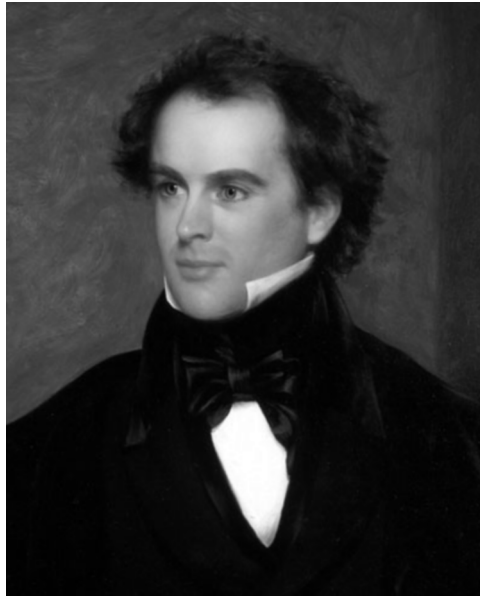


## 193 QUOTATIONS



Nathaniel Hawthorne

(1804-1864)

Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote the classics *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and world class short stories including “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” “Young Goodman Brown,” “The Minister’s Black Veil,” “The Birthmark,” “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” and “The Artist of the Beautiful.” The most intellectually complex literary form is a realistic allegory of symbols and Hawthorne is the greatest American allegorist, deriving his allegorical mentality from Platonism, Christianity, archetypal thinking, and his Puritan heritage—especially Spenser, Milton and Bunyan. Melville learned to write allegory from Hawthorne and dedicated *Moby-Dick* to him. Hawthorne is to New England what Faulkner is to the South and his mythic vision of American history is matched in scope only by Cooper, Cather and Faulkner. Hawthorne is the American equivalent of Dante. He is also interesting as a Victorian male feminist who accommodated the women in his life, in particular his talented wife Sophia Peabody Hawthorne—setting him at odds with his unmarried radical Feminist sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody, who wrote the Socialist manifesto of the failed utopian experiment at Brook Farm and opposed the institution of marriage.

ORDER OF TOPICS: youth, veils, becoming an author, artist of the beautiful, Herman Melville, faith, doubts, theology, Calvinism, predestination, miracles, other states of being, ghosts, Platonic idealism, Nature, animals, human nature, freedom in wilderness, sweet society, Victorianism, sexual desire, purity, romantic love, mature love, domestic bliss, holy hearth, angel in the house, head and heart psychology, lack of heart, spiritual death, Unpardonable Sin, the unconscious, conscience, sin, guilt, repression, sublimation, displacement, psychosomatic illness, madness, Democracy, black inequality, brotherhood, Socialism, progress, evolution, reformers, radical Feminists, Zenobia, Margaret Fuller, women’s movement, gender equality, ministers should be women, Transcendentalists, happiness, art, allegories, history, writing about America, the Puritans, from Prefaces, definition of Romance, moral purpose, Brook Farm, Italy, death, immortality:

### YOUTH

I love to swim, but shall not disobey my mother.

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination, as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-

feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor,—who came so early, with his bible and his sword... He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil.

#### VEILS

So far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face.

In its near retirement and accessible seclusion it [the Old Manse in Concord] was the very spot for the residence of a clergyman—a man not estranged from human life, yet enveloped in the midst of it with a veil woven of intermingled gloom and brightness.

For the Earth, too, had on her black veil.

#### BECOMING AN AUTHOR

What do you think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen? [to his mother in 1821]... But authors are always poor devils and therefore Satan may take them.

If ever I should have a biographer, he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed; and here I have been glad and hopeful, and here I have been despondent; and here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all—at least, till I were in my grave.

#### ARTIST OF THE BEAUTIFUL

It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius and the objects to which it is directed.

The greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool; the truest heroism is to resist the doubt; and the profoundest wisdom, to know when it ought to be resisted, and when it be obeyed.

#### HERMAN MELVILLE

Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had “pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated”; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists—and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before—in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting.

#### FAITH

You emerge from mystery, pass through a vicissitude that you can but imperfectly control, and are borne onward to another mystery.

