recognizing the enduring creative value of modern poetry.

A reader may easily be tempted at this point to conclude that Hawthorne was simply hostile to poetry because he failed to master it. Lacking the skill necessary to create great poetry, he condemned its popular expression, the argument might run. And Hawthorne's condemnation would be seen as a superficial one, not rooted in a thorough acquaintance with his age and with its writers, based on cursory reading of poetry and on popular rumors about poets and poetry that Hawthorne had inadvertently gleaned from a limited contact with the literary world. Such a tempting hypothesis would conveniently explain Hawthorne's critical opinions, perhaps, whisking them away as the snickering whims of a man who knew little about contemporary poetry or its relation to poetic tradition. But such a view would be insidiously unjust and inaccurate.

It is important, then, that theories held by men like Augustus Sala, an English visitor to the United States in Hawthorne's time, be laid to rest. Sala claims: "Nobody ever saw him [Hawthorne] read. ... A friend who knows him well told me that on his shelves Hawthorne had not twenty volumes, and that these even were of the most ordinary sort." Hawthorne was in fact a broad and catholic reader, unsystematic possibly, but comprehensive in his tastes, much more so than one might expect from his critical opinions about contemporary poetry. Chapter Two already noted that men like Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Thomson were his early companions. The sincerity of his sister Elizabeth can be accepted unreservedly
when she says: "We were the victims of no education pedantry. We always had plenty of books." Besides the more prominent masters, the family possessed a copy of Sidney's *Arcadia* that Hawthorne kept with him and reread continually over a period of forty years. And in *Our Old Home* Hawthorne himself confesses his boyhood fondness for Dr. Johnson's "two stern and masculine poems," "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Arlin Turner and Randall Stewart both trace Hawthorne's debt to Bunyan and to the *Faerie Queene* for his allegorical method. Letters to his sister in 1820 reveal that he had already read all the novels of Scott he could find. Then, while a student at Bowdoin (1821-1825), Hawthorne belonged to the Athanaeum Society, which owned an 800-volume collection of widely assorted books. Hawthorne dipped freely into its resources. Three years after he left Bowdoin, Hawthorne became a "proprietor" in the Salem Athenaeum library, holding a financial share in it until 1839. The reliable lending records kept by the Athenaeum highlight the breadth of Hawthorne's reading during his apprenticeship under the eves. He relished old memoirs, travel books, and histories, including Felt's *Annals of Salem*. And though he spoke French amateurishly, he read Montaigne, Pascal, Racine, Rosseau, and Voltaire fluently and freely during this time. Drawing impartially from the Romantics and neo-classics, Hawthorne went through Pope's Homer, Gifford's Juvenal and Persius, Marlowe, Dryden, Prior, Gray, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, and even an American anthology, Ketell's *Specimens of American Poetry* (1829). He sampled four volumes of Coleridge's prose, including *Biographia Literaria*, in addition to the poetry choices. He read Bacon, Defoe [*Pamela*], Burke, the *Essays of Elia*, Mather's *Remarkables*, patches from Jefferson and Franklin, as well as the novels of Brockden Brown. Much periodical literature, including the
Gentlemen's Magazine, Blackwood's, and the North American Review, also occupied some of Hawthorne's reading time, and he could hardly have failed to read some of the contemporary verse and poetry reviews published in such journals. And though his writing and consular duties in Liverpool occupied more and more of his time after 1850, the very fact that Hawthorne could say such disparaging things about Browning indicates a familiarity with the man and the more experimental movements in England and on the Continent. He mentions the poets Allingham, Patmore, Browning, and Tennyson in letters to his publisher, William Ticknor. Hawthorne developed a professional association with Melville while at Lenox in the early 1850's, after having favorably reviewed Typee in 1846 during his tenure at the custom-house. Besides the revelatory comments about Shelley in "P's Correspondence" or Byron in "Earth's Holocaust," Hawthorne also displayed an acquaintance with other contemporary poets and prose writers in other places. "A Virtuoso's Collection," for example, alludes sketchily to Don Quixote, Spenser, Hudibras, Wordsworth's "Peter Bell," Coleridge, Byron Shelley, Dickens, Irving, Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, and Poe just enough to persuade the reader that Hawthorne was familiar with the works of these men (cf. Mosses, where the abridged edition appears, II, 197-198). Hawthorne may have been unsystematic and spasmodic in his reading, totally disinterested in using it to formulate broad critical theories about contemporary creativity that might prove useful should he be called upon to write reviews. But his reading displays a catholicity and depth that should stifle any temptation to attribute Hawthorne's depreciation of contemporary poetry to an ignorant or spiteful narrowness based on a superficial contact with his milieu. As Randall Stewart appropriately notes: "Hawthorne, we may be sure, made no pretension to knowledge which he did
Given this un-bookish but comprehensive acquaintance with both the old masters and the dominant contemporary poets, Hawthorne did not then summarily dismiss all poets as insignificant, another conclusion that might hastily be formed from the previous review of the criticism and the prose passages which jokingly satirize poets. In the "Hall of Fantasy" Hawthorne reiterates his lifelong respect for the giant masters by referring to Shakespeare as "all-glorious," Spenser as a "meet guest for an allegorical structure," Homer as a man with a "grand old countenance," and Milton as one with "severe divinity" (II, 197-198). And though he viewed Longfellow's "spirited consciousness" as no more than a sunflower's, he handled him kindly for friendship's sake. In one of the few book reviews he published, Hawthorne saw Evangeline as a "Sweet and noble poem ... a poem founded on American history and embodying itself in American life and manners"--he [Longfellow] has placed himself on an eminence higher than we [the American nation] had yet attained and beyond the reach of envy. Let him stand, then, at the head of our list of native poets." Writing to Longfellow from Concord on January 2, 1864, just a few months before Hawthorne's death, Hawthorne observes to his friend, "I take great satisfaction in your poetry, and take very little in most other men's, except it be the grand old strains that have been sounding all through my life." Infrequently, too, a minor, traditional poet would work his way into Hawthorne's sympathies. Upstarts, Caroline Ticknor records, "sought him for sympathy, and brought their verses for criticism, feeling assured that he would perceive both merits and defects with a discerning eye and a responsive heart." Finding himself short on cash while writing The Scarlet Letter in 1850, Hawthorne agreed to do a critical job of Lewis Mansfield's
The Morning Watch, a poem of more than 2000 lines of pentameter couplets, giving an allegorical account of a journey toward immortality. The poem had undeniable lyrical power and a certain dexterity, says Harold Blodgett, who has collected Hawthorne's letters to Mansfield. But its great defect, as Hawthorne was quick to see, was its lack of structural strength. "In a story like this," Hawthorne writes, "it is allowable and highly advisable . . . to have as much mist and glorified fog as possible, diffused about on all sides, but still there should be a distinct pathway to tread upon—a clue that the reader shall confide in, as being firmly fastened somewhere." Hawthorne, in this one instance of expanded criticism of traditional religious poetry, could offer both a sympathetic appreciation of the poem along with a reliable and candid judgment of it. Further, during his mid 1850's consular duties in England, Hawthorne wrote in his English Notebooks that Tennyson was "the one poet of our day." Coming near him in a Manchester exhibition in 1857, Hawthorne says: "I would gladly have seen more of this one poet of our day, but forebore to follow him; for I must own that it seemed mean to be dogging him through the saloons, even to look at him, since it was to be done stealthily, if at all" (VIII, 531).

Saying Hawthorne simply rejected all poetic expression as fruitless and insignificant, then, is to completely misunderstand the man. On a broader level, though, Hawthorne's sympathetic appraisals of very selected contemporary poetry and poets actually help verify his general negativism toward the 19th century medium as a whole. As Austin Warren notes in his excellent study of Hawthorne's reading: "Longfellow is pronounced first among American poets, but who else was there—save Emerson whose daring metric irregularities would not have passed Hawthorne's muster even had
his persistent optimism been bearable." In every case, Warren continues, "His taste was certainly unexperimental and conservative--for Tennyson and Longfellow, not Browning or Whitman." Religious poetry like Mansfield's Morning Watch he could tolerate and, mostly for friendship's sake, Longfellow, too, would gain a favorable response, just as Tennyson would be accepted as a serious writer because he did not exhibit the excess of lyrical enthusiasm Hawthorne noticed in many earlier Romantics. But more experimental poets like Browning would be read but not fully understood. And this lack of understanding would not lead Hawthorne to reinvestigate the poetry seriously but simply to disdain the "lame-dromedary" measures that he thought so many of his contemporaries were trying. The selected sympathetic responses in Hawthorne to poetry, thus, only serve to highlight the generally unfavorable attitude he took of the importance of the contemporary poetic medium. The consistently satirical or bantering characterizations of men portrayed as poets in his prose works and his sincerely blunt criticisms in his letters and notebooks suggest two fundamental types of negative evaluation. Hawthorne disliked the modern, experimental attempts at verse, those "devilish queer measures," as he delicately puts it, that he saw arising in mid 19th century America and that he was even more exposed to in his travels in England and on the Continent. But he rejected, too, the "airiness" of more traditional Romantic lyrics, feeling them too insubstantial for moral weight.

All of these considerations of Hawthorne's generally cynical attitude toward the possibilities of contemporary poetry provide a necessary background for understanding why Hawthorne chose to reject poetry as his own creative medium. For, just as Hawthorne did not criticize contemporary poetry out of ignorance or spite, having a thorough reading knowledge of
his age, so he did not simply fall into prose because he was ignorant of poetry's possibilities. Even though striking evidence of a budding poet does not ooze out of every one of his iambics, Hawthorne had the language capabilities to substantially strengthen his verse. He deliberately refused to do this, choosing to work almost exclusively in prose when many other writers were managing both forms well. The study of his critical attitudes toward contemporary poetry helps illuminate the motives for this rejection and leads directly into the fascinating realm of the form-content growth of an artist.

