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Seekers in Hawthorne's tales: the artist and the scientist in “ The artist of the beautiful ”, “ Rappaccini's daughter ” and “ The birthmark ”

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Mémoire

Présenté pour l'obtention du Grade de

MASTER

« **Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation** »

Mention 2nd degré, Professeur des Lycées et Collèges.

Seekers in Hawthorne's tales: The Artist and the Scientist
in "The Artist of the Beautiful", "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "The Birthmark".

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Introduction

“So long as we love life for itself, we seldom dread the losing it. When we desire life for the attainment of an object, we recognize the frailty of its texture. But, side by side with this sense of insecurity, there is a vital faith in our invulnerability to the shaft of death, while engaged in any task that seems assigned by Providence as our proper thing to do, and which the world would have cause to mourn for, should we leave it unaccomplished.” (“Beautiful” 171)

This quotation from Hawthorne’s “The Artist of the Beautiful” serves to manifest the protagonist’s resolve to complete his self-assigned impossible task: to create “the Beautiful”. None of his acquaintances knows what he means to do, yet his determination is steadfast and his quest, although cryptic, is in fact not only that of creating something beautiful, but of saving his own sensitivity and artistic vision. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was an American author whose work is mostly composed of short stories and essays. Hawthorne wrote a lot about the influence of puritanism on American society and the power it has on people’s minds and conceptions of the world. This interest in puritanism and gloom probably originates from his family history, as one of his ancestors, John Hathorne, was a magistrate in the Salem witch trials (1692-1693). The author purposefully added a w to his name to distance himself from this unsightly legacy. Hawthorne wrote a lot of different stories related to the fields of religion, science, and art. However, several of his characters share similar traits, one of which is the steadfast resolve to pursue their quest to the bitter end. Each of these scientists and artists, referred to in this study as seekers, aim to use their craft in order to reach an unreachable objective. The question of the quest is the object of this study, and we will explore the following research question: how are Hawthorne’s seekers portrayed as estranged beings lost between the material world and the realm of ideals?

To study the notion of quest, we will analyse the three following short stories: “The Birthmark”¹ (published in 1843), “Rappaccini’s Daughter”² (published in 1844) and “The Artist of the Beautiful.”³ (published in 1844). For the purposes of this study, any further mention of these three tales (including quotations) will refer to the compilation named *Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Tales*, part of the Norton Critical Edition collection, published in 1987 by Norton and Company (edited by James MacIntosh).

¹ Further referred to as (“Birthmark”).

² Further referred to as (“Rappaccini”).

³ Further referred to as (“Beautiful”).

“The Birthmark” tells the story of Aylmer, a scientist whose skills are said to reach the level of sorcery and his wife Georgiana. Aylmer’s objective is to do away with the crimson birthmark on his wife’s cheek. Aylmer grew to abhor this birthmark, that he feels is tarnishing Georgiana’s otherwise perfect beauty. Convincing his wife that this defect is a flaw to be removed, and assisted by his brutish helper Aminadab, he conducts a series of experiments to make her perfect, only for her to ultimately die in his arms once the birthmark is finally erased.

“Rappaccini’s Daughter” is another short story dealing with such a figure but this time the scientist and the protagonist are two different characters. Giovanni Guasconti is a student from the University of Padua and arrives in a certain town in which he rents lodgings. From the window of his room upstairs he can see beneath him the exotic garden of his neighbour, Dr Rappaccini. One time he glances upon a spectacularly beautiful maiden named Beatrice, Rappaccini’s daughter, talking with the plants as if she and they were kin. Giovanni gradually falls in love with her until he learns that her father made her breath and touch poisonous, and that he himself has grown to manifest a similar trait due to his exposure to her. It is revealed that Rappaccini altered Giovanni in order for him to become a romantic partner for his daughter, just before Beatrice is killed by Rappaccini’s rival, seeking to destroy him.

Finally, “The Artist of the Beautiful” is the story of Owen Warland, an artist who once was the apprentice of a scornful watchmaker. His former teacher Peter Hovenden shows blatant disdain for Owen’s futile occupations and feels that he should focus his talent to more practical ends. Owen would be glad not to see him again, if not for Annie, Peter’s daughter, with whom Owen is madly in love. The story tells us of Owen’s many attempts to create “the Beautiful”, something that has no practical use but to stir feelings of awe inside one’s soul, and of Owen’s wish to offer his creation to Annie. Despite many failed attempts, and losing faith in his craft several times, Owen keeps on persevering. Alas, he finds out during his seclusion that Annie has married Robert Danforth, a kind but down-to-earth blacksmith with no sense nor interest for art and sensibility. One final time, Owen surpasses his sadness and ultimately succeeds in creating a mechanical butterfly imbued with life, shimmering and vibrant. Once he shows the butterfly to Annie, Robert, and Peter, however, it loses its brilliance when approaching beings with no regard for wonder and innocence, and is ultimately crushed by Annie’s child, who mistakes it for a plaything.

In order to properly understand the notion of quest, we need to examine the specificities of the figures of the artist and the scientists chosen for this study. To that end, we will start by analysing the different themes suggested by the aesthetics used by Nathaniel Hawthorne in the writing of his tales, which we can link to Gothic literature. We will then be able to dive into the notion of isolation, one of the seekers' most important traits as it separates them from the rest of mankind, and it allows them to pursue their respective quests undisturbed by society. However, we will also need to focus on the seekers' occupations, their field of study as well as their craft which lead them naturally to undergo a creative process as the way to reach their ideals.

The seekers' quests, their precise objectives, and the methods they use to reach these objectives are very unorthodox and we will question the relationship between the material world the seekers live in, and the immaterial realm they seek to reach. To understand their methods, we will need to study the notion of alchemy and the ways in which each seeker can be considered an alchemist. As we will study the spiritual traits the seekers aim to change, we will examine their own spiritual traits, such as the balance between the parts linking them to the rest of mankind and the parts excluding them from the material world. Due to the very nature of their crafts and their aim to have a sway over things considered unreachable by mortals, the seekers try to become beings on a higher level than mere humans. The notion of transgression and hubris will also be studied.

To conclude this essay, we will question the Puritan themes present in all three tales: indeed, religious undertones and theological notions linked to Puritanism allow us to learn about the reason why the seekers can be considered as tragic figures. We will also compare them to the protagonist of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as their stories share common traits and themes. Finally, we will focus on the end result of each of the seekers' quests: destruction. None of them are destined to peaceful or happy endings, as if they were simply fated to see their life's work destroyed before their eyes. We will conclude this study by examining how Hawthorne's seekers can be considered as tragic heroes instead of pitiful villains.

I) Scientists and artists: creative outcasts

Scientists and artists are not uncommon characters to be found in Gothic literature. Figures linked with mystery and eccentricity, they show how different they are from the rest of the world by their behaviour as well as the very nature of their occupations: studying and capturing secrets. This difference sets them apart from common men, who can hardly or cannot recognise them as part of their fellows. As they are figures shrouded in mystery and sometimes gloom, we will start this essay by delving into the themes of the Gothic genre, which is the genre most evocative of these notions.

1) The Gothic genre as a framework evoking the quest

« Le terme [Gothique] peut parfois paraître flou, mais il correspond d'abord à une certaine approche de la terreur, qu'il rejoint non par le comique, comme c'est le cas pour le grotesque, mais par le tragique. » (Liénard 789) The word « Gothique » or “Gothic” has seen its definition and implications vary greatly over the course of centuries. As Marie Liénard explains: « avec ses codes vestimentaires, sa nécrophilie, sa musique, ses rites, le néo-gothique constitue un véritable mode de vie et de pensée qui suscite parfois la suspicion et le rejet » (Liénard 789). While this specific feeling of rejection about the word “Gothic” is to be associated with 21st century audiences, we can notice that “Gothic” has kept, even if only in part, its original and main theme which is the feeling of Fear. Today just as much as before, “Gothic” is used to express an interest towards what is intrinsically scary.

But to firmly grasp the original implications of the Gothic, we must delve into the origins of this genre in various modes of artistic expression, but most singularly literature, and the reasons behind this emergence. As one could expect, Gothic aesthetics were not born out of a simple infatuation with ghost stories. It emerged during 18th century Britain primarily thanks to a general taste for Gothic architecture, which itself appeared in 12th century France. We can date the first appearance of this style of architecture as far as 1135, with the building of Basilique Cathédrale de Saint-Denis by Abbe Suger who was inspired by the writings of a theologian: « [il] découvrit les écrits de Denys l'aréopagite, un théologien selon lequel Dieu est lumière et la religion chrétienne fondée sur cette révélation. Le nouveau style de la basilique de Saint-Denis [devait] rendre sensible aux fidèles cette conception dès leur entrée dans l'édifice : il [devint] nécessaire d'y faire entrer un maximum de lumière. »⁴ Abbe Suger's objective to make natural light much more profuse resulted in

⁴ Bibliothèque Nationale de France Passerelle(s), *La naissance du style gothique à Saint-Denis*, Bibliothèque nationale

a vertical expansion of the building, and served as the first step towards a new style which over time turned into what we globally refer to as Gothic architecture. As previously mentioned, the origin of the Gothic aesthetic, including in literature, can be found in a British fondness for Gothic architecture during the 18th century. The origin of this taste for 12th century architecture can only be guessed at, but as Liénard details: « *Il était de bon ton de faire construire sa maison dans ce style ; le Moyen-Age était vu comme une sorte d'âge d'or. Châteaux et monastères en ruine étaient propices à susciter le Sublime, ce mélange du beau et du terrifiant. [...] l'émotion dominante est l'angoisse, voire la terreur, l'horreur et la révolusion.* » (Liénard 790)

The use of the word “Sublime” by Liénard reminds us of Burke’s definition of the Sublime, as it provides us with a view very closely linked to the themes of the Gothic : “*Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.*” (Burke 111). We find in Burke’s argument that the specific themes handled by the Gothic genre are justified, as it aims to explore inherently unpleasant feelings, such as fear, pain and death as a way to move the reader. The Gothic genre was therefore born out of a peculiar junction of nostalgia, terror, and awe, which is itself a mix of admiration and anxiousness caused by what is both beautiful and gigantic. This notion, most commonly linked to the Romantic movement, likely found an echo in the extremely tall gothic buildings, making them suitable locations for both the wonderful and the fearful.

Just like all other artistic movements, the reasons for the birth of the Gothic genre in literature are debated, but according to Marie Liénard, there are three main theories, one of which is particularly important to the study of the Hawthorne’s tales. Indeed, one of the possible hypotheses about the origin of the Gothic genre lies in the possible purpose for which gothic stories were written: “*En manifestant l'irrationalité de l'esprit humain et ses conséquences, les œuvres gothiques montreraient en creux la nécessité de les maîtriser ; ils susciteraient plutôt chez les lecteurs le désir d'ordre et de moralité* » (Liénard 790). This theory implies that the Gothic genre was born out of a conservative wish for morals and order to be preserved. By providing the reader with examples of what a lack of good manners and morality could cause, the genre would provoke a need for order in the mind of the reader. This theory would then imply that gothic stories would serve as cautionary tales, akin to books aiming to instruct young children about morality. We now have a deeper insight into the relationship between Hawthorne’s tales and the Gothic genre to which they belong: using well-known gothic themes such as fear and haunting, Hawthorne provides the reader with a stage, an environment that the reader recognises and with which he/she is accustomed. Furthermore, the notion of the Sublime

and the theory of gothic stories being cautionary tales confirm and foreshadow what we know about each of the seekers' ends: through the exaltation brought to them by the accomplishment of their toil, as they are gothic characters, they are fated to fail, and to show just how much chaos ensues their obsessive desires.

Defining precisely Gothic literature is complex, as it aims to make the reader feel a special kind of fear: it aims to explore well-known themes such as the fear of phenomena intrinsically beyond human control, like death or time, through old and new ways. However, we aim not to study Gothic as a whole, but to see how its themes have an influence on the notion of quest in Hawthorne's tales.

Liénard and many other writers argue that American Gothic includes what Freud, working on Jentsch's theory, called "Das Unheimliche", or "The Uncanny." It is equally difficult to precisely narrow down what the Uncanny is, but it can be summarized as "*that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar*" (Freud 1). According to Liénard, the main theme of American Gothic is a fear that was previously repressed or repelled coming back to haunt men. This notion creates a double meaning that she explains beautifully with: "*le familier apparaît étrange, l'étrange apparaît familier*" (Liénard 791).

