"A" Confession: How to Avoid Speaking the Name of the Father

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Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory, Volume 59, Number 1, Spring 2003, pp. 1-29 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.2003.0016*

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EVEN HAD HE NOT NAMED Anne Hutchinson in *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne tempts his readers to engage the relation between the Puritan society of his narrative and that of history in 1638. In both, a breech of Puritan law is at issue: adultery might suggest to some a "monstrous birth." And the question of public speech figures prominently: Hester Prynne's refusals and Anne Hutchinson's abundant expressions. However, as Michael Colacurcio states, "Clearly . . . the relationship is not one of 'identity': tempting as the view might be made to appear, *The Scarlet Letter* is probably not to be read as an allegory of New England's Antinomian Crisis" (178). Through detailed archival work, Colacurcio demonstrates convincingly how none of the characters and events in Hawthorne's novel really maps onto those involved in the Antinomian Crisis of 1638. Comparable, however, are Hawthorne's literary figures of Hester Prynne and Anne Hutchinson, found within the textual relations of his larger body of writing. As Colacurcio argues, Hester Prynne passes through a certain kind of antinomianism, "only to emerge as a version of the sexual reformer already 'typed out' in Hawthorne's 'figure' of Mrs. Hutchinson as independent and reforming 'female'" (184). Hawthorne's description of Mrs. Hutchinson in his sketch of the same name involved working out his own commentary on "the woman," a term that refers simultaneously to Anne Hutchinson as female and to woman as a category, both of which were vocally political, seemingly to Hawthorne's dislike in 1849.

Arizona Quarterly Volume 59, Number 1, Spring 2003

ISSN 0004-1610

I would like to engage whether the non-allegorical status of *The Scarlet Letter* in relation to the Antinomian Crisis is so clear, while gesturing to the ways in which literature might "speak" (to) history. In terms of the general relation to history, I use the word "speech" as a figure for how literary language is rendered as both address and potentially redress. In terms of the particular relation between *The Scarlet Letter* and the Antinomian Controversy, the question is that of the nature, derivation, and performance of speech—speech as a manifestation of language that can articulate private thought into public performance. While the theological issue at stake in the Antinomian Controversy concerns whether or not Anne Hutchinson accused the Ministers of preaching a Covenant of Works—an accusation that challenges their abilities as Ministers of Puritanism—the political, gender, and linguistic issues that are intertwined with the theocracy open pertinent, additional sites of the Controversy for allegorical rendering. Colacurcio recognizes what, he suggests, Hawthorne recognizes of Mrs. Hutchinson and the Controversy, that "The issue is not sanctification as an a posteriori evidence of justification, but the woman's own prophetic abilities" (185), which enables "the woman question" to be the relational bridge between *The Scarlet Letter* and the historical events, with Hawthorne's "Mrs. Hutchinson" as its stepping stone. Detailing the theological issue (the status of prophecy) as a gendered political issue (the problem of woman as reformer) in this way is to accept the dominant male historiographic terms of the Controversy—those of the Ministers, Winthrop in particular, and then later Cotton Mather's rendition in the *Magnalia Christi Americana*—and it is arguable whether Hawthorne's narrative in *The Scarlet Letter* accepts these terms as the ones that it wishes to prioritize. What I wish to explore is how the spirit of *The Scarlet Letter* is rendered in relation to Anne Hutchinson's own terms, and not those of the Ministers and Magistrates. For while Anne Hutchinson realizes that the theological issue in her case is immediately a gendered political issue of power and influence over others, she argues that it is at root a linguistic issue, a question of her ability to speak the word.

ABERRANT SPEECH

If the Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson begins with the charge that she "troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches"

by speaking "divers things . . . very prejudicial to the honour of the churches and the ministers thereof" (312), the Magistrates amplify the speech and power issue with that of religious and gendered conduct: "you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God nor fitting for your sex" (312). As their claims and her counter-claims proceed, however, the question arises as to what legitimizes and justifies her ability and authority to speak and teach. In responding that she received a revelation from God in his Word, Hutchinson employs the distinction between Divine language (Word) and fallen human language (word), in which the former is on rare occasion annunciated to the self in revelation to the soul.[1] In order to prophesy and otherwise teach the people, however, the self must then translate this soulful knowledge into our linguistic communicative medium.

In describing her revelation, Hutchinson moves between two different structures, neither of which alters the distinction between God's language and our own, but which do highlight the faulty condition of our language in different ways. First she claims that the Lord opened scripture unto her, by opening the letter of our language and enabling her to pass through to its spirit, articulated in the Word. The scriptural passage in question is Hebrews 9:16, "He that denies the testament denies the testator. . . . The Lord knows that I could not open scripture; he must by his prophetical office open it unto me" (336). When the Ministers and Magistrates question how she knew that the letter was opened unto the spirit, however, she responds, "How did Abraham know that it was God that bid him offer his son? . . . So to me by an immediate revelation. . . . By the voice of his own spirit to my soul" (337). These claims the Magistrates and Ministers cannot stomach, because her words and experience align her with the Patriarch, which in gendered religious and theological terms is unconscionable. It is as if to suggest equality between Hagar and Abraham: while both received the speech of God, Abraham and Hagar are not equal in the biblical narrative or in Judeo-Christian theology derived from it. In Galatians 4:21–26, Paul asserts that the new covenant of the spirit renders an explicit demotion of the children of Hagar. As a "bondwoman," Hagar is now associated with the Jews, in bondage to the materiality of the letter and the temporality of the here and now; however, the Magistrates

and Ministers also prickle over how the claim of direct revelation negates the necessity of the "ministry of the word" (341), the male church authority's claim to knowledge of explication and interpretation, or our fallen human ability to "open" the word.

In the later Trial of Anne Hutchinson, the Magistrates and Ministers come to test her ability to speak the word, which would indirectly test the possibility of her revelation. If God spoke to her soul, then surely she would be able to explicate clearly and convincingly her scriptural interpretive positions. Mr. Cotton begins the demand for explication: "Your first opinion layd to your Charge is *That the soules of all Men by nature are mortall and die like Beastes*, and for that you alledge Ecclesiastes 3.18–21" (354). In the pages of transcripts that ensue, the men come to judge her views as comprising a mortalist heresy, and they remain convinced that her puffed-up status in the community was motivated by the Antichrist, not by God. Yet the significant move by Anne Hutchinson in her defense, one which ultimately seals her fate in the Trial, emerges from how she interprets the distinction between God's language and human language. The annunciation of God's Word to the soul enables the self to know the Truth; it secures right judgment in one's ability to read the word of scripture. However, it gives no guarantee as to how well one is able to translate that judgment for communication in our fallen language. Anne Hutchinson tries to put forward this fundamental distinction between "judgment" and "expression" (361). When she contends that she thinks as the Ministers and Magistrates do about the passage, she, however, does not employ the same kind of language to articulate that judgment. What is at issue is a discursive problem caused by different modes of translating judgment into expression in human language. The only pure language in which the Word is the perfect sign of a unitary relation between signifier and signified is God's language; human language is fallen, a system of arbitrary relations.

