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PERFORMING SELVES AND THE THEATRICAL IMAGINATION IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA: THE EXAMPLES OF ANNA CORA MOWATT, P.T. BARNUM, AND NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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ABSTRACT

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Ralph Ellison has called America a "land of maskers and jokers," remarking that "when American life is most American it is apt to be most theatrical." Revolutionary and immediate post-Revolutionary society was skeptical of malleable selfhood, considering it a threat to the good order of the young republic. In Declaring Independence, Jay Fliegelman demonstrates post-Revolutionary America's fear of theatrical selfhood and its attempt to discover and employ a natural language that would reveal the sincere and essential motivations of public speakers and mitigate, even preclude, the duplicitous representation of self in the public sphere. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century Americans were concerned about the possibilities and problems of theatrical selfhood. Through a literary and cultural analysis of nineteenth-century America, I argue that by the middle of the nineteenth century the threat of a theatrical, or malleable, self is being celebrated, rather than reviled, in the material and literary expressions of Americans. Theatrical selfhood, a product of a post-Calvinist, politically liberal, and market-oriented society, is a stylized presentation of self that challenges notions of "essential" selfhood and posits the possibility of a

dynamic and socially constructed subject. I argue that the texts of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Anna Cora Mowatt, and P.T. Barnum liberally employ narrative devices and tropes of masking and disguising in order to experiment with a dynamic sense of selfhood released from Cartesian essences. I am sensitive to the contexts of culture and, in the first chapter, I use cultural phenomena such as the invention of the daguerreotype, the popularity of mesmerism and phrenology, and the development of department stores to illustrate ways in which nineteenth-century Americans were experimenting with the manipulation of their private selves into the public sphere of antebellum culture. The sense of theatrical selfhood I am uncovering is a site of cultural conflict between the private and public spheres. In subsequent chapters I argue that Hawthorne, Mowatt, and Barnum engage in narrative performances by negotiating the necessities and aspirations of their private selves with the expectations of a sentimental and capitalist-based public culture.

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Preface

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Anna Cora Mowatt, and P.T. Barnum were all born after the turn of the eighteenth century. The oldest, Hawthorne, was born in 1804, and the youngest, Mowatt, was born 15 years later, in 1819. Barnum was born in 1805. Each of the three did the major part of their life's work after 1826--the year of the death of Jefferson and Adams and the figural beginning of the post-heroic age.[1] United by this important fact, Hawthorne, Mowatt, and Barnum lived their lives and wrote their narratives in the midst of a culture that, by 1850, had developed a particular form of theatrical sensibility vis a vis the Victorian cult of domesticity.

The following essays are inquiries into the dynamics of theatrical selfhood in post-Revolutionary and antebellum America. Chapter One clearly defines the model of theatrical selfhood I am expounding at the same time as it provides a broad view of nineteenth-century cultural phenomena (material and epistemological) that illustrate the increasing theatricality of the age. The nineteenth-century understanding of the conscious and unconscious realms, the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839, and the popularity of mesmerism and phrenology all contributed to, and were affected by, a particular form of American discourse of theatrical selfhood. As the thesis winds itself out, it becomes clear that the turbulent social transformations of the Jacksonian era, the explosion of a market economy, and the decline of the Calvinist order during the second quarter of the nineteenth century contributed to the emergence of a particularly American way of representing and dealing with a self loosened from Cartesian essences. A fluid social order, along with rapidly expanding urban areas, problematized social relationships and contributed to a general mistrust or uncertainty about one's peers, neighbors, or business

relations. Conspiracy theories flourished in antebellum America and they were buoyed up by the general discontent and anxiety brought about by the nineteenth century's new ways of seeing and interpreting the self. In this way, masking and disguising of the self--the famous confidence men of the mid-nineteenth century--became important aspects of social and literary discourse and, for my model of nineteenth-century American culture, contributed to the theatrical selfhood of the period. My ideas, however, go beyond the bald-faced hoaxing and deceit of the "confidence men and painted women"[2] of the nineteenth century and submerge themselves in the rhetorical patterns and literary tropes that middle class Americans were using to represent their selves to the world.

In order to tack forward to mid-century, I use The Memoirs of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs of New Hampshire (1798) in Chapter One as a text that prefigures the mid-nineteenth century theatrical selfhood as it appears in the literary discourse of Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne. Burroughs, a rogue and a criminal who writes his life in order to alter his public image, engages in forms of the manipulation of the self that later nineteenth-century writers will employ. Burroughs pays a heavy price for the manipulation of self he engages in; his autobiography suggests that immediate post-Revolutionary America was threatened and wary of malleable selfhood. I am arguing, then, that by 1850, the kind of theatrical selfhood that Burroughs exercises in his Memoirs has become normalized and accepted in the epistemological trends of nineteenth-century America.

The chapters following the Burroughs essay concentrate on the autobiographical/fictional narratives of the three major figures of this study. Through the production of their narratives and the display/stylization of

their public selves, the figures of this study reveal the complexities of theatrical selfhood in nineteenth-century America.

From her first acting performance on 13 June 1845 Anna Cora Mowatt became a formidable figure in the theater world. She was an immediate success in Boston and New York and even made an extended (also successful) tour of England in 1847. Mowatt followed on the heels of popular nineteenth-century actresses and performers such as Fanny Kemble, Fanny Elssler, and Sarah Bernhardt--she was not the first actress to win the approval of the public. Yet Mowatt appealed to a specific class of American theater-goers and she made her appearance on the public stage at a time when the middle classes, who were settling into a republic fueled by market capitalism, were looking for entertaining, yet respectable, leisure activities. Chapter Two uses Mowatt's Autobiography of an Actress; or Eight Years on the Stage (1854) as an example of a nineteenth-century woman who steps out onto the stage of the public sphere and negotiates a sense of her private self in the face of the demands and expectations of a culture that had very specific and limiting ideas of what it meant to be a woman. Mowatt was an actress at a time in the American experience when women occupying public roles were suspect and, as I will demonstrate in a consideration of her autobiography, she spent a great deal of time justifying her career to the public expectations of what it meant to be a woman in nineteenth-century America. I am less concerned with the history of Mowatt's acting career than I am with the rhetorical mediations between herself and public expectations that she uses in her autobiography. Despite the approval she won from audiences and critics alike, Mowatt was still subject to the limiting role a woman could play in the public sphere. Her autobiography, then, becomes a document that opens up a dialogue between herself and the public sphere and rhetorically defends her

public role as an actress. Through the presentation of herself in the autobiography, Mowatt experiments with malleable (or what I will call) theatrical selfhood. Negotiating herself into the public sphere, Mowatt uses language to rhetorically manipulate a sense of her private self that will appear before the public sphere.

P.T. Barnum, who perhaps understood public culture of the nineteenth century better than any of his contemporaries, was an important and formidable nineteenth-century figure who has been underrepresented in the critical heritage of the American experience. Using Barnum as a central figure, and paying close attention to the first edition of his autobiography, The Life of P.T. Barnum (1855), I uncover a nineteenth-century culture of exhibition in Barnum's rhetorical theatricalization of self and Other. Through the numerous re-writings of his autobiography, and through the public presentation of "displays" such as the alleged 161-year old nursemaid of George Washington, Joice Heth, and the Swedish Diva, Jenny Lind, Barnum employed masking and disguising devices in order to present his private self and the private selves of Others in the public realm. Barnum participated in and helped to define a cultural sphere in which meaning was wrapped up in seeing and interpretation. Nineteenth-century Americans defined themselves and others according to the way they appeared in public, and the dynamic nature of the public realm greatly opened up the possibilities of individuals manipulating their private selves for public consumption. Antebellum culture was thoroughly wrapped up in the public display of the individual and Barnum, the greatest "show"man of the century, exploited the mid-nineteenth century's penchant for the exhibition of self better than anyone.

In Chapter Four, I use Hawthorne's voice as a comment on the nature of malleable selfhood at mid-century. At first glance, Hawthorne does not appear to fit into the equation I have set up: he was a retiring, almost obscure, figure in his day and he was ostensibly averse to engaging in the techniques of self-stylization and promotion that Mowatt and Barnum used. Whitman is referred to throughout the essays, and the reader might wonder why I did not chose to focus on him, or perhaps even someone such as Fanny Fern--another American writer attuned to and actively participating in the theatricalization of self at mid-century. But Hawthorne "works" here because of his rather aloof, withdrawn, and self-conscious position in antebellum America. Despite his outsider status in America, Hawthorne still employs tropes and motifs of theatrical selfhood in the corpus of his fiction. Moreover, as a writer of serious fiction, Hawthorne provides a perspective into the nature of mid-century selfhood that Mowatt and Barnum were either not interested or simply not capable of providing. Hawthorne was not an actor or a showman, yet as he presented his self in his literary discourse, it becomes clear that Hawthorne was as interested in performing and manipulating his private self in the public sphere as were his contemporaries, Mowatt and Barnum.

Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke out against the dangers of theatrical selfhood and I use his ideas and career in the final chapter as a way to suggest how prevalent the problem of self-stylization had become in nineteenth-century America. Emerson, who was wary of the possibilities of a malleable self, spent a great deal of time and effort trying to convince Americans that an individual with integrity and fortitude sloughed off the temptations of self-stylization in order to negotiate the private self into the public sphere. For Emerson, the theatrical sense of selfhood that the other figures of this study

experimented with was anathema to the integrity of the individual self. His notion of radical individualism and self-reliance, along with his insistence on nonconformity to the strictures of social institutions are representative of a jeremiadic, contrary voice warning against the epistemological drift of the American self from sincerity to malleability.

A note on method and scope: Contingent upon the interpreter's justifications and decisions, the study of theatricality becomes as open-ended and subjective as inquiries into the nature of American republicanism or Romanticism. And while some interpretations are more thoughtful, sophisticated, or clever, each interpretation is contingent upon the subjective and ideological status of the scholarly mind/imagination as well as the integrity and sophistication of the work. Studying theatricality, republicanism or Romanticism can potentially lead to the syndrome of cultural studies that Clifford Geertz calls painting bullseyes around holes in the fence, or simply making things up and theorizing them into existence. It is probably worth insisting that methodological self consciousness of the inherent subjectivism of scholarship can go a long way in obviating the potential problems built into cultural studies. From his insistence on the subjectivity of scholarly work and emphasis on pragmatic scholarship, Geertz may have pulled the rug from under our feet (a rug that people such as William James and Kenneth Burke had been interested in removing), but his influence on the methods and philosophy of research in the humanities has opened up new ways (albeit with their own pitfalls) of thinking about literature and culture. Ultimately, what saves historicism (or the scholarly method of textualizing cultural forms into the contexts of the period in which they were produced) and cultural studies from the ostensible methodological aporia that subjectivity threatens to unravel is simply the realization of the

invasion of subjectivity into the scholarly work. "Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape" (Geertz 20).

Theatricality, then, is a theorizing construct that is no less useful for its nebulousness; theory can/should be used to mediate the epistemological, sensory, and cultural differences between the past and the present, or to negotiate levels of understanding that history and culture serve to obfuscate. Historicism, Walter Benn Michaels has suggested, should be committed to a continuity between the past and the present and, in this way, theory itself, which has traditionally been perceived as a methodological tool that transcends ideology, is collapsed into culture and serves as the bridge between the past and the present ("The End of History"). Geertz talks about the necessity of cultural theory to stay "rather closer to the ground than tends to be the case in sciences more able to give themselves over to imaginative abstraction. . . . The whole point to the semiotic approach to culture [or reading culture as text and context]," he continues, "is . . . to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with the dead" (24).[3] And it is probably worth explaining that this study is more concerned with what Stephen Greenblatt would call "cultural poetics" than it is with "literature."[4] Each of the texts is examined as an expressive act entrenched in cultural practices. What matters here is the imaginative interaction of language and culture and the meaning(s) that are constructed through that interaction. Key words here are "circulation," "negotiation," and "exchange." Cultural texts are produced (and interpreted) in context; indeed, "society's forms are culture's substances" (Geertz 28).

Finally, the practice of choosing any number of authors/individuals as representative thinkers or models of an age is a suspect exercise. Nonetheless, cultural and textual studies demand that these artificial, yet potentially warranted, choices be made and employed. "Inevitably," explains Stephen Greenblatt, "the resonance and centrality we find in our small group of texts and their authors is our invention and the similar, cumulative inventions of others. . . . So from the thousands, we seize upon a handful of arresting figures who seem to contain within themselves much of what we need, who both reward intense, individual attention and promise access to larger cultural patterns" (Renaissance Self-Fashioning 6).

Because of space and time constraints, I have limited the scope of my study to a white, middle-class experience, but I do not mean to suggest that other racial/ethnic groups and social classes did not experiment with a nineteenth-century theatrical sensibility. African-Americans, Irish immigrants of the 1840s and, later, Jewish immigrants of the late-nineteenth century, as well as lower- and upper-class Americans all stylized and exhibited their public selves in different ways and for very different reasons. There is another book to be written that pays closer attention to these other groups. I have chosen to concentrate on a middle-class sense of theatrical selfhood primarily because the emergence of a middle-class (a term which implies social transition and transformation) culture in the mid-nineteenth century lends itself to the dynamics of nineteenth-century theatrical selfhood as I am defining it.

Notes

[1]See Forgie, for definitions and discussions of the post-heroic age in America.

[2]The phrase is taken from Halttunen's Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of American Middle Class Culture, 1830-1870.

[3]The final phrase, of course, has been made into the mantra of New Historical thought by Stephen Greenblatt.

[4]See Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture."

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Chapter One

Theatrical Selfhood in the Context of Post-Revolutionary and Antebellum America

Despite its historical mistrust of the theater, a middle-class American experience has been one of decided theatricality.[1] Two recent scholarly works by Jeffrey Richards and Jay Fliegelman have uncovered theatrical tropes and modes of discourse in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America. In Theatre Enough Richards looks at metaphors of theatricality from the first European settlements of North American to the end of the American Revolution. In the discourses of early American performers from John Winthrop to John Adams, Richards has illustrated the pervasiveness of a theatrical sense of self and the way in which tropological theatricality formed a group and, later, a national identity. For Richards, early Americans used theatrical tropes in their oral and literary discourses as a way to order their experience and expound the social, historical, and religious implications of their settlements in the New World. Colonial Americans wrote themselves into performing roles within the continuing American drama. Reacting against their European experiences, and devoid of a legitimate theatre culture, the colonists imagined themselves as actors on the stage of the theatrum mundi--they became the liberators of the self from the strictures of Church and State. "Whether they do so deliberately or not," argues Richards, "many of those Americans frame their epoch-making actions . . . as upon a world stage where individuals collectively act out roles in their rituals of independence" (10). For Richards, theater and theatricality are indispensable characteristics to the cohesiveness of American culture and he argues that early American attempts to suppress the theater did nothing to preclude early

Americans from applying dramatic rhetoric in their attempts to create a stable society.

In Declaring Independence, Jay Fliegelman illustrates the theatricality of Revolutionary American culture through the elocutionary revolution of the late-eighteenth century. Reacting against the Enlightenment's formalized and hierarchical use of language, the Revolutionary leaders set out to discover and employ a natural language that would reveal the true motivations of the speaker and mitigate, even preclude, the duplicitous representation of self and motivations in verbal speech. In the Revolutionary period, the "unadorned public man" (represented most clearly in John Singleton Copley's portrait of Paul Revere), free from the ostentations and chimeras of affected public life (which were rhetorically associated with English politics), became the ideal. Actions, facial expressions, and gestures became as important as words, as meaning was figured into the body of the public speaker and the apparent "naturalness" of his performance. This, of course, is an ideology pregnant with the possibility of co-option, and the irony, not lost on Fliegelman, is that the republican search for a natural form of verbal expression served to normalize a theatrical mode of discourse and presentation of the self in Revolutionary America; finally, the "unadorned public man" is as much of a chimera, a product of ideological trappings, as any European public man.

Other recent scholarly studies such as Peter Shaw's American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution and Ann Withington's Toward A More Perfect Union have, in less textual and more historical and materialist terms, explained the early and Revolutionary American experience as intensely theatrical. Shaw argues that the American Revolution was "rehearsed" in the 1760s through a series of homespun rituals that were modeled on English

precedents and adapted to the ideological needs of Revolutionary America. Less concerned with performative selfhood and the theatricality of self that Richards and Fliegelman see in early American discourse, Shaw, through his discussions of the riots, demonstrations, festivals and personalities of the pre-Revolutionary era, illustrates ways in which the colonists "set the stage" for their revolt from England. Similarly, Withington uncovers a sense of the theatricality of Revolutionary America in her discussion of the "moral aesthetics" of the Revolutionary program. Using the Boston Tea Party as an originary moment, Withington explains the social function and meaning of public spectacles such as executions and funeral processions as ways for the revolutionaries to cohere under a common cause and demarcate lines between themselves and the Tories. Her discussion of Revolutionary "theater," the mock and real funeral processions and executions, are all useful readings on the theatrics of Revolutionary culture and suggest how the spectacle of public justice used "histrionic techniques" to turn punitive actions into dramatic episodes of moral/political admonitions (71).

Scholars interested in the theatricality of the colonial and Revolutionary period (Fliegelman and Richards, specifically) have focused on the theatricality of selfhood in the face of a developing national identity. The Puritans imagined themselves in histrionic roles where they were clearing a space for the eventual sacred rejuvenation of the world. Similarly, Revolutionary Americans saw themselves as performers acting out the last great drama of world history as they ushered in a new republican age.[2] In the essays that follow I will argue that by 1850, the theatrical American imagination had turned from a collective vision of a band of performers acting out the rituals of national identity and hope toward a more individualistic, self-centered notion of the self acting out a performance that

negotiates between the expectations of public culture and the necessities of conscious and unconscious selfhood. American literary and historical scholars of the nineteenth century have noticed this dynamic, but no one has engaged in a sustained and focused discussion of an antebellum culture of performance. For example, in Confidence Men and Painted Women, Karen Haltenun constructs a dialectical argument implying that one form of cultural expression or experience supplants another, arguing that by mid-century,"[g]radually, the sentimental demand for perfect sincerity was losing its tone of urgency, and being replaced by a new acceptance of the theatricality of social relationships" (157). Robert Wiebe terminates The Opening of American Society, his study of post-Revolutionary American history and culture, at 1850--a date where he observes the division of American society along class lines becoming obvious and the beginning of a period more concerned with material presentation of self than previous American societies. Lois Banner, in American Beauty also sees a theatrical sensibility developing by mid-century when she argues that changes in women's fashion and ways of presenting themselves in the second quarter of the nineteenth century contributed to the theatrical culture of the 1850s.

The theatricality of American middle class life was a theatricality of the self. Simply stated, the theatrical imagination of the mid-nineteenth century works its way into the social and literary discourse of the period as a stylized mode of self-presentation. Theatricality is about the perpetual transformations of the self; it challenges notions of essential selfhood implied in Cartesian logic and suggests the dynamic and unknowable construction of the social subject. In this study, theatricality is a literary trope or a narrative device that is employed by the authors of the texts and speaks for a particular kind of performative selfhood of the period. Each of the authors of this study

is somehow aware that it is not necessarily what you say, but how you say it (the performance of meaning) that is important; theatrical selfhood becomes part of a rhetorical construction of self that enables the authors of this study to negotiate, or stylistically arrange, private selves into the public sphere. Fliegelman says as much in Declaring Independence, but the performative selfhood of mid-nineteenth-century America differs considerably from the "unadorned man" of the late eighteenth century. It is the "adorned man" and the "adorned woman" who steps onto the stage of mid-nineteenth century culture. By the mid-nineteenth-century, Americans had caught on to (and exploited) the problems involved with the valorization of the "unadorned man" and the belief that the private self could be revealed in the public realm.

Stephen Burroughs and the Problem of Theatrical Selfhood in Post-Revolutionary America

It is curious that a body of scholarly work regarding an American culture of performance after the Revolutionary period has not developed. The notion of a theatrical, malleable self is contingent on the social and political effects of the American Revolution--a series of historic events and intellectual excursions which fundamentally altered the way Americans would think about their selves in the public and private spheres. Consequently, inquiries into American theatrical selves after the Revolution seem particularly ripe for discussion and examination.

For Gordon Wood in The Radicalism of the American Revolution, the American revolution was a social revolution that thoroughly revised the individual's relationship to the State as well as augmented the individual's autonomy vis a vis State control. The colonists' revolt from England effected radical changes in the social fabric--the collapse of hierarchical distinctions

(and the consequential construction of new distinctions) and with the democratization of government were a few of the social changes that opened up possible fields of action for some white men. The weakening of the traditional State and the colonial protest against monarchical despotism created a certain amount of confusion though--as more individuals were given a voice in government and as governing quickly became a science of political organization, complexities arose that had no precedents. Men began to step outside the auspices of State and monarchical control and perceive themselves as freely-governing beings. The autonomous modern man acted willfully, outside the demands of a Divine or a Monarch, and free from the determinations of Fate. Modern man found himself with the power to affect history rather than serve as the tool for the monarch or the State. With the widespread notions that man's actions mattered came the plausibility of causality and causal history (Wood "Conspiracy" 413). The epistemology of causality allowed man to attribute effects to specific causes and place himself in a central role in the workings of history.

In 1798, Stephen Burroughs published an account of his life, The Memoirs of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs, of New Hampshire, that, through its rhetorical self-stylization, probes the limitations and the possibilities of an American self freed from the constraints of the English monarchy as well as looks forward to the experimentations with theatrical selfhood evident in the texts of Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne. The malleable nature of the private self and the consequential dynamics of public perception of self is true anywhere, for any culture, of course. Yet, for this study the implications and the results of theatrical selfhood within a given cultural milieu are the important issues. What was the effect of the Revolution on the American self? And how did immediate post-

Revolutionary society handle the possibilities, the realities, of theatrical selfhood? Burroughs' text will help us here. In the chapters that follow, the question will be slightly altered: By 1850, what has happened to the problem of theatrical selfhood? Has it fundamentally changed? Has it become more dangerous, more nefarious? Or has the problem been altered and recast so that theatrical selfhood has become an accepted manner of self presentation? For Burroughs, as for Hawthorne, Mowatt, and Barnum, rhetorical manipulation and creation of self is central to the narrative strategy.

The Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs becomes a text that exposes the limitations of the autonomous self in the new republic. In addition, through the manipulation of his public and private self, Burroughs demonstrates that, in the post-Revolutionary period, the celebrated autonomous American self is suspect in republican society. Through the public reactions against his theatrical manipulation of self, Burroughs implicitly underscores the fear of the self released from the strictures of social hierarchies and positions. Burroughs' Memoirs shows us that the American Revolution deposed a monarch and mixed up the social order, yet post-Revolutionary Americans were wary of the free-floating self and anxious for it to find its rightful place in the social order.

A picaresque narrative written in epistolary form that chronicles the life and adventures of a late-eighteenth-century rogue, Memoirs becomes a rhetorical attempt to justify the ways and means of the author to the expectations of the public sphere. The narrative is both polemical and anecdotal, incorporating discourses about the problems of post-Revolutionary society with hosts of stories concerning Burroughs' travels through the young republic.

Burroughs begins his memoirs with recollections of late adolescence; he is a prankster who makes trouble at school and is thrown out of Dartmouth. Ironically, he begins teaching school after his removal from Dartmouth and when he is not in prison teaching remains his vocation even though he accosts the reader with polemics concerning the uselessness of excessive book learning. Burroughs continues his narrative with dazzling hard-luck stories: he unwittingly falls in love with a married woman, he is falsely accused of rape, and he meets inordinate trials in prison where he is serving a sentence for passing counterfeit money. The rhetorical purpose of the anecdotes is to align the reader with his sympathies and exonerate himself from the false charges. Burroughs spends a better part of the narrative either in prison or waiting to go on trial for another crime of which he has (to his judgment) been falsely accused. Some of Burroughs' adventures are truly remarkable: he burns down a jail in which he is an inmate, he organizes an unsuccessful prison revolt, he is involved in a counterfeiting plot, he gets duped by a false alchemist who convinces him that copper can be turned into gold, and he suffers through miserable physical and emotional conditions.

By his twenty-ninth year, Burroughs has acquired a notorious reputation from which he cannot free himself. Throughout the republic, his name becomes associated with infamy and recklessness, and as the narrative progresses, Burroughs increasingly finds himself the victim of his own bad name. Consequently, much of his time is spent disguising and altering his identity in order to pass as an ordinary citizen. Burroughs' sense of self is radically at odds with the public persona he acquires, and the entire narrative is spent trying to close the enormous gap between his private self and his acquired public reputation. Burroughs employs tropes of the theatrum mundi along with narrative devices of masking and disguising in his efforts

to absolve his notorious public character. Furthermore, narrative devices of mistaken identities are used as vehicles for exploration into the malleable nature of selfhood. Memoirs, then, becomes a rhetorical tool that Burroughs uses to negotiate his private sense of self against his notorious public reputation.

Daniel Williams' rhetorical reading of Burroughs' narrative is informative and useful both for an understanding of Memoirs and as a way to set the stage for the following essays. For Williams, Burroughs' text suggests that self is based on perception and the context of perception. As a result, the self of the public sphere is pregnant with transformative potential--it is always open for manipulation and debate. "The perception of self was based on external transaction of belief," remarks Williams, "and, as Burroughs repeatedly illustrated, beliefs easily could be manipulated" ("In Defense of Self" 97). For Williams, Burroughs' text is an early example of subjectivity in American letters and a challenge to the notion of static selfhood: "And in shaping his life into a literary presentation, he demonstrated that good and bad were arbitrary, imprecise labels, a discovery that led to a uniquely American relativism of self" ("In Defense of Self" 98).

Through his construction of a narrator named Stephen Burroughs, Burroughs was able to manipulate the public perception of his self. He engages in some crafty rhetorical and narrative devices in order to accomplish his narrative motive of writing a self that counteracts the notorious public reputation he has acquired. "Realizing that, in many ways, reality is made up of what is mutually perceived," Burroughs has written his life in order to effect a change in his public self--"he set out to alter the perception of Stephen Burroughs by dramatizing his preferred view of self" (Williams "In Defense of Self" 99). The act of writing and the creation of a

narrator transforms the notorious Stephen Burroughs into the wronged and forsaken narrator of the narrative. Williams' reading of Memoirs is important because he has effectively separated Stephen Burroughs the writer from Stephen Burroughs the narrator--a task I take for myself as I read the narratives of Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne in the following chapters. Burroughs' text is embedded in rhetorical manipulations that thoroughly confuse the public and private selves with the effect of undermining the notoriousness of his public persona. The narrative is a performance; it is a valiant attempt to re-make self, and an inquiry into the histrionics of selfhood.

