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INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS SOCIETY: HAWTHORNE'S RESPONSE TO EMERSON'S
SELF-RELIANCE

CAMPINA GRANDE-PB
DEZEMBRO DE 2011

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RELIANCE*

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é comparar o conceito de Emerson sobre a autoconfiança com a ênfase que Hawthorne dá à influência do meio social sobre o caráter e as ações do indivíduo. Diante dessas noções distintas, pretendemos prover um breve relato dos fundamentos de suas divergências bem como dos pontos em que convergem. As obras de ambos os autores utilizadas aqui são *Self-Reliance*, (1841) de Emerson, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) e *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), romances de Hawthorne e seu conto “Young Goodman Brown” (1835). O trabalho contém também uma apreciação do ideal de virtude primitiva e liberdade pagã em contraste com o homem moderno e a herança moral da cristandade. O suporte crítico desse assunto deriva principalmente de três dos trabalhos do filósofo alemão Friedrich Nietzsche, *Assim Falou Zaratustra* (1883), *Crepúsculo dos Ídolos* (1888) e *Genealogia da Moral* (1887) e do estudo crítico de D. H. Lawrence *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) além do seu ensaio “Pan in America” (1924). Em todos esses autores a discussão sobre valores morais, mecanização da sociedade e obsessão pela busca da verdade são temas recorrentes em conexão com o ideal de força e liberdade do homem primitivo.

Palavras-chave: Individualismo. Sociedade. Liberdade. Valores morais.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is the comparison between Emerson's concept of the self-reliant individual and Hawthorne's idea of the influence of the social environment on man's character and his attitude towards life. With these opposite notions in mind, we intend to provide a brief account of the grounds of their divergence as well as an observation of the convergent points of their writings. The works of both authors which have been used here are Emerson's *Self-Reliance* (1841) and Hawthorne's novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and his short tale "Young Goodman Brown" (1835). The work also contains an appraisal of the ideal of man's primitive virtue and heathenish freedom in contrast to modern man and the heritage of Christian morality. The criticism on these issues will be derived mainly from Friedrich Nietzsche's works *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883), *The Twilight of the Idols* (1888) , and *Genealogy of Mores* (1887), and from D.H. Lawrence's work *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), and his essay "Pan in America" (1924). In all these writers the discussion of moral values, the mechanization of modern society and the obsession with the search for truth are often-recurrent themes in connection with the ideal of primitive strength and freedom.

Key-words: Individualism. Society. Freedom. Moral values.

“For my part, life is so many things I don’t care what it is... just now I
cup of tea, this morning it was wormwood and gall. Hand me the sugar”
D.H.Lawrence

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to appraise Hawthorne's and Emerson's writings on individualism and men's relation to the social environment. For this purpose, Emerson's transcendentalist view shall be compared with Hawthorne's pessimistic stance concerning the possibility of the individual's immediate deliverance from the social bond and the heritage of the past. As an instance of Emerson's thought on transcendentalism, I shall resort to his essay *Self-Reliance* (1841) in Richard Harter Fogle's *The Romantic Movement in American Writing* (1966), with a brief account of the concept of transcendentalism in America, of which he is the most important representative. It will also be taken into account his emphasis on action – the mark of the self-reliant individual – as well as the role of solitude on man's achievements. For Hawthorne's response to these items – transcendentalism, the individual, society, aloofness and action – we shall make use of elements of his novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). A last comparison between Emerson's and Hawthorne's concept of truth conveyed by symbols shall be seen in relation to the characters Dimmesdale, in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Hawthorne's short tale "Young Good Man Brown" (1835). These ideas will be seen in connection with Nietzsche's and Lawrence's concept that the loss of primitive instincts have deprived man of his sense of liberty and rendered him a slave to tradition and evil conscience. Some of Hawthorne's characters will be seen as reproducing the type envisaged by Emerson as the representation of the self-sufficient, self-reliant man, whose virtue and intelligence elevate him to a sphere of independence, above society and its false sense of accomplishment. It will also be considered that, inasmuch as Hawthorne's stance concerning transcendentalism is that of a skeptical critic – as opposed to Emerson's optimism – even the most powerful of the representatives of the doctrine of self-reliance in the former's work, will be seen as little more than an ideal far from being realized in the near future, whereby he shows his doubts of immediate, personal deliverance. The divergences arising from the comparison between Hawthorne's and Emerson's thought, the clash between the individualistic ideal and the hindrances of the social environment, shall be seen in the light of the literary criticism of Richard Gray in his *History of American Literature* (2008); the beliefs and basic precepts of American transcendentalism will be viewed in connection with his work, as well as with the article "The End of American Transcendentalism", by Lawrence Buell. The authors's concepts of the modes of apprehension of truth will be viewed in the light of F. O. Matthiessen's work *American Renaissance* (1941).

1. An Overview of American Transcendentalism

One of the earliest sources of American transcendentalist thought is German idealism, a concept that traces all phenomena to pre-existent ideas. The same idea pervades the heritage of Western Philosophy, from Plato down to modern times. Its most immediate inspiration was the urge for the nation's intellectual, personal and religious independence. In regard to Emerson, the influence of Eastern .Religious and philosophical thought provided the basis for his individualism, with the belief in the spiritual relation between man and the World Spirit.

From the first premise that the individual is part of the whole and shares a qualitative equality with the Divine Spirit, it followed that man's own efforts and intuition were enough for the apprehension of truth. This concept rejects the merely rational approach and the interference of religious institutions. Besides its severance from formalism in matters of religion, some transcendentalists were also concerned with the issue of social reform. Regarding this problem, Lawrence Buell says: "Transcendentalists sought nothing less than to change the world" (p.275). Those who followed Emerson's steps founded the Transcendentalist Club, which, for about eight years since 1836, by the time he was living in Concord, Massachusetts, assembled to discuss philosophic, religious, artistic, and social issues. Some of the most prominent among the members of the movement were Theodore Parker (1810-1860), Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), George Ripley (1802-1880), Orestes Brownson (1803-1876), Elizabeth Peabody (1804-1894), and specially Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), whose work, according to Gray (2008), approaches such subjects as the struggle for equality of women and men, the problem of slavery, the need of education as a means of personal emancipation, and many kindred issues that, measured with The Declaration of Independence was still far from being accomplished in their ideal land of freedom. Among the above mentioned thinkers, Orestes Brownson is cited by Buell as also engaged in the discussion of social problems related to the working class, while the pursuit of Utopian Socialism is associated to the name of George Ripley.

In regard to spirituality, another important concept of transcendentalism is the relation that symbols bear to the spiritual truths to be drawn from nature. Repeating the same idea of the participation of all things in the whole of material manifestation, the symbol, conveying truth in an accurate language of which the true poet- as Emerson would have it- is to be the faithful utterer, reveals the holiness and indissoluble unity of all things.

The ideal of American transcendentalism, affirming the individual independence of the American man, being a tentative rupture with the foreign and the old in every possible

aspect, from the political to the intellectual, to the artistic and religious manifestation, became a rich source of inspiration as well as contradictions in the development of issues on equality of rights and the consolidation of democracy.

1.2 Emerson's conception of the self-reliant individual

Among the outstanding names associated with American Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson is the most important. When he was in his thirties he gave up institutionalized religion, refusing to keep his place in the Unitarian Ministry. The event, according to Gray (2008, p. 130), signals Emerson's awakening to the movement of which he became a pioneer in America, after his contact with Coleridge, Wordsworth and Thomas Carlyle.

Another important source of inspiration was his acquaintance with Eastern religious and philosophical books, especially from Vedic Literature. The persuasion that he held of the doctrine of man as a microcosm and its assurance of his indissoluble connection with the whole have the influence of those spiritual teachings more than that of any other thought. His reassurance of material resources, the first consideration of his book *Nature* (1836), on one hand, and, on the other hand his awareness of the ephemeral quality of worldly possessions, as he expresses it in his poem "Hamatreya", establish the difference between the false sense of sovereignty over nature and the blessings of man's holy communion with it. The confidence that the highest good is within man's reach without any need of intermediates finds expression in his poem "*Brahma*" (1857).