Now, some obvious solutions to this rejection become immediately apparent. First, Hawthorne never really took contemporary poetry seriously, never really seeing its importance. From his early teens, when he would write his sister to say he had "scraps" of poetry plugging his brain and that he could "vomit" a dozen pages of it just by turning over, to his death, Hawthorne never seriously recognized poetry in general as a significant, contemporary form. Though his poetry has literary historical value as suggested in Chapter Two, Hawthorne himself never wrote many poems in more than a half-serious manner. Some of his early poems even parodied other silly poems he saw in newspapers. And many of his own poems are found in his light-hearted, satirically-oriented newspaper, "The Spectator." And from the fog, mist, and cloud eaters in "Carbuncle" to the "vague reveries" of the "Canterbury Pilgrim" poet, the poses in which one finds his prose poets add to this rather joking attitude Hawthorne frequently took toward contemporary poetry. He could not himself, then, energetically function in a medium he could not fully respect in its modern uses.

But Hawthorne also seemed to sincerely recognize his artistic
limitations in poetry. A study of his own poetry verifies that he could have been a much better poet but probably could never have been a great poet. Julian Hawthorne claims, in this regard, that his father's insensitivity to music contributed to his rejection of poetry as a personal creative medium. Hawthorne, he said, could not distinguish between "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail Columbia." And his own poetry reflects a fundamental inability to adjust form to content that would have been lethal to his success as a poet.

However, by far the most significant motive for leaving poetry for prose lies in the relationship between Hawthorne's literary theory and his interpretation of what 19th century poetry was doing and could do. In short, Hawthorne felt the dominant expressions of contemporary poetry were antithetical to what he believed art should accomplish. To Hawthorne art became an idealization of reality, a reworking of reality to get at the universal, enduring things in man's nature and world. Such a theory demanded a profound moral purpose in the artist. The world required "a deeper moral purpose and homelier truth" than that supplied by Scott (II, 416). As R. K. Gupta suggests in his study on "Hawthorne's Theory of Art": "For Hawthorne idealization was not a form of romantic escapism; it was a grappling with the actualities of life to wrest from them their inner meaning." Or as Charles Foster echoes in his "Hawthorne's Literary Theory": "Hawthorne aimed at an idealization which was not a beautiful escape but was actuality shaped so that it was universal truth." He wished to achieve not a startling effect but a "high and beautiful seriousness." Capturing the truths of men's hearts is the sole and enduring goal of the artist, Hawthorne says in his House of the Seven Gables preface: "The Romance sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truths
of the human heart" (III, 13). To accomplish this elevated and serious idealization of reality the artist must divorce himself from spectacular cleverness, exuberant outpourings of personal expression and confession, and wild attempts to be original. A "large humanity" rather than clever wit is what speaks to the hearts of men, Hawthorne felt, and is the essence of artistic genius. The laurels in "The Great Stone Face" go not to the clever poet but to Ernest, the profound and sincere human being (III, 436). Hawthorne disdained these personal "confidential depths of revelation" in art. And as he writes in his American Notebooks: "An innate perception and reflection of truth give the only sort of originality that does not finally grow intolerable." The artist's goal, then, is to idealize a reality, create a new reality in fact, but one which will help the reader grasp the universals he may miss in the glaring reality of daily life. And soaking up only the artist's personal cleverness, confessions, or originality is not enough. Hawthorne would agree with Melville, who insisted that art "should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie." This idealization, by its very nature, demanded an art form that allowed lengthy discussion and exploration. For example, in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne describes with minute fidelity the town, the society, and the natural surroundings in order to provide a firm footing in reality. But he idealizes that reality with haunting symbolism and ambiguities—letters, supernatural occurrences, hands over hearts, color and nature correlated with emotions and characterization—in order to move from "reality" into the universal. Such an exploration required room to build and space to demonstrate all the intricacies of the symbols, and the correlations of the symbols and the supernatural with outer reality itself. In the Marble Faun, too, lengthy
descriptions of Italian scenery, customs, and especially art and architecture are necessary to show the full educative effect of a culture's accumulated evil and experience upon our innocents Donatello and Hilda. Such an idealization, then, compelled an intricate, flexible, capacious art form.

Against these requirements for a heavy, significant, ultimately moral art, Hawthorne placed his interpretation of 19th century poetry. The human mind and heart, he was apparently certain, could not be examined very well with the lilt and jingle of measured feet. His introspective years in the chamber under the eves seemed to convince him that what he saw as the airiness of Romantic poetry was unsuitable for definitive, artistic statements on the complicated problems of human guilt, pride, and isolation. He needed what he thought was a more stable medium suitable for calm, translucent analysis, "since his was not the rushing thought-torrent of Browning—which analyzes, it is true, but does so by sweeping all the complex elements along in a turbulent flood."32 Looking about, he saw many of the early English Romantics as escapists who would "hie themselves back to the attic chamber" of poetry in order to achieve personal expression. He viewed Shelley's poetry as too concrete an arrangement of brilliant but cold crystallizations, working too much with fancy and wit rather than adequate moral substance (II, 420). Scott gave the reader, he thought, historical weight but no real moral. And Byron was original and confessional with his "fitful and lurid gleams and gushes of black vapor" (II, 447-448) but had not enough real enduring moral qualities in him. Byron is one of those men "who write about themselves and their feelings," serving up "their own heads, as a repast for the public." I am not one of those "supremely hospitable" people, Hawthorne says.33 Later, more experimental poets like Browning and Whitman he thought too difficult to read, and since the reader
always needed, he felt, some "clue" to keep him on the road while the artist presented his idealized reality, these men's forms could not fully meet his expectations. Also, the need for intricate, detailed journeys into both reality and reality's implications precluded Hawthorne's using a contemporary medium that emphasized, as Hawthorne saw it, fairly brief lyrical forms, this emphasis perhaps being reflected in Poe's extreme but suggestive statement that "a long poem does not exist."\(^{34}\)

The form of Hawthorne's art, then, grew inescapably out of the purpose he set for himself, just as the purpose required the rejection of another form Hawthorne interpreted as generally inadequate in its current usage to support the "sobriety of earnest utterance."\(^{35}\) If in actuality it may have been possible to accomplish the same ends with different media, Hawthorne did not believe it was. Perhaps he was naive in rejecting poetry and somewhat unjust in his subsequent assessment of it, but he was accurate and wise in the choice of form he made. Of course, an argument might be advanced: "Had not Hawthorne read and appreciated verse like Spenser's, Johnson's, and Pope's, and could he not work comfortably in their tradition?" The answer seems to be that Hawthorne believed an artist should appeal to his own age in whatever medium he chose. The artist should create, he says, "as if he were speaking for a great party or for the nation at large on the floor of the capital" (II, 469). And he felt the poetry his age was accepting and producing either simply could not support his earnest moral intent and his need for thorough and detailed investigations of behavior or was too obscure and difficult to be useful. Once set upon a definite purpose and type of content, Hawthorne unswervingly chose an almost inevitable form.

Such an examination of Hawthorne's poetic attitudes and of the motives
for his movement from poetry is both discouraging and encouraging. One is always disheartened to see a respected artist take a somewhat narrow view of the artistic possibilities of another medium. This restricted breadth of artistic, "formal" vision or tolerance is a side of Hawthorne the critic should understand and not willingly overlook. At the same time, the study points up one of the weaknesses of "Romantic" labels. Romanticism was a period, one theoretical handbook definition might run, of individualistic expression and of freer experimentation with meaning and form in a more tolerant, democratic, artistic climate. But ironically, though each of these separate characteristics is fundamentally accurate, the attitudes of one artist like Hawthorne, whose works helped define Romanticism, may be in some respects antithetical to those of another artist, like Shelley or Whitman, who also helped define it. Such ambivalences are vitally part of any complex, international movement; one understands them better by discussing them in a limited way as this chapter has done.

On the other hand, the encouraging side of this study is the respect it prompts for Hawthorne because of his accurate self-analysis of his artistic abilities and what his bent of mind could accept in a medium. Here was a man who wisely rejected a form he interpreted, however inaccurately, as incompatible to his end and chose one he could tolerate and develop, rather than simply conforming to a poetic tradition to show he could produce more poetry. Had he attempted to work more in poetry, he may have become only a mediocre poet or a prose-poet combination of far less stature. But he let content determine his form, and few men have been so single-minded in their artistic commitments. If in the process the world unfortunately gained a poet-critic, it at the same time was enriched with a prose-master.
NOTES
Chapter Three

1 Bate, p. 435.


3 With zealous prudishness, Mrs. Hawthorne "edited" her husband's notebooks after his death, striking out passages that she felt were too personal or would be socially objectionable. This passage in the Riverside Edition is, consequently, "edited" and only part of the selection quoted here appears there. Editor Randall Stewart, however, has restored the original in The American Notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 168.

4 Letters to William D. Ticknor 1851-1864 (Newark: The Cartaret Book Club, 1910), I, 102, 103.

5 Quoted in Hawthorne Among His Contemporaries, pp. 495, 496.


7 Warren, p. 491.

8 Letters to William D. Ticknor, I, 63-64.

9 Quoted in Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 496.

10 Warren, p. 480.

11 Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 99.

12 Warren, p. 482.


14 Warren, p. 484.

15 Warren, pp. 482-494. Also see "Books Read By Hawthorne," Essex Institute Historical Collection, 68 (1932), 65-87.
The motives for removing most of the names of Hawthorne's contemporaries in the final edition of 1846 are discussed in Harold Miller, "Hawthorne Surveys His Contemporaries," American Literature, 12 (1940), 228-235.

Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne's Contributions to the Salem Advertiser," American Literature, 5 (1934), 328.

Warren, p. 491.


Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and His Publisher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913), p. 147.


Warren, p. 492.

Warren, p. 492.

Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 103.


Charles Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," PMLA 57 (1942), 244.

Foster, p. 244.

Foster, p. 253.

Gupta, p. 319.

Quoted in Foster, p. 250.

Gupta, p. 314.


Stewart, The American Notebooks, pp. 107, 299.

