Chapter VII

Historical and Cultural Resonance in Hawthorne’s Selected Tales

The American past is a subject of various tales and sketches of Hawthorne. His critic Roy R. Male writes, “these pieces taken together comprise a pageant of some two hundred years of American history” (38). Hawthorne writes that his tales are not “the talk of secluded man with his own mind and heart, . . . but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world” (Matthiessen 222). The knowledge of historical matrix of Hawthorne’s fictional world is necessary to understand his tales. Longfellow writes “One of the most prominent characteristics of these tales is, they are national in character. The author has wisely chosen his themes among the traditions of New England; the dusty legends of “the good old colony times”, when we lived under a king” (23).

The stories selected in the present chapter offer a profound interpretation of the persecuting spirit of the late17th century Puritan culture and reflect Hawthorne’s ambivalence towards Puritanism. The first generations of English settlers were afraid of divine castigations for sinful behavior hence, they were very careful about individual conduct and practices. The Puritan mind was constantly haunted by a strong belief in the omnipresence of the devil. They believed that the devil was constantly looking for an opportunity to seduce true believers and misguide them towards the life of heretics. Their psychological insecurity led them to form a very close knit and austere society to protect their way of life. It gradually degenerated into bigotry because they resorted to harshness
to prove themselves divine agents. These issues are taken by Hawthorne in his two tales “The Maypole of Merry Mount” and “Endicott and Red Cross”. These tales have direct historical borrowings.

Hegemonic Forces and Containment

“The Maypole of Merry Mount” is a fictional treatment of a conflict at Merry Mount between Puritans and Hedonists. Richard L. Stokes in his dramatic poem “Merry Mount-A Dramatic Poem for Music in Three Acts of Six Scenes” [New York 1932] depicts the expression of uncontrolled passion bordering at insanity at Merry Mount which is an outcome of Puritan repression. Robert Lowell’s “Endecott and Red Cross” [The Old Glory, New York, 1968] projects the confrontation between Puritans and Morton Gent as an outcome of power game at the primitive level. Lowell takes a negative view of the Puritan police raid and their undue severity in destroying Maypole. The republican pedagogy of the 19th century left an indelible impression on Hawthorne. He was not lagging behind his modern counterpart in looking at the whole affair with critical perspective. He admonished repression as an unwholesome attitude towards life with his preference for a classless society. Hawthorne appreciated the virtue of tolerance which was an integral part of the democratic infrastructure of the society.

Mount Wollaston or Merry Mount was set up by a liberal tradesman, Thomas Morton [1579-1647] who was a man of some learning and wit along with an extremely jovial disposition. Historical Thomas Morton Gent was an early American colonist from Devon, England who was a lawyer, writer, and social reformer. Devon at that time was considered the dark spot of the establishment by Protestant reformers due to its
traditionalist intransigence. It had not only an affinity with a High Church Anglicanism that shared many traits with Catholicism but also had a paternalistic populism combined with a rural folk tradition that Puritans considered very close to paganism. Local inhabitants regarded it as their Old England. This culture was firmly ingrained in Morton Gent who was ideally a high churchman of good birth but a royalist and anti-Puritan. He was known for founding the colony of Merry Mount and his writings against Puritan’s suppressive regime. Morton was a “Renaissance man” with respect for Native Americans. He found their culture far more civilized and humanitarian than his intolerant European neighbors.

Morton visited America in 1622 but returned to England in early 1623. He demurred at the violation of individual rights and presence of tyrannical elements in the Puritan community. He revisited America in 1624 as a senior partner in a Crown-sponsored trading venture with his associate Captain Wollaston and thirty other indentured young men. Native Algonquin tribes donated them a piece of land on which they settled. Morton had great passion for its scenic beauty and belief in its trade potential. He set up a trading post there along with Captain Wollaston to avail the opportunity of flourishing in the fur trading. It soon expanded into an agrarian colony which became known as Mount Wollaston (now Quincy, Massachusetts).

Morton found that Wollaston was selling indentured servants into slavery on the Virginian tobacco plantations. He rebelled against his action along with the remaining servants. Wollaston fled with his supporters to Virginia in 1626. Morton was now in sole command of the colony and renamed it as Mount Ma-re [a play on “merry” and “the
sea”) or simply Merry Mount. Under his guidance, an almost utopian project was embarked upon. Colonists were declared free men and a certain degree of integration into the local Algonquin culture was attempted.

He raised Maypole in May 1628 and invited everyone to celebrate the spring, to improve his trade connections with natives which included even the sale of guns. His establishment, Merry Mount led to a riotous life and scandalous rumors were spread of debauchery here. The Puritans accused Morton of immoral sexual liaisons with native women in drunken state.

Bradford recorded the involvement of crowd at Wollaston into “great licentiousness, and into all profaneness. And Morton became Lord of misrule, and maintained [as it were] a school of Atheisme” (Andrews 333). They set up May –pole, got the Indian woman to drink and dance about it with worse practices, and changed the name to Merry Mount, as if this jollity would last forever. They indulged in all kinds of licentiousness and profanity (Frank 94). Hawthorne was aware that the greatest objection against Merry Mount and its ceremonies was that it encouraged sexual license.

The occasion of the present tale is the anger of the Puritan establishment against unconventional mode of life at Merry Mount. This tale unfolds at the moment of an eventful episode in the colonial history. In 1628, Mayday, a huge Maypole was erected topped with deer antlers which unnerved Puritans. The following June, the Plymouth Militia under John Endecott, chopped down the Maypole and raided Mount Dagon’s plentiful corn supplies. They called it “Calf of Horeb” and denounced it as a form of pagan idolatry for its heathen practices. “Lord hath sanctified this wilderness for his
peculiar people. Woe unto them that would defile it!” (MPMM 45) and with this conviction, Endecott assaulted the hollowed Maypole, “Merrymount was rechristened Mount Dagon, the place of Philistine idolatry” (Andrew 363).

The Puritan sternness and narrowness are epitomized in John Endecott who was an efficient executive officer but an intolerant and aggressive Englishman. Hawthorne focused on his despotic nature against democratic sentiments in his sketch on Mrs. Anne Hutchinson. In his untiring zeal to suppress dissenters, he became barbaric. In 1628, he left England as in charge of an advance company of Massachusetts Bay Colony. This time is recorded in the history of America for the intolerance of the Puritans and Archbishop Laud.

The Maypoles were celebrating the immemorial culture of the English folk with its Catholic and ultimately pagan roots. This culture was preserved in songs and dances, festivals, and superstitions, and especially the rites and dramatic practices of which May Day ceremonies were the key. The record of Thomas Morton’s Merry Mount comes principally from two sources: Morton’s own account in Book III, Chapter XIV of The New English Canaan, and William Bradford’s very different account in his Of Plymouth Plantation. John Winthrop also had an account of it in his History of New England which Hawthorne used along with New England Annals as source for tale. The masques, mummeries and festive customs as described in the text are in accordance with the manners of the age. Hawthorne asserts in the tale that the authority on these points may be found in Strutt’s Book of English Sports and Pastimes [1801] (MPMM 40).
Massachusetts Bay Colony was a Puritan state developed from Puritan church leaders who feared liberty in political, social, and religious spheres. They were aristocratic and autocratic in their approach against democratic congregationalism and eliminated those who were undesirable in the colony. Mirthfulness and jollity was a sin in that drab and gloomy state, hence, the jollity of Merry Mount raised the frowned eye brow of the Puritans. “Not far from Merry Mount was a settlement of Puritans, most dismal wretches . . .” (43), in that establishment, if anyone attempted to follow a dictum of his heart against the documentation in the religious scripture, he was condemned as rebel for undermining the monopoly of the church ministers.

Morton transplanted the traditional West Country May Day customs to the colony, and combined them with fashionable classical myth according to his own libertine tastes. He was very enthusiastic about the support he received from the newly-freed fellow colonists. On a practical level the annual May Day festival was a reward for his hardworking colonists. It also marked the day and a chance for the mostly male colonists to find brides amongst the natives.

The Puritans objected to Morton’s fur-trading post, near Wollaston Beach in Quincy on the ground of it being a non-Puritan commercial plantation. But it was a partial representation of the truth. The Puritan’s account of the colony as a decadent nest of good-for-nothing that annually attracted all the scum of the country to the area was guided by malicious intentions to divert mind from the real issue. The Puritan’s ire was not so much directed against Morton’s revelries as for his rivalries in dealing with the Indians. Merry Mount was the fastest-growing colony in New England. It was rapidly
becoming the most prosperous not only as an agricultural producer but also as the fur
trader in which Plymouth Colony was trying to build a monopoly. Hawthorn focused on
the conflicting economical interest of the Puritan colony with Thomas Morton. The
Puritans gave religious coloring to the whole affair.