Emerson's two first verses of '*Brahma*' is a transcription with slight modification of the instruction of Yama, the God of Death to the young Naciketas: "If the slayer thinks he slays, or if the slain think that he is slain, both of them do not understand..." (Katha Upanishad, 1.2. 19). The remaining verses reproduce the sacred message of the unfathomable and all-pervading character of the Godhead and the invitation to one's giving up all inferior knowledge and speculations for the sake of the highest spiritual attainment.

It is exactly on the basis of this compelling concept that Emerson's thought will remain ideally independent not only from religious dogmatism but also from unqualified sympathy for the movement associated with his name. If Transcendentalism is not a religion, at least as far as religion as a system is concerned, and if its practice presupposes action and the search for unity with nature, it is easy to have a glimpse of the ways in which this doctrine, at least ideally, goes against the social trend, a theme that is connected with Emerson's thought.

In his essay *Self-Reliance* (1841), he gives a brief narrative of a dialogue with a defender of “the dear old doctrines of the church”, (p 42-3), in which the said _defender expresses his misgivings that free thinking may be liable to the promptings of the devil. Emerson’s response is in keeping with his sense of individuality: “What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? ... No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature.” (p.42-3). The purport of his reply has to do with one of the most important tenets of Transcendentalism, the self-trust of the man who is committed only to his spiritual communion with what he considers to be the all-pervading, all-preserving Spirit who binds all material manifestation in unity, under the same eternal and infallible law outside of which nothing can be properly apprehended. All this run counter the stale attachment to fake social norms of spirituality.

Self-Reliance is an assertion that man in his true state is entitled to the highest rank. It begins with a definition of man as genius compared to baser individuals. The latter are subject to the dictates of society, the former is identified by his reliance on his own thinking ability and the originality of his conceptions. Self-Reliance is then identified as a work of transcendence which surpasses previous experiences and delivers man from cowardly attachment to tradition. Thus, the mark of the thoroughly accomplished individual is his freedom from the bonds of institutions and pseudo education, and his acceptance of the highest state a dignity, which, in Emerson’s opinion is man’s rightful position. Any frame of mind which should fall short of this belief is considered as petty and does not become man in pursuit of his noble grounds, which Emerson holds as akin to divine representation: “Prayer that craves any particular commodity, anything less than all good, is vicious.” (p. 53).

He also compares the higher nature man displays in youth to the pusillanimity he acquires later in life, when he begins to comply with the false values of society. In Emerson’s opinion neither dogma nor any form of self-deception must deviate man from the true path even at the risk of his running afoul of everyone else’s grace; compliance with society in its degraded form is seen as violence against one’s own true and sacred being.

But to attain such a degree of personal strength he affirms that man must learn how to be among the inferior multitude without being affected by their influence. In order to demonstrate the difference between great men and the mob, he recalls how few men of old were alone responsible for the greatness of their country as well as for the endurance of their influence through the ages. The persuasion that each man must pursue his own way and relinquish any intermediates between him and his spiritual path is an important aspect of his

thought. This consideration is what puts man in a direct conflict with the heritage of past experiences and the whole work of tradition. Thus, self-reliance, courage, intelligence and action are his weapons, and the last one, - action - is the proof of his deserving insofar as he exerts it properly.

It does not mean, however, that the bulk of knowledge provided by educational institutions must be thoroughly despised. For Emerson it has its own place and function in man's first steps to personal development. The only opposition he lays to its use is on account of the tendency in men of a cowardly spirit to petrify knowledge by building icons as boundaries beyond which they do not dare to cross. The purport of his message is the decadence ensuing from that stance: "love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue" (p.29). And here he urges for action toward an ever renovating path of thought. It is also a categorical assertion of the individual scholar's autonomy and insight, in opposition to "men... who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles" (p.29). That is also the difference he establishes between the mere thinker and the thinking man, in his treatment of the scholar's abilities. In Nietzsche's *Twilight Of Idols* (1888), a similar invective echoes Emerson's revulsion of slavish following of tradition: "They kill, they stuff when they worship; these idolaters of concepts" (p. 25)¹.

This stance and the spiritual stage of growth in which one is prepared to "disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures", as Emerson says, is a point at which it is pertinent to discuss the conflict and contradictions, both between his and Hawthorne's ideas as well as within their own works treated separately. The conflict stressed on here is specifically that of the self-trust enjoined in Emerson's thought in contrast to the skepticism which pervades Hawthorne's. As to the contradictions in their individual works, these have many instances in the literature of Romanticism --a theme that is treated with curious insight and slight mockery in D. H. Lawrence's work *Studies in Classic American Literature*, (1972), which presents man as always hanging between the enticing objects of material progress and a sensitivity to their devastating effects on the sacredness of his ideal communion with nature.

In Hawthorne's work the dilemma is often emphasized, whereas in Emerson's it is scattered here and there, but in a language vehement enough to reveal that his powerful assertions on the individual will, courage and action are also qualified with a dismal insight into the detrimental effects of modernity on the spirit of man. In these reflections the figure of the native is always presented as the ideal: "Strike the savage with a broad axe and in a day or

¹ Rendering mine.

two the flesh will unite and heal... the same blow shall send the white to his grave”, *Self-Reliance* (p.57). Hence the contradiction between his belief that there is a place for every human undertaking within the frame of nature-- the matching of material progress and the natural environment-, and the words at the end of the above-mentioned essay, in which he expresses his concern that the advent of the technological revolution might have been detrimental to the native vigor which distinguishes the true man from the weaklings in body and spirit. In this passage, the old- Christianity- and the new- technological progress- are deemed as vicious on account of their tendency to stagnate and stifle the manly vigor and thinking ability. (p.56-7).

In *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence taunts at the devices of the American Romantics, some of whom he diagnoses as haters of life and reality, whose writings are devoted to the overthrow of the old morality only in order to provide the way for the establishment of a new one (p. 171). In his essay “Pan in America”, he dismisses the ideal of the good savage, whom Emerson evokes, in a manner that reminds us of Nietzsche’s sentences on the same issue. In *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence affirms that identification with democracy entails the loss of individuality and consequent degeneration of one’s self. (P. 170). A brief quotation from Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Mores* suffices to show their convergences in this point: “The last nobility that existed in Europe, that of France in the 17th and 18th centuries, perished under the popular instinct of resentment” (p.44)². What Nietzsche expresses here is a lament on the anarchism of the mob and its Christian morality.

In this connection we may evoke Hawthorne’s concern, in which the same urge for “Some vigor of wild virtue” is observed in such characters as Hester Prynne and Pearl, in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Holgrave, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, (1851), and in *The Marble Faun* (1860). Here we can also appreciate to what extent, in Emerson’s and Hawthorne’s opinions, the individual will can withstand the social influence and its appeal to conformity. It is also here that the clash between them is best exemplified as to the fruits of American transcendentalism that, as it has already been mentioned, relates man to nature, in harmonious grounds, without human intermediates.

The divergences between Hawthorne’s and Emerson’s thought could be partly identified by an observation that Gray (2008), makes of both:

“The belief that Emerson retained throughout his life in what he called ‘the wonderful congruity which subsists between man and the world’,

² Rendering mine

could sometimes have worrying consequences. He was unwilling...seriously to contemplate the existence of evil” (p. 133).

Whereas for Hawthorne, whose stance before life is almost always pessimistic and inclined to fatalism, evil seems to be indissolubly linked to man’s character. His puritan background justifies this obsession. It is not, however, attributable to any sympathy in him concerning the Calvinistic dogma of predestination that he insists in his skepticism regarding the immediate deliverance of the individual from the bond with society. Granted, his reasons have much to do with his origins, but they also relate to the trauma received from the Christian heritage as a whole. Still spirituality seemed to him more comprehensive than any single confession of faith.

