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'A Stern, a Sad, a Darkly Meditative, a Distrustful, if not a Desperate Man, did he become, from the Night of that Fearful Dream': Nathaniel Hawthorne's Nocturnal Gothic

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the implications of what Q. D. Leavis has termed Hawthorne's 'night journey'. I argue that this journey is an ecoGothic one, as it requires a nocturnal environment in which to function. In order to demonstrate what this dream journey entails, the article focuses on Hawthorne's perennial example of the dream journey which takes place in 'Young Goodman Brown' (1835). By doing so it identifies some of the frequently occurring features of Hawthorne's 'nocturnal gothic' work and observes how they appear throughout his short stories and romances. The night is the ultimate battleground for his protagonists, as the literal darkness and chaos of the night becomes the metaphorical arena for their moral uncertainty. Hawthorne's night, then, frequently challenges, but must be faced if one wishes to achieve spiritual growth. Following from Hyatt Waggoner's (1967) observations regarding the importance of light and darkness in Hawthorne, this article demonstrates that night in Hawthorne represents death. This first night journey represents the first death that each individual must endure: that of the death of youth. Hawthorne's gothic fiction, then, illustrates the night as a space for metamorphosis. A single night is a transformation period in which his youths encounter their own shortcomings or sins of the past for the first time. How they come to address these sins—frequently represented as literal demons and their hellish followers—indicates their future comportment and how they will ultimately encounter their 'final night', which is their death. The culmination of a successful life, as seen in Hawthorne's sketch 'The Village Uncle', (1837) in which the elderly protagonist has learned to 'love the moonlight hour', or matured on his night journeys, is a lofty aim which many of his protagonists fall short of in the ecoGothic chaos of the American night.

This essay seeks to address Nathaniel Hawthorne's nightscape as an ecoGothic environment: one which highlights many of the key themes in his work and which influence his characters' lives, such as facing one's demons, the dangers and importance of dreaming, and night as death. These themes take on an ecocritical dimension when considering Roderick Nash's (2014) definition of American wilderness as 'Any place in which a person feels stripped of guidance, lost, and perplexed' (p. 3). This descriptor could easily be applied to Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic wilderness, which frequently destabilises or distorts the world view of his characters, forcing them to question the validity of their dreams or the trustworthiness of those they encounter. As a result, this essay proposes a new method of ecoGothic reading, which I have termed the 'nocturnal gothic', and it will explore how Hawthorne's gothic characters respond to their nocturnal environments.

The archetype for Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic journey can be seen in a summary of 'Young Goodman Brown' (1835). Brown is a young, impressionable member of the Puritan community, who decides to leave his newly-wedded wife Faith alone one evening to travel into the forest outside the boundaries of Salem. This journey, he tells his disappointed wife, 'must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise'. The road into the forest closes '[immediately] behind' him and soon he encounters an old man who may be the Devil, who chastises him for being late. This elder man accompanies Brown on his walk and he is shocked to discover that this man knew Brown's forefathers and accompanied them on similar journeys. Brown is further outraged when he recognises many of his upstanding neighbours making their own journeys through the forest. When he finally discovers that Faith is part of the proceedings he becomes enraged, becoming the 'chief horror of the scene', who 'shrank not from its other horrors'. What Brown finds at the centre of the forest is a witches coven, comprised of many of his neighbours and friends, where he and Faith are to be 'taken into communion'. Brown cries out to his wife to 'look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one'. Suddenly, he finds himself alone in the clearing, as if everything that had just happened was a dream. When he arrives back in Salem the next morning, Brown no longer trusts anyone in his community, not even Faith. He is unable to ever escape from the memories of that forest night: 'a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream' (pp. 276-89).

Q. D. Leavis' (1951) succinct summation of Brown's journey expanded to take in many of these elements, calling it

'The journey each must take alone, in dread, at night, is the journey away from home and the community, from conscious, everyday social life, to the wilderness where the hidden self satisfies, or is forced to realize, its subconscious fears and promptings in sleep.' (p. 195)

She furthermore recognises that the elements of this journey were *not* exclusive to 'Goodman Brown', something which this essay will explore with regard to Hawthorne's wider gothic canon. These elements include an impressionable young man, with little experience of the world, who encounters temptations from the devil, and a secret sin which the impressionable youth is ashamed to admit, even to himself. There is also a choice or string of choices which the protagonist makes to determine whether they will be able to emerge from the metaphorical gloom of the night, or whether this night will define the rest of his existence. A further element is that of ambiguity. As Jerry A. Herndon (1975) writes, '[characteristically], Hawthorne used dream imagery to indicate his conception of man's mortal life as a 'dim sphere of half development' in which good and evil blend ambiguously' (p. 538). Even in some of Hawthorne's stories which appear to eschew the 'night journey' template, the characters follow a similar trajectory, in which they attempt to make sense in a world that perpetually challenges their perceptions.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's world is frequently dusky, poorly-lit but occasionally interrupted by rays of strong sunshine and darkness. The importance of light and darkness in the author's work has been well observed throughout the last sixty years of scholarship, particularly the focus on the intersection of the two (Barker, 2002; Goddu, 1997; Levin, 1958; Arvin, 1950). It also did not go unnoticed in his own time: Herman Melville (1850) famously admired Hawthorne's ability to show America's 'blackness, ten times black', writing that 'this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving dawn, that forever advances through it, and circumnavigates his world' (p. 240). Melville here seems to suggest that Hawthorne utilises dark shades in order to better illustrate the brightness of a light. Similarly to *chiaroscuro* or the recently-invented daguerreotype, Hawthorne uses the contrast of light and darkness to produce strong effects in his writing. The prominent theme of night in Hawthorne's work has often been implied in scholarship, but never overtly stated. Furthermore, it is clear that the Hawthornean night plays a crucial role in the formation of character: Hyatt Waggoner (1967) writes that