Bate, p. 352.

Quoted phrase from Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, I, 104.
IV

HAWTHORNE THE PROSE POET

"He was a kind of Wordsworth in prose."
--S. G. Goodrich

"A thick wadding of words interposes between the reader and the object, and those words have in them no freshness or tension; they come from the stockpile of literary language."
--Martin Green

"He had an acute ear for phrasing."
--Arlin Turner

He has an "overfullness of expression" which "borders on the pleonastic."
--Randall Stewart

He had a "wonderful command over the music of the language."
--G. P. Lathrop

His "fancy can all too easily sprawl and run to seed."
--F. O. Matthiessen

Suppose, then, that Hawthorne falls short of being an accomplished verse-maker, that he had, in fact, serious difficulties in adjusting poetic form to poetic content, and that his verse is a rather ineffective blend of Romantic and neo-classic qualities. Suppose, also, that he remained indifferent to the possibilities of great poetry in the first half of the 19th century and that he frequently even mockingly satirized the efforts of other poets of his day, feeling their medium was either too insubstantial for serious moral weight or was too obscure and difficult to be effective. Could not Hawthorne still qualify for the coveted title "poet"? Many of the prominent men of his age seemed to think so.

Indeed, Hawthorne's denial of the meaningfulness of contemporary verse forms did not stop his admirers from spewing out an amazing plethora of platitudinous encomiums on the "poetic" prowess of Hawthorne. Leading
the parade, for example, Oliver Wendell Holmes says in an 1864 *Atlantic* Monthly tribute:

Poet let us call him, though his chants were not modulated in the rhythm of verse. The element of poetry is air. We know the poet by his atmospheric effects, by the blue of his distances, by the softening of every hard outline he touches, by the silvery mist in which he veils the deformity and clothes what is common so that it changes to awe-inspiring mystery by the clouds of gold and purple which are the drapery of his dreams. And surely we have but one prose writer who could be compared with him in any real perspective, if we use the painter's term. If Irving is the Claude of our unrhymed poetry, Hawthorne is the Paussin [sic].

William Dean Howells' contribution is a quote from Henry James: "He was not a moralist, and he was not simply a poet. The moralists are weightier, denser, richer in a sense; the poets are more purely inconclusive and irresponsible. Hawthorne combined in a singular degree the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems." The *Galaxy* critic Eugene Benson joins the march with his "But for Hawthorne's poetic sense, he would have been a droning moralist." Even the critics from across the seas said in the *North British Review* in 1854 that "Nothing in her [America's] poetry is half so poetical." The man who encouraged Hawthorne to publish his first short story collection, S. G. Goodrich, says, "He was a kind of Wordsworth in prose, less kindly, less genial towards mankind, but deeper and more philosophical." Why did Hawthorne—with his essentially poetic mind and "wonderful command over the music of the language which gives his prose its deep harmonies and delicate cadences"—why did he not write more verse? his son-in-law, G. P. Lathrop, asks in a 19th century *New York Times* article. James Russell Lowell calls him New England's poet, "the greatest poet, though he wrote in prose, that America has given to the world." Channing calls him New England's Chaucer. Reading a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard in 1877, anthologizer
E. C. Stedman says in his poem "Hawthorne" that though "No carol Hawthorne sang," "prose like his was poesy's high tone." And Henry Longfellow, reviewing Twice-Told Tales in the North American Review in 1842, claims that Hawthorne "detects the essentially poetical in that which is superficially prosaic. In the alembic of his genius, the subtile essence of poetry is extracted from prose." Now acclaimed as one of America's greatest writers, Herman Melville also acknowledges the "poet" in Hawthorne in his "Hawthorne and His Mosses," published originally in The Literary World in August, 1850. At once both a glowing, energetic, and often sensitive if exaggerated plaudit of Hawthorne and a critique of the American literary situation, the essay admonishes the American nation not to "adore Shakespeare too much nor lavish our embraces on the household of an alien," for "Shakespeare has been approached." Almost mesmerized by the "enchanting landscape in the soul of Hawthorne" while reading Mosses, Melville says rather sweepingly: "Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William." And someone as obscure as Hawthorne's friend R. H. Stoddard summarizes the basic content of the testimonials by asserting, "Lacking the accomplishments of verse, [Hawthorne] was in the highest sense a poet."

So Hawthorne's friends, British and American critics, minor poets, and prominent writers like James, Howells, Lowell, and Longfellow grace Hawthorne with the clear title of "poet." Unfortunately, few of the men amplify or support their tributes of Hawthorne as a poet; the label is almost automatically applied to his name while the labelers seem to feel no pressure or need to clarify their designations. Some make brief or
general efforts to explain. Creating "atmospheric effect," veiling deformity, and clothing the common in the heightened elements of "air" help identify the poet, Longfellow nebulously claims. Or the prose poet is one who combines the spontaneous imagination with moral responsibility, James comments. But such additions are too brief and sketchy to completely account for his contemporaries' insistence that Hawthorne was a "poet."

Further, determining how Hawthorne may be a "poet" after all by studying the statements of his contemporaries becomes even more complicated because some of the effusions above suffer from strong emotional overtones since they were delivered as "appreciations" soon after Hawthorne died. And perhaps some men simply felt obligated to call him a poet because of his demonstrably great contributions, even though he did not write much actual verse. Giving him the benefit of any doubt about how the word "poet" ought to be applied to a man, they may have tactfully admitted his "ultimate" poetic qualities without being very precise or even certain about what they meant by this broad but honorable term. Despite these obstacles to an adequate definition of the term "poet" as applied to Hawthorne, the nearly habitual manner in which reviewers and friends attached the term "poet" to his name suggests some common framework in which the mid 19th century writers and critics thought of the "poet" in a more general and universal sense beyond that of a rhythmic versemaker. Of course, without more specific definitions from the labelers themselves, any attempt to pinpoint the meaning of the term "poet" as applied to Hawthorne must content itself with intelligent conjecture. But an honest and plausible suggested definition can be advanced and can help clarify how the mediocre-versemaker-Hawthorne and the poetry-scorning-Hawthorne could still be "the poet Hawthorne" to the artist's contemporaries.
During the mid 19th century, when Hawthorne was writing his mature prose works, a critical theory that attributed great powers and insight to the imaginative literary creator was gaining wide circulation. Delivering a series of lectures in England in 1840 on Heroes and Hero Worship, Thomas Carlyle maintains in his "The Hero as Poet" that the "Divine" hero and the "Prophet" hero are products of past ages, unlikely to appear or be accepted readily in the present age. What we have instead, he continues, is another hero seen in the "less ambitious, but also less questionable, character of Poet . . . a heroic figure belonging to all ages." Such a Poet is not the product solely of studied craftsmanship in literary language and form. He is more a "free gift of nature" sent to men much as the Prophet is divinely sent and is not one who studies for the prophetic trade. Like the Prophet, the Poet must move beyond sensuous fact and "penetrate into the sacred mastery of the universe." He is above all a "Great Man," having a "great heart" and a "clear, deep-seeing eye." Through "direct insight and belief" he "will read the world and its laws." Looking at external nature, he sees not this or that face of it but its "inmost heart, and generic secret." When he has done this, he will "make the mystery clear to us" through "musical thought," whether it be prose or poetry. For all true poetry is musical and all deep thought is "song," Carlyle says. It becomes "song," he explains, because "a musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing," and has reached essentially the inner harmony, or "music," of the workings of true nature. And it is important to remember that the faculty which produces this musical thought in the true poet is not solely the result of habits or accidents but is the gift of nature herself. Given this "depth of vision," the poet can hardly help but suffer
in a world he understands too well; indeed, he "becomes perfect through suffering." And the character of the true poet is one of "intensity of genius," too, something Carlyle particularly admires in Dante and Shakespeare. The distinguishing mark of the contemporary poet, then, is not artificial craftsmanship or facility with language or form nor a decision to work in rhythmic verse. "The Poet" is a deep-seer, one who recognizes in external reality the inner reality that informs and works through observable fact and who expresses that recognition in "musical thought." As Carlyle himself so nobly and seriously concludes: "Yes, truly, it is a great thing for a nation that it get an articulate voice; that it produce a man who will speak forth melodiously what the heart of it means."

On the American side, Emerson outlines a basically similar philosophy of the true poet in his 1844 essay, "The Poet." The importance Emerson attaches to the role of the poet finds no more exalted expression than Emerson's firm belief that "All that we call sacred history attests that the birth of a Poet is the principal event in chronology." Out of the "three children of the universe"--the Knower or lover of truth, the Doer or lover of good, and the Sayer or lover of beauty--the poet or Sayer incorporates the other two and provides a fulcrum and center from which they can work, for the poet does not content himself solely with the good or evil of external behavior as the Doer, or with a knowledge of science or external fact as the Knower. The poet never stops investigating what lies behind the fact and the external act. "The highest minds of the world have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or shall I say, the quadruple or centuple or much more manifold meaning of every sensuous fact." In this respect, Emerson admits, all men are poets to some extent, though they know it not, for all men use "emblems," like flags or
political symbols, or certain clothes, etc., to symbolize a deeper meaning more important to them than the emblem itself. But most of us need an interpreter, he says, to see into more practical reality. "The great majority of men seem to be minors who have not yet come into possession of their own, or mutes, who cannot report the conversation they have had with nature." The Poet enters here. He is the person "without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, transverses the whole scale of experience and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart." All sensuous fact, all objects, all contradictions, assume an inner harmony and meaning in the poet's work. The poet looks at external objects and by an "ulterior intellectual perception" gives them a "power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes, and a tongue into every dumb and inanimate object." Through the poet's handling, in every object, "being used as a type, a second wonderful value appears" which is "far better that its old value, as the carpenter's stretched cord, if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the breeze," becoming more than a mechanical object. The poet "reattaches things to nature and the whole--reattaching even artificial things and violations of nature to nature by a deep insight." Speaking of poets in Representative Men, Emerson reinforces this seeing-into quality of "The Poet." Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, and Chaucer saw the "splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world, knew that a tree had another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth than for tillage and roads; that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute commentary on life." And like Carlyle, Emerson makes certain that the reader does not identify the
true poet mainly by a technical dexterity or a pre-assumed form. A poet is not solely or necessarily a man of "industry or skill in meter," for it is not meters but a meter-making argument that makes a poem." The true poet does not stop at the color or form but "reads their meaning." Because of this insight into the inner workings of seemingly disjointed or solely practical external fact, poets become in essence "liberating gods." In another figure, Goethe echoes these rather similar theories of Carlyle and Emerson when he views the poets as watches with dial plates of transparent crystal. Like other watches they show you the time, the external reality. But they also reveal the inward mechanism that controls the external appearance. This deep-seeing quality, this imaginative reworking of "fact" to make it reveal inner meaning, this emblematic use of external reality to portray the true "mechanism" of nature, this grandiose function of the Poet, whether he write in prose or verse, that Emerson, Carlyle, and Goethe advocate, find their most masterful and pithy summary in Emerson's quip: "The poet turns the world to glass."