But the concept of original sin is the most immediate concern of his writings. The theme of guilt and the absence of redemption, widely dwelt upon in Hawthorne’s work, is pointed by Gray: “The burden of the past, the problem of inherited guilt overshadowing the present, was to become a major theme because it was an integral ‘part of his experience” (p. 201). The allusion to the author’s experience refers to one of his ancestors, John Hawthorne, one of the judges responsible for the trial and execution of persons supposedly involved in the practice of witchcraft in The Salem Witch Trials. These historical facts involving his forefathers were explored in his novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and his short tale “Young Goodman Brown” (1835). The point of conflict concerning the individual is especially seen in the difference between Emerson’s Transcendentalism, which proposes a rupture with the social ties, and Hawthorne’s unbelief in the possibility of dissociating man from his environment and its traditions.

In fact much of Hawthorne’s writing is about this conflict. It seems to us that one of the moot points to be unraveled concerning the contradictions to be found in modern writers is precisely that of establishing a balance, if such there is, between the spiritual aspirations and the secular forces that run counter them. In Hawthorne’s characters, especially, this kind of balance would be the conciliation of unspoiled individuality in man’s dealings with the external influences of his environment. F.O. Matthiessen has called attention to the fact that Hawthorne’s concern with the problem discussed here- the relation of the individual to the community- is the basis of his art and that it persists in much of what he expressed in his writing throughout his career. Matthiessen’s explanation for Hawthorne’s treatment of his characters is that it represents the author’s search for religious truth. Here, in connection with Emerson, the solitude attending on the higher aspirations of the individual is contrasted to the common bond of the masses.

In Emerson, solitude is an element for self realization. This solitude is not, however, that of the hermit that flees from action. It is not imposed from without, compelled by any external injunction. It is rather self-imposed as a discipline against social conformity. Besides, it is not always literal isolationism, as the following passage assures us: “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude” (*Self-Reliance*, p. 44).

In Hawthorne’s thought, on the other hand, isolation is distorted to the point of depriving man of human feelings. Isolation as depicted through his characters begins, sometimes, not only under the weight of guilt, but also as a result of a personal characteristic, however altruistic in principle, or any form of idealism stretched beyond limits. On this Gray (p 202), utters the following comment: “...Repeatedly in his fiction, he concentrates on people who seem to be outside life, set apart by pride, egotism, or innocence, or guilt”. Thus we have this contrast between Emerson and Hawthorne in that, to the former the individual detaches from the social chain and yet keeps his integrity, whereas for the latter the isolated individual degenerates into inhumanity, and the cause of this downfall is, sometimes, ironically the individualistic aspirations for excellence. The estrangement of the individual from the community and its effect on his sense of selfhood can be seen in reference to *The Scarlet Letter*, represented in characters such as Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, and Hester Prynne. These three, for different reasons, swerve from human fellowship.

As it has already been stated, our discussion of the conflict between the individual and the social milieu will be drawn from some of Hawthorne’s characters, beginning with an appraisal of the convergences and divergences between Hester Prynne and Pearl, in *The Scarlet Letter*, with an observation on the latter’s attitude to the world outside her experiences, and her ultimate adaptation to it. It will then be followed by a brief consideration of the concept of truth in her relation with Dimmesdale and finally the problems of the apprehension of truth in Hawthorne’s short tale “Young Goodman Brown”.

The discussion of individual freedom in connection with *The Scarlet Letter* is highly pertinent because in this novel we are presented with reflections on much of what has been considered in Transcendentalism. From the questioning of the old mores to the democratic ideal of equality, it is one of Hawthorne’s appraisal of the basis of these notions and their failure to change society. It is also an expression of his urge for a time when these ideals should be accomplished indeed. Hester Prynne is the most immediate concern because she

represents womanhood in its most desperate attempt to assert itself against oppression in a Puritan environment, with the law in its own hands.

It must be remembered that the drama depicted by Hawthorne is severed from his own days by at least two hundred years, and that the narrator admits that values have changed considerably ever since. Nevertheless, the dwelling on the deep-rooted causes of oppression and the hindrances to personal progress one has to grapple with in trying to replace the old system is relevant even to our own times. In this connection, Lawrence Buell, in his article “The End of American Transcendentalism” (p.276), says that those who embraced the ideals of the Movement were willing to grant the same scope of individuality and intellectual pursuit for man and women alike, and that the latter had a great influence in the furtherance of the propositions of Transcendental beliefs. But he reminds the reader that the critics on the Movement had for a long time laid stress on the male representatives of this trend of thought and almost consigned to oblivion so many important names of American women who were seriously and productively engaged in the course of individual emancipation, and who only recently have been given the earnest consideration that is due to them. The most conspicuous of these names, Margaret Fuller, has been mentioned in our work, under the topic “An Overview of American Transcendentalism.”

Regarding Hawthorne’s skepticism about these revolutions of mind and change of spiritual perspective, Gray (p. 200) says of him that he did not accept these as the social panacea they were purported to be, neither did he commit himself to any of them.

2. HESTER AND PEARL: IDEAL CONVERGENCES AND MORAL DISPARITY

Hester Prynne, the main character of *The Scarlet Letter*, having been punished with prison, public shame, and alienation from the community, is described throughout the drama as oscillating between the individualism that her banishment entails and the attachment to the social milieu that she has shared with her fellow humans so far. Here the term individualism is taken equivocally, inasmuch as the estrangement imposed on her is felt as working both inner strength and progressive self-effacement. The beginning of the novel, for all its bleak perspective, seems to ensure an eventual deliverance, as could be expected from the description of Hester’s issue from the prison and her exposition in the pillory. Therein the narrator says that, in spite of all expectations, the exuberance of Hester’s comeliness is not

effaced by the darkness of the dungeon in which she had been kept, and that it rather gave a lively glowing aura to the very ordeal and reproach that encompasses her. (p.45-6).

We have here a promising prospect, which will prove to be deceptive, of the ideal of return to the primitive virtue of the self, capable of asserting its identity in spite of all opposition. Under the shadow of sin this ideal is set against its opposite which is the Puritan society. The ostracism imposed by the Puritans gives Hester a foretaste of the dream of liberty. Hence her words to Dimmesdale, later in the forest: "Is the world, then, so narrow?" (p.167), urging him to throw off the yoke of guilt and his bond with priesthood and redress past suffering with the love that she still cherishes for him. But then, outside the prison door it was just the beginning of the trying experience, and thenceforward Hester's isolation, the scarlet letter, and her own daughter will be equivocally treated in relation to their role on her road to spiritual progress.

The isolation in this case is not the same as the Unpardonable Sin, which stands for the individual's aloofness out of pride and selfish motives, which renders him hardly human at all. In Hester's case it is imposed from outside, and throughout the narrative, despite the moral concern, the integrity of womanhood and its need of protection is asserted with pathos: "The mystery of a woman's soul, so sacred even in its pollution" (p.57). But, despite Hester's display of inner strength and courage- Dimmsdale appeals to her for the revelation he is not capable of making, and elsewhere in the course of the drama she is represented as a kind of steady support to his enfeebled constitution - the stigma of the scarlet letter, the unconquerable yoke, gives her the sense of bereavement that the abrupt uprooting from the community wrought on her individual and womanly character. "...giving up her individuality, she became the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point..." (p.67).

The narrator muses on Hester's spiritual thralldom to her old ground, despite the freedom of thought that this estrangement affords, and comes to an often-recurring tone in Hawthorne's own life and work, that of inescapable Necessity.

"But there is a fatality... which almost invariably compels human beings to linger around and haunt, ghostlike, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color of their lifetime" (p. 67).