I shook with sobs. For a long time, I knelt there, holding her hand; and surely it is the darkest hour I ever lived.... I looked at my poor dying mother; and seemed to see the whole of human existence at once.... Oh what a mockery, if what I saw were all,—let the interval between extreme youth and dying age be filled up with what happiness it might! But God would not have made the close so dark and wretched, if there were nothing beyond; for then it would have been a fiend that created us, and measured out our existence, and not God. It would be something beyond wrong—it would be insult—to be thrust out of life into

annihilation in this miserable way. So, out of the very bitterness of death, I gather the sweet assurance of a better state of being. [1849]

Christian faith is a grand cathedral, with divinely pictured windows. Standing without, you see no glory, nor can possibly imagine any; standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendors.

Doubts may flit around me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down, but...while that blessed sunshine lives within me—never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith.

### DOUBTS

For there are states of our spiritual system, when the throb of the soul's life is too faint and weak to render us capable of religious aspiration.

To the untrue man, the whole universe is false.

### THEOLOGY

Volumes of the *Liberal Preacher* and *Christian Examiner*, occasional sermons, controversial pamphlets, tracts, and other productions of a like fugitive nature took the place of the thick and heavy volumes of past time. In a physical point of view there was much the same difference as between a feather and a lump of lead; but intellectually regarded, the specific gravity of old and new was about upon a par. Both also were alike frigid. The elder books, nevertheless, seemed to have been earnestly written, and might be conceived to have possessed warmth at some former period; although, with the lapse of time, the heated masses had cooled down even to the freezing-point. The frigidity of the modern productions, on the other hand, was characteristic and inherent, and evidently had little to do with the writer's qualities of mind and heart. In fine, of this whole dusty heap of literature I tossed aside all the sacred part, and felt myself none the less of a Christian for eschewing it. There appeared no hope of either mounting to the better world on a Gothic staircase of ancient folios or of flying thither on the wings of a modern tract. ["The Old Manse"]

All subtle, elaborate, intricate reasonings about abstruse questions beyond the grasp of the majority are certainly unimportant, and probably untrue. Is not the human heart deeper than a system of philosophy?

So long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence.

### CALVINISM

Their house of worship, like their ceremonial, was simple, and severe. But the zeal of a recovered faith burned like a lamp within their hearts, enriching everything around them with its radiance... All was well, so long as their lamps were freshly kindled at the heavenly flame. After a while, however, whether in their time or their children's, these lamps began to burn more dimly, or with a less genuine luster; and then it might be seen how hard, cold, and confined was their system,—how like an iron cage was that which they called Liberty.

Hester looked, by way of humoring the child; and she 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. Pearl pointed upward, also, at a similar picture in the head-piece. [The suit of armor is a symbol of Calvinism.]

Happy are we, if for nothing else, yet because we did not live in those days...daily life must have trudged onward with hardly anything to diversify and enliven it, while also its rigidity could not fail to cause miserable distortions of the moral nature. Such a life was sinister to the intellect, and sinister to the heart; especially when one generation had bequeathed its religious gloom, and the counterfeit of its religious ardor, to the next; for these characteristics, as was inevitable, assumed the form both of hypocrisy and exaggeration...

## PREDESTINATION

She [his little daughter Una] asks me to write sixty-four on her hand; probably there is some destiny or other connected with this particular number [he died in 1864].

## MIRACLES

Heaven promotes its purposes without aiming at the stage-effect of what is called miraculous interposition.

## OTHER STATES OF BEING

We reasoned high about other states of being; and I suggested the possibility that there might be beings inhabiting this earth, contemporaneously with us, and close beside us, but of whose existence and whereabouts we could have no perception, nor they of ours, because we are endowed with different sets of senses; for certainly it was in God's power to create beings who should communicate with nature by innumerable other senses than those few which we possess.

## GHOSTS

An apparition haunts our front-yard.... The other day, I found that my wife was equally aware of this spectre.

Houses of any antiquity in New England are so invariably possessed with spirits that the matter seems hardly worth alluding to. Our ghost used to heave deep sighs in a particular corner of the parlor, and sometimes rustled paper, as if he were turning over a sermon in the long upper entry—where nevertheless he was invisible in spite of the bright moonshine that fell through the eastern window....

A yet stranger business was that of a ghostly servant maid, who used to be heard in the kitchen at deepest midnight.

## PLATONIC IDEALISM

There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger.

Everything, you know, has its spiritual meaning, which to the literal meaning is what the soul is to the body.

"If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence, but the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward."

Each tree and rock, and every blade of grass, is distinctly imaged, and, however unsightly in reality, assumes ideal beauty in the reflection.... All the sky glows downward at our feet; the rich clouds float through the unruffled bosom of the stream like heavenly thoughts through a peaceful heart...let it be a symbol that the earthliest human soul has an infinite spiritual capacity and may contain the better world within its depths.

