AN INTERNAL STUDY

OF

HAWTHORNE'S

"RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER"

by

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INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne and the problem of evil were not strangers; a brief survey of his life and works will reveal, to even the most casual reader, his preoccupation with moral concepts. His background was a religious one. His family were Unitarian and, while he was formally as unchurched as Emerson, he evidenced throughout his life a marked tendency toward the early New England Calvinistic concept of an unapproachable, transcendent God. It was, finally, because of this trilogy of spiritual influences, each of which claimed his attention for a time, that Hawthorne was forced to look beneath the verbal assertions of man and lay bare the whole of his human nature.

His preoccupation with moral problems did not make of him a nationalist or a regionalist. On the contrary, it is because he saw good and evil, in varying degrees of activity in the soul of each man, that he was able to attain such a high degree of universality. Any setting could serve his purpose; for, in the words of Marius Bewley:

> The tendency of Hawthorne's art is always outward; it shows a habit of endowing the hidden and the private with a degree of publicity, and of revealing not the unique differences in men's souls but the hidden sameness.[1]

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[1]Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 140.

Ray B. Brown goes one step farther and implies that any importance geographical setting may have had for Hawthorne was so small that to ignore it is to do no great injustice to the author:

> He [Hawthorne] was an internationalist, for, having restricted himself geographically to the little lump of New England soil which was, he said, all his "heart could take in", he bored through the crust of life until he tapped the underlying ocean of story, which is fed by all lands, and he drank deeply of this continuum of human experience; knowingly or unknowingly he was the major American voice of a part of what Jung later called the collective unconscious; through him welled up the international folklore motifs - the themes - of life.[2]

I cite these critics' words on Hawthorne's universality in order to suggest that a study of "Rappaccini's Daughter" which is begun with externals will be less than rewarding. More pointed proof presents itself if we consider that Hawthorne took the germ of his story from a sentence which he, an American, copied from an Englishman about an Indian woman and an Egyptian prince.[3] Nor did he stop there. He placed these characters in Italy, a country which he was not actually to visit for more than a decade. Just as Hawthorne remained, for the most part, within the soul of man, I have chosen to remain, for the most part, within the soul of his work.

It shall be, then, the purpose of this thesis to show how the four major characters of the tale embody and dramatize its

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[2] Ray B. Brown, "The Oft-Told Twice Told Tales: Their Folklore Motifs," Southern Folklore Quarterly, XXII (June, 1958), 69.

[3] Quoted from Sir Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors by Mark Van Doren, The Best of Hawthorne (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951), p. 423.

theme. The character of Baglioni, his importance as a moral agent, will be given detailed attention in the final chapter, in the hope that his full impact upon the work may be underlined. The reader is warned that, although the characters are symbolic, their varying roles will not fit into predetermined molds; we should not expect them to do so. Rather, we might expect that they be ambiguous, for Hawthorne wrote of life, and, at its best, life is filled with ambiguity.

When the forces of evil made themselves manifest in the souls of Hawthorne's characters, he saw the result as sin and did not hesitate to name it as such. Neither will I hesitate to use Hawthorne's own terminology, especially here, for "Rappaccini's Daughter" is, in essence, a story of sin. Loneliness is the great Hawthornian catastrophe.[4] Self-chosen loneliness, or the failure of one man to be touched by the human situation, is the sin least likely to be pardoned by Hawthorne. This major theme dissolves itself into two thought-provoking problems. The most evident is the inadequacy of youth to survive the testing ordeal which fate has prepared for it.[5] The second is the ineffectual nature of weak Christian humanitarianism brought face to face with militant iniquity.

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[4]Rudolph Von Abele, The Death of the Artist: A Study of Hawthorne's Disintegration (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), p. 41.

[5]Bernard McCabe, "Narrative Technique in 'Rappaccini's Daughter'," Modern Language Notes, LXXIV, No. 3 (March, 1959), 214.

CHAPTER I

When the first critics of "Rappaccini's Daughter" began to dissect the tale, it was their unanimous conclusion that Professor Rappaccini himself was the most important character within it. They believed the tragedy to be his. But, Richard Hart Fogle and Hyatt H. Waggoner, as quoted by Bernard McCabe, have effectively disposed of the notion that Hawthorne ". . . was principally concerned with Rappaccini himself",[1] and have led modern critics to the belief that Rappaccini's chief importance in the tale is that of a symbol. Following this line of thought, the place of the scientist is not difficult to determine.

Before the reader is introduced for the first time to Rappaccini, his garden is described in detail. Hawthorne implies that, for all the beauty of the garden, it is not a natural place. Each of the plants and herbs seem to possess secrets "known only to the scientific mind that fostered them".[2] When the scientist appears, instead of an expression of the intimacy which might be expected between him and his vegetative creations, he walks among them as if they were "savage beasts, or deadly snakes or evil spirits, which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him

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[1]McCabe, 213.

[2]Hawthorne, Nathaniel, "Rappaccini's Daughter," Vol. IV of The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Old Manse Edition (22 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 131.

some terrible fatality".[3] Despite all this, and despite the fact that he wears not only heavy gloves but a mask to protect him from the odor of the plants, Rappaccini seems strangely to belong in their midst.

On subsequent appearances throughout the tale, he does not change, but is always presented as "a dark observer in a corner of his brilliant garden";[4] a man who would, in Baglioni's words, "sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge".[5] Here is the fullness of the concept of the Garden of Eden and the Adam of the present world. Here, indeed, "is the blaspheming, would-be creator, whose attempt to rival God has produced a garden of Eden which is full of serpents."[6] Rappaccini has created a world which is beautiful beyond belief, but, so terrible that not even he is permitted to live in it. Hawthorne's intended indictment of contemporary science, which could produce a world as beautiful as the garden of Rappaccini; but which would not take pains to render it inhabitable, is more than clear.