'the man under the umbrella had to leave the snug comfort of his brightly lighted chamber and brave the discomforts of a dark, cold, and rainy world, to see the world at its worst, before he could affirm that a proper faith could be trusted to lead us home through the encompassing darkness.' (p. 259)

Recent scholarship has identified strong ecoGothic themes in Hawthorne's writing. Building upon Andrew Smith and William Hughes' work in their highly influential edited collection *EcoGothic* (2013), Lesley Ginsberg (2018) has argued that ecoGothic readings of the environment permit critics to make connections between seemingly disparate texts, such as 'The Birth-Mark' (1843) and 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844). Despite the tonal differences found in these stories, 'nature in these tales is clearly "a space of crisis" linked to larger concerns about the status of humans in nature, a crisis refracted through gothic extremes of power and abjection' (p. 115). Matthew Wynn Sivils (2014) has contrasted wilderness in Hawthorne and Emerson as a way of delineating the gothic world view from the transcendentalist. Following Charles L. Crow (2009), he argues that 'Hawthorne's fiction promotes the idea that America's dark past results in a haunted landscape that exists beyond all reason' (p. 125). EcoGothic frameworks therefore enable new critical understandings of Hawthorne's canon and American gothic as a genre.

This article furthers this conversation, concerning itself with Hawthorne's night journeys. While there has been some recent movement within gothic studies to explore the connection with the literary night, as seen in Elisabeth Bronfen's *Night Passages: Philosophy, Literature and Film* (2013) and Maria Peker's chapter in the edited collection *Dark Nights, Bright Lights: Night, Darkness, and Illumination in Literature* (2015), the gothic literary night has yet to be identified as an ecoGothic environment, something which this essay attempts to rectify. Some of the reasons for exploring the nocturnal gothic are straightforward: gothic literature illustrates the unreliability of the human senses and the night, more than any other wilderness space, is directly connected with loss of sight (and therefore control) (Ekirch, 2005: p. 8). Relating this idea more closely to Hawthorne, the night is often related to a lack of control as his protagonists come to discover how chaotic and unpredictable the world is. Michael Cody (2012), quoting Robert S. Levine (1989), hints at this nocturnal reading when he observes that, 'Goodman' serves as a microcosm

'through which to explore the continuities and diversions found in [Hawthorne's] Gothic practices. ['Goodman'] features a journey into the dark wilderness, suggests the perils of misperception and reveals an anxiety arising from the troubled psyche on a frontier that is "unsettled and unsettling".' (p. 103)

Indeed, the core text scrutinised here is 'Young Goodman Brown' as it is in many ways the ecoGothic template of the night journey which is explored throughout many of the other stories. These stories are not representative of Hawthorne's ouevre: as Waggoner (1967) points out, many of Hawthorne's works are able to affirm the light or the daytime and, in doing so, 'reveal a side of Hawthorne that Melville missed – or was not interested in' (p. 30). However, the texts discussed are significant and are often his best-known. Alongside 'Goodman Brown' this essay focuses primarily on Hawthorne's most famous romance, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and a collection of his short stories including 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux' (1832), 'Roger Malvin's Burial' (1846), 'Ethan Brand' (1850), and 'The Hollow of the Three Hills' (1851). It will be supported with quotes from some of his more relevant sketches, most notably 'The Haunted Mind' (1837) and 'The Village Uncle' (1837).

There is a great deal of truth to Barker's (1987) assertion that:

'Although Hawthorne often wrote of the artist as a shadowy character who preferred the filtered light of a windowsill to the open light of day, his concern is still nevertheless that an alliance between the artist and 'dark' forces results in an unhealthy and destructive alienation from the healthful, normal world of the sun – and of course, from God.' (p. 16)

Night is unquestionably aligned with sin and evil, as evinced in the numerous examples of the devil-like figures and hellish followers which emerge almost exclusively at night. Many confused protagonists lose their way, both literally and spiritually, thanks in part to the murky nature of the darkness and the untrustworthiness of the moonlight. Although Hawthorne rejected Puritan beliefs regarding punishment and lifestyle, his writing accords with their Calvinistic fears regarding sin. As Nash observes, Hawthorne's work 'suggests the persistence into the nineteenth century of the Puritan conception of wilderness. For him wild country was still "black" and "howling" as well as a powerful symbol of man's black and untamed heart'

(p. 39). Much like his Puritan forefathers, Hawthorne viewed the world, particularly the New World, as a place of trial and tribulation (Donohue, 1985: p. 4). America, for Hawthorne, is a wilderness site in which his characters must struggle with their human failures, and the nightscape is where his Adams and Eves could, and most likely would, fall.