Which, after all, was the most real—the picture, or the original?—the objects palpable to our grosser senses, or their apotheosis in the stream beneath? Surely the disembodied images stand in closer relation to the soul.

This so frequent abortion of man's dearest projects must be taken as proof that the deeds of earth, however etherealized by piety or genius, are without value, except as exercises and manifestations of the spirit.

When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality.

## NATURE

Moonlight is sculpture.

Sunlight is painting.

Mountains are earth's undecaying monuments.

Life is made up of marble and mud.

The sunshine, also, broke across in spots, and in other spots the shadow was deep; but still there was intermingling enough of sunshine and bright hues to keep off the gloom from the whole path.

## ANIMALS

All these winged people [birds], that dwell in the vicinity of homesteads, seem to partake of human nature, and possess the germ, if not the development of immortal souls.

It is our duty to support a pig, even if we have no design of feasting upon his flesh; and for my part, I have a great sympathy and interest for the whole race of porkers, and should have much amusement in studying the character of a pig. Perhaps I should try to bring out his moral and intellectual nature, and cultivate his affections.

## HUMAN NATURE

Mankind are earthen jugs with spirit in them.

The faun is a natural and delightful link betwixt human and brute life, with something of a divine character intermingled.

It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible grip in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object.

## FREEDOM IN WILDERNESS

The chief profit of those wild days...lay...in the freedom which we thereby won from all custom and conventionalism and fettering influences of man on man. We were so free today that it was impossible to be slaves to-morrow. When we crossed the threshold of the house or trod the thronged pavements of a city, still the leaves of the trees that overhang...were whispering to us, "Be free! Be free!" Therefore along that shady riverbank there are spots, marked with a heap of ashes and half-consumed brands, only *less sacred* in my remembrance than the hearth of a household fire. [emphasis added]

## SWEET SOCIETY

And yet how sweet, as we floated homeward adown the golden river at sunset,—how sweet was it to return within the system of human society, not as to a dungeon and a chain, but as to a stately edifice, whence we could go forth at will into statelier simplicity!... I prayed that the upper influences might long protect the institutions that had grown out of the heart of mankind.

## VICTORIANISM

Man is prone to be a brute.

A woman's chastity consists, like an onion, of a series of coats.

God gave you to me to be the salvation of my soul. [to wife Sophia]

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

#### SEXUAL DESIRE

Let men tremble to win the hand of woman, unless they win along with it the utmost passion of her heart.

Caresses, expressions of one sort or another, are necessary to the life of the affections as leaves are to the life of a tree. If they are wholly restrained, love will die at the roots.

Holding her hand, you felt something; a tender something; a substance, and a warm one; and so long as you should feel its grasp, soft as it was, you might be certain that your place was good in the whole sympathetic chain of human nature.

Dearest [future wife Sophia], my heart yearns for thee mightily...now and continually... Looks—pressures of the lips and hands—the touch of bosom to bosom—these are a better language; but bye-and-bye, our spirits will demand some more adequate expression even than these.

In our nature, however, there is a provision, alike marvelous and merciful, that the sufferer should never know the intensity of what he endures by its present torture, but chiefly by the pang that rankles after it.

She who has once been woman, and ceased to be so, might at any moment become a woman again, if there were only the magic touch to effect the transfiguration.

#### PURITY

Purify that inward sphere.

A pure hand needs no glove to cover it.

#### ROMANTIC LOVE

There comes a sense of second youth, gushing out of the heart's joy at being in love.

Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a deathlike slumber, must always create sunshine, filling the heart so full of radiance, that it overflows upon the outward world.

True; it might be a sin and a shame, in such a world as ours, to spend a lifetime in this manner; but, for a few summer weeks, it is good to live as if this world were Heaven. And so it is, and so it shall be; although, in a little while, a flitting shadow of earthly care and toil will mingle with our realities.

They transfigured the earth and made it Eden again, and themselves the first dwellers in it.... But how soon the heavy earth-dream settled down again!

“What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so!” [Hester]

Selfishness is one of the qualities apt to inspire love.

#### MATURE LOVE

From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount.... There they stood, in the first hour of

wedlock, while the idle pleasures, of which their companions were the emblems, had given place to the sternest cares of life, personified by the dark Puritans....

All brave men love; for he only is brave who has affections to fight for, whether in the daily battle of life, or in physical contests.