But in contrast to this attachment to fate and the past, and again playing equivocally with the consequences of Hester's sin, the ostracism she undergoes will account for her off-

spring's sense of liberty from conventions and from the fears that bind the individual to stale traditions and bigotry.

The setting of Pearl's early development is outside the neighborhood, (p. 68), and there, despite the alienation from the warmth or human fellowship, or rather thanks to it, she flourishes with as much vigor and beauty as the wild landscape around her. Here primitiveness, liberty, and native strength arise out of a rupture with the social bonds, in a beautiful, vigorous and heathenish link with nature. Gorgeousness and intelligence are her outstanding characteristics. Some passages on her pagan insight smacks of the words Emerson uttered in his address on Thoreau, in reference to the estrangement in both mind and way of life with which he shoved aside any compliance with pre-established rules of religious practices (In Fogel, p. 86).

Pearl, in the same way is well aware of the basic tenets of man's relation to the deity, but she does not care to recite them in the fashion of Puritanism; by contrast, Hester's confidence waivers indefinitely. The girl's birth is first attributed by her mother to a gift from God, a blessing in redress for the wrong done to her. But this feeling is mixed with the paradoxical suspicion that this rich off-spring could turn out to be evil, in conformity to its source in an unlawful relationship. These contradictions, as it has already been mentioned, are carried throughout the narrative. The description of Pearl's wild beauty and perfection and almost all that is said concerning her is out of keeping with Hester's misgivings (p. 75-6). All that comes in contact with Pearl seems to partake of this aura of enchantment. Her dress, for instance, is described as suiting her to the most perfect detail, matching her with the beauty of the wild environment in which she has been reared. Nevertheless, the ambivalence persists; on one hand - from the narrator's perspective- Pearl is presented as the embodiment of freedom and truth; on the other hand she is seen by her mother as the tormentous remembrance of sin. Indeed, her attire is an ambivalent, symbolic contrivance of her mother's needlework.

Outside the moralist injunctions of Puritanism, Pearl is a symbol of the freedom of the wilderness, the long lost link with nature. As such, there is no compromising between this attractive little demon and the heritage of Christendom and the inflexible and hypocritical morality of the Puritan background. She is the child of nature, wild environment, solitude, beauty in its highest splendor, outside of which there is no authority to bend her to the will of another. " There is no law, nor reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong, mixed up with that child's composition", says Chillingworth, observing her behavior.(p.113).

The contrast between mother and daughter is remarkable. For all the misery which Hester is forced to suffer she does not lose the sense that she owes compliance to the society from which she has been banished. Granted she loses the sense of belonging to it, by constrained withdrawal, but the wounds of this severance will never be healed.

Hester withdraws from the community, but the community does not withdraw from her. The sense of guilt, the burden of sin and its haunting remembrance by means of the scarlet letter outweigh her yearning for liberty. The contradiction in Hester's observations on Pearl's development which illustrates this conflict is the fact that she is at once fascinated and frightened by the girl's unruly character. The mother's eyes and her innermost feelings and all her passionate drives, praise Pearl's natural graces, whereas the Puritan environment where the mother has lived poisons her imagination with the evil suspicion that the fruit of her shame cannot be good.

Before proceeding with this consideration on the divided spirit of Hester, it is necessary to say that what is being considered here is not the moral significance of her act, a subject that has its own place within the narrative. But there is a much greater issue underlying the drama. In fact, her crime is extenuated even by the most wronged party, Roger Chillingworth: "Peradventure, hadst thou met with a better love than mine, this evil had not been. I pity thee for the good that has been wasted in thy nature!" (p.148). What we intend to emphasize here is the struggle for spiritual survival in a most unchristian, *holier than thou* community. In this environment the woman is doomed to failure; on one hand it is in isolation that she will have a glimpse of the lost primitiveness so wistfully contemplated; on the other hand, it is also through this isolation that she shall undergo the loss of individuality.

Hester makes intermittent steps toward personal deliverance, with equivalent steps backwards which cause her to stop at the same point from which she has departed; Hester and Pearl are poles apart; at first what accounts for her lack of control over her daughter is the difference between hers and the latter's background. The mother has long been confined to the spiritual prison of the Puritan persuasion, from whose bosom, as we have affirmed, she has been expelled but whose influence she is not able to cast away. In contrast to that Pearl "seemed rather an airy sprite" (p.77-8). She seems unearthly to her mother because she is still endowed with the sense of freedom that is not entangled with the dullness of the Puritan surroundings; Hester cannot understand the scope of this liberty, for, notwithstanding her own spiritual aspirations she is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought", which is the common share of so many free thinkers.

Hawthorne yokes even the most enlightened views with the influence of the social system. Concerning the freedom of thought “on the other side of the Atlantic”, in Hester’s day, he is not optimistic of any far reaching effect. It is with this notion in mind that he affirms that those given to much revolutionary thinking, even the most daring among them are not so much diligent in the work of suiting the word to the action as their intellectual enthusiasm gives ground to hope, inasmuch as they remain attached to the same models of social injunctions, in spite of their broadness of view. (p.140).

Pearl, on the other hand, was born alien to all the oppression that weighs on her mother’s spirit. Furthermore she is still a child. The child is the embodiment of freedom despite the social influence that soon corrupts it. She is, up to now, an instance of that self-trust praised by Emerson. “Infancy conforms to nobody, all conform to it;” *Self Reliance*, (p 41-2). She is the embodiment of this concept of freedom. She is also aware of the enemies of joy and is willing to fight them, in earnest, as when chasing the children of the Puritans and fancifully, but no less significantly, as in the passage wherein, in her childish pursuits she fancies the old pine trees as the elders of the puritan faith, with the weeds representing their off-spring, against which Pearl acts as the destroyer. This is one of the most meaningful passages related to Hawthorne’s urge for renewal. “... the ugliest weeds...” the off-spring of the Puritans, are made away with, “uprooted most unmercifully”, by little Pearl, the one born outside this heritage of oppression and ugliness.

This ideal converges with Emerson’s assertion of the integrity of the self against traditions. The difference is that in Emerson the obsession with original sin does not exist, whereas in Hawthorne this idea is always haunting his characters’ minds.

The primitive bliss of Old England whose loss Hawthorne laments in his *The Scarlet Letter* and in the beginning of his tale “The Maypole o Merry Mount” , as well as in the fully developed symbol of the Faun, is so remote now that the Christian influence outweighs the long forgotten link of man to the perfect lawlessness of nature.

The representative of this stance in *The Scarlet Letter* is Pearl, and it is significant that she has no friend, that she is in enmity against all, a tendency that Hester apprehensively attributes to the irreconcilable natures of good and evil. Hester’s fascination is no more than a timid, wistful and fleeting glimpse of bliss, stifled by Puritanism. The girl typifies the lost natural strength and independent happiness which Hawthorne mopes about in his writing. This virtue is, just like in Emerson, in direct opposition to custom, but in Hawthorne it appears overwhelmed by tradition. The destiny he gives to Hester fits perfectly

with the notion of spiritual captivity to the environment that informs his sentences on the fate of man.

The comparison between Hester's inherited weakness and Pearl's natural strength is carried further. In chapter VI of *The Scarlet Letter*, which treats especially of the girl, we are presented with the mother's haunting doubts concerning her constitution. In Hester's feverish conscience, always stricken by the remembrance of its unlawful origin, there is the superstition that the girl might have a fiendish spiritual generation, a notion that is prevalent in the community: "Tell me, ... what thou art and who sent thee hither" Hester asks her, forgetting that she had once considered her daughter's birth a heaven-sent gift to sooth her grievous heart. Thus her mind hovers between hopes and evil surmises. (p.83).