Derived potentially from the Pauline demotion of the letter of the law as permeable and through which one must pass to the spirit, the arbitrariness of human language must be passed through, made open, to apprehend the spirit in an approach to the Word.[2] Annunciation, the immediate revelation to the soul from God, creates the problem in the reverse, for now one must figure annunciation into language as communication. For those who know God, according to Hutchinson, "judg-

ment" becomes singular and unchanging; however, that is not to say that judgment necessarily controls one's ability to express oneself. Figuring judgment in language may be more or less clear, which is the basis for her charge against the Ministers of Massachusetts Bay, excepting John Cotton, whom she lauds (318). It depends upon one's ability to manipulate language so as best to make the content of the announced revelation manifest. In this crucial instance of theological interpretation, Hutchinson renders her thought according to what one might call a certain poetics, the meaning of which the men cannot hear, let alone understand. In this question concerning the immortality of the soul, she asserts, "*I thinke the soule to be nothing but Light*" (356). They hear "light" variously as "breath" and as saying that "the soules of men by Creation is no other or better than the soules of beastes" (356); however, by the end of the debate on this issue, she asserts, "I do not differ" (360). "I doe not acknowledge it to be an Error but a Mistake. *I doe acknowledge my Expression to be Ironious but my Judgment was not Ironious*, for I held befor as you did but could not express it soe" (361).

"The woman's own prophetic abilities," to use Colacurcio's phrasing, are in fact related to the main theological issue of "sanctification as an a posteriori evidence of justification" (185), whose particular formulation in the Examination and Trial concerns whether the Ministers preach the Covenant of Grace clearly or whether they preach it as translated into a Covenant of Works. To believe in sanctification by works is, in a Pauline sense, to validate the letter, to trust in the readability of materiality, in the law's supremacy in itself and as the sign of Union with Christ. Fully convinced of grace, Hutchinson regards the letter as arbitrary, thus negating any unitary relation between human language and God's. This is not to say that she doesn't believe in good works or in preaching as a continuous trial to express the Word more clearly in words, but that she has no faith in the letter, only in the spirit. Election by grace for salvation is not discernable by human words or actions. Thus, while negation of the letter is a "negative," life is cast in a certain de-negation of it, in that within the arbitrary relation of language to the Word, of expression to judgment touched by grace, the poetics of speech may render "light" unto the world. To speak about God is simultaneously not to speak about God, in the sense that whatever can be said can never capture God's perfect revelation to the soul. The gift of language that enables the word to be said is always a

circumvention of the capture of its perfect referent. Hutchinson's decisions concerning how to speak, in their very choices, perform how not to speak of God, in the sense of how it is not possible to render the Word annunciated to the soul perfectly in human language.

The issues of how to speak and how not to speak are generated within antinomianism by definition. Inasmuch as the *nomos*, the law, is the authoritative pronouncement that lodges a certain faith in the letter and in a secured relation between the spirit and the letter, the antinomos arises from a faith in the spirit and a belief in the arbitrariness of the letter. Anti-nomianism and its issues of how (not) to speak move us from the everyday problem of diction to an examination of other possibilities—the work of silence, avoidance, denial and de-negation—whose relation to the more specific domain of apophantic discourse is one of points on a continuum. In question in this paper is antinomianism as a performance of language that "goes against the law" in its speech and writing by going against the authoritative laws of speech and writing. It "speaks" incorrectly and so against the law or doctrine, but as a certain apophantic discourse that seeks revelation of the meaning as the spirit of the law and as traced in contra-diction to the authorized and governable discourse. It performs "how not to speak" as a certain poetics, as, modifying Derrida, that which "exceeds even the order and the structure [and semantics] of predicative discourse. It 'is' not and does not say what it 'is.' It is written completely otherwise" (74).

The relation between *The Scarlet Letter* and the Antinomian Controversy is one in which Hawthorne's text plays out this linguistic issue, central to the Controversy. In this sense, the *Scarlet Letter* is written in an antinomian discourse, which is not to say that it sides with Anne Hutchinson's theological position or engages the debate between grace and works in the terms articulated in 1638. Rather it performs a circumlocution of the Controversy and the terms of the language issue *as* an attempt at its accurate representation. Hawthorne's engagement with history reads through the various representations of the Controversy to capture its core dynamic—the relation between the letter and the spirit as the performance of language. He alerts us to this performance of how (not) to speak about (this) history in the Introduction of *The Scarlet Letter*, which develops the issue of a relation to the letter of history.

IMPRESSION OF LANGUAGE

"The Custom-House—Introductory" presents the role of the Inspector as a kind of reader, in that he is to "peep into the holds of vessels!" (17) and thus is employed in a speculative operation that is to determine the relation between outside and inside to discover the contents. Not a rational operation, however, this initial reading functions according to "instincts" (20), which at least suggests another mode of reading that works on "faith" that the exterior sign does not particularly tell of the inner contents. One has to pass through the letter, which is literally here to get into the hold of the vessel, to derive the content, but ironically once inside, once reading, fussy attention to the little matters affords an obtuseness about larger ones:

> when a wagon-load of valuable merchandise had been smuggled ashore, at noonday, perhaps, and directly beneath their unsuspicious noses,—nothing could exceed the vigilance and alacrity with which they proceeded to lock, and double-lock, and secure with tape and sealing-wax, all the avenues of the delinquent vessel. (17)

For all the satire presented, the process described is that something passes from language when one passes through the letter. There can be a certain knowledge of the passage, if not necessarily the content, and vigilant attention to language comes mostly after the fact of this recognition. Then, language becomes unreadable, for one has sewn it up.