Closely linked, in Hawthorne's tales, to the notion of Uncanny associated to American Gothic, is the Transcendentalist notion of exploration. The three figures studied in the short stories chosen for this research are all engaged in a search, a quest for something that transcends the material plane. Something that should never be touched nor take physical form. This exploration of the unknown, of what is foreign to one's very being, looked at through the lens of the gothic frame and Puritan legacy, is not without reminding us of the definition of Transcendentalism worded by Ralph Waldo Emerson, which states that "*Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE*" (R.W. Emerson 1). We find Transcendentalism to be closely linked to the way Hawthorne used the gothic frame to represent what Freud later introduced as "the other", something both close and foreign. This relation between Gothic and Transcendentalist writers is further developed by Daniel S. Machaluk, who argues that "*certain "transcendentalist" techniques employed by Gothic authors indicate metaphysical intentions shared with the Transcendentalists*" (Daniel S. Machaluk 3). Taking these notions into consideration, it is no stretch to say that, following Gothic patterns, Hawthorne's stories are focused on quests and revelation: by providing the reader with extreme scenarios, almost supernatural events playing on the inherent fears of mankind, gothic stories staged fearful crises that brought something both foreign and familiar to the reader's mind. Be it old themes such as the fear of the unknown, feelings of powerlessness and the realization of mankind's place in the river of time, or "new" themes, brought by new societal issues linked to the industrial

revolution of the 19th century. These extreme scenarios involve men seeking to reach another plan of existence, something akin to the transcendentalist notion of Nature, which refers to the world, the environment and all of which does not come from the self.

The stories of Hawthorne's seekers follow the rules set by the Gothic genre as well as incorporating many other notions such as the Uncanny, the Sublime and Transcendentalism. The combination of all of these different elements creates a literary style focused on the quest; the search for something that is outside of one's natural control, and the search within oneself. Therefore, it stands to reason that Hawthorne's stories are a way to emphasize revelation: by focusing on their search for something outside of their reach, the seekers provide the reader with an opportunity to learn more about their states of mind, their flaws, their aspirations, and their society. But why exactly are they separate from their fellow men? The relationship between the seekers and the rest of mankind is one of rejection, which we will now focus on.

2) Seekers as outcasts

As previously stated, American Gothic is a genre that allows the author to reveal something, about the story, about himself or about the reader. The gothic atmosphere creates environments, almost like theatre stages well-adapted to invoking the supernatural and the fearful, but we should bear in mind that for every story there is a specific setting; a carefully built world in which the characters evolve and go on their quest. The relationship between the seekers and the world around them is the next part of our study. In the introduction of this essay, we have questioned the possible implications of genre of the tale, chosen by Hawthorne to tell a story that is neither too short nor too long. However, this format only sets the framework of what is the author's work. There are cases where the story and its setting itself contribute to the elaboration of this framework and give further unspoken detail about the characters.

The stage set in "The Birthmark" is a perfect example. In this tale, we follow the story of Aylmer and his wife Georgiana, and her tragic destiny at Aylmer's hands. However, if we were to focus, in this first look at the story, not at the actual theme of the narrative but at the frame, the environment in which the story happens, we can notice something peculiar. While the existence of a wider world is made known to the reader by the mention of the couple being included in a community, presumably 19th century America, there are only really two locations described: Aylmer's laboratory and Georgiana's boudoir. The whole of the tale happens really in these two distinct locations,

completely cut off from the rest of the world. According to Jules Zanger, this isolation is both physical and social: “*Unlike other Hawthorne characters who must sooner or later come to terms with the world, the Aylmers never leave, indeed, have no existence outside of the laboratory and boudoir that are the physical bounds of their marriage*” (Zanger 365). The Aylmers are effectively cut off from the rest of the world, they are completely isolated both materially and socially from the rest of their community. Zanger suggests that not only are they trapped in these very specific locations that do have their own implications, but he also argues that they are trapped in this “*hermetic marriage*” (Zanger 365), in this interdependent relationship they have regarding one another, and that doesn’t have any room left for social activity or the rest of the world. This selection of very specific locations as appropriate for the story to follow its course reminds us of the careful planning of a scientist. They are effectively two characters, two guineapigs almost, displayed in two cages for the story, that we could compare to an experiment, to proceed as planned without any disturbances from their outside world. This recluse environment allows Aylmer’s ideals and behaviours to be tested; he can pursue his quest in making his wife perfect without ever being interrupted by his fellow men who could have served as voices of reason. He is only met by the temporary resistance of his wife, soon followed by her unadulterated faith, which only serves to push him further until the point of no return. His ideal and his behaviour ultimately clash with the laws of the world and result in Georgiana’s death. Rucker explains that this dramatic failure only emphasizes the notion of test: “*Should the reader emphasize Aylmer’s Neoplatonism and his quest for ideal beauty, the disjunction between drama and assertion assumes a thematic function: it is Hawthorne’s means to test the modus operandi and values of the ideal artist*” (Rucker 448). Aylmer has indeed been put to the test and has failed: he was not able to see that his limits would cause Georgiana’s doom. While his values may have been noble at one point, his modus operandi was not adapted and therefore he spelled the death of his own subject. Aylmer failed to realize that the one way he could have experienced his goal in his everyday life would have been to keep his wife as she was and live happily with her. He traded a lifetime of fulfilment for one glorious instant of victory over the world. If we take Aylmer’s goal (to make his wife perfect) literally, then it can truly be said that Aylmer didn’t realise that what he always wanted was already in his grasp.

A very good contrast to this complete isolation is the setting found in “The Artist of the Beautiful”, in which we learn of the story of a man named Owen Warland and his quest to reach what he calls “The Beautiful”. In opposition to the Aylmers, Owen is forced to engage in society despite his wishes. He tries and tries again to isolate himself from his society and its flaws to pursue his goal, but time and time again an exterior force disturbs him and shatters his resolve, and his work alike. Owen tried to isolate himself just as Aylmer did, both physically and socially, conducting “*his nightly toil*” (“Beautiful” 166) secretly in his workshop, away from prying eyes. While Aylmer’s work proceeded to go uninterrupted by the meddling of his fellows, Hawthorne’s experiment with Owen

included many more variables. Each time Owen is disturbed causes in his mind a period of great distress and delays the completion of his work. The author's testing of his own character is present in this tale as well: by his nature, Owen is a man obsessed with the spiritual and unhappy with the overly pragmatic logic of his own community. Here again, we have a character in the middle of a conflict in which his nature and his environment clash. Very similarly to Aylmer's test, Owen's story ends up with the object of his craft being destroyed, but unlike the scientist, we can see that the result of the process of the toil has left Owen a very different man, a wiser and stronger one, from the one he was at the beginning of the story.

The notion of isolation is at the core of the main themes of "Rappaccini's Daughter", a tale that could serve as a middle ground between Aylmer's and Owen's respective environments. Rappaccini doesn't operate in a laboratory nor a workshop, rather he practises his craft in his garden, effectively isolating himself and his daughter Beatrice from the rest of the world, save for one, chosen person: Giovanni Guasconti. He alone has been allowed to gaze upon the luxuriant garden and its myriad of different plants, as well as the mysterious young maiden isolated from everything else in the world but him. He has even been allowed to witness the scientist himself observing and tending to his test-subjects. Giovanni here has been given an opportunity, the same one that Owen Warland gave Annie but that she could not properly seize due to her lack of sensitivity and caution. This opportunity is that of being introduced to the craft, an art formerly deemed secret. Giovanni has been offered the chance to be initiated to the secrets of the scientist's work by being allowed to witness him. He is not the first to be offered an initiation, Beatrice herself is said to have been taught by her father, making her a known scholar and an assistant to Rappaccini's work. However, we later learn in the tale that this initiation did not have as a goal to make Giovanni learn and master the craft, rather he was only introduced as a new variable to the experiment. Giovanni was never meant to be the scientist but the test-subject himself. Yet, unlike Georgiana who was not allowed to witness Aylmer's experiments and could only marvel at the records of his results, Giovanni, despite being a sort of lab-rat, was still able to witness with his own eyes the scientist's work. The youth is not isolated from the outside world either, as he is able to carry on with his life, even going so far as reaching out to Signor Pietro Baglioni, who is the professor who will offer him the vial that will ultimately kill Beatrice. However, he and Beatrice are indeed isolated from the rest of the world, as they have become poisonous and toxic to other living beings. The fact that only Giovanni can be touched by Georgiana without dying is truly the epitome of this idea; as something dangerous to humans, they will only be able to depend on each other. This interdependent relationship is very similar to the Aylmers'.

The notion of test here is much less present than it is in the two other tales, but Arne Axelsson writes about the relation of isolation and idealism in both Rappaccini's and Aylmer's cases: "*The final scene in "Rappacini's Daughter," when the earthy materialist Doctor Baglioni triumphs over the perverted idealist Rappaccini, has a direct correspondence in "The Birth-Mark," when the earthy Aminadab has the last laugh at the defeated idealist Aylmer*" (Axelsson 71). Not only do Rappaccini and Aylmer encounter the same doom, but they are equally mocked by their respective counterparts, for they have failed their tests. Despite having very different goals, methods, and crafts, the two scientists are really the same in the way they fail to see the limits of their influence, causing their family to pay the price for them. The only difference in their respective fates is that Beatrice's death is effectively caused by her father's rival, while Aylmer's demise is not due to Aminadab's actions, he only seized the occasion to laugh at his master.

The characters of these three tales evolve in various environments: Aylmer and Georgiana are completely isolated and caged in their two distinct rooms without any influence from the outside world, Rappaccini isolates his daughter and himself in his garden and allows Giovanni to witness his craft in order to use him, and Owen Warland tries desperately to isolate himself from the rest of his community only to be forcefully included in the world he belongs to. These stages allowed each character to be tested, confronting their respective quests against a reality that does not conform to their wishes, and resulting in sadness and destruction. Hawthorne, through his tales of isolation and his testing of scientists and artists, makes his inherently flawed characters examples of what brings sorrow to mankind. This cautionary dimension of Hawthorne's tales is thus summarized by Axelsson: "*A blinded idealist, Hawthorne maintains, is often as harmful to mankind as the grossest of materialists*" (Axelsson 71). As we have examined the theme of isolation in which all three seekers evolve, we must question the means used by the seekers to attain their goal. Indeed, isolation does not come as the source of the quest, but rather as its consequence. How then do the seekers go on their quest and to what end? To answer this question, we now need to look into each of their creative undertakings.

3) Creation as the medium of the quest

Artists and scientists in Hawthorne's tales are very similar in their approaches to their community and their way of life: all of them, by the nature of their very occupations, aim to create something. The process used, the goals, and the nature of these creations differ from one figure to the next, but the very act of creation is both something artistic and scientific. Indeed, by the definition of their work, artists express their artistic creativity which can also be linked to the concept of originality. One possible point of view is that art is a medium through which to express creativity, which implies an intimate relation between the medium and the idea. Creation is also very much a scientific activity; by observing, understanding, and re-producing something, one can claim to truly have grasped completely all the different aspects of their object of study. The scientific method is therefore by definition something that aims to understand, to search for something, and the creative aspect of the work represents a sort of completion. We aim in this part to understand the nature of the creative process of Hawthorne's characters.

"We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it.

The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless." (Wilde 4)

In his preface, Oscar Wilde tells us of a conception of art shaped by the popular 19th century concern for materialism due to a growing dissatisfaction with Romanticism. This rejection is exemplified by Robert Danforth's statement when faced with Owen's creation: *"There is more real use in one downright blow of my sledge-hammer, than in the whole five years' labor that our friend Owen has wasted on this butterfly!"* ("Beautiful" 175) This quote represents an everyman's voice expressing a clear denial of artistic activities, considered as useless and worthless. This notion of art as something inherently beautiful while being of no practical use is one of the cornerstones of Owen Warland's tale, if only by its name: "The Artist of the Beautiful." Several times is the adjective substantive "Beautiful" used as a proper noun in the story: *"Owen Warland's story would have been no tolerable representation of the troubled life of those who strive to create the Beautiful, if, amid all other thwarting influences, love had not interposed to steal the cunning from his hand."* ("Beautiful" 169) After all, according to Dean Wentworth Bethea, one of the possible portrayals of the watchmaker is that of *"a visionary trapped in an uncaring and totally mundane society"* (Bethea 23), thus making the tale one of *"idealistic romanticism"* (Bethea 23). We can find the previous argument to be verified, as the main criticism Owen's neighbours hold against him is the uselessness of the product of his toil, as they consider it to be only worth a moment of attention as a temporary entertainment.

However, the “Beautiful” in “The Artist of the Beautiful” is not to be mistaken for superficiality. While it is true that Owen’s idea of the Beautiful is greatly inspired by the romanticized relationship he has with natural beauty, its true nature is much more complex than simply being pleasing to the eye. Owen’s work takes the shape of a butterfly, a form filled with meaning in and of itself, as we can remember that the figure of the butterfly is intrinsically linked to metamorphosis. After all, as Bethea words it: ““([Psyche] is both butterfly and soul)” (Billy 34), and this double meaning informs the whole of « The Artist »” (Bethea 23) This explains that the shape of the butterfly was not chosen only for its symbolism as a live representation of wonder and natural beauty, it hints at the spiritual nature of Owen’s work beyond its apparent beauty. Despite this fact, the narrative development of the tale prevents the reader from knowing what exactly Owen’s work entails too early in the story. The first time that the reader is truly given a hint about the exact nature of Owen’s craft is through Annie questioning him with the sentence “*you are so taken up with the notion of putting spirit into machinery.*” (“Beautiful” 166) Only then is the reader given an idea of exactly what kind of “beautiful thing” Owen is trying to create: far from being an object merely pleasing to look at, it is something ethereal, something spiritual in a material frame, something alive. Owen’s goal as a person but most importantly as an artist is to create, but it comes to clash with the customs and prejudices of his community.