Pearl, however, in the simplicity of her shadowless soul and childish tranquility, does not share the same dismal feeling of her mother. *The Scarlet Letter* is fraught with descriptions of her lightheartedness and self-trust. For instance, with her unaccountable insight into the sinister intimacy between her father and Roger Chillingworth, she says to Hester: "He (Chillingworth) got hold of the minister already. But he cannot catch little Pearl". (p. 114). For Hester she is a mixture of blessing and curse (p. 95), but she was also "... like a creature that had nothing in common with a bygone and buried generation, nor owned herself akin to it" (p.114)

The natural beauty and potentialities flourishing vigorously in Pearl are seen as stifled in Hester. If we compare the latter's forced alienation and consequent sense of belonging to a sphere other than that of the Puritan surrounding with the ineluctable ties that still hold her to it, in spite of herself, there will be an endless contradiction of feelings which translate Hawthorne's pessimism concerning the possibility of immediate deliverance from past experiences. Thus, despite the eventual extenuation of the stigma of the scarlet letter later in her life, after so much misery, no matter in how favorable a light she may be seen, henceforward she is no longer herself; Having been deprived of human companionship- the companionship of the community- she is barely recognizable for what she used to be. All the womanly graces are as if it were withered: "There seemed to be no longer anything in Hester's face for love to dwell upon;... some attribute had departed from her, the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman". (p139).

Still she cherishes a moral and spiritual reformation modeled on that greatness of humanistic thought which dared to question the old conventions both in politics and theological issues. There is a stage in her perception at which she feels that the world is in

need of change; but her intellectual enlightenment does not operate her personal freedom. Much of the rebellious inspiration mentioned in this connection is viewed here as a pale show, even in the efforts of the boldest reformers; an ideal that from Hawthorne's perspective has proved to be elusive.

Moreover, the author fails not to touch on the unlikelihood of these hopes being extended to the lives of women, inasmuch as the realization of such reforms would require no less than the overthrow of all social structure, and the danger of losing one's own self in the struggle is also affirmed, as far as women are concerned (p. 141). Thus, for all its natural impulses, Hester's spirit is enslaved to her social background and its hard-and-fast rules; despite her isolation and free thinking, she is still morally attached to the heritage of the past.

Hawthorne's treatment of Pearl, on the other hand, reveals a sympathy for that emancipating strength so yearned for in Emerson's writings. At first, it seems, all possible evils that Hester dreads concerning her daughter may be attributed to the mother's own diseased conscience, which does not grant truce to the soul; whereas Pearl always displays an unmistakable greatness of spirit, undaunted and uncompromising with the superficialities of conventional morality:

“ In the little chaos of Pearl's character, there might be seen emerging - and could have been, from the very first - the steadfast principles of an unflinching courage- an uncontrollable will - a sturdy pride, and a bitter scorn of many things, which, when examined, might be found to have the taint of falsehood in them”(p.153).

Still, the shadow of evil and corruption- a haunting theme with which Hawthorne never fails to qualify even the most promising prospects, is hinted at as eventually assailing and overwhelming any one that bears the frame of humanity. For example, in the passage where mother and child are described in the forest, the density of the foliage hinders the sunbeams from entering its interior; the rays, scattered and elusive to the mother are within reach of Pearl; but, when Hester affirms that the child has not the stain which prevents the sinful from bathing in the sun, the girl asks, with the peculiar insight that characterizes her: “Will it not come of its own accord, when I am a woman grown?”

F.O. Matthiessen's work, *American Renaissance*, for all its sober and insightful treatment of Hawthorne's concepts and the themes that inform his art, does not probe deep into the novelist's conception of Pearl. In his comment on it he affirms that it is the point where Hawthorne falls short of his usual imagination. We cannot ascertain if what he means is a reproach on Pearl's former or last condition. If it is the latter, bringing Pearl to a sphere of

humanity is, as it seems to us, so much the more realistic than any other destiny he could have given her.

Pearl is not conceived after the image of so many dreary characters which, in Hawthorne's other novels and tales swerve from normal human course and stand an awful shadow of barely recognizable humanity. Her last state is, as Hawthorne intended it to be, what lacked to assign her the common share of happiness and misery. After Dimmsdale's revelation, says the narrator,

"...A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it".

In *The House Of The Seven Gables* (1851) there is also, from the perspective of the individual conflict with, and attachment to the social milieu, what could be called a dialogue between Hawthorne and Emerson. Holgrave, one of its main characters, represents a convergence in ideal, and, to some extent in action, with Emerson's concept; Thus he expresses his concern: "Shall we never, never get rid of this past?.. it lies upon the present like a dead giant's body!" (p 352). These words echo the same yearning that burn in Hester's bosom: "Let us not look back... the past is gone! Wherefore should we linger upon it now?", says she to Dimmsdale, throwing away the scarlet letter only to be constrained to pick it up again.(p 172).

Pearl's imposition that her mother resume the badge of shame represents an instance of Hawthorne's attachment to truth. Hester and Dimmsdale, having been tried with almost unbearable reproach - the former openly, the latter by the prick of conscience- now contemplate the possibility of rupture with their social background. But Dimmsdale has not yet made the sacrifice that would rightfully entitle him to liberty. All this while he has hidden his secret in his bosom, and has not had the courage to face the reproach that Hester underwent for seven years. Pearl is unaccountably, almost supernaturally aware of this lack of commitment to truth, and her natural purity and frankness do not accept any bargain short of full confession and manly deportment from her father. Hence her question to him after their meeting on the scaffold at night: "Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, tomorrow noontide?" (p130).

But for the sake of truth Hester must give up once again the chance to assert her true constitution, her own identity as a woman. After throwing down the symbol of shame "her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back..."(p173); on resuming

it “as if it were a withering spell in the sad letter, her beauty, her warmth and the richness of her womanhood, departed, like fading sunshine;” (p 180).

Contrary to the tenets of Transcendentalism, Hawthorne always emphasizes the weight of the centuries behind man, and the immediate surroundings as well. It has already been mentioned how he was skeptical toward any ready panacea to the troubles of mankind. In a short tale called “The Celestial Railroad”, we find an explicit example of his response to this trend of thought:

“ But as to his form- he says of Transcendentalism - his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor any body for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern’s mouth we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and darkness. He shouted for us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted”. (p1077).

There seems not to remain much doubt that his opinions about the intellectuals who upheld American Transcendentalism are not very flattering, and that it was felt by him as mere flourish of empty, muddled rhetoric which added nothing to the cause of soothing human suffering, neither spiritually nor politically.

An episode in *The House Of The Seven Gables*, about an Italian artist’s puppets illustrates how Hawthorne’s introspection and sense of powerlessness before the perplexities of life differ from Emerson’s optimistic sententiousness on the latent strength of man. The symbol of the king which Emerson makes use of in his *Self-Reliance* and again in the parable of the sower, is an assertion of power in man inasmuch as his courage, action and confidence are earnestly exerted. The optimism with which he treats the subject seems to extend it to all without respect of class: “There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned as well as for unlearned hands”, a conviction that does not seem in keeping with his utterance on the means to this bounty: “Power is, in Nature, the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdom which cannot help itself”.

To Emerson’s notion that nature is at man’s command in the proportion of his obedience to its precepts, Hawthorne interposes the allegory of the artist’s puppets as representative of our plight:

“Possibly some cynic, at once merry and bitter, had desired to signify, in this pantomimic scene, that we mortals, whatever our business or amusement,- however serious, however trifling- all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity, bring nothing finally to pass.” (p 340).

Still he is not always utterly hopeless; there is a kind of balance between his pessimism and Emerson's confidence. It does not mean that hope should be given up, but one must hope long, it seems, to see the brighter days which shall dispel the dark, gloomy mood inherited through the centuries. The point of disagreement is that in Emerson's opinion this age is the one that would necessarily accomplish the power and freedom so long yearned for: "If there is any period one would desire to be born in,- is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side and admit of being compared;" *The American Scholar*, (In Fogel, p 36).