The idea of a certain kind of communication as passage, where the contents are not discovered so much as impressed upon the person that there were contents that had already passed, is furthered in the narrator's first relation to the letter found in Surveyor Pue's documents:

> My eyes fastened themselves upon the old scarlet letter, and would not be turned aside. Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation, and which, as it were, streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind. (32)

Transfixed by the letter, the gaze of the reader is invoked within some kind of perception or apperception able to feel the passage of meaning outwards, but this meaning passes by the mind. Reading the letter is not a function of cognition but a relation to sensibility. Hawthorne underscores the difference of this kind of communication by figuring the letter, the A, as if burning an impression when affixed to his breast (32). As if—for the relation is not one of expression that makes an impression, but "almost so" (32). Is it so emotional that it was almost physical? Perhaps, but in a way that the "emotion" cannot be described, because it does not enter thought as linguistic content. Is it a sensation that approaches becoming physical, is about to be manifested physically, is about to gain materiality in itself and not in representation by a letter, but which passes instead? Hawthorne does not yet clarify, but rather leaves us lingering on the gap constitutive of the sensation, where sensation is a figure for the kind of "communication" the letter renders.

One of the "inspectors" of *The Scarlet Letter*, the man for whom inspection has become an obsession, is Chillingworth. As a reader, his "bleared optics had a strange, penetrating power, when it was their owner's purpose to read the human soul" (55). Hawthorne expands the description further on:

> "Believe me, Hester, there are few things,—whether in the outward world, or, to a certain depth, in the invisible sphere of thought,— few things hidden from the man, who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the solution of a mystery. Thou mayest conceal it, too, from the ministers and magistrates, even as thou didst this day, when they sought to wrench the name out of thy heart, and give thee a partner on thy pedestal. But, as for me, I come to the inquest with *other senses* than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!" (69, emphasis added).

With the ministers and magistrates relegated to the position of the not well-devoted and clumsy readers who try to "wrench" the contents out of the text, Chillingworth figures himself as something beyond and su-

perlative, exercising a technique appropriate to a kind devotion whose religious fervor exceeds theirs. His is a fanaticism that reads for the truth, but now the formerly described "bleary optics" signify in some other sense, which is not solely sight. This kind of reading is a "seeing" that functions as a relay for a sympathetic *bodily* sensation: "I shall *see* him tremble. I shall *feel* myself shudder." The sympathy will make him conscious. What is performed by the "text" will be enacted by the reader and *then* read. Thus the reader reads himself in order to be made conscious. The structure is not dissimilar to the Annunciation given to Anne Hutchinson, such that the divine voice opens the word, which she then reads and makes conscious to herself. The trouble, as Hutchinson discovered, comes in terms of how to be sure of the conscious *representation*, of how one phrases it in thought. Perhaps this trouble is why Hawthorne figures the surety of reading as that of the process of alchemy, a process that has never been known to work, but which at the time held forth the lure of possibility.

If the process of reading seems problematic, the texts to be read are particularly difficult. The corporeal texts, the characters of *The Scarlet Letter*, often refuse to speak, or they speak otherwise. While the focus of the novel and much of the attendant criticism concerns the readability of the A and what it stands for, as mute the A is a sign affixed to the human texts, Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl. "Our narrative," says the narrator, is personified as Hester, the "narrative, which is now about to issue forth" through the prison door, treading in the "footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson" (46). The Hutchinson reference immediately institutes the question of what kind of narrative Hester is. How will she (not) speak, and (not) do so in relation to Anne Hutchinson, who speaks otherwise? The theological context is reasserted by Hawthorne in that particularly when entering a church, Hester "find[s] herself the text of the discourse" (77). "She will be a living sermon" (58), but one that "absolutely refuseth to speak" (58). Indeed, as Michael Ragussis claims, "The act of speech is baffled during the entire course of the tale" (59). However, if Hester does not speak the name of the father outright, and as a name recognizable in the conventions of socially constructed language and discourse, she does perform signification, all derived from the stitches of her embroidery. This kind of "speech" announces itself in a perlocutionary process, for it creates events in time. As I will come to argue, it *sentences*, but in such a mode as to convert

and so turn the reader around. Dimmesdale's modes of signification are various. He speaks out the truth of the name of the father of Pearl to the public and later the congregation, but as initially concealed in the use of the third person pronoun (62, 126). Further, he appears to somatize his thoughts, seemingly confirming Chillingworth's assertion that the body is the "instrument" of the spirit (119), betwixt the two of which there is a "strange sympathy" (120). "Dimmesdale's life fluctuates between two linguistic poles—between asking another to speak for him and speaking for another" (Ragussis 66). Finally, Pearl speaks in tongues or a certain ornamentalized discourse that functions in an idiosyncratically ironic mode—ironic in so far as it reveals and conceals what it says simultaneously, but idiosyncratic in that her language does not represent a content that she knows verifiably, but rather a certain positive non-knowledge that she senses. As the scarlet letter in human form (90, 100), she voices the multiplicity of the A in so far as it has been embellished by Hester's "speech."

"A" LANGUAGE

To ask the question of how the A speaks demands no singular answer. Millicent Bell argues that it exemplifies "the almost infinite potentialities of semantic variety" between how as a material object it authenticates a past, and how as an abstract sign it speaks both to Hester's past and her present condition (162). Yet as a letter of the alphabet, it is also "an initial, a sign of a sign, since it represents a word," though the most obvious one, "adultery," is never articulated in the text (162). The word "initial," however, suggests the idea of the A as the first letter of the alphabet, the alpha, and so can be read to stand as an abbreviation or acronym for language as such, for the ushering in of the tools and possibility of linguistic signification. I would also add that the very character of the A is in question, meant both as its material appearance as a typed letter, and its performance as a sign, a player in this plot. The ministers and magistrates intend the character to be "a mark of shame" (58), and a young wife in the crowd notes that "the pang of it will be always in her heart" (49).

This letter, then, also has a spirit. The ministers and magistrates intend it as a punishment that will turn Hester's strong-willed heart so that she will speak the name of father in a triple sense—to name her

fellow adulterer, to bend and to employ language in the authoritative confines of speech, and to appeal to the mercy of God. The command to speak the name reflects the public desire for justice to be performed by the adulterer. The public nature is constitutive of the construction of the A and its office, for in an exchange economy the community has got its hands on private performance, positioning the A as the marker of that forced publicity. Figured as the A in human form, Pearl is, of course, the analogue of the A as much as it is of her. Their analogous relation is constructed in "The Market-Place" (47) into which they are both displayed, with Hester as their backdrop. Certainly Pearl is the result of intercourse and biological gestation, but she becomes a product of adultery as a recognized legal issue only within the market place, the economy of public trading in which discourse, the law, can reconstruct the contexts in which material objects take on meaning and in which they are given value. The material market-place exists as a representation in dialectical relation to its representation as conscience. The imposition of communal language and the shared understanding of the signification are fundamental to the A in performing its office. But in this theocracy, the origin of the "crime" is biblical and religious. It is fitting, then, that the call for Hester to utter the name of the father is both civil and religious, such that to speak "Dimmesdale" is to say "Abba." In choosing not to speak, Hester rejects this mode of speaking doubly, but elects for another.