However, artists are not the only ones whose work implies creation. While it is undeniable that in the three tales, artists and scientists are very much alike, the figure of the scientist is fundamentally different. To properly appreciate the likeliness of these figures, we must first analyse in what ways they are different. We have seen that the essence of the Artist is to create something beautiful. But the scientist’s main goal usually isn’t so much creation as revelation. The figure of the mad scientist is one of the archetypal antagonists of typical gothic stories, and still retains this role in literature and popular culture to this day. The pursuit of knowledge has long been linked to this frightful figure. More specifically the character of the doctor, by the very power of life and death brought to him by virtue of his profession, has been used as an antagonistic figure throughout time. “*Figure inquiétante du savant, nouvel avatar du héros démoniaque, l’anatomiste incarne une conception de la science dont on préfère désormais considérer les limites plutôt que les triomphes.* » (De Mulder 409) The figure of the scientist and its role in gothic fiction is ultimately one of transgression, of going beyond the limits that were previously respected. The role of the scientist is therefore to find something, to discover a truth opening new vistas of existence and opportunities yet unseen. Such is the description, in fact, written in the introduction of “The Birthmark”: “*In those days [...] the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle.*” (“Birthmark” 118)

However, Hawthorne's work seems to make the distinction between artists and scientists unclear; both figures are interested in pursuing something, as few Hawthorne artists settle for the purely superficial aesthetic of beauty, with Drown from "Drowne's wooden image" as an exception. The useless nature of Owen's creation can very much be found in the tales of Aylmer and Rappaccini, as both of them follow a similar creation process to that of the artist: their goal is to create something that has no practical use, to be admired as something beautiful and nothing more: for instance Aylmer's endeavour was born out of his wish to rid his wife of the only imperfection tarnishing her otherwise pure beauty which is the red mark on her cheeks. Therefore, his work could be considered complete with the creation of a perfectly beautiful ideal of a woman, a sort of "*ideal beauty*" (Rucker 448). While we could find that Rappaccini's work indeed had a practical goal (to make his daughter impervious to the dangers of the world), we can argue that it is only a side-effect of the real reason behind the scientist's experiments; to make his daughter something that "*stands apart from common men*" ("Rappaccini" 208) as Rappaccini himself claims as he gloats about his accomplishments, even when reprimanding his daughter for her insolence and ingratitude: "*What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvellous gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful?*" (Rappaccini 208) Beatrice, and by extension her lover Giovanni, are not useful creatures in Rappaccini's mind; he makes no allusion to controlling them, to use their poisonous nature for his own benefit, just as he never seems to use the toxic traits of any of the plants present in his garden to any nefarious ends. His work's goal is mainly to create something that is more than a man, more than a woman. We can directly link this speech of triumph, Rappaccini's glorious ascension as the father of a new race, to Victor Frankenstein's gloating about his own ascension as the dawn of a new form of mankind: "*A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.*" (Shelley 54)

In this sense, the lines dividing scientists and artists are very thin and blurred, because their goal is ultimately to create something that has no practical use. The only real difference between scientists and artists in Hawthorne's three tales is the medium by which each character perfects his craft: while Owen works with the gears and skills he obtained from his occupation as a clockmaker, Rappaccini's experiments lead him to hone his skills in botanical medicine, while Aylmer's work defines him as a chemist or an alchemist.

The one aspect that is the same in these three men's tales is the fierce desire to create something out of something else. The Creation comes as a natural product of the search, serving as proof that the answers sought have indeed been found. The notion of creation, by its nature, puts the creator on a pedestal, on an elevated plane as he wields his authority like a father who deserves, by

simple faculty of existing, the adoration and respect of his children. Indeed, the very act of creation makes the artist and the scientist someone above mortals, someone closer to God, thus isolating them even further, on a whole other scale from what their fellow men are limited to. The immaterial objectives sought by the seekers will be the next point of our study.

II) Pioneers of a new reality

We have previously studied the implications of the gothic frame on the effect produced by the tales and their intrinsic themes, as well as detailing one of the traits the seekers share, their being creative figures able to shape the material world around them via their work. However, it would be a mistake to say that all they are doing is superficially modelling the world around them. They are in fact very much altering the spiritual world by the influence they have on their material surroundings. We will study in this part the influence of the seekers on the spiritual world via their actions on the physical elements around them.

1) Seekers as Alchemists

As we have previously mentioned, Owen, Aylmer and Rappaccini all undergo a creative process leading them to interact with the world around them to reach their desired objective: Perfection for Aylmer, Beauty for Owen, and a new humankind for Rappaccini. However, despite the very different natures of the three seekers' respective crafts, we can argue that in their spiritual journey, they are in fact very similar. Indeed, all three seek to take a base material taken from the world around them and turn it into a finer product, be it in shape or essence : Aylmer wants to rid Georgiana of her birthmark, therefore making her the perfect ideal of a woman; Owen scraps together pieces of metal and cogwheels to create a beauty similar to what is found in Nature; and Rappaccini elevates his own flesh and blood, his daughter, to the state of a being superior to ordinary mortals. This similarity is not without reminding us of the concept of transmutation found in alchemy, which can be defined as the "*conversion of one chemical element into another.*"⁵ While limited by the theoretical knowledge of their time, alchemists believed it possible to transmute base materials into finer products, such as the infamous example of turning copper into gold. However, alchemists were not only interested in

⁵ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "transmutation". Encyclopedia Britannica, 14 Apr. 2009, <https://www.britannica.com/science/transmutation>. Accessed 2nd December 2022.

superficially replicating precious metals:

L'alchimie médiévale latine et ses nombreux traités [...] montrent comment les pratiques de laboratoire s'articulent avec une théorie de la matière qui rend concevable la transmutation des métaux. Si les métaux sont des corps mixtes, se développant dans les mines à partir de semences métalliques dont la croissance est souvent gênée par la présence d'impuretés, il doit être possible, en extrayant cette semence, de réitérer par l'artifice le processus naturel dans des conditions idéales que la nature n'offre pas. La pierre philosophale est le produit qui permet une telle opération. Et si l'on admet que les corps des êtres vivants sont composés des mêmes éléments principaux que les corps minéraux, [...] il doit être possible de purifier aussi les êtres vivants, de les guérir de leurs maladies et de leur assurer une longévité comparable à celle de l'argent et de l'or par l'emploi d'un élixir qui n'est qu'une variante de la pierre philosophale. (Joly 75)

As Joly explains here, alchemy is not simply about converting one physical element into another, its aim is to refine physical entities, to make them pure and lasting, whether the object of study is a piece of metal or a living body. The reference to alchemy in the case of Hawthorne's three seekers can either be explicitly shown or well hidden, with the most obvious example being Aylmer. He is several times directly linked by the narrator to alchemy, as he seems to be inscribed in "*a long tradition*" (Swann 375); he possesses books directly written by well-known alchemists from ages past: "*They were the works of philosophers of the Middle Ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, [...]. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves, to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world.*" ("Birthmark" 126) We can therefore argue that Aylmer is shown to have studied the legacy of past alchemists, sharing both their techniques and their beliefs of being able to change what Nature had wrought. Aylmer is shown to inscribe himself in the lineage of these alchemists, as they paved the way for him to learn his craft and influence the spiritual traits of his object of work, yet he is not really interested in the transmutation of earthly materials such as metal: "*He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod of earth assumed a soul.*" ("Birthmark" 126) We can then safely assume that Hawthorne's definition of the alchemist, at least in Aylmer's case, refers to an occupation going beyond the realm of the ordinary chemist; the alchemist is the one who, by his actions on the world around him, shapes and transmutes not only the material world, but modifies the spiritual traits of the object of his study. Indeed, it is very much the case for Aylmer as he tries to rid his wife of her birthmark, her only natural defect, therefore transmuting her spiritual traits from imperfect to perfect.

This definition of the alchemist as the one to change the spiritual through his action on the physical can be applied to Owen as well, as what he essentially strives for is to capture a metaphysical

concept (in this case, Beauty) and to frame it inside a physical object of his own craft. Indeed, as Annie summarizes while trying to comprehend the scale of Owen's secret work: "*But I don't know whether you will condescend to such a task," said she, laughing, "now that you are so taken up with the notion of putting spirit into machinery [...] "But that is a strange idea of yours," said Owen, "about the spiritualization of matter!"*" ("Beautiful" 167) Owen, just as other artists created by Hawthorne, is indeed not satisfied with simply creating something that is pleasant to look at, far from it: "*If Hawthorne was fascinated with painting, it was because, as in his story "The Prophetic Pictures," he admired the painter whose eye searched beneath surfaces, who painted "not merely a man's features, but his mind and heart."*" (Matthiessen 267) While Matthiessen mentions paintings, and more precisely, portraits, it is clear that he refers to artists going beyond producing a work of art that is superficially beautiful, replicating feelings and emotions into their work. What Owen plans on creating is of a similar nature, as it is something that stirs the soul, replicating the awe and wonder one feels when surrounded by primordial nature.

And while Rappaccini appears the earthliest of all the seekers presently studied, he does separate the intellectual aspects of his work from the physical labour, which he leaves to his daughter. Just like Aylmer, Rappaccini is presented as a man neglecting his own physical body, as he appears a "*tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, 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.*" ("Rappaccini" 189) The mention of his age calls forth the image of an austere old scholar, knowledgeable and wise, who we are inclined to trust as he has probably seen more than we can imagine. Yet something in his eyes, the window to the soul, reveals his lack of concern for human solidarity. The nature of his research and his objective also reveals him as a figure linked to the occupation of alchemists, as he aims not only to research the mysteries of botany as a goal in and of itself, but for the envisioned objective to create a new form of humankind revering him as their creator and father, as he "*stresses here that he has given Beatrice and Giovanni and their descendants the power to dominate the world. It becomes clear now that his garden is to be an Eden whose creatures and plants will eventually supersede God's creation.*" (Alsen 431) Rappaccini's link to alchemy is therefore not only the act of transmutation of living bodies into poisonous entities, but the very act of creation deemed both miraculous and immoral in the hands of a mere mortal.

The artists and the scientists of Hawthorne's fiction are imbued with the notion of quest linked to their very occupation, but they go beyond the mere perfection of their skills; they intend to change the metaphysical and the spiritual via their work on the physical, as they are linked to the notion of alchemy, which serves the purpose of showing them as alienated figures excluded from their own communities, as well as researchers seeking to discover the occult secrets of the world, as their

predecessors did before them. The existence of such a quest is only made possible by its envisioned objective. While the journey is a crucial step to study in and of itself, the goal the seekers set for themselves guide them down their paths like lanterns in the dark, leading them to their one true calling. However, Hawthorne's seekers do not mean to seek what common men would search. In this part we are going to focus on the seekers' different objectives and methods to reach their goals.

2) The Head and the Heart.

As previously mentioned, each of Hawthorne's seekers has a unique quest: Aylmer aims to reach Perfection in human form, Owen Warland seeks to capture the Beautiful in a material entity, and Rappacini's plan is to create and nurture a new humankind of his own making. We see here that every one of these characters has great ambitions going beyond the betterment of society. We've shown previously that one of the main common points between the seekers' respective quests is that its objective ultimately benefits to no one. This notion, best exemplified in Owen's tale, not only shows that Hawthorne's characters are estranged intellectuals rejected by and rejecting their fellow men, but also shows that the object of their quest is to reach something not yet seen in the physical world around them. For instance, Owen is not only mocked by his peers for the futility of his enterprise, but he is also shown multiple times rejecting the more practical purpose imposed on him by his former teacher and society alike: *"he altogether forgot or despised the grand object of a watchmaker's business, and cared no more for the measurement of time than if it had been merged into eternity"* ("Beautiful" 161). The fact that this element of the quest is present in all three of the seekers' progress may be further proof that Hawthorne purposefully built his characters as visionaries rejecting the advance of materialism and devoting their life's work to a cause perceived and imagined as more noble. This idea is similar to the one detailed by Bethea in his analysis of Owen Warland's objective: *"Owen's attention to detail and quality in his watchmaking already indicates that he resists the inferior innovations in his field, such as the emergence of mass-produced clocks with cheap wooden wheels."* (Bethea 30)

Another way to apprehend the matter would be to consider the material advancement in each of the seeker's respective fields not as inferior or less noble, but rather as advancement already made, and techniques already mastered. Aylmer, in his quality as a chemist indeed has already brewed the most potent and dreadful of all potions, thus making it credible that he is indeed capable of every accomplishment linked to the physical nature of the world around him: *"By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. [...] No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in*

depriving him of it.” (“Birthmark” 125) Aylmer shows in this quote how he has already started to consider himself as superhuman creature, above the laws of both Nature and mankind. He claims that he can and would use his knowledge to sinister ends as long as he would deem it justified, taking up the roles of both judge and executor. And Rappaccini is known for his numerous achievements in the realm of botany, as he is described by his daughter as being so “*fearfully acquainted with the secrets of Nature*” (“Rappaccini” 206) that he was able to create a plant so toxic no one but his daughter may breathe around it. The two scientists are depicted as already being true masters of life and death by means of their respective fields of study, which leaves them with little fresh material to study save for what is not material. Aylmer is a perfect example of this argument since he is shown mastering his craft, yet failing to understand all the inner workings and invisible laws of nature as the narrator explains that “*our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results*” (“Birthmark” 122) Their sight is aimed higher than simple material and technological advancement, they indeed aim to reach a totally new realm of existence, a sort of higher plane composed only of metaphysical concepts and ideals. The material world, which is to say the world created by Nature seems to be beneath their notice, which raises the question of their arrogance and hubris.