Rappaccini chose what he considered to be the path of pure science, but the reader is not allowed to witness the choice. It

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[3] Ibid., 132.
[4] McCabe, loc. cit.
[5] Hawthorne, op. cit., 137.
[6] McCabe, loc. cit.

was made long before the birth of Beatrice, the feud with Baglioni, or the arrival of Giovanni at Padua. Whatever impression Hawthorne wished to leave concerning Rappaccini would certainly be incomplete were it not understood that "he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic".[7]

Pure science, pursued with whatever degree of devotion, is not a subject noted for its instillation of warmth within the human character. What Rappaccini gained in scientific knowledge, he lost in love. Caring, as he did, "infinitely more for science than for mankind",[8] Rappaccini could not help but be removed from the realm of natural affection.

He saw human beings, even his own daughter, as objects of experiment rather than of love. So detached was he from emotion that his dismay is honest when, in the climactic scene of the tale, he is unable to understand why Beatrice is not pleased with his plan to provide a mate for her in her "paradise". Whatever vestige of humanity has remained in him is expressed in this scene; his feeling for his daughter, if not natural, is entirely sincere. He would purposely set her apart from other human beings but he would not leave her in solitude. Completely lacking human companionship in his own life, he was, nevertheless, aware of the need for it in others:

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[7] Hawthorne, loc. cit.
[8] Ibid.

> My daughter, thou art no longer lonely in the world. . . . My science and the sympathy between thee and him Giovanni have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides.[9]

When Beatrice asks him the reason for his infliction of "miserable doom" upon her, he exclaims:

> Miserable! What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou then deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy, -misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath -misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?[10]

Within these passages is the key to the symbolic meaning of Rappaccini. He is the personification of analytic science which "violates nature by pursuing its chosen art past the point of human usefulness".[11] This Rappaccini has done, but, because the situation related in the tale is a human situation, he has not been able to fully understand it. He accepts no blame for what has happened because he does not feel any responsibility in the matter. In his own mind, he has been a true scientist.

It is to be supposed that when Rappaccini first was smitten with the love of science, his motives were of the highest caliber. Perhaps he deeply desired to be of aid to mankind. What these early

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[9] Ibid., 176.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Van Doren, op. cit., p. 11.

motives were, and what became of them, is a story which Hawthorne does not attempt to tell. Evidently, the author's concern with his character is centered, not on what he had been, or on what he might become, but on what he is. When he is viewed as a static figure, his actions become predictable.

He will not change his course of action because he sees no error in his thought. His sincere devotion to science would label any action contrary to the ends of science hypocritical. The transformation of his character to one more in line with Christian concepts, would necessarily involve the substitution of Christian principles for those at which he had arrived unaided. There is only one character in the story who could work such a change in Rappaccini, and that character is Professor Baglioni. Giovanni, after all, is not only a youth but a stranger. Beatrice is his own daughter; what knowledge she has of a factual nature he has given to her himself. Baglioni, however, is seeped in Christian teaching. Because he is a long time associate and is close to being Rappaccini's intellectual equal, his is the only help worth the taking. It, however, is not offered; and Rappaccini is the same character at the end of the tale as he is at the beginning. He undergoes no change to which the reader is a witness.

CHAPTER II

Beatrice Rappaccini is one of the most mystifying characters that Hawthorne ever created. So unique is her place in "Rappaccini's Daughter" that it is difficult to label her. Many factors, sometimes almost contradictory, need to be considered in an analysis of her that it becomes impossible to state, in a line or two, her symbolic significance. Charles Boewe states that this fact is definitely not a fault, but contends that the tale would suffer if the allegorical meaning of Beatrice remained the same throughout: "There is no need to push one to one correspondence of allegory; . . . the story would lose in artistic suggestiveness what it gained in mathematical precision."[1]

Further, it must be remembered that Hawthorne's talent was essentially a lyric talent;[2] his characters are the creations of his own mind and, as such, they have the freedom to be whatever he chooses to make of them. They may be simultaneously creatures of a fallen world and angels.

Remembering this, the mind must be willing to accept Beatrice as she is found in the tale. It is absolutely essential to realize that the first problem in the struggle to accept Beatrice resolves

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[1]Charles Boewe, "Rappaccini's Garden," American Literature, XXX (March, 1958), 48.

[2]Von Abele, op. cit., p. 15.

[3]Boewe, op. cit., 46.

itself as follows:

> The problem of the acceptance or non-acceptance of events outside the statistical order.[3]

The reader has two choices. He may dismiss the entire story as a "fairy tale", or he may proceed in an analysis of Beatrice with a firm determination not to exclude the possibility of supernatural intervention.

The title of the tale first calls our attention to Beatrice; suggesting not only that she is to be the center of meaning, but that she will be so specifically in her capacity as her father's child.[4] As has been seen in the previous chapter, Beatrice is so fully a product of her father's "genius" that she can hardly be considered at all when removed from his influence.

It is in the first paragraph of the tale that the key to the meaning of Beatrice is given. The simple fact that Giovanni remembers his place of lodging to have been that of a noble family long since extinct and, that one of the ancestors of this family "had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the Immortal agonies of his Inferno,"[5] does not seem significant until it becomes evident that this Beatrice will fill the mind of Giovanni as another Beatrice had once filled the mind of Dante. Hawthorne does not intend to let this suggestion escape us. He makes a distinct point of the fact

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[3]Boewe, op. cit., 46.

[4]E. H. Rosenberry, "Hawthorne's Allegory of Science," American Literature, XXXII (March, 1960), 40.