THREADS OF DISCOURSE

As both an object of and a product for the market place, the A awaits its display. John Carlos Rowe argues that "Hester still has not made it her own" (1214), as if "ownership" is solely internalization of its spirit, and in that sense the letter would rather own Hester, for it would have done its office. "In the initial stages of her exile, Hester remains fully within the Puritan system of signification" (Rowe 1214), which is a claim that overstates the case: It is so macro in formulation that it misses any hiding spots within that signifying system. In contrast, Hester has appropriated the letter in a fashion, and has added not just value but new signification to it—and not just significance, but an additional mode of signification, a private discourse both fashioned and figured as the embroidery that adds value and alters public performance

as it circumnavigates the A with gold thread, while affixing it to her bosom.[3] I don't mean to sound too literal here, as if I am suggesting that appropriation hangs on her ability to stick the A onto her dress; rather, her manner of fixation signifies appropriation. In affixing it—in a sense pre-fixing it as the article in front of her body, turning her name into an object—Hester obeys the law to the letter and at least the outline of its spirit by taking fixed hold of the letter, adding herself to it in both body and personal skill of craft. While not his intention, Henry James's assertion that "Hester is an accessory figure" (147) takes on an appropriate meaning in this context, signifying that she is a figure who in her ability to accessorize her dress becomes the accessory of the A, while accessing the power of its office for simultaneous redeployment. The embroidery of the letter incenses the public, and not only because it adds excess to a style of dress that already proved itself to be "greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony" (50). By embellishing it with an other (mode of) signification, she has trans-figured it, in the sense of fashioning it from one figure into another. She "make[s] a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment . . ." (51).

The incensed reaction of the public might also signify their unconscious recognition that Hester materializes in her trans-figurative act the dynamics of the constitutive Puritan relation to human experience—in a word, typology. As Evan Carton argues, "More precious than the fabric of experience itself is the application of a design, the inscription of a purpose, upon it. The insistence upon such a societal inscription lies at the heart of Puritanism" (103). What performs as insubordination, haughty pride, and a figure epitomizing a Puritan relation to experience structures its own commentary on Puritan agency in relation to the construction of their worldview, available then for readers to take up. The fantastic embroidery and illumination makes the pride (51), but this kind of "making" is one that alters the letter to become a fully realized figure. If the public types Hester's act of intercourse with a figure, the A, her appropriation then refigures it. She adds a seme/seam to it. The embroidery does not cover or conceal the A but is rather part of what enables the A to attempt its office, because it requires public display in order to function. Hester's appropriation of the article exchanges display for spectacle. The irony is that in following

the letter of the sentence upon her, in taking ownership of the A as hers, her embroidery of it makes it into an object as such, and more particularly an overdetermined object of fixation. Its now spectacular appearance demands to be looked at in itself. The scene of the convex mirror in Governor Bellingham's house only hyperbolizes the performance of the A. Hester "saw that, owing to the peculiar effect of this convex mirror, the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be greatly the most prominent feature of her appearance. In truth, she seemed absolutely hidden behind it" (94). If the convex mirror suggests the warped optics of the public, what compels that warp is the A's spectacular construction.

If the initial office of the A is to turn Hester's heart, part of the uniqueness of the story is that through Hester's appropriation of the A and living under its sentence according to the both the letter and the spirit, what happens over time is that the hearts of the public are turned. In "Another View of Hester," the narrator tells that over the seven years since the imposition of the sentence, the embroidered A became "familiar" (139), and that "a species of general regard had ultimately grown up in reference to Hester Prynne" (140). From the beginning of its spectacular appearance, we learn that the continual display of her embroidering skill in the marketplace nets her a subsistence income from needlework in the community, including the heads of state. While affixing the letter in a fashion, the public comes round to her style: "By degrees, nor very slowly, her handwork became what would now be termed the fashion" (74). Over seven years, just as the number seven has a biblical significance of rebirth and renewal, A Hester achieves certain rights in the community, naturalizing her new position "as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble" (140). To her needlework, she adds her services as caregiver and nurse (141). What begins with a fascination and desire over the embroidery of the A additionally becomes a call for her aid as caregiver, and I would argue that the fascination with her embroidery is as much an intrigue over her agency, her ability to take on and care for the worst, the most punishing. The community calls for that agency to be directed upon them, and "In this manner, Hester Prynne came to have a part to perform in the world" (76). As always A Hester, that part performed is by definition an enactment, a playing out of the letter as an "undying

. . . ever-active sentence" (77), but it is her addition of signification in appropriating the letter that turns its spirit out to the public to change their hearts.

If the A is a sign of a sign, the sign of language and the possibility of sentencing, her needlework that affixes it onto the female subject is another discourse that circumnavigates the A and its office. Here it is only the "feminine" and "expressive" circumnavigation that can affix the language of sentencing onto the female body as that body's own. Figured by the narrator as a certain mode of expression (76), the discourse of gold thread re-points the A to signify additionally and differently, altering its sentence. It does not alter the ministers' and magistrates' intentions, nor how the A sentences her, but rather how the A now begins to sentence and thus perform additionally and otherwise than in its initial office. In being affixed, it is embellished. If the initial direction was from the public to the private or from the community to the individual, so much so that Hester was in a "sphere by herself" (51), Hester's circumnavigation-as-circumlocution of the A (a discourse threaded *around*) turns the direction from the private to the public, even as it still maintains its original office. Through embroidered appropriation Hester does, in fact, speak the name of the father, but in the sense of a discursive thread that sutures the A-sentence to her breast. She thus conserves its office while expending her own onto the public.