Morton was earning profit in his trading with the Indians. Unlike the Puritans, he
was not biased against Indians as damned state old savage. He understood red men better
than the Puritans hence, he easily made them friend. His plan of setting up a Maypole at
Merry Mount was a well thought decision with a practical purpose. He knew that no
pilgrim could compete with an Indian as a trapper. He wanted to succeed in fur trading
so he tried hard to win their confidence in order to obtain their fur. His method of
handling the Indians proved not only enjoyable but eminently profitable. Puritans of the
New England colony of Plymouth objected to his sales of guns and liquor to the natives
in exchange for furs and provisions, which at that time was technically illegal although
almost everyone was doing it. The weapons undoubtedly acquired by the Algonquin were
used by them to defend themselves against raids from the Northern Tribes not against the
colonists.

Morton was considered an interpolator and undesirable person for going against
the economic interest of the colony by refusing to respect the fur trading regulations of
the Massachusetts Bay Company. Morton also wrote a book in 1637 New English
Canaan [3 vols ]to take his revenge upon Puritans. It was an inspired denunciation of the
Puritan regime and their policy of land enclosure and near genocide of the Native
population.
He won an influential backing for his cause and was treated as a champion of liberty. The real political force behind his good fortune, however, was the hostility of Charles I towards the Puritan colonists. In 1635 Morton’s efforts were successful, and the Company’s charter was revoked. He was accused of being a “Royalist” and put on trial for his role in the revocation of the colony’s charter, as well as charges of sedition.

He was arrested and expelled from the colony several times for his deviance from Puritan code of behavior. He was exiled by Plymouth’s Myles Standish without any legal process for his supplying guns to the Indians, “Standish had seized Morton and sent him back to England three months before Endecott reached the colony, . . .”( Andrews 362). His trial is recorded in the legal history of Massachusetts as the first entry for Massachusetts Bay Colony’s prosecutions of religious, economic, cultural rivals, and troublemakers. The conservative historian A. C. Adams dismissed Morton as a vulgar royalist libertine, an extremely reckless but highly amusing debauchee and tippler but more recently his reputation has begun to be restored. Today there is a 1½-mile-long wall surrounding Mount Wollaston Cemetery in Quincy, Massachusetts, erected by the WPA in 1934-35 and dedicated to the memory of Thomas Morton.

Hawthorne bewailed religious austerity of the Puritans and denounced their cheerless spirit and hypocritical characters by demonstrating that they adopted subversion as a rule of governance against which they rebelled in England. Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 17th century was not a bastion of freedom and equality. Although the Puritans fled from England in search of religious freedom, the General Laws and Liberties of the Massachusetts Colony were extremely restrictive. The long list of
“crimes” for which citizens could be put to death was astounding. The essential elements of the 17th century Salem are reflected in the breast plate of Endicott in the tale “Endicott and Red Cross”. It helps in recreating the bigoted and repressive atmosphere of the 17th century Puritan world.

The image of the whipping post symbolizes austere Puritan regime for disciplining those who go astray. The plate displays a tall lean man, a fanatic bearing on his breast this label-A WANTON GOSPELLER, which betokens that he, “had dared to give interpretations of HOLY WRIT unsanctioned by the infallible judgments of the civil and religious rulers” (Crew 42). It is similar to Felt’s record of an order of 4th November, 1646, according to which, if any one opposed a preacher in season of worship he would stand two hours on block four feet high with an inscription, “A WANTON GOSPELLER” on his breast in capital letters. The other figure on the plate is of a woman who is wearing a cleft stick on her tongue for speaking against the elders of the church. Felt recorded an incident of August of 1646, of a woman Mary Oliver, with a cleft stick on her tongue for slandering the elders. The same incident was recorded in the Journal of Winthrop (Doubleday 105).

There is also an image of a man whose ears are cropped like puppy dogs and the other whose cheeks have been branded with the initials of his misdemeanors. The other figure is of a man whose nostrils are slit and seared and another is punished with a halter about his neck. These modes of punishment were common in first half of the 17th century. When a man was caught for burglary, he was punished by judges by the lopping off of one ear and the branding of a “B” on his forehead. Hawthorne’s perusal of Annals of
Salem by Felt made him aware of all the celebrated cases in which his ancestor William Hathorne acted as one of the judges.

There is also a figure of a young woman, “with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown, in the eyes of the entire world and her own children” (ERC 206). In Winthrop’s “Journal”, Hawthorne had read about punishment of Mary Latham who bore letter “A” on her breast. The plate depicts a repressive environment which is an indirect denunciation of Puritan regime. It is ironical in the light of Endicott’s proclaimed love of liberty in the tale. In the Puritan set up, “Democratic” was feared and repelled as an agent of the devil. Even Puritan leaders were banished from the colony if they refused to conform. Nevins and Commager wrote about this period:

The Puritans were not religious radicals; they were religious conservatives. In England they had believed in the Church of England, but had wished to modify the absolutism of its hierarchy and to alter it by abolishing Catholic forms, observing the Sabbath strictly, and keeping a close watch upon morals. Failing in their hope to capture the establishment, they sought the American wilderness to set up their “patriarchal church” supported by public taxation, interwoven with the state, and tolerating no opposition. (25)

“Endecott and the Red Cross” is based on an actual incident of 1634 of late autumn. On a muster day for colonial militia in Salem, John Endicott rented the Red Cross from the English flag under which the company of militia was drilling. He was
then an assistant in the colonial government who raised his arms against the English authority. New England Puritans spent painstaking years establishing a system of church government that was based upon independence and power of individual congregation. The state in Massachusetts did not appoint a clergy, nor was there one over-arching body that regulated churches. Each church was a sovereign unit. Only one church was tolerated in Massachusetts: the Puritan or Congregational church. The Puritans of Massachusetts were afraid that the English government would try to force its new rules of toleration and Presbyterianism on them. In order to save their freedom; they elected their own governor and established a General Court which was a combination of legislature and judiciary. They built many forts to protect their harbor and drilled their militia men regularly. They continued to persecute Quakers, who brought their own version of the Gospel to New England despite the harsh and cruel punishments they received.

According to Puritan’s any sacred symbol was idolatry so a cross was not a symbol of genuine Christianity but Popery. Endicott ripped the cross from the English banner, “one of the boldest exploits our history records” (Fogle 8). This episode tarnished the image of the colony and projected it as a subversive and unpopular form of the government which was menacing for the independent status of the colony. A committee was constituted to judge his impudent behavior and condemned him for challenging the royalty without the advice of court. Endicott was debarred from holding any office for a year. Charles I was the king and colonists were afraid of the Romanization of England by Laud and the royal family, “The bigoted and haughty primate, Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, controlled the religious affairs of the realm, and was consequently invested
with powers which might have wrought the utter ruin of the two Puritan colonies, Plymouth and Massachusetts” (ERC 205). “Endicott and the Red Cross” establishes the historical authenticity by starting the tale in the background of the dissension between Charles I and his subjects, for several years on the floor of the parliament, “There is evidence on record that our forefathers perceived their danger, but were resolved that this infant country should not fall without a struggle, even beneath the giant strength of the King’s right arm” (ERC 205).

Endicott expounds, “Wherefore, I say again, have we sought this country of a rugged soil and wintry sky? Was it not for the enjoyment of our civil rights?” (ERC 207-208) These lines indicate the stirring seeds of rebellion. Endicott obscures his legal ties with the English government through this grandiloquent outburst against the authority of bishop and the king. He asks “Who shall enslave us here? What have we to do with this mitred prelate, -with this crowned king? What have we to do with England?” (ERC 208). It was in this spirit that an order from the English judges to bring about the downfall of the Massachusetts Bay Company was disregarded by the Puritan rulers.

Massachusetts Bay Colony was established with the desire of the English non-conformists to work out their ideas in the church and state which would be both a religious refuge and profit making plantation. The king granted land to New England but regarded it a part of England, and planned to govern it from there. With this intention, conservative English legal mind passed the Charter which gave Puritans the right to control their affairs but Puritans wished to establish a state independent of any alien control. They refuted any allegiance to the king and found it difficult to obey God as well
as public officials of England who were guided by the laws, customs, and needs of the kingdom.

England threatened to withdraw the privileges of the charter and to send over a governor general to manage affairs on king’s behalf. The tale reverberates the same historical moment when Endicott reads out the gist of the letter that King and Archbishop are, “taking counsel, saith this letter, to send over a governor general, in whose breast shall be deposited all the law and equality of the land” (ERC 208).

The King relied heavily on the advice of William Laud whom he made an Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud was resolved to have the services of the established church carried on in precisely the way that was most offensive to Puritans. The archbishop Laud insisted that every English clergy should read from his pulpit a favorable declaration of traditional Sunday pastimes. It was one of the important reasons for leaving the Old world for few New England clergies which they could not bear any longer in this new World (Frank 99).