The notion of pioneering a new realm of existence beyond the mortal plane is also the focal point of the story of “Ethan Brand”, another one of Hawthorne’s short stories revolving around a doomed protagonist on a quest for spirituality. In the story bearing his name, Ethan Brand is a man returning to his hometown after a lifelong search for the Unpardonable Sin, which is the one sin that even God’s otherwise “*infinite mercy*” (“Ethan” 237) cannot forgive, dooming the sinner to an eternity in hell after death. We have here an interesting parallel to draw between Owen, Aylmer and Rappaccini compared to Ethan Brand. While Ethan’s quest was not born out of a sense of higher purpose, nor a special affinity to an abstract idea, and neither from a recognized mastery over his craft, he, just like the three other seekers previously mentioned, dedicated his life to the search of something beyond the mortal plane, if only of a different nature. While the artist and the scientists aim to capture the essence of romantic (Beauty) or intellectual concepts (Perfection), Ethan chose to research the theological frontier between a redeemable man and doomed sinner. Yet, hints of similar religious undertones can be found throughout their respective quests. Robert B. Heilman has for instance shown that “*the language of religion is there so unfailingly that, like iterative imagery in drama and poetry, it must be closely inspected if a final reading of the story [of “The Birthmark”] is to be complete.*” (Heilman 421) Indeed, Aylmer, as well as Rappaccini (for his own work is of a similar type), not only try to meddle with the work of Nature and overcome its failings, but to rebel against

God himself as they have modified the human entity, God's "own image" (*Book of Genesis* verse 27)⁶

Bethea makes a more direct comparison between the four seekers as he analyses Owen's character: "Critics in agreement with Baym [...] also assert that Owen, like Aylmer in "The Birthmark," Giovanni in "Rappacini's Daughter," and Ethan in "Ethan Brand," commits Hawthorne's "unpardonable sin": the voluntary separation of the head and heart, the intellect and the soul" (Bethea 23). While it is true that Bethea writes about Giovanni and not Rappaccini, it is important to remember that Rappaccini initiates Giovanni to his craft through the youth's exposure to his daughter, therefore attributing Giovanni's "sin" to the temptation offered by Rappaccini. The most important common point between all four seekers is therefore not their common search for a different aspect of the immaterial, but rather the fundamental trait of all four of their quests: unwarranted separation between what belongs to the physical realm and what doesn't, between their logic and feelings. Donald A. Ringe develops in more precise details the notion of head and heart in Hawthorne's stories, defining the two parts as follows: "the heart may be equated with nature and the head with art, that is, intellectual activity in philosophy, art, or science. In other words, the head is that quality which raises men above the level of animals. We must not assume that Hawthorne placed his entire faith in either head or heart; rather, both are necessary elements that must be present in every man". (Ringe 121) We can therefore observe the existence in Hawthorne's stories of some sort of ideal state, a balance that must be maintained inside every human being where the head and the heart, which is to say, their earthly nature and their spirituality must be found in equal measures. In opposition to this ideal balance, we can find two possible degraded states, once again perfectly exemplified in "The Birthmark," in Aminadab and Aylmer's characters: both are far from having achieved this perfect balance, one of them choosing to cultivate the head to the detriment of the heart (Aylmer), and the other neglecting his head to only focus on his heart, thus rendering him an earthly brute (Aminadab). The result is both characters suffering from major self-inflicted flaws, Aminadab being described as a primal "man of clay" ("Birthmark" 127), and Aylmer severing his connection to the world around him, leading him to misinterpret its laws, and bringing him to his own downfall. This same flaw can be found in Owen and Rappaccini, although Owen's obsession with the Beautiful is of a different calibre: in opposition to Aylmer, Owen's own separation of head and heart is very much portrayed as a good thing, allowing the artist to effectively develop his own sensitivity for art and intellectuality as he does his utmost to display this "quality which raises men above the level of animals" ("Beautiful" 121), and reaching an ideal considered futile and unreachable by his fellow men. This difference may serve to show that Hawthorne's proposed balance of head and heart go both

⁶ Bible, Book of Genesis, Verse 27, New International Version, Bible Gateway,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201&version=NIV> accessed on 28 May 2023.

ways; while an unwarranted excess of spirituality is a flaw, its manifestation in an environment too heavily restrained by materialism is a miracle allowing men to develop their sensitivity and creativity.

According to Ringe, Hawthorne's proposed balance for a human being to be in harmony with himself and nature would be to have their head and heart developed in equal measures. If this is correct, then Hawthorne's seekers become beings characterized by their innate dissociation from humankind, in complete opposition to harmony, as they separate the part of themselves that link them to their fellows and to the world around them from the more intellectual, spiritual part of their essence. The seekers become then characterised by their inhumanity, having effectively become something else.

3) Seekers as beings more than men

We know that Hawthorne's seekers are not just ordinary humans. Their focus and dedication to their work in order to achieve their goals can't be mustered by just anyone. However, we've seen that not only are they unlike their fellow men in their resolve and actions, but their respective quests also set them apart from the realm of ordinary men. This is best demonstrated in Ethan Brand, as he cryptically describes what he found the "original sin" to be: "*It is a sin that grew within my own breast [...] A sin that grew nowhere else! 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!*" ("Ethan" 235). According to Ethan, the unpardonable sin, the one thing that cannot be forgiven by God's otherwise infinite mercy, is to look for the existence of such a sin in the first place. The very act of searching becomes the sin, as it inherently separates the seeker's own morality from that of his fellow men. The reader is provided with an explanation for Ethan's claim, as Ethan's thoughts are shown when being asked for the welfare of a girl he met on his journey: "*the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process.*" ("Ethan" 238) On his quest to reach the answer he sought, Ethan effectively destroyed the girl's life and morality, which raises the question of the number of potential similar victims. Ethan is here shown as a person who will do anything, including manipulating and experimenting on humans to progress in his quest. The difference here is that unlike the scientists (Aylmer and Rappaccini) who have conducted similar experiments on human bodies, Ethan's objects of study are indeed the soul and the mind directly.

Arne Axelsson writes more extensively about the nature of isolation as the consequence of a

misguided quest for knowledge or spirituality: “*To reject the Faustian impulse affords a possibility to remain in the chain of human brotherhood*” (Axelsson 20) However we must define what exactly is “*the Faustian impulse*” he mentions. Faust is a character from German folklore and mostly known for being the protagonist of Goethe’s *Faust*, being composed of two plays (respectively created in 1808 and 1832.) Faust is a scholar plagued with ennui, as he has effectively learned every secret of every realm of intellectual research yet does not know any of the earthly pleasures common men have grown to love. However, the devil Mephistopheles tempts him in learning what he does not yet know, be it material pleasures or intellectual secrets beyond his reach, such as the true nature of heaven and hell. What Axelsson describes as “*the Faustian impulse*” therefore is the desire or impulse to reach for truths mere mortals were not meant to comprehend, a trait that is shared by Hawthorne’s seekers, particularly Aylmer, Rappaccini and Ethan Brand. Their respective quests to reach for a realm of the metaphysical and learn its secrets set them apart from common men who do not question nor seek to unveil the secrets of the universe around them. The notion of exclusion is here not without reminding us of the notion of sin present in Ethan Brand as the protagonist claims that to even look for the unpardonable sin is the unpardonable sin. Following this logic, all seekers in Hawthorne’s fictions are irredeemable transgressors, separating themselves from their fellow men by their newfound status as well as their need to learn the secrets of the universe.

Donald Ringe presents us with a similar view on the matter as he states that “*The Unpardonable Sin is the result of the complete separation of head and heart. It should be apparent, then, that one solution to the problem of life lies in the simple balance of head and heart.*” (Ringe 122) Indeed, if the seekers’ quests were born from a disproportionate importance given to the head while forgetting the heart, it stands to reason that simply re-establishing this natural balance would keep them bound to humankind. But this separation between head and heart represents a conscious choice made by the seekers, some of them willingly accepted to become estranged from a society that does not understand them to pursue their goals like Owen Warland, and others needed to be set apart from common men for their proposed experiments to yield satisfactory results : Aylmer needed to be alone with his wife for his experiments to unfold in proper conditions, Ethan Brand meant to study human morality, and therefore to properly seize his results in an objective manner, needed to separate himself from morality altogether, and the whole essence of Rappaccini’s work was to create beings so different from ordinary men and women that they would become a new type of humankind, with him as their creator.

Each seeker’s relation to morality is different, from Owen who is barely doing anything immoral to Ethan whose very goal was to put himself above morality to study it. There is one seeker however that is very much unlike the others; most seekers have a very unique relation to their quest and to their own morality, but most of the time their quests were imbued of some sense of purity at

some point, if they were not pure all the way: after Aylmer saw how dedicated his wife was to his enterprise, he made an unconscious vow to turn his selfish wish of making her perfect a genuinely disinterested one, and we could argue one reason Ethan went on a journey to find the Unpardonable Sin in the first place was to be able to warn his fellow men about it. But there is one seeker whose quest was never misguided, and always a clear transgression of natural and heavenly laws: Rappaccini. Indeed, he is the only seeker thus far to never have been presented as having a noble goal. He is presented as a man who *“has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said he distils these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm”* (“Rappaccini” 188) by the people who don’t know him and as someone who *“cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard-seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge”* (“Rappaccini” 192) by his rival Pietro Baglioni. These descriptions of him imply that his own separation of head and heart were always a conscious choice on his part, idea that is enforced with the revelation of his true goals. Rappaccini is indeed a true transgressor and blasphemer, willingly and knowingly modifying God’s creations according to his own design, altering it to unrecognizable degrees. In addition, not only is Rappaccini described as cold but also greedy : his knowledge being compared to a *“great heap”* makes it a material entity, such as a treasure the scientist wants to grow bigger at all costs, if only by an amount as minuscule as a mustard seed. As Alfred J. Kloeckner argues, Rappaccini’s garden is very much a corrupted version of the garden of Eden: *“The scientist’s daughter flabbergasts Giovanni when she explains to him that her father created the shrub. I am led to believe that she used this word because of her general innocence and her particular ignorance of her father’s craft. It is more consistent, perhaps, that Rappaccini-Adam found the products of nature in his anti-Eden and became responsible only for their poisonous attributes. Any claim to have created the plant can be attributed to the scientist’s hubris.”* (Kloeckner 329)

Following this logic, we can see how shallow and selfish Rappaccini’s experiments truly were in comparison to the other seekers: while the others tried to give shape to their ideals in material forms, Rappaccini was content with merely producing false copies of God’s creations, parodies of their true natures all the while claiming that he was the one to have created them in the first place. According to Kloeckner, these claims can only be attributed to Rappaccini’s ego manifesting in the form of “hubris”, the very concept of disregarding the natural laws of the universe regarding the limited scale on which humans can act. This idea links back to the notion of transgression, which is a logical consequence of hubris: the transgressor, disregarding the laws of the universe and convinced that mankind’s role in the cosmic scale is higher than what it really is unvaryingly tries to break these laws, to challenge the natural order of the world.

Hawthorne's seekers are characterized not only by their seemingly unnatural desire to pursue their quest, but also by the fact that their pursuits lead them to be separated from "the human chain of brotherhood", making them become creatures no longer truly belonging to the natural world they were born into. Their un-humanity as well as their unrelenting quest for something out of their reach effectively portray them as pioneers, adventurers of metaphysical realms beyond the reach of mankind. However, this transformation comes at a price, and the object of the seekers' quest is unvaryingly doomed. In the final part of this essay, we will study how Hawthorne's seekers are irredeemable transgressors, and how their works were always doomed to fail.