For Hawthorne, on the other hand, the individual, however conscious of the burden of the past and the influence of the social system in shaping man's attitude towards life, cannot modify them in the near future, and in his own age he is not sure to exert much greater influence than any revolutionary before him.

3. "Young Goodman Brown" and the issue of the apprehension of truth

Another important point of divergence between Hawthorne and Emerson is that of the apprehension of truth, as it touches the use of symbols.

The use of symbols, an inheritance from early Puritanism, is mentioned in *The Scarlet Letter* as a means of interpretations as diverse as the personal motives and characters of those who make use of them. The importance of symbols as a means of conveyance of spiritual truth has already been mentioned in our overview of the sources of American Transcendentalism. The discrepancies between Hawthorne and Emerson once more relate to the issue of individualism and the influence of society.

In Hawthorne the individual undergoes a process on his road to self-awareness which cannot be dissociated from the social chain and his time and place in history. On this F.O. Matthiessen makes the following comment: "... He wanted... to study not merely 'human character and its individual developments', but also 'human nature in the mass' ". (p.238). The self, as we can see in the drama of "Young Goodman Brown" is swallowed by the collective.

As an instance of this, and for the sake of an appraisal of the nature of truth, as seen in connection with Hawthorne's and Emerson's stances, we shall proceed to consider the onset and progress of Goodman Brown's spiritual experience.

In order to provide a clearer guide to the points compared, we shall follow briefly the narrative of this tale in reference to the young man's path and its different stages, reaching to the climax of his experience: The moment he leaves his wife to undertake a journey through the forest to participate in the witch Sabbath, the three arguments he sets forth against the wicked deed he is about to perform; the three refutations he is confronted with on the part of the old man; the occasional recurrence of faith; his giving over to dark feelings; his fusion with the spirit of the crowd and their mutual fusion in the wild landscape; the awakening from the trance and his return home.

Goodman Brown is a simple man, dwelling in Salem village and following the spiritual persuasion of his forefathers, the Puritans. Heretofore he has led a life of humble, unquestioning faith, but now his creed is about to be overshadowed by doubts. Much of what is said in this tale is a reproduction of the harmful superstitions which stained the image of the 17th century Puritans, among whom were Hawthorne's own ancestors. Goodman Brown represents the traumas inflicted by their deterministic views and their obsession with evil.

Hawthorne's choice of words and ideas are pertinent throughout the story. Indeed, they are calculated to impart a full account of the inner conflict of the character. One of the most dramatic aspects of Goodman Brown's experiences is the recurring doubts with which he postpones the completion of his journey. Thrice does he argue against the wicked errand, thrice is he rebutted by his companion. He has hardly been enlightened about his old faith, for only when deeply set in the forest does he confirm his ugly suspicions concerning human nature. These suspicions eat up into the innermost of his confidence. Talking of his worthy ancestors he thinks too much of their supposed purity in comparison to the wickedness of the personage who now guides him to the witch meeting. The old man's reply to his objections foreshadows the episode of the mingling of each individual into the undistinguishable whole (p.238-9); Goodman Brown's experience is the inverse of Emerson's belief in the correspondence of all things to their divine origin and their partaking in its holiness.

It must be observed, however, that Emerson's conception of the influence of the Oversoul cannot, as it might seem at first, be taken for granted by any kind of man. Potentially it is there for the great and the small; indeed that notion is present in his unshakable belief in man's latent greatness, but, as William James rightly expressed it: "his optimism had nothing in common with the indiscriminate hurraing for the Universe with which Whitman has made us familiar..." (Konvitz's and Whicher, p.22). For Emerson man cannot seize anything from nature. His place in life depends on his own merits.

The three steps to Goodman Brown's despair begin with his qualms. "I have scruples touching the matter thou wots't of", says he to the old man, (p.233). With this laconic statement he shows that he is not yet certain of his surrender to the dark side. The man proposes that they keep on the journey and that he may depart afterwards if he is not fully satisfied by his argument. What follows is an account of religious intolerance and violence drawn from Hawthorne's recollections of his own ancestors' history. The problem of bigotry and hate had already been treated in another of Hawthorne's short tales, "The Gentle Boy". Here again an instance of this is seen in the allusion the author makes to one of his ancestors' bitter persecution of the Quakers. "I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem", says the old man to Goodman Brown.

Goodman Brown is puzzled that such wickedness as the old man ascribes to his forefathers could really have come to pass.; He presents his second argument by excusing himself of any commitment, claiming that to a man of his humble rank the affairs of the great ones do not apply.

The third and last resort to which his bewildered conscience goes for shelter is the assumption that if the great lords are corrupted there is still the memory or the good teachings he has received from the humble and holy elders of the community, whom he is bound to honor. The old man's reply to his naiveté is a scornful word on how deceived he has been in regard to his "honorable" teachers: "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing" (p.234). This taunting remark characterizes the third refutation but the device of the old belief, represented in his wife, comes to the rescue. We did not count faith as the last resort because against it the old man gives no answer, neither does he need to. The mockery on the sacredness of faith is felt throughout the course of events.

It has already been mentioned in connection with Matthiessen's appraisal of Hawthorne's work that religious truth is the core of his writings. His probing into the depth of social and moral decay is rendered through the recurring allegory of devilish degeneration of the social structure. His unveiling of the hypocrisy that hides moral decadence discloses the facts by easy stages, but the hint of what is to be revealed is obvious from the beginning, and in its progress it confirms the more incontrovertibly the surmises of the reader. In the same way, in *The Scarlet Letter* Miss Hibbins, the Governor's sister, despite the infrequency of her appearance in the development of the story, is an important device for the author's exposition of vices in the entire community. There is a parallel between her function and that of the old

man who guides Goodman Brown through the forest: “Many a church member saw I, walking behind the music, that has danced in the same measure with me, when Somebody (the devil) was the fiddler ...”, she tells Hester (p. 205). And among the potential members of the party she recognizes the “holy” minister Dimmesdale, to whose secret she alludes with her characteristic mockery. She is acquainted with the *white-washed-walls* of every rank within the neighborhood. In “Young Goodman Brown” the dreadful shepherd addresses his servants in words that reminds us of Hibbins’ role in *The Scarlet Letter*: “Ye deemed them – the spiritual teachers- holier than yourselves ... yet this night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds” (p.240).

. F. O. Matthiessen, (p.361) says that Hawthorne’s wife was prudishly careful to avoid any coarse wordage in her husband’s writings and made some modification therein. He also makes reference to an instance of her tampering with Hawthorne’s words in matters beyond mere stylistic choices. These matters were related to his loss of faith and reverence for the state of inanity into which religion and its representatives had lapsed, as well as to his nonchalance towards the do-goodism of George Ripley’s Transcendentalist enterprise.

With this reminder of Goodman Brown’s dissuasion of the holiness of his people and the examples provided along his journey—the acquaintance of Goodman Brown’s ancestors with the old man, the exchange of words between the old man and the old lady on their way to the witch Sabbath, the minister and deacon Gookin’s riding through the forest, whose purpose Goodman Brown overhears from their own mouths, the gathering together of “saints and sinners” (p.239)—the reader is led to the scene of the overlapping of identities to which we have alluded in reference to Hawthorne’s concept of the influence of the social environment in depriving the individual of his absolute self-hood. This point also signals the extent to which Hawthorne’s treatment of symbols differs from Emerson’s preaching of self-trust and the universality of his theoretical approach to the nature of truth.