Closer examination, of course, would reveal subtle differences between the philosophies of Emerson and Carlyle. But the common denominators, however, are fundamental, and it is difficult to avoid seeing the limited definition outlined above in the critics' views of Hawthorne as a "poet." Hawthorne's whole life and prose canon obligingly conform to the basic points in the exalted, mid 19th century, basic definition of "The Poet." Hawthorne's thorough dedication to his writing and his deliberate self-exclusion from a trade for over twelve years while he churned over his literary ideas must have conformed well in the critics' eyes to the grand "suffering" image of the poet. Here was a partially mysterious man to whom writing was immensely more than a sidelight.
Given the basic natural gift of seeing reality in deeper terms than his fellow men, the poet Hawthorne "suffered" through a long, demanding apprenticeship in which this gift had somehow to be reconciled with the reality of other men. Here indeed was a quality of the Poet hero. The intensity, too, of Hawthorne's prose qualifies him for another of the age's characteristics of "The Poet." This "intensity of genius" crops up in the sustained atmospheres of gloom that pervade books like *The Scarlet Letter* and, to a lesser extent, *The House of the Seven Gables*. Nearly all of Hawthorne's great prose pieces are characterized, in fact, by this enduring moral weight, these serious purposes informing his prose. "I would speak to the nation," Hawthorne says in effect in his works, as noted in the previous chapter, and "I will give it deeper moral earnestness than Scott does." Such prevailing seriousness and intensity surely could not have gone unnoticed in the critics' free use of the term "poet" with Hawthorne's name.

But even more significant in tracing the motives behind the use of the term is Hawthorne's habit of mind in viewing reality and in using it in his prose works. Biographers note that he would follow the creeping process of the shadows and the dusty beams of sunlight as they inched across his attic chamber floor in Salem during the day, and he would try to understand what such a seemingly simple physical occurrence might mean in moral or allegorical terms. Throughout his life, Hawthorne was fascinated by the correlation of physical reality with inward states of mind or abstract principles. He packed his notebooks with curious observations about odd dogs, ugly monkeys, dark rivers, organ grinders, wierd hens, and so on, only to bring them to life as outward manifestations of an inner abstract reality. Even the simplest physical objects become grand
examples of profound moral processes. A dog chasing his tail in "Brand" becomes not only Brand in his ridiculous circular quest for the unpar-donable sin but every attempt to find meaning without searching into the heart first and changing it. The shriveled Pyncheon hens nervously pecking in the yard of the gabled house say little as external objects but correlate deeply with the deteriorating effects of aristocratic seclusion. The house, so momentous in itself, means little to Hawthorne, though, besides its ability to portray the cumulative effect of past sin and the burdening character of the past. Such correlations of physical with abstract or inner, moral meaning make the building one of the dominant figures on the American literature landscape. Having taken part in recovering a drowned body from a murky river, Hawthorne ponders how such a physical event could correlate with a spiritual, a deeper reality. He makes his decision as he has Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance destroy herself below the black mask of the river, the opaque river itself acting as a physical manifestation of the human isolation that ironically pervades the Blithedale scheme to make men brothers. Nearly every physical fact in Blithedale somehow correlates and suggests this spiritual loneliness and isolation of men who seek outward reform before softening the rich juices of the heart. The blinding snowstorm that accompanies the arrival of the main characters, the black eye-patch on Old Moodie, the pseudonym of Zenobia, the gold "humbug" tooth of Westervelt, the green, womb-like hermitage of Coverdale all impel the discussion out of physical reality and into spiritual isolation, out of the "fact" and into the moral "ideal." Even the minute tracing of architecture and Italian scenery in Marble Faun becomes significant only as it grows into an abstract "world of experience" for Donatello and Hilda to confront and to learn from. The
entire "formal" structure of some of the prose works imply this correlation of outer with inner reality. The circular journeys conducted by Brown, Roger Malvin, Robin, and Brand, become simply logical narrative forms for the pathetically circular and fruitless movements of men who cannot reconcile experience with innocence or who refuse to recognize that the deepest reality lies in the heart and not in some artificial journey that must always bring the traveler back to his starting point. In every case, Hawthorne searches for the physical fact, the overt action, that best draws the reader into the spiritual reality, whether that be a noxious flower on Rappaccini's daughter, a rosy birthmark on Georgiana, the mechanical butterfly of Owen Warland, or something as sweeping as an embroidered Scarlet A, perhaps the most overwhelming physical manifestation of a whole complex set of spiritual meanings— guilt, Puritan oppression, consequences of "sin," et. al.—ever devised in American literature.

None of this is to say that Hawthorne is dominantly "allegorical." The complex behavior of the characters in Hawthorne's prose has important meaning in human, psychological ways, and the symbolic references and correlations are more richly suggestive than the cold equations of strict allegory. Indeed, the physical descriptions frequently lead to a view of the complexity and multiplicity of the inner meaning Hawthorne intends. In "The Birthmark," for example, Alymer insanely seeks to remove what he sees as a hideous defect, while Aminadab thinks the handshaped mark a sign of beauty. But the process of Hawthorne's thought "flowed," as Emerson might say, from the physical manifestation to the underlying moral suggestions. As Turner says, "He saw meanings in the objects about him and in everyday affairs, and entries in his notebooks suggest that
externals held an interest for him primarily for the correspondences they might have with ideas and meanings which interested him.\textsuperscript{22} And as Hawthorne says autobiographically of one character in an obscure story, "The Antique Ring": "He could never separate the idea from the symbol in which it manifests itself."

It is this inner movement in his prose, then, that most fully accommodates Hawthorne in the "Hero as Poet" scheme, this deep-seeing perception that manipulates fact by using concrete, imaginative language so that "the inner heart of things" becomes the truly "real" part of experience. It is the transparent-watch-Hawthorne that is the poet Hawthorne, the Hawthorne who turns his chosen world to clear glass. In this way he meets Carlyle's, Emerson's, and Goethe's conditions for the glorified "poet," and his contemporaries become especially accurate in labeling him prose "poet" in this respect. However, beyond the obvious need for a highly select, imaginative choice of concrete data to insure this out-to-in transfer, such a definition of "the poet," admittedly limited, says little about the language and form that the poet uses. In view of subsequent comments in this chapter, it is vitally important to remember that Hawthorne's placement as a "poet" is primarily a philosophical one, rather than one that stresses structure, form, or language.

In the most significant philosophical sense, then, Hawthorne deserves the title "Poet." But a problem arises when the critic assumes that the philosophical qualifications imply a certain set of language, rhythm, and structure qualities as well. Saying Hawthorne is a true 19th century "prose poet" does not insure that he also exhibits all the best characteristics of 19th century Romantic poetry as verse. The critics have sometimes indiscriminately combined the two without adequate distinctions.
S. G. Goodrich, Hawthorne's publisher, calls Hawthorne a "kind of Wordsworth in prose." To the man who produced one of the finest scholarly editions of Hawthorne's works, G. P. Lathrop, he had a "wonderful command over the language which gives his prose its deep harmonies and delicate cadences." And the incisive critic Arlin Turner is sure Hawthorne "had an acute ear for phrasing and in infallible sense of correctness in adapting language to thought." But the commentators do not explain their claims as a rule, leaving the reader with a hazy feeling that Hawthorne's prose somehow comprises the best in 19th century philosophy and language in a verse-poetry sense. Perhaps a thorough study of Hawthorne's language would justify these statements. All things considered, these critics may be correct in their own ways. In the interest of balance and perspective, however, some specific limitations to these sweeping attributions ought to be suggested.