People of high intellectual endowments do not require similar ones in those they love. They are just the persons to appreciate the wholesome gush of natural feeling, the honest affection, the simple joy, the fullness of contentment with what he loves...for a man loses the capacity for this kind of affection, in proportion as he cultivates and refines himself.

#### DOMESTIC BLISS

Life, within doors, has few pleasanter prospects than a neatly arranged and well-provisioned breakfast-table.... The early sunshine—as fresh as that which peeped into Eve’s bower, while she and Adam sat at breakfast there—came twinkling through the branches of the pear-tree and fell quite across the table.

#### HOLY HEARTH

The sacred trust of the household fire has been transmitted in unbroken succession from the earliest ages and faithfully cherished.

Religion sat down beside it, not in the priestly robes which decorated and perhaps disguised her at the altar, but arrayed in a simple matron’s garb, and uttering her lessons with the tenderness of a mother’s voice and heart. The holy hearth!

Wisely were the altar and the hearth conjoined...for the hearth, too, had its kindred sanctity.... The holy hearth!

#### ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

Mr. [poet Coventry] Patmore seems to acknowledge [his wife] as the real “Angel in the House,” although he says she herself ignores all connection with the poem.

I suppose I should have pretty much the same feeling if an angel were to come from Heaven and be my dearest friend,—only the angel could not have the tenderest of human natures too, the sense of which is mingled with this sentiment...methinks it converts my love into religion. [Letter to wife Sophia]

Methinks it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristics, when women of high thoughts and accomplishments love to sew; especially as they are never more at home with their own hearts than while so occupied.

“I will leave you to feel whether it is not better to be a true woman, than a lady [aristocrat].” [Holgrave]

It is often instructive to take the woman’s, the private and domestic view, of a public man.

#### HEAD AND HEART PSYCHOLOGY

Colleagues, but often disputants—my Mind and Heart. The former pretends to be a scholar...the latter takes me on the score of feeling; and both, like several other preachers, spend their strength to very little purpose. I, their sole auditor, cannot always understand them.

If mankind were all intellect, they would be continually changing, so that one age would be entirely unlike another. The great conservative is the heart, which remains the same in all ages; so that commonplaces of a thousand years’ standing are as effective as ever.

## LACK OF HEART

Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between mind and heart.... [compare T.S. Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility"] So much for intellect! But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,—had contracted,—had hardened,—had perished! It had ceased to partake in the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling at the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

That cold tendency, between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people's passions and impulses, appeared to have gone far towards unhumanizing my heart.

A tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black...with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

## SPIRITUAL DEATH

This is the calamity of men whose spiritual part dies out of them and leaves the grosser understanding to assimilate them more and more to the things of which alone it can take cognizance.

## UNPARDONABLE SIN

"What is the Unpardonable Sin?" asked the lime-burner... [Ethan Brand replied]: "The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony!"

## THE UNCONSCIOUS

Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regards to which we practice an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments.

Unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul where his motives lay hidden, he believed that a supernatural voice had called him onward, and that a supernatural power had obstructed his retreat.

It was the exhilarating effect—upon a prisoner just escaped from the dungeon of his own heart—of breathing the wild, free atmosphere of an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region. [wilderness]

## CONSCIENCE

Conscience unveils her face, and strikes a dagger to the heart.

## SIN

But this had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose.

The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers—stern and wild ones—and they had made her strong, but had taught her much amiss.

"Hush, Hester, hush!" said he, with tremulous solemnity. "The law we broke!—the sin here so awfully revealed!—let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot our God,—



when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul,—it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and He is merciful!"

"Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none!"

Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence.

#### GUILT

An evil deed invests itself with the character of doom.

No great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right.

Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity.

"Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!"

What we call real estate—the solid ground to build a house on—is the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests.

We are left to dispose of the awful query, whether each inheritor of the property—conscious of wrong, and failing to rectify it—did not commit anew the great guilt of his ancestor.

A hard, cold man...seldom or never looking inward, and resolutely taking his idea of himself from what purports to be his image, as reflected in the mirror of public opinion, can scarcely arrive at true self-knowledge, except through loss of property and reputation.

#### REPRESSION

We must not always talk in the market-place of what happens to us in the forest.

What other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart? What jailer so inexorable as one's self!

#### SUBLIMATION

Women derive a pleasure, incomprehensible to the other sex, from the delicate toil of the needle. To Hester Prynne it might have been a mode of expressing, and therefore soothing, the passion of her life.