I don't think that this act signifies any fully redemptive agency, but rather something "versive," if I am permitted a neologism. By "versive" I mean an agency that constructs a version. It does not entirely subvert or simply invert the dynamics of the letter's office, but rather stands at the crossroads of *verso* and *verse*, turning while employing the dynamics of the letter to sentence anew. If the spirit and the letter together perform the office as a sentence, much like a signifier and signified together perform the work of the sign, then affixing the letter to the self in Hester's way enables it to speak again and in such a way as to turn the office around to a new object—the "master" of its original intention. Hester's "versive" agency is enabled as the loopholes, the embroidery, within captivity by the communal and masculine derived and employed capacity to sentence (language and punishment).[4]

Hester's liberation as a woman doesn't come until she throws off the A in the forest (176), which is curtailed when she takes it back up again (184). The loophole that enables "version," embroidery as ex-

pression of feminine language, has the cost in Hawthorne's text for Hester of conventional femininity itself:

> All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand, and had long ago fallen away, leaving a bare and harsh outline, which might have been repulsive, had she possessed friends or companions to be repelled by it. Even the attractiveness of her person had undergone a similar change. . . .There seemed to be no longer any thing in Hester's face for Love to dwell upon; nothing in Hester's form . . . that Passion would ever dream of clasping in its embrace; nothing in Hester's bosom, to make it ever again the pillow of Affection. Some attribute had departed from her, the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman. (142–43)

It depends upon one's commitment to the traditional social constructions of femininity and beauty as to whether readers are to pine for Hester's "loss." Hawthorne rhetorically constructs it as loss and tragedy, yet at the same time Hester gains association with a community of women who sentence freely in the marketplace economy of Puritanism—those "beef and ale" (48) women who sentence her to stronger punishments according to the law of "Scripture and the statute-book" (49). The argument, then, is that female sentencing, which must be heard as a dialectical relation between the power of masculine speech to sentence the feminine (to construct it, position it, and condemn it) and the agency derived by women in appropriating the language to sentence performatively in turn, is that which taxes and so saps traditional femininity. At this moment, Hester appears as the sister of both Anne Hutchinson, who has "rather bine a Husband than a Wife" ("Report" 383), and Margaret Fuller, whom Perry Miller called "'phenomenally homely,'" following in a long line of male "critical" thought spawned by Emerson (qtd. in Dickenson x).

Hawthorne seems acutely aware of the politics of this dialectic, as brought out in description of the malaise with which Hester Prynne looks out on the world. The narrator asserts that Hester had "assumed a freedom of speculation" (143) aligned with theories that had "overthrown and rearranged . . . the whole system of ancient prejudice" (143), including gender prejudice which, we are to infer, contributed

to her reactionary behavior, following her heart and sleeping with Dimmesdale. The embroidery of the letter as a kind of perlocutionary performance is a thread of that speculation exercised while under the A's sentence—from speculation to spectacle. It contributes fundamentally to her malaise because it signifies that the freedom of speculation that was constitutive of her attractiveness as a free(er) thinking woman is still hers, enacting in a fashion, but only as a thread of its self. That she can throw off the letter and that all her femininity can return in a rush is the testament to its continued existence. What appears to be suggested by the narrator is that it is the push to the margin of the social, here signified by the forest, that is constitutive of the move toward having one's cake and eating it too—the throwing off of the letter (full agency) and having the beauty of one's self (re)bloom. It is important to stress, however, that the narrative does not simply suggest that one has to be persecuted and marginalized in order to find the strength to fight back aggressively and to win on one's own terms; rather, "marginalization" partakes of re-association with the community, one that enables the development of an agency that is not simply subversive or "other" than that employed by the center, the community, men, or power, but one always derived *within* that same logic of power. While the move to "throw off the letter" as a figure for self-defined agency is positioned in the shadowy margin of the social, one gets there not simply by being pushed, but by appropriating the power of that push, appropriating the power of performative agency from wholly "inside" the marketplace, the economy, and the "logic" of the community and social construction or "sentencing."[5]

I stress this process, hopefully to displace the binaristic assumptions which are brought to the text, which Hawthorne's language does not wholly support. Rather than an outside and an inside, isolation and communal integration, or a margin and a center as conceived within the figure of a circle, Hawthorne constructs a more dynamic three-dimensional doughnut, where the margins always fold back into and so form the "center," which, in turn, does not itself have an essential core of value in its own right, but rather shows itself to be an empty construction, requiring its "margins" for its central shape. Thus, Hester's art of making loopholes with that phallic needle creates "compositions" that "influence" (74).

"I" IN THE THIRD PERSON

The idea that the margin is part of the "center," and that the center of a doughnut shape of society is really the "stuff" that circulates endlessly around an absent center, is furthered by the figure of the Black Man, who is simultaneously the specter of some kind of devil lurking at the forested margin, and the beloved minister at the center of the community, Dimmesdale himself. Hester affirms, "Once in my life I met the Black Man! . . . This scarlet letter is his mark!" (162). Literally, he is the only man in black that we see in the forest. On the level of the spirit, he is the one with bad morals who will seemingly not confess responsibly.[6] In fact, Dimmesdale's speech is entirely appropriate to his doubled and duplicitous position. Early on, urged by the Reverend Wilson to speak publicly from his balcony position down to Hester on the scaffold, Dimmesdale performs how (not) to speak privately *as* publicly, self-referentially *as* referring to another, and literally *as* figurally—here in the sense that his figures continuously turn to an other as himself, his self as other: ". . . believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee, on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him—yea, compel him, as it were—to add hypocrisy to sin?" (62). "I" is spelled as "he," "me" as "him." As such, while in one sense this structure hides the "I" while calling for it to be revealed, it also performs "I" speaking *in* the third person. Speaking in the third person is simultaneously speaking as the third person, given that the call for Hester to speak out the name is a call for the name of the adulterer as a father of the child—a call for the third member of the family.

This structure of employing one's position of public power to call for a confession, which performs its own kind of confession—a circumfession—is a central performance of phallic language as the Name of the Father under the Law of the Father. As a version of the masculinist construction of language that would have the neuter and general "one" replaced by gendered "he," what Dimmesdale accesses is the agency of male power and its "ownership" of language to deploy "him" as the replacement for "me." This is to say that male power's relation of ownership to language and the law of sentencing enables this substitution as

"legal." It is a function built in to the structure of language to allow for pronouns to replace, and in that sense conceal, subjectivity on the level of the letter, while revealing the gender of the referent on the level of the spirit, so to say—as immediately re-placed in ways that are barely conscious because they have been so hardwired and thus "naturalized." Though the narrator notes that no one in the crowd picks up on how Dimmesdale is (not) speaking and thus saying, they all reach an "accord of sympathy" with his speech (62), which is constitutive of their glossing over what the pronouns are confessing. Hawthorne is surely aware of the structure, however, because the novel's readers have no doubt as to what Dimmesdale is saying. We have the sympathy with language and reference, and make the pronominal replacements quickly.