For eleven years the king and Archbishop continued to govern with a high hand. Puritans suspected the intention of William Laud to establish idolatrous forms of English episcopacy in New England. With their right to their charter and their territory questioned, and with their principles of civil government facing serious modification, the Puritans were now in danger of seeing their most cherished theological doctrine and practices denounced and demolished.“Massachusetts formed by Puritan ministers and merchants under the leadership of John Winthrop. Here nobody was welcome who wouldn’t accept the beliefs and moral disciplines of the Puritanism” (Parkes 34) because
they believed that the Unity of the faith was essential to ensure their lasting regime and diversity of sect would scatter their power.

Elizabeth Hathorne, William Hathorne’s sister was married to Richard Davenport, who was an ensign bearer for the Salem Company of Militia. He was the first to be called by the court for the explanation for the defacing of the flag (Loggins 18). This ancestral connection with the episode was one of the reasons for Hawthorne selecting this historical moment as the subject of this tale.

The presence of the mild and tolerant Roger William in the tale is not without significance. Historical Roger William came to Massachusetts in 1631 and soon became the pastor of the church of Salem. He was a non conformist who advocated the separation of the church and state. He declined to conform to the rigid practices of the church in Massachusetts Bay Colony and demanded equality in the administrative policies and freedom in religious affairs. He condemned the way the early Americans grabbed lands from Indians. Hence, he was also expelled from the colony.

A dissenter rebuffs John Endicott pompous claim that the colony is founded, “for liberty to worship God according to our conscience” because he has suffered imprisonment for his own interpretation of the Holy Writ, Endicott forcefully suppresses his voice. Endicott’s rhapsody regarding liberty turns ironic in the light of his preceding action. He forcefully nullifies individual rights. A sad smile flits across the mild visage of Roger Williams, who disagrees with the rampant religious intolerance and stands in the tale for the liberty of conscience.
Hawthorne left the tale on a rebellious note and deliberately not followed the embarrassing aftermath of Endicott’s act. Through this tale, he highlighted the irony of the Puritan settlement which was formed to avoid religious persecution but its founders themselves turned hostile to religious freedom. Hawthorne condemned the aristocratic nature of the regime in favor of democratic paradigm of society.

“The Gentle Boy” can be coupled with “Endicott and Red Cross” and “Maypole at Merry Mount” in the present reading because of its thematic angle. Like them, it also depicts Puritan repression but Hawthorne’s treatment of this tale is singular. It juxtaposes Puritan despotism with Quaker’s fanaticism and projects an ambivalent attitude towards Puritanism. The forceful reinforcement of discipline by Puritans in religious and social life was necessary for survival yet their fanatical bigotry was fiercely condemned. The persecuting spirit of Puritans and Hawthorne’s shameful acknowledgement of his ancestor’s role in the episode is in the background of the tale. In 1832, version of “The Gentle Boy” Hawthorne wrote, “they feared that admitting divergent religious sects should destroy the unity that would be necessary for their survival” (Mather 62). In the tale, Ibrahim is a victim of religious sadism of Puritans as well as religious masochism of Quakers.

The fictional occurrence of the tale takes place in Boston and its vicinity during the time of persecutions of Quakers in mid 17th century New England when, “the government of Massachusetts Bay indulged two members of the Quaker sect with the crown of martyrdom” (GB 48). Hawthorne seemed to be drawing upon the execution in Boston common of William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson on October 27, 1659.
There was also a woman Mary Dyer among them but who was extenuated at that time like the mother of Ibrahim. Historical Mary Dyer was an ally of Mrs. Hutchinson. She was an extreme case of Quaker fanaticism. In 1659, she was punished but not executed. In spite of that, her heresies continued and she was finally hanged on 1st June 1660. She was the first woman executed in America for practicing her personal religious beliefs. Mary Dyer’s execution implied that the tolerance of other religious viewpoints was non-existent in the Puritan community.

The Puritan leaders justified the persecution of their opponents without any compunction. In the beginning, the movement of the Puritans was directed towards the preservation of the values of humanity and morality but later on, they neglected the virtue of tolerance that was essential for peaceful co-existence. Hawthorne could perceive that democratic fervor of the Puritan regime gradually degenerated into a rigid and self-righteous pride which manifested itself in bigotry and oppression. Puritans were bent on crushing all sorts of dissention. Their fanatical temperament led them to forget their common humanity in the artificial rationalization of bigotry. In Pearson’s condemnation of Puritan’s severity of punishment against Heretics, Hawthorne bespoke his own mind.

The main character of the tale is a Cromwell soldier Tobias Pearson who migrated to New England. Tobias and his wife are moderate Puritans who retain their basic humanity. Tobias fought courageously against Cromwell to overthrow the autocratic tyranny of the state and church. Pearson was returning home from Boston on the night of Quaker persecution when he found a little boy Ibrahim. He was weeping on a grave of his Quaker father who was hanged and buried beneath the gallows on Boston Common.
Tobias brings Ibrahim to his house in spite of his being son of a Quaker. His action reveals the triumph of intuitive humanity over dogmatic harshness of Puritanism. Pity and gratitude succeed spiritual pride as celebrated virtue.

The tale seems to convey that heart can serve as a better guide than the logical tenets of theology. It is interesting to note the conviction of William Ellery Channing, the spiritual mentor of Sophia Peabody, “I have expressed my abhorrence of the sectarian spirit of Rome; but in that, as in all other churches, individuals are better than their creed; and amidst gross error and the inculcation of a narrow spirit noble virtues spring up and eminent Christians are formed. It is one sign of the tendency of human nature to goodness that, it grows under a thousand bad influences” (210). Puritanism with its fanaticism and absence of rational piety could not prosper beyond the 17th century. In the character of Tobias Pearson, the author has combined the virtues of Puritanism with perfect tolerance. Hawthorne intensely desired to make tolerance an important component of the ideology of his parental religion in order to embrace it unconditionally and uncritically.

Pearsons are a childless couple and the loving and sensitive child Ibrahim lives with them like their own son. They are ostracized and segregated from the Puritan community and are subjected to repeated penalty for sheltering a son of Quaker. Their fearless advocacy of human values is applauded in the tale. Ibrahim’s widowed mother is a turbulent Quaker. There is ample record of many zealous Quakers in New England at the time of Boston Common in the mid seventeenth century. We find Ibrahim’s mother Catherine’s parallel in Mary Fisher, a Quaker zealot in Turk (Taylor 41).
Catherine abandons her motherly responsibilities in favor of wild fanaticism and admits, “My child, my child, how many a pang awaits thy spirit, and I the cause of all” (GB 56). Her confession brings tears in the eyes of every parent. Dorothy convinces her about the welfare of Ibrahim regardless of his paternity. These spontaneous outbursts of Dorothy celebrate intuitional virtue of love and sympathy upheld by Emerson in opposition to the dogmatic religion of the Puritans. Catherine is recognized in the tale as a woman who “had assaulted the Governor with frightful language as he passed by the window of her prison; they knew, also, that she was adjudged to suffer death, and had been preserved only by an involuntary banishment into the wilderness (55). It has its historical counterpart in Mary Prince who “called to him from a window in the prison, railing at and reviling him, saying, Woe unto thee, thou art an oppressor; and denouncing the judgments of God upon him (Taylor 53).

There is a historical parallel available for fictitious Tobias Pearson in the form of Captain Robert Pike and his friend Thomas Macy of New England. Pike was an orthodox Puritan but of moderate character who was excommunicated for Sabbath breaking. Robert Pike’s friend, Thomas Macy was summoned by the general court for providing shelter to four Quakers. Pearson’s other parallel could be find in Nicholas Upsall who was banished for his sympathies with Quakers. Even his wife Dorothy boldly supported her husband at the time of his banishment by writing a letter to the General court for the revocation of the sentence. Hence, history is replete with examples of humane Puritans on which Pearsons’ characters are based.
Puritans believed that the Quakers were heretics because anyone who was not an Anglican was a heretic, be they Catholics, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Quakers or Ranters. These heretics put barriers in the way of salvation. They were also considered traitors to their country because they did not belong to the official state religion. The Puritan Congregationalism was the official and only religion of New England. But it wasn’t just about their religion. The persecution of Quakers was also part of the Puritans’ determination to rule them, independent of England. Puritans left England because they were persecuted by the government for their demands of reform in church. When Quakers showed up in Boston in the 1650s, it was no surprise that they were persecuted.