As a post-Revolutionary crime narrative, Memoirs represents immediate post-Revolutionary notions of selfhood as well as looks forward to nineteenth-century ontological trends. In "Rogues, Rascals and Scoundrels," Daniel Williams charts the three stages of crime literature in colonial and immediate post-Revolutionary America, suggesting how literature reflects perceptual changes of selfhood. The first stage is represented in Cotton Mather's Pillars of Salt (1699), a compendium of crimes and criminals who are brought to justice by the "benevolent" arms of the State and who undergo a compulsory conversion from their former "sinful" selves. Criminals of this first stage of crime narratives repent of their crimes and, prior to execution, submit to the will and beliefs of the authorities. Williams places the second stage of crime narratives between the mid-eighteenth century and the Revolution. The gradual waning of the Calvinist order and the increasing importance of individualism (the valorization of the self), along with augmenting economic opportunities in the marketplace, contributed heavily to the development of this second stage (Williams "Rogues" 9-10). Crime narratives of the second stage developed increasingly complex character

representations, were less concerned with confession, and more inclined to attribute the waywardness of the criminal to social and economic determinations. "The narratives [of the second stage] exhibited an ambivalence towards criminals. They were ultimately executed, but not before sympathy was aroused for them" (Williams "Rogues" 12). The third stage of crime narratives (of which Burroughs' text is an example) developed in the post-Revolutionary period. The Revolution institutionalized rebellion against Church and State[3] and, consequently, fundamentally challenged pre-Revolutionary ontological patterns. Williams nicely describes the epistemological sea-change of post-Revolutionary society and the beginnings of the valorization of self in American thought:

> Individualism, in short, was becoming more popular. Refusing to accept the limitations placed upon them by either a Calvinist God or an English King, Americans exhibited a far greater willingness to pursue their own interests. . . . Self-determination, self-reliance and self-initiative became socially celebrated ideals. Defiance of authority became pervasive, almost institutionalized. ("Rogues" 12)

Prior to the American revolution, monarchical hierarchies subjected the American self to mitigating forces. Philip Greven argues that evangelical notions of the self before the Revolution were "preoccupied with ways to abase, to deny, and to annihilate their own enduring sense of self-worth and selfhood, convinced that only by destroying the self could they conform absolutely and unquestioningly to the sovereign will of God" (13).[4] The third stage of American crime narratives, then, is a reaction to earlier notions of American selfhood and is characterized by a roguish figure who generally escapes execution at the hands of the State and explains his punishments as unjust treatments. The rogue is inclined to represent himself as a martyr--

someone whose pursuit of his own individualism, his essential sense of self, has been precluded by State strictures or misunderstood by the public. Narratives written in the third stage represent fully-developed characters who relish (or blame them on someone else) rather than repent their crimes. Moreover, the criminals writing in this third stage are deeply committed to malleable selfhood: the rogues freely change identities, masquerading, imitating, and assimilating according to the particular situations in which they find themselves.[5]

Memoirs, which Jay Fliegelman reads as "a plea to the new nation to embrace the new age of deception and invention," was widely popular during the first few decades of the nineteenth century and new editions were still being printed in the 1850s (Prodigals and Pilgrims 245). The continuing popularity of Burroughs' text suggests that he was raising issues important to his nineteenth-century readers. Williams calls Burroughs' text a "huge success" and an "early best-seller" that was published nearly thirty times in fourteen cities ("Rogues" 14). The first volume of Memoirs was published in 1798, and a second volume followed in 1804. The third edition of the text (1804) combined both volumes, and in 1811 a new edition was released with an updated appendix and more notes. Three more editions were released in the 1830s, and the 1850s witnessed the publication of five more editions. Furthermore, twelve editions of an abridged version of Memoirs, (both volumes together run nearly 375 pages and the second volume gets tedious), named Sketch of the Life of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs, were published between 1809 and 1818.[6]

Burroughs was read into the nineteenth century because he engaged his readers in discourses of theatrical selfhood which were being taken up, for instance, by writers such as Hawthorne, Mowatt, and Barnum. Burroughs's

readers, Williams suggests, "were engaged by his determination to create his own criteria for identifying and evaluating the self, by his rejection of the classical notion of universal truth and order, by his defiance of authority, and simply, by his creative force of imagination. He did not attempt to deceive readers by omitting his crimes, but to entertain them by demonstrating the creativity of deception" ("In Defense of Self" 117).[7] Williams suggests the cultural work Burroughs accomplished up through mid-century as well as associates his discourses with those that will be discussed in the following chapters. Attracted to his individualism and intrigued by his exploration of malleable selfhood, nineteenth-century readers read Burroughs in terms of the literary discourses and epistemological trends of their time.

Burroughs uses the language of the theater to dramatize vitriolic conspiracies directed toward the assassination of his character: He "enters the stage of life" (3) and acknowledges the different "parts" he is forced to act (23). Spurned by a woman, he melodramatically laments, "May I hide myself with a mantle of darkness, and retire from the stage of action, into eternal obscurity" (46). Released from a seemingly endless prison sentence, and finding himself once more among friends, Burroughs joyously exclaims, "Here was a theater upon which I had exhibited in such a manner, as to raise the desponding hopes of my friends" (190). The entire narrative is written in letter form and has apparently been requested by an unidentified friend (another rhetorical device to catch the readers' sympathy); in an aside to this man, Burroughs ruminated on the practical application of his tale by turning his life into a public performance, "Therefore , sir, if you can gather anything from my observations on those subjects which you have requested, either profitable or amusing, I shall be highly gratified with my performance" (230).

There is a curious tension between the formation of a Lockean self and a prototypical Emersonian notion of the imperialized and self-created self operating in Memoirs. Burroughs begins his narrative with a lesson in the formation of a Lockean self: he represents himself as a prankster whose active imagination and impatience with respectable pursuits set him on the path toward public infamy. "My thirst for amusement," Burroughs almost boasts, "was insatiable," and his "only dependence for that gratification" was in making his superiors look ridiculous, "so as to raise the laugh at their expense, and partake of the general diversion, which such a matter created" (3). Despite reprimands--"the repeated application of this birch medicine"--Burroughs reveals that his "pursuit of fun" was never quelled. In this way, Burroughs confirms Philip Greven's formulation concerning selfhood and childhood in early America:

> Childhood was the matrix within which the sense of self, shaping consciousness and convictions, was being formed, not only because many parents set about to ensure the inculcation of particular modes of behavior, values, and beliefs, but also because the accumulation of personal experiences in the earliest years of life had an enduring influence upon the development of the temperaments and religious experiences of people in adulthood. (16)

Using devices that Mowatt and Barnum will employ in their autobiographies, Burroughs uses his prefatory representations of self to demonstrate how his life followed the patterns that were established as a child. For example, Mowatt begins her narrative by suggesting that acting is an essential aspect of her character, and, similarly, Barnum represents his childhood as a never-ending pursuit of fun and jokes. Similarly, Hawthorne's letters to his mother reveal his sense that authorship was his fate. All three spent the better part of

their lives attempting to realize the essential parts of their nature, be it author, actress, or entertainer. Burroughs prefigures the valorization of the self that Hawthorne, Mowatt, and Barnum were able to enjoy. A man ahead of his times, Burroughs had sanctified his self at the expense of the authority of Church and State. "Being true to the self, he implied, was more important than bending the self to fit the exact expectations of society" (Williams "In Defense of Self" 104). However, unlike his nineteenth-century followers, Burroughs pays a heavy price for attempting to fulfill the needs of his essential self. Indeed, as the narrative progresses, Burroughs' pursuit of entertainment is severely quelled by the misunderstandings and tragedies that seem to roll over him.

Burroughs uses narrative devices of masking and disguising in order to illustrate the malleable nature of self-presentation. Following his removal from Dartmouth and the failed love affair with a married woman, Burroughs finds himself with little prospects for the future. Stealing ten of his father's sermons, Burroughs leaves home intending to find a position as a minister: "There is one thing, said contrivance, which you may do; and it will answer your purpose;--preach! Preach?"[8] Aware of radical differences between the life he has lived and the role he purports to masquerade, Burroughs remarks, "What a pretty fellow am I for a preacher! A pretty character mine, to tickle the ears of a grave audience! Run away from my own home for being connected in robbing a bee house, and for my attention to a married woman; having been through scenes of tumult, during my career, since I have exhibited on the active stage of life" (48). Traveling 150 miles south down the Connecticut River and changing his name to Davis, Burroughs arrives in Pelham where he masquerades as a minister for six months.

In Memoirs, sartorial significations become important devices in the projection of a public self; Burroughs uses clothing to broach issues of exchangeable selfhood. Aware of the importance of looking the part, Burroughs laments his inability to acquire an outfit suggestive of a minister (48). Appearing before his congregation for the first time, Burroughs remarks, "I know my dress is against me, and will cause some speculation; but I cannot help it . . . " (50). Burroughs understands the close connection between appearance and belief, an issue that will be fully explained in the following chapters. "Fortif[ying] my countenance with all my resolution," Burroughs sets out to meet his parishioners and deliver his first sermon. "When I made my appearance," Burroughs adds, "I found a stare of universal surprise at my gay dress, which suited better the character of a beau than a clergyman" (50). After successfully delivering his inaugural sermon, Burroughs manages to nicely and quietly assimilate into the community: "I found myself soon able to dress in a habit fitting my calling. I soon found, likewise, that my endeavors to suit the people had not altogether failed" (53). Burroughs is indeed a master of assimilation, molding himself into an unobtrusive member of this foreign community: "I soon gained a pretty thorough knowledge of the people whom I was amongst; and I endeavored to adapt my conduct to their genius as far as I was capable" (53). "Suiting" himself up in the proper garb is imperative to "suiting" the community. Following more successful public orations, Burroughs actually begins to reconcile with his newly acquired role as a minister, to see himself, that is, as a man of the cloth and not simply an impostor: "I found it necessary to purchase me a horse, saddle, and bridle, as well as to clothe myself anew entirely, with such apparel as became a clergyman" (58).

Describing his maneuverings into the life of a charlatan, Burroughs distances his self from the action by referring to himself in the second person: Consider the language in the following passage:

> . . . many difficulties must be surmounted, in order to enter into this business [of masquerading as a minister]; but as this is the only kind you can attend to, said I to myself, under present circumstances, you can but be destitute of resource, if you make the trial and do not succeed. (48)

Continuing, Burroughs begins to employ the language of advice manuals, recommending clever and safe ways to be a charlatan in a young republic:

> [I]n order to obviate the first difficulty, viz. of disagreeable reports following you, it will be necessary to prevent, as much as possible, you being known, where you offer yourself to preach; and in order to prevent that you must change your name. This being done, you must go some distance, where you are not personally known; and the probability is, that you can continue in such business, till some opportunity may offer for your entering into other employment. (48)

In his public role as a minister, Burroughs is constantly challenging static notions of identity formation and public perceptions of the self. When he is finally unveiled as an impostor, he is driven out of town and universally condemned for the false role he has performed. Yet, in the narrative, Burroughs is constantly reminding the reader that his masquerade was not as artificial as it appears. Burroughs changes his name to Davis, his mother's maiden name. Later in the narrative, when he finds it imperative to change his name again, he continues to choose names associated with his family. For instance, at one point he takes up the sir name of Eden, his father's first name. This trick, of course, suggests that the altering of his public identity is

less dangerous than the general public assumes. Yet Burroughs, by recycling consanguineous names, mitigates the ostensibly radical implications of name changing.

Similarly, Burroughs challenges the idea of static, essential selfhood and effectively turns the self into a dynamic, highly assimilable, rhetorical construction. "All mankind are in a state of motion," Burroughs remarks, "none remain inactive on this stage of probation; all are moving forward with rapidity, and hastening to their final end" (56-57). For Burroughs, all individuals are impostors, acting out public roles that are not necessarily congruous with their private selves. Indeed, pushing the limitations of republican democracy as far as it can go, Burroughs sees America as a place where the individual has every right to be as duplicitous as s/he desires.[9] Burroughs broaches questions that get at the problems of representation of the public self--what are the implications of representing one's self as "other"? Does it matter that Burroughs took on the preacher's role, appropriating a clerical posture, even if he wasn't a "preacher"? Burroughs contends that he performed his public role well; he has executed his duty (until his charade is discovered, the town is happy with his performance) and has "never, in one instance, taken advantage of that confidence which the people of Pelham entertained towards me, to injure them and benefit myself" (67). Why was he accused of being someone he wasn't, Burroughs is asking, when obviously, for a time, he was indeed a preacher?

Burroughs concludes his masquerade as a minister with an intriguing polemic on being an impostor. In a rhetorical effort to justify his actions, Burroughs explains the determination of his fate: "Have I acted with propriety as a man, or have I deviated from the path of rectitude? I have had an unheard of, difficult, disagreeable part to act: I do not feel entirely satisfied

with myself in this business, and yet I do not know how I should have done otherwise, and have made the matter better" (66). Contesting the public's inclination to call him a charlatan, Burroughs says he has broken no laws, even if he has "violated that principle of veracity which we implicitly pledge ourselves towards each other, as a general thing in society" (67). Because the public only "understand[s] the matter in gross," it does not realize the extenuating circumstances that have driven Burroughs to his masquerade, "[t]herefore, they concluded from this general view, the whole to be grounded in wrong" (67). Burroughs contends that he has not engaged in his masquerade for personal aggrandizement and, therefore, cannot rightfully be called an impostor: "That I have aimed at nothing but a bare supply of the necessaries of life, is a fact" (67).

Burroughs' notorious reputation follows him wherever he goes. As the narrative progresses, the name of Stephen Burroughs gradually acquires more infamy. His assertion of a malleable self is partly explained in his efforts to clear his good name and release himself from the burden of being "Stephen Burroughs." Chapter XIV, a section titled, "Becomes A Public Character," records the accusations against his character that eventually land him in jail for passing counterfeit money. Burroughs is sentenced to prison for three years and the public nature of his trial, where his previous masquerade as a minister has been used to convict him of counterfeiting, has incited public opinion of his scandalous public persona: it "was a pretty general opinion among people at this time," remarks Burroughs, "that I must be conversant in every species of outrage which was going forward, and consequently, when anything of that nature was known to be on foot, they were very confident of my being interested in it" (100). Confined to a Springfield jail, the public worries that it is "insufficient to hold" him and

sends him off to a more secure prison in Northampton. On the way to the Northampton jail, "people thronged the roads to see this procession. When we passed the people would inquire with eagerness, who was the minister, being known more by that appellation than I was by my own name" (101). Myths about Burroughs begin to circulate throughout the republic[10] and on his remove to the Castle (a prison in Boston) Burroughs continues to describe himself as a notorious public figure: Stopping at a tavern on the way to the prison, Burroughs (who was undoubtedly shackled) is immediately recognized; he comments: "Some [people] were led here by an anxious desire of seeing me perform some feats of dexterity in eluding my guard, concluding that I should not remain with them longer than to arrive at this tavern. Whether they expected I should evaporate in a flash of fire, or disappear in a cloud of smoke; or whether they thought I should, Faustus-like, fix my guards, like pillars of stone, immovable, to some spot, until I could leisurely walk away, I do not know" (131).

Prefiguring Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne, Burroughs becomes a late eighteenth-century master of self promotion. As a result of the notorious character he has acquired, Burroughs becomes aware of the close correlation between seeing and knowing--a dynamic that Barnum was able to use for personal aggrandizement by 1850. "For him, what people believed to be true became true" (Williams "In Defense of Self" 107). Williams has nicely summed up Burroughs' textual self-stylization:

> The textual oppositions, impossible for readers to overlook, offer evidence that Burroughs simultaneously was promoting the self and illustrating the craft of self-promotion. Consequently, the perception of self that he, as narrator, forced readers to consider was that there was no self, at least no one self. There were only countless contextual

> variations of self; in effect, each act of perception created a new self, another ripple in the amorphous mass of identity. For Burroughs, life became art ("In Defense of Self" 115).

The following essays are inquiries into the rhetorical stylization of selfhood in the literary discourse of mid-nineteenth-century fiction and autobiography. Like Burroughs, the subjects of the following chapters write their lives and consequently create their selves. Engaging in the theatrical presentation of self, Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne negotiate the selves they create with the demands and expectations of their reading public.

Theatrical Selfhood in Antebellum America

Since the theatrical imagination is inseparable from the cultural milieu--that is, since literature is produced, and, hence, contingent upon the contexts of culture--sketching out some larger cultural circumstances and phenomena of antebellum America is imperative here. "Literary works," Richard Brodhead has claimed, "do not produce their own occasions. They are always produced within some particular set of relations in which literature's place is at any moment socially determined" (Cultures of Letters 66). Theatricality at mid-century, then, is a product of a liberal, post-Calvinist America that was rapidly expanding across space and time, providing wider angles of opportunity for white men and anxiously defining itself as a democratic nation.[11] The theatrical imagination is informed by the changing contexts of culture--changes brought about by technological, religious, and psychological discoveries; it is socially determined, but also acts as its own agent in the production of social and literary discourses. Like light being reflected and refracted from the mirrors within a kaleidoscope, ideas circulate within the contexts of culture. Through exposure to the aspects of a particular culture,

the responding imaginations grab onto and create the specific contexts of culture; developments in fashion, psychoanalysis, image production (the daguerreotype), and consumerism (the development of department stores, etc.) of the mid-nineteenth century inform the ways individuals think about the public and private selves and, for this study, the way in which the private self acts on the public stage of the theatrum mundi. Robert Wiebe has talked about a "democratic surge" across space that fundamentally changed human relationships and, more specifically, the way in which Americans thought about their bodies, their souls, their futures and authority: "it infected individuals everywhere with a heady feeling of command over their destinies, a sense of marvelous potential in their own lives that they came to project on to the nation as a whole" (143). Later, we will see how this democratic surge and the American Liberal tradition worked its way into the consciousness of nineteenth-century Americans, but for now, it is sufficient to realize that the theatrical imagination of mid-century America was informed by the promises and opportunities afforded most white men and some white women in the new democratic culture.

Furthermore, the theatricality of American life at mid-century must be understood vis a vis a culture of sentiment and sincerity. The middle-class culture of sentiment and sincerity clashed with the increasing theatricality of American life which arrived and evolved with a fair amount of ambivalence, confusion, and skepticism. A general acceptance of the artificial and the ostentatious had invaded the ranks of America's middle classes and posed a threat to the sentimental culture of sincerity that is marked in texts such as Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) and aspects of material culture such as sentimental dress and the ladies' magazines of the period. An aesthetics and politics of illusion and delusion had become a normal part of middle-class life

and the following chapters will demonstrate the artificiality of sentimental culture, suggesting that Americans had to "play" at being sentimental because the cultural values that sentimental culture accepted and tried to enforce actually worked to undermine the possibility of transparent selfhood and promote an acceptance of malleable, theatrical self. In Private Theatricals, Nina Auerbach argues that theatricality invaded the Victorian (English) imagination despite the fact that the theatrical self was anathema to the Victorian/humanist vision of human selfhood. The theatrical self was dynamic and, hence, unknowable and non-essential; therefore, it posed a serious threat to the dominant belief in an essential self that gradually moved toward a Hegelian teleology of self fulfillment and evolution. That is to say that, despite its prevalence, theatricality was not necessarily a way of thinking about or presenting human selfhood that was accepted by nineteenth-century middle class culture. The fact is that, in terms of the increasing acceptance of the theatricality of the self in the literary discourse of the period, middle-class Americans (like their English counterparts, as Auerbach argues) simply did not know what hit them, nor did they necessarily believe in the very theatricality of self that they celebrated in their fiction and material culture. Indeed, as Auerbach observes, despite Victorian England's efforts to "finish" the fictional self through narrative devices such as marriage and conversions, static or essential selfhood remained elusive to Victorian writers (and the same goes for their American counterparts). Like it or not, the theatricalization of the self became a typical way of representing selfhood throughout the period.

I am arguing that theatricality became a fact of American middle class culture by mid-century and that it both threatened and formed a symbiotic relationship with the culture of sentimentality.[12] One of the arguments of

this study is that culture is conflict and that if consensus is formed at all, it is the result of conflicting ways of seeing and experiencing the world which come into contact with each other and form entirely new epistemological realities. "Culture is neither autonomous nor an externally determined field," remarks Richard Johnson, "but a site of social differences and struggles" (39). Karen Halttunen reads the increased concern for fashion and personal beauty as the decline of sentimental culture and the emergence of a more theatrical culture, but it is not entirely clear, or plausible, that one form of cultural sensibility triumphs and replaces another in the way Haltenun suggests. Rather than presume, as some scholars have, that by 1850 a general acceptance of theatricality had invaded middle class culture and consequently undermined the cult of sentiment and sincerity, it seems more convincing to talk about the theatricality of the period as a cultural phenomenon that played itself out against a sentimental culture, and existed both in reaction to and in a conjugant relationship with sentimental culture.

A consideration of the white, middle-class theatrical imagination at mid-century ultimately demands a recognition of the importance and complexity of what James Hoopes has called the "consciousness concept" that he sees operating in the earlier part of the century. "Consciousness," Perry Miller has remarked, "was a magic word in the early Republic" (25). By 1850, the belief and wonder of the unconscious had saturated the American imagination and made its way into the popular imagination. And it is worth considering the importance, even the mystery, of consciousness to nineteenth-century subjects because the theatrical imagination of the period was intensely informed by the epistemological patterns of conscious and unconscious thought. For Hoopes, the "consciousness concept" is the idea that "the self is the creator and container of thought and that it therefore has

privileged, completely accurate knowledge of its own actions in thinking" (32). In other words, the consciousness concept is nineteenth-century New England transcendentalism writ large--it is part of the larger cultural acceptance of social selves loosened from the strictures of the Puritan deity by the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1850, the Puritan emphasis on selflessness and its attempts to escape or purge the self had been dramatically transformed. The self had been valorized and absolved of its dirt and grime, and although there was still talk about the inevitable perfection of American society, some nineteenth-century subjects agreed that American society--not the individual--was corrupt and in need of repair. Consider the following excerpt from Albert Brisbane's Social Destiny of Man (1840), a utopian polemic in the vein of Fourier:

> We assert that the evil, misery and injustice, now predominant on the earth, have not their foundation in political or administrative errors, in the defects of this or that institution, in the imperfection of human nature, or in the depravity of the passions; but in the FALSE ORGANISATION OF SOCIETY ALONE. We assert that the present social mechanism is not ADAPTED to the nature of man and to his passions; that its laws are in flagrant opposition to those which regulate or govern their action; that it perverts, misdirects and develops them subversively, and that the selfishness, oppression, fraud, injustice, and crime, which mark the course of his societies, are attributable to that artificial social misdirection and perversion, and not to say inborn depravity in the human being himself. (quoted in Robert Levine 113-114)

Now it was society itself that had become corrupt and if the domestic sphere failed in its mission of forming a moral character, then the reform and

utopian movements promised to rejuvenate the individual self and, upon treatment of the ostensible afflictions, return the individual to society where s/he would in turn positively influence the larger society. For example, as David Rothman argues in The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic, the emergence of the asylum in the nineteenth century was developed under the notion that removing the patient from the evil influence of the social order would heal him. Upon his removal from the asylum, then, the patient would in turn perform his own healing function by transforming the corrupt society from which he had recently removed. The prevalence and popularity of the reform, utopian, and revival movements of the 1830s and 1840s, along with missionary societies such as the New York Tract Society (founded in 1825), speak for a larger cultural mistrust of American society and the need for the individual to be saved from its influences.[13] And if domesticity or reform still eluded the individual's moral betterment, there was always the transcendental promise of the individual saving his own soul by escaping the society's soiled talons and boring into "self" in order to find religion, sanctuary, and the self's original relation to the universe.

By the early-nineteenth century, James Hoopes argues, theologians were speculating on the existence of a realm of experience within or beyond the conscious or everyday world: "Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England theology offered fertile soil for growth of theories about the inner life, especially the notion that personal identity rests in an emotionally divided and partly unseen self within which human beings must reestablish harmony if they are to be happy" (124). Nineteenth-century culture was wont to bifurcate experience into mutually exclusive dichotomies--the separation of male and female spheres is perhaps the most obvious example. Similarly,

some early nineteenth-century thinkers, as they speculated and experimented with unconscious experience, gradually developed an artificial demarcation between the conscious and the unconscious realm. Consciousness became associated with the social world. In many ways, consciousness was the Lockean slate onto which culture inscribed its values and epistemologies. In relation to, yet quite opposed to the conscious realm, was this mysterious arena called the unconscious. Of course the pre-Freudian unconscious was not associated with a sphere of unfulfilled desires; rather, nineteenth century subjects looked to the possibilities of the unconscious realm to help them acquire a harmonious relationship with Nature and to direct their social (conscious) selves in the direction of their essential beings.[14] The unconscious, then, was associated with the Cartesian self of essences--it was the arena of innate selfhood, a place where the individual could find a way to "be at home in the universe" and an original relationship to Nature.[15]

The theatricality of nineteenth-century middle-class culture emerges within the (artificial) interaction between the conscious (Lockean) and unconscious (Cartesian) realms. In a Lockean universe, the self is writ upon by the demands and vicissitudes of experience and is, consequently, malleable--the conscious world is made up of physical externalities that are open for manipulation and alteration. The Cartesian self is grounded in essences that transcend culture; it acknowledges an order of human activity beyond the boundaries of culture and is contingent on the uniqueness of the individual. A theatrical sense of self, which strives for a middle ground between the public and private spheres, develops somewhere between the Cartesian self and the Lockean notion experience. Theatrical selfhood develops within the tension between the public and private world and attempts to negotiate between the individual sense of self and the

expectations of the public sphere. Theatrical selfhood emerges from the results of exchanges between the demands of the public sphere and the necessities (or whims) of the private individual.

Three cultural phenomena of the first half of the nineteenth century--mesmerism, phrenology, and the invention of the daguerreotype--played upon middle-class Americans' interest in the conscious and unconscious realms. Ultimately, mesmerism, phrenology, and the daguerreotype became cultural marvels that informed the theatrical sensibility of the 1850s by providing middle-class Americans with new ways to think about their private selves and project their public conceptions of self.

The history of mesmerism, and later phrenology, in American culture speaks for the energetic, bombastic, and fervent spirit of the first half of the nineteenth century. "No account of the antebellum scene is complete without consideration of these often bizarre but highly influential pseudo sciences," remarks David Reynolds. "They represented the rich mixtures of the materialistic and the otherworldly that fed into the theory and practice of American literature . . . " (170).

Originally conceived by the Viennese physician, Franz Anton Mesmer, in 1775, the healing process that would come to be known as mesmerism caught on in Europe (Mesmer was most successful in Paris) as an aristocratic form of entertainment and relaxation. Robert Fuller places Mesmer and his practices somewhere between the mystical practices of the Church and the overdetermined rationalization of human experience of the Enlightenment. For Fuller, Mesmerism becomes a romantic way of seeing human experience as it "uncovered the depth to human experience which defied reduction into the mechanistic categories of Enlightenment rationality" (10). Similarly, mesmerism, which explained the result of human ailments as cosmic

imbalances within the human constitution and attempted to balance the equilibrium by correcting those imbalances through the use of natural forces, served to de-mystify the Church's insistence on the supernatural healing powers of the Divinity. In Europe, Fuller explains, mesmerism never moved beyond a trend and "became just one more passing fad that entertained an idle upper class" (14). It was Ben Franklin who, in 1784, reportedly had a hand in debunking European mesmerism. Van Doren reports that Mesmer's experiments with animal magnetism had become so popular in late eighteenth-century France that a commission was formed to investigate its methods and validity. Franklin, as a member of the committee, is credited with exposing the fraud and deflating the inflammation of the popular mind over the promise of mesmeric healing (713-17). The irony, of course, is that shortly after mesmerism lost its credibility in France, it became all the rage in America; exposed in France by an American, the lure of mesmerism soon seduced the popular imagination of Americans. But in America, unlike in Europe, mesmerism became a religious exercise and developed relative to a declining Calvinist order and the consequential search for alternative healing and new ways of thinking about the self in relation to the natural and cosmic order.[16]

Charles Poysen brought the mesmeric phenomenon to America in 1836, and shortly thereafter he was filling up lecture halls as mesmerism was quickly becoming one of the nineteenth century's most popular forms of public entertainment. By 1837, Fuller notes, mesmerism and animal magnetism had become part of the social discourse of New England papers and journals (70). Through the 1830s and 1840s mesmerists swept through the States and the territories giving lectures and staging demonstrations. American mesmerism was thoroughly entrenched in the popular

consciousness and was widely talked about and practiced in the parlor rooms, public stages, and even the legislative offices of America. Henry Clay, Sam Houston, and Daniel Webster were a few of the many politicians interested in mesmerism (Fuller 70).

Not all nineteenth-century Americans were enamored with the possibilities and promises mesmerism brought to the popular imagination. In "Demonology" Ralph Waldo Emerson expresses his overriding suspicion of the pseudosciences. "Mesmerism is a high life below stairs," he remarks, "It is a wholly false view to couple these things in any manner with the religious nature and sentiment, and a most dangerous superstition to raise them to the lofty place of motives and sanctions" (30).

Emerson's contrary view was not shared by most of his contemporaries. The mesmeric experience was adapted to an American, middle-class experience and it highlights the prevalence of theatrical selfhood during this period. For nineteenth-century, middle-class Americans, mesmerism became associated with religion--they began to see the unconscious world mesmerism uncovered as a spiritual realm of transcendental powers (Fuller 22). "Mesmerism," Fuller explains, "received attention, not because it healed the physical body, but for the more important reason that it effected a change in a person's spiritual outlook on life" (71). In a cultural climate in which the self was valorized, mesmerism became a way to explore that self and bridge the gap between the conscious and unconscious realm of the individual that culture and society had created.