Dimmesdale's speech, then, performs a queer confession in the form of a circumfession, one that calls out to another as the turn to say the self. And there is a hint that the confession is not only for readers, but comes in the form of a Puritan confessional narrative par excellence. Patricia Caldwell's work on the conversion narrative may be adapted here inasmuch as the conversion narrative is a public confession, and inasmuch as the way in which Dimmesdale confesses depends upon the turning structure of words in conversion. While the conversion narrative tells the story of one's turn to God through the belief in Union with Christ, the rhetoric employed must attempt to represent this divine act. In so representing it, language must turn the hearts and minds of the congregation assembled to witness. According to Caldwell, members of the church are empowered to judge whether one is converted and has godly conversation or not. Thus, while a certain kind of behavior is being generated and taken as a sign of justification, it is behavior that is neither individualistic nor extraordinary, but rather "common," or "communal," "essentially known and understood and felt in common by all the other members" (Caldwell 86). In an effort to control the problem of effusion, of just being a good orator and rhetorician, Puritans argued that it was not so much the meaning of the language or the description of the "event" that needed to be validated communally, but rather more importantly "the 'tast' of another saint's spirit despite that ultimate privacy of all experience" (95); loosely, then, the feel. In these senses, Dimmesdale's confession employs a rhetoric of conversion. "The feeling that it so evidently manifested, rather than the direct purportof the words, caused it to vibrate within all hearts, and brought the

listeners into one accord of sympathy" (62). The actual confession of Dimmesdale does not, as we know, concern the direct purport of the words, but rather their indirection, the turn back. There is, then, a conversion in the structure of the confession. But if, according to Caldwell's research, the tast of the words is the deciding factor in a successful confession, such that the congregation can create a relation of sympathy with the speaker, then Dimmesdale is remarkably successful. And the narrator clarifies that it is not that anyone has sympathy for Hester and her choice not to confess the name, but rather a specific sympathy for Dimmesdale. "Even the poor baby, at Hester's bosom, was affected by the same influence; for it directed its hitherto vacant gaze towards Mr. Dimmesdale, and held up its little arms, with a half pleased, half plaintive murmur" (62). As time passes, Dimmesdale modifies how (not) to speak, volleying "self-condemning words" at his congregation "more than a hundred times" (126), shaping a "confession," which the narrator terms "vague." It is not vague on the level of speech and the formed sentence. "He had spoken the very truth" (126). "Could there be plainer speech than this?" (126). Dimmesdale is said to know that the reception of his words would, in fact, sentence the sentences, with the context of the listening congregation transforming the literal content of self-incrimination and recrimination into that which "did but reverence him the more" (126). Thus, Dimmesdale is condemned by the narrator as putting "a cheat on himself" (126), that the meaning of his words does not match the intention of their construction and dissemination. Knowing full well the necessity of having the congregation sympathize with the tast of the confession, here Hawthorne, through Dimmesdale, suggests that tast and literal meaning of words have little to do with each other. The intrigue, however, is that simultaneous with this disjunction, intention and reception are fused.

Dimmesdale's supposedly "actual" confession on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl at the end of the novel maintains the (k)not of speaking till the bitter end. His declared self-referential "I" first asserts *that* "'I withheld myself from doing [something] seven years ago'" (219), but not *what*. The *what* comes in performance, the mounting of the scaffold, to be later affirmed as only that: "'At last!—at last!—I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood'" (220). While the public is to infer a confession by his physical performance, Dimmesdale never speaks his name as the name of the father, never conjoins "I"

as the pronominal replacement for "Dimmesdale." What he does is to confess in the third person once again.

> "It was on him!" he continued, with a kind of fierceness; so determined was he to speak out the whole. . . . "But he hid it cunningly from men, and walked among you with the mien of a spirit, mournful, because so pure in a sinful world!—and sad, because he missed his heavenly kindred! Now, at the death-hour, he stands up before you! He bids you look again at Hester's scarlet letter! He tells you, that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart!" (221)

The determination is for the "he" to "speak out the whole," but as Chillingworth has already noted, "this man . . . hurrieth him out of himself!" (120), which is to say, as if in the voice of Dimmesdale, "I am out of my self as he; he hurrieth out" as the public "I."

Within the context of Dimmesdale's hundred-fold circumfessions, the narrator asserts that the minister had spoken. "Spoken! But how?" (126), and the questioning of how he spoke, such that his speaking was a certain non-saying, is as much a part of the intrigue of Dimmesdale's character as it is of Hester's. Part of the loophole of public disclosure, or the cheat of publicity that reserves a space for the "not," the negation or otherwise avoidance of speaking where meaning and reception do not bond but the intention of dissemination and reception do, is the bodily performance of signification so associated with Dimmesdale. What obsesses Chillingworth as Dimmesdale's apparent somatizing of moral anxiety is figured as a kind of writing, with the body as both a sheet upon which writing is rendered, and a visual text itself whose shapes of deterioration and changing coloration seem to offer readable meaning. The question of writing appearing on the body is left by Hawthorne as a question. There is debate over whether an A was revealed on Dimmesdale's chest when he finally rends his garment and speaks the name: "*Most* of the spectators testified to having seen, on the breast of the unhappy minister, a SCARLET LETTER—the very semblance of that worn by Hester Prynne—imprinted in the flesh" (223; capitals in original, italic emphasis added). However, "certain persons, who were spectators of the whole scene, and professed never once to

have removed their eyes from the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, denied that there was any mark whatever on his breast" (223). The argument for the A's appearance is set up by Dimmesdale, who publicizes the "red stigma" as a "type of what has seared his inmost heart" (221). It is seconded by the narrator, in the sense that he argues for regarding Dimmesdale as "a false and sin-stained creature" proven "clear as the mid-day sunshine on the scarlet letter" (224). The ground for the argument is laid by Chillingworth, who reacts with a foot-stamping and arm-raising "wild look of wonder, joy, and horror" after opening the sleeping Dimmesdale's shirt and staring at his chest (121). We are to infer, at least, that something profound was seen there, confirming Chillingworth's theory that Dimmesdale manifests "A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body!" (120)

Body as text is a performance in its muteness of how (not) to speak. But taking speaking as a figure for signification, the parenthetical (k)not of how to speak is performed by Hawthorne himself in his presentation of the proof of the existence of the writing as undecideable. Most testify to it, but others who never took their eyes off of Dimmesdale profess otherwise. Surveyor Pue's document is the testimony; Hawthorne's story is the profession. In Pauline fashion, testimony's existence and its proof demand the death of the testator, and in this case the materiality of the text itself, Dimmesdale's chest. Hawthorne's profession, his writing and publication of the novel, is overdetermined with the senses of profit-making career and, however, a certain vow of faith, as in the sense of "profession" that emerged in the fifteenth century, the active declaration of belief and faith (*OED*). The point is that nowhere is there a binding together of saying and speaking, of the truth of history or even of narrative as coming together with the meaning of words as indissoluble. Hawthorne ups the ante to the state of the undecidability of Anne Hutchinson's ambivalent relation between our language's words and interior revelation of truth, such that the word can be erroneous, yet judgment be sound. The theological valence to the question of "speaking" is underscored in very Hutchinsonian terms, for when Dimmesdale tears away his ministerial garb, "It was revealed! But it were irreverent to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentrated on the ghastly miracle" (221). If the "secular" and "religious" contexts are brought together, such that the A as the sign of our language as such and revelation as the