Hawthorne writes in the tale, “The King’s mandate to stay the New England persecutors was effectual in preventing further martyrdoms,” (GB 66). It replicates the actual order of Charles in November 1661. “ . . . that if there be any of those people called Quakers amongst you, now already condemned to suffer death, or other corporal punishment, or that are imprisoned or obnoxious to the like of condemnation, you are forebear to proceed any farther . . . ” (The Colonial Gazette 4). According to the “King’s Missive,” any Quaker accused of breaking the law in Massachusetts should be sent unharmed to England for trial. It indirectly undermined the authority of the local General Court but they could not violate the King’s law. If they did so, they would be declared traitors, and would be forced to accept a royal governor rather than their own elected governor. Hence, slowly the atrocities against Quakers ceased. But long before it, the Puritans of Massachusetts found it impossible to inflict the death penalty on Quakers as all the colonists were not in favor of the harsh treatment, for example, James Cudworth.
The Quakers reveled over the discomfiture of the magistrates and played some of their most offensive antics of railing and defiance. Hawthorne seemed to be advocating for a midway. He condemned the harshness of Puritans but at the same time disapproved the unbridled fanaticism and the spiritual arrogance of Quakers. The distorted moral perception of Puritans is condemned in the violence of their children against Ibrahim. He tries to befriend them and they pelt him with stone, “. . . the devil of their fathers entered into the unbreeched fanatics, and sending up a fierce, shrill cry, they rushed upon the poor Quaker child” (GB 60). At the same time, Quaker’s extremism was condemned in the character of Catharine whose, “imagination hopelessly entangled with her reason” and she mistook “flood of malignity” for “inspiration” (GB 55). This tale presents accounts from both oppressed and oppressors and assesses the error and guilt on each side to study the psychological aberrations involved.

Religious Hysteria vs Personal motives

Hawthorne’s tale “Young Goodman Brown” draws heavily from the history of the witchcraft trial of 1692. Cotton Mather’s Remarkable Providence offered Hawthorne the public essence of Puritanism. John Winthrop’s “Journal”, Samuel Sewell’s “Diary” Felt’s Annals of Salem supplied him with information and a personal approach to Puritanism. The names of Goody Corey, Goody Cloyse and Martha Carrier are not new in the history of witchcraft trial. Even the witch meeting at the centre of the tale, where the protagonist Brown goes at night has its historical parallel.
The action of the tale is focused near Salem village, probably in 1691, a year before the witchcraft trial. The story takes place in the reign of King William, as Hawthorne has mentioned, who ruled from 1688 to 1702. The historicity of the time is established by reference to persecution of the Quakers by Brown’s grandfather [1660s] and King Philip’s War [1675-1676] in which Brown’s father participated. Locales like Salem, Boston, Connecticut, and Rhodes Island are mentioned. This tale is replete with ecclesiastical terms that were part of the Puritan’s vocabulary like meeting Houses, communion table, lecture days, select men, ministers etc.

Young Goodman Brown was married three months back to a pretty, innocent, and pious woman Faith. He lives in Salem, Massachusetts in the late 17th century. One evening, he tells his wife about his plan to spend the night in a forest to perform a secret mission which could only be performed between sunset and sunrise. He does not tell her that he is going to attend a witch Sabbath. Faith is apprehensive of his plan and requests him to postpone his visit till morning but Brown is adamant and set off. He knowingly proceeds on an evil purpose because he admits that his wife would die due to shock and horror, if she knew his mission and after this one terrible night he would “cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven” (YGB 247).

Brown meets a traveler in the forest and promises him that he will attend the witch meeting and participate in a diabolical sacrament. This traveler is a devil disguised as a middle aged respectable looking man. The devil tells him that the church and the states are in league with Satan. In the forest, Brown hears the voices of his minister and deacon of his church and sees his childhood teacher of Sunday school as a witch.
In the historical account of the witchcraft trial in *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, Cotton Mather quoted a testimony of a lady who confessed her physical presence at, “. . . witch meeting in Salem village; and that she knew the prisoners to be a witch, and to have been at a diabolical sacrament and that the prisoner was the undoing of her and her children, by Enticing them into the snare of the Devil . . .” (Burr 244). Another woman Lacy also confessed her share in the witchcraft and said, “. . . they had Bread and Wine Administered unto them” (Burr 244). Even Abigail William testified her presence in a diabolical sacrament along with forty others. Diabolical sacrament was a profane parody of the Christian baptism. On that occasion Goody Cloyse was one of the deacons. Mary Osgood too confessed her baptism by the devil (Doubleday 202).

Cotton Mather wrote, “Hellish Randenzvouzes, wherein the confessors do say, they have had their diabolical sacraments, imitating the Baptism and the supper of Our Lord” (Fowler 395). Young Goodman Brown believes in what he sees in the forest and participates in the ceremonial baptism by the devil in the witch Sabbath. He identifies one of the voices as the voice of the minister and the other as of Deacon Gookin. In this story Hawthorne raised the question of Specter Evidence which baffled the judges of witchcraft trial. During the first phase of the trial accusation against a person that his specter afflicted and persuaded them for devil’s association was sufficient evidence against the alleged person.

Cotton Mather wrote that according to the belief of the Great in Spectral Evidence the devil might take the shape of innocent person. Here is an extract from the confession of Mary Osgood, which throws some light on this controversial topic. She said that she
attended a meeting along with Goody Parker, Goody Tyler and Goody Dean at Moses Tyler’s house, last Monday at night. She also stated that she and Goody Dean carried the shape of Mr. Dean, the minister between them to make persons believe that Mr. Dean was afflicted.

Q. “What hindered you from accomplishing what you intended?”

A. “The Lord would not suffer it so to that the devil should afflict in an innocent person’s shape” (Doubleday 207).

But a woman Susanne Martin says, “How do I know? He who appeared in the shape of Samuel, a Glorify’d saint, may Appear in any ones shape”. Hutchinson wrote that it was accepted in the formal statement that, “It is an undoubted and notorious thing, that a demon may by God’s permission, appear even to ill purposes, in the shape of innocent, yea, and a virtuous man” (Burr 230). Hence, Spectral Evidence was nullified in the later trials of the court.

This controversial issue surfaces in “Young Goodman Brown”, when the identity of the traveler whom Brown meets in the forest is not established. He has been described as “bearing considerable resemblance” to the protagonist himself. Old Goody Cloyse identifies him as the devil. The other personages Brown encounters during his journey are his moral and religious mentors, Old Goody Cloyse, Deakin Gookin, his grandfather and his wife Faith.

The crux of the tale comes when Brown goes to the altar to be the part of the band of lost souls. He is shocked to see his wife there whom he has considered an embodiment of heavenly virtues. By merely seeing a pink ribbon, like of his wife, he believes that she
is present there. Later on, he sees her in ceremonial satanic baptism and cries out in despair, “come devil”. The next morning when he returns to Salem, he finds nothing has changed. All those personages he has met in the forest as part of devil band remain excellent Christians. They are engaged in domestic worship and catechizing others. But Brown is a changed man now. He turns into a cynic who doubts the righteousness of everyone.

Brown does not believe in the *sacred truth* uttered by the minister from the pulpit with fervid eloquence. He cannot ascertain whether what he has witnessed in the night or sees in the morning is true. The questionable issue is compressed in a single statement: “Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of witch meeting?” (YGB 255) or is he deceived by the devil in shape of innocent people like minister, Goody Cloyse, Old Deacon, and his wife and so many others.

At first glance, Hawthorne’s selection of such subject for his tale appears meaningless for the 20th century readers as a mere figment of imagination but a study of American past, biographical details of Hawthorne’s life and his interest in the colonial period will establish the historical ground for it. Cotton Mather, the most learned man of the period attested eloquently his belief in the witchcraft phenomenon in his book *The Wonders of the Invisible World* as stated in the present reading.

This tale had been placed in later part of the 17th century in America when witchcraft was a reality. There was nothing strange and unusual in the beliefs that one’s neighbor is in the service of the devil. Historians turned their attention towards Salem Village because it figured as a spectacular example of how “pagan” forms of supernatural
beliefs endured even in the fervently Christian culture of Puritan New England. As David Hall’s *Worlds of Wonders, Days of Judgment* and Richard Godbeer’s *The Devil’s Dominion* showed that the case of Salem Village vividly illustrated the remarkable persistence among all early New Englanders of beliefs in the witchcraft and magic, demonic possession and angelic visitations, spectral apparitions, prophetic dreams, and portents. In short, not only New Englanders but almost every American at that time inhabited a complex supernatural universe, one in which Christian doctrines and practices were mingled with varied beliefs in “a world of wonders” (Leigh). John Butler emphasized the same in his most recent book, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.