There are many ways in which, initially, Hawthorne's views regarding the natural world do appear to take the form of a binary between good and evil, light and dark, day and night. However, Hawthorne ultimately saw the night as a time of necessary growth, in which everyone should be exposed to their own failures and shortcomings in order to mature and develop as individuals and artists. Hawthorne spent much of his life until his marriage at thirty as a recluse, leaving his family home only at night to 'mingle anonymously with a crowd or to watch a fire' (Donohue, 1985: p. 9). This suggests that he saw an attraction to the night, as somewhere in which he could learn more about himself at the remove of regular society. It is also important to recognise that, although evil is a feature of the night time, it is not an abstract and external evil, but an internal evil made manifest in the nocturnal environment. The evil that is being encountered is the cruel thoughts and lingering guilt plaguing one's own soul (Murphy, 2013: p. 2). 'It is a sin that grew within my own breast', cries Ethan Brand when addressing his midnight crowd, perhaps like the kind Hawthorne himself joined. 'A sin that grew nowhere else!' (pp. 1056-7). Hawthorne's protagonists must undertake a journey to confront this evil, and this article concerns itself with this journey.

The nocturnal gothic in Hawthorne is particularly conducive to encounters with evil because it is the time natural defences are down frequently in sleep. Hawthorne's characters unsurprisingly find themselves at their most susceptible to the evils of the world, while in their most indefensible position. According to A. Robert Ekirch, this is when humans were most vulnerable, both physically and mentally, particularly before the modern era. Not only are deaths 'most likely to occur during the early morning hours [...] In general, we become most vulnerable when the body's "circadian cycle is at its lowest ebb"' (p. 14). It is little wonder that in 'The Haunted Mind' the narrator describes the fear of awaking one's own inner demons as something most likely to happen at night:

> 'In the depths of every heart, there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights,
> the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the
> buried ones, or prisoners whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftenest at

midnight, those dark receptacles are flung wide open. In an hour like this, when the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength; when the imagination is a mirror, imparting vividness to all ideas, without the power of selecting or controlling them; hthen pray that your griefs may slumber, and the brotherhood of remorse not break their chain.' (p. 201-2)

The ambiguous nature of many of Hawthorne's tales lends them a dreamlike quality, whether this is the midnight forest in 'Goodman' or the nocturnal Boston in 'My Kinsman', in which both characters question the veracity of their experiences, wondering if they have been dreaming. This uncertainty also plays out in more metaphorical terms in Hawthorne's other works. Leslie A. Fiedler (1966) notes that *The Scarlet Letter* 'is finally dream-like rather than documentary […] evoking the past as nightmare rather than fact' (p. 231). Much of Reverend Dimmesdale's experiences are related in terms of nightmare imagery. Following his forest encounter with his former lover, Hester Prynne, he observes how the world around him seems changed; 'Mr. Dimmesdale's mind vibrated between two ideas; either that he had seen it only in a dream hitherto, or that he was merely dreaming about it now'. His guilt, at having never admitted to his affair, has up to this point forced him to live much of his life in a fugue or trance-like state. Earlier, when he approached the town pillory (the site of Hester's public shaming), he is described as 'Walking in the shadow of a dream, as it were, and perhaps actually under the influence of a species of somnambulism' (1850: p. 163, p. 110). Dimmesdale, in a nocturnal zombie-like state, is doomed to ever remember and even recreate the scenes of his own failure until he can find a way to redeem himself and escape his perpetual dream journey.

However, much as dreaming may lead characters down terrifying paths, it is an essential aspect of Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic. Dreaming is the time, outlined in 'Haunted Mind' during which man's imagination is open to 'all ideas' without the bias or 'power of selecting or controlling' that usually leads to daytime prejudices. Disturbing as these nocturnal experiences are, there is something undeniably honest about them: a suggestion that everyone must confront these realities about themselves, or never become fully rounded individuals. This is clear regarding gothic characters who do not dream: they are missing a vital part of their existence. Judge Pyncheon's self-admission in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) that he does 'not belong to the dreaming class of men' (p. 235) may explain why he is little more than a carbon copy of earlier incarnations of the Pyncheons, such as the original Colonel Pyncheon himself (1964: p. 193). It is also telling that Ethan Brand claims he 'cannot sleep' (p. 1063). In

revoking his membership to the human race he has given up the ability to dream. He remembers, 'how the stars had gleamed upon him', but now he is beyond even the influence of the darknesses that all men are subject to:

> 'He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.' (pp. 1063-4)

Brand cannot access humanity as in 'Haunted Mind': he is not privy to the mechanisms through which men realise their guilt. His inhuman omniscience has pushed all ability to dream of other worlds out of his head. Similarly to Judge Pyncheon, he is too preoccupied with this world.

An active engagement with one's dreams and nightmares is at the heart of Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic. This, I argue, is what delineates a story such as 'David Swan: A Fantasy' (1837) from Hawthorne's gothic canon. Within this story the eponymous protagonist seeks a shady spot along the side of a road and falls asleep. He is observed by various wayfarers, who project their own thoughts onto the sleeping figure, two of whom are even thwarted in an attempt to rob his prone body. We are never made privy to Swan's own dreams, however, and the story concludes on a cautiously optimistic note: 'Does it not argue a superintending Providence that, while viewless and unexpected events thrust themselves continually athwart our path, there should still be regularity enough in mortal life to render foresight even partially available?' (p. 434). 'David Swan' is, therefore, not the story of Swan's night journey (aesthetically or otherwise) because his dreams are not the mechanism through which to explore his psyche or challenge his worldview, and it concludes with a note of certainty absent in Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic.