III) Revealing one's essence in the search

As we have previously studied, Hawthorne's seekers have very unique quests revolving around their personal ambitions and views of the world around them. Their objectives and journey towards accomplishing their goals tell us about the society they live in but also about themselves, what they are or what they want to become, as well as what they are not even aware of. In the final part of this study, we will question the Puritan traits of the seekers as well as the way each of them is engaged in a doomed enterprise.

1) The inherent sin of mankind

Hawthorne's seekers, just like almost every other character from his fictions, are inherently flawed creatures. Indeed, we can argue that no human being is ever perfect, and that it is specifically this imperfection that allows them to grow, mature and become better versions of their former selves (should they pursue their own betterment). However, this is not why Hawthorne's characters are imbued with fatal flaws that set them on their quests. To properly understand their inherent defects, we need to take into consideration how Puritanism influenced Hawthorne's view of the world and how its precepts have been infused into his stories.

The Puritan doctrine draws upon several important theological concepts, among which two are especially important in the context of Hawthorne's literature. First, the concept of the Original sin. According to the encyclopaedia Britannica, the Original sin is "*in Christian doctrine, the condition*

*or state of sin into which each human being is born; [...] Traditionally, the origin has been ascribed to the sin of the first man, Adam, who disobeyed God in eating the forbidden fruit (of knowledge of good and evil) and, in consequence, transmitted his sin and guilt by heredity to his descendants.”*⁷

What this notion entails is that each person is to be denied spiritual salvation and is considered a sinner by mere circumstance of their birth. The sins of the first man have been passed from generations to generations, condemning mankind as a species for millennia. This concept breaks away from the preconceived idea that human beings are born innocent and need to be led on the right path, instead they are inherently sinners. We should also note that these sins inherited from birth are considered to fall more heavily on women, as they are to be linked with the figure of Eve, convincing her husband to share in her transgression of eating the forbidden fruit.

Another theological notion that needs to be addressed when studying Puritan literature is the Calvinist notion of predestination: *“The idea of predestination establishes that no matter the number of good deeds people had done in their lifetime in order to be always protected by God and be sure to get to paradise after death, entering the gates of Heaven depends exclusively on God’s will. This occurs because, according to Calvinists, even before birth, God has already decided who are the people who will make their way to salvation and who will not (Wallace 201).”* (Díaz Méndez 4) Predestination is, in a sense, a form of continuation of the perpetual damnation of mankind as first seen in the notion of Original sin, as not even those who behave according to God’s will and teachings are all granted absolution from the inherent sins their ancestors committed. The combination of both theological notions described thus far produces a world view shared by Puritans in which hope of salvation is almost entirely lost, since they were never sure to be one of the elect few that would be allowed to reach heaven. However, they could not totally abandon hope either since, on the off chance that they were indeed chosen by God to reach absolution, they absolutely had not to squander this chance by misbehaving, or else they would lose divine favour.

This grim vision of a doomed world where absolution is just out of reach, and human beings fated never to know for sure if they were worthy of salvation or not is, according to some critics, one of the themes from which Hawthorne drew inspiration for some of his stories: *“And Barrett Wendell, while admitting that Hawthorne “could never shake off the temperamental earnestness of the Puritan” and that he is “most characteristic when [...] he expresses that constant, haunting sense of ancestral sin” which he inherits from his Puritan forefathers, nevertheless pointed out that for Hawthorne Puritanism was no longer a way of life but rather a subject for literary art”* (Mills 79). While Hawthorne is known for separating himself from his Puritan heritage in his personal life, it is

⁷ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Original sin". Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 Nov. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/original-sin>. Accessed 29 December 2023.

nevertheless important to note how this view of inherent damnation for mankind influenced his stories, and while this particular field of expression is more closely linked to fictions such as “Young Goodman Brown”, “The Minister’s Black Veil”, or “Wakefield”, we can find traces of this influence in the stories of his seekers as well. The most obvious example we could find is in the story of Ethan Brand, since its entire premise is built around the notion of sin and misguided search for absolution. Ethan’s inherent sin does not come from a will to harm others, but from the feeling of superiority over them and the laws of God. *“Thus one of the worst sins is pride, especially the pride of the intellect. This is the unpardonable sin of Ethan Brand, the “sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God.” Rappaccini’s sin is pride of intellect also, as is Aylmer’s.”* (Mills 94) Mills refers to the notion of hubris which is one of the common traits shared by many of Hawthorne’s seekers, born from the disproportionate parts of their essence being allocated to the head instead of the heart as seen previously. The ideas of predestination and Original sin in these stories create a vision in which the seekers were always going to commit their sins, they had no choice, no other possibility than to commit them since they were born with inherent flaws. In the case of Aylmer, Rappaccini and Ethan, this inevitability can be attributed to a compulsive obsessive desire for knowledge. We could argue that they had no choice but to set out on their respective quests since they were ultimately born flawed. The balance of head and heart in these characters was not disrupted by their conscious choices, but rather was disrupted from the moment they came into being. Their choices and actions only aggravated the situation further by continuing to revel in the search for knowledge when they should have fought their inherent nature as sinners and stopped in their tracks long ago. In the case of Owen Warland however, the influence of Puritan beliefs and spirituality is not found in Owen’s character, but rather the society around him. As Hawthorne himself describes: *“when the first novelty and stir of spirit had subsided, when the new settlement, between the forest border and the sea, had actually become a little town, its 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.”* (“Main Street” 221) As the narrator explains, the “religious gloom” caused by Puritan notions of sin caused the descendants of the first settlers to reject what was not considered as essential, entertainment, art, and beauty alike. The overwhelming focus on the practicality of human endeavours with a visible disdain for art and intellectuality found in Owen’s village can therefore be attributed to the development of typical Puritan settlements evolving for a few generations after their founders’ time. We can note for instance the final scene of “The Artist of the Beautiful” when Owen’s mechanical butterfly loses its brilliance after being touched by men with no regards for art like Owen’s former teacher: *“Let us see,” said Peter Hovenden, rising from his chair, with a sneer upon his face*

that always made people doubt, as he himself did, in everything but a material existence.” (“Beautiful” 175) This scene serves to illustrate Hawthorne’s argument that spiritual calling and artistic genius are tortured and fade when too brutally confronted with a reality devoid of “head.” Indeed, Peter Hovenden is to Owen much what Aminadab is to Aylmer: a direct counterpart, positioned on the opposite end of the scale, favouring their heart, and neglecting their head. Confronted with this earthly man, the flawed Owen Warland searches for a way to break away from this gloom reality imposed on him by Puritan society, and therefore is led by his nature as an artist to seek the Beautiful.

Of course, Puritanism is not the only factor which led each of Hawthorne’s seekers on their quests, but its influence is undeniable: in some cases the seekers are trying to detach themselves from mankind by reaching a spiritual objective, not knowing that they are only more human by attempting to achieve their goal, and in others the society they live in is too infused with the fatalistic gloom inherited from the devout first settlers and smothers them with neglect for anything that is not earthly and practical. The doctrines of Puritanism are therefore depicted as starting points for the seekers’ quests to unfold, it is from this religious background that each of the characters’ quests can be understood. But Puritanism, or more globally religion, is not only a force that sets Hawthorne’s characters on their quest without ever having a role to play in the quest. We will focus in the next part on the notion of finding absolution through the rejection of the material and the search for the spiritual.

2) The search as a way of achieving Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress.

Knowledge of religious concepts and Christian notions allow us to study more accurately the implications behind each of Hawthorne’s seekers as previously seen in the example of predestination and Original sin. With the knowledge of these two concepts, we are now aware of the possible reasons why the seekers are so fixated on their quests. Their obsessions push them to go to considerable lengths until they deem their work finished, but it does not answer the most important question about them; why do Hawthorne’s seekers strive to reach non-material ideals? We will now try to discover some insight on the matter.

What we have focused on thus far for the most part of this study was to explain the seemingly unnatural attraction Hawthorne’s seekers felt towards their respective goals. It is now time to study the fundamental question of the very nature of their quests. After all, the seekers could have envisioned their respective goals with a more materialistic point of view: for instance, Aylmer, seeking feminine perfection in the human frame could very well have simply produced a life-sized replica of his wife, a doll without the fatal birthmark. This would have placed him in the same tradition

as king Pygmalion from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who created his own version of feminine perfection as a marble statue called Galatea, brought to life by Aphrodite. Instead, Aylmer chose to try to make his wife perfect in her own flesh as he deemed that her birthmark was a defect imposed on her by nature, which he chose to defy. Thus, if the seekers specifically envisioned their goals in a spiritual way when they could have done otherwise, it stands to reason that there would be an explanation for this choice. Their flawed nature is one possible explanation, but they also have more in common than that.

As we have previously established, each of Hawthorne's seekers aim to reach their versions of a spiritual ideal: human perfection for Aylmer, Beauty for Owen, a new humankind for Rappaccini and knowledge of the true nature of sins for Ethan Brand. Each of them is unnaturally drawn to the realisation of their ideal and each of them is ultimately seeking something that exists only in thoughts and imagination. This common point may be linked to their respective occupations as scientists and artists, whose roles are to research the realm of possibilities and innovation, but it can also be linked to another source, a Christian novel written by a British preacher from the 17th century, named Paul Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The influence of this novel on the Christian community is considered to be immense, as according to Leland Ryken: "*For more than two centuries after its first publication, The Pilgrim's Progress ranked just behind the King James Bible as the most important book in evangelical Protestant households.*" (*The Pilgrim's Progress* 1) To provide a short description of the novel, it tells the story of the devout man named Christian leaving his family behind and fleeing from the City of Destruction in order to reach the Celestial City, which is Heaven. Along the way, he will meet fellow pilgrims like Evangelist and Hopeful, and overcome many challenges among which are the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair to finally reach his objective. However, Christian's adventure is not only his own, but rather a means to tell the reader of the fate of many others before and after him, as Ryken explains that it is an "*allegorical story [...] one in which the literal, physical level of action is intended as a picture of something else. Double meaning is at the heart of allegory. The details in an allegorical story stand for something else. In The Pilgrim's Progress, for example, a slough or bog [...] stands for spiritual despair over one's lost state.*" (*The Pilgrim's Progress* 5) We can gather from this explanation that Christian's journey is not only about his adventures to overcome despair, sin and hardships in order to find absolution at the gates of the Celestial City, it also provides guidelines that the good Protestant needs to follow to live a life according to God's teachings. This novel is an allegorical story, which is to say that it is susceptible to tell multiple stories at once. Therefore, it is logical to compare Christian and Hawthorne's seekers, as we will see that we can find striking similarities between their stories. Although different in origins and motivations, these characters are similar in their experiences and the means they employ to overcome the same obstacles.

Christian's objective is to reach the Celestial City which lies beyond many obstacles and locations such as the Valley of the Shadow of Death as well as the River of Death. The names of these locations hint at the true nature of the Celestial City; it is not a place that one can reach while living, it can only be truly accessed in the afterlife. What Christian really intends to do is to reach Heaven and to get there he must travel through metaphorical challenges that he has to overcome, one of them being death itself. What is interesting to note is that "*Christian does ultimately triumph, and Vincent Newey points to Christian's isolation as the factor that makes the River of Death one of the "great experiential episodes" of the narrative. For Newey, the scene reveals "the essential aloneness of the Puritan, hazardous yet dynamic," (Newey 4) and looks boldly forward to "modernity" and "a world [...] without inviolable corporate frameworks of Faith."* (Seen 50) In other words, Christian's trials as well as goals could in fact only be found in a realm going beyond the physical realm; his faith cannot be truly represented by any material entity, and the Celestial City is not a place he can physically enter, rather it is a place his soul shall reach after his death. While Christian's objective is very different from the ones sought by Hawthorne's seekers, all of these goals have a common point, being their nature as immaterial objectives to be reached on a spiritual level. We could, just as we have named the seeker's goals Beauty, Perfection and Godhood, name Christian's objective Absolution.

We can notice for instance the beginning of Christian's journey as he leaves the City of Destruction, abandoning everything and everyone he knew: "*Now, he had not ran far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on.*" (*The Pilgrim's Progress* 5) Later, he is confronted by two of his neighbours who ask him to return, telling him how foolish his endeavour is: "*What, said Obstinate, and leave our friends and our comforts behind us? [...] What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?*" (*The Pilgrim's Progress* 6) These two elements describe how Christian voluntarily separates himself from the rest of his community in his search for the Celestial City. He even manages to convince one of his neighbours, named Pliable, to follow him in his quest for Heaven. We remember that the motif of isolation is another one of Hawthorne's seekers' common traits, as they too separate themselves from the rest of the material plane, be it physically like Aylmer and Rappaccini, or intellectually like Owen. The seekers, as well as Christian, reject the world around them and intend to reach their destination. The only difference between Christian and Hawthorne's characters is that he doesn't necessarily reject the "*human chain of brotherhood*" (Axelsson 20). While the seekers want to separate themselves from both the material plane and the people living in it, Christian doesn't deem it a necessity but rather one of the consequences of his quest, he tries to bring people with him on his road to salvation, it's just that the vast majority of humankind does not

want to walk with him.