#### DISPLACEMENT

This morbid meddling of conscience with an immaterial matter betokened, it is to be feared, no genuine and steadfast *penitence*, but something doubtful, something that might be deeply wrong, beneath. [emphasis added]

#### PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESS

A bodily disease, which we look upon as whole and entire within itself, may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part.

#### MADNESS

The sufferer's conscience had been kept in an irritated state, the tendency of which was, not to cure by wholesome pain, but to disorganize and corrupt his spiritual being. Its result, on earth, could hardly fail to be insanity, and hereafter, that eternal alienation from the Good and True, of which madness is perhaps the earthly type.

## DEMOCRACY

When an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and so unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed.

## BLACK INEQUALITY

I think my prevalent idea was, that, whoever may be benefited by the results of this [Civil] war, it will not be the present generation of negroes, the childhood of whose race is now gone forever, and who must henceforth fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms.

## BROTHERHOOD

He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity.

It contributes greatly towards a man's moral and intellectual health, to be brought into habits of companionship with individuals unlike himself, who care little for his pursuits, and whose sphere and abilities he must go out of himself to appreciate.

That warm and mysterious brotherhood that is between men; passing as they do from mystery to mystery in a little gleam of light; that wild, sweet charm of uncertainty and temporariness,—how lovely it made them all.

Every individual has a place to fill in the world and is important in some respect whether he chooses to be so or not.

## SOCIALISM

They are practiced politicians, every man of them, and skilled to adjust those preliminary measures, which steal from the people, without its knowledge, the power of choosing its own rulers.

This faith, more than any thing else, steals the pith and availability out of whatever enterprise he may dream of undertaking. Why should he toil and moil, and be at so much trouble to pick himself up out of the mud, when, in a little while hence, the strong arm of his Uncle [Sam] will raise and support him?...while he leans on the mighty arm of the Republic, his own proper strength departs from him.

The bond of our Community [Blithedale] was such, that the members had the privilege of building cottages for their own residence, within our precincts, thus laying a hearthstone and fencing in a home, private and peculiar, to all desirable extent; while yet the inhabitants should continue to share the advantages of an associated life.

## PROGRESS

As the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic gaiety, even so was their home of wild mirth made desolate amid the sad forest.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as...the site of a prison.

The chief obstruction to the improvement of the world and the growth of knowledge is, that mankind cannot go straight forward in it, but continually there have to be new beginnings.

Powers showed me, in his studio, the model of the statue of America, which he wished the government to buy. It has great merit, and embodies the ideal of youth, freedom, progress, and whatever we consider as distinctive of our country's character and destiny. It is a female figure, vigorous, beautiful, planting its foot lightly on a broken chain, and pointing upward.

The past, dismal as it seems, shall fling no gloom upon the future. To give it its due importance we must think of it but as an anecdote in our Eternity.

#### EVOLUTION

As to the better centuries that are coming, the artist was surely right. His error lay in supposing that this age, more than any past or future one, is destined to see the tattered garments of Antiquity exchanged for a new suit, instead of gradually renewing themselves by patchwork; in applying his own little life-span as the measure of an *interminable* achievement; and, more than all, in fancying that it mattered anything to the great end in view whether he himself should contend for it or against it.

This process, for aught we know, may belong to the great system of human progress, which, with every ascending footstep, as it diminishes the necessity for animal force, may be destined gradually to spiritualize us by refining away our grosser attributes of body.

#### REFORMERS

There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods it adapted to that end.

“Moonlight, and the sentiment in man’s heart, responsive to it, is the greatest of renovators and reformers. And all other reform and renovation, I suppose, will prove to be no better than moonshine!” [Holgrave]

The reformers should make their efforts positive, instead of negative; they must do away with evil by substituting good.

#### RADICAL FEMINISTS

A female reformer, in her attacks upon society, has an instinctive sense of where the life lies, and is inclined to aim directly at that spot.

I sometimes feel as if I ought...to endeavor to enlighten you as to the relation between husband and wife.... But the conjugal relation is one God never meant you to share, and which therefore He apparently did not give you the instinct to understand; so there my labor would be lost. [to sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody]

I do assure you that, like every other Abolitionist, you look at matters with an awful squint, which distorts everything within your line of vision; and it is queer, though natural, that you think everybody squints, except yourself. [to Elizabeth Peabody]

Accuracy is the twin brother of honesty; inaccuracy, of dishonesty.

As for Zenobia, there was a glow in her cheeks that made me think of Pandora.