Unlike Swan, who can sleep deeply and soundly, Hawthorne's gothic characters walk a fine line between dreams and the waking world. In such texts, dreaming is a connection that can lead one astray from the collective understanding of humankind. If an individual becomes too taken up with the subject of their dreams they can become divorced from their humanity as

they begin to ignore the realities of the waking world. On the other hand, dreaming itself is also a human characteristic. The ability to dream means that one is not wholly occupied with the waking (or material) world, which leads to a lack of imagination and wonder. Not dreaming is significantly more dangerous than dreaming: it is the symptom of an unfeeling and unconscionable individual, be they devil-man or banker.

Many of these night journeys are populated by supernatural nocturnal figures that try to convince the protagonists to join them. As Donohue (1985) observes, 'Hawthorne's use of devil imagery, devil characters, witchcraft, the demonic, and the supernatural are too numerous to recount' (p. 31). There are many variations of Brown's journey with the Devil throughout Hawthorne's work: indeed, these experiences suggest that his characters are all variations of Brown. When Brand is warned not to summon the devil he replies 'what need have I of the devil? I have left him behind me, on my track' (p. 1056). This evokes Brown's night journey but suggests a man who joined the coven at the heart of the midnight forest, and has risen to the top ranks, rather than returning (at least bodily) to the daytime community. In contrast is Hester's response to Mistress Hibbins, the local witch-woman, who invites her to join her coven: 'Wilt thou go with us to-night? There will be a merry company in the forest; and I well-nigh promised the Black Man that comely Hester Prynne should make one' (1850: p. 87). Just as Brown's journey is precipitated by an arrangement to meet in the forest as evinced by the fact the devil chides him for being late, so is Hester invited to be a guest at the midnight proceedings. Meanwhile in 'My Kinsman', Robin continually encounters an individual who is described as being dressed up like a devil: 'One side of the face blazed an intense red, while the other was black as midnight' (1832: p. 84). We learn that this man is a conspirator working towards the political upheaval of Robin's relative, Molineux, the unpopular English-appointed official of Boston. As Leavis points out, however, the infernal language used to describe him suggests that Hawthorne intended him to be thought of as more than simply a man (p. 202). The end of the story leaves the reader uncertain of whether Robin has made a deal with the devil. The Americans may have justifiable reasons to reject British rule, but the way in which Robin gives into the frenzy of the night-time rabble suggests his ability to become like the very tyrants they are opposing: Robin's own laughter, we learn, is the loudest.

Witches or devils do not appear in all of Hawthorne's night journeys. Others eschew the template of the single night. However, there remains the element of the temptations of sins and the influence of the evils of night. In 'The Birth-Mark', resisting the natural cycle of day

and night proves to be fatal. The scientist Aylmer, believing that he can avoid the pitfalls of humanity, has set up his own laboratory so that it '[excludes] the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance'. This enables him to maintain a perpetual but false twilight in his own little world, ignoring the realities of the one beyond. This removal from the real world leads to Aylmer's dream-induced state in which he believes that he can similarly control the fate of the humans around him by removing the birthmark that, he believes, blemishes the otherwise perfect beauty of his wife, Georgiana. It is not until Aylmer draws aside the curtains 'and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room' (1843: pp. 770-779) that his dream of perfecting humanity escapes him. Once sunlight touches his wife Georgiana her birthmark recedes, but it also results in her death. Aylmer's midnight journey did not require him to leave his own home; it was, instead, a self-imposed night. A similar case appears in 'The Minister's Black Veil' (1832) in which the protagonist Reverend Hooper perpetually wears a black veil that covers his face. David Morse (1987) suggests this story as evidence that 'the puritan mind creates a semiotic wilderness' (p. 187). Hooper's veil becomes a metaphoric night which creates a divide between him and the rest of his congregation.

In 'Roger Malvin's Burial', the night which plagues the protagonist, Reuben Bourne, is even more nuanced. Like Dimmesdale, he endures decades of guilt and is unable to leave his self-imposed night. However, in 'Burial', Bourne, like Hooper, has manufactured the night: lying to his community and himself, he tells a story in which he cares for a dying man, Roger Malvin, throughout the night, before giving him a Christian burial. In reality, he had abandoned the dying Malvin long before it became dark. This leads to tragedy as, years later, Bourne unintentionally kills his own young son (who is Malvin's grandson) in the very place Malvin remains unburied. Bourne forfeits his lineage as a result of his fabricated night time. Bourne, then, just like many of Hawthorne's protagonists, is drawn inexorably toward narratives which paint him in a favourable light, on literal journeys which are entwined with a metaphorical night journey which may never end (Fossum, 1973: pp. 5-12). The frame of mind, represented by night-like darkness, which has become intrinsically linked to a specific sin, will not leave the youthful protagonist until they are spiritually strong enough to admit their sin. Failure to do so can be tragic.