**Democratic Aesthetics and Revolt**

“Gray Champion” and “My kinsman Major Molineaux” celebrate the democratic and revolutionary spirit of New England against the interference of British administration in matters of the colony. “Gray Champion” is based on Boston revolt against the dictatorial regime of Sir Edmund Andros in 1689. He was a representative of James II who “had annulled the charters of all the colonies and sent a harsh and unprincipled soldier to take away our liberties and endanger our religion” (GC 21). Channing wrote:

In 1676 Edward Randolph arrived at Boston. He came as the bearer of a letter from the king, in which monarch vigorously complained of the action of Massachusetts as to the navigation laws. His further duty was to
spy out irregularities in the conduct of the government on which a suit could be founded for the revocation of the Massachusetts Charter. (86-87)

Boston revolt was a defiance of the commoner against the king to regain the privileges of the Charter which were revoked by the British government. It was a part of the general scheme of Stuart monarchy for the consolidation of all the colonial governments under the direct control of the crown and to diminish the power of the colonists to withstand the attack of king and the parliament.

Edward Randolph sent a report unfavorable for the colonists. Theocracy had a number of things to its discredit; hence, he found no difficulty in discovering many unlawful proceedings going on in the colony. After a long legal battle, Massachusetts Charter was annulled in 1684 in James II’s regime. The initial first two paragraphs of the tale are the summary of the historical account and the details are so accurate that any parallel reading of the book of history of that particular period will find mutual explanation in each other.

Massachusetts Bay colonists enjoyed full freedom under the Old Charter. After its revocation the government of Massachusetts was confided to Joseph Dudley, son of one of the founders of the colony. He was the governor in place of John Winthrop to restrict the power of the Puritan assistants in the general court. The revocation of the charter was considered an act of oppressive tyranny. Hence, Dudley as the representative of the royal authority was considered a traitor. Joseph Dudley appears in the March of Sir Edmund Andros in the tale, “Dudley came behind, with a downcast look, dreading, as well, he
might to meet the indignant gaze of the people, who beheld him, their only countryman by birth, among the oppressors of his native land” (GC 23).

The rule of Dudley was soon replaced by Edmund Andros who was a tyrannical ruler. He and his council were appointed by James II, and were entrusted with unaccountable power liable to corruption and its abuses lacked “scarcely a single characteristic of tyranny” (GC 21). Andros was free to make law, levy taxes, perform executive functions and appoint judges. He was allowed to convict people charged with disobeying his decrees. In most ungracious manner, he abused his power to seize private property. Individual rights were violated. There was no freedom of expression as the voice of dissenters was muffled, “by restrictions on the press” (GC 21). Andros compelled the witnesses in the court to kiss the Bible when they swore to give true testimony. New England was groaning under the pressure of these wrong doings and Puritans complained that this harsh and unprincipled soldier was, “to take away our liberties and endanger our religion” (GC 21). These tyrannical measures paved the way for the revolution. In England “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 hurled James II from the throne and it had a great impact in America also. “The news of the landing of William of Orange, in November 1688, reached Boston in March,1689, and the flight of James II was probably known to the colonial leaders not long after”( Channing 88).

Gray Champion announces the fall of, “a Popish tyrant” from the throne of England” (24). It was seen as a triumph of civil and religious rights in New England. It stirred the people and made them bold. People were on the verge of revolt, waiting for a signal to rouse from a sluggish despondency. The time period is established in these lines,
“one afternoon in April 1689” (GC 21). Edmund Andros and his favorite councilors “made their appearance in the streets of Boston” (GC 21) and before another sunset, “the governor, and all that rode so proudly with him, were prisoners, and long ere it was known that James had abdicated, king William was proclaimed throughout New England” (GC 25).

On the morning of April 18, the town was full of armed men; Andros was arrested and the commander of an English frigate, which happened to be in the harbor, was compelled to strike her topmasts and send her sails on shore. A provisional government was then formed under the Old Charter, and William and Mary were proclaimed king and Queen. (Channing 88)

The rebellion in Boston was a miniature prototype of the actual revolution. After the accession of William of Orange on the throne of England, a declaration was issued that magistrates unjustly turned out of office should resume their functions. The bearer of the news John Winslow was at once arrested but before his imprisonment, the news was out. This intelligence produced a marked effect and precipitated a revolt.

The aftermath of the revolution led to the restoration of governorship in Bradstreet’s provisional Government in 1691. This new government was a midway between that of an independent colony and a Royal Province. The revolt aimed to regain the Charter’s privileges but the act of civil disruption was denounced by Bradstreet. He exclaims in the tale, “do nothing rashly. Cry not aloud, but pray for the welfare of New England, and expect patiently what the Lord will do in this matter!” (GC 22) and after the revolt, Massachusetts became practically independent.
“My Kinsman Major Molineaux” is also centered on people’s rebellion against the English authority for revoking the autonomous status of the colony. The historical context is established in these lines of the tale, “After the kings of Great Britain had assumed the right of appointing the colonial governors, the measures of the latter seldom met with the ready and generous approbation which had been paid to those of their predecessors, under the original charters” (MKMM 517). It unfolds in the time of high political excitement, “not far from a hundred years ago” (MKMM 518) when the agitation against the colonial authority was not a rare spectacle. “The people looked with most jealous scrutiny to the exercise of power which did not emanate from themselves . . .” (MKMM 517).

Hawthorne captured the wave of revolution in the present tale that generated immense interest in the American revolutionary leaders who were trying to constitute the representative government and alleviate the oppression that precipitated the revolution. The story revolves around a country bred youth, Robin who arrives in a little metropolis of a New England colony from a far off place in search of his wealthy and influential relative, Major Molineux. Robin has an ambition to prosper in the world with the help of this paternal uncle. He has come to the town for the first time hence, he does not know about his dwelling. In his encounter with various people, he inquires about it but nobody gives him a proper answer. The response of the people on hearing the name of his relative baffles him.

On his expedition, he meets a man with painted visage. His face was painted intense red on one side while the other side it was black. This man tells Robin to wait at
one side of the street as Major Molineux would pass by. Robin has actually arrived in the town on the night of a planned riot in which his relative is the victim. The Major seems to be an official of the British administration, a loyalist to the crown, and a member of the court party, hence, is hounded by the mob in the wake of the revolution. The Loyalists were those Americans who remained faithful to the British Empire during the war. Although they were steadfast in their commitment to remain within the British Empire, it was a very hard decision to make and stick to during the Revolution. They suffered regular harassment as their property was plundered and they were subjected to personal attacks. About one-in-six Americans was an active Loyalist during the Revolution and that number undoubtedly would have been higher if the Patriots hadn’t been so successful in threatening and punishing people who made their Loyalist sympathies known in public.

Robin waits for the arrival of his relative and finally a procession comes into his view. His relative is being driven out of the town by an angry mob whose leaders are disguised to conceal their identity from the authority. The man with the painted visage with whom Robin enquires about his relative was the leader of the protesters. The Major is seen amid mighty stream of people in an uncovered cart, “there, in tar-and-feathery dignity, sat his kinsman, Major Molineaux!”(MKMM 528) In Annals of Salem( ii edition), Felt wrote, “It was a mobbish custom with a small portion of the people here and elsewhere, before and at the first of revolution, to punish individuals, charged as traitors with a coat of such materials”(2:562). Tar and feathering was the sort of activity in which the sons of liberty were carrying in summer of 1765. In his essay “The Old News”
Hawthorne referred to, “the ignominy of tar and feathers” (155). The process of “Tar and feathering,” was brutally violent. The victims were stripped of their clothes, covered with hot tar, and splattered with feathers then they were forced to parade about in public unless the British Army was close at hand to protect them. They often suffered bad treatment from the Patriots and often had to flee from their own homes. The American patriots used tar and feathering to intimidate British tax collectors.

The colonists acknowledged the right of the parliament to regulate their trade and to impose tariff duties but tacitly reserved a right to disobey laws whenever it would run counter to their interest. Taking its lessons from the French and Indian war, the British government tried to tighten the administration of its laws on its colonies. This step was followed by an attempt to tax the colonist which led to a warning growl of discontent. The Americans opposed the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Town Shed Act 1767 with unexpected violence. The colonists objected to being taxed at all by any legislative body, in which they had no representation.

In spite of numerous protests from the colonies the Stamp Act was passed. This law required the colonists to put stamps of varying values upon the newspapers, pamphlets, and almanacs published in the colonies. It was also required to put the stamp on advertisements, college, diplomas, wills, deeds and mortgages, and on every sort of legal documents used in the court proceedings. The stamps were to be bought from officers appointed to sell them. The revenue derived thus was to help pay the cost of the government in the territory obtained from France at the end of the French and the Indian war. In August 1765, the names of the stamp distributors were published which led to
riots in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The Stamp Act struck at all classes and interest such as lawyers, editors, and clergyman; hence it aroused a universal opposition and led to resolutions, memorials, boycotts, riots, and hangings-in-effigy. It threw the entire set up of the colonies into turmoil. Barker and Commager wrote about this time:

. . . and pressure was exerted everywhere to induce the officers appointed to sell the stamps to resign their positions: where they refused to comply with this demand, the colonists restored to mob violence, seizing and destroying the stamps, riding the officials on rails, and otherwise showing their determination not to submit to the tax. (106-107)

The colonial resistance led to further coercion by the British administration and coercion led to war. Decades before the actual revolution took place; resistance in America against the British colonial policies was intensifying. The resentment of people was directed against the custom officials as well as against the stamp officers. In the temper prevailing in America, it was absolutely impossible to enforce it without an armed conflict (Barker and Commager 106). One famous Loyalist, Thomas Hutchinson was lieutenant Governor and Chief justice in 1765, and he became victim of mob fury because he favored the Stamp Act. His house was sacked and his books and papers were destroyed. In 1774, he was forced to leave America for London (Channing 106). Hawthorne had read the papers of Thomas Hutchinson “the unfortunate governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony who had fled to England on the eve of revolution” (MKMM
40) and that reading would have given him an edge in factual details and a historical coloring to the whole event.