opening of the word as Word by God are mapped on to each other, then the (k)not of speaking is made constitutive and absolutely fundamental to the idea and the process of trying to reveal the truth. It is irreverent to try to describe the miracle, and that irreverence can only manifest itself in "ironious" signification, the reading of which is undecidable.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The most complex speech comes from Pearl, or comes *as* Pearl, for Pearl is "the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!" (90). If the A sentences, its vocal form becomes Pearl, whose speech is a discourse in the language of the A. The A, however, is a sentence whose office is to exact punishment, whose performance would repair the breaking of a law by exacting compensation. As the A in another form, Pearl is both the product of adultery and the iterative reminder that the A is and is not doing its office. "The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being, whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to be discovered" (81). The idea of Pearl's disordered relations as the result of the breaking of a law is a simple enough one-to-one representation, but the figure of Pearl as the A suggests that disorder is part of the nature and functioning of the A, of the sentencing function of the law itself. Figured as a kind of text, Pearl becomes the object of Chillingworth's questioning as to her "composition" (117). "'Hath she any discoverable principle of being?'" he asks Dimmesdale, "'None,—save the freedom of a broken law'" (117). And so this constellation of figures suggests a complex interweaving of the categories of social law, identity within definitional boundaries, and regulated, discernable behavior, with those of language, text, the rules of grammar, syntax and semantics that seek to set readability. In both cases, Pearl's principle of being is freedom from the law. She is what erupts from the breaking of the definitional boundaries, socially and linguistically. As the product of adultery and as the A in human form, she calls into question the product not just of the law broken, but also of the legal recourse to compose the effect of the broken law. If the A is supposed to shore up legal boundaries by socially containing Hester, Pearl as the A

indicates that such sentencing binds and unbinds simultaneously, in a similar sense to how the affixing of the A and thus following the sentencing of the punishment to the letter are what structure their own loopholes that turn the structure of sentencing around. Pearl is a "living hieroglyphic" (180), and the senses of movement and stasis associatively link to her double role of unbinding and binding.

That unbinding nature is made manifest in both her bodily presence and her speech. On the one hand, her very presence "revealed the secret they [Hester and Dimmesdale] so darkly sought to hide,—all written in this symbol,—all plainly manifest,—had there been a prophet or magician skilled to read the character" (180). On the other, her speech performs revelation, for the principle of a broken law is traced and made manifest in how she employs language. The problem with presence is less its material reality as its readability, and as such Pearl exemplifies the Hutchinsonian problem of the translation from revelation to manifestation, and from manifestation to "understanding." Revelation opens the word. The representation of revelation demands that the law of language be broken, opened on the level of the letter and the sentence. With Pearl, the opening of language is the performance of the spirit without employing the socially sanctioned letter, and this structure takes various forms. In the face of social and religious authority, which, beyond the particular magistrates and ministers is the socially accepted form of speech and conduct, Pearl either refuses to speak, misspeaks, or speaks in figures that are not clearly readable. In her interview with Governor Bellingham,

> Pearl . . . could have borne a fair examination in the New England Primer, or the first column of the Westminster Catechism, although unacquainted with the outward form of either of those celebrated works. But that perversity, [of] which . . . Pearl had a tenfold portion, now, at the most inopportune moment, took thorough possession of her, and closed her lips, or impelled to speak words amiss. After putting her finger in her mouth, with many ungracious refusals to answer good Mr. Wilson's question [of who made her], the child finally announced that she had not been made at all, but had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses, that grew by the prison-door. (99)

Along with simply not speaking and speaking amiss, Pearl's final response seems exactly right, but to the question of origin as if asked in a different context. She responds to the question of the origin of her significance and signification, her spirit as opposed to the creation of her physical material. If the rose-bush was said to have sprung up under the foot of Anne Hutchinson (46), then Pearl's "figurative" response speaks clearly to how she employs an Hutchinsonian principle of language, generated from the mediation of her mother's actions connecting wittingly or unwittingly to and through history. If Anne Hutchinson's erroneous words were her monstrous birth, as Winthrop refers to them (*Short Story* 214), then Pearl is Hester's. Like Huchinson's language that attempted to represent and so bring into our language the unrepresentable in thought—the open Word—Pearl "lacked reference and adaptation to the world" (81). On the one hand she represents and so reveals that which remains unspeakable and unspoken in *The Scarlet Letter*—the name of the father. On the other hand, as the scarlet letter itself, she performs its function as an open figure, one that keeps turning, signifies multiply, is the sign of a sign, and which remains unreadable in so far as we employ the traditional definition of reading for meaning and understanding that functions as the truth. Similar to Anne Hutchinson, who could not control her discourse so as to not make an "ironious" translation of revelation in social language for communication, Hester "failed to win the master-word that should control this new and incomprehensible intelligence" (83). Pearl, like Hutchinson's language, is monstrous in the first sense of the definition provided in the *OED*—"of things material and immaterial." She performs as the attempted translation between the two, exemplified in the various speakings in tongues that she delivers in society, from "that [which] sounded, indeed, like human language, but . . . it was in a tongue unknown to the erudite clergyman, and did but increase the bewilderment of his mind" (137), to different phrasings in question form of the same revelation: "'What does the letter mean, mother?—and why dost though wear it?—and why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?'" (158).

A STITCH IN TIME

What can't be forgotten in any treatment of how (not) to speak in *The Scarlet Letter* is a consideration of how Hawthorne's text functions

according to its name. "The Custom-House" introduction to the story of Hester Prynne and the A asserts that relations to history establish the frame of the tale. Surveryor Pue's documents purport one relation; the Hawthorne-narrator's re-telling of the story fashions another; *The Scarlet Letter* as a whole functions in relation to Puritanism in general and the Anne Hutchinson affair in particular, as well as to the time of its writing, and the time of our reading. How do these texts (not) speak to the past, with the events irretrievable in themselves? Hawthorne constructs his narrator's relation to the (fictionally constructed) documents of Surveyor Pue in a multi-faceted way. If the Surveyor of old is anything like the Inspector in Hawthorne's time, then we shouldn't necessarily lodge much hope in his documentation of the Prynne Affair as being thorough and accurate. If Pue is anything like the recorders of the Anne Hutchinson affair, then the document may not be in any better position.[7] We know that it is "not official, but of a private nature" (30), which may not necessarily be a demotion. "Official" documents are prone to cast events as the officials require them to be recorded and to signify in the house of custom, which is both the official language of communication and the social structures and mores that it constructs and upholds. The "private" nature of the documents might suggest them to be cast more as narrative, certainly as remembrance, and potentially not far in structure or tone from the "romance" that Hawthorne will come to write. Given that Hawthorne will romance the documents for his own "profit" (33), he continues the "official" structure demonstrated in both the Hutchinson and Prynne Affairs. He makes the private public, trans-scribing it into a discourse and form consumable by the public. The question, however, is whether his use of the official structure adheres only to male governmentality and the authorized rules of transcription or whether that structure frames another mode of speaking as its profit.