[5]Hawthorne, op. cit., 128.

that Giovanni was well acquainted with the writings of Dante. He forces us to look back to the significance of Dante's Inferno not only for the tone which the tale has borrowed from the Italian artist, but, also so that we will find his own Beatrice easier to understand.

Dante's Beatrice has ever been identified with the angelic. It might be well, at this point, to offer other proof concerning the status of Hawthorne's Beatrice as an angel. If, in this opening scene of the tale, Hawthorne has but hinted at the angelic status of Beatrice, he unequivocally announces it in the mind of Giovanni at the last meeting between the youth and his love:[6]

> He rushed down and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance; but with her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off: recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a <u>religious calm</u>; recollections of many a passionate outgust of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that, <u>whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel</u>.[7]

Hawthorne's meaning could not have been stated more clearly.

Still there may be other, more natural, explanations advanced for this statement. Let us examine them.

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[6]McCabe, <u>op. cit.</u>, 215.
[7]Hawthorne, <u>op. cit.</u>, 169-170.

Had Beatrice been well educated by pious individuals she might be expected to evidence a religious zeal which could be mistaken for true inspiration. This, however, would have been impossible. She had been nourished with poison since birth. Even as a child she was deadly to every living thing around her. It is inconceivable that, under these conditions, her father would have allowed her outside of his house. She even tells Giovanni that her father had estranged her from society of all kinds.[8] She asks questions of him which indicate "such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms,"[9] that Giovanni responds as he would respond to a small child.

Before her meeting with Giovanni, Beatrice had contact with her father. Doctor Rappaccini would certainly not have exposed her to deep Christian faith, serving, as he does to exemplify humanity lacking Christian purpose. Thus, it must be finally conceded that Beatrice received her holiness from the Source of all Holiness, and that she is truly more a citizen of Heaven than of this world.

Even to call Beatrice an angel is not to fully explain her. We must be deeply impressed with the fact that Beatrice is not exclusively the child of Heaven. Wherein it was necessary to look above the natural in order to study one aspect of her character; it becomes necessary to look below the natural order to study the other, for she is composed partly of vegetative elements.

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[8] Ibid., 171.
[9] Ibid., 155-156.

Her sisterhood to the strange purple shrub in her father's garden points to this vegetative nature. While this bazaar relationship may defy exacting biological explanation it cannot fail to make its appeal to the imagination. Let the words of Beatrice describe its origin and early history:

> . . . At the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his her father's science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. . . . -- I grew up and blossomed with the plant and was nourished with its breath.[10]

Now, at the time the story takes place, she still calls the plant "sister" and is horrified if she forgets it for even a moment.

Taken together, the angelic and the vegetative nature of Beatrice herald her early death. Charles Boewe goes to great lengths to establish Hawthorne's revulsion at the sight of an unnatural mixture. The main point of his thesis is the literal interpretation by Hawthorne's contemporaries of that dictate of Nature which denies fertility in any product of unnatural breeding. At the end of an extensive study, the following conclusion is drawn by Mr. Boewe:

> Hawthorne was more than a little squeamish about unusual biological mixtures and, probably without thinking very deeply into it, preferred to see alliances of persons neither too remote nor too close of kin.[11]

In the mind of Hawthorne, and again in the words of Boewe,

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[10] Ibid., 171.
[11] Boewe, op. cit., 37.

we learn why Beatrice cannot be allowed to live, even though she is guilty of no wrong:

> Her soul, no doubt is pure; but she cannot be left to live, because nature abhors such mixtures.[12]

Thus, in Beatrice there is a blend of angelic beauty and vegetative repulsiveness. She is as terrible as she is beautiful. But, and this point cannot be over-stressed, she has been the cause of neither aspect of her dual nature. She has made no free-will act, for free will is a human attribute, and she does not exist at all on a human plane.

If "Rappaccini's Daughter" may be considered to be a tragedy, the tragedy does not belong to Beatrice Rappaccini. In order to be a tragic heroine, Beatrice would have had to make a choice between good and evil. Lacking, as she does, free will, she could not have made such a choice.

Beatrice does not grow in relation to the events around her. What seems to be growth is nothing more than evidence of Hawthorne's skill in uncovering her character. His revelation is delayed and delivered in bits, but the character which he is revealing is as static as that of Doctor Rappaccini. As a victim, Beatrice is purely passive. The work itself offers evidence for this:

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[12] Ibid., 41.

> . . . this poor victim of man's ingenuity a and of thwarted nature and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni.[13]

Notice the word fatality, for fatalism attends the death of Beatrice. It is inevitable for two reasons. The above quoted passage fully explains one reason why Beatrice could not be left to live. When Beatrice realizes that Giovanni no longer loves her, she expresses the second reason: "Spurn me, tread upon me, kill me! O, what is death after such words as thine?"[14] With the loss of Giovanni's love, Beatrice has no reason to go on living. There is no suitable mate for Beatrice on earth; it is fitting, then, that she go where "the evil which had striven to mingle with her being will pass away like a dream --- like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint her breath among the flowers of Eden."[15]

Her father had never intended such a death for her - neither had Giovanni - indeed, both of these men had supposed that she might live on in happiness. Only, Baglioni, the observer, knew that her death would surely follow the drinking of the antidote. Even if it is admitted that Beatrice could not have been allowed to live, the blame for her death is not to be dismissed. Baglioni had full knowledge of the situation; thus, his crime becomes more terrible than

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[13]Hawthorne, op. cit., 177.
[14]Ibid., 174.
[15]Ibid., 177.

that of either Rappaccini, who nourished her with poison, or Giovanni, who had the imperfect faith of shallow youth.