By the time Hawthorne was writing his mature prose the Romantic poetry of England and America had basically freed itself from the stylized, decorous vocabulary of the Augustans and had attempted to employ Wordsworth's dictum that poetry ought to employ "a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." The simpler, rustic approach was favored over a prescribed diction or artificial correctness. Burns found immense value in the language of simple folk and Whittier dedicated himself to the "near, the low, the common" and a simple poetry of humble life and common pleasure or simple religion. Wordsworth tried, as best he could, to follow his preference for a simple, natural language and sentence pattern that approached the speech of men in such poems as "Michael." Lowell, too, illustrates this language interest in his colloquial poems like "Courtin'" or the Biglow Papers. And this increasing interest in "organic" verse and
conversational patterns found its mid 19th century American ultimate in
the poems of Whitman, who was not contented even with the traditional
retention of rhyme and felt that a "free verse" form could most aptly
capture the flowing rhythms of "a man speaking to men." This greater
simplicity of language, then, along with a renunciation of artificial
diction, and a greater concern with organic speech patterns was common
in Hawthorne's maturity. Or to quote Norman Foerster once again, by the
time of Emerson and Longfellow, a "blood-warm" manner of writing was
prevalent, "closer to the currents of real life, its language more con­
der, its verse . . . diversified to serve many ends." 26

Hawthorne, however, displays a frequent penchant to prefer the stilted
and formal over the simple and natural, the wordy sentence over the concise,
and the involved and complex structure over an equally adequate simpler
one. At Bowdoin College Hawthorne had mastered Samuel Newman's rigidly
Augustan The Practical System of Rhetoric, and the book's prescriptions
left an indelible mark on Hawthorne's prose, as F. O. Matthiessen notes
in his American Renaissance. 27 Newman had advocated "purity and propriety"
as the essential qualities both in choice of words and construction of
sentences. "Refinement," "delicacy," and "correctness" were cardinal
requirements in writing, and "these qualities," Matthiessen remarks,
"belonged to Hawthorne in the first pages he printed as well as his last." A study of Hawthorne's notebooks reveals how an initially simple, unstylized
sentence structure and vocabulary becomes "polished" up when the transfer
from the notes to the finished prose is made. That Hawthorne was capable
of a freshly simple and concrete style without an artificial diction or
formalized style is evident in such notebook entries as this amusing
account of a country dentist:


The patient seats himself in a chair on the stump, with great heroism. The doctor produces a rusty pair of iron forceps; a man holds the patient's head; the doctor perceives, that it being a difficult tooth, wedged between the two largest in the head, he shall pull very moderate. And the forceps are introduced. A turn of the doctor's hand; the patient begins to utter a cry, but the tooth comes out first, all bloody with four prongs. The patient gets up, half amazed, spits out a mouthful of blood, pays the doctor ninepence, pockets the tooth; and the spectators are in glee and admiration. 28

The passage proceeds smoothly and concretely, employing a simple, precise vocabulary and a direct, non-circuitous sentence structure. No attempt is made to soften the boldness of the language or the tone of the humor with an involved sentence structure or pompous vocabulary. But notebook passages like this seldom appear in the finished prose. What happens when Hawthorne translates the often simple and natural notebook descriptions to the finished product is well summarized by Notebooks editor Randall Stewart. His comparative study of the journals shows Hawthorne's preferences for a stilted word of Latin derivation over a simpler, equally adequate word, based on the standards of his age. An "old dog" in the notes becomes a "venerable quadruped" in the story, small becomes diminutive, soul--spiritual element, deep--profound, good--beneficient, loud--obstreperous, toper--inebriate. One does not cry but sheds tears; it is not a belly but a rotundity; not trash but all other productions of a like fugitive nature, effect of green--aspect of verdure, flood--watery waste, leaves--green attire. 29 In this way, Hawthorne frequently attempts to move away from the colloquial or simple into the formal, the "literary" or the euphemistic.

From the time he wrote Fanshawe, which does not present mature Hawthorne thought but does present mature Hawthorne language, this preference for the formal or stilted encourages a "tendency to verbosity" rather than
compression and economy:

This institution, though the number of its years is inconsiderable compared with the hoar antiquity of its European sisters, is not without some claims to reverence on the score of age; for an almost countless multitude of rivals, by many of which its reputation has been eclipsed, have sprung up since its foundation. At no time, indeed, during an existence of nearly a century, had it acquired a very extensive fame; and circumstances, which need not be particularized, have, of late years, involved it in a deeper obscurity. There are now few candidates for the degrees that the college is authorized to bestow (XI, 73).

An unnecessarily complicated and wordy style "elevates" the importance of an insignificant statement. Hawthorne is simply trying to say that the 100-year-old college deserves reverence, although other colleges are older or have better reputations, and that because of obscure circumstances few degrees are now given. But the formal appeal of "hoar antiquity," "reverence on the score of age," and "authorized to bestow" must have proved too strong for the young writer, prodding him into a too-lengthy and needlessly stilted account.

And up through the time of the great romances this penchant to choose the wordy and stilted over the concise and simple prevails, as in these not atypical selections from The House of the Seven Gables:

In short, to bring the matter at once to a point, it was incontrovertibly evident that somebody had taken the shop and fixtures of the long retired and forgotten Mr. Pyncheon, and was about to renew the enterprise of that departed worthy, with a different set of customers (III, 53).

And, therefore, since we have been unfortunate enough to introduce our heroine at so inauspicious a juncture, we would entreat for a mood of due solemnity in the spectators of her fate (III, 55).

Someone was obviously about to reopen old Mr. Pyncheon's cent shop, the first passage means simply, though it consumes fifty words in the process. Such expansion does not aid the atmosphere; perhaps it would be justified
if it did. And it does not elevate the mood of expectation Hawthorne is here trying to achieve as Hepzibah begins her "mercantile pursuits," as Hawthorne might say. Likewise, the officiousness of the vocabulary in the second passage unnecessarily formalizes a simple, "low-keyed" idea. "Inauspicious," "due solemnity," and "spectators of her fate" could be effective labels if a more witty, satirical tone were needed, but Hawthorne is serious and literal here, not wishing to say or imply more than he puts in his sentence. This same inclination towards verbosity appears frequently in the change from journal entry to finished prose, as in this concise notebook sentence: "There is a pervading blessing diffused all over the world." The same idea in the mature Mosses collection becomes: "A blessing is flung abroad and scattered far and wide over the earth to be gathered up by all who choose." The more "poetic" mind would immediately search for the concrete illustration of the diffused blessing, rather than simply extending the same point in twice as many words without appreciably modifying the original meaning. The extra wordiness, too, encourages the reader to place an elevated importance on the subordinate ideas contained in these samples. Such low-keyed, routine sentences seen in the House and Notebooks quotes in this paragraph could be more effectively expressed in a simpler, direct language, if one is to see his prose as exhibiting these qualities of Romantic poetry.

Further, Hawthorne's tendency to stylize, to pad, and to "elevate" words into formality leads to frequent uses of complicated sentence structures in which the complexity does not organically grow out of the subject matter. While the short stories are generally constructed in much tighter designs and more precisely suggestive language than the romances, overly-involved sentence patterns like this one are frequent:
It was a circumstance, though minute, yet characteristic of his present state, that, when employed to engrave names or initials on silver spoons, he now wrote the requisite letters in the plainest possible style, omitting a variety of fanciful flourishes that had heretofore distinguished his work in this kind (II, 513).

The sentence becomes a series of parenthetical comments, introductory clauses, and participle phrases, burying the kernel thought somewhere in between. The complication loses the natural rhythms of a more conversational tone, a popular ideal, if not a constant manifestation of Romantic poetry. The many "addendums" to the main thought produce diffuseness rather than poetic directness and compactness. And after all, all he wishes to say is that Owen Warland is now engraving letters on spoons with a plain rather than a fanciful style. "A sentence should read as if its author, had he held a plow instead of a pen, could have drawn a furrow straight and deep to the end," Thoreau says, reflecting a Romantic interest in the more natural structure. Hawthorne's sentences frequently make little wiggles with an occasional run into the briars.

Some of this formality and artificiality of construction and vocabulary grew, perhaps, out of Hawthorne's manner of thinking about an idea. Hawthorne's normal method of developing an idea, Arlin Turner says, was by "accretion, by accumulating manifestations, frequently in the manner of a catalog." It would be easy, then, to lose sight of the initial purpose of using the symbols to suggest inner reality and let the weight of the symbols get away from the writer. In the Marble Faun, for example, this tendency appears in the excess weight of profuse detail in unnecessarily complicated descriptions of paintings, statues, buildings, court-yards, and scenery. Some controlled detail is essential to capture the weight of experience and evil accumulated in the culture of Rome, in its
landmarks, art, and architecture. But as Donatello and Kenyon are traveling from the Monte Beni retreat to another significant encounter with experience in Perugia, Hawthorne cannot resist describing the goats, the old women tending sheep, the long grass by the road, the pigeons, the pumpkins, the rustic houses. This added weight does not contribute to the necessary atmosphere of men confronting evil and experience and accepting the consequences of that confrontation. If Hawthorne had observed an object, a scene, a particular person on his journeys in Italy, he seemingly could not resist telling his readers about what he had seen, though it contributed little but words to his prose in this case.

Not only a presumptuous graduate student has taken such cautionary attitudes toward one aspect of the "poetic" qualities of Hawthorne's prose. One of Hawthorne's friends says: "He was seldom epigrammatic as the other Concord men of letters were apt to be, and as Emerson and Thoreau so eminently were. In copying from his journals into his books, he wrote in rather than struck out. Consequently, his fault, when he has faults, is to be diffuse rather than concise."32 F. O. Matthiessen admits that Hawthorne's "fancy can all too easily sprawl and run to seed."33 Randall Stewart reacts with a restrained understatement in suggesting the "un-poetic" qualities of Hawthorne's prose. Stewart feels that Hawthorne's penchant for elaboration of the material which he drew from his journals often results in an "overfullness of expression" which "borders on the pleonastic."34 Comparing Hawthorne with his contemporary Poe, critic George Latimer feels that "the prose of Poe passes easily over into verse. . . . His works take on another color from any use we find in the writings of Hawthorne, who was ever a prose writer; an exquisite, beautiful, and artistic use of words he had indeed, but yet separated by the vocabulary
as well as form from all claim to the rhythmic line." An English critic, Martin Green, not affected with either false patriotism or the British understatement, delivers a resounding but undoubtedly too-bitter castigation of Hawthorne's language. "A thick wadding of words interposes between the reader and the object," he says, "and those words have in them no freshness or tension; they come from the stockpile of literary language." Auburn University's John Nist observes in his Structural History of English that "Hawthorne alone had the potential of artistic heights but he choked reality with coils of indirection: emblem, symbol, moral, analogy, type, image." Though these men seldom explain their criticisms very well, they all rest in a common recognition of Hawthorne's inclination for the profuse, the formal, and the involved, over the direct and the concise, the natural and the simple. Even Hawthorne himself occasionally recognized this leaning. After giving a wordy description of the Monitor in "Chiefly About War Matters," he writes: "The singularity of the object has betrayed me into a more ambitious vein of description than I often indulge; and after all, I might have well contented myself with simply saying that she looked very queer" (XII, 337).