As cast in an unearthly voice annunciating its own revelation in religious rhetoric, the "official ancestor" of the narrator exhorts him "on the sacred consideration of my filial duty and reverence towards him . . . to bring his mouldy and moth-eaten lucubrations before the public" (33). As if writing history were a certain type of missionary work, commanded to disseminate the word publicly, Hawthorne then turns and comments on the figure by having the voice say, "'do this, and the profit shall be all your own!'" (33). Rather than for the glory of God, or here Pue, the command to publicity results in the writer's profit. In the

recording and thus the constructing for posterity of the Hester Prynne Affair, the male writers enter into a profit sharing enterprise. Hawthorne is explicit that the writing will take place "with one remove farther from the actual, and nearer to the imaginative" (36), and his noted qualm that the characters would say, "'What have you to do with us?'" (34) does little to alter the ethics of the enterprise. Profit for the writer and the age of the writing is the motive and goal. Hawthorne's narrator justifies the venture as inevitable:

> It was a folly, with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age; or to insist on creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter, when, at every moment, the impalpable beauty of my soap-bubble was broken by the rude contact of some actual circumstance. The wiser effort would have been, to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of today, and thus to make it a bright transparency; to spiritualize the burden that began to weigh so heavily; to seek, resolutely, the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the petty and wearisome incidents, and ordinary characters, with which I was now conversant. The fault was mine. (37)

The "actual" remains a category of the present in this passage. It intrudes on the possibility of reconstructing the past, which is only a "soap-bubble." The wiser effort would have been to write allegory, which is the figure and technique for going after the spiritual value. The value of the incidents, as given to us in the words, is covered by them, and in order to best represent the hidden value one needs to trans-figure, change the figure, rendering the opacity of today into a transparency. Eric Savoy argues that prosopopoeia is the engine of the ensuing fiction, such that "the ghosts of the past are made to perform—to speak, and in speaking to authorize Hawthorne's literary labors—history itself is reconceived. . . . History itself, its illegibility at least provisionally diminished, becomes a palimpsest to be overwritten" (399).

Pue's A is overwritten by Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, where Hawthorne's A is first for a certain kind of allegory. While Hawthorne's present is given up as the mise-en-scène for the "history" that Pue records, the text of *The Scarlet Letter* becomes the mise-en-scène for 1637–38, the time of the Examination and Trial of Anne Hutchinson,

and its trailing aftermath. Indeed, the events and persons in *The Scarlet Letter* do not match up with those of the Antinomian Controversy, because on the level of the letter, if *The Scarlet Letter* is an allegory, it is "ironious" in its expression. It is not so, however, in its judgment. The ghosts of the past do speak, and what is allegorized is the issue of how they speak, if not what they say. In the various modes of Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Hester, *The Scarlet Letter* speaks to the history of transcribing history in the Antinomian Controversy, while, in an Hutchinsonian fashion, it seeks to communicate and (not) reveal its divinely original source.

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NOTES

1. In the transcripts of the Examination, John Cotton details three types of revelation possible, two of which "tend to danger more ways than one" (340). The third is "breathed by the spirit of God . . . in a word of God" and is holy (340). "Though the word revelation be rare in common speech and we make it uncouth in our ordinary expression, yet notwithstanding, being understood in the scripture sense I think they are not only lawful but such as christians may receive and God bear witness to" (340).

2. See Romans 2:25–29, 7:6–8, 9:31–32; Galatians 2:16, 3:11–12.

3. Hawthorne himself notes the relation between embroidery and writing in his earlier sketch, "Mrs. Hutchinson," within his short introduction concerning the flourish of women's journalism in his time. Hands that used only to embroider now write, manifesting their "feminine ambition" (18). I am arguing that not just as a point on a continuum or simply as generative of writing, embroidery for Hester is already a certain performative writing.

4. I owe my attention to the idea of "loophole" to Burnham.

5. I draw here on Butler's "understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (*Bodies* 2). Or, in terms of agency, Butler notes that "Whereas some critics mistake the critique of sovereignty for the demolition of agency, I propose that agency begins where sovereignty wanes. The one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject) acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset" (*Excitable* 16).

6. Alternatively, the Black Man is Chillingworth, whose margin and center positions are always threaded together. Puritan husband of Hester, he appears first as a stranger in a mix of Native and Puritan clothing. He becomes the friend and personal physician of Dimmesdale while being his self-professed foe, desiring to be the

agent of his demise. Upon seeing Chillingworth with Dimmesdale, Pearl calls out, "'Come away, mother! Come away, or yonder old Black Man will catch you! He hath got hold of the minister already'" (117–18).

7. The transcripts of Hutchinson's Examination and Trial have missing words, unreadable lines, and obscure biblical references. Furthermore, in the crucial moment when Anne Hutchinson says, "*I thanke the Lord I have Light*" (359), both obscure reference and potential transcription error come in to play. The context relates to whether Hutchinson adheres to mortalist heresies concerning the mortality and more generally the status of the soul in relation to the body. When she thanks the Lord for light, it is not clear that she is referring to knowledge gained from the men in the Trial situation who endeavor to correct her thoughts. As she was to have said in the Examination, which is reiterated in the context of the Trial, both to fear men and to trust in men is a snare ("Examination" 320, "Trial" 352). She may well be thanking God that *God* has given her light, revelation, union and the knowledge both of it and from it. She may be reiterating her confidence in her own judgment given from God in a scenario of words that is exactly to the point of her thinking. And finally, she may well have said, "I thank the Lord that I have life," which was mistranscribed. Transcription error seems quite possible, given that the prickly issue of the soul and the spirit itself implicates either a misquotation of 1 Thes. 5:23, (Maclear 89) or a mistranscription of the conversation. 1 Thes. 5:23 reads as, "I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." On the problems of Ezra Stiles's transcription of the trial record, made 133 years after the event, and which is the only existing record, see Maclear 87–91.

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