CHAPTER III

The two preceding chapters of this thesis have dismissed the possibility that either Beatrice or Doctor Rappaccini undergoes any growth in relation to the events unfolded in "Rappaccini's Daughter". It becomes necessary to focus attention on Giovanni and to determine whether or not his youthful character offers evidence of dramatic growth. If the reader disregards the "problems" of Beatrice and her father and follows the narrative movement as established in Giovanni, he has chosen a satisfactory approach.

The story of Doctor Rappaccini was begun and ended before the related events of the tale take place; Beatrice's seeming growth is but the skillfully delayed revelation of a static situation. Giovanni's arrival in Padua heralds the story to follow: "All the dramatic movement in 'Rappaccini's Daughter' is in terms of the development of, or constriction in Giovanni's character."[1] It is through his eyes that the entire story unfolds; as Giovanni's awareness of the situation grows, so does that of the audience.

Just as surely as the opening paragraph of the tale sets the scene and the tone to follow, it establishes Giovanni as its narrative center. The thoughts of the youth are to be the only thoughts which will serve to reveal the situation as it is. Hawthorne will

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[1] McCabe, op. cit., 214.

intercede only when Giovanni is incapable of even a partial understanding of the circumstances. To substantiate this responsibility which has been given to Giovanni, it is necessary only to look at a few different points in the story.

The key to the understanding of Beatrice as an angel comes, not from inserted material, but from Giovanni. Indeed, the first hint of her status is given in Giovanni's recollection of Dante's poem.[2]

When Dr. Rappaccini's garden is described, the description is not the casually objective notation of a story teller; it is, instead, the purely subjective statement of the effect of the garden upon the impressionable mind of Giovanni. It is in the mind of Giovanni that the garden is first said to have sinister overtones. He hints, even now, at the full significance which this "Eden" is to have for him before the tale has ended. In short, he is already conditioned to accept all that happens through the subjective eyes of imaginative youth. He is homesick, and having been inclined to melancholy since childhood, it is not strange that he sees significance of each of his thoughts in keeping with the tone of the story and with his own frame of mind.

The story will be understood only in so far as Giovanni is understood. Another youth, given the same circumstances would not have allowed the story to progress as it did. Too much emphasis can-

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[2]Hawthorne, op. cit., 128.

not be given to this point. All that happens must be seen through Giovanni's eyes; the reader must place himself within Giovanni's eyes; the reader must place himself within Giovanni's awareness or the story becomes a nonsensical fairy tale, not at all to be believed.

In Giovannis own mind, the basis for Beatrice's angelic meaning was conceived. His imaginative faculties also gave birth to the idea of Rappaccini as the Adam of the present world, and to his garden as its Eden. Nor does Hawthorne make this point obscure. He explicitly states that Giovanni is responsible for these ideas:

> It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which have had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this the garden, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, Rappaccini with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow, -- was he the Adam?[3]

The next idea which is all important to the story is the sisterhood of Beatrice with the purple shrub in her father's garden. Beatrice is not to announce until much later in the tale her relationship to the plant; Giovanni, however, is so impressed by the affinity which exists between the girl and the plant that he even dreams of it after he has seen them together but once. It is not a verbal pronunciation by Beatrice which causes the idea to take form in his mind; it is his willingness to see events, which to others

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[3]Ibid., 132

might appear commonplace, as strangely meaningful. Just after he has first seen the girl and the plant, he, "dreams of a rich flower and a beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape."[4]

When Beatrice was examined, her two natures were discussed at length. Giovanni's part here is almost too obvious to warrant mention, but it will be recalled that each of Beatrice's natures were first seen in his imagination. No one, if Giovanni had not come to Padua, would ever have hinted at the full significance of Beatrice.

To Giovanni's curiosity, somewhat shame-faced but still unsatisfied, must be given the credit for unveiling the animosity between Professor Baglioni and Doctor Rappaccini. So enthralled with the entire situation and with his own tendency to dream of the exotic is Giovanni, that he takes the first occasion offered to probe into the private affairs of the Rappaccinis'. Baglioni, as will be later seen, responds to the youth's inquiry with a vehemence prompted by professional and personal jealousy. The opinion formed by Giovanni after hearing the biased remarks of Baglioni is the opinion which stays with the reader. The reader, in fact, has, as yet, no reason to suppose Giovanni's opinions as anything but sound.

It might be well to examine, now, the reason why Hawthorne allows Giovanni to carry the feeling of the reader. Throughout the tale, Giovanni is used by Hawthorne to bear the brunt of any ac-

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[4]Ibid., 153.

cusations of unreality. Never does Hawthorne, as a story-teller, blankly acknowledge a dependence on supernatural events. Instead, he lets a youthful mind, one well saturated with literature concerning unnatural events and one already prone to dwelling on strange occurrences, speak for him. Precisely because of this special role of Giovanni, Hawthorne is well protected from critics who would attribute any departure from reality directly to him; it is Giovanni, and not Hawthorne, speaking when supernatural occurrences are related. Once Giovanni is understood and his views are accepted, there is a distinct possibility that what may appear to be an irrational symbol is but a rational one misunderstood by the impetuous youth.[5] Any skeptic who will scoff at the happenings in the tale is not allowed to scoff at Hawthorne. He must, instead, scoff at himself for taking the word of an inexperienced young man concerning the significance of the events related. He is forced to acknowledge a special skill in the author who can make opinions of one of his characters so convincing that it may be mistaken for his own.

Giovanni is not so adept at self-deception that he does not recognize his own tendency to misconstrue events to suit his own attitudes. Again and again, he asks himself if he has been dreaming of strange events or if they have actually taken place. But, his curiosity is ever stronger than his rationality and he insists upon further observations and further pondering until his curiosity has completely mastered him.

5Von Abele, op. cit., p.26.