The political and cultural events of American culture of the 1840s effectively carnivalized the culture and precluded mesmerism from becoming anything more than a form of mass entertainment that had pretensions toward religious/transcendental quests.[17] Loosened from the

authority of institutional science and aristocratic approval, American mesmerism was quickly mainstreamed into the popular culture and became a pseudoscience/entertainment that was practiced in village halls across the country. Consider Hawthorne's use of the mesmerizer, Westervelt, in The Blithedale Romance (1852). Westervelt (German for "Western world") has essentially kidnapped the waif, Priscilla, and, dressing her up in ethereal white gowns and mystifying shrouds, passes her off to unsuspecting audiences as the famous "Veiled Lady."[18]

Despite its apparent carnivalization, mesmerism became a phenomenon that mediated the apparent differences between the conscious and the unconscious in the American popular mind. Most importantly, mesmerism became an significant part of the theatrical imagination of the period. Mesmerism suggested to nineteenth-century Americans the reality of an inner, spiritual life and a way of expressing and exploring the individual's dual nature. If there was an unconscious realm of essences that could be uncovered, then it followed that the conscious sphere of reality was made up of dynamic selves that were determined by culture and the individual. The realization of this double consciousness caused them to consider the waking state as one in which a particular social role was being performed. The waking state became associated with histrionics and an artificial presentation of the self--ultimately, the waking state became a realm where theatricality could be played out.[19]

It is no wonder that each of the authors of this study thought seriously about, practiced, and or/exploited the American interest in mesmerism. In a letter to Sophia dated 18 October 1841 (during his stay at Brook Farm), Nathaniel warns his betrothed against seeing a mesmerist to cure her headaches:

> [M]y spirit is moved to talk to thee today about these magnetic miracles, and to beseech thee to take no part in them. I am unwilling that a power should be exercised on thee, of which we know neither the origin nor consequence, and the phenomena of which seem rather calculated to bewilder us, than to teach us any truths about the present or future state of being. . . . Supposing that this power arises from the transformation of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it, there would be an intrusion into the holy of holies. (XV: 588)[20]

Barnum, the century's most effective bamboozler, ironically and hilariously recounts an episode in Struggles and Triumphs (1869) in which he set out to expose what he thought to be a chimerical hoax on the American public. Curiously, the scene resonates with Franklin's earlier debunking of European mesmerism. Barnum's rival, Peale's Museum (taken over and considerably commercialized by Charles' sons), had employed a mesmerizer in its lecture hall which was drawing customers away from Barnum's American Museum. In order to quell Peale's draw, Barnum fights a hoax with another hoax when he engages a young woman to go on stage and appear that she is being mesmerized by Barnum himself. She plays along, the audience falls for the trick, and Barnum then proposes that if any man came up on the stage and Barnum failed to mesmerize him in five minutes he would give the spectator fifty dollars. It doesn't work, of course, and with two minutes to go, Barnum gives up, goes back to the girl and tells the audience that he is going to cut off her fingers to show she is so mesmerized she won't feel pain (this is all staged, of course). The girl runs away, proving to the audience she was never mesmerized to begin with, and suggesting the

theatrics in the Peale museum were, too, nothing more than a hoax (Struggles and Triumphs 133-34).

Mowatt actually practiced mesmerism and in her use and representation of the process clearly demonstrates the gender-specific implications of the mesmeric state. Barnum's insistence on engaging a man to be (not) mesmerized says this much. To be mesmerized or to lose consciousness at the hand and will of another--to put oneself under the control and direction of another--was a practice suitably fit for the sphere of the nineteenth-century woman and clearly at odds with the expected role of the middle-class man and his endeavors in the burgeoning market economy. As the mesmeric phenomenon illustrates, even the search for self in the nineteenth century was a highly-gendered social activity. Mesmerism, a form of self-fulfillment associated with the woman's sphere, involved a metaphysical dive inward. Compare this with the male search for self, illustrated in most of the fiction as a journeying outward to the virgin spaces of the sea or the wilderness, or (the underside) a monomaniacal attempt to smash through the "pasteboard mask" of reality. Yet, Mowatt found ways of using the mesmerized state to forward her career and get beyond the constraints of women's subject position in mid-nineteenth century society. The only professional actor of this study, Mowatt uses mesmerism as a way to think about her function as an actress on the public stage.

The phrenological phenomenon is a good example of the manner in which nineteenth-century Americans devised ways to read their own bodies and the bodies of others.[21] Phrenology, which curiously resonates with the late-twentieth century's infatuation with the possibilities of Prozac, was a pseudoscience that was quickly tailored into an American model. Phrenology became popular in America in the nineteenth century because it posed

alternatives for the individual against the corruption of antebellum society. A phrenological reading of the skull analyzed the bumps on the head in order to bring attention to and cultivate the concealed possibilities of the individual. The brain was divided into separate sections, each of which acted as the source for specific personality traits. Folds and fissures within the brain housed these sections and were elevated or depressed according to their prominence within the structure of the brain. The strengths and weaknesses of the individual were read according to the bumps and cavities that appeared over the specific areas; moreover, phrenological readings provided the individual with a way to both assess and improve his or her condition. It was a quintessentially American practice, setting out to help individuals realize hidden potential and embark on the road to self-help. "The corollary [of phrenological assumptions] was electrifying" notes Justin Kaplan. "[I]f you found out what you were, you could then become what you wanted to be by 'depressing' faculties that were too prominent and 'elevating those that were too small" (Walt Whitman 148).

A phrenological model of the brain revealed a decidedly fragmented way of thinking about the individual. The various sections of the brain acted as control centers where personality traits such as Firmness, Self-Esteem, Combativeness and Conjugality existed in healthy or sparse doses. This notion of the fragmentation of the brain, a nineteenth-century, pre-Freudian assumption of psychological workings, suggested that the individual was made up of various, pliable, and yielding elements which could be molded according the will of the individual.

Phrenology was first introduced in America in the early 1820s; by 1822, this pseudoscience had its own society, the Central Phrenological Society, which was supported by learned communities on the east coast and taken seriously

in prestigious journals such as the Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences. The movement augmented its authority in 1832 when one of its founders, Johann Spurzheim, traveled to America, won over audiences with his intelligence, wit, and charm, and then unexpectedly died six weeks into his tour. Phrenology reached its height of popularity during the years between 1838 and 1840 when George Combe traveled through the states on an eighteen-month lecture tour consisting of 158 lectures, and nightly drawing audiences of 300 to 500. Combe's proselytizing helped move the American phrenological movement from a rather elite, esoteric phenomenon into a stage of American popular culture in which phrenology was accepted and practiced by the masses. The "democratization" of phrenology that John Davies talks about in Phrenology: Fad and Science was evidenced by the thousands of "practical phrenologists" who combed the country during the 1830s and 1840s. Itinerant, self-taught phrenologists began to practice their trades and offer the American public a pragmatic use of the science of reading bumps on the head: "[f]oot-loose young men, some educated but others not, took off on the lecture trail, and during the 1830s and 40s there was probably not a village in the nation that did not entertain at least one visit from an itinerant practical phrenologist" (Davis 32). These practical phrenologists exploited the nineteenth-century subject's thirst for the sensational, staging lectures and performing exhibitions that drew up to 3000 listeners at some Boston phrenological events.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin explains how historical and technological developments change the sense perceptions (and I would add, the "self" perceptions) of social subjects (222). The daguerreotype, invented in 1839 by Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre and introduced in America the same year, thoroughly altered the

way Americans perceived their selves, their loved ones, and their nation. Daguerreotyping became the most popular form of self-representation of the mid-nineteenth century and it is interesting that daguerreotyping (which validated the Lockean self) and mesmerism (which validated the Cartesian self) would be popular at the same time: The daguerreotype represented the external self that was open for interpretation by the public sphere while mesmerism uncovered the "innate" self of the unconscious realm. Francis Gourand (an agent of Daguerre's) arrived in America late in 1839 and had success with his lectures and exhibits of the new daguerrreotyping machine.[22] By 1846, daguerreotypists had set up studios in American towns across the country and there were itinerant daguerreotypists who traveled across the country in special wagons that served as makeshift studios. By 1850, daguerreotyping had invaded the culture and was a regular topic of stories in magazines; the daguerreoypist appeared as a fictional hero in Augustine Duganne's The Daguerreotype Miniature: Or, Life in the Empire City; the first photographic magazine in the world, The Daguerreian Journal, was published in 1850; Peter Buckley notes that an 1850 New York census revealed 93 self-proclaimed daguerreotypists (507). Furthermore, by 1850 roughly 2000 daguerreotypists were open for business in the United States and Richard Rudisill reports that by 1856, no less than 15 million dollars had been paid for daguerreotypes in America (198). "If you want to know who makes money in these Jeremiad times," exclaimed one contemporary, "it is the beggars and the makers of likenesses by daguerreotype" (quoted in Trachtenberg 21, emphasis in original). In Photography of the American Scene Robert Taft notes that 3 million daguerreotypes were annually produced from 1849 to 1853 (81).

The daguerreotype aided and created an arena for nineteenth-century Americans in their theatrical pursuit and presentation of self. It is no coincidence that by 1856, 95% of the daguerreotypes taken in America were portraits of individuals, couples, or groups (Rudisill 198). The daguerreotype provided the nineteenth-century subject with an entirely new and unusual opportunity of self-creation. "The millions of surviving daguerreotypes, mostly unidentified by maker or sitter," says Alan Trachtenberg, "show people learning a new way of seeing themselves in the eyes of others, seeing oneself as an image" (29). Prior to the daguerreotype, only the aristocracy could enjoy creating and gazing at their own images. In its allowance of the individual sitter to (largely) determine the manner in which s/he would be represented, the daguerreotype was a more democratic art form than portrait painting and (along with the low prices--a daguerreotype in the 1850s cost about $2.50) provided a greater number of Americans with the opportunity to possess images of their selves and loved ones. Emerson picked up on the democratic aspects of the daguerreotype, commenting that "The artist stands aside and lets you paint yourself, the true republican style of painting" (quoted in Trachtenberg 29).[23] The self-theatricality that the daguerreotype afforded the sitter was more dramatic and powerful than that afforded to sitters of portrait paintings. In the pre-daguerreotype age, the painter of portraits was a stronger mediator between the image of self projected by the sitter and the final image represented on the canvas. With daguerreotyping, however, the representational influence of the painter was mitigated, although not entirely lost. Consider the words of Nathaniel Parker Willis (the popular New York columnist and brother of Sara Parton/Fanny Fern) which illustrate the built-in theatricality of the daguerreotyped image, the innate

power of the sitter as creator of his or her own image, and the society's latent concern for the concealing and revealing of self:

> Some of us know better than others how to put on the best look; some are handsome only when talking, some only when the features are in repose; some have most character in the full face, some in the profile. . . . A portrait painter usually takes all those matters into account, and, with his dozen or more long sittings, has time enough to make a careful study of how the character is worked out in the physiognomy, and to paint accordingly. But in daguerreotyping, the sitter has to employ this knowledge and exercise this judgment for himself. (quoted in Rudisill 211)

The daguerreotype was perceived as a medium that objectively mediated the "truth" of the natural world. "The profession developed a rationale," argues Alan Trachtenberg, "which held that the true daguerrean artist looked through surfaces to depths, treated the exterior surface of persons as signs or expressions of inner truths, of interior reality" (27).[24] Still, the daguerreotyping studio became a place where theatricality of the self flourished. In In Visible Light, Carol Schloss notes a list of "faking devices" (the arrangement of draperies and backdrops and postures) that appeared in the 23 October 1839 issue of the New York Post, all of which suggested ways for the subject of a daguerreotype to stylize a presentation of self (34). Sitters were given instructions on how to present themselves before the camera and, thus, "were encouraged and cajoled to will themselves, as it were, into a desired expression--in short, a role and a mask which accord with one's self-image" (Trachtenberg 26, emphasis in original). Consider, too, the figure Walt Whitman cuts on the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass

--the robust and confident Walt (not Walter) Whitman standing aplomb and akimbo, his shirt half-way unbuttoned--becomes a perfect example of a mode of self-stylization (and an early example of self-marketing) of the period. The daguerreotyped image makes the self-created portrait of Whitman look as if he is among his natural elements, cutting a most natural pose. Gazing at the picture, you would imagine him to continue sauntering down the street, on his way to Brooklyn Ferry or down to the waterside to bathe with his friends. And in the eight editions of Leaves of Grass that followed the 1855 edition, Whitman manipulated the image he presented to the public along with the language within the covers of the book: With each new edition of Leaves of Grass, Whitman proudly presents a new "Walt Whitman" "but none is the 'Me myself,' none the final, definitive Whitman" (Trachtenberg 67). The magic of the daguerreotype was simply that it had the power to both change and affect the way the individual could project him or her self to the world.

Self-stylization did not always work, though; some of the staging that accompanied the sitter's mode of presenting the self lacked a serious attention to detail. For instance, nineteenth-century subjects carried on the eighteenth-century portrait sitters' (and artists') inclination to surround the subject with articles that mirrored the sitter's identity--or at least the wishful identity--women with guitars, men with books or tools, etc. were common scenes. Yet, the images of men and women reading upside down books are not uncommon and suggest the fact that daguerreotyping mitigated the role of the artist's representation and placed more of the responsibility with the sitter. This, of course, was not always the case. For instance, many of the images Matthew Brady captured of the Civil War--images that fundamentally affected the way the nation felt about the gruesomeness of civil strife--were deliberately staged by Brady. This, of course, does not make the images any

less powerful, but it does suggest the problems of representational art that cropped up in the nineteenth century as a result of the proliferation of daguerreotyped images.[25]

Daguerreotypes of the mid-nineteenth century were deliberately recorded. The long exposure time required for the primitive machines tested the sitter's patience, precluded surreptitious image-making, and further added to the theatricality of the event. Excessive body movement of the sitter resulted in poor, often eerie images that probably shocked early viewers of the daguerreotypes by their ghastliness and their suggestion of mortality. Long iron poles with two prongs into which the sitter immobilized his or her head extended from the back of the sitters' chair and held the head in an unnatural and seemingly uncomfortable position. Sitters were required to dust their faces with white powder which gave their images a pallor and suggested a mask of death. Oftentimes, the images would come out blurry, almost ethereal, and if the image was clear, the exposure would sometimes show the sitter with his or her eyes closed. As a new form of representational art, the daguerreotypes challenged nineteenth-century perceptions as well as traumatized its early models. Alan Trachtenberg has remarked that "the daguerreotype seemed to possess its sitters" (14). Consider the following passage from Godey's Ladies Book of May 1849:

> The different impressions made upon sitters is curious enough. The most common is the illusion that the [camera] exercises a kind of magnetic attraction, and many good ladies actually feel their eyes "drawn" towards the lens while the operation is in progress! Others perceive an impression as if a draft of cold air were blowing on their faces, while a few were affected with a pricking sensation, while the perspiration starts from every pore. A sense of suffocation is a common

> feeling among persons of delicate nerves and lively fancies, who find it next to impossible to sit still; and on leaving the chair, they catch their breath and pant as if they had been in a vacuum. (quoted in Rudisill 209)

The author focuses on the female experience in front of the image-making device and the language here is curiously sexual and highly gendered. The camera becomes a site of pleasure; it has a "magnetic attraction," and some ladies feel a "prickling sensation." Sometimes the camera creates such excitement that the subject simply cannot "sit still." But the camera is not always a pleasurable experience--the writer notes that some suffer from a "sense of suffocation" and "pant" and "catch their breath" after the experience is finished.

By 1850, Copley's "unadorned man" was merely an historical image and the "adorned" men and women who used the forms and methods of culture to stylize their public personas were gradually being normalized in the cultural sphere. Consider some of the changes in material culture that various scholars have uncovered

A general change in the social acceptance of fashion as a worthy pursuit further demonstrates the theatricality of the period. Fashion is part of the semiotics of culture that speaks for larger cultural trends and values; indeed, fashion studies becomes a context for cultural meaning, and an example of material culture reflecting ideological trends. In Confidence Men and Painted Women, Karen Halttunen adumbrates fashion trends from the turn of the century to 1850 as a way to illustrate the epistemological and ideological changes of the first half of the century.[26] Halttunen and Lois Banner note the increasing theatricality of women's fashion by mid-century. Parisian styles began to invade the fashion conscious and "by the 1850s . . . the appearance

and behavior of women on New York City streets had changed" (Banner 73). Once social observer wrote: "The wives and daughters of free-born Americans seem to think they have a right to sport their silks and satins at what hour of the day they please, whether in the boudoir, public sitting room, or on Broadway. They look like tinseled butterflies born for show. If anyone needs their services it is P.T. Barnum" (quoted in Banner 73). Even the emergence of fashion seasons which were prominently announced and displayed in the store-front windows had the effect of turning the world and pursuit of fashion into a drama. In City People Gunther Barth illustrates the fragmentation of social selves in the nineteenth century:

> The days of owning one working dress and one Sunday suit became numbered as modern city life created more and more social pressures. The promenade required different attire from the parlor; shopping called for one dress, a social call another. The office and the theater each made different demands on one's wardrobe. (142)

Furthermore, the increased importance of fashion turned clothing into potential sartorial disguises that were donned (and bought) for many different social occasions and surely illustrated the different culturally determined social selves of the nineteenth-century subject.

Lois Banner demonstrates the increasing proliferation and acceptance of hairdressers and cosmeticians in the first half of the nineteenth century. Cosmetics had been used for centuries to cover blemishes and create a certain sexual aura, but in a republican society in which simplicity and transparency of self were politicized, the masking devices of cosmetics were suspect. The use of cosmetics through the first half of the century was mostly associated with prostitutes, but by 1850, "at least in the cities, such attitudes about

cosmetics were largely reversed" and middle class women took to painting their faces (Banner 40-44).

As Gunter Barth and others have observed, the emergence of the first department stores in the late 1840s also demonstrates a society flirting with theatrical selves. A burgeoning urban culture, as well as industrial order, and the changing consumer demands of middle-class women, created a need for large retail dry goods outlets in which clothing could be purchased ready to wear. Department stores, which did not really begin to effect the American cityscape until the economy had recovered from the panic of 1857, began to appear in Lower Manhattan in the late 1840s, replacing smaller and more specialized retail stores. In 1846 A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace opened for business at 34th and Fifth in (what is now) midtown Manhattan and fundamentally changed the way Americans would purchase, think about, and model sartorial fashion. In a condescending, perhaps jaundiced remark, Barnum wrote to his friend Bayard Taylor on 22 July 1865: "A.T. Stewart, who owes his wealth to ladies, is erecting that large marble building in 5th Ave., at an expense of $700,000" (Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum 139). America's first department store filled an economic need for ready-made clothing but also quickly became a public venue where theatricality of the self was exploited and developed.[27]

The semiotics of the department store culture suggest the stylized presentation of self that had become a regular part of mid nineteenth-century middle-class culture. Department stores such as Stewart's became the early theaters of consumer capitalism. The stores themselves, enormous, imposing structures that would have caught the eye and interest of all of New York, became spheres in which the theatricality of selfhood could be acted out in everyday life. Lois Banner notes that by 1850, mannequins were being

displayed in department store windows and some stores hired women to stand in the large plate-glass windows (effectively framing and staging themselves) and slowly turn in circles as they displayed the latest fashions. Once inside, the stores (like the theaters of the period) were designed so that shoppers/spectators had maximum opportunities to see and be seen. For instance, the second of Stewart's four floors was used as a "Ladies' Parlor"--dressing rooms made for promenading--where the woman could try on new clothing and gaze at herself (and others) in full-length mirrors. Gunter Barth explains "The displays in the large plate-glass windows added the diversion of window-shopping to the pleasures of the promenade. Women came downtown purposely to see and to be seen" (129).

Furthermore, the popularity of parlor theatricals as home entertainment at mid-century suggests how histrionics and role playing invaded the middle-class domestic sphere. In the increasing print culture of the period, guides for performing parlor theatricals were readily available to consumers.[28] "As they built parlor stages, donned costumes and stage makeup, and learned to perform amateur theatricals in their homes," explains Haltenun, "the American middle classes openly embraced theatricality for its own sake . . . [and] laughing harder than ever at the theatricality of their own lives" (174). The popularity of parlor theatricals suggests one of the many ways in which middle class culture was experimenting with histrionics. Indeed, the invasion of the theater into the home is surely an example of the theatricality of the period.

Finally, consider the example of funeral processions. Ann Withington explains the funeral processions of the pre-Revolutionary as highly politicized social events where lines were drawn between Tories and the sympathizers of the colonial cause.[29] During times of political trouble

(especially during the tensions over the Stamp and Townsend Acts) frugality and simplicity of mourning rites and funeral processions became a sign of one's political sympathies. But in Confidence Men and Painted Women, Karen Haltenun illustrates how the social function of funeral processions had become adapted to a more theatrical period of the 1850s. Mourning rites became excessively ostentatious as they became public events that demonstrated the wealth and position of the deceased and his survivors. For Haltenun, the funeral processions of the period took on a dramatic air: "[t]he funeral procession is a dramatic movement involving many actors. Although the performance may have its basis in an indispensable physical act, social participation in it cannot help but produce significant ceremonial overtones" (169). And, indeed, the drama of mid-nineteenth century funerals was acted out by undertakers who acted as master of ceremonies, mourners who became an audience witnessing a spectacle, and the corpse itself which performed the lead in its last show on earth.

The sense of theatricality that mesmerism, the daguerreotype, and other elements of material culture brought to America and the power it gave to individuals in the self-stylized presentation of their selves suggest larger cultural concerns about concealing and revealing, masking and disguising of the self. Ralph Ellison has called America a "land of maskers and jokers": "Americans began their revolt from the English fatherland when they dumped the tea into the Boston Harbor, masked as Indians and the mobility of society created in this limitless space had encouraged the use of the mask for good and evil ever since . . . when American life is most American it is apt to be most theatrical" (Shadow and Act 54). Mid nineteenth-century middle-class culture invented and developed the penchant for role playing and histrionics that Ellison has observed. The histrionics of American life at mid-

century, especially the cultural concern for masking and veiling of the self, is a form of theatrics that uncovers some of the anxieties, promises, and epistemological patterns of the period.

Not exceptional to the American experience, masks have been used as narrative and cultural devices since at least the time when Satan dressed up like the Serpent and tricked Eve into eating the Forbidden Fruit. Each culture and each society uses masks in different ways which, when analyzed and discussed, reveal particular dynamics and patterns of thinking. In the pre-modern world masks were used in carnival atmospheres to suggest self-transformation.[30] But by the nineteenth century, according to Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World, the social function of masks and disguises had been fundamentally altered by the modern world and the age of revolution and then industrialism. In the modern world masks became devices of deception and secrecy: "Instead of working marvelous transformations," says Bakhtin, the mask now "hides something, keeps a secret, deceives" (Rabelais 40). Ironically, masks in the modern world become political tools that illustrate the new notions of humans as self-governing and self-forming beings. Masking becomes a way to talk about the public and private self in the modern world where masks are used to construct the public and indulge the private self, in addition to serving as a mystifying device that conceals rather than reveals the self. In other words, masking becomes a way for the individual to negotiate a sense of his or her private self into the expectations and demands of the public sphere. In this way theatricality and the masking of self becomes a way for an nation ambivalent about its purpose or confused about its future (as America in the 1850s certainly was) to distance itself from the cultural and political realities.

Consider Hawthorne's use of the mask as a narrative device in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," his tale of 1828 that broaches the ambiguities of revolution in a democratic society. Robin Molineux, a country-bred bumpkin, arrives into a "little metropolis of a New England colony" one evening and becomes unwittingly embroiled in a chaotic and mean public protest against the British monarchy (XI: 210). The leader of this "revolution" is no George Washington--his "grotesque" features include a bulging forehead, an irregularly curved nose, and "deep and shaggy" eyebrows (213). As Robin unsuccessfully searches for his elusive kinsman he trudges down crooked streets and is accosted by unprepossessing townspeople. The din of the collective action resounds throughout the town, but Robin, an innocent, is unaware of the gathering storm. Finally, as he sits on the steps of the local church, the cacophonous and discordant procession--Hawthorne calls it a "contagion"--comes "rolling" down the street led by the fiendish leader and carrying along his kinsman in his "tar-and-feathery dignity" (230). Astride his horse, the "double-faced fellow" (228) dons a "parti-colored" (220) mask that shrouds his visage. Suggesting the lack of a unified voice or purpose to this collective gathering and using images that resonate with the Boston Tea Party, Hawthorne tells us that following the leader is a cast of "wild figures in the Indian dress and many fantastic shapes without a model" (228). In this collective action, the protesters veil their visages in order to enact their radical performance.

The nineteenth century fear of conspiratorial plots against the republic, while not specifically working itself into the literary discourse of this study, nonetheless contributed to the theatricality of the mid-nineteenth century. "Fifth column" theories, or conspiracy theories, have served Americans as ways to explain unexplainable and potentially threatening social phenomena

(Davis, Fear of Conspiracy; Hofstadter). American history has demonstrated that a fear of subversion tends to simplify cultural complexities and create simplistic cultural bifurcations which ignore ambiguities. Masks and disguises, then, become narrative devices and rhetorical ploys that suggest the complexities that bifurcation ignores. As Gordon Wood argues in "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," the art of disguise and public deception became a common element of eighteenth century discourse (and, as I will illustrate, nineteenth-century discourse, too) that reflected the complexity of human experience introduced by the modern world.

Conspiracy theories become ways of explaining the unexplainable when the State and the monarch had been considerably weakened. Gordon Wood successfully integrates ideas of modernity with conspiracy theories:

> The paranoid style, in other words, is a mode of causal attribution based on particular assumptions about the nature of social reality and the necessity of moral responsibility in human affairs. It presumes a world of autonomous, freely acting individuals who are capable of directly and deliberately bringing about events through their decisions and actions and who thereby can be held morally responsible for what happens. ("Conspiracy" 409)

In the modern period, masks and disguises become ways of illustrating humankind's new relationship to government, God, and to "self."

In Conspiracy and Romance, Robert Levine argues that conspiracy theories are particular to the American experience because in the eighteenth century republicanism was thought to have an ephemeral political and social existence. It was feared that the openness and liberalism of republicanism would give ready way to subversive tendencies and corruption of the republican ideal.

> The first lesson republican ideology taught was that the fate of a republic was uncertain, for traditionally republics were short-lived, subject to cyclical decline, and vulnerable to the plottings of internal and external enemies. It was feared that the new American republic would be especially vulnerable because its large geographical territory and "republican mistrust of standing armies made foreign infiltration all too tempting and easy. (Levine 10)

In a republic of free inquiry and popular sovereignty, fear of subversion was particularly intense. And this is of course why the ideal of public virtue became such an important concept in the political rhetoric of the eighteenth century. "Republican ideology," Levine says, "taught, then that there was an acute need for, and indeed a symbiotic relationship between private and public virtue" (10). The fear of conspiracy continues throughout the political and literary discourse of the nineteenth century, as evidenced in the anti-Illuminati movement of the 1790s, the anti-Masonry rhetoric of the 1820s, the anti-Catholicism fervor of the 1840s, and the anti-slavery and anti-abolitionist movements of the 1830s through the 1850s.

Although the fear of conspiracy pre-dates democracy, it is clear that the fear of conspiracy in America was spun in the weave of a democratic culture: amid the mobility and ostensible equality of the new republic, many different social classes and groups mingled with and "infiltrated" each other, creating a social climate that was ripe for impostors. "The image of a vast subversive force," David Brion Davis explains, "subtly appropriating and transforming American institutions might well reflect anxiety over the problem of preserving a consistent sense of national identity in the face of rapid social change" (Fear of Conspiracy 1). A culture of charlatans is the underside way of explaining the equality of opportunity that a democratic culture of the post-

Revolutionary period provided for white males. But in addition to creating opportunity, a dynamic and open social order also nourished a sense of mistrust among American citizens. "In a nation in which every man is supposed to be on the make," says Davis, "there is an overriding fear of being taken in" (Fear of Conspiracy, xvi).