The night journey is also intimately connected to the past in Hawthorne. As outlined above, the journey is often undertaken (frequently unknowingly) to discover a secret guilt or sin related to the protagonist's past. This may be Brown's complicity in the hypocrisy of Puritan society, Hester and Dimmesdale's affair, or Brand's search for the 'unpardonable sin'. The night acts as a conduit through which past sins are brought to the forefront of one's mind. In 'The Haunted Mind', Hawthorne asks:

'See! those fiendish lineaments graven on the darkness, the writhed lip of scorn, the mockery of that living eye, the pointed finger, touching the sore place in your heart! Do you remember any act of enormous folly, at which you would blush, even in the remotest cavern of the earth? Then recognize your Shame.'
(p. 202)

The personal shame that can be ignored or forgotten during the day manifests itself at night. In 'Haunted Mind' it is personified as a cruelly laughing individual looking back at oneself, much in the way that the witch congregation which stares back at Brown at the centre of the forest, or the old woman laughs cruelly at the failure of the young woman in 'The Hollow of Three Hills'. The journey goes into the depths of remembrance, where an individual's guilt comes or perhaps more accurately is forced to the forefront of their consciousness. The darkness is so conducive to remembrances that, as Fossum (1973) writes, 'Frequently, the setting of the narrative is in itself the historical past, a dusky region correspondent in Hawthorne's fiction to that psychic territory where temporal categories fuse, overlap, and become ambiguous' (p. 2).

A further reason that the past is represented by the night in Hawthorne is because the night obscures as well as reveals. Any decisions these young protagonists make are hampered by their own inabilities to ascertain what is right or wrong at any instance. Fogle (1964) has observed of 'Goodman' that so much of the story's ambiguity springs from visual motifs regarding the intermingling of light and dark at the crux of the night (pp. 16-21). Even as the protagonists try to make sense of their nocturnal history lessons they are losing their grasp in what Hawthorne (1835) in 'Alice Doane's Appeal' terms the 'Twilight [...] congenial to the obscurity of time' (p. 215). Hawthorne recognises the difficulty in achieving spiritual metamorphosis. The only time which appears to any degree clear is what Hawthorne dubs in his sketch 'The Prophetic Pictures' (1837) 'that narrow strip of sunlight, which we call Now'

(p. 467). It is in the dark of Hawthorne's night that one is forced to face their personal demons. Past failures weigh them down and prevent them from appreciating the daylight of the present.

A further element of the gothic night journey is that the traveller is almost always a youth, more often a young man than a woman (Waggoner, 1967: p. 65). If they can come to terms with the reality that they are complicit in the evils of the world, there is the possibility that they can live in the world as imperfect beings, learning to be cheerful in the daylight and embracing the chill of night time. The aim is to emulate the elderly narrator of 'The Village Uncle' whose 'past [appears] to mingle with the present and absorb the future, till the whole lies before me at a glance'. His ability to live in the present while fondly remembering his past and accepting that the future will include the final inevitable night time, that of death, means that he can watch 'the sun, going down, but not in gloom'. Admittedly, this patriarch had a significantly easier life than Hawthorne's tragic protagonists, but his ability to 'love the moonlight hour' (pp. 222-6) means he has achieved a level of well-rounded completion that most can only aspire to. The fact that the darkness of the night time is particularly distressing to the more naïve and impressionable characters suggests that the night is in fact a projection of these characters' own fears and prejudices. The night changes as individuals grow and learn how to cope with their insecurities.

Insecurities appear at every turn on these journeys. In particular, false lights often lead characters astray. Lanterns and other man-made lights add ambiguity to a situation rather than enlighten the reader or the character involved. As observed in *The Marble Faun* (1860), 'The unhappy are continually tantalized by similar delusions of succor near at hand; at least, the despair is very dark that has no such will-o'-the-wisp to glimmer in it' (p. 353). In a previous article, I argued that light in Hawthorne's work can be seen as power itself, used to distort and bend the truth for one's own benefit. Indeed, we see this in Hawthorne's short story 'The Birth-Mark'. Aylmer uses light he himself has created in an attempt to remove his wife's birthmark. This light creates scenery and figures which 'were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original' (Hawthorne, 1843: p. 771). These light projections are much more attractive than reality but are *not* reality. The procurement of artificial light is the preserve of those who are interested in progress purely for personal gain (Arvin, 1950: p. xvii). If both light and darkness are required to make sense of the world, light can become dangerous when used by the powerful for their own selfish ends. This problem of a dictator-

like control over viewpoint in Hawthorne's work is brought up convincingly by Patricia Ann (1975). Observing the importance of the lamp in 'The Wives of the Dead' (1831), she notes 'it is a visual projection of the conscious state of the widows – anxiously expectant and unable to accept the reality of death. The lamp signifies a psychic condition very susceptible to illusions, and it is within Carlson the light of this lamp that all the action of the tale takes place' (p. 63). The light does not illuminate the world as it is, instead projecting an image of what the widows wish to see: the return of their husbands. Because they are not able to accept that their husbands are dead, they use the lamplight to construct alternative narratives, in which they do not have to realise the 'reality' of their situation (Cullen, 2014, pp. 4-5).