The free-will choice which was allowed to neither Beatrice nor Doctor Rappaccini was given to Giovanni. He could have, at any time, withdrawn from the situation. He hints at his own foolishness when he becomes conscious of "having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice."[6] Just how much of this "Power" may be attributed to the poisonous lure of Beatrice and how much is the result of his own curiosity is not a matter to be decided here; but it must be noted that Giovanni, while not realizing all the horror which was to follow, had an inkling of a situation from which he would have been wise to remove himself.

The youth was capable of enough introspection to see that:

> The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, . . . to quit his lodgings and Padua itself at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself as far as possible, to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice -- Thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience.[7]

At this point, Hawthorne intervenes to tell the reader that there is good reason why Giovanni does not leave; that he is ever concerned with the satisfaction of his own curiosity, and will satisfy it at whatever expense may be necessary:

> Gausconti had not a deep heart -- or, at all events, its depths were not sounded now; but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperment which rose every instant to a higher fever

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[6] Hawthorne, op. cit., 144.
[7] Ibid.

> pitch. Whether or not Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes, that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system.[8]

Giovanni, as a shallow youth, could not match the trust and devotion which Beatrice was later to give to him. His faith was finally imperfect because he was not capable of love. Hawthorne goes on:

> It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be embued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other.[9]

Here is the horrible outcome of mixed emotion; its power to create evil. Just as Hawthorne was appalled at the mixture of natures in Beatrice, he is appalled at the mixture of two opposing emotions. His one interruption into the narrative carried by Giovanni produced these remarks:

> Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produced the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.[10]

The reader is now brought face to face with the real problem of the story. Not only has Giovanni been given the faculty of free-will, but it is because he has used it to confuse and deceive himself that the entire tragedy takes place. By Hawthorne's stan-

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[8] Ibid., 145.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 146.

dards, neither Rappaccini nor Beatrice could commit sin, because neither was capable of a free-will choice. It is at the above mentioned point that the power of Giovanni to sin is clearly stated.

Up to this point, Giovanni could be viewed as simply a boy who had the depth and the feeling to match his youth. Now, however, his symbolic significance must be admitted and examined. Giovanni is fully believable as an individual, but, as a symbol for all youth, he becomes much more meaningful.

It is not Giovanni who is on trial; it is all of youth that Hawthorne is indicting. Throughout the remainder of the tale, Giovanni will stand, not so much for himself as for all of youth.

In the mind of Hawthorne, Giovanni is caught, as all of youth is caught, between the lure of analytical science divorced from humanitarianism and the Christian principles which he has heretofore accepted without question. In his weakness, Giovanni is not even to be carried to the wrong choice by his convictions. He is, instead, by his very lack of conviction, to be capable of making no choice at all. He is to look at the nobility of science and to the fantastic harm which it can do with indecision. His values are not so firmly fixed that he is capable of following them. What dedication he has is directed toward himself. He is driven by passion, not led by reason. It is passion, and not love, which drives him to Beatrice.

Even when Baglioni confronts him with the cruel reality of the situation, Giovanni cannot face the truth. He cannot even feel

real pity for Beatrice. He just tries to dismiss the entire situation as an illusion: "It is a dream, surely it is a dream."[11]

So shallow is Giovanni, and so incapable of sympathetic understanding, that Hawthorne, in the climactic scene, chooses to remove the narrative thread from his hands. His sullen insensibility renders him incapable of relating such crucial events. McCabe has insisted that the removal of the narrative point of view from Giovanni "signals and illustrates the one unsatisfactory element in this unusually compelling work of art."[12] While acknowledging the dependence of this paper on the views of McCabe, it must still be said that the suspension of Giovanni's mediating techniques indicates nothing more than Hawthorne's clear understanding of the youth's character and his desire to pass this understanding on to the reader. For, just as the author chose the final, climactic scene to unequivocally announce the angelic status of Beatrice, he chose it to announce the inadequacy of Giovanni in revealing the significance of the situation. If Giovanni could have handled this last scene, he could surely have been able to handle the events which came before it.

Admittedly, the tale may require a second reading before this fact is realized, but this author's convictions are founded on the premise that the story merits a second reading and that it would

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[11] Ibid., 165.
[12] Ibid., 214.

seem a great injustice to Hawthorne to accuse him of a literary fault -- changing the narrative point of view in the midst of the story without a compelling reason -- generally found only among amateurs.

The responsibility of Giovanni in the tragic movement of the tale will be discussed at length in the last chapter of this thesis, for it cannot be understood apart from the influence of Professor Baglioni.

CHAPTER IV

The most evident problem in "Rappaccini's Daughter" is that of the inadequacy of youth to survive the testing ordeal which fate has prepared for it. This problem comprises the story of Giovanni Gausconti. The tale, however, is concerned with an even bigger problem: the ineffectual nature of weak Christian humanitarianism brought face to face with militant iniquity. With full realization of the fact that critics, for the most part, have been content to dismiss Professor Baglioni as a simple allegorical representation of orthodoxy, this reader would still contend that he is the most complex figure in the tale and that he holds the key to the more complex of its two problems.

Rosenberry, who is the only critic of note to deal with Baglioni at length, has dismissed him with these words:

> Baglioni as a professor, as Giovanni is a student, and his entire role in the story is devoted to representing an academic philosophy diametrically opposed to that of his rival, Rappaccini. If he does so ineffectually, at times petilly, the manner will of course qualify the role, but it will in no sense define or alter it.[1]

Here the role of Baglioni is defined, but is is so oversimplified as to lose the implications which make it so vital and meaningful.