Of course, there are major differences between Christian and Hawthorne's characters, the most important one being the religious nature of their respective quests. However, they all find themselves in the category of characters who abandon everything behind in the pursuit of a spiritual goal. We could question the implications behind this similarity, as we know that Hawthorne criticized Puritan beliefs and rules in several of his stories, so perhaps his characters behave similarly to Christian as further criticism of the religious ideal to leave all material things behind and to only care about spiritual salvation. It is noteworthy to mention that Hawthorne did write a short story more than heavily influenced by Bunyan's book, named "The Celestial Railroad" (1843), the events of which are supposed to take place in the same world as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, if only several years after Christian's journey. What is certain however is the undeniable similarities his characters and Bunyan's protagonist share. As opposed to Christian however, each of Hawthorne's seekers see their quests ultimately fail, as they realise the object of their desires is unattainable. We will now conclude this essay by analysing the inherently doomed dimension of each seeker.

3) Fated to fail.

According to Liénard, one of the possible traits linked to gothic literature is the desire to show an example of events going wrong, one of the worst possible alternatives of a given scenario. This would place gothic stories in the same category as folk tales regarding their cautionary aspect; they aim to provide the reader with the example of what not to do. In the same way, the majority of Hawthorne's seekers are involved in their misguided quest to achieve their sometimes-noble goals, but one constant remains; all of their efforts are ultimately destroyed, and the object of their ambition is reinforced as being out of their reach.

If hubris is a trait that can be attributed to many of Hawthorne's seekers, the inevitable downfall that such a notion entails is therefore also to be expected. Indeed, the seekers all see their life's work ultimately destroyed before their eyes, Georgiana dies in Aylmer's arms after drinking his potion, Beatrice suffers a similar fate although the potion was not made by her father but by his rival, Ethan Brand ultimately realises that no one but himself cares for what the Unpardonable Sin is, and Owen sees his work destroyed by Annie's child. We could wonder what Hawthorne's intent was in making his stories share such similar ends. One of the possible explanations in the case of characters

such as Aylmer, Ethan and Rappaccini is indeed the eventuality that their stories are in fact cautionary tales meant for the reader to see just how much suffering and destruction is brought by their obsessive ideas. In fact, such endings are not uncommon in Hawthorne's fictions, as Mills states that "*the purpose of ["The Gentle Boy"] is not to weigh the evidence for or against the Puritans but to show the evil effects of a monomania, even of a religious cast.*" (Mills 80) Some of Hawthorne's stories are indeed meant to warn the reader of the consequences of obsessive quests that take up the whole of a character's mind and life. Hawthorne warns in this way about the dangers of religious monomania but also about the possible destruction brought about by one's obsessive attempts to reach an unreachable goal.

While the issues and potential dangers of monomania are displayed in Hawthorne's stories, there is one of them which does not leave quite as much suffering and death in its wake as the others. Indeed, while the end of "Rappaccini's Daughter", "The Birthmark" and "Ethan Brand" were all tragic, each of these seekers having lost something of sensible value without ever gaining anything in return, having caused pain both to themselves and others, the tale of Owen Warland depicts a much more hopeful vision of his doomed quest. That is not to say that it represents Owen's isolation as a blessing or something that should be done; indeed, according to Bethea, the tale warns the reader about the dangers of isolation as exemplified by Owen's behaviour after realising that the woman he loves is to marry another without him even being aware of it : "*This blow prompts his third and final regression, as he assumes a literal, corporeal chrysalis [...] However, the story has already revealed the destructiveness of pursuing an existence divorced from social reality; equally regressive is a "vegetable existence" that includes "the main strength" of the intellect.*" (Bethea 28) Bethea argues that every time Owen has seen his spirit crushed and his work destroyed, he underwent a form of metamorphosis, not without reminding us of the figure of the butterfly which is both the physical shape of his work, and the symbol of his journey. What is of note is that in opposition to the other seekers, not only has Owen suffered setbacks, but he was able to learn from them, he was able to get out of each of his moments of distress a stronger man than he was before. If we compare Owen's failings to Aylmer's and Ethan Brand's, we can see that the key difference that sets them apart is the ability to have a retrospective look at their own shortcomings : Aylmer would rather forget "*these mortifying failures*" ("Birthmark" 124) in order to comfort his wife as much as possible, and Ethan, when faced with the unchanged townfolk he left behind years prior, is confused "*It made him doubt--and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt--whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion.*" ("Ethan" 237) Their way of dealing with setbacks and failure is to blindly ignore the reality of their situations and pursue their obsession, purposefully avoiding the painful revelations these setbacks cause. As for Rappaccini, it can hardly be said he faced any kind of personal setbacks

or failures, as even his professional rival is forced to admit that “*Ill would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine [...] to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini.*” (“Rappaccini” 191) Rappaccini’s only failure recorded within the short story is ultimately his downfall which is Beatrice’s death brought by the hand of his rival, but how the scientist came to terms with his failure, both as a parent and as a God-to-be, is not mentioned. As opposed to them, Owen faces his failings and the consequences of the destruction of his work several times, and each of these failures brings forth both distress and questioning. Several times did he think his quest was indeed futile and so he tried to live a life more similar to the earthly townsfolk who mocked him, even though he ultimately could not let his quest go incomplete : “*He had lost his faith in the invisible, and now prided himself, as such unfortunates invariably do, in the wisdom which rejected much that even his eye could see, and trusted confidently in nothing but what his hand could touch.*” (“Beautiful” 171) Ultimately, Owen ends up pursuing his goal to the end, but not without having changed drastically as a person in the process. He is no longer a naïve youth idealising beauty in everything he found, but rather he becomes wiser, and embraces the fate of his work.

Which leads us to the very end of each seeker’s quest, the destruction of their life’s work. It is unclear how each of Hawthorne’s seekers reacts to the end of their quests, Beatrice’s death only leaves her father as a “*thunder-stricken man of science*” (“Rappaccini” 209), Ethan persists in his self-assigned duty and throws himself in his old furnace, and Aylmer’s reaction to his wife’s death is simply not mentioned. On the other hand, Owen was able to face the consequences of the destruction of his work rather humbly as he “*platonically or transcendently achieves an emotional development that eludes Deacon Drowne, who in the end weeps over the damage inflicted on his beloved, Pygmalion-like image.*” (Newberry 94) Owen does not linger on his work, nor is it indicated that he feels any kind of guilt or sadness, but rather he was able to look “*placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which yet was no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this.*” (“Beautiful” 177). The inevitable fate of his work was only a stepping stone for him to reach a new stage of his own life and sense of purpose, he “*rose high enough to achieve the beautiful*” (177) and emerged from this quest a wiser man and a more accomplished artist than ever before.

One question remains: the issue of classifying which types of characters Hawthorne’s seekers usually are. As we have seen previously, their doomed quests originate from the inherent flaws and unbalance of their soul with which they were born, and more often than not they aim, at least in the initial stage of their quests, to reach noble goal, as Hawthorne leaves a comment one would argue describes the author’s feelings about Aylmer (although his name is not mentioned) : “*a person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily.*” (“The American Notebooks” 206). Although

this comment best fits Aylmer's story, a similar idea can be found in Owen's and Ethan's stories as well. While their superficial likeness to traditional crazed scientists and madmen would lead us to consider them as villains, their misguided efforts to reach a new plane of existence ultimately lead them to their own doom. Hawthorne's seekers are indeed not simple fairytale villains punished for their greed or bad morals; they are tragic heroes reaping the destruction that their obsessive desires for the immaterial have sown.

IV) Partie Didactique

Le sujet d'étude premier de ce mémoire étant relativement complexe et spécifique, à savoir la notion de quête et l'influence du Puritanisme sur les nouvelles de Nathaniel Hawthorne, ces analyses ne me semblent pas correspondre au niveau d'anglais et d'analyse littéraire que je suis en droit d'attendre d'élèves du second degré. Il m'est également nécessaire de diversifier mes sources et de ne pas limiter mes enseignements à un seul auteur. En effet le cadre institutionnel m'encourage à faire découvrir aux élèves des textes adaptés à leur niveaux, tout en restant ambitieux, mais aussi à leur faire découvrir des auteurs variés. C'est pourquoi j'ai choisi de construire la séquence d'enseignement liée à ce mémoire non pas uniquement autour de Nathaniel Hawthorne et de ses œuvres, mais sur la thématique du genre gothique à laquelle il est possible de les rattacher. La littérature gothique est encore aujourd'hui un genre qui fait beaucoup parler de lui. L'on peut ainsi trouver de nombreuses adaptations et réécritures de grands classiques de la littérature gothique (Frankenstein, Dracula, Dr Jekyll et Mr. Hyde pour ne citer que ceux-ci). Ce genre littéraire est d'ailleurs mis en avant dans l'axe « Imaginaire effrayant » détaillé dans le programme de langues vivantes de première et terminale générales et technologiques plus particulièrement par la section enseignements commun et optionnel, annexe 2, qui détaille les enseignements de spécialité. Voici quelques extraits présentant cet axe ainsi que la thématique de l'Imaginaire :

« En s'éloignant du réel et en basculant dans le fantastique, dans l'étrange ou le merveilleux, l'artiste accède à un espace de liberté où il laisse libre cours à la puissance créatrice du langage, s'affranchir des règles du réel et repousser les limites de l'esprit humain en façonnant un univers unique. Cet espace des possibles s'ouvre au lecteur, qui peut à sa guise s'aventurer dans les mondes fabuleux qui lui sont proposés (notamment dans le genre très riche de la fantasy). Cet art de l'imaginaire permet aussi d'explorer les peurs et les fantasmes de l'artiste et de son public, dans des genres comme le gothique ou l'horreur. [...] Cet axe explore la façon dont l'imagination vient donner corps à ce que l'être humain ne comprend ni ne maîtrise, à ses fantasmes et terreurs les plus enfouies, à ses angoisses métaphysiques, tout en les plaçant à une rassurante distance dans des univers surnaturels. On peut s'intéresser par exemple au motif du monstre (de Dracula de Bram Stoker à Elephant Man de David Lynch), ou étudier les techniques propres aux genres du gothique et de l'horreur, en littérature et dans les arts (Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde de Stevenson, The Shining de Stanley Kubrick.)»⁸

⁸ Programme de spécialité, annexe 2, trouvé sur <https://eduscol.education.fr/1684/programmes-et-ressources-en->

Parmi les éléments permettant de relier les nouvelles de Hawthorne au genre gothique, j'ai choisi de me concentrer sur la description de lieux : les figures faustiennes de Hawthorne choisissent de s'isoler dans des repaires, lorsqu'elles en possèdent, dignes des châteaux hantés qui sont beaucoup plus présents dans le gothique européen et britannique. Cela nous permet d'aborder des questions techniques sur les façons de représenter l'étrange et l'effroi. J'ai donc construit cette séquence d'enseignement dans le but de la proposer à des élèves de première générale spécialité anglais Langues, Littératures et Cultures Etrangères et Régionales (LLCER). Le niveau de langue visé pour cette classe correspondra à la confirmation du niveau B1 acquis en fin de seconde ainsi qu'à la progression vers l'acquisition du niveau B2, attendu en fin de première. Les compétences principales qui seront au centre de la séquence correspondront à l'Expression Ecrite (EE), dans le cadre de la tâche intermédiaire (TI) où les élèves inventeront et créeront une brochure touristique détaillée d'un château écossais de leur choix, et l'Expression Orale en Continu (EOC) dans le cadre de la tâche finale (TF) où les élèves créeront un audioguide détaillé présentant un lieu gothique de leur choix. Ces tâches permettront aux élèves de laisser libre cours à leur créativité tout en les forçant à s'approprier et à utiliser les diverses techniques de description de lieux et de représentation de l'effrayant. Voici quelques extraits du Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues (CECRL), régissant le niveau de maîtrise attendu à ce niveau :

*“**EE:** Can give clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned. (B2)*

***EOC:** Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to their field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples. (B2)”⁹*

Il me sera malheureusement impossible de mettre en œuvre cette séquence avec les classes auxquelles j'enseigne en responsabilité partagée avec mon tuteur, car je me trouve actuellement en stage dans un collège, ce qui ne me permet pas d'avoir à charge des élèves de première spécialité LLCER. Néanmoins, cette séquence, pouvant être utilisée relativement tôt dans l'année, me sera

[langues-litteratures-et-cultures-etrangeres-et-regionales-voie-g](#)

⁹ Cadre Européen de Références pour les Langues : <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>

certainement utile plus tard dans ma carrière lorsque j’aurai la responsabilité de classes plus avancées, où quand je serais parvenu à revoir mes exigences afin de correspondre à un niveau moins expérimenté qui pourrait être celui d’élèves du cycle 4.