Observing that Hawthorne often 'places his characters in that loneliest and most isolated of spaces - the great chasm between them and the remote God of absolute justice', Donohue (1985) argues they end up '[wandering] fruitlessly in the labyrinths of their minds' (p. 2) One of these most lonely and isolated spaces is night time. During this time Hawthorne's characters are physically and mentally lost, as well as spiritually. In 'My Kinsman', Robin finds himself homesick: imagining what it would be like if he were home instead, he envisions his father 'holding the Scriptures in the golden light that shone from the western clouds; he beheld him close the book, and all rise up to pray' (Hawthorne, 1832: p. 80). There is comfort not only in the thought of being with his loved ones, but in the thoughts of the familiar heavenly light of day that gives him a sense of certainty. At night there is no one to interpret the signs to determine whether they spring from the God or the devil. The terror springs from the fact that these characters never know and never *can* know whether the lights that entice them will lead them towards or away from God. The most disquieting example of a false light can be found in *Letter* in the forest scene. Hester and Dimmesdale discuss escaping from Salem and restarting their lives guilt-free elsewhere; the sunshine which suddenly appears and seems to advocate their behaviour may be another attempt by the Devil to tempt them further from the path of redemption. As Fogle (1964) observes:

> 'There is no hue of heaven in *The Scarlet Letter* which really offsets [the shades of hell]. Sunlight is the nearest approach to it, and its sway is too fleeting to have any great effect. In the forest scene of chapters XVI-XIX sunshine, 'as with a sudden smile of heaven', bursts over Hester and Dimmesdale, but this is merely a momentary relief. The hope which accompanies it is short-lived, delusory, and dangerous.' (p. 134)

This sunlight may, Fogle continues, be 'false and even sinful' (p. 138). Occasionally even natural light cannot be trusted in Hawthorne's universe. In romantic texts, such as 'Night Sketches: Under an Umbrella' (1837) light is more closely aligned with that of a heavenly power. That sketch concludes with a sense of certainty that the gothic texts lack, with the belief that if humans (referred to as 'night-wanderers') 'bear the lamp of Faith, enkindled at a celestial fire, it will surely lead us home to that Heaven whence its radiance was borrowed' (p. 549). In Hawthorne's nocturnal gothic narratives, there is never any certainty of whether a light is a display of heavenly power, a dream-induced illusion, or something more sinister. This suggests Hawthorne was aware of how each person experiences the night differently, depending on their personal outlook. What one takes to be a challenge to their faith could for another be perceived as an affirmation of evil. The reaction of Hawthorne's characters to their own personal night-time is as varied as there are stories told.

In the absence of certainty in the gothic text, the night often takes on the effects that the protagonist projects onto it. Talking more generally about the wilderness in 'Roger Malvin's Burial', James McIntosh (1988) notes that the landscape 'increasingly takes on the role of a surrogate for fate'. The protagonists 'keep guessing its meaning but they fail to understand it' until finally, 'the wilderness exercises its power and draws Reuben back to the scene of his imagined crime' (pp. 200-1). The night, as one facet of this ecoGothic landscape, similarly projects the prejudices of the protagonists. Cody (2012) explains that 'Goodman Brown's experiences in the external darkness surrounding Salem village reveal that he, internally, is in spiritual darkness, and his externally perceived religious social structure collapses due to his ignorance' (p. 108). The darkness of the nightscape reflects Brown's own personal failings. He will inevitably find the night chaotic and terrifying because he does not have faith required to view it otherwise. This is why the night takes on its most foreboding atmosphere, and why a rejection of the rest of humanity means Hawthorne's characters will be haunted by the night eternally. Crucially, the night takes on its most terrifying form only when Brown's own 'Faith' is gone. When he has decided that 'There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name' the cries of the night forest reaches a crescendo: in the 'heart of the dark wilderness',

'[the] whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees,

the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind

tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn.' (p. 284)

The night mirrors Brown's own conception of the world as a place void of piety and goodness, a sinful place in which beasts and Indians wait to pounce at every corner, where nature conspires against the innocent and honest who alone are trying to remain pure in a godless world. In other words, Brown feels his very identity, that of being a 'good man', perhaps the only good man, is literally under attack from all sides. Similarly, the description of the night-time hollow in 'Hollow' is indicative of the unnamed protagonist's misanthropy:

'One of these masses of decaying wood, formerly a majestic oak, rested close beside a pool of green and sluggish water at the bottom of the basin. […] The chill beauty of an autumnal sunset was now gilding the three hill-tops, whence a paler tint stole down their sides into the hollow.' (p. 7)

The 'midnight' of the hollow is at odds with the 'autumnal sunset' taking place at the top of the three hill-tops: the fact that Hawthorne has mentioned them simultaneously emphasises that the midnight in which the two women choose to meet is a state of mind as much as a literal one. This is further supported by the description of the hollow ('decaying', 'sluggish', 'putrid') which suggests that the woman is herself in a state of decomposition now that she has severed ties to family and community. The pale tints of sunshine still observable from the hill tops above indicate that the young woman's salvation may lie in re-establishing links with the three strands of community that she has abandoned: Fossum (1973) observes that she has violated her ties to the present by dishonouring her parents, breaking her marriage vows and leaving her child to die and in doing so she is 'locked in the depths of her isolated self, where the dark, immutable past is continually present. […] Her face remains in darkness' (p. 13). The night wins in the end, as the woman dies without making amends. This is represented by 'deep shades' which obscure 'the hollow and the pool, as if sombre night were rising thence to overspread the world' (p. 10). Writing about 'Hollow', Waggoner (1967) observes that Hawthorne could 'find ways of making outward and inward reality, history and dream coalesce and reinforce each other' (p. 48). In 'Hollow' there is an externalising of the young woman's guilty history which manifests itself as a crepuscular rock bottom. Thanks to the strong negative feelings American audiences associate with darkness and decay, the nocturnal gothic is

therefore one arena in which Hawthorne's symbolism can most fully coalesce with the American landscape.