Masks and veils become metaphorical devices in the republic that raise discourse of conspiracy theories and suggest the inherent theatricality of the American self. In Conspiracy and Romance, Levine explains the post-Revolutionary period as a "culture of masks." Behind the flagpole patriotism marking the period was a real concern for all the dark aspects of American culture:

> Celebrations of America's republican virtue and burgeoning economy masked concerns about the ingress of "European" corruption and luxury; millennial assertions of the republic's future glory and redemptive mission masked intimations of cyclical decline and uneasiness over the slaughter of Indians; faith in the sacred bonds of Union, as espoused in Clay's American System and embodied an internal improvements, masked the sectional strains of the Missouri Compromise and, later, the Nullification and tariff debates. (61)

In the countersubversive rhetoric of the post-Revolutionary period, objects of mystification were particularly suspect. Consider the words of John Robison in an anti-Illuminati tract of 1797:

> Nothing is so dangerous as a mystic Association. The object remaining a secret in the hands of the managers, the rest simply put a ring in their own noses, by which they may be led about at pleasure; and still panting after the secret, they are the better pleased the less they see of their way. A mystical object enables the leader to shift his

> ground as he pleases, and to accommodate himself to every current fashion or prejudice. (quoted in Davis 40)

Robison's sentiments illustrate the ideas behind James Fenimore Cooper's "masking" novels of the early nineteenth century--The Spy (1821) and The Bravo (1831). In both texts, Cooper uses masks and disguises to suggest the disparity between the public and the private spheres and the overriding fear of conspiracy in a republic. In both stories, misunderstood heroes--Harvey Birch in The Spy and Jacopo in The Bravo--are forced to don masks and disguises and consequently present a skewed version of their private selves into the public sphere. The Spy, as it illustrates the dark side of the American Revolution, is perhaps Cooper's most epistemologically subversive novel. Later in his career, Cooper would have another try at a narrative of the Revolution, but Lionel Lincoln (1825), a patriotic celebration of the Revolutionary cause, is less successful than The Spy. The world of The Spy is one in which masks and disguises and the manipulation of public selves flourishes. The Revolution itself begins to look like a grand masquerade where the players spend more time outwitting their opponents by using mistaken identities than attempting to drive their enemies from territories they claim as their own. In Cooper's American Revolution, even George Washington (who appears in the novel as his historical self) rides around the colonies in disguise and under the cover of night. Throughout The Spy, the protagonist, Harvey Birch, is wrongly perceived by the public as a traitor to the colonist's struggle against Britain. By the end of the novel, it is revealed to the reader that, contrary to public opinion, Harvey Birch, rather than being the notorious Tory spy the public thought him to be, has risked his life and reputation for the colonial cause. It is a bittersweet ending, however, because while Cooper lets the reader in on Birch's plight, Birch's own contemporaries

fail to understand that he has not been the traitor they expected him to be, but, rather, one of the colonist's most stalwart supporters.

In The Bravo, a novel that combines socio-political commentary with terrific Romantic devices, Cooper uses the ancient State of Venice to comment on the political situation of the American republic in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.[31] The novel was begun while Cooper was in Paris working with Lafayette during his efforts to defeat an aristocratic contingency intent on establishing a constitutional monarchy in France.[32] Still, the novel is as much about the contemporary American situation as it is about France, or even ancient Venice. In The Bravo, Cooper makes it very clear that he sees any State organized around aristocratic principles as false and dangerous. Looking back wistfully to the age of Jeffersonian republicanism, Cooper was distressed by the apparent drift of the republic from those values. The strong authorial voice of The Bravo reveals a mind fearful of excessive aristocratic influence and of the increasing passivity of the American citizenry. Venice is corrupt and decadent, the masses are docile, the leaders are tyrannical and removed from the people, and an overwhelming sense of lethargy pervades the State. In the world of Venice, nothing is as it seems; it is a world of Carnival where evil passes for good and the strong are wrongly persecuted for their ideals and vigor. Cooper's Venice is a world of masks where public identities are constantly manipulated and juxtaposed. The novel begins with a rush of Carnival imagery--"Hundreds of pedestrians," were "pouring out of the narrow streets of Venice" to participate in the State-sponsored masquerade (19). As the novel develops it becomes clear that the State has an interest in encouraging the citizens to participate in these public masquerades as they lend opportunities for the leaders to operate their own machinations and influence the public opinion.

To the citizens of Venice the protagonist of the novel, Jacopo, the Bravo (or the hired assassin) of the State, is a man to be feared and avoided. As the novel progresses, Cooper reveals that Jacopo's public persona is at odds with the real man; underneath the public image of a ruthless killer is the last good man in Venice whose father, falsely accused of a crime of conscious, is imprisoned by the State. Jacopo retains his position with the government in order to, hopefully, free his father. Jacopo's plight, however, is even more grim than Harvey Birch's--as "Agents of the police had been active in preparing the public mind" (377), the State manages to foment public hatred toward Jacopo and the novel concludes, eerily, with his beheading.

The great fear of the mask (and it is similar to the fear Reverend Hooper's parishioners had of his own black mask in Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil") is the element of unknowing (mystification) it shrouds its wearer with. And it is not the bearer of the mask, but the one attempting to peer beneath the disguise who is struck with the most fear. Masks and veils are empty signification--they thwart the ability to "put a name to a face" and, therefore, put into question the fundamental essence of the being behind the disguise. All that masks reveal is our inability to know; they cast a shadow over epistemology and demonstrate the fear that not knowing brings. Masks are signs without significations and since language is humankind's way of providing meaning, masks point to the prospect that meaning is illusive. The mask can be anything from an actual veil to a letter "A" embroidered on the breast or even a hothouse flower in the hair. Masks can also be associated with membership in a secret organization (such as the Illuminati or the Masons), indeed, the most disturbing disguises are the ones that are least visible and least taken by the perceiver as a "self" disguise. For instance, Hester's embroidered "A," because of her refusal to name the father of her

child, becomes a disguise for a part of her"self" she refuses to show in the public arena. The very same Puritan community that was miffed by Hester's "veil" was obviously less threatened by the armor worn by the Puritan militia when it came time to parade the streets on Elections Day. These "disguises" are State sanctioned and their sartorial signification corresponds with the order of the hegemony. Rather than suggesting meaninglessness, these "masks" demonstrate the overall purpose of the Puritan community and, therefore, comfort, rather than, disturb the perceiver.

In the following essays I argue that the autobiographical rhetoric of Barnum and Mowatt and the fictional characters of Hawthorne suggests that public discourse at mid-century, rather than revealing the private life of the speaker, is merely a rhetorical mask for the private self. Even more threatening, however, is the suggestive possibility in the discourses of these three authors (especially Hawthorne) that the masking and veiling of self is in itself a charade and that selfhood is an elusive entity, contingent upon cultural circumstances and devoid of any essential traits. As all of the texts considered here demonstrate, by 1850 it was widely held that public performances or the public self was merely a concealing device with which the individual donned any number of social masks and disguises. The transparent (male) self of the Revolutionary period (which gradually became associated with the transparent female self of the Cult of Domesticity) had itself become a chimera and mid-nineteenth century subjects imagined the conscious self as culturally determined, dynamic, and potentially duplicitous.

Notes

[1]For an historical discussion of the slow start that the formal theater had in America, see Silverman 59-71, 103-107, 235-245, 536-569.

[2]See Bercovitch 132-175.

[3]The question that plagued the minds of the Revolutionary leaders after 1783 was how to stop the rebellion. Prior to the Revolution, collective gatherings and political convocations outside of State sanction were radical events. The Revolution institutionalized these public affairs so after the Revolution, when the people continued to express their discontent through collective action, the problems of handling these outdoor activities becomes a balancing act between the promises of a representative republic and the official need to quell, or at least mitigate public dissent. See Wood's discussion, "The Novelty of Constitutional Conventions," in The Creation of the American Republic (306-309).

[4]Greven explains three different models (Evangelicals, Moderates, and the Genteel) of Protestant child rearing practices and religious experience in early America.

[5]This third stage is not, of course, the final model of American crime narratives. For discussions of crime narratives of the nineteenth century, see Reynolds 169-80, 474-75.

[6]See Williams (118) for a nice summary of the publication history of Memoirs.

[7]Regarding the nineteenth-century reception of Burroughs, Williams frames an idea that sounds curiously similar to Neil Harris' twentieth-century critical interpretations of P.T. Barnum's "operational aesthetic" that I will outline in Chapter Three of this study. See Harris, Chapter Three.

[8]This passage resonates with Hester's spirited advice to Dimmesdale during their interview in the forest in Chapter Seventeen, "The Pastor and his Parishioner." Exhorting Dimmesdale to flee New England, she asks, "Is the world so narrow?" "Begin all anew," Hester admonishes, then tells Dimmesdale: "Preach! Write! Act! Do any thing, save to lie down and die! Give up this name of Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another; and a high one, such as thou canst wear without fear or shame" (I: 198).

[9]See Fliegelman's discussion of Burroughs in Prodigals and Pilgrims (245) for more on Burroughs's vision of America.

[10]Jay Gatsby shares a certain mythical notoriousness with Burroughs. See, especially, Chapter Three of The Great Gatsby where Nick, attending one of Gatsby's lavish parties, meets two women who exchange speculations on the myths behind the Gatsby legend.

[11]See McCoy and Wiebe.

[12]On the development of an American middle class see Ryan, Smith-Rosenberg, Bledstein, and Blumin.

[13]Further, the notion of a corrupt society manifested itself in apocalyptic rhetoric during the 1840s and 1850s. For discussions of the catastrophic themes in American discourse at the time see Somkin 34-54.

[14]Hoopes does not argue that some of these early nineteenth-century thinkers were pre-Freudian or even developing a theory of the unconscious. Rather, Hoopes explains they were developing the idea of "unconscious selfhood" or the notion that "the human self is not conscious of all of which it composes" (100).

[15]For a more detailed discussion of Lockean and Cartesian notions of selfhood in the nineteenth century see Hoopes 44-46. See also Moby Dick, particularly Chapter Thirty-Five, "The Mast-Head," where Melville, that consummate Cartesian diver, problematizes the leap into the Cartesian vortex of essences. Perhaps more than any other author of the period, Melville had his finger on the nineteenth-century cultural tensions between the Lockean and Cartesian universes.

[16]In addition to the religious crisis, subjects of the second quarter of the nineteenth century shared a general mistrust of medicine, which had yet to be professionalized and was still practicing rather medieval healing techniques. Wiebe talks about a common notion of the nineteenth century, prior to the professionalization of medicine, that "every man was his own physician" (160-164).

[17]On the carnivalization of antebellum culture see Reynolds, especially Chapters Two and Four. On the "carnivalization," or democratization of American politics, consider Andrew Jackson's Inauguration of 1828. See, too, Robert Gunderson's account of the Log Cabin Campaign of 1840.

[18]For discussions on Hawthorne and mesmerism see Stoehr.

[19]Hoopes explains that by the second quarter of the nineteenth century many Protestant theologians had accepted the notion of an unconscious realm and, more importantly, the individual's need to mine its depths. Many nineteenth-century clergymen found it necessary to argue for an unconscious because it was the only way that they could continue to believe in a structure of self that had innate characteristics determined by the divinity. "Many early nineteenth century clergy therefore rejected the belief of both Edwards and Locke that personal identity was constituted of consciousness alone. Only unconscious selfhood could preserve a saving remnant of dependence on God" (98).

[20]Hawthorne's entire letter is worth reading. It is not short, but in its length and development of the argument against mesmerism it is a useful document in the understanding of Hawthorne's mind and the implications of mesmerism within his society. Of course, the views Hawthorne expressed here are fully developed in The Blithedale Romance, Chapter Twenty-Three, "A Village-Hall."

[21]See Pfister for excellent discussions of how nineteenth-century Americans used advice manuals and cultural practices such as phrenology in order to read and assess their bodies.

[22]For a discussion of the history and social implications of daguerreotyping in America, see Rudisill, especially Chapter Three, "Naturalization into America"; Schloss, Chapter One, "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Daguerreotypy"; and Newhall, passim. Also, for more general discussions of the daguerreotype and, later, the photograph in America see Culver.

[23]The equation of republicanism and self-stylization here will become a leitmotif of the following essays: I have demonstrated how Stephen Burroughs rhetorically used the idea of republican America to justify the manipulation of his public character. The Barnum chapter is particularly concerned with the tensions and problems of self-stylization in a young, republican country.

[24]Still, some individuals such as Melville and Emerson were wary of the belief that the daguerreotype had the power of mirroring the inner being through the recording of externalities. See Schloss 36.

[25]The collision of traditional ways of seeing and the opportunities, challenges, and threats that technology brings is discussed in Berger. Americans have always struggled with coming to terms with representational art. I am reminded of the story of George Washington milling around Peale's museum and mistaking as real a picture Peale had painted of his sons when he tipped his hat and wished the figures a good day. Peale was fond of hoaxing in this manner: Learning the art of waxworks from Patience Wright he constructed a wax image of himself and placed it in the museum one day. When one of his friends entered the hall and gazed at the wax work, he called to the ball of wax and was miffed that it did not respond. Proceeding through another door, the friend was more than a little surprised to run into Peale himself, who was observing all this from another room. See Sellers and Fliegelman, Declaring Independence (84-88) for a discussion of the waxworks of Patience Wright.

[26]See, especially, Chapter 3 "Sentimental Culture and the Problem of Fashion."

[27]For the history of the department store see Ferry and Homer.

[28]Some titles included: The Parlor Stage, Hudson's Private Theatricals for Home Performances, and Burlesque and Minstrel Acting Charades.

[29]See Withington, Chapter 5, "Funerals and Processions."

[30]See Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World , especially Chapter One.

[31]Cooper's changing political sympathies have been discussed and debated in McWilliams, Deker, and Bewley.

[32]See Spiller 162-188.

Chapter Two

Strategies of Opposition and Rhetorical Negotiations in Anna Cora Mowatt's Autobiography of an Actress

Soon after its publication by Ticknor, Reed, and Fields on 31 December 1853, James Fields sent Nathaniel Hawthorne[1] a copy of Anna Cora Mowatt's The Autobiography of an Actress; or Eight Years on the Stage. On 20 January 1854, Hawthorne addressed a letter to Fields in which he expressed his admiration for Mowatt's text:

> I thank you for . . . Mrs. Mowatt's Autobiography, which seems to me an admirable book. Of all things I delight in autobiographies; and I hardly ever read one that interested me so much. She must be a remarkable woman, and I cannot but lament my ill-fortune in never having seen her, on the stage or elsewhere. (XVI: 166)

Hawthorne would never meet the author/actress herself[2] but he continues to refer to Mowatt's autobiography in his letters. In a letter dated 13 November 1854, Hawthorne recommends the autobiography as one of the "half a dozen good American books" he will send to an English friend,[3] and comments, "The 'Autobiography of an Actress' is very amusing, and admirably done. One hardly knows whether to think her the simplest or the most artificial creature in the world; though, after all, there can be no real doubt about it" (XVII: 277). On 26 April 1855 Hawthorne would speak of two of her plays, Armand and Fashion,, as "'silly' enough to be pleasant reading" (XVII: 336). Still, in a letter to Ticknor on 17 January 1856, Hawthorne is in the midst of Mowatt's[4] new work, Mimic Life; or, Before and Behind the Curtain (1855) and again expresses his "wish [to be] acquainted with her" (XVII: 428). Mowatt was more than an actress, she was also a writer, and moreover, her narratives

about stage life were evidently intriguing to Hawthorne's highly theatrical sensibility.

Mowatt was a successful author of plays, shorts stories, novels, and essays. Her drama, Fashion; or Life in New York (1845), a satire on New York's fashionable middle class, was one of the most successful American plays of the nineteenth century.[5] "[I]n the matter of theme," remarks Daniel Havens on Fashion, "Mowatt reveals what may be called a greater cultural maturity than we have seen in any of the earlier playwrights" (135). She was also a widely published novelist, short story writer, and essayist, with her work appearing in The Democratic Review, The Ladies Companion, Godey's Ladies' Book, and Graham's Magazine. She wrote under her own name, as well as pseudonyms, and she also acted as a ghost writer, penning such domestic works as Housekeeping Made Easy, Book of the Toilette, and Book of Embroidery for the famous popular author, Mrs. Ellis.[6]

Besides the enduring popularity of Fashion, Anna Cora Mowatt is best known for her work on the American stage. Mowatt was not the first nor the most successful actress/stage personality to win the public support of the American public; she was preceded by the likes of Fanny Kemble, Fanny Elssler, Charlotte Cushman, Ellen Terry, and Sarah Bernhardt. In an attempt to put Hawthorne's Priscilla from The Blithedale Romance into an historical context, Brodhead comments on the emergence of "women acting" in antebellum America:

> What the Veiled Lady is most essentially is an image of woman as public performer; and if we insisted on reading this image as historically based, she could help us to the realization that the same period already known to us as the decade of reform and of the establishment of a more privatized and leisured model of middle-class

> domesticity could also be described as the time of the emergence of some women--specifically women in the entertainment sector--to an exaggeratedly public life (Cultures of Letters 51).

Lois Banner observes that "[a]lthough most major nineteenth-century writers and composers were men, the most acclaimed stage performers, dancers, and singers were women" (8). Mowatt, however, was one of the first American actresses to enjoy the overwhelming acceptance of the American public. The only other American woman to rival Mowatt's popularity in the first half of the century was Cushman, who, incidentally, found fame by starring in men's roles.[7]

Furthermore, Mowatt was the first actress to be lauded by the American middle class. Until 1845, the public stage was still considered by most respectable middle class Americans as an illicit sphere of deviance and debauchery.[8] As Bruce McConachie illustrates in Melodramatic Formations, from 1820 until the mid-1840s the American stage was primarily attended by and written for males; respectable women did not become active theater-goers until the emergence of moral melodrama in 1845 and even after that, the theater was still a spurious entertainment.[9] Similarly, Madame Minegerode, in The Fabulous Forties (1924) argued that "ladies in general seldom attended the theatre, except to see a Fanny Elssler, or an occasional opera, or some visiting dramatic star" (150-56). In Impressions of America During the Years 1832,1834,1835, Tyrone Power noted that it was uncommon to see women at the theater in the 1840s (I: 62, 172, 211, 352; II: 172, 191) and Charles Dickens expressed a similar observation in American Notes (I: 192). Indeed, throughout the 1820s and 1830s the only women to faithfully attend the theater were the prostitutes who occupied the infamous "third tier" of most theaters. Near the end of her autobiography, Mowatt makes a euphemistic

mention of this particular "problem" when she obliquely refers to the moral "abuses" of the theaters: "I allude to the demoralizing effect of allowing any portion of the theatre to be set aside for the reception of a class who do not come to witness the play," and closes the issue by stating, "But this is a difficult topic for a woman to touch upon" (445).

Although the clergy had lost a great amount of its cultural power by the second quarter of the nineteenth century,[10] they were the ones most responsible for the anti-theater rhetoric of the age. Actors and actresses were suspected of leading immoral lives, but actresses, who challenged the prescriptions of the cult of domesticity, had it particularly bad[11]: "With the sole exception of prostitution, to which [the profession] were often compared" argues Claudia Johnson, "no single profession was so loudly and frequently condemned" (69). In 1840 Reverend Samuel Winchester argued that the theater was a dangerous zone of illicit emotions: "The tendency of theatrical amusements is to produce injurious excitement. The passions are inflamed, the sympathies are excited, and a multitude of various emotions crowd upon and often overwhelm the soul" (quoted in Johnson 70). Even as late at 1870, clergymen were still railing against the theater. Reverend Talmadge, a cleric in one of the largest churches in New York said that most people would prefer to see their children "five feet under the ground of Greenwood" than "in a month's association with actors" (quoted in Johnson 67). Even with the popularity of moral melodrama, however, actresses were still suspect characters to middle class Americans. These ideological assumptions (of which Mowatt is acutely aware) help to explain her need to couch her career in the rhetoric that she does.

"Real as her contribution to our drama was," says Arthur Quinn about Mowatt, "her influence upon our theatre was probably even greater . . . she

proved triumphantly that an American gentlewoman could succeed in it without the alteration of her own standard [middle class] life" (319). Indeed, Anna Cora Mowatt removed the stigma of the theater from middle class American life and finally made it safe for respectable and social aspirants to enjoy American theater. In eight short years, she witnessed (and shaped) the emergence of a mode of American drama that turned the tide of America's moral aversion to the theater and firmly established theater life as a fundamental aspect of middle class entertainment.[12]

In her Autobiography of an Actress (1853), written immediately after her retirement from the stage and in order to fulfill a promise made to her recently-deceased husband, James, Anna Cora Mowatt produced a text full of the anecdotes and adventures of a middle class woman on the American (and English) stage. Mowatt was born in 1819 and died in 1870; her life stretches from the beginnings of the market-oriented economy and the cult of domesticity to the abolitionist and feminist movements of antebellum America, the Civil War and, finally, Reconstruction. Mowatt's life, and the life she represents in her autobiography, is a cultural paradox: her career on the public stage was a direct challenge to the values of the American middle class and the socially prescribed definition of what it meant to be a middle class woman. In her role as an actor and author, Mowatt became everything that the middle class woman was not, nor was supposed to be: she operated in the public sphere, she became a creator of culture, and she became the economic provider for her husband. Yet, paradoxically, she was nationally lauded by the American middle class. Mowatt's acting tours took her from New York to New Orleans to London where she enjoyed overwhelming public acclaim. She retired from the stage a legend, but, except for the

continuing popularity of Fashion, she was all but forgotten in the years just prior to the American Civil War.

Anna Cora Mowatt was born the daughter of Samuel Ogden, a wealthy patrician. Her mother's father was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Mowatt begins her story in France where her father had moved the family in 1818. They returned to the States in 1826, settled in New York, and Mowatt tells us about a precocious childhood filled with poetry, frolic, and parlor performances. She eloped with James Mowatt (who was more than twice her age) when she was fifteen--a young age to be married even in the nineteenth century. Given her rather patrician upbringing, the marriage was especially shocking to family and friends and it was an early sign of her characteristically independent will. The turning point in the text, however, occurs a quarter of the way through when James, who is a lawyer and a speculator, falls sick and it finds impossible to support Anna.

Mowatt's illness becomes the raison d'etre of Anna's eventual career on the public stage when she embarks upon a career in order to support herself and her invalid husband. Her career began in 1841 when she gave a series of poetry readings that made her the first successful American "lady elocutionist." Four years later she made her acting debut when she appeared in a Boston production of the very popular drama, The Lady of Lyon. From 1845 to 1853 Mowatt toured throughout America and Great Britain and quickly became one of the most popular and respected actresses of the nineteenth century. Edgar Allan Poe, Mowatt's most faithful critic, raved: "We have to speak of her acting only in terms of enthusiastic admiration--let her trust proudly to her own grace of manner--her own sense of art--her own rich and natural elocution" (quoted in Quinn 315). Mowatt retired from the stage with much fanfare and public acclaim in 1853.

Mowatt's autobiography becomes a document that uncovers ideological patterns of what it meant to be a woman in the public sphere in the mid-nineteenth century. 18,000 copies of the autobiography were printed and sold at $1.25 apiece in seven printings between December 1853 and April 1854.[13] Autobiography is an ideological act; to write is to place oneself within culture and a specific historical situation. As Janet Varner Gunn argues:

> Although the self already inhabits a world, its entry into the "perilous domain of history" makes it impossible simply to assume an unmediated relation to this world. At the same time, only because of self's already inhabiting the space-time of its world can autobiography take place. (9)

Autobiographical discourse uncovers perilous questions about the possibilities of human selfhood. What is the relation of the autobiographer to the text s/he produces? Does autobiography reveal an essential self that is free from the ideological constraints of knowing and being? Or, does autobiography illustrate the social construction of the individual, forming and constraining him or her within specific ideological patterns of belief? Furthermore, what kind of a role does gender play in the autobiographical act? Accepting notions of the social construction of gender challenges any universal or transcendental readings of female autobiography, but how, then, does the construction of gender determine the style and vision of the autobiographical self? In addition, how is autobiography used to conceal and reveal the motivations and aspirations of the self that work against ideologically determined gender roles?

In Autobiography of an Actress Anna Cora Mowatt uses the autobiographical act as a defense and a justification for her movement in the public sphere. The theatrical selfhood that Mowatt experimented with on the

public stage spills from her acting performances and blurs into the "real" Anna Cora Mowatt as represented in the autobiography. Aware of her ideological position as a middle-class woman, Mowatt "plays" to her reader(s), creating a sense of herself that both challenges and confirms her role as a mid-nineteenth-century woman. Mowatt's autobiography sets up two primary levels of discourse: on the first and most basic level, Mowatt confirms her position as a middle class woman by writing all of the necessary aspects of what it meant to be a woman in the mid-nineteenth century into her text. The autobiographical self that she represents is thoroughly entrenched in nineteenth century middle class values. However, Mowatt clearly is not the embodiment of the nineteenth century's ideal woman: she operates in the public sphere, she is the economic provider of her household and she is a creator of culture.[14] The second level of discourse, then, is the veiled Anna Cora Mowatt--the author/actress who has clearly gone beyond the limits of the cult of domesticity, yet feels the ideological compulsion to mask her public actions and motivations. Mowatt presents a particular challenge to the prescribed limits of the cult of domesticity: as a poet, novelist, short story writer for women's magazines, and, of course, actress, Mowatt pushed at the boundaries of the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity, but still managed to receive public acclaim. Mowatt was not just a stage actress--she staged her entire life and her autobiography becomes Mowatt's own narrative performance as she uses rhetorical devices to construct a self that can engage in activities outside of the socially prescribed roles of nineteenth-century womanhood without being labeled a deviant.

Challenging and Confirming in the American Cult of Domesticity

Mowatt was aware of what it meant to be a mid-nineteenth-century woman and she writes her autobiography with gender roles and expectations

in mind. As Nancy Cott has explained in The Bonds of Womanhood, the social and economic turbulence of the post-Revolutionary period fundamentally changed women's role in the family and in society. Earlier, the home and the private farm served as the principal site of production. Men and women were mutually dependent on one another to produce the goods and perform the tasks that were necessary to survive and to make a living. A developing industrial order and a market-oriented economy shifted the modes of production from the home to the factory. As a result, sometime during the decade of the 1830s, the social roles of middle class men and women were neatly dichotomized into two separate spheres. The gradual shift from an agrarian and rural culture to a mechanized and urban society carried the men from their homes and established cities and factories as the primary sites of the production of goods. Men became associated with the culture of industrialism--they built the bridges, lay the roads, and drew the contracts of the new industrial order. Women were left at home, and as a result, their sphere became associated with domestic life. During the 1830s, then, the cult of domesticity became the central standard for defining the American middle class woman. "The canon of domesticity," explains Cott, "expressed the dominance of what may be designated a middle-class ideal, a cultural preference for domestic retirement and conjugal family intimacy over both the 'vain' and fashionable sociability of the rich and the promiscuous sociability of the poor" (92).

More than anything else, the cult of domesticity was associated with the home. "If married women's occupations no longer predictably consisted of domestic productive activities such as spinning, soap making, or brewing, nevertheless," Cott argues, "they were identified with being at home" (44, emphasis in original). Middle class Americans accepted a Lockean theory of

education-- women were assigned the task of promoting the virtues of the republic by forming their children to be honest and respectable citizens who would further the republican ideal. Americans of the 1830s through 1850s thought their society was fundamentally corrupt and worried about decadence and threats to the republican order. William Lloyd Garrison's philosophy of "Perfectionism" is a good example of a middle class belief in the fundamental corruption of American society. In Feminism and Suffrage, Ellen DuBois says Garrison's "doctrine of perfectionism . . . identified the sanctified individual conscience as the supreme moral standard, and corrupt institutions, not people, as the source of sin" (33). After the 1830s in America, the home became associated with a sanctuary from, and agent of transformation for, the amoral and irreligious world of market capitalism.

The cult of domesticity, however, was not as monolithic as many scholars have represented it. It was mostly confined to the middle class experience and, as the life of Anna Cora Mowatt, as well as many other public and private women in the nineteenth century evidenced, the socially prescribed roles of domesticity were abundant with subversive opportunities. For instance, the social role of womanhood to protect and forward the domestic sphere into the more threatening world of market capitalism opened up the opportunity for women to operate in the public arena. "[T]he celebration of woman's special 'sphere' of domesticity," says David Brion Davis, "provided a basis for asserting female hegemony over manners and morals" (Antebellum American Culture 73). For many, women's sphere was responsible for working to change the social order at the same time it nourished the moral necessities of the home. Consider the following excerpt from Young Lady's Own Book (1833):

> But society, too, feels her influence, and owes to her, in great measure, its balance and its tone. She may be here a corrective of what is wrong, a moderator of what is unruly, restraint on what is indecorous. Her presence may be a pledge against impropriety and excess, a check on vice, and a protection to virtue. (quoted in Davis Antebellum American Culture 75)

The experience of the middle class woman was not solely confined to the domestic sphere, however. Indeed, the beginnings of the American feminist movement (a decidedly middle class group of women) was visible during the same years the American woman was initially being confined to the home. In Feminism and Suffrage, Ellen Dubois posits the early years of women's political action within William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist movement, and she points to the political experiences there which gave suffragists the experience and the courage to later develop a feminist movement that would demand a woman's right to own property, control wages, and, among other things, vote. By the mid-nineteenth century, the American women's movement was strong enough that it could call a meeting in Seneca Falls and draft a declaration of women's rights and demands of equality.

