

their bidding. Henry does not mention this possible biblical source of the poet's image; neither does my article, whose listing of such sources obviously could not have been all-inclusive.

As to God's remoteness, I certainly dealt with it, particularly in my analysis of "Bénédiction." In the Old Testament not only Job but also the Psalmist (e.g., in Nos. x, xxxviii) lament God's remoteness, but they utter their laments while or because they cling to God desperately, almost convulsively. There is nothing transmundane or inaccessible about their remote God as there is about Baudelaire's.

Henry also faults me for not showing how the poet's "Biblical and religious allusions . . . convey pessimistically the poet's concept of the salvational insufficiency of . . . traditional religion." This may apply to the religious allusions, but not to the biblical allusions outside of "Révolte," and not to borrowings of biblical imagery, all of which I have now reexamined. Finally, whatever Henry finds or misses in my study, my conclusion is not, as he puts it, that "Baudelaire's poetry is on the whole literary or esthetic, and not religious," but that the influence of the Bible on this poetry is of such nature.

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House of the Seven Gables: An Unlikely Source

To the Editor:

In light of the long-standing, well-known, and often acrimonious debate that has been carried on in certain quarters over the actual, physical prototype of the Pyncheon home, John R. Byers' "*House of the Seven Gables* and 'The Daughters of Dr. Byles': A Probable Source" (*PMLA*, 89, 1974, 174–77) would appear to advance the claims of a very dark horse indeed. Whether or not one accedes to what has by now become the majority opinion and chooses to regard the Turner house (still standing in Salem) as the most likely of the candidates, there can be no doubt that Hawthorne had all the models he needed quite close at hand. If the Byles house had a board fence, so did many houses in Salem; and, for the precise condition of the fence, it is far easier to suppose that Hawthorne was more guided in the matter by the demands of theme and appropriate setting than by any literary source. Indeed, a very great deal of the putative resemblance between Hawthorne's romance and Miss Leslie's sketch is to be explained by the fact that the old New England homes of reclusive spinsters inevitably have much in common. Old, unpainted houses, for example, *do* turn black in an east wind, and surely Hawthorne did not need to come by that information in a magazine.

Byers further notes the similar descriptions of the furniture, and, in particular, discovers a source for the fatal chair in which Colonel and Judge Pyncheon in turn succumb to the curse. Yet Hawthorne's description of the chair, as well as its function in the romance, are so clearly related to another source that any influence from Miss Leslie must positively be ruled out. That source, of course, is Hawthorne's own *Grandfather's Chair*. Interestingly enough, the armchair that served as the model in Hawthorne's juvenile volume was at that time (1840) located in the "actual" House of the Seven Gables—the Turner house! Nor is it surprising that Miss Leslie's chair should so much resemble Grandfather's: the best English armchairs of the seventeenth century *were* invariably straight, stiff, made of oak, and carved. Likewise, the detail common to both texts in the description of the table—evidence of literary influence—is the notation that they both have unusually many feet. Yet Wallace Nutting (*Furniture of the Pilgrim Century*, New York: The Old American Co., 1924, p. 501), who was to my knowledge influenced by neither writer, speaks of a table that has "a forest of legs," for the very adequate reason that many gateleg tables of the period were in fact built that way.

Whatever hints Miss Leslie may have supplied for the character of Hepzibah—and of course it is impossible to prove that Hawthorne was positively *not* influenced by the sketch—we need to remember that Hepzibah is in many respects a conventional type. One is free to suppose that Miss Leslie thought the Byles sisters worth writing about largely because they were, though even more eccentric than Hepzibah, nevertheless a recognizable type of the retiring, unmarried old lady of New England—a type that would surely not be unknown to Elizabeth Hawthorne's son.

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Note

¹ See Roy Harvey Pearce's "Historical Introduction" to *True Stories from History and Biography* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 292–93, and Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne and 'The Man of God,'" *Colophon*, NS 2 (Winter 1937), 268–72. The Turner house was then occupied by Hawthorne's second cousin, Miss Susan Ingersoll, a lady of about Hepzibah's age, whom Hawthorne referred to as "the Duchess."

Mr. Byers replies:

In noting the debate over the prototype of the House of the Seven Gables and in rejecting Hawthorne's possible use of the old Byles house, von Frank would seem to be arguing two completely different points: (1) that the House of the Seven Gables was constructed from a series of archetypal New England houses, all