In Emerson’s thought the symbol, conveying spiritual meanings of the truth it represents, does not disturb the minds of those who know how to read it, no matter in which shape it is manifested; the man who is committed to truth will not fail to recognize the oneness behind phenomenal diversity. Matthiessen speaks of the wide scope of Emerson’s approach to the subject: “Christianity itself was true to Emerson only symbolically as were all other religions” (p.42). In Hawthorne, on the other hand, there is a recurrent denial of this clearness of apprehension. In “Young Goodman Brown” reality and vision seem to mix, and the farther one probes into the phenomenal and psychological aspects of the search for truth,

the more one's identity fades before the concept of the whole. But in this kind of unity, opposite to Emerson's, nature and humanity, the seeming good and the overruling wickedness are all enwrapped in the unraveling knot of the material world. That is the very drama which saps Goodman Brown's convictions, and, notwithstanding the individual's efforts, there is no assurance of any likely retrieval from his identification with the collective. Goodman Brown's individuality is too feeble to rescue him from the trap he has fallen into. His notions of evil lurking everywhere may be a peculiar extravagance of the Calvinistic tenet, but it proceeds from it. The old man needs not to interfere with his assertion of pious faith, since the individual cannot be dissociated from the community. Contrary to the young man's previous consideration: "Is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith..." (p.236), if the whole community lies in the power of darkness, he, more than anyone else is yoked to it.

Now faith itself is at stake. This is the climax and meaning of the whole parable of the individual and his relation to the social milieu and his inherited concepts of truth, as aptly expressed in these words: "Faith!, shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying 'Faith! Faith!' as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness." (p.237).

The dramatic effect of the sense of confusion and hopelessness is given its whole force in the train of feelings of "grief, rage, and terror", followed by screams while darkness is being dispelled but still "leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown" (p.237). The remark that the sky is silent is significant for the comparison between Hawthorne and Emerson. In Hawthorne's opinion the sky is silent indeed; it holds its peace after the uproar of voices in "Young Goodman Brown". It is as deaf now as when Jesus cried from the cross "God, why hast thou forsaken me?". It is the bewildered confession of man's hopelessness before the unfathomable riddle of human existence and its spiritual conflicts as Hawthorne conceived them. In the long run, the concepts we inherited are too fragile to provide the answers, because they are as changeable, as ephemeral as any of the processions of social and cultural phenomena which strut across the pages of history.

"My faith is gone!" (p.237) his character announces. He is now thoroughly given over to external influences; he is absorbed by all he has witnessed around him. Both "Young Goodman Brown" and *The Scarlet Letter* are instances of moral concern, denunciation of hypocrisy, and realization of the burden of the past. In the former, religious dogmatism and hypocrisy operate the alienation of an ordinary man from the bosom of his community and all that must be held as sacred. In the latter, a woman is bereft of the most sacred and inviolable

right that can be conceived, which is to be oneself. In all this there is nothing of Emerson's self-confidence, the hope for the near future and the spiritual guidance of symbols. On the contrary, in "Young Goodman Brown", the author brings together different concepts only to show the shaky grounds of our sense of truth.

But now we are come to the no less unsure ground of moral judgment: After describing the meeting of saints and profanes for a single dreadful purpose, and hinting at crimes and hypocrisy, the hopelessness of any amendment is laconically expressed in the question – "But where is faith?" Here conveying its double significance: Goodman Brown's wife and his Christian belief.

The accusation that characterizes the last account of Goodman Brown's experience immediately before his return home seems to be the most conspicuous and unqualified sign of moral judgment. However, the invective is not primarily on the crimes alluded to, crimes with which so many respectable people, great and small, were charged. The denunciation here is much more on hypocrisy than on the deeds themselves, just like in *The Scarlet Letter* the attitude of Dimmesdale, not his sins, brings the heavier grief upon him. Still the tenor of the last words in the story is all about guilt, wickedness, hopeless damnation.

At first it seems hard to identify whether the author's voice here is simply venting his knowledge of the difficulty one finds of getting rid of the heritage of fear and guilt, or if he is himself disillusioned with the course of the human race. But in the essay which introduces *The Scarlet Letter* as well as in the first paragraph to "The May Pole of Merry Mount", already mentioned, he gives us a clue to the right construction of his mind when he speaks of the gloomy influence of Puritan thought on the spirit of his country. In the said essay he mentions also the harmful influence of a dull environment, with dull spirits around, which is capable of blunting, although not irrecoverably, the sharpest men's thinking abilities.

On the subject of cultural heritage and the metaphor of the traveler, Nietzsche, in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, addresses a similar issue. Getting rid of ideologies and the influence of the common herd is the most difficult achievement in the path to his superman. In his abode in a cave, a host of beings representing all human feebleness of purpose are portrayed as filling different ranks on the road to spiritual progress. This is the philosopher's metaphor of the path toward the highest goal. Among the crowd are the traveler and his shade. The shade resembles the traveler in shape, of course, but it lacks the strength to go on, for obvious reasons. He then recognizes that the path is hazardous and that the millennial heritage of fear

is a yoke no one has yet shaken off. Here we have the same concern expressed in *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and in Emerson's waiting for the true man.

Hawthorne's treatment of the matter is both literal and figurative; his judgment is sane, although not always explicit. His character Goodman Brown undertakes a journey which will confirm in his mind the long held concept of evil lurking everywhere and inside the human heart. The author does not subscribe to Goodman's views unconditionally; rather, he gives through the personage a sound judgment about the dark and narrow route to self-awareness and the enlightenment of the hidden side of history. It does not matter whether Goodman Brown lost himself in the journey; what is really important in his account is that in the journey there is not just a single, linear path leading up to an established version of truth. Neither does Goodman Brown's last state imply the author's confirmation of the Calvinistic tenets; his message at this point is not on what is true or false, a subject that remains questionable: "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamt of a witch-meeting" (p.241). It is rather an account of how the ghosts of the past haunt man to his grave, and although we can take new roads it does not follow that we shall find our way.

Hawthorne's approach to symbols differs from Emerson's in that for him the manifestation is elusive, while for Emerson it is faithful in representing truth, and makes it palpable enough for one to be led towards it.

4 Wild Virtue versus Moral Values

We have mentioned Lawrence and Nietzsche in connection with a subject which is in the basis of the concept of the individual. We have searched to articulate both writers within the discussion of ideal primitiveness because in them there is an approach to the same issue developed in Hawthorne's and Emerson's writings. Besides, their views are expressed by means of similar symbols.

In Hawthorne, for instance, a convergence of ideas with Nietzsche is found in at least two significant points: The symbol of the Faun in the former with its correspondence with the dionysian concept in the latter, and their similar view of the ancient glory of Rome compared to the decadence of modern times. "Rome as it now exists...seems like nothing but a heap of broken rubbish, and...its annals...seem also but broken rubbish, as compared with its classical history", says the narrator in *The Marble Faun*. (p.633).

The concept of the faun as the symbol of primitive bliss is also found in D.H. Lawrence's essay "Pan in America" (1924), and in these three instances it is conceived as the freedom and glee that finds in silence, irrationality and the solitude of the woods the only possible grounds for its being. Emerson's concept, although not expressed by the same symbol, conveys a similar concern, represented in his observations on the "wild virtue" threatened by modernity. (*Self-Reliance*, p.56-).

As to Hawthorne's treatment of the subject, *The Marble Faun* is especially suitable for the comparison we have drawn, for therein is found the connection between rusticity, ignorance and freedom, answering exactly to Nietzsche's and Lawrence's notion that reason and speech were the downfall of this comely God of the wild: "Speech is the death of Pan, who can but laugh and sound the reed-flute", says Lawrence in his "Pan in America", (p.27). "I am afraid we shall not get rid of God,(the Christian one) for we still believe in grammar", says Nietzsche in his *Twilight of Idols*, (p.28).

In *The Marble Faun* these concepts are embodied in Donatello, its pathetic hero, but, as it is always the case with Hawthorne, the Christian view overwhelms the pagan thought, and, once more, the sense of guilt and sin is the device whereby the author brings his character to the sphere of conscience-stricken humanity. In *The Scarlet Letter* a closely related view haunts the development of Pearl's characterization. As it has already been mentioned, as long as she is situated outside the world of Christian morality and its withering influence, she bears an almost supernatural aura, and in this happy state she is incapable of sympathy for her parents and the weaklings of the world in general. But, as Hawthorne will have it, she must eventually learn that to be human is to have one's share in the misery of humankind.