Still, it is wrong to think of domesticity as a subversive dynamic, intent on undermining the status quo of market capitalism. As Cott explains, "Yet the canon of domesticity did not directly challenge the modern organization of work and pursuit of wealth. Rather, it accommodated and promised to temper them" (69). Domesticity was an antidote to the corruption of post-Revolutionary society; it would transform and rejuvenate, but not necessarily challenge the new economic order.

The 1830s witnessed the entrenchment of the cult of domesticity in American life, but Nancy Cott also sees that decade as a "turning point in

women's economic participation, public activities, and social visibility" (6). The new industrial order gave some women the opportunity to "get out of the house" and participate in market activities--Cott notes that women led and participated in some of the first industrial strikes in the United States (7). Furthermore, the teaching profession began to open up to women during this decade, providing some with another alternative to the domestic life. Also, the reform movements of the '30s and '40s granted women opportunities to engage in the public sphere. The reform movements and the cult of domesticity shared a symbiotic relationship, each one providing a sanctuary from the corrupt social order. Consequently, a middle class woman could move freely between the domestic and reform spheres. Cott skillfully discusses domesticity and nascent feminism and shows how the two social dynamics were more integrated than mutually exclusive. Unwilling to term domesticity a protofeminist movement (which would imply domesticity was more subversive than she believes it was), Cott ends her monograph on the note that women's domestic sphere in some ways looked forward to the later feminist movements of the 1850s:

> Yet how much of what they learned in woman's sphere feminists carried with them! Throughout the nineteenth century feminists saw women's progress not in opposition to but at one with esteem for home and family; their radical demand was to include a role in the civil and public sphere among women's rights and prerogatives. (205)

The Performing Self in <u>Autobiography of an Actress</u>

Mowatt found herself somewhere between the demands of domesticity and the new opportunities afforded to certain women. She was most productive as a writer during the years 1842 and 1845 and, of course, her acting career

began in 1845. Mowatt's opportunities to do the things she did in the public sphere was a result of serendipitous social changes as much as they reflected her ability as a writer and actor. By 1845, a tradition of "women writing" and speaking in the public sphere had cleared a space for Mowatt's public life and made her actions less radical than they might have been fifteen or twenty years earlier.[15]

It is clear in the introduction to her autobiography that Mowatt's ideal reader is a woman. Indeed, the preface of the narrative takes a decidedly feminist tone

> If one struggling sister in the great human family, while listening to the history of my life, gain courage to meet and brave severest trials; if she learn to look upon them as blessings in disguise: if she be strengthened in the performance of "daily duties," however "hardly paid;" [sic] if she be inspired with faith in the power imparted to a strong <u>will</u>, whose end is good,--then I am amply rewarded for my labor.

Although Mowatt was a woman of the world rather than the home--she freely consorts with Henry Clay and William Ellery Channing, she gracefully moves within Parisian society during a trip to the Continent--she is neither a radical feminist nor even an overtly political "actor" in the public sphere. Mowatt was not Fanny Fern, Francis Wright, or Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Whether Mowatt intended to subvert the dominant order or perform cultural "work" in her performances and texts is not a question I am concerned with here. Yet, Mowatt was aware of the political and ideological implications of her life on the stage and the life she represents in her autobiography; she was equally concerned with changing the public consciousness (that is, justifying theater to the middle class and normalizing

the phenomenon of women working in the public sphere) as she was with negotiating a space for herself somewhere between the limits of the cult of true womanhood and her 1) life-long love for the stage and 2) the necessity of her taking on a career to support her invalid (and bankrupt) husband.

In this way, Mowatt, begins to look very much like Catherine Beecher--that other indomitable woman of the nineteenth century who advocated for women's sphere to influence and change the market-oriented, irreligious sphere of nineteenth-century men.[16] Mowatt and Beecher were not feminists in the grain of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who argued against the essential differences between men and women and fought to collapse the socially prescribed roles of the two genders into each other.[17] Both Mowatt and Beecher, as members of the respectable elite, had a certain vested interest in the continuing order of the republic, yet as creative, inquisitive, and energetic women, their movements and accomplishments could do nothing except challenge the dominant order. In Sensational Designs Jane Tompkins (rightly) argues that the social function of domestic fiction was to alter and transform (and transforming is different than challenging) the social order, but Mowatt and Beecher (women not necessarily working in the realm of domestic fiction) pose different problems to the question of how they should write or act or teach.[18] Mowatt's problem in her autobiography, then, is to assert a sense of herself that allows her to do the things she needs/wants to do in the public sphere, while also paying attention to the way in which her actions will be received by the public.

"Negotiating" is a good word to describe Mowatt's relationship between her self and the assumptions of her culture concerning what it meant to be a woman. Margo Culley has described American women's autobiography as "that mirror glimpsed at, gazed into, and negotiated with in public" (10). In

her autobiography, Mowatt arranges and confers with public expectations and then forms her public persona accordingly. Yet, despite the heed she pays to her social role as a middle class woman, Mowatt is clearly someone going against the grain of the ideological patterns of nineteenth century thought, and her rhetorical posturing is clearly the result of her cognizance of larger ideological assumptions about what it meant to be a woman, an actress, and a wife in antebellum culture.

The autobiography, instead of being written "around" or "within" the domestic sphere (requirements of sentimental fiction), uses Mowatt's artistic accomplishments as the critical scenes and important circumstances of the text. For example, when she returns home from a visit to Europe she unashamedly passes over recollecting the "joyous greetings of kindred and friends" in order to go into a detailed description of the rehearsals of her new play, Gulzara (132). In addition to placing her name and her self in the public domain, she also becomes the primary breadwinner of her family, challenges the notion that women were unfit for intellectual pursuits by writing outside of the sentimental tradition when possible, and argues polemically for the legitimacy of theater at the close of her autobiography. From performing parlor theater at home to playing before well-wishing crowds in Boston and London, and from writing her first poem to penning numerous plays, novels and short stories, Mowatt's story is "about" the life of a writer and an actress -- not a mother or a wife.

As Mary Kelley explains in Private Woman, Public Stage, it was a "revolutionary act" for a woman to be a "creator of culture"--"the boldest and most presumptuous act of all on a female's part" (181). Mowatt was aware of this and does all she can to mitigate her role as author and actor. Even as a little girl, Mowatt seems to have been aware of the radicalism of women

writing as she describes the surreptitious maneuverings of a young and imaginative poetess:

> I used to sit for hours stringing doggerel together, and longing to show it to somebody who would be sure to say that the verses were very beautiful. I seldom had courage to exhibit these infantile productions, but laid little plots to secure their being seen. Sometimes I would leave a copy of verses on the floor in some of my brother' rooms, or on the nursery mantelpiece, or write them on the walls in the garden, which at one period were covered over with rhymes. (31)

In a wonderful anecdote that illustrates the power of nineteenth-century patriarchal culture, Anna describes a plot to reveal her writing and the consequences it elicits. One day, she purposefully leaves a "little 'poem'" in her brother's room, and watching him pick it up and read it, she follows him as he proceeds to take the piece to his father. Anna is highly agitated, not knowing whether she will be chastised or praised, when she hears her brother remark, "Just read this, papa; it is some of Anna's nonsense" (32). Her father calls her in the room and Anna says she "sprang up to betake myself to flight," but she could not get away in time and "entered the room like a culprit who had been guilty of some heavier crime than that of murdering English and perpetrating bad poetry." But questions of style and meter veil deeper issues regarding the appropriateness or the ability of a young girl to express emotions on paper. Anna's father pronounces judgment, declaring the verses "quite pretty, for all that," but "not very good grammar." Still, he caresses her in an act of encouragement and she leaves the room "inclined to cry for joy," until her brother catches her, takes the verses from her hands and begins to point "out the flagrant mistakes in metre, in grammar, in sense." The whole incident filled Anna with "conflicting emotions" of "delight,"

"vexation," and "shame," and she concludes the anecdote by declaring, "For a long period after that I kept every thing I wrote carefully locked up, and made a bonfire when my store accumulated beyond limits" (32). As readers, we might attribute the young girl's reactions to childish self-consciousness; however, as the autobiography progresses Mowatt continues to pick and choose how she will represent her career as a creator of culture.

Unlike the Romantic Men of Letters of the nineteenth century who celebrate the individualism and self-governing autonomy that is associated with the creative act and position their "selves" at the starting point of the creative process,[19] Mowatt feels the ideological pressure that the nineteenth-century woman was not to initiate strategies and courses of action. Mowatt's narrative is couched in qualifications: autobiography, the ultimate assertion of the self, is mitigated (and, oftentimes, rhetorically disguised) with the extra-literary intrusions of letters and poems written by family and friends in an effort to legitimize her culturally-determined position as a middle-class, nineteenth-century woman and to deflate the autobiographical self associated with male writers. Yet, by deflating her autobiographical self, Mowatt has devised a strategy in the Autobiography to deflect the criticism she might receive for being too bold in her pursuits. On one level, Mowatt represents herself and her career as the embodiment of male authority. Her creative life is inspired by others; she goes out of her way to show the reader that her life as an author and actress was not part of her own grand design toward self-fulfillment and fame. As a nineteenth-century middle class woman, she cannot initiate her own career or artistic endeavors for fear of being labeled a conniving and calculating woman, more concerned with her own self than the welfare of her family and the private sphere she is trusted with guarding. Instead, Mowatt masks her creative impulses, representing herself as an

empty vessel who is filled up with the encouragement of family and friends to write and to act. Mowatt represents herself as a passive agent in the process of her artistic career. Mowatt's artistic accomplishments occupy center stage in her narrative, but in order to do this and still work within the ideology of the cult of domesticity, she finds it necessary to manipulate rhetorically the way the reader perceives the development of her career. Most importantly, she explains her artistic impulses as the effects of encouragement from friends and family.

Consider the manner in which Mowatt has set up her relationship with her husband, James Mowatt. As a bachelor approaching middle age, Mowatt meets Anna's older sister, Charlotte, at Rockaway, and thinking her unwed, openly declares his affection. Charlotte demurs, explaining she has a husband, but encourages Mowatt to visit her father's house, explaining she has "plenty of young sisters at home and one of them very much resembles me" (41). Of course Charlotte was not thinking of Anna, who was only thirteen, yet Mowatt goes for a visit, does not find the other sisters favorable, but catches a glimpse of the thirteen-year old Anna and immediately takes it into his head that he will marry her. The courtship that follows is an astonishing story that illustrates a society in a transitory state between arranged marriages and those motivated by romantic love.[20] But even more than that, the courtship of James Mowatt and Anna Cora Ogden becomes a cogent example of the power of nineteenth-century patriarchy.

The first time James sees Anna she is rushing through the drawing room on her way to school. He asks her sister to call Anna back, but she calls out, "I don't care for Mr. Mowatt," (which a skeptical twentieth-century reader can only take to mean that she really <u>does</u> care for Mr. Mowatt, or is at least strangely fascinated with him) and several minutes later, thinking he has

departed, she steps out of the front door only to be confronted by James himself: "Mr. Mowatt was standing at the foot of the street door steps, and placed himself in front of me with extended arms. There was no retreat, and he kept me prisoner for some time" (43). This is hardly the language of star-crossed lovers and Anna proceeds to explain the relationship in terms of confinement and embodiment. Later in their relationship James tells Anna that shortly after their first encounter on the front steps, he ran into an old friend and declared, "I feel as though I should never marry unless I marry that child," using a few of Moore's sentimental lines to convey, and stylize, his emotions.[21] And it was at that moment, Anna tells us, that James "conceived the project of educating me to suit his own views--of gaining my affections, and, the instant I was old enough to be considered marriageable, of taking me to his own home--his child-wife" (44). Anna casts herself into the role of the reluctant lover, and James as the indomitable pursuer. When James proposes to her in her fourteenth year, she sits down to write a letter explaining to the persistent lover that she is too young to marry and would rather be his friend, but upon reading the letter, James "merely laughed at what he considered girlish shyness" and shortly before her fifteenth birthday, the "'No'" inscribed in her initial response to his hand in marriage "was forgotten, and a 'Yes' had taken its place" (47). The appeal to Anna's father is made, but he thwarts the plans by asking the couple to wait until Anna turned 17, but, Anna writes, "This answer did not satisfy a lover whose principal object was to direct the whole education of the girl he married" (47). Eventually, James' persistence convinces Anna to elope and it is important that they surreptitiously leave on the night before Anna and her sisters were to give a parlor theatrical of Voltaire's "Alzire" for their family. The play, of

course, had to be given up and Anna exchanges her stage costume for the bridal wardrobe and becomes a child-bride of 15.

Mowatt uses this aspect of their relationship in order to confirm her place within the cult of true womanhood at the same time she is pushing at its boundaries, and her rhetorical use of oppositional strategies here is quite cagey. Furthermore, Mowatt plays against the function of marriage in Victorian society and fiction. In Private Theatricals, Nina Auerbach shows how marriage was used as a fictional device to cease the development of the self. Victorians worried about the possibilities of a theatrical or non-essential self used marriage as a way to freeze its transformations. "In fiction, marriage . . . terminates the process of conversion. For men and women alike, the discovery of the right mate not only neutralizes the dangerously detonating self by splitting it in two; it sets an evolutionary seal on that self's theatrical explosiveness" (62). For Mowatt, however, marriage is a lever that springs her into a world of books and poetry and theatrics; marriage provides a space for her theatrical self to proceed rather than regress into its essence.

Furthermore, Mowatt represents herself as an empty vessel to be objectified and filled up with the ideology of her husband, yet she uses these instances when others give her career advice to empower herself and to accomplish her career on the stage and in the literary world; her husband has always encouraged her intellectual pursuits and it is, finally, his sickness and inability to support the household that opens up the opportunity for Anna to work in the public sphere. And it is clear that for Mowatt, as a nineteenth-century middle-class woman who finds herself in the position of having to explain and justify her career, this device of representing herself as someone who has been formed and molded by her husband becomes her way of justifying her position to the expectations of the respectable society.

Mowatt peppers her account of herself with the voices and admonitions of other people. For instance, in Chapter I of Autobiography Mowatt narrates her family's voyage from France to America when she was a young girl. Inserted into her account is a description of the shipwreck the family survives, everyone, that is, except one of the younger brothers. But, unwilling or unable to provide the account of the loss, Anna includes a long section (7 pages) written by her brother, Charles, describing the death of the young boy. Other narrative intrusions occur when Anna relates her mesmeric experience--she uses a long letter from a friend (9 pages) to describe her somnambulistic state and her actions while under the veil of the mesmerist (170-79)--and she includes poems and excerpts of news articles written both to honor and condemn her.[22]

As a young woman negotiating a space for herself in the public sphere, Mowatt continues to throw her career into the knowing hands of males. Chapter X begins with Mowatt telling us that, under the pseudonym of Helen Berkely (a typical concealing/veiling strategy for women writers of the mid-nineteenth century[23]), she had been writing "a series of lively articles," but, under her own name, she had been writing and publishing verse.[24] Just when she was "half determined" to begin writing a "tale of some length," a friend informs her that the New World newspaper has offered one hundred dollars to the best original novel with the title, Fortune Hunter, and set in New York. Unwilling to show the act of writing emitting from her own will, Mowatt uses the voice of another to encourage the effort: "Why do you not try what you can do?" the friend says, "Write a story in your Mrs. Berkley style . . . Ten to one your novel will be the one accepted" (185). She sets to work and the story, Fortune Hunter, wins first prize and is accepted for publication.[25]

Similarly, Chapter XI begins with the following suggestions from E. S---- (her literary agent, mesmerist, and confidante, Epes Sargent):

> Why do you not write a play? You have more decided talent for the stage than for any thing [sic] else. If we can get it accepted by the Park Theatre, and if it should succeed, you have a new and wide field of exertion opened to you--one in which success is very rare, but for which your turn of mind has particularly fitted you. (202)

Unsure of expressing her own desire to write a play, Mowatt writes her own desires into another character (we know that Sargent is a man, but even if we did not we could guess since the market language--"succeed," "wide field of exertion"--seems particularly fitted for male discourse), possibly writing the part of her self that needs to be concealed vis a vis the middle class scrutiny of the woman who exerts herself in the public sphere.[26] Sargent answers Mowatt's query, "What shall I attempt, comedy or tragedy?" by further inscribing her into the female realm of nineteenth century society when he says, "Comedy, decidedly, because you can only write what you feel, and you are--'nothing if not critical'" (202). But the importance of this scene is evident with Mowatt beginning a pivotal chapter in her autobiography with the suggestion (or the voice) of another (male) person for her to write a play that (by that time) she certainly could have done on her own volition.

Other instances of Mowatt's strategy of deflection of self into the voice of another occur when she is contemplating beginning her career on the public stage. Mowatt describes the success of Fashion, but, curiously, includes a deprecating remark from her "sternest" critic Edgar Allan Poe who praised her acting, but deprecated her writing, remarking that the play "resembled The School for Scandal in the same degree that the shell of a locust resembles the living locust" (213).[27] Mowatt tells us that Fashion had attracted the

attention of the elites of the New York theater and that she has been encouraged by others to begin a career on the stage:

> Again I received propositions to go upon the stage, coupled with the assurance that I would rapidly acquire an independence. The day had come when all things seemed to work together to force me of necessity to contemplate this step. (214)

Again we perceive Mowatt's insistence on ascribing her move into the public sphere, and also into the sphere of the creative imagination, to the promptings of other voices and opinions. Mowatt turns herself into the passive force that is "forced" by "necessity" (and encouragement) to pursue a career, which, ironically, will give her "independence" to act outside of the traditional roles within the cult of true womanhood. Her decisions do not come from a self-styled sense of individualism and autonomy, but are based on second opinions and "coupled" assurances.

Most of Mowatt's actions in the autobiography--her decision to write, act, and go under the spell of the mesmerist (discussed below) are suggested by men outside of her family. Interestingly, all of these men--Epes Sargent and Dr. C---g--are specialists in their field and Mowatt's deference to their opinion suggests how dependent, by the mid-nineteenth century, middle-class Americans were on the opinions of men who had specialized their niches in the pre-industrial, market-oriented republic.[28] Indeed, after their marriage, James Mowatt plays a decidedly minor role in the narrative. It seems that he is always hovering around Anna in spirit, but after the marriage, he is given very few words (less than the other men in the autobiography), and furthermore, Anna never ascribes any of her actions to his prompting (except, of course, the ill-received "Pelayo"[29]). It is strange that the student of Mowatt's autobiography has to read Eric Barnes' biography of the actress in

order to discover that James Mowatt, in the twilight of his life, asked Anna to write her autobiography, and she then promised that she would do so. Why doesn't Mowatt, "faithful historian" that she is, mention this in the text? Of course, there is a vague allusion to a promise in the last sentence of the narrative; Anna finishes her story in apparent exhaustion: "I lay down my pen with a sense of relief, which is in itself a guerdon; for I have fulfilled my promise" (448). Yet, the casual reader would need to have read Barnes' biography in order to make the connection. Furthermore, as Barnes tells the story, Mowatt feverishly writes the text of Autobiography of an Actress immediately following a life-threatening illness incurred after her final removal from the stage in 1853. Barnes' re-creation of Mowatt's life is hardly objective, yet Mowatt's textual clue of exhaustingly fulfilling a promise suggests that his information is not entirely speculation. During the convalescence following her illness, or, in Barnes' words, "as soon as she could be propped up in bed," Anna begins to write "with feverish activity, scattering the pages on all sides as they were written" (331). It seems strange that she would be feverish during her convalescence and, furthermore, her decision to omit mentioning the fact that her husband prompted her to write her life is a detail that sheds light on the character behind the autobiographical mask.

Disguising the Performing Self

Among the many questions that Mowatt's autobiography raises, then, is her use of rhetorical masks and disguises in her efforts to work within the cult of true womanhood while also challenging its limitations. Through her rhetorical positionings of self--the mitigation of her private life, her manner of attributing histrionic talents to an essential aspect of her nature, and her

rhetorical use of mesmerism, it is clear that Mowatt is doing a fair amount of masking and veiling of her self in her autobiography in an attempt to negotiate that space between cultural expectations, immediate necessities, and her own pursuit of self-fulfillment. This may be why Hawthorne (ambiguously) called her "artificial."

Mowatt, as a woman operating in the public sphere, has less of herself to advertise and more of herself to conceal--she has written her public life, but has clearly drawn a veil over her private thoughts and desires. Except for instances when Mowatt is consciously attempting to present her domestic self to the reader, we get very little sense of her private life outside of the stage. For instance, in the middle of the text Mowatt places the story of her adoption of three orphan children in between her discussion of the publication of Evelyn: A Domestic Tale and Fashion. Mowatt's autobiographical self does not appear as the romantic, self-governing and autonomous self of male autobiography. Certainly, Mowatt places herself on the "center stage" merely by writing her autobiography, yet she feels an ideological compulsion to surround herself with other figures and voices in order to marshal authority for the position she has acted and written herself into.

By entering the public realm, the nineteenth century woman was entering a sphere that was beyond her socially prescriptive role as a woman and, consequently, placed her under intense public scrutiny. In the public realm, the nineteenth-century woman lost her acculturated sense of who she was as a woman and was left to find a place for herself somewhere between the realms of domesticity and producer capitalism. Consequently, becoming a public woman necessitated a re-making of the self:

> . . . [T]he act of national commercial publication was steeped in significance. To enter the public realm was for the woman to enter a

> new realm of being. It was in fact a testing of the limits imposed upon a woman's life, and it suggested the will or the desire on the woman's part to test or resist those limits. It suggested a new assertion of a woman's being for simply stated, to be a published writer [or actress] was to have a visible influence, a public role beyond home. (Kelley 125)

Every woman went about this re-making of the self in a different manner. Kelley illustrates how the emerging self of her twelve literary domestics "surfaced in disguise." These women never transformed themselves out of their domestic roles, but rather masked their private lives (and identities) in order to perform incognito in the public sphere. As authors, these women could freely engage in concealment of self (mostly by publishing their work under another name), but Mowatt, as an actress, had a different problem. The stage precludes Mowatt from the luxury of concealing her identity and forces her to take a different tack. Unable to hide from the public scrutiny, Mowatt manages to turn the tide of public justification for her acts by arguing that her public self is a natural or essential part of her nature.

If she cannot use a third party to initiate her career, her other strategy is to attribute her talents and creative impulses to an essential part of her being. For as theatrical as Mowatt's life was, and despite her awareness of her self as a pliable social self, Mowatt's insistence and search for a core Anna Cora Mowatt is truly astonishing. As a woman on the public stage, Mowatt opened herself up to more of the middle-class observation than other nineteenth-century women who decided to play outside of the realm of domesticity. As a result, Mowatt's decision to go public with her acting is approached with a strong sense of pragmatism and necessary justification. When her husband initially falls ill and they are faced with the prospect of losing their home, Anna explains her decision to support them through acting:

> Were there no gracious gifts within my nature? Had I no talents I could use? Had a life made up of delightful associations and poetic enjoyments unfitted me for exertion? No--there was something strong within me that cried out, it had not! What, then, could I do to preserve our home? I had talents for acting--I could go upon the stage; but that thought only entered my mind to be instantly rejected. The idea of becoming a professional actress was revolting. (139)

Later, when her first public lectures are declared a success and the threats of losing her home have passed, Mowatt rhetorically takes herself outside of the cult of domesticity and places herself in the position of the family breadwinner when she writes, 'I stood there in thought, exclaiming, 'our home is secured; I am mistress here still'" (149). This was an anomalous role for a middle class, nineteenth century woman:

> Males were the economic managers; they were the primary economic producers beyond the household; and they controlled the distribution of material resources. There could not have been a clearer, sharper distinct in the gender-determined economic spheres of influence or power, in activity or responsibility. Males performed and ruled in the public sphere; females were subordinate, dependent, and centered in the private sphere. (Kelley 140)

But since she has couched her entrance into the public realm in terms of an essential aspect of her nature, the radicalism of Mowatt's statement is mitigated. Since acting is a natural gift that she has been privileged to cultivate, using that gift to save her home (even in the most morally spurious of all spheres, the public stage) cannot be an unnatural "performance." In a passage that resonates with her earlier justification for

taking to the public lectern, Mowatt explains her decision to embark on an acting career as an essential part of her self:

> I should never have adopted the stage as matter of expediency alone, however great the temptations. What I did was not done lightly and irresponsibly. I reviewed my whole past life, and saw, that from earliest childhood, my tastes, studies, pursuits had all combined to fit me for this end. (216)

So for Mowatt, the stage becomes the teleological conclusion to a self that was "made for the stage." And, of course, explaining herself as a natural-born actress is ideologically essential for her to create a space for herself on the stage. Already delving into a sphere that was off-limits to nineteenth-century woman, the public stage, Mowatt finds it necessary to represent her decision as a rational, clear thinking move that is as natural as breathing.[30] This is a particularly interesting rhetorical move because she has effectively stumped the middle class/Victorian world view of the essential self by searching, and discovering (of all things) a performer at her core.

The stage of the first half of the nineteenth century was an arena where the dichotomized social roles of men and women was evident. As Claudia Johnson notes, "few professional situations could be as paradoxical as that of the nineteenth-century woman who went on the stage for a livelihood" (66). The stage was a place associated with men's activities--it required self initiative and reliance along with a large dose of individualism. Women who entered public life through the theater stage embarked on journey into the world of pre-industrial capitalism--they bargained, competed, negotiated, and sold. Ironically, an energetic theater required just as many actresses as it did actors. And it is important to realize that along with the proto-industrial economy, there was a large increase in the public demand for theater in the

second quarter of the nineteenth century. Also I have not come across any instances where men played women's roles on the stage, but all through the nineteenth century, it was common for women to perform men's roles on the public stage. Despite the need for women performers, the stage was not considered a sphere for women to operate in. Consider the ideas of Robert Turnbull in 1837:

> The effect of the kind of life led by players is peculiarly pernicious to female character. It strips it of all its loftier attributes, its softer and more delicate charms. Sensibility, modesty, and refinement are gradually extinguished by the unfeminine and indelicate business of the stage, and nothing is left but the hackneyed and haggard form of infuse humanity, covered and bedecked perhaps, by false and tawdry ornaments. (quoted in Johnson 92)

Mowatt, too, uses her life as a performer to illustrate the social construction of gender in the nineteenth century. Acting on the stage becomes a metaphor for Mowatt to illustrate the different social selves she is expected to perform in "daily life" and in the writing of her autobiography. In chapter XIII, the section titled, "Two Schools of Acting," Mowatt has written gender roles into the acting profession. Mowatt defines herself as a part of the first school which is comprised of the actor who "totally loses his own individuality, and abandons himself to all the absorbing emotions that belong to the character he interprets" (241). This school is associated with femininity as these actors lose themselves in their parts, dissolving their own selves into the parts they are playing, or at least as they have interpreted those parts. For actors of this school, "his tears are real, his laughter real, as real to himself as to the audience. Frequently they are <u>more</u> real to himself than to his

listeners; for the capacity of feeling, and the faculty of expressing the sensation experienced, are widely different" (241).

The second school of acting is associated with the masculine ideal. Mowatt clearly admires this second school, the "grand and passionless" mode of performance, but admits that she cannot "belong" to it--"No amount of study or discipline would have enabled me to belong to the grand and passionless school" (241). Consider this:

> The actor of the opposite school . . . is more certain of producing startling effects. He stands unmoved amidst the boisterous seas, the whirlwinds of passion, swelling around him. He exercises perfect command over the emotions of the audience; seems to hold their heartstrings in his hands, to play upon their sympathies as on an instrument; to electrify or subdue his hearers by an effort of volition; but not a pulse in this own frame beats more rapidly than its wont. His personations are cut out of marble; they are grand, sublime, but no heart throbs within the life-like sculpture. This absolute power over others, combined with perfect self-command, is pronounced by a certain class of critics the perfection of dramatic art. (242)

The actor from this school is clearly in charge; he "stands," "exercises," "electrif[ies]," and "subdues." Unlike the actor from the first school, who is oftentimes more affected by his or her performances than the audience, the actor from the grand and passionless school molds and shapes the audience with the projection of his or her performance. And, moreover, the actors from this second school have the uncanny ability of removing themselves from their stage roles in order to comment on the affects of their performances on the audience. For instance, during a staging of The Stranger, Mowatt relates how, after a particularly melodramatic and affecting

scene, the gentleman playing "The Stranger" (and a member of the second school of acting) turned to her and "whispered in the most lachrymose voice, 'Poor things, they [the audience] want umbrellas in front!'" And, then, in the very next breath, managed to pronounce a series of fateful words that send the audience into further anguish and sobbing. But Mowatt, inscribed into the ideology of the cult of true womanhood as she is, yet admiring and even appropriating masculine ideals of working in the public sphere in addition to using and developing her intellect, "never succeeded in stirring the hearts of others unless I was deeply affected myself" (244).