Contrary to all classical stipulations to place supporting arguments in an order of ascending interest and never to put the opposition last, a point of concession must be produced. Only a horribly imbalanced view of these "poetic" limitations would claim that Hawthorne never exhibits the qualities he is here accused of slighting. Take, for example, Hawthorne's description of the Maypole at Merry Mount:

It has made their true history a poet's tale. Spring decked the hallowed emblem with young blossoms and fresh green boughs; Summer brought roses of the deepest blush, and perfected foliage of the forest; Autumn enriched it with that red and yellow gorgeousness which converts each
wildwood leaf into a painted flower; and Winter silvered it with sleet, and hung it round with icicles, till it flashed in the cold sunshine, itself a frozen sunbeam (I, 76-77).

Concrete imagery, strong verbal power, simplicity of structure, rhythmic development, and natural and effective diction make the passage closely akin to a free verse lyric. The very fact that such an informal and concretely powerful paragraph comes from Hawthorne makes one question why he wrote like this so seldom. The surprise elicited by finding such passages reinforces the claim that they are infrequent indeed.

So, despite exceptions, Hawthorne has a tendency to substitute formal terms for equally effective colloquial or simple terms, unlike the Romantic trend to write words that would simulate "men speaking to other men" as authors like Wordsworth, Whittier, Lowell, Burns, and Whitman try to do. And his formality leads to a frequent wordiness and diffusion unlike the compactness of much of Romantic lyric poetry. And all this encourages a complicated sentence structure, well-modulated and grammatically sharp, but overly-complex, unlike the more popular speech sentence patterns in poets like Whitman. At this point, someone may say that the issues have not been settled here. An analysis of a half dozen quotes, a study of the notebook translations, and the opinions of a group of critics do not substantiate a generality that Hawthorne is "unpoetic" in his prose, one might argue. A monumental "inductive leap" has been taken. But the study nowhere claims to have proved that Hawthorne is "unpoetic." It only suggests that Hawthorne has a tendency to do certain things that, according to his age, would limit the poetic appeal of his prose. It points up some specific limitations. It goes no farther. But another may arise and claim that discussing stilted vocabularies and formal, involved sentence structures covers only one limited corner of the "poetic"
qualities of prose. No one would question that. Other elements of Hawthorne's prose, like the multiple ambiguity in his images, would perhaps be considered poetic in any age and by nearly all standards. But only an extensive, well-defined, and precise study of Hawthorne's language, not yet undertaken, could fully appraise the final poetic quality of his prose, a study beyond the time and scope of this thesis. Surely, just the task of settling on an accurate, complete definition of poetry to apply to Hawthorne would almost be an act of supererogation. Also, in no way do the limitations suggested about the "poetic" quality of the prose invalidate the claim that Hawthorne is, in the end, a master of form and content.

The issues raised about the poetic nature of the prose remain simply specific, suggested limitations, glimpses into tendencies Hawthorne had, not bald assertions about an "unpoetic" Hawthorne. No attempt is made to "prove" or settle, but simply to suggest in a limited, responsible way tentative conclusions about areas of Hawthorne's work that other critics have seldom taken the time to explore, conclusions that ought to be considered in any more ambitious investigation of the poetic Hawthorne.
NOTES

Chapter Four


3 Eugene Benson, "Poe and Hawthorne," The Galaxy, 6 (December 1868), 743.

4 Quoted in Hawthorne Among His Contemporaries, p. 57.

5 Hawthorne Among His Contemporaries, p. 57.


7 Poems, p. v.

8 F. B. Sanborn, Hawthorne and His Friends (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1908), p. 84.

9 Poems, p. v.


12 Poems, p. v.


14 Foerster, pp. 501-511. Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent Emerson selections are from this edition.

The basic foundation for such a view was formed in the Greek concept of the ποιήτης or "maker" and the Roman vates, or priest-prophet; the Renaissance restated these basic premises in such men as Sidney. The Emerson-Carlyle concept, then, was certainly not new, although these men revised the concept to place more emphasis on the imagination and on the subjective personality of the artist. But in many basic respects, Hawthorne would also conform, thus, to Sidney's or Aristotle's grand view of "The Poet," too. No claim is made here that this 19th century view was entirely unique. The primary concern, though, is to see how Hawthorne conformed to his contemporaries' expressed views of the poet.

For a more detailed study of the use of concrete images to suggest the abstraction of isolation, see David Evans, "The Veiled Fraternity: A Study of Isolation in Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance," an Unpublished Essay, Loma Linda University, Riverside, CA, December, 1970.

Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 121.

Hawthorne Among His Contemporaries, p. 57.


Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 140.

Foerster, p. 383.


Matthiessen, p. 242.


Foerster, p. 384.

Turner, p. 122.
32 Sanborn, pp. 82-83.

33 Matthiessen, p. 214.

34 Stewart, The American Notebooks, pp. xxxviii, xli.


V

CONCLUSION

Summary

Despite the relative unimportance of Hawthorne's poetry and poetic attitudes compared to the importance of the prose, the meager body of verse preserved serves a useful literary historical role, provides glimpses into the creative theories of the man, illuminates frequently neglected personality facets of Hawthorne, and helps explain part of the form-content development of the writer.

As a poet, Hawthorne is generally disappointingly superficial, the content of the verses ranging from childish simplicity to serious and promising mediocrity. As such the poetry is naturally unrepresentative of and strangely unlike the artist's prose maturity.

Hawthorne's verse displays a sympathetic if immature response to some of the important qualities often associated with Romantic poetry. Many of the poems have a haunting "atmospheric" tone, reflecting the growing tribute paid to the individual imagination and to the value of a subjective interpretation of reality. They show, too, a sentimental interest in nature and its therapeutic qualities. Other poems exalt the wild, unregulated aspects of nature rather than the orderly balance and control more appropriate in neo-classical thinking. Hawthorne's merging of the imaginatively haunting and atmospheric with a "didactic" role is much in keeping with a common American Romantic concern, although he is unlike many English Romantics like Byron in this sense, with their emphasis on the personal, confessional possibilities of poetry, an emphasis that easily obscured the
didactic or objective moral value of the poems. Further, Hawthorne contributes his share of the Gothic elements of horror, death, and the unusual in his poetry, much as numerous other Romantics do. But the potential effect of these Romantic qualities is dampened by an inability to effectively couple form and content. Hawthorne's verse rigidly depends on a very limited range of forms, stanza patterns and rhyme schemes, most frequently employing the couplet and the simple abab quatrains to express all types of content. To even the "wildest," freest subject matter, thus, Hawthorne arbitrarily assigns the couplet form, losing in the process much of the potential value of the mood and imaginative content of the poetry. Only in a poem like "The Star of Calvary," using an experimental verse form and a skillful blending of various poetic techniques, does Hawthorne achieve an effective and convincing "organic" form-content coupling. Further, despite the age's increasing concern with common language and conversational speech patterns in poetry, Hawthorne uses traditional poetic devices like foreshortening of words, a formalized and stilted vocabulary, and a personification of abstractions. A final assessment of the placement of the poet Hawthorne in any Romantic scheme, however difficult and ultimately insignificant such a pegging is, might be that he is an "atmospheric formalist," strongly influenced by the emotional, imaginative, subjective possibilities of poetry but feeling, nevertheless, that this content could be molded into set, pre-established forms.

The inorganic forms, stilted vocabulary, and other ineffective, stock poetic devices mentioned above contribute to the generally poor quality of the poetry, as do frequent incomplete or inappropriate rhymes. But contradictions in thought also appear occasionally within the poems, suggesting a hasty composition. And unlike the more suggestive, or at least smoother,
joining of the didactic elements of poetry with the "atmospheric" or the imaginative found in the best verse of Hawthorne's contemporaries, Hawthorne's verse takes the church pew lesson approach, preaching to the reader directly, changing the tone frequently from the suggestively emotional in the body of the poetry to the directly and explicitly didactic at the end. Taken together, these defects in the verse prompt a general disappointment with Hawthorne's poetry and contribute to its most inclusive weakness: it is superficial and simplistic, lacking mature subtlety, irony, ambiguity, multi-level interpretation, and suggestiveness.

The poems have some praiseworthy assets, of course. The simple wit, advanced vocabulary, and language dexterity revealed in some of the early poems demonstrate Hawthorne's early skill with the language. Natural details that create a haunting mood are also strikingly painted in some verses. And occasionally a satirical limerick or a devotional poem like "The Star of Calvary" manages to organically link the right content with the right form, producing a verse that may be mediocre in meaning but that shows real potential in its facility with the language.

Despite its disappointing immaturity, however, the verse highlights facets of Hawthorne's personality that are easily neglected. Often seen as a dark recluse by critics and students, Hawthorne is present in the poetry as an individual who knew and could respond freely to his environment, as a man who could parody love poems and jokingly satirize transcendentalism, as a man who could partake of an occasional youthful indiscretion. He is a poet aware of his surroundings. And the poet is, above all, a more confident, optimistic writer here that he frequently is in the prose. The poems display a thorough certainty and confidence in life's meaning, including an unflinchingly orthodox view of Christianity,
especially interesting because he was writing short stories at the same time that exhibited a vast amount of ambiguity toward his Puritan ancestors.

But perhaps what is most significant about this simple poetry, beyond its biographical possibilities, is its thematic relationship with the mature prose. Certain pervasive themes and ideas developed with consummate artistry in the prose found early and incomplete expression in the verse. Hawthorne's early sentimental interest in moonlight and its haunting suggestiveness matured into his use of moonlight as the symbolic expression of his theory of the romance, the "tender glow" of the moon aptly illustrating to Hawthorne, as he tells us in his Prefaces, the illusive fusion of the "actual" and the "imaginary." The circular and disillusioning journeys that men like Young Goodman Brown, Ethan Brand, and Robin take in the prose are conducted first by men in the poetry. And Hawthorne's disgust with destructive, misdirected efforts to gain personal ends by manipulating others is foreshadowed in the poetry. A related theme, the foolishness of external or artificial reform before men's spiritual natures are changed, often appears in the poetry. Also, the poetry sometimes ironically juxtaposes life with death, suggesting Hawthorne's more mature preoccupation in the prose with this complex interaction of good and evil, life and death, and the necessity of men to come to grips with evil and with a complicated world where appearance and reality are often inconsistent, where good and evil appear together in a confusing blend.