The crux of the problem is just this: Does the fact that Baglioni is not able to live up to the principles which he verbally

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[1]Rosenberry, op. cit., 42.

maintains, really change his significance in the tale? Assuming that Hawthorne could be using the Professor to point to the failings of Christianity instead of as a guidepost to point to the evil with which he is surrounded, this question will be discussed. If Baglioni can be shown to be more at fault than any of the other characters in the tale, then it would seem evident that Hawthorne intended to teach a lesson more through the example of his failure than his virtue.

Before dealing at length with the symbolic Baglioni it may be well to examine his place in the story-line of the tale. He is first introduced when Giovanni goes to pay his respects to him. Although he is a physician of imminent repute, Baglioni is only too happy to receive the son of an old friend into his circle. He is exceedingly kind to the youth, and impresses him with his friendliness and joviality.

If it is Giovanni who first brings the Rappaccinis into the conversation, it is Baglioni who supplies information concerning them. Baglioni, while mentioning the fact that Rappaccini is indeed a learned man, dwells at length on the question of his ethical practice. It is evident that Baglioni knows Dr. Rappaccini well; not only does he say this himself, but Hawthorne's interceding note about the professional warfare between the two men of science is indicative of long-standing personal contact. It also indicates the fact that, any person, but a stranger, would already

have known of the feud by reason of the publicity given it.

While Giovanni is forced to listen to the views of Baglioni about the dubious ethics of Doctor Rappaccini, he is anxiously awaiting a chance to uncover the real reason for his initiation of the topic -- he wishes to learn something of Beatrice.

Baglioni has few, but trenchant comments to make concerning Beatrice. He stresses the fact that she is said to be deeply instructed in her father's scientific skill; then he goes on to voice his real fear: ". . . young and beautiful as fame reports her, she [Beatrice] is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine."[2] True it is that Baglioni labels this rumour as absurd, but he has seen fit to mention it, and by that very fact he has betrayed his anxiety over the situation.

After this first meeting, Giovanni avoids the professor's company. He has not yet been in the garden, nor has he conversed privately with the girl, but he evidently is afraid that Baglioni is perceptive enough to "look too deeply into his secrets." Baglioni, however, seeks out the youth, and overtakes him as he is out for a walk. Before many words have passed between the two, Doctor Rappaccini walks by. He does not speak, and his penetrating look is one which Giovanni hardly notices; but, Baglioni makes much of it. He says, just before the youth breaks away from him:

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[2]Hawthorne, op. cit., 139.

> 'Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiment.'[3]

Still, it is not until the professor is alone that we learn of the real reason for his concern. He is not motivated so much by the fact that Giovanni is the son of an old friend as he is by the thought that Doctor Rappaccini may be capturing the youth's attention. So indignant is the professor that he here conceives a plan which will be disclosed only much later in the tale:

> . . . it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it.[4]

The man speaking here is the man who has just called Doctor Rappaccini a monster because he is more interested in people as subjects of his experiments that as inviolable human beings. Yet, from this point in the story until its conclusion, Giovanni will be, to Baglioni, not a fusion of body and soul, but an instrument of revenge to be used against Rappaccini. Because, while verbally dissenting, Baglioni has agreed with Giovanni that Doctor Rappaccini truly loves his daughter, and he is cunning enough to realize that the most effective revenge against Rappaccini will involve her use. Because he has heard, or imagined, rumors to the effect that Beatrice may replace him at the university, he will be only too happy

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[3] Ibid., 148.
[4] Ibid., 149.

to rid himself of the threat which she poses to him. His plan of revenge, then, will serve two purposes.

The third meeting between the professor and the youth takes place in Giovanni's dwelling place. Hurrying through the gossip of the city and university, Baglioni arrives at the real reason for his visit. He tells Giovanni, using the approach of the story-teller as a ruse, about an Indian slave-girl who was sent to Alexander the Great after having been nourished with poisons for her entire life until intimate contact with her could not but result in instantaneous death.[5]

In the vulnerable mind of Giovanni, this story has already effectively linked itself to the reality of his situation with Beatrice, when the professor makes the connection for him: ". . . That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini, and in the person of the lovely Beatrice."[6] Giovanni, too stunned to call upon a true lover's perfect faith, can defend Beatrice only feebly. He is all too willing to put the problem in the hands of Baglioni, and to trust the professor to find a solution.

Baglioni, in anticipation of this trust, is ready to produce a silver vial filled with what he tells Giovanni is an antidote for the poison which has rendered Beatrice unhuman. This he thrusts at

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[5]Quoted from Sir Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors by Mark Van Doren, The Best of Hawthorne (New York: The Ronald Press Company, (1951), P. 423.

[6]Hawthorne, op. cit., 164.

Giovanni, encouraging him to use it immediately and to await the results hopefully. What Giovanni does not know, and what the reader realizes only after serious thought, is that Baglioni, while he is professing his desire to help the youth and to restore Beatrice to a natural life, is actually planning her death. As a man of science he cannot but be well aware of the effect which his "antidote" will have.

He implies this fact to himself as he leaves Giovanni's room: "We will thwart Rappaccini yet."[7] He has but to wait to see the fruition of his plan.

His revenge is completed in the climactic scene of the tale. Having sneaked back to Giovanni's room after the youth left to keep his rendez-vous with Beatrice, Baglioni witnesses the death of the girl through an open window. And, fittingly, he has the final word when he calls out to the horrified Doctor in triumph: "Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is this the upshot of your experiment!"[8]

Thus ends the story of Professor Baglioni, but it has been a story told on the surface. If he is to be proven to be as meaningful as this paper asserts him to be, it is necessary to look deeply into his actions and into the motives which foster them.