In her study of premodern women autobiographers, Mary Mason argues that the social construction of gender results in fundamentally different autobiographical visions of men and women:

> Nowhere in women's autobiographies do we find the patterns established by the two prototypical male autobiographers, Augustine and Rousseau; and conversely male writers never take up the archetypal models of Julian, Margery Kempe, Margaret Cavendish, and Anne Bradstreet. The dramatic structure of conversion that we find in Augustine's Confessions, where the self is presented as the stage for a battle of opposing forces and where a climactic victory for one force--spirit defeating flesh--completes the drama of the self, simply does not accord with the deepest realties of women's experience and so is inappropriate as a model for women's life writing. (210)

The sovereign "I" of male autobiography and the Romantic and egoistic conception of the self as imperial and central to consciousness is foreign to women's autobiography. One of the differences, Mason argues, between men's and women's autobiography is women's use of an alter ego, or "other" self, that operates along the margins of ideology and functions to deflect the

ideological challenges that women writing presents to the dominant discourse.

> On the contrary, . . . the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some "other." This recognition of another consciousness--and I emphasize recognition rather than deference--this grounding of identity thorough relation to the chosen other, seems . . . to enable women to write openly about themselves. (210)

Mowatt uses her mesmeric experiences to explore a "double consciousness" that acts as a rhetorical device similar to Mason's notions of the alter ego in women's autobiography. Early in her autobiography, Mowatt falls sick and, consequently, undergoes her first mesmeric experience which she then uses as a tool to construct a narrative alter ego that leads her along paths of self-discovery and self-assertion, and, more importantly, deflects the criticism of the public gaze that she had attracted in her role on the public stage. But while Mowatt demonstrates her challenges to the cult of domesticity, she also casts herself into the role of the cult of true womanhood. She is a loyal and devoted daughter and wife, and represents herself as a paragon example of the four "cardinal virtues of womanhood" (piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity) that Barbara Welter talks about in Dimity Convictions. Despite her unbreakable will and energy, Mowatt still represents herself as a frail and sickly woman and, in this way, she tips her hat to the nineteenth century ideological assumption of the physical vulnerability of the middle class woman. Aware of the embodiment of nineteenth-century woman, Mowatt writes her numerous illnesses, frailties and "brain fevers" into her autobiography. Pressures from her life on the

public stage often wear her down to the point where she is bedridden for weeks. Following her initial foray into the public spotlight, her illness is so acute that it takes a mesmerist to bring her back to health. Mowatt describes her illnesses with the same vigorous and dramatic language she uses to explain her career on the stage. Yet, the reader might pause when, intermingled with these anecdotes of her frailty, Mowatt adds experiences that have her trekking across the eastern half of the States in an effort to get home for the holidays and her stalwart manner of approaching the grueling demands of her career on the stage. Mesmerism was a highly gender-specific cure for the emotional ills that Mowatt suffered from; characteristically, however, Mowatt places herself under the mesmerist's spell (and, hence, confirms her place in women's sphere) only to use the experience to push at the boundaries of her socially prescribed position. By letting herself go under the influence of the (male) mesmerist, Mowatt cagily positions herself within the definitions of nineteenth-century womanhood--she is "put under" by male conjurings and then becomes the ideal embodiment of a patriarchal culture when she loses herself to his contrivances. But Mowatt turns the tables, and instead of "losing" her"self," in many ways, she "looses" herself from limitations of identity and action.

Mowatt first enters the public sphere when she gives a series of poetry readings in Boston in 1841. Following her first foray onto the public stage, Mowatt falls sick--ailing, no doubt, from the anxiety and pressure of her new life and public role. Mowatt is encouraged to go under the mesmerist's spell by another male, Dr. C--g, who says, "If she is susceptible to mesmerism, I think she can be relieved more readily than by any medicine that I could administer" (158). The first mesmeric experience is short in duration, but it leaves her much relieved. But her headaches, coughing fits (she suffered

from consumption) and anxieties continue and she begins to rely on the mesmerized state as an antidote to her sufferings. In a letter written to her from a friend, the writer says he saw Mowatt mesmerized "several hundred times," which, despite the popularity of the medium, seems like quite a lot of mesmerizing for one woman. In her autobiography, Mowatt tells some frankly frightening stories about her mesmeric experiences, all of which deal with her losing consciousness for long periods of times--sometimes up to two weeks. In his biography of Mowatt, Eric Barnes explains that for three months following her initial mesmeric experience, Mowatt "lived increasingly in a strange world of dreams and fantasies" (92). In an anecdote that is difficult for a skeptical late-twentieth century reader to believe, Barnes notes that Mowatt developed a distinct personality, or alter ego, while mesmerized. "The gypsy," became the Anna Cora Mowatt behind the veil. This part of Mowatt's self was a seer and visionary. Communicating with angels, discoursing about medicine and metaphysics, and writing poetry, "the gypsy," condescendingly refers to the waking Anna Cora Mowatt as "the simpleton" (92).

What is disturbingly eerie about Mowatt's mesmerism is the way the men of her life hover about and record and control her actions and responses. Mowatt becomes an object of fascination to the men who are in charge of her health. Indeed, throughout the autobiography, for as much as Mowatt asserts her own sense of who she is, who she wants to be, there are always (male) forces that are pushing her in certain directions. Yet, when Mowatt uncovers another part of her self she directly challenges the male voices and machinations which are clearly attempting to embody her according to their own visions her female identity. Even Mowatt, though, is frightened by the prospect of another form of consciousness and demonstrates one of the

anxieties that a republican nation had with the mesmeric experience: "I soon grew impatient at this apparent surrender of free will--one of Heaven's choicest gifts to man. I was annoyed at being told that I had spoken, done, or written things of which I had no recollection" (161). Despite her own fears, Mowatt continues to use mesmerism as an antidote for her discomforts.

Anna Cora Mowatt's autobiography is a rich (yet neglected) text providing insights into the middle-class world view of mid nineteenth-century America. As an articulate, brave, and intelligent woman, Mowatt managed to use her acting and writing ability to negotiate a space between her social self and the self she finally ends up constructing. In Mowatt's rhetoric, we see neither radical attempts to change her subject position, nor quiet passivity vis a vis patriarchal domination. Rather, her life and the life she inscribes in Autobiography of an Actress, the life that Hawthorne and 18,000 other American readers found so interesting, is one of negotiation and cultural exchange of a self-stylized self.

Notes

[1]Hawthorne was serving as an American consul in Liverpool at the time.

[2]But Hawthorne and Sophia would become close friends with Anna's sister, Mary Ogden Thompson, during their stay in Rome, 1858-1859.

[3]Hawthorne reports to William Ticknor on 30 September 1854 that he has been asked to send half a dozen books to his English friend, Monckton Milnes.

[4] By this, time, however, Mowatt has remarried and taken the name Ritchie.

[5]See Havens's chapter on Mowatt where he argues that Fashion represents the coming of age of the nineteenth-century American theater, placing the drama at the end of the line of experimenters in American social comedy: "Mrs. Mowatt's Fashion stands, not falls, upon its foundation of the native tradition begun by Tyler and developed by generations of playwrights soon forgotten" (147).

[6]See Barnes 104; and Mowatt 186.

[7]See Shafer.

[8]Grimsted mentions some observers who supported and argued for a developing American theater, but he notes that, for the most part, the theater never gained widespread support (23).

[9]McConachie shows how theater in the 1820s up to 1845 was divided along class lines in his discussions on the urban drama of the Age of Jackson. Theaters in the 20s were funded by elites who used the stage to confirm their positions in society (both through the actual plays performed and also through the spatial positioning of the spectators). In the 30s, though, an urban working class theater developed, and, as a result, "working-class attendance at fashionable playhouses began to decline in the 1830s as workers shifted their patronage to other theaters offering plays more appealing to their aesthetic and social values" (8). And while respectable women did not attend the "yeoman melodrama" and urban melodrama from 1820 to 1845, most theaters provided a separate tier for prostitutes.

[10]See Douglas's arguments regarding the feminization of Protestant ministers in antebellum America, especially Chapters One and Two.

[11]See Grimsted, Chapters Four and Five, for a discussion of the status of actors and actresses in the nineteenth century.

[12]See Barnes 136; and Halttunen, Chapter Six.

[13]See Tryon and Charvat, eds., for a detailed publication history of Mowatt's autobiography (271-90).

[14]For a critical response to academic discussions of the Cult of True Womanhood, see Cogan. Cogan confronts the interpretation of nineteenth-century womanhood that academics such as Barbara Welter, Lois Banner, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have posited, asserting that the popular conception

of True Womanhood--the frail, shy, and demure representations popularly represented in novels and advice literature--was not as homogeneously accepted by nineteenth-century women as scholars have been arguing. Arguing for a model of the Ideal of the Real Woman or Real Womanhood, Cogan uncovers a cultural discourse that resisted and reacted against the Cult of True Womanhood: "My point is simply to suggest that it is very likely, based on didactic literature and popular novels--primary sources both--that more than one popular ideal for middle-class American women existed and was embraced between 1840 and 1880" (9).

[15]See Brodhead, "Veiled Ladies: Toward a History of Antebellum Entertainment," in Cultures of Letters.

[16]See Sklar.

[17]The different visions of women's role in society of Beecher and Stanton represent the fundamental differences between the feminist perspective and the domestic perspective of mid-nineteenth century. Sklar sees Beecher as a reformer working in a middle class consensus and arguing for two separate and essentially different spheres of men and women: "In this time of great social and political ferment, Catherine Beecher deemed it more prudent to consolidate the culture around known female and male virtues and to mediate class and race issues by creating a new female caste" (137). This view is opposed to early feminists such as the Grimke sisters and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who argued the separation of men and women into different spheres only served to oppress women.

[18]See Tompkins' introduction, Chapters Five and Six.

[19]I am thinking specifically of two of Mowatt's contemporaries, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, who were busy imagining and writing their own lives at the very same time Mowatt was writing her autobiography.

[20]Mowatt handles the entire courtship in less than six pages. The oddity of the courtship between James and Anna cannot be attributed to the mores of a different age because, as Barbara Welter illustrates, nineteenth century middle class society discouraged women from marrying young--or at least until their first menstruation period which they marked at about fifteen years old. Even Samuel Olden, Anna's father, could find no fault with James Mowatt, but when asked to give his consent to their marriage asked for a promise that they would wait until Anna was seventeen. Mowatt cannot wait, however, and after pressing Anna to elope, he finally convinces her--during her fifteenth year. For more on nineteenth-century mores and habits regarding courtship, see Ellen Rothman.

[21]James uses these lines to characterize his initial feelings for Anna: "O, there are looks and tones that dart/An instant sunshine through the heart/As though the soul that moment caught/Some object it through life had sought" (44).

[22]See 155, 188, 213, 271, 283, 292, 299, 324, 326, 373, 406. Also see Mowatt's Reviewers Reviewed, her critical commentary on art critics.

[23]See Kelley 128-138.

[24]Of course the articles, which are "sketches celebrating persons" she had known and were "generally found on fact," were associated with the male tradition of writing from the intellect, so the pseudonym was a necessary device. But the verses, written from the heart and exuding emotion were associated with the female imagination and could properly be published under how own name.

[25]Again, this is very different from the way men imagined other men writing. Auerbach explains how Carlyle, in On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, creates a Shakespeare for nineteenth century readers who did not create his literature from artifice, but rather "secrete[d]" his works from his essential being (4).

[26]E.S. makes another interesting remark when he refers to the "sarcastic ebullitions" that Mowatt "constantly indulges" her friends with. We might pause to wonder about this, too, because, so far, Mowatt has not represented herself as sarcastic. Could this be, again, her surreptitious way of writing parts of her "self" into the text--sensibilities that would have been scrutinized by the middle class?

[27]For a detailed discussion of Poe's critical discourse on Mowatt's acting career see Barnes, Chapter Thirteen. Also, see Havens's notes for further references.

[28]See Bledstein.

[29] As Mowatt relates the story, her first foray into the public sphere was an ill-received poem, "Pelayo," penned under the pseudonym, Isabella. The poem is roundly shouted down by the critics as inane doggerel and Mowatt confesses, "I wrote no more under the signature of "Isabel." My greatest desire now was to preserve my incognito" (69). Ironically, it was her husband, who encouraged Mowatt to produce and then publish this ill-received poem.

[30]In this way, Mowatt seems to be paying tacit heed to the Cult of Sincerity of the nineteenth century. See Halttunen, especially Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter Three

The Exhibition of the Theatrical Self and Other in the Life and Writings of P.T. Barnum

P.T. Barnum has been the subject of numerous biographies and a few critical studies. He appears in the critical literature of American culture as an episodic figure who pops in and out of texts that synthesize the American experience, generally playing a minor role in the critical reconstruction and analysis of nineteenth-century culture. Barnum represents both the problem and the promise of nineteenth-century America, embodying some of its most salient tensions. On one hand, we might celebrate his ingenuity, lively rhetoric, and creative passion. Barnum became the most formidable showman of the nineteenth century, institutionalizing a democratic popular culture and organizing spectacular public extravaganzas that seduced and occupied the nineteenth-century imagination. On the other hand, Barnum's antics are inexcusable and he remains a representative figure for the problematical nature of the early republic's exploitative and racist inclinations. His career is marked by the shameless and thoughtless public exhibition of human aberrations for profit. Furthermore, Barnum's public display of wild and exotic animals and the methods he contrived in bringing his beasts to New York are enough to make any conservationist cringe. His imperialism and racism, of which he seems almost wholly unaware, are shocking at times. Yet, Barnum is a representative figure primarily because of his fulfillment of the promise of the republic and his unpleasantly conspicuous racism and imperialist tendencies. Finally, it is too easy, and ultimately dull labor, to deconstruct Barnum and sacrifice him in an effort to clear the good name of American experience, and I certainly do not intend to

do that in this chapter. The tendencies operating within the critical commentaries on Barnum have been to lift him up, rather unquestioningly, as the progenitor of a democratic popular culture and mitigate the inherent problems of his exhibitions and displays. Even Neil Harris, who has written a sparkling biography of Barnum that gracefully places the showman in his cultural milieu, is more inclined to celebrate Barnum's contribution to a democratic "operational aesthetic" than he is to illustrate the problems involved with an institutional mode of public entertainment where free white men and women exercise their democratic rights and minds by gaping, wondering, and discoursing about the authenticity of a 161-year old black woman who alleges to have been George Washington's nursemaid, or a pin-headed black man who is passed off to the public as a primordial missing link.

My aim in this essay is to read Barnum into an American culture of exhibition that I see developing in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Through a discussion of the publication history of Barnum's autobiographies and a textual analysis of his first narrative, The Life of P.T. Barnum, Written by Himself, I will show how and why Barnum "exhibited" his self to the antebellum public. Yet Barnum's participation in nineteenth-century exhibition culture went beyond the stylized presentation of self. Through a discussion of Barnum's first public exhibition, the old slave woman, Joice Heth, a blackfacing incident Barnum mentions in the Life, and the famous Jenny Lind American tour of 1850, I will show how the nineteenth century's greatest showman created sites of public pleasure (and profit) while famously theatricalizing the lives of others.

Barnum embodied many of the primary tensions of nineteenth-century life and performed a curious kind of cultural work in nineteenth-century America. He orchestrated cultural performances and exhibitions, produced

narratives and advertisements for public consumption and debate, and achieved a public role as the nineteenth century's greatest showman. Barnum was indeed the public manager of nineteenth-century American popular culture.

In Barnum's autobiography and his public actions/exhibitions, the showman challenged mid nineteenth-century Americans with the problems of inessential selfhood and the implications of the performative self. Ironically, Barnum's challenge to nineteenth century selfhood was cloaked in rhetorical disguises which confirmed the culture's dominant ways of thinking; that is, P.T. Barnum worked within and courted the sentimental values of the American public at the same time that he was implicitly challenging them. The performative self that Barnum donned before the public gaze (whether it was the different Barnums of his autobiography or the many human exhibitions he displayed throughout his career as a showman) was gleefully applauded and vociferously discussed in the public sphere.

By 1855 we can see in the figure and autobiography of P.T. Barnum the theatricality of selfhood, the masking and disguising of the self and of the Other, as an acceptable, even profitable, practice. Like his predecessor, Stephen Burroughs, Barnum engages in cultural ventriloquism and plots of masking and disguising. Yet, by 1855, the problem of the theatrical self that P.T. Barnum presents is applauded and consumed. When Barnum exhibited his freaks, dwarfs, and Divas, he was challenging the American public to accept the pliant and adorned nature of self; Barnum exhibited theatrical selfhood to the public--and they bought it. In his autobiography, as well as his life, Barnum worked out the problem of selfhood on the debit and credit sheets of his financial records. For Barnum, it does not matter that "things are not what they seem."[1] "Not knowing" or the inability to distinguish the illusion

from reality is no longer an epistemological conundrum posing a threat to the republic and the good order of society. The gulf between public and private perception, or between reality and illusion, is less threatening when someone like Barnum (who understands the importance of consensus and confirmation of dominant world views) is orchestrating the public perception of the self. Instead, the theatrical self that rises up from epistemological subjectivity is celebrated. By mid-century, the theatricality of self had become a normal part of American life that entertained, diverted, and challenged the masses. Barnum recasts the problem of "self" representation of the post-Revolutionary period by turning the problem into an entertainment for the masses.

Re-Making the Autobiographical Self:

P.T. Barnum was only forty-five when he wrote the first of three versions of his autobiography in the fall of 1854. The Life of P.T. Barnum, Written by Himself was published by Redfield in January of 1855 and, according to Carl Bode, promptly sold 160,000 copies in the States (Intro. Struggles and Triumphs 19). The book was subsequently published by Sampson Low of London, and soon thereafter pirated editions were appearing in Germany, France, Holland, and Sweden. When the sales of Life started to decline, Barnum destroyed the plates, intent on publishing another version of his life. The second autobiography, updated, altered, and renamed Struggles and Triumphs: Or, Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum, was published in 1869. By 1882 half a million copies of the 1869 edition were published, and by 1888, the figure had reached one million. The final version of Barnum's life was published in 1889, two years before his death, and appeared under the same name as the 1869 version. Carl Bode announces that sales figures to the

1889 edition are not available, "but we can be certain that they were huge" (Intro. Struggles and Triumphs 24).[2]

If any book of the nineteenth century is worth considering for its circulation within the culture, it is surely the three versions of Barnum's autobiography. "For the American people during the second half of the nineteenth century," notes Bode, "Barnum's autobiography became, after the Bible, the most widely read book" (Intro. Struggles and Triumphs 23). Each of the three editions has a tenor and tone of its own and each reflects a different P.T. Barnum. The 1855 edition is anecdotal, primarily concentrating on Barnum's early life. Spontaneous, artless, and full of the "confessions" of the narrator, Barnum's Life has all the stylistic attributes of autobiography. The first 100 pages read like the tale of a Yankee trickster and work to establish Barnum as a born jokester who, as "The Prince of Humbugs" and "The Prince of Showman," is merely acting out his innate talents and abilities.

Barnum trimmed down the anecdotes for the 1869 edition, spending more time on Tom Thumb and the Jenny Lind enterprise, but the book was still a formidable affair, running over 700 pages (the 1855 edition is just over 400). Barnum was never happy with the 1855 edition; he considered the first autobiography to be a form of advertisement, explaining that Life was designed "for the purpose, principally, of advancing my interests as proprietor of the American Museum" (Bryan xviii). By 1869, he was waxing philosophical and talked about the second edition of his life as

> the matured and leisurely review of almost half a century of work and struggle, and final success, in spite of fraud and fire--the story of which is blended with amusing anecdotes, funny passages, felicitous jokes, captivating narratives, novel experiences, and remarkable interviews--the sunny and somber so intermingled as not only to entertain, but

> convey useful lessons to all classes of readers. (Struggles and Triumphs 46)

But, for Barnum, high-mindedness never got in the way of making a buck: the 1869 edition was brought out in a dazzling number of different imprints--small print, large print, abridged versions, and both cheap and expensive styles of the autobiography inundated the American and English reading public. Moreover, Barnum persisted in making unprecedented autobiographical moves by continuing to write chapters and tacking them on to new editions of the 1869 version. By 1884, Bryan records Barnum's announcement that the book was open to be published by any interested party: "The whole or any portion of this book may be published by any parties without objection or claim of copyright on the part of the Author" (xx).[3] In the 1880s, Barnum as much as gave the book away during his circus performances--copies of the book were piled on carts and given to paying spectators, and the showman was known to remark that the crowds leaving his bigtop looked "as if they were coming out of a circulation library" (xxii)

Few twentieth-century critics have taken Barnum's autobiographies seriously. Constance Rourke dedicates a chapter of Trumpets of Jubilee to the Barnum legend, calling the book a "flowing bowl of candor" (276). Ludwig Lewishohn, an anti-genteel commentator working in the shadow of Van Wyck Brooks, placed the book in the American folk tradition:

> Only one Yankee of a humbler stripe wrote a book in the high days of the New England pseudo-classics which also belongs to the folk-literature of America. That book was, of course, the autobiography of Phineas T. Barnum. (103)

Referring to himself in the third person, Lewisohn recalls his first childhood reading of the book and the deep impression it made on him:

> He read that with a severe absorption and in the course of the next few years returned to it again and again and carried throughout many succeeding years with him a hundred images and incidents from the homespun narrative which communicated somehow the very tone and taste and tang of American life. . . . Barnum, rogue and vulgarian, wrote out what he thought and saw and dreamed and knew. (103-4)

Since Lewisohn, most of the other critics to consider Barnum's autobiography have been his biographers. George Bryan has called the autobiography "an abounding book, quick with native gusto. It is the work of a man thoroughly enjoying his world, his work, and himself" (xxii). "Taking the autobiography, then, as just a human document, and ignoring its deliberately instructive features," continues Bryan, "we encounter a full, leisurely narrative, done with vast relish" (xxxiii). Neil Harris astutely places the showman and his book in his nineteenth-century cultural milieu, explaining that the book "raised complicated and diverse issues" about "credulity and deceit, disguise and sincerity, hypocrisy and idealism, [and] art and artifice" (Humbug 230). For Harris, the book is not "simply the chronicle of a life, but a text on the social functions of illusion and the role of the deceiver in an egalitarian society"--a society that had "abandoned traditional rituals of accreditation" (Humbug 230-31). Barnum's most recent biographer, A.S. Saxon, has called the Life "a strangely disquieting book" (9) and in his 1989 study of American autobiography, Altered Egos, G. Thomas Couser has taken a different tack from Rourke by placing Barnum's book in the tradition of Franklin's autobiography, explaining both as narratives of confidence which undermined the integrity of the autobiographical act.[4]

Barnum's first autobiography incorporates aspects of the picaresque novel, instructional literature, and Yankee trickster/Southwestern humor tales all

told in an authorial voice that explicates, narrates, and even confesses the actions and events of the life of P.T. Barnum. Life is a cornucopia of American literary traditions; the shadows of Ben Franklin, Stephen Burroughs, and Jonathan Edwards,[5] and the legends of Mike Fink and Davy Crockett are lurking within its anecdotal, bombastic, and didactic rhetoric. As a boy, he hangs out with thugs and gleefully proclaims his "aversion to hard work" and the fact that he "had the reputation of being the laziest boy in town" (Life 28).[6] When he goes to New York as a young boy he squanders the dollar his mother gave him on molasses candy. Barnum has an eye for maverick characters who challenge orthodoxy and are apt to dupe unsuspecting individuals. It is the apparent lack of narrative direction and the homely metaphors and anecdotes that give Life its native charm. Yet it is the linear progression of a self that moves from a small-town wag to a big-shot showman who occupies and manipulates the public mind of the nineteenth-century that becomes the strongest selling point of this most "American" of books. "In this country," Constance Rourke says while explaining the popularity of Barnum's autobiography, "Barnum's rise from humble origins, his struggles with adversity, his achievement of fortune were discovered as evidences of the American genius; he was hailed as a national example" (276).

Furthermore, by continually re-writing his life, Barnum becomes one of the many unreliable (not untrustworthy) narrators of American literary discourse. Despite the confessional tone and the occasional attempts to reveal a private self, Barnum's first autobiography remains a highly stylized narrative construction of a public persona and, consequently, tends toward fiction. [7] The autobiographical act is collapsed into fiction when it is realized that "autobiography is necessarily a partial account of one's life: to write an

autobiography is to 'fix' one's life in more ways than one" (Couser 66). Less than "self-biography" and tending more toward the fictive invention of self, Barnum's Life becomes a "hopelessly subjective" autobiographical fiction (Spengemann xiii; Couser 66). Roland Hagenbuchle has called the unreliable narrator a particularly American rhetorical construction of the nineteenth century: "In view of the epistemological crisis in post-Revolutionary American culture, it is hardly surprising that the 'unreliable narrator' is an American invention, and 'unreliable narratives continue to be a specifically American device that . . . achieves its climax in the work of James at the end of the century" (132). Barnum, as he narrates his own life, aligns himself with predecessors such as Ben Franklin, Clara Wieland, James from Crevecoeur's Letters, Miles Coverdale, and Ishmael.

Barnum "exhibits" a dynamic sense of selfhood in his autobiography; with each new edition, Barnum presents himself anew to his readers--each subsequent edition creates a new P.T. Barnum, replacing and adding on to the former. Couser said as much when he explained that "Barnum made a habit, and a career, of exploiting the elusiveness of identity--impersonation was part of his stock-in-trade as a showman" (54). The Life uncovers the inherent subjectivity of writing a life by flamboyantly flaunting that life's malleability in the face of the reader. The revisions of Barnum's autobiography, if they mean or do anything, demonstrate an inessential self, a self that transforms itself with the passage of time and the continual (re)act of writing. Barnum's notion of a "malleable" or dynamic self, illustrated in each re-writing of the autobiography, then, reveals and exposes the elusiveness of essential self identity.

Paul deMan has declared that all texts are autobiographical and that autobiography is particularly theatrical in the sense that it "demonstrates in a

striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions" (922). In rewriting his autobiography, Barnum becomes a chronicler of the self, who, with every new edition of his life, re-creates his self by writing over the top of the former self and, consequently, challenging the notion of essential, innate selfhood. Barnum amplified and enlarged his life with the re-publication and re-writing of each autobiography. Couser finds this problematical, complaining that the Life "very nearly makes an autobiography out of practical jokes, and a joke out of autobiography" (53). Ultimately, argues Couser, the "effect of his prolific production and circulation of different accounts of his life during the second half of the nineteenth century was to undermine the authority of his own autobiography and, by implication, that of the genre as a whole" (53-54). Possibly. But Barnum was never anyone who was overly concerned with authority (especially the "textual" authority of a genre--the slippage here between Couser's expectations and Barnum's intentions is glaring) and like his contemporary, Walt Whitman (who published the first of nine editions of his autobiography in 1855), Barnum multiplied the autobiographical moment as an act of self advertisement. With the subsequent publications of the autobiography Barnum validated a sense of stylized selfhood in American culture. The autobiographical act corrals experience forming a public self and, in this way, autobiography becomes an achievement of self-construction and the rhetorical shaping of a public persona.

Mistaken identities, the concealment of self (masking and disguising), and public hoaxes--nefarious situations in the early Republic--become whimsical anecdotal devices in Barnum's book. The treachery that accompanied duplicitous selfhood in the texts of Burroughs and Cooper has been turned

into benign, even congenial, yarns and fables. In his Life, Barnum is reckless to the point of flippancy about the implications of mistaken identities in his narrative. Early in the narrative, while Barnum is setting himself up as the prototypical Yankee trickster, he reveals his first anecdote regarding the duplicitous presentation of self. In this first illustration of mistaken identity in his Life, Barnum uses the figure of a clergyman to playfully jeer at the old-guard Puritans. The clergy is a particular target for Barnum's anti-institutional vision; indeed, for as much of a bamboozler and agent of duplicity that Barnum was, he is wont to uncover false pretensions and piousness in his Connecticut neighbors. Asserting his "sincere respect" for the clerical calling, Barnum remarks the sad reality that "as the 'best fruit is most pecked by the birds,' so also is the best cause most liable to be embraced by hypocrites; and we all have learned, with pain and sorrow, that the title 'Rev.' does not necessarily imply a saint, for nothing can prevent our sometimes being deceived by a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'" (44). In Barnum's anecdote the Reverend Richard Varick Dey, is an intelligent and eccentric preacher from Greenfield, Connecticut, whose "pathos and wit" scares the more "strait-laced" deacons and parishioners. Dey has been accused of heresy and is enroute to his own trial before an ecclesiastical council when he serendipitously meets another clergyman who has been picked as a judge in Dey's trial. Dey learns all this information before he divulges anything to his judge and when the time comes for Dey to "present" his identity to his fellow clergyman, he misrepresents himself, calling himself Mr. Richard from Fairfield. An amusing dialogue of misunderstanding and double entendre ensues while Dey performs a role as his "not" self and thoroughly embarrasses his colleague at the trial when it is revealed to the unsuspecting

judge that the man he was talking with the day before was none other than the accused, Richard Dey.