#### ZENOBIA

“...I am a woman—with every fault, it may be, that a woman ever had—weak, vain, unprincipled (like most of my sex; for our virtues, when we have any, are merely impulsive and intuitive,) passionate, too, and pursuing my foolish and unattainable ends...”

#### MARGARET FULLER

For her [Margaret Fuller] on whose feminine nature had been imposed the heavy gift of intellectual power, such as a strong man might have staggered under, and with it the necessity to act upon the world?

The expression on her face [Priscilla], but not its features, had a resemblance to what I had often seen in a friend of mine, one of the most gifted women of the age.... “Priscilla,” I inquired, “did you ever see Miss Margaret Fuller?...you reminded me of her, just now, and it happens, strangely enough, that this very letter is from her!” [correspondence]

## WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

She discerns, it may be, such a hopeless task before her. As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated. A woman never overcomes these problems by any exercise of thought. They are not to be solved, or only in one way. If her heart chance to come uppermost, they vanish. [Hester]

The angel of the coming revelation must be a woman, indeed, but lofty, pure, and beautiful; and wise, moreover, not through dusky grief, but the ethereal medium of joy; and showing how sacred love should make us happy, by the truest test of a life successful to such an end!

## GENDER EQUALITY

I do not believe any man who ever knew one noble woman would ever speak as if she were an inferior in any sense: it is the fault of ignoble women that there is any such opinion in the world.

Instead of discussing her claim to rank among ladies, it would be preferable to regard Phoebe [his pet name for his wife Sophia] as the example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist. There, it should be a woman's office to move in the midst of practical affairs.

Man's intellect, moderated by Woman's tenderness and moral sense! Were such the legislation of the world there would be no need of State Houses, Capitols, Halls of Parliament.

## MINISTERS SHOULD BE WOMEN

"Oh, in the better order of things, Heaven grant that the ministry of souls may be left in charge of women!... The task belongs to woman. God meant it for her. He has endowed her with the religious sentiment in its utmost depth and purity..." [Coverdale]

The reverend clergy are nowhere held in higher respect than at Vanity Fair... In justification of this high praise I need only mention the names of the Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep, the Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-truth, that fine old clerical character the Rev. Mr. This-to-day, who expects shortly to resign his pulpit to the Rev. Mr. That-tomorrow; together with the Rev. Mr. Bewilderment, the Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit, and, last and greatest, the Rev. Dr. Wind-of-doctrine.

## TRANSCENDENTALISTS

[I] admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness, but sought nothing from him as a philosopher. It was good, nevertheless, to meet him in the wood-paths.

Never was a poor little country village infested with such a variety of queer, strangely-dressed, oddly-behaved mortals, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of a very intense water. Such, I imagine, is the invariable character of persons who crowd so closely about an original thinker as to draw in his unuttered breath and thus become imbued with a false originality. This triteness of novelty is enough to make any man of common sense blaspheme at all ideas of less than a century's standing, and pray that the world may be petrified and rendered immovable in precisely the worst moral and physical state that it ever yet arrived at, rather than be benefited by such schemes of such philosophers.

At the end of the valley, as John Bunyan mentions, is a cavern, where, in his days, dwelt two cruel giants, Pope and Pagan, who had strown the ground about their residence with the bones of slaughtered pilgrims.

These vile old troglodytes are no longer there; but into their deserted cave another terrible giant has thrust himself, and makes it his business to seize upon honest travelers and fatten them for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust. He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist; but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted.

"...the round globe is a vast head, instinct with intelligence!...these poor rogues, the bank-robbers—who, after all, are about as honest as nine people in ten, except that they disregard certain formalities, and prefer to transact business at midnight...and for these murderers, as you phrase it, who are often excusable in the motives of their deed, and deserve to be ranked among public benefactors..." "You are a strange man, Sir!" said the old gentleman, bringing his gimlet-eye to a point on Clifford, as if determined to bore right into him.—"I can't see through you!" "No, I'll be bound you can't!" cried Clifford laughing. "And yet, my dear Sir, I am as transparent as the water of Maule's Well!" [satire of Emerson]

### HAPPINESS

Happiness is a butterfly, which when pursued, is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

Happiness in this world, when it comes, comes incidentally. Make it the object of pursuit, and it leads us a wild-goose chase, and is never attained. Follow some other object, and very possibly we may find that we have caught happiness without dreaming of it.

I recline upon the still unwithered grass and whisper to myself, 'O perfect day! O beautiful world! O beneficent God!' And it is the promise of a blessed eternity; for our Creator would never have made such lovely days and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal. This sunshine is the golden pledge thereof. It beams through the gates of paradise and shows us glimpses far inward.