Conversely, characters can emerge from the night wiser by accepting responsibility for their actions. Hester's response to her own night journey is more positive than most. Unlike Brown she does not despise her neighbours despite their coldness; neither does she reject her humanity and remain an aloof and unfeeling observer like Brand. Instead she takes up a role at the margins of the community and ensures that her influence is significant, if subtle. Acting as a nurse whenever needed, 'She came, not as a guest, but as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble, as if its gloomy twilight were a medium through which she was entitled to hold intercourse with her fellow-creature'. Hester finds that her vocation is best served in the night, at the time when her neighbours feel they can accept her help without embarrassment of being seen in her company. Her presence as a 'rightful inmate' approximates that of a benevolent witch or indentured slave tied to the night time. As condescending and unjust as this treatment is, it does allow Hester to reclaim a place within society: as a result of her 'helpfulness' 'many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Abel, so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength." Hester shows her practical nature by finding her place in the night time rather than rejecting it. We see this too when she encourages Pearl to "gather thine own sunshine'. Hester herself has 'none to give' (1850: pp. 120-1, 77).

Contrasting Hester's relationship with Pearl with that of Bourne and his son Cyrus, we see that Hester permits her child to escape the perpetually beckoning pull of midnight in a way that Bourne was unable to. In comparison with those who permanently lose their way on their dream journeys, Hester alone succeeds in maintaining a healthy relationship with her child, in stark contrast to Brown whose offspring 'carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone' or the young woman in 'Hollow' who had 'sinned against natural affection, and left her child to die' (p. 11). Rejecting the future due to an unhealthy preoccupation with the past is the most heinous act Hawthorne's protagonists commit. By becoming obsessed with their own guilty pasts which are revealed to them in their dream journeys, they risk compromising not only their own futures but the futures of their genetic line. If, like Hester, they come to terms with their own failures and recognise that that they will never again live in the broad and simple daylight of innocence, their own children will have the opportunity to gather their own sunshine. While Hester herself

cannot replicate the successes of the Village Uncle, perhaps Pearl will be able to mingle the past 'with the present and absorb the future' (p. 224).

Similarly, problematic are figures who have never taken the night journey to discover the hidden dimensions of their own characters. This is illustrated in *The Marble Faun* in the allegorical tale regarding the aptly named 'Sunshine', the wine that can be procured only at Monte Beni. Sunshine has a fragrance, 'like the airy sweetness of youthful hopes, that no realities will ever satisfy!' (Hawthorne, 1860: p. 223). Although it is considered one of the finest wines available, enjoyed by the higher echelons of Italian society, the Counts of Monte Beni have never been able to sell Sunshine at market, because it is 'so fond of its native home, that a transportation of even a few miles turns it quite sour'. This implies that the path to maturity, leaving one's family home, necessitates entering the dusky world of adulthood. If a character lives long enough in Hawthorne's post-Eden world they eventually encounter the pitfalls and strife represented by the night-side of life.

Even those characters who Hawthorne is accused of simplifying or deifying for their sunny qualities are seen to be more rounded individuals once they have passed through a phase of darkness. Phoebe Pyncheon, the much derided 'good girl' from *The House of the Seven Gables* (1850), often seen by critics as unpalatably sweet and innocent (Fiedler: p. 292; Barker, 2002: p. 14) develops as a character after living in the gloom of the eponymous house for several months. At the culmination of the romance, a stormy night which permanently effects all the protagonists, Phoebe reflects on her new-found maturity. She has previously been 'happier than I am now; at least, much gayer', however, she is also 'sensible of a great charm in this brightening moonlight':

> 'I shall never be so merry as before I knew Cousin Hepzibah and poor Cousin Clifford. I have grown a great deal older, in this little time. Older, and, I hope, wiser, and,—not exactly sadder,—but, certainly, with not half so much lightness in my spirits! I have given them my sunshine, and have been glad to give it; but, of course, I cannot both give and keep it. They are welcome, notwithstanding!' (1851: pp. 214-5)

Phoebe's personal growth is intrinsically linked to her thoughts on the night. She is beginning to sound like the Village Uncle in her ability to accept the ending of her youth and embrace the

moonlight. Like Hester, Phoebe also recognises that she has given some of her sunshine away, but in doing so she, again like Hester, has grown in her ability to widen her own sense of community and is more able to empathise with others. Similarly, Pearl in *Letter* is often referred to as an 'imp' or 'elf' to indicate her not-quite-human status. Hester observes that 'it was as if she were hovering in the air, and might vanish, like a glimmering light that comes we know not whence and goes we know not whither' (p. 69). Pearl is as intangible as the sunshine on which she is so dependent. As long as she is 'without a sense of temporal place' as Fossum (1973) writes (p. 114) she will be a Manichean spirit whose temperaments changes upon a whim, much like the weather. It is not until Pearl experiences personal growth following a period of night time tribulations that she is able to mature. After encountering her estranged father, Dimmesdale, at the town scaffolds at night, she is continually refused when asking him to stand on the scaffold 'with mother and me, tomorrow noontide'. Following these rebukes her father ultimately does join them, and after kissing him while on the scaffold Pearl pledges to 'grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it'. This joining up of night and day time experience ensures Pearl's survival into adulthood: in the conclusion we learn that 'No one knew [...] whether the elf-child had gone thus untimely to a maiden grave; or whether her wild, rich nature had been softened and subdued and made capable of a woman's gentle happiness' (pp. 114, 192, 196). The choice for Pearl is to die an undeveloped child of the sun or to be softened and subdued by the night-side of life and emerge into adulthood more fully formed. Unadulterated sunshine does not survive long in the world without either souring or giving way to more sombre hues.