Later in the narrative, Barnum gleefully reports a number of incidents involving his own role in similar performances of deception. Concealing his own identity for a time, he engages in conversation with a stranger, asks some leading questions to which the stranger, unsuspecting of whom s/he is talking with, responds with an honesty and an assurance that leads to embarrassment after learning that it was "old Barnum" himself who was acting as the questioner. [8] A typical example occurs in "Bragging Too Fast" in which the showman recalls sitting in a barber shop[9] the night after giving a lecture on "The Philosophy of Humbug." The ticket taker also happened to be there and, not knowing Barnum's face, enters into an unwitting and embarrassing conversation with the showman who asks a series of leading questions without divulging his identity. The highly stylized scene is representative of other incidents of mistaken identity in the Life and also serves as a nice illustration of Barnum's narrative style:

> "Did Barnum make a good speech," I asked.
>
> "I did not hear it. . . . But it makes not difference whether it was good or not . . . the people will go to see old Barnum. First he humbugs them, and then they pay to hear him tell how he did it! I believe if he should swindle a man out of twenty dollars, the man would give a quarter to hear him tell about it."
>
> "Barnum must be a curious chap," I remarked.
>
> "Well, I guess he is up to all the dodges."
>
> "Do you know him?"
>
> "Not personally," he replied, "but I always get into the Museum for nothing. I know the doorkeeper, and he slips me in free."

> "'Old Barnum' would not like that, probably, if he knew it," I remarked. (375)

The conversation continues in this vein until Barnum leaves, the customers inform the ticket taker who he had been talking to, and his embarrassment is manifest in his "chop-fallen" face the next time he ran into "old Barnum" at the Museum.[10]

Barnum orchestrates and relishes other plots of mistaken identity throughout the text. When Jenny Lind made her triumphant tour of America in 1850 she was mobbed by adoring crowds that congregated to catch a glimpse of the Swedish Nightingale. In Philadelphia a crowd gathered outside their hotel, demanding to see the Diva. Jenny was fearful of crowds and Barnum "tried to induce the crowd to disperse," but they refused (320). Unwilling to disturb Jenny, Barnum dressed her traveling companion in the star's shawl and bonnet and promenaded her before the crowd who gave three cheers and "quietly dispersed" (320). The incident seems innocuous enough, but Barnum closes on the following note: "Miss Lind was so utterly averse to anything like deception, that we never ventured to tell her the part which her bonnet and shawl had played in the absence of their owner" (320).

Other incidents of mistaken identity occur on the Jenny Lind tour and Barnum continues to relate them with interest: One Sunday morning Barnum's daughter, Caroline, is mistaken for Jenny Lind when, accompanying a friend to a Baltimore church service, she happened to sit in the section reserved for the choir. Some of the parishioners recognized Caroline with Barnum the day before and immediately concluded that Caroline was Jenny Lind. Barnum tells the story with typical delight:

> A number of the congregation, who had seen Caroline with me the day previous, and supposed her to be Jenny Lind, were yet laboring under

> the same mistake, and it was soon whispered through the church that Jenny Lind was in the choir! The excitement was worked to its highest pitch when my daughter arose as one of the musical group. Every ear was on the alert to catch the first notes of her voice, and when the notes gushed forth, glances of satisfaction passed through the assembly. (320)

The congregants continue to react to the false Jenny Lind, blocking Caroline's passage out of the church and continuing to boast, "in good faith, that they had listened to the extraordinary singing of the great Swedish songstress" (320). Similar incidents follow. In New Orleans, Barnum clears a path through a throng of admirers when he disguises Caroline in Jenny's shawl and bonnet, veils her face, and escorts her through an unsuspecting crowd who again mistake his daughter for Jenny. The crowd is satisfied they have seen "Jenny" and disperses; minutes later, Jenny and her traveling companion walk through empty streets. In Cincinnati, Barnum discovers a waiting crowd is aware of Barnum's trick of disguising Caroline as Jenny. Walking through the crowd with Jenny in tow this time, the crowd begins to taunt Barnum, yelling, "That won't do, old Barnum! You may fool the New Orleans folks, but you can't come it over the 'Buckeyes,'" and allow Barnum and Jenny to pass through (338).

In addition to telling us about Barnum's playfulness with cases of mistaken identity (and also showing himself off as a popular man of the people) these scenes nicely contrast with the more problematic cases of mistaken identity in post-Revolutionary literary discourse, revealing the general acceptance of the theatrical self in nineteenth-century society. Jenny-Lind-o-mania (which will be discussed at length below) is representative of an

emerging cult of (pliant) personality in a developing nineteenth-century popular culture.

These anecdotes of mistaken identity that Barnum merrily draws our attention to throughout his Life are merely spontaneous and haphazard isolated incidents. But, for Barnum's purpose, these incidents are rhetorical devices that help to normalize the more calculated scenes of mistaken identity that he exhibited on the public stage. Barnum's professional career--his exhibitions and displays of human aberrations and wonders of the natural world (The Fejee Mermaid, the Woolly Horse, etc.) were almost entirely based on mistaken identities and stylized presentations of a public self. His first public "exhibit," Joice Heth, the alleged 161 year-old slave woman who was George Washington's nursemaid, is a prototypical event that looks forward to the Jenny Lind "enterprise" of 1850. Another less memorable, yet fairly typical Barnumesque exhibit grounded in this notion of mistaken identity is the Swiss Bell ringers who, before they were picked up by Barnum, called themselves the "Lancashire Bell Ringers." These Englishmen were miffed when Barnum stipulated that in order for him to bring them on tour in America they would have to grow their mustaches, "assume a picturesque dress," and change their name. Protesting, the Englishmen declared their inability to speak German and hence, "pass muster as Swiss people." Barnum, with his keen sense of duplicity and the parochial American mind, counters their protests by explaining that "if they continued to speak in America as they had just spoken to me, they might safely claim to be Swiss, or any thing else, and no one would be any wiser" (344). Other examples abound; indeed, Barnum's professional life as a showman was contingent on his ability to manipulate private identity for public consumption.[11]

In the emerging market economy of antebellum America, the creation and manipulation of self was imperative to success. Closing his autobiography with a section, "Rules for Success in Business," the showman encourages fortune hunters and speculators to "put on the appearance of business and the reality will follow" (396). For Couser, Barnum's book is a dark derivation of Franklin's autobiography and suggests the potentially subversive possibilities in the American republic: "Barnum's Life was not at all what Benjamin Vaughan had in mind as the proper offspring of Franklin's seminal American autobiography. Indeed, it exposes a link between Founding Father and the nineteenth-century confidence man that we are not eager to acknowledge" (53). Yet, based on a quick survey of the public reception of Life (and the subsequent editions), Barnum's book, while it had its detractors,[12] was held up by many nineteenth-century Americans as a model of American virtue, piety, and ingenuity. As the reviews suggest, Barnum's book did the kind of cultural work that confirmed the values of a mid nineteenth-century market economy as it spread across space and time. Read as a handbook for survival in a burgeoning market economy, the text, which surreptitiously expostulated and celebrated dynamic selfhood as it exhibited its central figure, established the necessity of theatrical selfhood in a socially and economically turbulent time period.

"To Barnum's admirers," explains Neil Harris, "his autobiography was simply a road map of the route to success" (Humbug 224), and in his introductory essay to a blue-penciled version of Barnum's autobiography, George Bryan declares, "In his own day, the 'practical' value of the autobiography was stressed" (xxx). John Fitch,[13] a contemporary of Barnum, told the showman:

> I know every line in your book; so, indeed, do several members of my family and I have conducted my business on the principles laid down in your published 'Rules for Money-Making.' I find them correct principles; and, sir I have sought this interview in order to thank you for publishing your autobiography, and to tell you that to act of yours I attribute my present position in life. (quoted in Bryan xxv).[14]

Harris reports an American lecturer who expostulated that he knew "of no book which is better adapted to become a thoroughly instructive and agreeable guide through life" (224), and Bryan reprints advertisements for Struggles and Triumphs declaring "Every young man should read it." Furthermore, that other instructor of young men, Horace Greeley, explained (this is according to Barnum) that the book and the lecture on the Art of Money-Getting "was worth a hundred-dollar greenback to a beginner life" (quoted in Bryan xxi). Barnum's most recent biographer, A.S. Saxon, notes that Barnum boasted (in an unpublished letter dated 13 March 1855) that his publisher had received over one thousand auspicious reviews of Life since its publication in December of the preceding year. Saxon reprints a "fair example" of one of the one-thousand-plus favorable reviews:

> THE MORAL OF BARNUM'S BOOK. If this book be not superficially read, it is easy to see that, under a cloak of fun, jokes and good humor, the author intends to teach and press home the lesson that mere humbugs and deceptions generally fail, and that money acquired in immoral occupations takes to itself wings and flies away, while permanent wealth is only to be obtained and enjoyed from sources of real merit and substantial worth. Thus he shows . . . his "humbugs" were no source of direct profit to him, but were used merely as advertisements, to attract public attention to himself, and to gain public

> support for his real and substantial exhibitions, such as his Museum, Tom Thumb in England, and Jenny Lind. (12, emphasis in original)

In his encouragement of the reader to take Barnum's book seriously and engage it on a deeper level of meaning (a level similar, perhaps, to the way nineteenth-century readers would have been encouraged to read the Bible), the writer of this article suggests the comfort that American culture, by 1855, had with individuals engaging in plots of mistaken identity and games of duplicity ("cloak"s of good fun), arguing that the public hoaxes were all for the "greater good" of Barnum's "real" and "substantial" (could this be thick irony?) public displays.

The relationship between the self-stylized, dynamic self of Barnum's autobiography and the book's status as a handbook for success in the mid-nineteenth century suggests how Americans recast the problem of selfhood at mid-century. Barnum's book was consumed and produced during a period of the American experience when, Russel Nye explains, "the control of the means of cultural production and transmission [had finally and decidedly] passed from a previously privileged elite to the urbanized, democratized middle classes" (The Unembarrassed Muse 2). The emergence of a bona fide mass culture operating through the market mechanisms of a burgeoning capitalist system created a space for Barnum's book to do the kind of cultural work that it accomplished.

Stylization of Other and an Antebellum Culture of Exhibition

The theatricality of Barnum's public life does not simply stop with his self. Barnum managed to stylize his own life in his autobiography, but the autobiography is primarily made up of accounts of Barnum's peculiarities in

the theatricality of the Other. Indeed, Barnum made a name for himself by stylizing the lives of Others and packaging them for public consumption.

It is no coincidence that in 1834 Barnum moved his wife and child to New York City in order to fulfill a dream of owning a public exhibition: "I had long fancied that I could succeed if I could only get hold of a public exhibition (143). The nineteenth-century culture of exhibition was wide and varied, involving the public display of natural curiosities, technological advances and demonstrations, and medical/psychological treatments. Mesmerism, phrenology, animal magnetism, the daguerreotype and other cultural phenomenon were displayed on the exhibition stage of nineteenth-century America. In addition, the public lectures and lyceums[15] that became popular during the 1830s and the grand revival traditions[16] of the same decade also contributed to the larger exhibition culture of the period. Barnum participated in and used all of these aspects of the culture of exhibition in his career--he gave lectures (his most famous was entitled "The Philosophy of Humbug"), exhibited mesmerized subjects in his "Lecture Room" and even addressed congregations of America's churches. His most intense (and profitable) experience with the exhibition culture, however, was through the public display of human aberrations.

In her discussion of the development of Dime Museums, Brooks McNamara has noted that before the Revolution traveling showmen roamed the colonies exhibiting natural curiosities for profit (218). By 1835, when Barnum exhibited his first human before the public gaze, the exhibition had become an integral, and curious, part of an emerging urban American popular culture. By 1850, as we will see in Barnum's orchestration of the Jenny Lind American tour, "exhibiting" had become a formalized extravaganza yielding high profits and intense public fervor. Barnum was

working in a tradition of public exhibition and we might pause to adumbrate the development of the tradition from the post-Revolutionary period to the mid-nineteenth century.

Barnum's most famous predecessor in the area of public exhibitions was Charles Willson Peale, the eccentric developer of America's first museum of indigenous artifacts and natural history. Peale's museum, which he opened in Philadelphia in 1784 and passionately developed until he retired in 1810, was a product of an Enlightened mind that believed in the essential perfection of the natural order. For Peale, humans that copied and learned from Nature led happy, righteous lives: "I love the study of Nature," he once said, "for it teacheth benevolence." Peale exhibited Nature in order to teach and instruct; the following was inscribed over the entranceway of the museum:

> The Book of Nature open,
>
> . . . Explore the wondrous work,
>
> . . . an Institute
>
> Of Laws eternal, whose unaltered page
>
> No time can change, no copier corrupt. (quoted in Sellers 15)

Christopher Looby has argued that the immediate post-Revolutionary leaders (like Peale) looked at the world around them and were fearful of the chaos and the turbulence of the new republic. Realizing that the immediate post-Revolutionary society was a "factitious entity, a concocted political framework that gathered together people whose primordial loyalties were attached to local, ethnic, sectarian, and linguistical communities. . . . [i]t occurred to [the leaders] that nature might aid them in constituting the nation" (Looby 255). The mission of Peale's museum, then, was to rationalize and justify the new (artificial) social hierarchies and orderings according to what they saw as the

universal truth and order of nature: "In the thought of cultural leaders of the early national period, there is a kind of automatic metaphorical exchange between images of natural order and ideas of social and political order" (Looby 253).

Consider Peale's "The Artist in his Museum": In his self-portrait of 1822, the benign and unassuming Peale stands in the foreground of the painting, pulling back a regal-looking curtain and beckoning the viewer to enter his most democratic of public spaces.[17] From archaeological artifacts to stuffed birds to the portraits of the new country's political leaders, the museum houses the stuff of America. Furthermore, the museum is organized in a manner befitting a culture based on the principles of enlightened rationalism and a concern for hierarchies. From the floor to the ceiling, the artifacts are displayed in taxonomical order: The spectator needs to direct his gaze downward in order to ponder the lower orders of animals, but in order to delight in the visages of George Washington and John Adams the visitor is required to tilt his or her head backward and gaze up toward the ceiling. Images of blacks, women, Native Americans, or any Others do not grace the top layer of Peale's pictorial display.

After Peale retired, he gave the museum management to his sons, Rembrant and Reubens, post-Enlightenment subjects who found it impossible to maintain the didactic mission of the museum. The exhibition of Nature gradually gave way to public demand for fantastic and exotic displays and performances. Gradually, the function of the museum moved from an institution benefiting the public good to a money-making device as Reubens, late in the first decade of the nineteenth century, began to use lecturers, performers, and experimenters to attract more customers.[18] By 1817, Reubens conceded that the museum could only survive on a profit

motive and, to keep pace, he added catchpenny shows and a pandean band (a one-man musical show). By 1838, three years prior to the opening of Barnum's American Museum, Peale's museum was displaying Negro bands, Yankee impersonators, Hungarian minstrels and musical ladies. Tom Thumb appeared on the Museum stage in 1845. The museum stayed on this course until Barnum finally purchased it in 1850.

The exhibition culture of the 1830s through the 1850s was fueled by the demands of an emerging, culturally complex, and diverse American city. As more Americans began to call the city their home, a new urban culture of heterogeneity and differences evolved. "In an atmosphere of expanding personal freedom and individual opportunity, nineteenth-century cities severed the old ties of men and women with the countryside, setting them adrift in a maelstrom of people radically different from themselves" (Barth 3). The variety of residential housing areas, sartorial significations, and verbal speech patterns all demonstrated that the emerging American city was a place of contrasts that highlighted ethnic, racial, and socio-economic differences. And the radical differences that separated city people also became a form of popular fascination and speculation.

Barnum seized on the opportunities of marketing and advertising afforded by the developing "metropolitan press" of the period. During the 1830s, the urban newspaper gradually became a common source of public information and knowledge: "The metropolitan press pioneered journalistic practices that satisfied people's need for information about the bewildering place they found themselves in, the other inhabitants, and themselves" (Barth 59). The modern newspaper was a representational tool that made sense of the baffling signs of the city, reporting on public events and even, as Barth argues, providing urban residents with a way to define themselves in the face of

their neighbors (62). Yet, newspapers were profit-motivated enterprises and relied on the representation of sensational and fantastic stories to hold their reader's attention and keep them buying the papers. "The least that can be said is that the antebellum public was fed an increasingly spicy diet of horror, gore, and perversity in both the penny papers and in the closely allied genres of trial pamphlets and criminal biographies" (Reynolds 171). "The roots of sensationalism," argues Barth, "lay not merely in the human craving for thrills, but in the nature of the modern city itself" (65). In its expansive size and diverse ethnic and cultural offerings, the modern city was a place of wonder and mysteries where concealment and disguises were a part of city life. Urban newspapers, in turn, served its residents as both agents of revelation of the mysteries of the city and mystification devices. Public controversy sold papers and the editors of the nineteenth century metropolitan press were not above fabricating stories in order to foment public interest. "By the 1850s," argues David Reynolds, "the penny papers had long held undisputed dominance of the mass newspaper market, the public was so accustomed to sensational news that a feeling of glut had set in" (175).

By the 1830s, a fascination with the spectacular and bizarre was rivaling the interest in and the study of Nature in the popular mind. There is perhaps no period of the American experience that demonstrated the interest in "freaks" and human aberrations with the avidity and fascination of Americans in the 1830s through the 1850s. The exhibition culture that Barnum participated in and helped foment was based on differences between the spectators and the human displays. Differences of race, gender, and the human form excited and mystified nineteenth-century audiences.

"Freak shows," or the public display of difference and the self-stylization of the Other, were an informal and unorganized, yet popular, cultural context of

the early nineteenth century. By mid-century, explains Robert Bogden, "'human curiosities' who, up to then traveled and were exhibited independently, were joining burgeoning amusement organizations" (537). The exhibitions highlighted exotic contrasts with "civilization"; Bogden observes that favorite themes included "cannibalism, human sacrifice, head hunting, polygamy, unusual dress, and food preferences which were disgusting to Americans" (540). Contance Rourke explains the flair for the grotesque in antebellum exhibition culture, noting that by 1841 "[a] passion for the morbidity strange, perhaps always languidly sleeping in the human mind, suddenly had become devouring" (291). Rourke mentions the publication of Poe's Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque in 1840, arguing that

> [F]reaks and monsters of all kinds were a fashion. . . . Aberrations from the normal in anatomical specimens were shown everywhere, with teeth and bones or even more gruesome relics which evoked the scenes of Indian slaughter, or the hint of monstrous heathen rites.[19] (291)

Barnum made his reputation and his fortune through the public display of human aberrations and the autocratic stylization of the Other. By the mid-1840s, Barnum's American Museum was in full swing, attracting audiences who were able to view freaks of all sorts. From the Bearded Lady to the "Nova Scotia Giantess," from the Leopard-skinned boy to Zalumma Agra, the famous "Circassian Girl," and from the Chinese family to the Albino family--if they were deformed, exotic, disproportioned in any way, or simply inclined to be transformed into one of Barnum's freaks (he exhibited a "Yankee Man" at one point) the great showman would put them on the stage of his "Lecture Room" for the inspection of the masses.[20]

The differences between the exhibit and the spectators, however, were generally more ostensible than real; that is, the "freaks" were misrepresented and stylized according to popular stereotypes of specific races and nationalities. The exploitation of human strangeness was a theatrical performance grounded in the disguise of the Other. Blacks acted out aboriginal roles, often being represented as "missing links"; Native Americans performed rituals and dances that confirmed their primordial type; and Gypsies and Bohemians (usually women) were represented as lusty, exotic beauties.

> Dressed in a manner compatible with the story, the exhibit would behave consistently with the front. "Wildmen" or "savages" might chant or scream while strutting about the stage snarling and growling. Dress might include animal skins, string of bones around the neck, and chains allegedly protecting the audience from the beast before them. In the case of people from the Orient, the presentation and the performance would be characteristically more sedate with the 'freak" acting out in exaggerated stereotypic ways the mannerisms and customs of the countries they represented. (Bogden 540)

The primary function of the displays was to make money, despite the fact that the "freak shows" were advertised as "educational or scientific exhibits," and not merely "frivolous entertainment" (Bogden 538). But while the managers used the human aberrations for their use value, the spectators found something quite different in the context of the "freak shows." Harris's assessment of the public reception of Tom Thumb (Barnum's popular midget who made a big hit in America as well as England, even impressing Queen Victoria with his prepossessing and precocious performance) seems quite

naive when he argues that Tom Thumb appealed to the perpetual boy or girl in each of his adult spectators:

> He was the furthest thing possible from a monster. Pert, intelligible, able to mimic, sing, and dance, General Tom Thumb . . . would become the perfect man-child, the perpetual boy, appealing to all ages and conditions. Crowds identified with him, rather than against him. (49)

Bogden, perhaps because he is writing fifteen years after Harris, is tougher with his assessment of the "freak shows," declaring the exhibitions "steeped in racism, imperialism and handicapism" and emphasizing the "inferiority of the 'human curiosity.'" Moreover, Bogden passes over arguments that the "freak shows" provided the human aberrations with a venue to make a living and even prosper by arguing that the shows were distortions of reality and antidemocratic: ". . . the mere presence of the exhibits on stage and as part of the amusement world, a world which became tainted in the public view, suggested that they belonged with their own kind, and that they were not competent enough to prosper in the larger world" (547).

The truly astonishing dynamic about the emergence of freak shows, which is lost on Bogden, is the fact that as the freak shows were entertaining the urban masses, criminal penitentiaries and insane asylums--institutional homes for humans with "aberrational" tendencies--were becoming an integral part of the American reform culture. America was the site of the world's first penitentiary system; the French government sent Toqueville to America in 1832 to observe the new penitentiary system. Prior to the rise of the asylum the poor and the insane were assimilated into the community. By the 1830s, a Lockean way of viewing human behavior (the blank slate theory) demonstrated that society itself was corrupt and a burgeoning reform tradition gradually developed the idea that criminals and the insane could be

reformed of their problems by removing them from the social (dis)order. The implication was that separation from the social milieu and a good dose of moral reform would rejuvenate rational behavior.[21] It is interesting that as the reformers of the period were carting the aberrants away and sequestering them behind institutional walls, showman like Barnum were parading "defective" individuals before the wondering and paying public gaze. Of course, Barnum did not search out his "freaks" from neighboring asylums or penitentiaries. An important distinction needs to be made between Barnum's freaks and the institutionally committed individuals. Yet, the irony of a society that has made room for human aberrations in the forum of a culture of exhibition and, at the same time, demanded the removal of social pariahs, illustrates one of the paradoxes of the tension-filled nineteenth century.

The exhibition of self and Other in antebellum America was a site of cultural exchange and conflict. The freaks, dwarfs, and Divas that were displayed to the public gaze in antebellum America, both confirmed and implicitly challenged middle class values. While it has become fashionable to create a dialectical model of culture where the hegemony corrals all forms of cultural discourse into dominant epistemes,[22] recent cultural studies such as Eric Lott's Love and Theft have argued that culture is an arena of negotiation and exchange between dominant and peripheral discourses.[23] As a site of cultural exchange and pleasure, nineteenth-century exhibition culture becomes a sphere in which hegemonic and peripheral voices mix and mingle, precluding the type of cultural domination of the hegemony that is implicit within the critical work of consensus/Marxist schools. The public exhibition textualizes self and Other, and consequently highlights the subjectivity of the exhibit in the creation of public meaning. The exhibition culture was bound up in the dynamic circumstances that occurred when a self

was projected out toward the public sphere. On one level, the selves that were exhibited to nineteenth century Americans were used as ideological mirrors that reflected the values and epistemologies of the dominant order. We have discussed this in terms of Barnum's book and the cultural work it did, and discussions to follow on Joice Heth and Jenny Lind will continue this idea. On another level, however, the reflecting mirrors were distorted--like the fun house mirrors at a carnival. As authors of their own personas, the self that is on display performs a drama and consequently thwarts the homologous correspondence between the audience's desires and perceptions. The exhibition of self and Other was performed in a cultural sphere where meaning was created somewhere between the ideological demands of the audience to see their own selves through the public display of Other and the public presentation of self that the private self was projecting into the cultural playing field. Exhibition demands interpretation of the public self that has been displayed before the public gaze, and with interpretation, the individual authors of self remit their authorial authority and concede the fact that meaning occurs somewhere between the stylized public personas and the public interpretation of the exhibitees.

The Russian formalist M.M. Bakhtin may be helpful here. For Bakhtin, the dialogical discourse of the novel precluded a strictly hegemonic domination of cultural space and language. We might think about Bakhtin's discussion of the novel in terms of the textualization of self in the exhibition culture of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Defining the novel as a diversity of social speech types and individual voices, all artistically organized, Bakhtin relished novelistic discourse for its uncanny ability to express cultural tensions and ideologies. The novel for Bakhtin is made up of a multitude of social voices that refract off of each other and compete for

distinction. The chaotic, incalculable effect of a word (or language) precludes homologic correspondence between the author's intentions and the reader's interpretation, and meaning occurs somewhere within the kaleidoscope of language that makes up a literary text. Language is neither owned nor controlled by a specific class, race, or gender, "words and forms can belong to no one . . . language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents" (Dialogical Imagination 283). Each sign or gesture of culture means and is interpreted within a specific cultural context, yet each sign is "open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist" (Dialogical Imagination 276). In the semiotics of culture, gestures and language are "shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents"--nothing exists in itself; everything means and works within a specific cultural context (Dialogical Imagination 276).

Consider Barnum's initial foray into the exhibition culture of antebellum America. In 1835, the "Prince of Humbugs" began his career as a showman by becoming a slaveholder. Keen on the public demand for the exhibition of race and difference on the public stage, Barnum made every possible effort to supply the public need.[24] He purchased Joice Heth, the alleged 161 year old woman who was displayed before the public as George Washington's nursemaid, from R.W. Lindsay in June of 1835 and began to "exhibit" her at Niblo's in New York City in August. Barnum only enjoyed Heth's services for 7 months; she died on 19 February 1836. A public autopsy revealed Joice's age to be no more than 80 years and Barnum came under public suspicion for his blatant humbuggery. Barnum managed to make Joice Heth the subject of public controversy and to profit considerably from her exhibitions. Indeed, Joice Heth becomes the first of a multitude of Others that Barnum exhibited

and stylized for public consumption. However, Joice Heth was as much the author of her self as Barnum was the creator of her character and it is the dynamics between Barnum's manipulation of the Other and Joice's presentation of her self, all embedded in the culture of exhibition, that makes this incident important here.

Shortly before he purchased Joice Heth, Barnum visited Scudder's Museum (which he would purchase 6 years later) to bargain on the purchase of a Hydro-Oxygen Microscope that the owner guaranteed would "secure its owner an independence" if the invention were exhibited throughout the country (144). The two thousand dollar price tag (1000 down and the balance on credit) was more than Barnum was willing or able to pay, though. Shortly thereafter Barnum discovered Joice Heth and does not seem to have had much trouble talking Lindsay down from the $3000 asking price to $1000. It was more profitable in antebellum America to exhibit fantastic African Americans than it was to offer close-up glimpses of nature through a microscope. On a pragmatic level, Barnum certainly made the right choice in choosing Joice over the microscope. The fantastic claim of her age and the mythical connection to Washington was ripe for the spectacular imagination of the 1830s.

According to Barnum's description, Joice was a wonder to look at: He says he was "favorably struck with the appearance of the old woman" who "might almost . . . have been called a thousand years old any other age (148). Toothless, blind, and nearly completely paralyzed, Joice's eyes "were so deeply sunken in their sockets that the eyeballs seemed to have disappeared altogether." Her decrepit hand was bent inward and the fingernails went beyond her wrist. Rounding out the picture, Barnum tells us, "The nails

upon her large toes also had grown to the thickness of nearly a quarter of an inch" (148-149).