Hawthorne was skeptical of any kind of violent revolution; hence, he called the leaders of rioters “like fiend”. Hegle Norman Nilsen said about this perception of Hawthorne, “what Hawthorne seems to say, in his subtly ironic manner is that the essential nature of any political leadership is moral chaos and corruption. This quality is usually hidden behind a polished exterior, but in times of revolt and mob violence, it is revealed in all its horror” (134).

Everybody was not in favor of violent revolution. There is one man in the tale that represents the voice of those who disapprove violence in the name of reform. He says about the upcoming violent procession, “three or four riotous fellows abroad tonight.”(MKMM 527). Hawthorne’s democratic association could understand and sympathize with the anger of masses against the unjust domination but his distrust of mob fury and violent behavior would explain his negative tone for the rioters. The revolution had been a fearful thing in Hawthorne’s mind for sometime even though he found the ends it wrought at times admirable. His skepticism towards revolution is resonant in the words of R W Emerson:

A mob is a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason and traversing its work. The mob is man voluntarily descending to the nature of the beast. Its fit hour of activity is night. Its actions are insane, like its whole constitution. It persecutes a principle; it would whip a right; it would tar and feather justice, by inflicting fire and outrage upon the
houses and persons of those who have these. (87)

Violent reforms and mob frenzy disturbed Hawthorne. He had some reservations regarding the behavior of the revolutionary mob as reiterated in his manuscript “Septimius Felton” and in his sketches “Liberty Tree” [1840] and “The Old Tory” [1835]. His manuscript Septimius Felton contained some of his final thoughts regarding mob frenzy:

In times of revolutions and public disturbances all absurdities are more unrestrained; the measure of calm sense, the habits, the orderly decency, are in a measure lost. More people become insane, I should suppose; offenses against public morality, female license are more numerous; suicides, murders, all ungovernable outbreaks of man’s thoughts, embodying themselves in wild act, take place more frequently, and with less horror to the lookers-on. (67)

At the end of the story, Robin remains in the town though he knows that his uncle is no longer there to support him. It throws light on the optimistic ending of the tale. In a democratic era there will be hope and better prospect for everybody irrespective of lineage. In this new political structure aristocratic lineage and royal connections will be meaningless. Robin chooses to adopt himself to an emerging social structure which is full of democratic convictions. Hawthorne seems to celebrate this moment because of his “marked preference for democratic rather than aristocratic occasions” (Mellow 10). He was a professed democrat; hence we can understand his joy and hope in coming out of the yoke of British rule. QD Levis says about the tale my Kinsman Major Molineaux as,
“a tale symbolizing America’s coming of an age deposing an old practical authority and beginning to establish itself as a young, new and independent country” (Nilsen 125).

**Abuse of Intellectual Power**

The next set of tales in the present chapter shift focus from the 17th century to the 19th century. Hawthorne’s tales “The Birth Mark” and “Rappaccini’s Daughter” are reflective of the attitude of the 19th century society towards men of science. They depict the author’s distrust of science in the wake of Nazi’s experiments on human beings and the creation of atom bomb in the 19th century. Hawthorne found in his contemporary society a relentless devotion to procuring money, deviousness, and obsession with appearance, along with the manipulative reduction of others to a tool. This moral decadence was quite disturbing to him. These tales originate at a single point that is the radical viciousness of trying experiments on human beings. In both the tales the central figure is a physician or a scientist. Hawthorne wrote these tales in the 19th century, so attributed some of the evils present in medical profession at that time to the characters of these tales. The prime concern of Aylmer and Dr. Rappaccini is the success of their scientific venture to enhance their reputation as physicians or scientists not the life of those who are subjected to their experiments or treatment.

“The Birth Mark” was published in 1843. The historicity of the tale is established by placing the happenings of the tale in the late 19th century. It was the time when electricity was recently discovered as mentioned in the tale itself. At that time, medical practitioners were enjoying financial prosperity coupled with social respect but they were
severely criticized for their inhuman attitude toward their patient. During 1831, the major allegation against physicians was that they were indifferent to human life.

The physicians were so obsessively involved with their studies that they began to develop eccentricities beyond normal standards and tolerances. Since the 19th century, fictitious depictions of science vacillated between notions of science as the saviour of society at one extreme and its doom on the other end. Consequently, depictions of scientists in fiction ranged between the virtuous and the depraved, the sober and the insane. Until the 20th century, optimism about progress was the most common attitude towards science but later latent anxieties about disturbing the secrets of nature surfaced following the increasing role of science in wartime.

The prototypical fictional obsessive scientist appeared in 1818 as Victor Frankenstein in the novel *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley. Frankenstein was a sympathetic character but the critical element of conducting forbidden experiments that cross “boundaries that ought not to be crossed” heedless of the consequences was present in Shelley’s novel also. Frankenstein was trained as both an alchemist and a modern scientist that made him a bridge between the two eras. Another archetypal Mad Scientist was Faust, or Dr. Faustus in Marlow’s *Dr. Faustus*. The Faust legend was widely recognized and referred to as an example of selling one’s soul to the devil. In almost all cases, Faust sold his soul for knowledge or supernatural power.

Hawthorne’s men of science are not evil genius but their obsessive passion for knowledge and their desire to test the power of science lead them to cross formidable
boundaries, hence, inviting their material and spiritual ruin. Aylmer is a man of science and has explored the secrets of chemistry. His love for science overrules his love for his beautiful wife, Georgiana. He is so obsessed with the idea of perfection that he cannot bear even the slightest imperfection. There is a mark upon the cheek of Georgiana, which resembles a human hand. It appears to Aylmer as a visible mark of earthly imperfection. He has tremendous faith in the power of science and is convinced of his ability to remove it through an operation. This confidence is generated in him because of his “successful explorations of his (my) studies of nature” which opened, “new vistas of human endeavor”. He even rejoiced in the imperfection of Georgiana, “Since it will be such a rapture to remove it” (BM 231).

He persuades his wife to undergo an operation for its removal. He happily ejaculates, “What will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work!” (BM 230). Georgiana has gone through the record of Aylmer’s failure in other great experiments. She knows that how he has fallen short of his greatest conception yet loves him for what he is. She wants to satisfy his highest and deepest conception and puts her life at stake for him. At the end of the tale, she dies on the operation table and Aylmer’s failure has been highlighted with these words of Georgiana, “Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer” (BM 237).

The criticism of medical profession goes back to the time of Chaucer whose physician loved “gold in special”. During 1830 to 1850, the medical profession was thought to be a respectable and noble profession. But the impact of chemical and
technological discoveries and the success of medical practitioners in South and North during the civil war paved the way for their enjoying more favored positions and its misuse. Even Aylmer had made discoveries in the elemental powers of nature that roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe.

At the advance stage of his experiment on his wife, Aylmer becomes conscious of the risk involved in it but does not stop there. He prefers to sacrifice his lovely wife on the altar of professional pride. His looks and gestures betray how much was at stake when he tells Georgiana, “there is a danger”, to which Georgiana replies, “Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad” (BM 235). She identifies Aylmer’s monomaniac obsession with perfection and self so, instead of being the subject of her husband’s loathsome gaze for the rest of her life, she prefers death. Aylmer is insensitive and individualistic. He says, “ . . . only one thing remains to be tried. If that fails us we are ruined” (BM 235). Aylmer is only concerned about the success and failure of his experiment.

On the contrary, Georgiana is a perfect picture of the self–sacrificing woman with unconditional love and devotion. Her only wish is to satisfy her husband’s highest and deepest conception regarding her physical perfection. It is only for his sake that she wishes to put off the birthmark. After administering the draught of the liquid concocted by him, “Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotion proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested” (BM 236). The success of his experiment will be another draught of success in the ocean of his accomplishment to enhance his reputation in the learned circle. “There was a fear that
doctors would “try things’ on them; that patients, in short, were used, not treated” (Gross 134). Aylmer is not an exception but an exemplification of the negative countenance of the medical profession. This story can also be studied as a brilliant depiction of sexual politics of idealization. Georgiana was acceptable to her male counterpart only on terms of her physical perfection.