Let him first be considered in relation to Dr. Rappaccini. Whatever Baglioni may have been able to do to prevent the Doctor

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[7] Ibid., 166.
[8] Ibid., 177.

from first following his analytical course would necessarily have been done before the action of the story took place. But, during the events related in the tale, he could possibly have persuaded Rappaccini to adopt a more Christian attitude to replace those already present within him. Hawthorne carefully mentions the contact between the two scientists so that the reader may not doubt the influence which Baglioni could have had. The feud between the two has evidently been one of long standing. The reasons for it are not related and they do not matter. What is important is the fact that, for Baglioni, at least, the feud has become not a professional but a personal battle. Any personal feelings which Rappaccini may have had for Baglioni are not mentioned, but Baglioni's bitterness is repeatedly presented for thought.

Steeped as he is in Christian teaching, Baglioni yet allows himself to stoop to revenge. He is not even given the dignity which would result from honesty with himself, for he deceives himself to the point that he supposes he is doing a service for mankind by thwarting Rappaccini. He considers his motives above reproach because he never stops to seriously question them.

Baglioni repeatedly accuses Rappaccini of being untouched by the human situation. His accusation is true, but it must again be said in Rappaccini's defense that his motives were pure and his dedication, if misplaced, was entirely sincere. He followed the path indicated by his convictions without reserve. In the final analysis, it was Baglioni himself who could not remain true to his

convictions. In his failure, then, to remain true to himself, Baglioni, as the symbol of orthodox Christianity, fell to a position much lower than that of the scientist whom he sought to destroy.

Although his contact with Beatrice need not have been so intimate as that with her father, Baglioni chooses to make it so by being instrumental in her death. Allowing himself to be plagued by idle rumors concerning her training, he feared that she might replace him at the university. Beatrice had no such intention. She denies that she even has great scientific knowledge when she tells Giovanni: "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! . . . I know no more of them than their hues and perfume -- . . . "[9] That Beatrice has no interest at all in the plants her father has created is made even more plain by the fact that each of these plants, except for the purple shrub which she calls 'sister', is repulsive to her. Rappaccini has no such plans for his daughter; he has deliberately ostracised her from society. Baglioni chose to see Beatrice as an evil creature, not because of any evidenceto support his views, but simply because, if he did not allow any human feeling for her to color his thinking, he would be better able to use her in his plot to destroy her father and herself. If he had believed his own words, to the effect that Beatrice meant nothing to her father, he would

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[9] Ibid., 154.

never have sought to hurt Rappaccini through her death. He surely must have realized that, questionable as its manifestation might be, the love of a father for his daughter was deeply imbedded in Doctor Rappaccini.

Beatrice suffered innocently, and she suffered because of the actions of her father, Giovanni and Baglioni. What suffering was caused her by Rappaccini was unintentional; he sincerely desired her happiness. Giovanni's responsibility is not excused, but is lessened because of his shallow character. He can hardly be blamed for dealing foolishly with a situation he never understood. The antidote which made him instrumental in the death of Beatrice was, after all, placed in his hands by someone much older and wiser than he. Even if he had been an ideal youth, it is doubtful that he could have risen high enough to deserve the angelic devotion of Beatrice.

It is only Baglioni who had difficulty finding a defense for his part in her death. He cannot plead the love which motivated Rappaccini; nor can he plead the youth and inexperience which motivated Giovanni. Excluding petty jealousy, there has been no valid excuse for his actions.

The tragedy, insofar as "Rappaccini's Daughter" may be considered to be a tragedy, belongs to Giovanni. Too much emphasis, however, cannot be placed on Baglioni's part in the tragic movement of the story. Giovanni was weak, but he could have been strong if the society which formed him had been more careful of its pupil.

His failure to cope with the situation which confronted him is indicative of the failure of society to arm him with firm convictions and the courage to uphold them.

Baglioni is representative of the world which formed Giovanni. It is a sad fact that the professions of such people as the professor mean little if their example openly contradicts their words. As the self-appointed protector of Giovanni, Baglioni could say again and again how horrible is it to find a man of science (or any man, for that matter) who fails to be touched by the human situation. But, if his actions show that he, too, is incapable of rising above petty jealousy and vindictiveness, the youth has nowhere to turn for guidance.

It is ironical that Baglioni, who never enters the fatal garden, should so immeasurably add to the sorrow to be found within it. It is ironical that the most obvious source of aid should be the least able to offer help. Nor is Hawthorne jesting in his ironical treatment of the situation; on the contrary, ". . . he is most effectively serious precisely at those times when he is most deliberately ironic."[10] He is deadly serious in his indictment of Christian society.

In a very real sense, Baglioni is representative of the entire Christian world. In his hands is the power to prevent

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[10]Robert Allen Durr, "Hawthorne's Ironic Mode," The New England Quarterly, XXX (December, 1957), 486.

tragedy from occurring; in his example is the answer to the question of proper action. His failure is truly a tragic failure. A greater sin by far than his petty way of dealing with a situation has been his part in allowing such a situation to develop -- his refusal to be a stable influence for good in a world of evil.

CHAPTER V

If this thesis has done what it has proposed to do, it has remained, in scope, within the work studied. The attempt to defend the employment of the method of internal criticism against those who suppose background and environment to be of primary importance in any critical approach is a task better left to the major critics. It is enough here to present two reasons why the choice to study "Rappaccini's Daughter" as an isolated literary achievement was made.

The first reason stems from a recognition of the tendency, when an author, in the full maturity of his creative genius has written a work which is internationally hailed as a chef d'oeuvre, either to discount his earlier works completely or to study them only as a foreshadowing of the magnificent fulfillment to come. While this approach may serve to accentuate the value of the masterpiece it must necessarily detract, at the same time, from the discovery of any intrinsic merit which the earlier work may have. In order that the tale be allowed to proclaim its value apart from its sister-works, mention of the The Scarlet Letter has deliberately been excluded.