Donatello, the young Italian rustic whose comely shape is astonishingly like that of the Faun of Praxiteles, is, according to the legend, descended from that race or mythical beings. In the course of this novel he replaces his happy rusticity and grace with the consciousness of guilt and passion. The most immediate cause of this change is his involvement with Miriam's secret and the murder that ensues. The more remote one is the gradual loss of primitive virtue inherited from the mythical ancestor and debased in contact with the weaknesses of modern times.

In his *Genealogy of Mores*, Nietzsche states what he considers to be the root and source of "evil conscience", a product of reason and habit. For him all moral qualms spring from man's subjection to the harmful influence of the social milieu and its peaceful pursuits.

According to this thinker, under the influence of “evil conscience” mankind has, from time immemorial, been sick of what he calls the foul disease of the consciousness of suffering and the most baneful quest attending on it, to wit, the quest for the reasons of human tragedy. These feelings are attributed to man’s severance from his primitive state, the only propitious ground of his strength. Still in the track of Nietzsche’s reflections, degeneracy was ironically unleashed by men whose power of will, inexorably exerted against the weak, brought about the establishment of states.

According to Nietzsche the “evil conscience” would not have poisoned mankind if it were not for the suppression of weaker wills. He believes that the origin of the very Gods might be linked to the fears that domination and suffering inspired. The sounding of the depths of the drama, says the philosopher, is exceedingly painful, despite the enlightenment it affords. “There are so many horrible things in man!..the earth has long been a mental hospital!”, says he. (p.82). This thought finds echo in the drama depicted in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown”: “The fiend in its own shape is less hideous than when it rages in man’s breast” (p.238). Nietzsche’s hope for a new age, however, is expressed in his treatment of the conciliation between Fate and Will.

At first there is the recognition that Fate operates against will, but when the individual rises to the perception that the province of Fate is in the train of circumstances, his enlightenment brings the two opposite forces into harmony. In the unconsciousness of the individual, directed by Necessity, good or evil success hangs on the history of his forefathers, his immediate relatives, surrounding and cultural heritage; but when man becomes aware of his plight, he guides his own steps, breaks the chain of Fate, and exercises the power of will. All this is closely related to the issue that informs Hawthorne’s art, with the exception that in his thought fatality is ineludible.

Nietzsche’s concern with the problem also reflects Emerson’s conception of transcendence. The philosopher inquires into the causes of man’s ineluctable attachment to trifles, when intelligence and will could raise him to higher spheres of thought and action. In Emerson the symbol of the king converges with these reflections. Nietzsche ventures at an answer to his own quest “A fatalist conformity of the skull and spinal cord, the condition and natural constitution of his parents,...his ordinary environment, the monotony of his homeland and daily life”, (p.165-6) all concur to modern man’s weaknesses. Here he dwells on the painful feeling man experiences when he yields to external forces and buries his potentialities under the weight of circumstances. “stifling of the faculties of the spirit through the power of

habit” as Nietzsche says, has much to do with that which Hawthorne says in his *The House of The Seven Gables*, in reference to Clifford, one of its main characters, as the man ‘who had learned to be wretched as one learns a foreign language’ which means to be gradually and continually exposed to it.

On the issue of Fate, Hawthorne’s stress on the powerlessness of man has been illustrated in the sentences we have quoted from him. Emerson, whom Nietzsche praises in his book *Twilight of Idols*, has been shown as a man who preached self-confidence in spite of all adversity, in contrast to those who dwelt on the traumas and diseased conscience of the past. In response to the former’s stance, Hawthorne’s opinions converge and diverge at the same time. Nietzsche’s discussion of the relation between Fate and will, despite its hopeful tone, almost fuses into Hawthorne’s words in *The Marble Faun*, chapter XIII, entitled “A sculptor’s studio”: “As these busts in the block of marble,...so does our individual fate exist in the limestone of time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action” (p.656).

Donatello, the hero of this romance, lacks worldly wisdom in his beginning. We have associated this character to Nietzsche’s and Lawrence’s notion that word and reason were detrimental to man’s instinctive strength. In his essay “Pan in America” Lawrence traces the stages whereby the primitive man, once sharing the virtue of the wild in close connection with nature, began his course of quick degeneration. This strength, represented in the figure of the god Pan, is degraded first in Europe in the 18th century, and then in America, where, after its identification with the soul of the universe - the *Oversoul* of which Emerson spoke - the joyful and handsome god was demonized by Christian morality and given its coup de grace with the quick mechanization of the modern man.

The author sets side by side the manly vigor of the individual whose life was one with his wild environment, and the decadence to which he came by his thirst for material power. The principle of this downfall is identified with his feverish obsession with the idea, construction of machines, and at the root of all this evil, speech, the opposite of the silent wisdom and strength of the wild. “Speech is the death of Pan”. In Nietzsche we have the same theme and concern. In Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun* we have this reflection: “...words have been feebly substituted in the place of signs and symbols” (p.634). On page 636 the reader is informed that Donatello had lived, before his fall, in an eternal present, the opposite of the morbid habit of musing on the past. Miriam, his beloved, also expresses painfully the

yearning already referred to in our presentation of Hester and Dimmsdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Holgrave, in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Hawthorne, despite his insistence in what F.O. Matthiessen calls his search for religious truth, is as painfully aware of the traumas and harmful fears inherited from his Puritan background- and the Christian persuasion as a whole- as Nietzsche and Lawrence: “My reality! What is it? Is the past so indestructible? The future so immitigable?” says Miriam, the character in *The Marble Faun*, (p.637), who hides in her bosom a dark secret which is carried silently throughout the romance, a tragedy without the eventual revelation we are used to. The narrator gives plausible reasons for the insolubility of the mystery. The more he hides, the more his narrative attains to the portrayal of real life, in which so many things are presented in ‘media res’, and the joys and miseries which proceed from Fortune are distributed whimsically to mankind, whose fretting and search for reasons do not render them a whit the wiser.

5. Final considerations

In our approach to the theme of individualism we limited our scope to Hawthorne’s and Emerson’s writings concerning the issue. Along this brief consideration of the individual in relation to the social milieu we included Lawrence’s unfavorable judgment on the idealism of the return to the primitive state of liberty. We also included Nietzsche’s passionate words on moral issues, fate, and free will. Our last consideration has to do with the convergences and divergences pointed in the authors discussed. These were strictly related to the conflict between the individual and society. As it seems to us, neither of them escapes the contradictions and oscillations in mood that characterize the modern man in his dealings with the conflicts of modernity. The assertion includes Lawrence and Nietzsche as well. Both Emerson and Nietzsche foment man’s outgrowing of inherited weaknesses and announce the advent of a new and stronger individual. Hawthorne, in spite of his stance in the works mentioned here, is not always hopeless. Comparing all these writers’s words to his we have provided instances in which the novelist’s awareness of the need to shake the burden of harmful fears and attachment to the past is akin to theirs. In the cherished ideal of inner strength and liberty all but Emerson waver between the dream and the sense of its remoteness. These oscillations in the long run fit in, at least partially, with Hawthorne’s view. As to Emerson’s position it goes without saying that his scholar, his poet, and his awakening of America to its full potentialities were also expressions of ideals yet unaccomplished in much

the same way as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is the man of the future, some indomitable manifestation yet to come and, as the philosopher honestly confesses, someone younger than him, stronger than him, belonging to the fulfillment of an age - how far away one cannot tell - that, just as the conception of Hawthorne's Pearl, has nothing to do with our inherited morality, or, just as the woman whom Hester envisaged as eventually entitled to freedom, has nothing to do with the woman that, at the end of *The Scarlet Letter* "had returned and resumed" her long-forsaken badge of shame. (p.223).

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