Rappaccini of “Rappaccini daughter” is also a victim of the evils of medical profession. He is an unorthodox practitioner with his belief in medicinal herbs. The University of Padua and its botanical garden are the setting of the tale. The Botanical garden in the University of Padua was in existence as early as in 1545. Dr. Rappaccini makes his daughter, Beatrice the subject of his scientific study without her consent. He treats her as an object and gradually instills poison in her. The gradual exposure to the poisonous herbs and plants makes her breath poisonous for normal beings; be it human or any other natural living objects. She is deprived of simple joy and cannot look at an insect without harming it because her look is capable of sucking life from that creature. She is bereft of any normal relation by her association with her father’s study.

Like a normal girl of her age when she falls in love with Giovanni, to her utter despair she realizes the “awful doom” of her life as this natural emotion is prohibited for her. It is reflected in the following words, “the effect my father’s fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind . . .” (RD 273). Giovanni’s contact with Beatrice contaminates his breath too.

This tale highlights the professional warfare of a long continuance between two physicians Rappaccini and Baglioni. The malicious and evil intention of Dr. Baglioni is
revealed when he tells Govianni that, “Rappaccini is said to have instructed her (Beatrice) deeply in his science and that Young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor’s chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine!” (RD 261).

In Hawthorne’s time, factionalism was common and it was normal for doctors to abuse each other with unsparing violence in the name of their medical commitments. The criticism of Rappaccini procedure by Baglioni and lack of respect towards each other was not unusual among doctors during the 19th century. Baglioni speaks about the success of Rappaccini as “work of chance” and attributes his failure to his mistaken theories. The author of “Character and Abuses of the Medical Profession” records, “Physicians exhibit a sensitiveness and jealousy of temper, especially in their intercourse with each other, far greater than is met with among other educated men” (Gross 137). They lacked “professional etiquette” like respectful attitude of one physician towards other. The criticism of a doctor’s way of treatment by a colleague, an unfavorable estimation of one practitioner’s skill by another that smacked of “patient-grabbing” or even remotely implied an unfavorable estimation of one practitioner’s skill by another-doctors were constantly, and often neurotically, on watch for. The result was that “intercourse between [physicians] is but too often disturbed by personal rivalry, . . .” (Gross 137). The apathy of doctor towards the patient was most severely censured.

RH Shryocks in “Medicine and Society in America 1660-1860” [1960] mentioned about, “medical sectarianism” which referred to the division of medical practitioners in two camps. In one camp, there were physicians, who were known for
their bigoted attachment to authorized modes of practice. This group of physicians was unwilling to receive, inform or to adopt improvements in practice however valuable that did not come through the regular channels of scientific investigation or established theories. On the other hand, there were doctors who were known for their, “bigoted devotion to visionary theories” (Gross 139).

In larger perspective, a contest was on between galenic and paracelsan medicine. These two schools of thoughts were engaged in a battle related to the cultivation of botanical garden. In “Rappaccini’s Daughter” this factionalism is present in form of a rivalry between the two doctors and their modes of practices. Rappaccini is more respectable. His bigoted devotion to “visionary theories” deters him from the good old rules of the medical profession. Rappaccini follows Thomsonianism [using only botanic drugs], a radical and an unconventional mode of treatment of diseases which has sprang up in 1830s and 1840s. Like a fanatic, he holds biological control over the life of his daughter. He has limited his material medica to medicine distilled from plants. His theory, that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons makes him an ally of both botanic and homeopaths.

Baglioni is a regular practitioner who condemns Rappaccini because, “. . . he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge”(260-261). But ironically, even Baglioni does not hesitate in taking away the life of Beatrice to beat Rappaccini.
The situation in medical field is reflective of other radical changes in the
American society analogous to the radical departures from orthodoxy in other areas of the
cultural life of America. Beatrice and Giovanni become victim of the professional rivalry
between the two giants of medical world. Baglioni exploits the gullible and simple
Giovanni to take his revenge upon Rappaccini. He makes Giovanni believe that
Rappaccini has a scientific interest in him and there must be some role of Beatrice in it.
Under his influence, Giovanni accuses Beatrice of a crime she has not committed.
Giovanni gives a liquid as antidote to Beatrice to drink to prove her love. This liquid was
given to Giovanni by Baglioni. As soon as Beatrice drinks that chemical, she dies.

Baglioni bursts forth in happiest ejaculation and exclaims: “perchance most
learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!” (RD 265). He sacrifices
two innocent lovers on the altar of his professional rivalry. The tale seems a fictional
representation of the ethical deviation in the medical field. The Physicians’ indifference
to the stuff of mankind and imperviousness to the ordinary emotion of humanity was
under constant attack. They were obsessed with the ambition to enhance their reputation
irrespective of the life of their patients. Both the characters, Alymer and Dr. Rappaccini
depict Hawthorne’s distrust of scholarship, devoid of emotions.

Cultural Colloquy: A Quest for Utopia

Hawthorne’s next set of tales “Shaker’s Bridal” and “The Canterbury
Pilgrims” are based on his actual observations of the shaker community. The vision of
Christian perfectionism led the first half of the 19th century in an era of utopian experimentation. All of them, Owenists, Fourierists, Oneida Perfectionists, Mormons, Amana inspirationalists, and New Icarians were founded in America between 1820 to 1870. The Shaker community was one of them. In an age when, “Thousands were involved in soul searching religious experiences, many heard God speak in the thunder or encountered angelic visitants bringing a revelation that would save mankind” (Bragdon and Cutchen 259).

The Shakers sect first appeared as an offshoot of the Quakers around 1750 in Manchester, England, “Some religious groups decided to cut themselves off from the world and found utopian communities of their own. Thus the shakers, an off shoot of the Quakers established scores of village where everything turned in common” (Bragdon and Cutchen 292). The new sect was the result of protest against denominationalism. It was a calling for a return to primitive faith. As Zealous Protestants, they studied the bible and felt full liberty to interpret the sacred writings for themselves. The Shakers were best known for the fervor of their worship services like the Quakers and their community spirit.

The idea of writing about a Utopian experiment was not new in the 19th century. Thomas More coined the word “Utopia” in 1516 in his work De optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insular Utopia. It was about the highest state of the republic which was ruled by reason and where property was shared communally. The population of cities was controlled by resettlement. His work inaugurated a genre of speculative fiction in the West that imagined the possibility of perfect societies existing outside the confines of
Europe. More’s book spawned a vibrant genre of speculative fiction that later included such notable works as Johann Valentin Andreae’s *Christianopolis* (1619), Tommaso Campanella’s *Civitas Solis* [The city of the sun, 1623], and Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis* [1627].

The cultural impact of More’s novel on actual utopian experimentation is difficult to measure. All of these utopian communities in the 19th century experimented with communal ownership and control of property, and alternative family arrangements. These Christian perfectionists created the template for subsequent Utopian communities by demonstrating practical alternatives to the patterns of domesticity, radical individualism, and competitive capitalism within the new American Republic. By the 19th century, this utopian format was already well established and easily appropriated by the authors of that era. Twenty-nine utopian works were published in America between 1800 and 1860.

This fictional treatment of the actual shaker community by Hawthorne was not something unusual. Molly Jones’ “The Choosing Tree” was set in Maine in the late 19th century and it reveals shakers in the background. Daniel is an eight year-old boy who is left to live with a strange, fervent group of people called Shakers. “The Choosing Tree” explores lesser-known people shakers and contributes to the understanding of the history of the church in America.

In August 1831, Hawthorne actually visited New Hampshire with his uncle Samuel and saw the shaker village at Canterbury. He was impressed as well as amused by the shaker customs. He described the village in a letter to his sister, Louisa; “If it were not or their ridiculous ceremonies,” he added, “A man might do worse than join them”
In August 1851, twenty years later, he again described the Shakers settlement at Hancock in his notebook in terms of disgust and disdain. Hawthorne observed:

No bathing or washing facilities in the chambers; but in the entry there was a sink and wash-bowl, where all their attempts at purification were to be performed. The fact shows that all their miserable pretense of cleanliness and neatness is the thinnest superficiality; and that the Shakers are and must needs to be a filthy sect. And then their utter and systematic lack of privacy; the close function of man with man, and supervision of one man over another—it is hateful and disgusting to think of; and the sooner the sect is extinct the better—a consummation which, I am happy to hear, is thought to be not a great many years distant. (Mather 10)

The Shakers, he concluded, “are certainly the most singular and bedeviled set of people that ever existed in a civilized land” (Mather 10). Hawthorne’s tale “The Canterbury Pilgrims” derives its title playfully from Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales as well as the name refers to an actual New Hampshire Shaker village. This tale chronicles the woes of three pilgrims en route to a Shaker village. The group comprises a poet, a merchant, and a yeoman. They are all failures in The World and are escaping from it to seek solace and a better life within the confines of a Shaker village. These pilgrims meet a pair of young Shakers, Miriam and Josiah who have just fled from the community to marry. These pilgrims try unsuccessfully to convince these lovers to return to the village with stories of their own misfortunes in the larger world.
Hawthorne meaningfully refers to the garb of its inhabitant Miriam and Josiah as, “strange”, and “old-fashioned”. They are dressed “in a mode unknown to our times” which might have existed, “half a century before” (CP 490). Hawthorne’s reflections regarding Shaker establishment display his impatience with such religious colonies. He criticized their goal for utopia at the expense of worldly “fret and fear” and “iniquities of the flesh”. About this settlement, he writes in his tale, “The Canterbury Pilgrim”, “Where all former ties of nature or society would be sundered, and all old distinctions levelled, and a cold and passionless security be substituted for mortal hope and fear, as in that other refuge of the world’s weary outcasts, the grave” (495).