The ability to endure the night time and emerge from the journey a better individual springs from Hawthorne's conceptualisation of night representing death. This first night journey represents the first death that every individual must endure: the death of youth. 'The Haunted Mind' concludes with the narrator observing that sleep is a 'temporary death':

> 'Your spirit has departed, and strays like a free citizen, among the people of a shadowy world, beholding strange sights, yet without wonder or dismay. So calm, perhaps, will be the final change; so undisturbed, as if among familiar things, the entrance of the soul to its Eternal home!' (p. 204)

This conclusion suggests that each night is in effect a dry-run for the final departure into the afterlife. However, if bodily death is the 'final change', it follows on that these nightly

temporary deaths are more than just warm-ups. They are a series of changes, all of which must be undertaken to achieve spiritual metamorphosis. This is illustrated in the short story title 'The Wedding Knell' (1837), a portmanteau of 'wedding ceremony' and 'death knell'. The final death is dependent upon how one has prepared oneself for it. Because Brown was never able to reconcile his time in the twilight forest of Salem with his everyday existence, his final 'night' is similarly devoid of hope: 'Goodman' concludes with the damning words that 'his dying hour was gloom' (p. 289), making his prospects in the afterlife similarly dire. The literal and figurative night coalesce to an even greater degree in 'Hollow' as the young woman's first night, the death of her youth, also proves to be her final one, her literal death. The story ends with her dying in the hollow as she witnesses images of her own funeral in which her sins against her kin are whispered amongst the community. Her failure in the first night has led directly to the final night. Her inability to survive into maturity is underscored by the fact that she dies in the lap of a much older woman who laughs at her demise. Symbolically, Brand too is dead, having parted ways with his humanity when he abandoned kinship to the human race. As a result, he can only appear, ghostlike, at night: the dead, we are told, 'would have had more right to be at home, in any familiar spot, than he' (p. 1055). Brand has damned himself by refusing all spiritual metamorphosis, choosing instead to become an immortal being, all-knowing but tied forever to the Devil. As such he has failed his steps towards maturity. His arrested development means that he can only occupy the death-space of the night.

We can therefore conclude that what makes a nocturnal gothic journey different from other night journeys is that the gothic night journey continues indefinitely. As has been seen, with a brief consideration of romantic nights, 'The Village Uncle' and 'Night Sketches', the night can be tamed, and certainty can be found within them. In comparison, after encountering the gothic night, characters in Hawthorne's gothic stories are perpetually negatively defined by them. Even in Hester's relatively positive night journey, she shares some of the unfavourable traits of Brand. In highlighting Hawthorne's claim that Hester, spirit-like, roams the 'moral wilderness ... as freely as the wild Indian in his woods', (p. 150), René Bergland suggests that Hester's position as an Indian-like spectre has cut her off from citizenship within Salem society, rendering her socially dead. In this way, Hester has only softened the effects of the gothic night rather than escaping it, something highlighted in Bergland's (2000) observation that *Letter*'s 'success at replacing soul-destroying ambivalence and abhorrence with the self-sanctifying forces of internalization, ambiguity, and compromise' (p. 147). Indeed, a complete break from Hawthorne's gothic night requires a break from the gothic genre itself: this is perhaps why *The*

Scarlet Letter cannot follow Pearl as an adult: she has either died a gothic death, or else is no longer bound by the conventions of the story.

Waggoner (1967) claims that 'Death haunted Hawthorne […] as the most striking evidence of evanescence in a world where all was slipping and sliding into ruin' (p. 24). Life for Hawthorne is represented by a sequence of dark nights of the soul in which individuals gradually become duskier, losing their innocent sheen as the darker side of life increasingly affects them. If a character is to mature successfully into old age, they must, like the Village Uncle, 'love the moonlight hour', or learn to mature alongside the night. It is not healthy to attempt to forget the tribulations of the past either by 'dismissing the shadows of dead or distant people' or by dreaming away one's life 'from youth to old age'. It is important that one lives in the 'wintry blast' of life. By cheerfully accepting that he has reached his final hour, the Village Uncle believes that it is also his happiest: 'sweetest of all is the hour of cheerful musing and pleasant talk, that comes between tile dusk and the lighted candle, by my glowing fireside' (p. 227). Death itself, just like this late hour, is a welcome end to a long and fruitful day. By focusing on variations of the night journey, Hawthorne illustrates the trajectory of an individual's life and death. How his protagonists respond to being confronted by their own demons in the ecoGothic realm of the night represents how they navigate their way more generally in the post-Eden America, in which the will of God can never be known for certain.

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