Tableau synoptique

Classe	Classe de première générale spécialité LLCER.
Niveau	B1 → B2
Thème et Axe	Imaginaires – Imaginaire Effrayant
Titre de la Séquence	Scary places in British and American Gothic
<p>TI: Create a travel brochure presenting a Scottish haunted castle of your choosing. Present the place, tell its history, and give detailed descriptions of its threatening aspects.</p> <p>TF: You are a supernatural creature living in a threatening lair. One day, you hear about “audio guides” used by tourists to visit unusual locations, and you want to try making one. Prepare the description of your lair, relate past events that shaped the place, and try your best to lure people to your lair. The audio guide should last at least 5 minutes.</p>	
Objectifs	<p>Culturels : Classiques de la littérature gothique, gothique britannique et gothique américain (19 et 20^{ème} siècle). Registre soutenu et daté. Techniques et modes de descriptions du gothique.</p>
	<p>Lexicaux : Champs lexicaux de la peur, de la violence. Lexique du surnaturel, des sensations et descriptions de lieux effrayants, phrasal verbs de mouvement (walk across, go under, back up...) Adverbes de lieux (below, above, across, ...)</p>
	<p>Grammaticaux : gestions des temps et concordances, (prétérit / past perfect), repères spatiaux et expressions du mouvement, « One » en tant que pronom impersonnel, modalité conditionnelle de would.</p>
	<p>Phonologiques : Différentes prononciations de la graphie « th »</p>
	<p>Pragmatiques : Brosser un portrait d’un lieu menaçant, utiliser des expressions émotionnellement fortes pour susciter ces émotions chez le lecteur, utiliser les connecteurs et expressions appropriées pour décrire un lieu effrayant, Forme de l’audio guide touristique et de la brochure.</p>

Séance 1

La première séance de la séquence aura pour objectif de familiariser les élèves aux décors et aux codes du gothique tout en faisant ressurgir le vocabulaire déjà maîtrisé, qui sera complété par du vocabulaire nouveau et adapté. Pour ce faire, la séance sera divisée en plusieurs parties. La segmentation en séances utilisée ici prend en compte les spécificités de l'enseignement de spécialité, les séances sont donc des cours de deux heures.

Partie 1 : Anticipation.

La première partie de la séance aura pour but de faire deviner aux élèves le thème de la séquence, ce qui servira d'introduction à la thématique abordée. Pour ce faire, une illustration représentant la première de couverture de l'œuvre d'Horace Walpole, « The Castle of Otranto » sera projetée au tableau et les élèves devront présenter et décrire le document à l'oral et en classe entière.



THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO HORACE WALPOLE



Cette étape aura pour but de revoir le vocabulaire déjà connu des élèves. On attendra d'eux qu'ils maîtrisent la méthodologie de la description iconographique, bien que des lacunes de vocabulaire spécifique pourraient faire obstacle à la bonne réalisation du travail. Pour pallier ce potentiel manque de vocabulaire, les élèves seront autorisés à utiliser leurs téléphones portables afin d'accéder au dictionnaire français-anglais disponible sur le site wordreference.com, dans le cadre de l'usage pédagogique en vigueur. On attendra des élèves qu'ils décrivent l'image, mais aussi qu'ils commentent sur les émotions dégagées par l'illustration, ainsi que sur les moyens mis en œuvre par l'illustrateur pour inspirer ce ressenti. J'utiliserais ainsi la consigne suivante : "Identify and describe the document as best as possible. Focus on how the document makes you feel and why."

Cette description sera donnée à l'oral par les élèves jusqu'à ce que le terme de « Gothic » soit mentionné, terme qui sera alors noté au tableau. On en profitera pour effectuer un rapide rappel sur les différentes prononciations de la graphie « th », qui reste souvent une difficulté que les élèves n'ont pas tous surmonté en classe de première. Une fois la description terminée, on s'interrogera sur les connaissances préalables des élèves concernant ce style. On utilisera alors un outil numérique de création collaborative de nuage de mots tel que Digistorm (service gratuit et sans inscription proposé par LaDigitale) afin que les élèves puissent mobiliser leurs connaissances. Il leur faudra alors suivre la consigne suivante : "Write all the words you know about Gothic". La production sera contrôlée par l'enseignant qui pourra filtrer les propositions des élèves si besoin. La classe bénéficiera finalement d'une carte mentale reprenant les éléments les plus importants du style gothique, le nuage de mot servira de trace écrite (TE). Le nuage ci-dessous est un exemple de production possible.



L'important n'est pas ici de cibler directement le sujet du lieu gothique, mais bel et bien de faire s'interroger les élèves sur les traits généraux liés à ce style. Cette introduction permettra aux élèves de découvrir le sujet de la séquence tout en s'exerçant d'ores et déjà à l'analyse des sentiments dégagés par le style gothique, et des techniques utilisés pour les produire. Ce travail permettra aux

élèves de découvrir les codes du gothique, qu'ils pourront réutiliser dans leurs travaux futurs, plus particulièrement sur les aspects mystérieux et effrayants du gothique.

Partie 2 : Analyse de cas.

Une fois les traits du style gothique connus des élèves, le document suivant servira d'entrée en matière d'un point de vue linguistique et littéraire. Le document proposé pour cette partie est un extrait de la nouvelle intitulée « The Horror of Dunwich » écrite par H.P Lovecraft en 1928. Cet extrait a été choisi pour plusieurs raisons, par exemple le vocabulaire descriptif soutenu et varié utilisé par l'auteur. De plus, il permettra aux élèves d'élargir leurs perspectives sur les types de lieux que l'on peut apparenter à des lieux gothiques : il n'est pas question ici de châteaux hantés ni de cimetières, mais d'un village en ruine de Nouvelle Angleterre.

Introduction :

Dans un premier temps, les élèves, ayant chacun reçu le texte imprimé, auront pour tâche de présenter le document brièvement sans le lire. Ils s'aideront pour ce faire du cotexte. Je demanderais alors aux élèves s'ils connaissent l'auteur de la nouvelle, auteur ayant connu une popularité nouvelle ces dernières années dû à un grand nombre d'adaptations littéraires, allant même jusqu'à atteindre les nouveaux médias que sont les jeux et séries, qui font partie des médias par lesquels les élèves auront pu être exposés à l'atmosphère du gothique. Cette discussion avec les élèves se déroulera bien sûr en anglais, et leur permettra d'identifier l'auteur du célèbre « Call of Cthulhu », œuvre qu'ils peuvent connaître.

When a traveller in north central Massachusetts takes the wrong fork at the junction of the Aylesbury pike just beyond Dean's Corners he comes upon a lonely and curious country. The ground gets higher, and the brier-bordered stone walls press closer and closer against the ruts of the dusty, curving road. The trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles, and grasses attain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions. At the same time the planted fields appear singularly few and barren; while the sparsely scattered houses wear a surprisingly uniform aspect of age, squalor, and dilapidation. Without knowing why, one hesitates to ask directions from the gnarled, solitary figures spied now and then on crumbling doorsteps or on the sloping, rock-strown meadows. Those figures are so silent and furtive that one feels somehow confronted by forbidden things, with which it would be better to have nothing to do. When a rise in the road brings the mountains in view above the deep woods, the feeling of strange uneasiness is increased. The summits are too rounded and symmetrical to give a sense of

comfort and naturalness, and sometimes the sky silhouettes with especial clearness the queer circles of tall stone pillars with which most of them are crowned.

Gorges and ravines of problematical depth intersect the way, and the crude wooden bridges always seem of dubious safety. When the road dips again there are stretches of marshland that one instinctively dislikes, and indeed almost fears at evening when unseen whippoorwills chatter and the fireflies come out in abnormal profusion to dance to the raucous, creepily insistent rhythms of stridently piping bull-frogs. The thin, shining line of the Miskatonic's upper reaches has an oddly serpent-like suggestion as it winds close to the feet of the domed hills among which it rises.

As the hills draw nearer, one heeds their wooded sides more than their stone-crowned tops. Those sides loom up so darkly and precipitously that one wishes they would keep their distance, but there is no road by which to escape them. Across a covered bridge one sees a small village huddled between the stream and the vertical slope of Round Mountain, and wonders at the cluster of rotting gambrel roofs bespeaking an earlier architectural period than that of the neighbouring region. It is not reassuring to see, on a closer glance, that most of the houses are deserted and falling to ruin, and that the broken-steepled church now harbours the one slovenly mercantile establishment of the hamlet. One dreads to trust the tenebrous tunnel of the bridge, yet there is no way to avoid it. Once across, it is hard to prevent the impression of a faint, malign odour about the village street, as of the massed mould and decay of centuries. It is always a relief to get clear of the place, and to follow the narrow road around the base of the hills and across the level country beyond till it rejoins the Aylesbury pike. Afterward one sometimes learns that one has been through Dunwich.

Extract from "The Horror of Dunwich", H.P Lovecraft, 1928

Compréhension globale : Les élèves, répartis en groupes de deux, liront le texte et prendront le temps de repérer tous les adjectifs et noms liés au champ lexical de la ruine. Le but n'est pas ici d'en dresser une liste exhaustive, mais de donner aux élèves du vocabulaire qu'ils pourront réutiliser dans leurs productions au fil de la séquence. La consigne suivante sera projetée au tableau: « *Read the text, and underline every word related to the lexical field of ruin with your neighbour.* » Cette liste sera énoncée à l'oral par les élèves, permettant aux autres de surligner tous les mots qu'ils auraient pu manquer. Elle sera ensuite corrigée en classe entière.

Compréhension détaillée : Une fois la liste de vocabulaire terminée, les élèves devront essayer de réécrire le passage d'exposition de Dunwich avec leurs propres mots. Ils pourront bien sûr s'aider du vocabulaire présent dans l'extrait, mais ils devront écrire un résumé avec leurs propres phrases et avec leurs propres structures. Cet exercice est complexe, et requiert des élèves une fine compréhension du texte afin de pouvoir être réalisée de manière efficace. Cette tâche conviendrait ainsi aux élèves dont le niveau d'anglais est le plus élevé. Une fiche de travail pourra être proposée aux élèves en difficulté en fournissant des pistes afin de paver le chemin vers la réécriture. Les pistes proposées pourront prendre la forme suivante :

- 1) Identify the type of landscape described in the extract. (Seafront, forest, fields, city...)*
- 2) Identify who the pronoun "one" refers to in the extract.*
- 3) Identify what people feel when they visit the region.*
- 4) Explain in your own words why people do not usually go to Dunwich.*
- 5) Present the place in your own words: describe it, tell where it is located and its main characteristics.*

Une fois leurs résumés terminés, chaque paire d'élèves échangera sa production avec celle d'une autre paire, permettant à chaque groupe de lire les différentes interprétations de Dunwich. Les résumés feront office de trace écrite. Il serait également approprié de faire ici un point de grammaire sur l'utilisation de « one » en tant que pronom personnel, étant donné que la forme impersonnelle qui l'accompagne est particulièrement présente dans cet extrait.

Séance 2 : Compréhension orale, Compréhension écrite, Expression écrite.

La séance commencera par un rapide rituel d'entrée, où les élèves devront donner un mot lié aux caractéristiques du style gothique afin de pouvoir entrer dans la salle. Ce rituel donne la possibilité aux élèves de revoir les mots vus lors de la création du nuage de mots à la séance précédente, mais ils pourront également fournir des mots nouveaux. S'ensuivra une courte discussion (Expression orale en Interaction : EOI) en classe entière autour de la question qui sera projetée au tableau, à savoir ; « What types of places can be gothic ? » Cette discussion ne fera pas l'objet de prise de notes, mais permettra aux élèves de s'interroger sur la diversité des lieux pouvant être relié au gothique (Château hanté, cimetières, forêt sombre et laboratoire de savant fou pour n'en citer que quelques-uns). Une fois cette discussion terminée, La séance se divisera à nouveau en deux parties, chacune faisant l'objet de l'étude d'un document nouveau.

Partie 1 :

Afin de varier les types de documents proposés, et de donner aux élèves un exemple typique de lieu gothique, le document proposé ici sera la bande annonce du film *Crimson Peak* (2015), réalisé par Guillermo del Toro : <https://youtu.be/6yAbFYbi8XU?si=4aBWIkkgJVZqzWEy>

L'étude du document se composera de plusieurs visionnages, le premier sans prendre de notes, le deuxième en présentant le document et en prenant le plus de notes possibles, et le troisième en répondant à des questions spécifiques concernant les spécificités du manoir représenté dans le document. Ce travail est réalisé individuellement. Les questions pourraient prendre la forme suivante :

- 1) *Explain what "Crimson Peak" is in the story.*
- 2) *Find the protagonist's name. Explain what happens to her.*
- 3) *The protagonist receives several warnings about the house. What are they?*
- 4) *List as many scary and horrible events that take place in the house as possible.*
- 5) *List the adjectives that are used to describe the house. Explain why these words were used.*

La trace écrite, qui sera écrite en collaboration avec les élèves, leurs notes, et les réponses aux questions, pourrait ressembler à celle-ci :

"The document is the trailer of the movie *Crimson Peak*, released in 2015 and produced by Guillermo del Toro. It tells the story of a young woman named Edith, who marries a charismatic man and goes to live with him in his manor called (or located on) *Crimson Peak*. She soon receives various threats and warnings not to wander around certain parts of the manor, deemed dangerous. Edith finds out that many ghostly appearances and horrible events such as blood pouring out of water pipes happen frequently. Edith is trapped in the house, not able to escape, as her husband assures her that the house itself is alive."