Hawthorne called Shaker’s abode a living tomb for they prefer a secluded and ascetic way of life instead of battling the difficulties of life. He portrayed the pilgrims to Canterbury in ironical light who dissuade Miriam and Josiah from joining the larger world but they themselves are still imbued with passions and aspirations of the former world.

The culture in which Hawthorne was brought up did not allow him to indulge in sexual details yet he could not conform to the ideal of celibacy so vehemently proclaimed by Shakers. Shaker communities were the form of protestant monasticism. It was essentially ascetic in its orientation with a belief in abandoning the world. Shakers from early childhood avoided face to face contact with their elders in fear of betraying their carnal passion in front of them. Shaker rules did not forbid a member to leave the community but they were asked to announce their intention of leaving the community at the time of departure. Hawthorne had a strong inclination and liking for married love and
domestic life. He wrote in “The Old Manse”, “Therefore, along that shady river- bank, there are spots, marked with a heap of ashes and half consumed brands, only less sacred in my remembrance than the hearth of a household –fire” (23), hence, in “The Canterbury pilgrims”, Hawthorne wishfully depicted Miriam and Josiah rejecting the “cold and passionless security” which the shakers substitute for “mortal hope and fear”. It was a celibate sect which failed to keep its ranks full from new conversions, hence obviously doomed to an eventual extinction. “The emphasis on celibacy, however, tended to drive away the young people and reduce the strength of the communities” (Baldwin 248).

The shakers were followers of an English mystic Mother Ann Lee who claimed to have seen Christ in a vision. She said that Christ told her that the marital relations were not merely sinful but the fountain head from which all the rest of the world’s evil proceeded, hence, should be discarded (C 2002 Pagewise). She rejected the idea that God had sanctioned sex for reproduction and insisted on the spiritual necessity of celibacy. Shaker beliefs appealed to many people in the United States at that time. They believed that everyone was child of God, hence, should be treated equally, regardless of sex, age, race, education, or wealth. Many were particularly drawn to the Shaker’s doctrine of radical equality.

In “The Shaker Bridal” father Ephraim bestows the responsibilities of his village on Adam Colburn and Martha Pierson. They were former lovers but could not marry in absence of proper subsistence. They remained faithful to each other and did not marry anyone else to prosper in the world otherwise possible but their fortune never blossomed.
They decided to join the Shaker community and soon became an integral part of “the primitive form of shaker government, as established by Mother Ann” (SB 203). In the Shaker communities sexes were rigidly segregated, using separate entrances, stairways, and sleeping quarters to avoid intermingling. Each family had two elders who were responsible for the spiritual management of the family, and the elders answered to the “ministry”—which consisted of two male elders and female eldresses chosen from among the elders of the families. Detailed oral confession of sin before witnesses was considered to be necessary for salvation, and was required for admission to the sect. The confession was to be repeated frequently, each time a member felt that he had sinned.

Adam’s ambitious nature accommodates his worldly affection for Martha and he willingly accepts her as his sister in the new arrangement but Martha fails to do it. “But, had she attempted it, perhaps the old recollections, the long repressed feelings of childhood, youth, and womanhood, might have gushed from her heart, in words that it would have been profanation to utter there” (203). Father Ephraim hopes that, “... the time may hasten on, when the mission of Mother Ann shall have wrought its full effect, — when children shall no more be born and die, and the last survivor of mortal race, some old and weary man like me, shall see the sun go down, never more to rise on the world of sin and sorrow” (SB 204).

His longing for the end of this world because of its “sin and sorrow” is reflective of shaker’s perverted vision. Hawthorne has rejected it as unhealthy human aspiration which was involved in the basic conception of Shaker sect. They appear to be escapists who have turned their back from the struggle of life. Hawthorne describes the
membership of the sect as being, “below the ordinary standard of intelligence” (SB 202). Martha died before the actual ceremony because she could not let her earthly affection extinguish completely. She still retained in her heart, “the iniquities of the world”. She could bear no longer, “the weight of its desolate agony” (SB 204).

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) visited the Canterbury, New Hampshire Shakers in 1828 and 1829 and condemned them as incapable animals led by shrewd male and female oligarchs. Unlike Hawthorne, Emerson renewed his interest in the Shakers and tempered his criticism in 1842 after his visit to the Harvard community with Nathaniel Hawthorne. He established lasting relationships with two Shaker elders and observed similarity between Shaker communalism and the European socialism sweeping across the United States before the Civil War. He also admired the institutionalized equality among the Shakers.

But Hawthorne was not the only one who was uncomfortable with the fundamentals of the Shaker community. Like him, Catharine Maria Sedgwick was also simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the new utopianism. In her novel Redwood [1824], she describes the Shaker villages of Lebanon, Hancock, and Massachusetts, as a “religious republic divided into communal family units. She describes respectfully the structure and practices of the Shakers in an earlier section but finds “deceit lurking under many a broad brim” (RW 207) in the Shaker community. In the midst of this mostly flattering portrayal, she observes that these communities “have been visited by foreigners and strangers from all parts of our union—all are shocked or disgusted by some of the absurdities of the shaker faith, but none have withheld their admiration from
the results of their industry, ingenuity, order, frugality, and temperance” (RW 181). Sedgwick’s conflicting assessment of Shaker culture is representative of the mixture of skepticism, abhorrence, and grudging respect extended by Americans to their brethren living in utopian communities during the same period. She devotes ten pages of the novel to the rescue of young Emily from the sect. Sedgwick also casts an elder Reuban Harrington in the role of villain who forces Emily to marry him.

Daniel Pierce Thompson (1795–1868) also published a story titled “The Shaker Lovers” in 1848 that chronicles the “escape” and impetuous wedding of two hot-blooded Shaker youths. The first chapter promises to display the wonderful honest exterior (SL 7) of Shaker life, prefacing a story that will climax with the attempted murder of young Seth by an enraged Shaker elder wielding an oar. Herman Melville’s [1819–1891] treatment of the Shakers in chapter 71 of Moby-Dick is also less than flattering. Melville describes an encounter between the Pequod and the plague-ridden Jeroboam which has been taken over by a Shaker prophet named Gabriel. Hailing from the “crazy society of Neskyeuna Shakers,” Gabriel is said to have ascended to heaven through a trapdoor during “their cracked, secret meetings” (MD 312). Melville’s association of Shaker culture with religious fanaticism is consistent with the literary skepticism accorded to them throughout the 19th century.

One obvious reason for the Shaker’s decline was that it was not marriage-based. As Shakers were celibate, their communities could grow only by constantly bringing in new converts which was hard to find in the 19th century. The unquestioning submission to authority, celibacy, and strenuous manual labor in the shaker community disenchanted
American populace. At that time when a common American citizen was overpowered by individualistic and materialistic values, Shaker’s insular and communal way of life and its rigorous spiritual discipline did not appeal to them.

All the tales selected in this chapter breathe the episteme of time and draw material from colonial history of the 17th century as well as the 19th century society. They comprise the complex web of attitudes, ideals, and perception; and highlight the poetics of culture of that particular historical moment. It is interesting to note that this cultural reproduction serves as a guide to the Puritan world of the 17th century from the point of view of the author of the 19th century. These stories dramatize the conflicting forces and values within a culture for eg. Quakers and Puritans, Catholicism and Protestantism, Democratic aesthetics and subversive Colonial regime, and Individualism and Society. This reading articulates the multiple voices present in these tales that are suppressed and reconciled. In the present reading of this cultural colloquy, it has been observed that the character and circumstances of Hawthorne’s life have influenced the discourse contained within this text. Consciously or unconsciously the author’s perception has mingled with the facts which are as accurate as any actual book of history notwithstanding some abbreviation deliberately intended by the writer.
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