Whatever Hawthorne's superficial verse may say to us about another realm of his creative life, about his personality, or about his consistent thematic concerns, Hawthorne's own failure to produce good poetry did not imbue him with respect for those who could. Throughout his adult life, he looked at contemporary poetry disparagingly. He never recognized the
contemporary poetic medium as a potent and significant creative force. He lightly satirized poets in his prose works as foolish people living insubstantial lives, performing deeds of little significance, acting irrationally to achieve useless ends, or just generally being out of touch with reality. He denied that he enjoyed contemporary poetry and freely criticized contemporary poets like Whittier, Channing, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Patmore, and others. And more experimental poets like Browning he dismissed as "devilish queer measure" writers, too obscure to be significant for an audience. Only a few old masters like Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton and a very select number of traditional contemporaries like Longfellow, Hawthorne's close friend, escape his cutting blows.

This failure to see contemporary poetry as an important creative medium was not rooted in a naive ignorance of the age, its movements, or its writers. From his early comprehensive reading of books like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* to his wide and frequent use of the library at Bowdoin College to his catholic borrowings at the Athanaeum Society in Salem, Hawthorne reflects a thorough awareness of the growth of poetry and a knowledgeable acquaintance with modern English and American Romantic poets and with more experimental poets like Browning. His rejection of poetry, thus, rests not in an ignorance of what poetry was trying to do.

Nor did it rest in a jealous and spiteful envy of what other more poetically creative men were doing. His deliberate rejection of poetry grew out of more complex motives, and studying these motives provides an interesting insight into one part of the artist's form-content development. The lack of polish and the shallowness of his poetry demonstrates that Hawthorne probably had only a half-serious attitude while writing his
own verse. Perhaps he quickly recognized that his poetic potential was limited and that, however hard he worked, poetic glory would elude him. Indeed, his son says that he had a "musical insensitivity" that crippled his poetic ability. But his best poetry reveals a glimmer of Romantic promise that could have been strengthened. And the above explanation of his rejection of poetry would not account for Hawthorne's consistently dim view of the value of modern poetry. A more likely explanation is that Hawthorne felt the nature and content of contemporary poetry was antithetical to his view of what great literature should accomplish. Hawthorne's literary theory proposed that art is an idealization of reality, a reworking of reality so that the universal, enduring things in man's external world and his own nature become clear. External reality itself only suggested the deeper moral meanings hidden behind the raw data. The artist, then, created a second reality in some ways better than the immediate reality of sense experience. Creating such an idealization of reality demanded a profound moral purpose in the artist. But it also demanded, Hawthorne thought, an art form that could support detailed and intricate explorations into men's characters and their world. A capacious, flexible form was needed, a form that could completely trace the symbolic relationship of outer with inner reality. In Hawthorne's eyes, contemporary Romantic poetry failed to meet these requirements. The depths of the mind and heart could not be probed with the "lilt and jingle" of measured feet. The "airiness" of Romantic poetry made it too insubstantial for moral weight, he thought, and the popular, brief lyric poem was simply too circumscribed to provide a roomy medium with which to explore men and a complicated reality. And Hawthorne thought men like Browning, with their obscure measures, lacked the clarity to speak to the present nations of
men. Contemporary poetry was thus either too fanciful, too airy, too "escapist," and too restricted in form to bear the earnest moral weight Hawthorne intended for art, or it was too difficult to understand and served no popular purpose because of it. With this literary theory and his view of modern poetry, whatever the limitations of such a view may be, Hawthorne moved almost inevitably into a prose form that he thought was suited for his content, while at the same time he rejected a form he interpreted as generally inadequate to support the "sobriety of earnest utterance." Assuming this explanation, Hawthorne's bantering satires of poets in his prose works and his own critical remarks about poetry become clearer. One is discouraged, however, to see a great artist so limited in his attitudes toward the possibilities of one form of literature. But one is encouraged to see the wisdom Hawthorne had in allowing his strong moral intentions and specific literary theory to determine a form he could successfully use.

However harshly he may have denounced poets, and despite his meager verse output, contemporary poets celebrated Hawthorne as a "Prose Poet," nevertheless, as did major novelists, critics, friends, and publishers. Their claims that Hawthorne the prose writer deserved the title poet rested, of course, on a philosophical definition rather than one based on a certain use of language or form. A critical theory giving great powers and insight to a literary artist circulated during Hawthorne's adulthood. "The Poet," described by men like Carlyle, Emerson, and Goethe, was an imaginative man with a "clear deep-seeing eye," one who could look at the external fact of nature and read its "inmost heart and generic secret," one who saw beyond mere objects and even apparent contradictions in outer reality and read the inner harmony of things. He "liberated" men from mere sense experience and
made the world as clear "glass." Hawthorne's art seemed to fit well into such an exalted view. His habit of using external objects, "emblems," etc., to suggest abstract meaning conformed to the seeing-into view of "The Poet." Hawthorne's fascination with the correlation of physical reality with inward states of mind or moral principles clearly filled his prose with the philosophical qualities his contemporaries saw as the real essence of "The Poet," even though he wrote prose.

A difficulty arises, however, when the philosophical definition becomes equated or confused with the language or "formal" definition of the poet as a rhythmic versemaker. Assuming that a growing interest in a simpler, more natural sentence structure and diction and an interest in conversational speech patterns represents an important quality of much Romantic poetry as verse, Hawthorne's prose faces some poetic limitations. His prose works display a frequent penchant for the stilted and formal word over the equally effective simple and natural one. He often chooses to write a wordy, "pleonastic" sentence over a concise one. And he tends to use an involved and complex sentence structure rather than an equally adequate, simpler, more direct formation. However admirably qualified for the title "Poet," Hawthorne's prose might be on the philosophical level, any fuller and more specific definition of the poetic qualities of Hawthorne's prose might profitably consider these suggested limitations.

Significance

Throughout the body of the paper and in the summary, the thesis has attempted to supplement or broaden certain areas of traditional Hawthorne research. Certain positive, responsive personality traits in the artist become better illuminated by studying the poetry. A more thorough understanding of the creative life of the artist is gained when the scholar
knows something about the writer's earliest and more obscure creative efforts. Also, learning why a man rejected a popular creative form as his dominant literary mode provides interesting glimpses into the form-content decisions of a writer, demonstrating again that a literary artist is often only "selectively" brilliant in certain special genres or forms and that his literary theories and bent of mind make a striking difference in the type of forms he will be able to tolerate and develop in any really creative way. The study highlights the vital importance of accurate form-content decisions in the development of the artist and shows some of the motives behind Hawthorne's single-minded, fortunate decision to work in prose. It is a study in this respect not only of a man, but in a limited and specific sense, of the mechanics of creative growth and the broader relations between form and content and how the artist reacts to these relations. Thus, while encompassing areas like these, the thesis has biographical and literary historical significance, offering a different type of supplement to the many fine studies on Hawthorne's life and artistic development.

But the study has some additional significance. It helps reveal some of the limitations of the label "Romantic," as it applies to Hawthorne. Both the rigid and restricted forms of Hawthorne's verse and some of the specific formal aspects of his prose move Hawthorne away from what are frequently defined as the "language of men" qualities of Romantic literary art. Noting this in a specific way contributes to the views of those who suggest that Hawthorne's ambiguous uncertainty about human progress, his primary concern with men's reactions to sin and guilt, and so on, remove him from the optimistic, individualistic exuberance so often broadly associated with the Romantic movement. Indeed, Hawthorne's
endurance and permanent importance rest in his refusal to be pegged into any narrow period designation. Studying his poetry and poetic attitudes shows the neo-classical as well as the Romantic Hawthorne, the complicated, changing Hawthorne, the Hawthorne who defies neat historical classification.

The study can also contribute to balance in Hawthorne studies. In an age of increasing scholarly works on and admiration for Hawthorne, adverse reactions to facets of his art or discussions of areas in which Hawthorne failed to produce great works can help provide perspective. By suggesting occasionally what Hawthorne is not, we are made freer to concern ourselves with what he is. And we are discouraged from making exaggerated claims about Hawthorne. Perhaps, for example, Hawthorne's tendency toward the formal and the involved in his language can sometimes betray a reader into thinking a point of ambiguity or a symbol has more significance that it really has. Being aware of Hawthorne's language, then, can assist us in making the most accurate appraisal of the quality of the symbol or the ambiguity. And in an age when each drip of ambiguity in Hawthorne is so eagerly sipped in as meaningful artistry and profundity, it is perhaps valuable to stimulate reactions to provide balance and to encourage further dialogue.