### ART

Easy reading is damn hard writing.

Religion and art spring from the same root and are close kin. Economics and art are strangers.

The only sensible ends of literature are, first, the pleasurable toil of writing; second, the gratification of one's family and friends; and lastly, the solid cash.

Taste seems to be a department of moral sense; and yet it is so little identical with it, and so little implies conscience, that some of the worst men in the world have been the most refined.

It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language. When we ascend into the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment, they are only expressible by such grand hieroglyphics as these around us.

Nobody, I think, ought to read poetry, or look at pictures or statues, who cannot find a great deal more in them than the poet or artist has actually expressed. Their highest merit is suggestiveness.

O potent art! As thou bringest the faintly revealed Past to stand in that narrow strip of sunlight, which we call Now, canst thou summon the shrouded Future to meet her there? Have I not achieved it? Am I not thy prophet?

Words—so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.

In youth men are apt to write more wisely than they really know or feel; and the remainder of life may be not idly spent in realizing and convincing themselves of the wisdom they uttered long ago.

### ALLEGORIES

Upon my honor, I am not quite sure that I entirely comprehend my own meaning, in some of these blasted allegories; but I remember that I always had a meaning, or at least thought I had.

[Allegory] is the ability to convey both the outward narrative and the inner truth and spirit of the whole affair.

Our story is an internal one, dealing as little as possible with outward events, and taking hold of these only where it cannot be helped, in order by means of them to delineate the history of a mind bewildered in certain errors.

### HISTORY

The pavements of the Main Street must be laid over the red man's grave.

I know not why we should suppose that an Indian's life is less precious, in the eyes of heaven, than that of a white man. Be that as it may, death had certainly been very busy with the savage tribes.

The Creator gave us our world, in a certain sense, unfinished, and left it to the ingenuity of man to bring it to the highest perfection of which final and physical things are susceptible.

The wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones.

Time flies over us, but leaves its shadow behind.

### WRITING ABOUT AMERICA

No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land.

### THE PURITANS

A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes....the grim and grisly presence of the town-beadle, with a sword by his side...prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law.

The very ideal of ignominy was embodied and made manifest in this contrivance of wood and iron [the pillory]. There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature,—whatever be the delinquencies of the individual,—no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame; as it was the essence of this punishment to do.... The scene was not without a mixture of awe, such as must always invest the spectacle of guilt and shame in a fellow-creature, before society should have grown corrupt enough to smile, instead of shuddering, at it. The witnesses of Hester Prynne's disgrace had not yet passed beyond their simplicity. They were stern enough to look upon her death, had that been the sentence, without a murmur at its severity, but had none of the heartlessness of another social state, which would find only a theme for jest in an exhibition like the present.

[The Puritan] community...owed its origin and progress, and its present state of development, not to the impulses of youth, but to the stern and tempered energies of manhood, and the sombre sagacity of age; accomplishing so much, precisely because it imagined and hoped so little.... They were, doubtless, good men, just, and sage. But, out of the whole human family, it would not have been easy to select the same number of wise and virtuous persons, who should be less capable of sitting in judgment on an erring woman's heart, and disentangling its mesh of good and evil, than the sages of rigid aspect towards whom Hester Prynne now turned her face.

It was as if a window were thrown open, admitting a freer atmosphere into the close and stifled study... But the air was too fresh and chill to be long breathed, with comfort. So the minister, and the physician with him, withdrew again within the limits of what their church defined as orthodox.

Their immediate posterity, the generation next to the early emigrants, wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to earn again the forgotten art of gayety.

The people possessed, by hereditary right, the quality of reverence; which, in their descendants, if it survive at all, exists in smaller proportion, and with a vastly diminished force in the selection and estimate of public men.... Stern, severe, intolerant, but not superstitious, not even fanatical; and endowed, if any men of that age were, with a far-seeing worldly sagacity. But it was impossible for the succeeding race to grow up in heaven's freedom, beneath the discipline which their gloomy energy of character had established; nor, it may be, have we even yet thrown off all the unfavorable influences, which, among many good ones, were bequeathed to us by our Puritan forefathers.... Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank Him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of ages.