Partie 2 :

Afin d'approfondir la variété de lieux gothiques étudiés, le document proposé ensuite sera à nouveau un document texte, à savoir l'extrait de « *The Birthmark* » ci-dessous, dans lequel Georgiana découvre pour la première fois le laboratoire de son mari.

« Georgiana is a woman married to an enigmatic scientist called Aylmer. He loves his wife dearly, and he has decided to use his experiments to erase the birthmark that she has on her left cheek. She has never seen his laboratory before.»

He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gayety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory. The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself. He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "*The Birthmark*", 1843.

Ce document permet de relier Nathaniel Hawthorne au style gothique en comparant le repaire d'un de ses scientifiques à un lieu tout aussi étrange et effrayant qu'un manoir hanté. Après une série de questions proposées aux élèves (alors répartis en groupes de deux) pour guider leurs réflexions, la consigne suivante sera projetée au tableau : « Write a short text and compare Crimson Peak manor to Aylmer's laboratory. List the differences and the similarities between the two. ». Ces textes seront à nouveau échangés entre groupes, seront présentés à l'oral par ceux-ci au reste de la classe, et composeront la trace écrite, avec bien entendu un retour en classe entière pour confirmer ou infirmer les analyses présentées par les élèves. Les questions qui serviront de pistes de réflexions seront les suivantes :

- 1) Describe what is found in Aylmer's laboratory.
- 2) List the adjectives used to describe the place.
- 3) Identify the feelings felt by Georgiana when she saw the laboratory.
- 4) Explain why she felt that way. Give two examples.
- 5) Would you say that Aylmer's laboratory is a gothic place, just like *Crimson Peak*? Explain your reasoning.
- 6) Write a short text and compare *Crimson Peak* manor to Aylmer's laboratory. List the differences and the similarities between the two.

Voici un exemple de production possible, qui pourrait servir de trace écrite :

“Crimson Peak is a representation of a typical haunted manor, appearing threatening, gloomy and most of all, huge. The size of the building makes it seem very much like a labyrinth, and it emphasizes the feeling of dread it causes. Not to mention, it is directly presented as a very dangerous place, as there are many ghosts haunting the place. In comparison, Aylmer's laboratory is another type of gothic location. It is not described as being huge, so the feeling of unease that it provokes in the reader does not come from size or from the presence of ghosts. Instead, the laboratory is described as a strange place, full of mysterious apparatus of unknown uses. The science that Aylmer practises seems to be unnatural and oppresses the very air inside the laboratory. The fact is that while Aylmer's laboratory appears less threatening than *Crimson Peak* at first sight, it is still very much full of mystery which causes the reader and Georgiana to be instinctively scared of this place. It also seems to have strange effects on Aylmer himself, as he seems to become another man entirely as soon as he enters his laboratory.”

Cette étape occupera la fin de la séance. En tant que devoir à la maison, les élèves devront imaginer et prendre quelques notes sur un lieu gothique de leur invention, en réutilisant les codes vus précédemment. Cela leur permettra de s'approprier ces techniques, de réutiliser le vocabulaire et les descriptions liés à la peur et à l'effroi, ainsi que d'amorcer le travail en amont pour faciliter l'aspect créatif et pratique de la réalisation de la TI et de la TF.

Séance 3 : Compréhension Ecrite, Expression Ecrite.

Cette séance se déroulera en salle informatique. Les élèves seront répartis en groupe, de sorte à avoir environ huit groupes (de 3 élèves maximum) différents. Les élèves seront dirigés vers le site internet de l'agence de voyage Braw Scottish Tour, plus particulièrement la page donnant des informations sur une sélection de châteaux et de lieux considérés comme hantés¹⁰. Chaque groupe aura l'occasion de lire la page, et choisira l'une des quatre attractions présentées (la seule limite étant que chaque attraction ne soit choisie que par deux groupes maximum, pour plus de variété). Chaque groupe sera alors chargé de faire des recherches et de créer une brochure de voyage afin de présenter le lieu choisi. La consigne sera la suivante : « Create a travel brochure about the place you chose. Present it and do your best to make people want to visit the place! »

Pour ce faire, ils pourront s'aider des éventuels brochures papiers présents, des exemples de brochures possibles trouvées sur internet, mais aussi des résultats de leurs recherches : le but étant que les élèves se trouvent en position d'apprentissage actionnel, utilisant les informations qu'ils auront trouvé afin de produire un document original.

La forme de la brochure de voyage sera découverte lors de cette séance, et la production du travail fini fera l'objet de la TI, fonctionnant comme une évaluation formative non notée. Il est important de noter que l'analyse du format de la brochure de voyage est ici exploitée en tant que rappel, ce format de production restant relativement simple d'accès pour des élèves de ce niveau. Les élèves les plus à l'aise pourront bénéficier d'un plus grand degré d'autonomie dans leurs recherches et dans leur processus de travail, alors que les élèves ayant plus de difficultés auront besoin d'être guidé dans leurs recherches, plus particulièrement dans le choix d'informations importantes qui figureront dans la brochure finale. Selon les besoins, les interventions orales et les conseils de l'enseignant pourront suffire. Dans le cas d'élèves à niveaux faibles, une fiche de pistes de réflexion semblable à celles des séances précédentes pourra être distribuée. Voici une liste de pistes qui pourront être exploitée dans une telle fiche :

- 1) *Identify the name and the location of the place.*
- 2) *Present its history briefly.*
- 3) *List the main characteristics of the place.*
- 4) *Select photos matching your description.*
- 5) *Create a travel brochure with the information you have picked out. A lot of people want to visit haunted places, so do your best to make people want to visit the place!*

¹⁰ <https://brawscottishtours.com/blog/a-guide-to-scotlands-most-haunted-castles>

Il faut toutefois prendre en considération la nature du travail demandé et les enjeux qui y sont liés. Les brochures, une fois finies lors de la séance ou finies à la maison, seront envoyées en format PDF à l'enseignant, qui prendra grand soin de vérifier qu'aucune partie des productions reçues n'ait été plagiée, ni produite par un outil d'intelligence artificielle. Pour ce faire, certains outils en ligne peuvent être envisagés, comme Scribbr.fr qui propose différents services gratuits comme celui de la détection de plagiat.

Cette tâche intermédiaire permettra à l'enseignant de s'assurer que les élèves ont bien intégré les codes du gothique et de l'effrayant, et qu'ils sont capables de réinvestir leurs connaissances pour produire un document à visée touristique, et de tourner le lieu effrayant en une attraction à visiter tout comme ils le feront lors de la tâche finale. Cette TI sera corrigée par l'enseignant et rendue en version imprimée aux élèves lors de la séance suivante.

Séance 4 : Compréhension orale, Expression écrite. (Salle informatique)

L'on commencera la séance par un rituel rapide en classe entière, où les élèves auront l'opportunité de revoir le vocabulaire de l'effrayant, identique au rituel de la séance 2. Après avoir rendu les tâches intermédiaires, chaque élève devra tenter de traduire du mieux possible une phrase courte, écrite au tableau. La phrase en question pourrait être similaire à la suivante « Traversez le jardin pour atteindre la porte d'entrée. » Le but n'est pas ici de produire la meilleure traduction possible, mais plutôt de faire en sorte que les élèves s'interrogent sur les différentes façons de traduire le verbe « Traverser » en anglais. Qu'ils maîtrisent ou non cette forme, c'est une bonne opportunité pour faire un point sur les différentes manières d'exprimer le mouvement. On effectuera ici un point de grammaire sur cette thématique du mouvement. On ne dressera pas une liste exhaustive de verbes pouvant être utilisés dans tous les contextes, mais on donnera aux élèves une formule générale qui pourra les aider à reconstruire les expressions du mouvement lorsqu'ils en auront besoin :

Verb	Direction
Walk / run	Across, through, back, on, up, out, in ...
Climb	Up (the stairs), down.
Go	Out, in, back, through, up, down ...

Une fois ce point de grammaire effectué, les élèves pourront accéder aux postes informatiques par groupe de deux. Ils pourront ainsi visionner, à leur rythme et autant de fois que nécessaire, la vidéo

intitulée : « Virtual Tour of Strawberry Hill. »¹¹ Les élèves pourront ainsi découvrir le format de l'audioguide, et prendre autant de notes que nécessaires en prévision de la tâche finale.

La consigne suivante sera projetée au tableau: « Take notes and present Strawberry Hills using the virtual guide: describe the rooms (names, functions, trivia) and explain how to move from each room to the next. » Une correction en classe entière sera proposée ensuite, afin de corriger les éventuelles informations erronées et pour donner quelques verbes et expressions utiles afin d'amorcer la production de la TF lors de la séance suivante.

Séance 5 : Tâche Finale.

Cette séance marque la fin de la séquence, et permettra aux élèves de mettre en application tous les faits de langues étudiés au cours de celle-ci. Les élèves auront alors l'entièreté des deux heures de la séance afin de constituer leurs groupes (maximum 2 membres par groupes), découvrir la consigne de la TF ainsi que le barème, et d'amorcer le travail d'invention et de rédaction.

Les élèves pourront bien entendu poser des questions si une partie de la consigne pose un problème. Lors de cette dernière séance, ils auront pour tâche d'inventer (ou de choisir) le lieu gothique qu'ils présenteront durant leur audioguide. Ils pourront avoir accès à leurs notes ainsi qu'aux différentes traces écrites réalisées au cours de la séquence. Le but est ici de proposer une tâche créative, forçant les élèves à réutiliser le vocabulaire étudié (celui des lieux gothiques et de l'effroi) et les éléments syntaxiques abordés (« one » en tant que pronom, expressions du mouvement) tout en respectant un format ciblé (celui de l'audioguide). Une fois le lieu choisi, les élèves s'emploieront à la rédaction du script qu'ils utiliseront pendant l'audioguide. Ce script sera ramassé, pris en photo par l'enseignant afin de s'assurer que les productions orales trouvées dans les TF finies soient bien celles des élèves, puis rendu à ceux-ci. Les élèves auront alors jusqu'à deux semaines afin de compléter leurs productions, et de les envoyer à l'enseignant via le service d'enregistrement de Pronote. Les élèves maîtrisant les outils d'édition vidéo pourront également fournir un fichier mp4 en ajoutant une dimension visuelle à leurs productions (images, musiques de fond...), leur permettant de gagner des points bonus. La consigne proposée sera la suivante:

¹¹ <https://youtu.be/rCHfBlbXhJI?si=z7wtd2sQYNPW-C-7>

Final Task

“You are a supernatural creature living in a threatening lair. One day, you hear about “audio guides”, used by tourists to visit unusual locations, and you want to try making one. Prepare the description of your lair, relate past events that shaped the place, and try your best to lure people to your lair. The audio guide should last at least 5 minutes (10 if working in pairs). Send an mp3 or mp4 file on Pronote”.

Barème :

Qualité de la langue anglaise (syntaxe/vocabulaire)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Prononciation	0	1	2	3	4		
Originalité	0	1	2	3	4		
Respect des codes (audioguide/gothique)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Conclusion :

Bien que courte, cette séquence se destine à faire travailler les élèves sur plusieurs points grammaticaux et lexicaux en lien avec le style littéraire du gothique. Elle se destine à être une séquence de découverte littéraire et d’expérimentations, laissant les élèves utiliser les outils de langue mis à leurs dispositions afin d’exprimer leur créativité dans le cadre donné. Cette séquence pourrait être envisagée relativement tôt dans l’année grâce à la relative simplicité des formes grammaticales abordées, mais aussi grâce à l’aspect saisonnier qu’une telle séquence revêt.

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Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) was an American author whose work is mostly composed of short stories and essays. Hawthorne wrote a lot about the influence of puritanism on American society and the power it has on people's minds and conceptions of the world. He exposed Puritan themes leading to societal issues of his time in his works of fiction, and with his vast array of characters. Among these, we can find misguided figures of perseverance, men who dedicated their lives to the realisation of their own personal ideals, not realising that their quests were doomed to fail from the instant they undertook them. This document aims to research and analyse several of these tragic characters: Aylmer from "The Birthmark", Rappaccini from "Rappaccini's Daughter" and Owen Warland from "The Artist of the Beautiful".

Keywords:

Nathaniel Hawthorne - American Gothic – Quest - Transcendentalism – The Uncanny – Puritanism
– Character Analysis