For any age that places great singular importance on an artist can be tempted to indiscriminately idolize that person without maintaining some balance. As Randall Stewart observes, "A marked interest in Hawthorne is one of the more striking phenomena of our time." Indeed, the last several decades have seen a tremendous proliferation in Hawthorne studies, most of them praising the artist highly and finding in his prose more and more symbols, difficult allusions to mythology, obscure source borrowings not seen before, archetypal motifs, etc. These critical works have ranged
from something as admirably fundamental and broad as Richard Fogle's *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark* (1964)\(^2\) to something as questionably specific as Herndon and Moss's "The Identity of the German Jewish Showman in Hawthorne's 'Ethan Brand.'"\(^3\) Scores of new Hawthorne studies appear each year in the *PMLA Bibliography*. In both broad and specific studies, scholars seldom see Hawthorne as an artist who makes many mistakes. Twentieth century writers make their characters laugh quite often, but only with Hawthorne do the critics find in the laugh not just a simple character trait but a subtle and astounding use of art.\(^4\) The danger always exists, then, during such a critical revival, that the studies will become band wagon praises with more and more researchers clambering to discover some new, well-buried symbol or unique interpretation of a work no one had noticed before. In the field of Hawthorne's artistry, such studies can sometimes go to unjustified lengths. Schubert, for example, in *Hawthorne the Artist: Fine-Art Devices in Fiction* (1944),\(^5\) self-consciously divorces form from content and announces that he will study Hawthorne's "fine-art" techniques as he would study a painter, a sculptor, or a musician. An area on canvas, then, becomes in Schubert's mind, equated with chapters in a novel. And recurring words or phrases prove to Schubert how similar Hawthorne's art is to the "repetitious melodies and chords" of the musician. In an attempt to make Hawthorne into a glorified literary "painter, sculptor, and musician," the critic is forced to stretch the comparisons to the point of false analogy while avoiding the whole issue of how this "art," even if the rather artificial comparison is accepted, becomes important to the content. And in Q. D. Leavis' "Hawthorne as Poet" (*Sewanee Review*, 1951)\(^6\) the author praises Hawthorne as a "dramatic poet" who works much in the style of Shakespeare, but no
definition of the dramatic poet is given beyond showing that both Haw­thorne and the dramatic poet work with symbols, something very many
writers do. Hawthorne, then, again becomes a monumental poetic artist
but with little effort made in the process to clarify the limits of that
artistry or to adequately define the labels applied to him.

The present study does not disparage the best of recent studies. It
merely assumes that an attempt to leaven often poorly defined and somewhat
stretched "painter" and "poet" claims by suggesting some specific limita­
tions is a healthy and responsible approach. The cautions raised about
Hawthorne's "prose poetry" and, in the end, the whole study about his
intolerance toward contemporary poetry and his own inability to produce
great verse can act as a mild antidote to the large dose of Hawthorne
encomiums that roll off the presses these days, illustrated in the samples
above.

Despite this "balancing" role, however, and the biographical and
literary historical value that the thesis might also contain, it must
recognize its own limitations. The whole thesis is probably subject to
the type of criticism Emerson leveled at people who are solely concerned
with things like meters when discussing poetry. "Their cultivation is
local," he says, "as if you should rub a log of dry wood in one spot to
produce fire, all the rest remaining cold."

\[7\] Studying Hawthorne's poetry
and poetic attitudes admittedly heats up only one very narrow strip of
bark on the Hawthorne log. And as Douglas Bush significantly comments,
one of the reasons for the massive indifference to the value of literature
among the general populace is the English profession's "indiscriminate
advancement of knowledge" in the form of trivial monographs.\[8\] I am poignant­
antly sensitive to the great limitations of such a "monographic" Hawthorne
study and its failure to offer any lasting insights into literature that can assist my brother humans in improving the quality of their lives. But if humility in the face of these drawbacks is any virtue, I meekly extend my head for a couple of gentle pats of admiration before closing the discussion.

Whatever the limitations or the assets of the study, the real core of the Hawthorne log must, of course, be kept burning most brightly. The prime concerns must always be with Hawthorne's "haunting care for moral problems," as James says. The effects and causes of isolation, the nature and results of pride, the modifying power of what people interpret as sin--these can mean a lot to people, and they are the central critical concerns. Still, a study of limited scope like this one can also, all things considered, help present Hawthorne "fully rounded."
NOTES
Chapter Five


2 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press).

3 23 (1962), 362-363.


5 (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc.).

6 59 (1951), 179-205, 426-458. Mrs. Leavis does not, of course, deal with Hawthorne's critical opinions or with his verse. Her study is substantially different in goal and approach from this thesis. Besides her claim that Hawthorne was a "dramatic poet," she also attacks the notion that he was aloof, stating instead that he was a sort of sociologist fiction writer. She denies, too, that Hawthorne was a type of allegorist.


8 Bate, p. 706.

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"MEASURED FEET AND JINGLING LINES":
The Poetry and Poetic Attitudes of Nathaniel Hawthorne

by

David L. Evans

An Abstract of a Thesis
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts
in the Field of English

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A study of Hawthorne's poetry and poetic attitudes encompasses three separate but integrally related areas. First, few people realize that Hawthorne wrote verse, and no other investigation of the nature and significance of the meager surviving body of this poetry has yet been undertaken. But Hawthorne's failure to create verse of enduring quality is intimately connected with the second part of the study, Hawthorne's own views of 19th century poetry and the motives surrounding his deliberate rejection of poetry as his dominant creative mode. And when his contemporaries glowingly label him as a "poet," despite his strong refusal to write much verse, understanding what those contemporaries mean by the term and to what extent Hawthorne the prose artist conformed to that definition becomes an important third section of the study. Taken as a whole, these different but coherent areas offer biographical as well as literary historical value. They also help illuminate a neglected corner of Hawthorne's early creative efforts. And they provide glimpses into a selected area of the form-content development of a respected literary artist.

As a verse poet, Hawthorne ranges from embarrassingly poor to yawningly mediocre. Responding strongly to the Romantic interest in the subjective imagination, the "atmospheric" possibilities of the Gothic elements of death, horror, and the unusual, the sentimental and therapeutic qualities of nature, and the exultation over wild, unregulated nature, Hawthorne, nevertheless, dampens the potential effect of these lively qualities by forcing all content into a needlessly restricted range of verse forms, using couplets most frequently. And while his interest in the didactic potential of poetry reflects a similar concern in his contemporaries' verse, Hawthorne's didactic poetry preaches rather than suggests, frequently moving from a powerfully "atmospheric" and emotional tone in the poem's body to a
church pew lesson ending that does not grow organically out of the verse itself. Further, besides this fundamental inability to couple effective form with content, making him a type of "atmospheric formalist," Hawthorne often contents himself with ineffective stock poetic devices like overused foreshortening of words, a formalized and stilted vocabulary, and personification of abstractions. Frequent incomplete or inappropriate rhymes and contradictions in meaning within poems reinforce this poor showing of the verse. Most disappointing, however, is the superficiality of the poetry. On the whole, the poems are simplistic, lack mature subtlety, irony, ambiguity, multi-level interpretation, and are seldom written with admirable poetic technique or control. An occasional poem, of course, like the devotional "Star of Calvary," organically links the right content with the right form, producing a verse that may be typically mediocre in meaning but which shows real potential in its facility with the language.

On the other hand, the poems serve a useful purpose in highlighting a more responsive, optimistic side of Hawthorne's personality, a side easily obscured by the brooding prose. His unflinchingly traditional Christian orthodoxy in the poems is significant in view of the prose stories that display a vast amount of complex ambiguity toward the Puritan culture. And the poems contain early expressions of significant themes that were to find fuller and more mature development in the prose. The circular journey motif, Hawthorne's disgust over efforts of men to manipulate each other, the role of moonlight as the symbolic fusion of the actual and the imaginary, a disenchantment with attempts at external reform or purely material progress without changing "that inward sphere," and an unusual juxtaposition of life with death, good with evil, find skeleton development in the poetry before being filled out into complex maturity in the prose.
Hawthorne's own inability to write significant verse did not imbue him with respect for contemporary poets, however. Throughout his adult life, he fairly consistently denied that he enjoyed modern verse, scorned contemporary poetry, and rather intolerantly failed to see the importance of 19th century verse as a creative form. His rejection of and scoffing attitude toward contemporary poetry was not rooted in jealous naivete.

He had read extensively both older and contemporary English and American verse. Perhaps he recognized his lack of poetic potential and, knowing poetic glory would elude him, left the arena; perhaps he had a "musical insensitivity" as some critics suggest. More likely, however, is that his decision to reject poetry arose out of his belief that contemporary verse was antithetical to what he felt great art should accomplish. Hawthorne's literary theory insisted that art is an idealization of reality and serves a vital moral purpose. The artist creates a new reality, in fact, in some ways better than the "old" reality, and helps the reader grasp the universals he may miss in the glaring reality of daily life. Such a view of art demanded a form that provided for intricate, detailed explorations into men's characters and world. A capacious, flexible form that could completely trace the symbolic relationship of outer with inner reality was needed. Contemporary poetry, Hawthorne felt, failed to meet these requirements. The depths of the mind and heart could not be probed with the lilt and jingle of measured feet. The "airiness," fancy, and confessional aspects of Romantic poetry made it too insubstantial for moral weight, he thought, and the popular, brief lyric poem was simply too circumscribed to provide a roomy medium with which to explore men and a complicated reality. And, Hawthorne insisted, men like Browning, with their obscure measures, lacked the clarity to speak to the present nations of men. Given such a view, however unjust
it is, Hawthorne moved single-mindedly and inevitably into a prose form he could tolerate while rejecting in the process a medium he interpreted as incapable of supporting the "sobriety of earnest utterance."

Despite his denunciations, however, contemporary critics, novelists, poets, friends, and publishers frequently called Hawthorne a "Poet."

Hawthorne wrote his mature works in an age that attributed great analytical and intuitive powers to "The Poet," described by men like Carlyle, Emerson, and Goethe as a person who sees below external data and wrests the inner meaning and ultimate harmony out of a confusing, often contradictory outer nature. He is a "Deep-seer," a man who turns the external world to clear glass by using imaginative language, whether it be prose or verse. Hawthorne's pervasive habit of using external sense data, objects, physical emblems, and symbols to suggest deeper abstract principles or moral meanings qualifies him well for this dominantly philosophical poet title so frequently attributed to him. It is dangerous, however, to assume that this philosophical attribution implies that Hawthorne's prose language also exhibited all the basic qualities of 19th century Romantic verse. Hawthorne frequently prefers a stilted or formal word of Latin derivation over an equally effective simpler or more concrete word. He often chooses to write a wordy, "pleonastic" sentence over a concise one. And he tends to use an involved and complex sentence structure rather than an equally adequate simpler and more direct formation. Any future, more definitive study of the poetic language of Hawthorne's prose might profitably consider these suggested limitations, based on verse language preferences of Hawthorne's age.