There is, however, another reason, more compelling than the first because it is implicitly contained within the tale itself. Hawthorne's evident concern, in "Rappaccini's Daughter" is with

the exposition of some universal truth. Because of this, he has been careful to establish a dominent tone and even more careful to preserve it for the sake of unity. In order to preserve the ambiguous darkness of his tone, the author subtracted reality from his story until only the most minute fraction of it remained. He tells of times and settings only what it absolutely necessary to convey his intended meaning; of his characters he tells so little that they often may be mistaken for spiritual entities moving behind a veil of sheer fantasy. But, just when this feeling of a world that is all symbol begins to fix itself in the mind of the reader, a redeeming note of humor or tenderness is injected, making him feel that, after all, this is his native earth. Here, then is a master story-teller who would do more than tell a story. He has preserved that flexibility in his work which enables the setting to be anywhere, the time to be anytime and the characters to be anyone.

It has seemed to be just to Hawthorne to use the same method of approach in a critical study of his tale as he used in the composition of the original, for his achievement is barren of meaning when divorced from his intent. To begin with the theme of the work, then, has been only to begin with Hawthorne's own starting point. In essence, the story is a story of sin. Sin is a simple matter of turning from God to self, but this definition is proper to the Theology text in which it is to be found. As a practical guide it is almost devoid of meaning by reason of its

simple but vague terminology. In the mind of Hawthorne, this concept was modified until it became a matter of the greatest sin to remain deliberately untouched by the human situation.

Beatrice is the embodiment of the theme not because she is capable of committing sin, but precisely because she is suffering innocence personified and, as such, she is incapable of returning evil for evil. Free will is, after all, a prerequisite for sin, and, as a creature composed of two natures, neither of which are human, Beatrice lacks the purely human benefit resulting from the felix culpa. Deprived of free will, she is a static character and the situation which causes her pain is, basically, a static situation. It is ironical that she, incapable as she is of any sin, should suffer the greatest loneliness; for, had her loneliness been self-imposed she would have been guilty of the blackest sin.

Hawthornian critics have, in the past two decades, qualified their first statements concerning the burden of guilt belonging to Doctor Rappaccini. His end, viewed apart from his means, was good; his dedication is awe-inspiring in spite of the fact that it is misplaced. His motivation, involving his beloved daughter, is free from blemish. It is as ironical that he, while devoting his entire talent to the end that Beatrice be preserved, should have taken, unknowingly, the first fateful step toward her destruction, as it is that Beatrice, who is all goodness, should suffer so intolerably. The two natures of Beatrice combined to

make of her a creature without free-will; we do not know what elements combined to make of her father a creature so driven by fanatical devotion that he was incapable of a free-will choice. What can be known is the fact that whatever tragedy Doctor Rappaccini experienced, either it was played out before the beginning of the action in the tale or it is reserved for him alone when Beatrice's death has ended the tale.

Giovanni, as the narrative center of the work, establishes his own ideas in the mind of the reader with such subtlety that they may be mistaken for the reader's own impressions. His youth and inexperience, however, prove themselves to be so inadequate that he is not even to be allowed to carry the narrative thread through to the concluding scene of the tale. He cannot even face the situation, (at all,) let alone choose freely to remedy it by removing himself from the scene. Giovanni is a "Yes-Man"; he does what he is told to do. The old crone, Lisabetta, directs him to look out a window and he does so; she directs him to take the secret way into the garden and he does so. Baglioni directs him to give the "antidote" to Beatrice and he does so. His failure to act by himself is not attributable to an inherent lack in his character, but to the ineffectual society from which he was generated. The ability to make a wise choice is not inborn; it seems so at times because it has been taught so well that the resulting action is more reflexive than reflective.

The society which generated Giovanni was, obviously, a Christian society. Equally obvious is Baglioni's symbolic representation of the whole of this society. Here is the man with age, intelligence, and education enough to form a world of idealized Giovannis. Here is a man influential enough to transform a world of warped Rappaccinis. What he has done speaks more clearly, however, of Hawthorne's purpose in his creation, than reflection on what he might have done. Evil was a positive force for Hawthorne just as it is seen as a positive force by the Christian world. Baglioni's insistence upon asserting principles to which he did not really adhere label his humanitarianism more as sham than as the actualization of the Christian ideal. His weakness provides a fitting vehicle for the militant evil of which he professed the desire to free the world. Because he can plead neither the youth and inexperience of Giovanni nor the compelling dedication of Doctor Rappaccini, Baglioni stands without defense. He has chosen the path of vindication while verbally adhering to the path laid by a compassionate God.

Here, finally, lies the true sin, the greatest tragedy. All of Christian society is on trial and the judgment must be as obvious to the reader as it is to Hawthorne. Great evil has been made greater with cowardice, when it could have been rendered impotent by courage. The fulfillment of the theme of the tale is to be found in Baglioni; his ambiguity mirrors the basic ambiguity of

life.

In conclusion, it is this author's greatest tribute, more meaningful in the long run than the entire effort of this thesis, that the tendency to trite praise has received no indulgence. A trite expression expresses best a reaction to mediocrity; there is to be found, in the Salem gentleman's "Rappaccini's Daughter", nothing mediocre.

Now that this thesis has spoken for itself, the author takes this opportunity to include an entirely subjective note - her most sincere thanks for the help of those who have made its completion possible. Father James R. White of the Carroll College Library obtained periodicals which were essential to the paper. Miss Joanne Keane has proof-read the manuscript; Miss Billie Jean Hill has typed it. Finally, because without his encouragement and guidance this thesis would not be a reality, the author expresses her gratitude to Doctor Joseph T. Ward of the Carroll College English Department.

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