And who was the Gray Champion?... He wore the old Puritan dress, a dark cloak and a steeple-crowned hat, in the fashion of at least fifty years before, with a heavy sword upon his thigh, but a staff in his hand to assist the tremulous gait of age...in the twilight of an April morning, he stood on the green, beside the meeting-house, at Lexington, where now the obelisk of granite, with a slab of slate inlaid, commemorates the first fallen of the Revolution. And when our fathers were toiling at the breastwork on Bunker's Hill, all through that night the old warrior walked his rounds...should domestic tyranny oppress us, or the invader's step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come, for he is the type of New England's hereditary spirit; and his shadowy march, on the eve of danger, must ever be the pledge, that New England's sons will vindicate their ancestry.

There they stood, in the first hour of wedlock, while the idle pleasures of which their companions were the emblems [the Maypolers], had given way to the sternest cares of life, personified by the dark Puritans.

#### from PREFACES

They [his tales] have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade,—the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment; and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor; the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages....

The sketches are not, it is hardly necessary to say, profound; but it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so. They have none of the abstruseness of idea, or obscurity of expression, which mark the written communications of a solitary mind with itself. They never need translation. It is, in fact, the style of a man of society. Every sentence, so far as it embodies thought or sensibility, may be understood and felt by anybody who will give himself the trouble

to read it, and will take up the book in a proper mood.... They are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so, they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable), but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world.... [Preface, *Twice-Told Tales*]

There is no harm, but, on the contrary, good, in arraying some of the ordinary facts of life in a slightly idealized and artistic guise....burrowing, to his utmost ability, into the depths of our common nature, for the purposes of psychological romance,—and who pursues by his researches in that dusky region, as he needs must, as well by the tact of sympathy as by the light of observation... You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits....

The comparison of these various trifles—the indices of intellectual condition at far separated epochs— affects me with a singular complexity of regrets. I am disposed to quarrel with the earlier sketches, both because a mature judgment discerns so many faults, and still more because they come so nearly up to the standard of the best that I can achieve now. The ripened autumnal fruit tastes but little better than the early windfalls.... [Preface, *The Snow Image*]

#### DEFINITION OF ROMANCE

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvelous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the Public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution....

#### MORAL PURPOSE

The point of view in which this Tale comes under the Romantic definition, lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us. It is a Legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the Reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events, for the sake of a picturesque effect. The narrative, it may be, is woven of so humble a texture as to require this advantage, and, at the same time, to render it the more difficult of attainment....

Many writers lay very great stress upon some definite moral purpose, at which they profess to aim their works. Not to be deficient, in this particular, the Author has provided himself with a moral;—the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief;—and he would feel it a singular gratification, if this Romance might effectually convince mankind (or, indeed, any one man) of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms. In good faith, however, he is not sufficiently imaginative to flatter himself with the slightest hope of this kind.

When romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one. The Author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod—or rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural



attitude. A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skillfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first...

He would be glad...if...the book may be read strictly as a Romance, having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead, than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex. [Preface, *The House of the Seven Gables*]

#### BROOK FARM

His [my] whole treatment of the affair [the Brook Farm experiment in communal living] is altogether incidental to the main purpose of the Romance; nor does he put forward the slightest pretensions to illustrate a theory, or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise, in respect to Socialism. ...[I hope] to convey both the outward narrative and the inner truth and spirit of the whole affair... [Preface, *The Blithedale Romance*]

#### ITALY

This Romance was sketched out during a residence of considerable length in Italy, and has been rewritten and prepared for the press in England. The author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral, and did not propose attempting a portraiture of Italian manners and character.... Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and must needs be, in America.... [Preface, *The Marble Faun*]

#### DEATH

Really, I think, if there were to be no death, beauty would be all tame.

We sometimes congratulate ourselves at the moment of waking from a troubled dream; it may be so the moment after death.

The dying melt into the great multitude of the Departed as quietly as a drop of water into the ocean, and, it may be, are conscious of no unfamiliarity with their new circumstances, but immediately become aware of an insufferable strangeness in the world they have quitted.

Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state.

It is because the spirit is inestimable that the lifeless body is so little valued.

#### IMMORTALITY

Hope spiritualizes the earth, Hope makes it always new; and, even in the earth's brightest and best aspect, Hope shows it to be only the shadow of an infinite bliss hereafter.

As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight.

When we shall be endowed with spiritual bodies, I think they will be so constituted that we may send thoughts and feelings any distance, in no time at all, and translate them warm and fresh into the consciousness of those we love.

In a future state of being, I think it will be one of my inquiries, in reference to the mysteries of the present state, why monkeys were made. The Creator could not surely have meant to ridicule his own work. It might rather be fancied that Satan had perpetrated monkeys, with a malicious purpose of parodying the masterpiece of creation!