Joice mixed her grotesque features with a fine sense of histrionics when she passed herself off as George Washington's nursemaid: She was "sociable" and talked "incessantly" to her public viewers. Joice performed on her own volition; unlike Tom Thumb, her successor in the world of Barnum's exhibitions, she did not rely on Barnum for any prompting or training. She sang hymns, spoke of the first President as "dear little George," and proudly claimed to be present at his birth. "'In fact,' said Joice, and it was a favorite expression of hers, 'I raised him.'" Appealing to the piety of her viewers, Joice moved from anecdotes of Washington's childhood to religious subjects, "for she claimed to be a member of the Baptist Church," which "rendered her exhibition an extremely interesting one" (149).

We might pause to consider the implications of the alleged nursemaid of Washington stirring public interest and being profitably exhibited in the public sphere. The irony, of course, is that Barnum secured his own independence through the enslavement of another--he made $1500 a week exhibiting Joice Heth at Niblo's and then he took her on a profitable tour of the Eastern states. Barnum's campaign to "sell" Joice Heth to the public was a curious example of the theatricality of Otherness that Barnum perfected throughout his career. Moreover, the incident demonstrates how the exhibition of black culture in the nineteenth century, particularly Barnum's exhibition of black culture, was based in the commodification and reification of the Other. "While the slaves are certainly playing in for some control, it is clear that black culture was frankly on display in the North as well as the South, and that such display adhered to a commodified logic whose roots inevitably lay in slavery . . ." (Lott 43).

Certainly the appeal of the Washington legend attracted interest in the post-heroic period of the republic--the Founding Fathers had all passed away, but Washington's nursemaid was alive and well. Barnum's exhibition of Joice, of course, cuts across the major social and economic tensions of antebellum America: In 1835, a period of increasing sectional tension over the issue of slavery (recall the Nullification Crisis of 1832), Barnum buys and exhibits an old slave woman, exhibiting her to the public as the first person to put clothes on the Father of the country and implicitly underscoring the embarrassing reality of slavery in a society based on principles of freedom and equality.

Barnum's success in the theatricalizaton of Other was primarily accounted for in his manipulation of the press and, consequently, the public mind. Barnum was not the first to exhibit Joice Heth, and her "success" as a public display was a result of her own sense of histrionics combined with Barnum's cagey marketing of the Other. Lindsay was exhibiting Joice before he sold her to Barnum and though we don't know how he fared, he did, after all, sell her for $2000 less than what he originally asked. After the purchase, Barnum set off "to make the necessary arrangements for her reception in New York" (152). In the 1869 edition of the autobiography, Barnum would add, "At the outset of my career I saw that everything depended upon getting people to think, and talk, and become curious and excited over and about the 'rare spectacle'" (83). An exhibition space at Niblo's was secured and two foot by three foot transparencies announcing, "Joice Heth--161 years old" were placed outside. Advertisements announcing Joice as "The greatest curiosity in the world" ran in the New York newspapers. His cagey sidekick, Levi Lyman (who would later disguise himself as the learned Dr. Griffin and lead the infamous Fejee Mermaid up the East Coast, marshaling excitement and

public fervor over the alleged exotic artifact), wrote a pamphlet of Joice's life (fictionalizing a fiction), placed a sketch of the Negro woman on the top, and sold it to the public for 6 cents. When public interest waned, Barnum drummed up public controversy and, consequently, more business, when he sent pseudonymous editorials to the New York papers declaring that Joice Heth was an automaton made up of India rubber and whale bones.

Of course the enormous irony of the career of America's most famous showman being founded upon the shackles of African American slavery is nothing new in our understanding of antebellum America. Yet Joice Heth, ultimately, had the last laugh on P.T. Barnum. Throughout his career, Barnum submitted that he was astonished when the physicians who examined her corpse discovered that Joice was no more than 80 years old. It is important that Barnum maintains his innocence in this alleged humbug. In his Life, he willingly reveals previous public deceptions. For instance, he happily unmasks, or "confesses," his participation in the Great Buffalo Hunt in Hoboken, New Jersey in 1843 and the Woolly Horse episode of 1848.[25] Of course Barnum had a great deal to lose by admitting the willful duplicity of the Heth affair. In addition, as any reader of the autobiography can see, Barnum was not averse to uncovering former deceptions; indeed, he reminds us in the Preface to Life:

> None of my enterprises, however, have been omitted, and though a portion of my "confessions" may by some be considered injudicious, I prefer frankly to "acknowledge the corn" wherever I have had a hand in plucking it. (iv)

Yet, by maintaining his ignorance of Joice Heth's age, he admits that he has been duped by the histrionics of the cagey old woman. In his Life, Barnum was still asserting his innocence in the Heth hoax, arguing that he bought

Joice from Lindsay in "perfect good faith," and that he was duped by a "forged bill of sale purporting to have been made by the father of George Washington." Barnum argues that he "honestly believed" the false document and laments the fact that he "has ever since borne the stigma of originating that imposture" (Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum, italics in original). It probably hurt Barnum more to admit his unwitting role in the falsification of Joice Heth's character because, by doing so, he was admitting that Joice Heth duped him. The actor with the most crafty sense of showmanship in the Joice Heth affair was not Lindsay, or even Barnum, but Joice Heth, and critical commentaries regarding this episode have ignored this important dynamic. Throughout the autobiography, Barnum goes to painstaking lengths to prove to the reader that no one can outsmart him, yet Joice Heth out-theatricalizes "The Prince of Humbugs" at the start of his illustrious career.[26] Joice Heth performed her role so well that it was only death that could uncover her mask of deception.[27]

In Love and Theft, Eric Lott's recent book on the minstrel tradition in American culture, issues of race and theatricality of antebellum America are broached, providing an important background for understanding Barnum's Life. With Joice Heth, Barnum exploited the Other as an integral part of the national past, but in the following episode, the great showman actually became that Other in order to receive the dividends of his investment in black culture. Of course Barnum was colorblind when it came to exhibiting human aberrations on the public stage. White, brown, black, or red; man, woman, or child--Barnum was satisfied if he could profitably present any"body" into the public sphere. However, as we saw in the Joice Heth episode, the "bodies" that Barnum exhibited were not selfless and will-less mannequins, and it is their assertion of self as it conflicts with Barnum's

presentation and the consequential perceptions of the public spectators that makes Barnum's participation in the exhibition culture interesting.

There is an important moment in Barnum's Life that illustrates this idea of the theatricalizaiton of Other. Barnum joined a traveling circus under the direction of Aaron Turner in April of 1836. A minstrel singer (a white man who blacked his face and sang black folk songs) named Sanford was under the employ of the circus, but on a jaunt through South Carolina, Sanford "abruptly" flew the company (189).[28] Barnum was left with a problem. He had advertised a minstrel show and was "determined not to disappoint the audience" (189). However, since there was no one in the company willing to perform the minstrel act, Barnum tells us that he assumed Sanford's role, blacked his face, and stepped onto the stage that evening to participate in a nineteenth-century cultural practice that struck at the heart of race, class, and gender relations in antebellum America.

The passage (quoted in its entirety below), ripe with the ideological language of race, demands a certain amount of cultural decoding. Emerging in the early 1830s, the minstrel tradition was at its height from 1846 to 1854, and is still evidenced in the practices of American popular culture. The critical response to the minstrel tradition has exposed the phenomena as a racist attempt by white culture to mock and lampoon black culture, and so it was. Yet, Lott uncovers the cultural complexity of the tradition, explaining it as the first white recognition of black culture and a phenomena that "worked for over a hundred years to facilitate safely an exchange of energies between two otherwise rigidly bounded and policed cultures. . ." (Lott 6). Given the subjected position of African Americans, the minstrel tradition was precluded from becoming a middle ground of cultural exchange. The "exchanges" of the minstrel tradition were more evident in the commodified relationship

between the black-white man (the minstrel singer) and his (mostly) white audience. The minstrel tradition effectively commodified "blackness"--in their appropriation of black culture, whites "invested" (by studying and expropriating black culture) and then in turn "sold" blackness to the white public. Lott describes the minstrel tradition as a performative aspect of white culture that, in its appropriation and co-option of black culture, expressed racial ambivalence that whites harbored for blacks: guilt over slavery and fear of the black man as a formidable sexual force were obvious racial confusions being worked out in the minstrel tradition. Finally, the minstrel tradition worked as a control mechanism over the black body; the stylized implementation of a black mask over a white face, and the racial confusion that resulted in audiences actually thinking they were hearing Negroes singing "maintain[ed] some symbolic control" over the black body by allowing white culture to puppeteer the black body into ideological submission. Lott's study is essential for an understanding of what, exactly, was at stake that fall evening in 1836 when Barnum blacked his face. By using Lott as a cultural explicator, we can examine Barnum's rhetoric and discuss the implications of his theatricalizaiton of self and Other. In the midst of his anecdotal narrative about life as an itinerant showman in the mid 1830s, the following passage appears in Life:

> At Camden, S.C., Sanford abruptly left me. I had advertised Negro songs; no one of my company was competent to fill his place; but being determined not to disappoint the audience, I blacked myself thoroughly, and sung the songs advertised, namely, "Zip Coon," "Gittin up Stairs," and "The Raccoon Hunt, or Sitting on a Rail." It was decidedly "a hard push," but the audience supposed the singer was

> Sanford, and, to my surprise, my singing was applauded, and in two of the songs I was encored! (189 emphasis in original)

Recalling the account nearly twenty years after the incident, Barnum is still surprised and merry over his success. For as much of a showman as Barnum was, he rarely occupied a stage in a costume other than his own self. Barnum orchestrated his own life and the lives of others, but his stage was the stage of the world. It is curious, then, that when Barnum does assume another character it is done by blacking his face and improvising a minstrel act. (Furthermore, his rationalization for blacking up--no one in the company "competent" enough to perform and his unwillingness to disappoint the audience--seems disingenuous. It seems obvious that Barnum simply delighted in the prospect of the performance.) Barnum's comment about the "competence" required in minstrelsy suggests both the professionalization and the specialization of the practice. However, we might wonder about what made Barnum qualified to perform the minstrel routine. The minstrel show, a highly popular nineteenth-century entertainment, was a black performance based on a white invention, and as Barnum demonstrates here it was used "for better or worse" as a "product of self-commodification" (Lott 39). Here, Barnum reaps the rewards of reification through his "investment" in black culture. Mimicry required study and observation, and the minstrel singers who confused the empirical boundaries between black and white entered into black culture in order to present it (in a highly artificial, distorted manner) to their white audiences were engaging in some form of cultural exchange.

Barnum uses his minstrel performance to introduce a commentary on slavery and Southern rule:

> One of my musicians, a Scotchman named Cochran, was arrested in Camden, for having said to the colored barber who was shaving him,

> that he ought to escape to the Free States or Canada. I made strong but vain efforts for his release. He was imprisoned over six months. (189)

The passage is ambiguous on the subject of why Barnum set out to free his musician. Were his efforts to release Cochran based on political principle or mere self interest? Of course he was "interested" in Cochran as a musician in his troupe, but the very mention of the anecdote and the suggestion of authoritarian and anti-democratic Southern rule aligns Barnum against slavery and the political institutions that confirm its practice. The ideal reader response to this passage is a distaste for any state which precludes free speech and imprisons detractors from its system of belief. Finally, Barnum winds up this brief foray into nineteenth century issues of race with another anecdote:

> After singing my negro [sic] songs one evening, and just as I had pulled my coat off in the "dressing room" of the tent, I heard a slight disturbance outside the canvas. Rushing to the spot, and finding a person disputing with my men, I took their part, and spoke my mind to him very freely (189).

Barnum did not simply fill in for Sanford for one night and he makes no mention of searching for another minstrel singer. Indeed, he had found the minstrel he was looking for in himself, and the subtle reference to continuing performances ("After singing my negro songs one evening") is intriguing; Barnum has performed the songs on a number of occasions, and, moreover, he has made them <u>his</u>; that is, he has taken stock in his "negro songs" and made a repertoire from them. In the preceding passage, Barnum never tells us what the disturbance was about and, indeed, when he emerged from the tent disguised as a black man and began haranguing the stranger, a new problem quickly arose:

> He instantly drew his pistol, exclaiming, "You Black scoundrel! dare you use such language to a white man?" and proceeded deliberately to cock it. I saw that he supposed me to be a negro [sic], and might perhaps blow my brains out. Quick as thought I rolled up my shirt sleeves, and replied, "I am as white as <u>you</u> are, sir." He absolutely dropped the pistol with fright! (189)

The psycho-sexual overtones of this passage (the gun as phallus, and the imagery associated with the man "deliberately" "cock"ing his pistol) are examples of the white male's latent fear of miscegenation and the homoerotic fascination of the black body that Leslie Fiedler first noticed in 1948.[29] Lott has picked up on these inclinations as they reveal themselves in the accounts and lyrics of the minstrel tradition, observing, "In accounts like this we read a relatively transparent white male attraction to and repulsion from the black penis, for which the preoccupation with miscegenation serves as a kind of shorthand" (57).[30] Moreover, this incident is of interest to us for the way it demonstrates the lack of control Barnum (or anyone who "blacked up") had over the role they were performing. Whites mistook the minstrel singers for "real" African Americans. Lott remarks, ". . . when, in the decades before the civil War, northern white men "blacked up"" and imitated what they supposed was black dialect, music, and dance, some people, without derision, heard Negroes singing" (17). Barnum's anecdote demonstrates that this racial conflation occurred off the stage as easily as it did under the footlights. Furthermore, we might wonder about Barnum's decision to use the word "fright" in describing the man's reaction upon learning Barnum was white. Was the fear the result of the glaring possibilities of the flexible and transformative nature of race? Was the man miffed by the theatrical

presentation of race and consequently threatened by the thought of the mutability of racial signification?[31]

It is probably too simplistic to chastise Barnum, as Thomas Couser does, for "not moralizing on race at this opportune narrative moment," and treating "it as a contingent phenomenon, allowing the incident to stand as a practical joke that nearly backfired" (57). Barnum's views on slavery were characteristic of many Northern Democrats. On one hand he could write the following to Thomas Wentworth Higginson in April of 1855: "I have spent months on the cotton plantations of Mississippi, where I have seen more than one 'Legree'" (Selected Letters 86), yet on the other hand, he could argue for the continuing enslavement of blacks on the grounds that emancipation would put them in an inferior position to the whites. It was no accident that Barnum omitted this incident from the 1869 edition of the autobiography. Indeed, by 1869, the racial "problems" relating to black slavery in antebellum America that were lost on Barnum in the 1855 edition are considerably cleared out of the autobiography. The Joice Heth affair remained a sore spot for Barnum and he continued to talk about it in the subsequent editions of his autobiography, but without the aplomb he exhibited in Life. It should come as no surprise that Barnum excised the blackfacing passages from later editions and there is another curious incident in Life that is removed from later versions. In January of 1836, a month before Joice Heth's death, Barnum traveled to Washington to do a show with his newly-acquired juggler and acrobat, Antonio Vivalla. Sitting in the gallery of the Senate one day, Barnum witnessed a vitriolic debate over the question of slavery. Barnum reports a raging speech by John Calhoun, who had recently spearheaded the nullification crisis (Barnum does not mention the Crisis, however) that was beaten down by Andrew Jackson, regarding the nefarious abolitionists and the

danger they presented to the stability of the social order. Apparently, in 1855 the irony of his position as a one-time and future slaveholding Northerner sitting in the house of the United States Senate, listening to Calhoun's diatribe, was lost on his authorial consciousness. A.S. Saxon reports a disturbing incident regarding the P.T. Barnum of antebellum America: In one account of his life published in the New York Atlas, Barnum records his purchase of a male slave in Mississippi during the winter of 1837-38. When he discovered the man had stolen money from him, Barnum gave him 50 lashes and sold him at auction in New Orleans, receiving in turn "cash, sugar, molasses, and a negro woman and child" (Quoted in Saxon 84, based on a story in the Atlas, emphasis in original). The goods were shipped back to New York and the woman and child sold in St. Louis. Barnum's racism is inexcusable and his attitudes about African Americans demonstrate that he was a typical Northerner who was clearly ambivalent about slavery, yet untroubled and un-selfconscious about many of the problems that his exhibition of the black body presented.[32]

Barnum, it is worth stressing, began his life as a political and religious radical, and throughout his life he maintained a rather cavalier attitude toward the "status quo." While residing in Connecticut in the late 1820s, Barnum made a name for himself as a Universalist and a vociferous Jacksonian Democrat. When the local paper refused to print his editorials, he established a newspaper, The Herald of Freedom, as a tool to fight religious intolerance and repression. (It is curious, of course, that Barnum's paper started publication the same year Garrison first published that other herald of freedom, The Liberator.)[33] He was thrown in jail three times for his religious beliefs (which, in many ways were indistinguishable from his political ideology) and in a most (self) celebrated incident, he was jailed for

sixty days for allegedly libeling a deacon in Danbury, Connecticut. Furthermore, he expressed interest and sympathy with the women's movement. His minister at the Bridgeport Universalist church he sometimes attended was the locally-famous Olympia Brown, a radical suffragette who became embroiled in vitriolic church politics and was eventually ousted from the parish.[34] He listened to the suffragette, Lucy Stone, with interest, published a piece about her in his Illustrated News and attempted to get her to lecture in Bridgeport, explaining, "I think the lecture on Woman's Rights would suit them here--at all events, they ought to hear it" (quoted in Saxon 60). In a letter dated 27 April 1853, Barnum explained to Dr. Russell Trail that he "was much pleased with Miss Stone's speech last night and concur with nearly all her views" (Selected Letters 68). Barnum had nothing to gain by speaking sympathetically toward the nascent woman's movement and some of his most ostensibly genuine public statements regard an expanded social role for women.[35]

Theatricality of Self and Other within a Culture of Sentiment

While Barnum would continue to exhibit the strange and fantastic, by 1850 he was clearly searching for a way to distance himself from "freak shows" and public hoaxes and break into the respectable market of sentimental culture. With its unashamed "confessions," and its dramatic "conversion" to teetotalism near the end of the narrative, Barnum's book becomes a text that confirms a sentimental culture. Indeed, although Barnum has not been at home during his entire narrative, the showman's closing thoughts link him to the sentimental realm of domesticity:

> I am frequently in New-York, and occasionally in other great cities, yet I am never so happy as when I return to my "homestead." I am writing

> the closing pages of this Autobiography on the sixth anniversary of the "housewarming"[36] and my heart is warm with gratitude. I am at home, in the bosom of my family; and "home" and "family" are the highest and most expressive symbols of the kingdom of heaven. (404)

Through a discussion of Barnum's "Lecture Room," the Jenny Lind American tour of 1850, and the construction of his homestead, Iranistan, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, I will show how Barnum put sentimental culture on display, proving that by mid-century, the theatrical and sentimental were happy bed-fellows and that mid-century Americans were comfortable with "playing" at being sentimental.

In addition to his autobiography, the reigning passion of Barnum's life from 1841 until 1868 was his American Museum (destroyed by fire in 1868). With its strange and curious artifacts (magnets, autographs of famous people), wax figures (Queen Victoria, Venus), stuffed and live animals, an aquarium, and outright hoaxes (a replica of Niagara Falls, the Fejee Mermaid, the Woolly Horse), Barnum's American Museum "quickly became the most famous place of entertainment in nineteenth-century America. Nothing quite like it had existed before, either in the Old World or the New" (McNamara 219). The Museum attracted people of all classes and ranks--Whitman, Thoreau and James, in addition to foreign and domestic dignitaries and leading religious figures all visited and talked about Barnum's place. From 1841 until 1868, Saxon reports that 38 million admission tickets were sold. This astonishing fact is compounded by the fact that in 1865, the population of the United States was only 35 million.[37]

Barnum's "Lecture Room," a large theater that he renovated in 1850, occupied the second floor of the Museum. The room, which housed up to 3000 people, was a cultural site of pleasure where middle class values of

propriety and piety were offered to the public in dramatic representations. The name "Lecture Room" was a euphemistic moniker for a theater in which moral dramas and public exhibitions were acted out before large crowds of Americans who were looking for fun, but queasy about attending the City's more suspicious theatrical establishments. Recalling an earlier discussion, we can talk about the shift from Peale's museum to Barnum's as representative of the movement in post-Revolutionary America from a culture of Enlightened rationalism to one of sentiment. While Peale intended to mirror Nature with the hope of instructing humankind, Barnum used his Museum (particularly his Lecture Room) to instruct the masses in temperance and moral propriety. Consider the open letter he addressed to various editors in June of 1850 regarding the opening of his "Lecture Room": The new "room," Barnum explains, will be modeled after the exhibition room in his Philadelphia Museum (recently acquired from the Peale estate) "which receives the approbation and countenance of the great body of clergymen, the religious community at large, and all of the first families in that city . . . " (Selected Letters 43). Barnum continues by explaining the moral mission of the "Lecture Room":

> My plan is to introduce into the lecture room highly moral and instructive domestic dramas, written expressly for my establishments and so constructed as to please and edify, while they possess a powerful reformatory tendency. (Selected Letters 43 emphasis in original)

By mid-century, society is still considered corrupt and Barnum's insistence on the reformatory power of his theater attests to the demand and the rhetorical power of reform of mid-nineteenth-century culture. The conflation of the sentimental with the theatrical is perhaps no where else more evident than in the following:

> My whole aim and effort is to make my museums totally unobjectionable to the religious and moral community, and at the same time combine sufficient amusement with instruction to please all proper tastes and to train the mind of youth to reject as repugnant anything inconsistent with moral and refined tastes.
>
> Every vulgar or profane allusion and gesture is scrupulously avoided, and nearly every person in my employment . . . is a teetotaler. (Selected Letters 43, emphasis in original)

Like an evangelical revivalist of the 1830s, Barnum managed to combine the sacred and the ostensibly profane like no other American theatrical manager before him. Barnum's "Lecture Room" was theater for the middle classes and the culture of sentiment. Consider the words of A.S. Saxon, who despite his apparent unawareness of the ideological implications of Barnum's appeal to the middle class sensibility in his "Lecture Room," is correct in saying that Barnum

> made theater into something it had rarely been before: a place of family entertainment, where men and women, adults and children, could intermingle safe in the knowledge that no indelicacies would assault their senses either onstage or off . . . (105)

On the surface, Barnum's business was to confirm rather than challenge dominant ways of thinking--he entertained his audiences with shows they wanted to see--renditions of The Drunkard and a pirated dramatic version of Uncle Tom's Cabin were only a few of the moral melodramas acted on the stage of the "Lecture Room." Spectators looking for a drink would not find one in Barnum's Museum; indeed, he even prohibited his patrons from leaving the theater between acts in order to imbibe.[38] So concerned was Barnum to keep his theater free from alcohol that he employed detectives to

roam around and evict any dubious characters. Upon entering the theatrical establishment, spectators were given the opportunity of signing a teetotaling pledge.[39] Of course, the notorious "third tier" of early nineteenth-century theaters was never allowed in Barnum's "Lecture Room." Barnum vociferously defended his theater against accusations of impropriety: "No vulgar word or gesture, and not a profane expression was ever allowed on my stage! Even in Shakespeare's plays, I unflinchingly and invariably cut out vulgarity and profanity" (quoted in Saxon 107). Yet, the "Lecture Room," while it derived from the lecture rooms that Peale used in his museum, was a new phenomenon in American popular culture. Simply put, the "Lecture Room" made it safe for the sentimental culture to participate in American theater. Of course, Barnum was not alone in this endeavor--we have already examined Anna Cora Mowatt's earlier (1845-1854) efforts at making the theater approachable for the middle classes.

Barnum's great push for middle class respectability and his most dramatic wedding of the theatrical and the sentimental occurred during the Jenny Lind American Tour of 1850-1851.[40] In addition to suggesting Barnum's commodification of the Jenny Lind "enterprise" (an adjective he was fond of using to describe the tour), the following anecdote from Life, in Thomas Couser's words, "reflects his sense that their contract [Jenny's and Barnum's] wedded him to a personification of the Victorian ideal of a chaste, genteel, and cultured woman" (59): One day Jenny approaches the showman "in a playful mood" announcing "a most extraordinary report": "I have heard that you an I are about to be married. Now how could such an absurd report ever have originated?" Barnum, a verbal punster, replied, "Probably from the fact that we are 'engaged'" (319).

Barnum shaped and molded Jenny Lind's image for public consumption in a middle class culture of sentiment. If Jenny Lind would never have existed, Barnum probably would have invented someone like her. Gregory Green has, rather flippantly, termed Jenny Lind a "sanctified burlesque queen" (390), but for the much of the American public at mid-century she was an angelic Diva.[41] Indeed, Jenny was a Puritan at heart and Barnum did not have to do a great deal of "image management" in creating her appeal from the middle classes. Early in her career, Jenny Lind had won her reputation by appealing to the moral sensibilities of her listeners. Theatrical life was still an offense to the respectable mind and Jenny provided her European listeners with a respectable alternative to the sordid lives of many European performers.[42] A Puritan in her sensibilities, Jenny Lind began her career with the intention of helping the "theatrical profession to raise itself from the quagmire into which it had sunk. . . " (Bulman 20). She made her name on the European continent by performing operatic roles and dressing in the full regalia of the parts she played. Uncomfortable with this, she gave up opera, and purportedly her stage life, just prior to signing the contract with Barnum.

Jenny's ambivalence with the performing life was something she held in common with her American listeners; indeed, America was made for Jenny Lind as Jenny Lind was made for America. When Barnum set out to present Jenny Lind to the public, he engaged the public interest on moral and religious as well as aesthetic grounds, representing Jenny to the public as they would like her to be and as a visible embodiment of their own values. Consider the following passage from an advertisement Barnum used in February of 1850: ". . . so anxious am I that the United States should be visited by a lady whose vocal powers have never been approached by any other human being, and whose character is charity, simplicity, and goodness

personified" (quoted in Ware 4). Aware of the dubious glances the American public let rest on public performers (especially women), Barnum inundated the public presses with images of Jenny Lind that stressed her philanthropy and Puritan aesthetic.

When Jenny Lind arrived in New York on 1 September 1850, she was greeted by 20,000 adoring fans who had never seen her face or heard her mellifluous voice. Lind's arrival to the United States was just one more event in the history of the public spectacle in nineteenth-century America. The first formidable public spectacle of the century was Jackson's Inauguration in 1828--a well intended event motivated by Jackson's favorite phrase e pluribus unum, and which eventually became a rabble-rousing mob action. Of course Lafayette's return in 1824 and Kossuth's tour of the States in 1851 are examples of nineteenth-century public spectacle with rather different political and national implications than were evident at Jackson's Inauguration. Lafayette's tour, coming at the tail end of the post-Revolutionary period, preceded the deaths of Jefferson and Adams by two years and functioned as a national event that nostalgically confirmed the history of the American Revolution.[43] Kossuth, the Hungarian nationalist, called "The General Washington of Hungary," arrived in the States on a ship officially provided by the American government which also honored the General with a one hundred thousand dollars honorarium for his visit.[44]

In addition to the spectacle, Lind's arrival represents one of the more famous "docking" scenes of the American experience. From John Winthrop's address to his pilgrims aboard the Arabella in 1630 to the dilemma of General Anderson at Fort Sumter in 1861, the broad canvas of American history seems to have been primarily acted out on the docks of the Eastern seaboard. Indeed, there have been some wonderfully vivid "arrival"

scenes in the history of the American experience. After Winthrop's and his crew's solemn advent, we might think about the events of the Boston Tea Party on 16 December 1774.[45] Consider, too, Jackson's defense of New Orleans against the ominous appearance of the British in 1815.[46] Lafayette's much-celebrated landing to New York's Battery on 15 July 1824 is another example.[47] Also, the arrival of the French ballet dancer, Fanny Kemble in the spring of 1840, is explained by Ivor Guest as such a grand affair that "No other theatrical celebrity--not even the great singer Malibran, who had visited New York in 1827--had been awaited with such eager excitement as Fanny" (44).

Lind's arrival, an early example of an emerging culture of personality, is vividly described by Barnum in Life:

> Thousands of persons covered the shipping and piers, and other thousands had congregated on the wharf at Canal street [sic], to see her. The wildest enthusiasm prevailed as the noble steamer approached the dock. So great was the rush on a sloop near the steamer's berth, that one man, in his zeal to obtain a good view, accidentally tumbled overboard amid the shouts of those near him. (307)

In February of 1850, Barnum received word that Jenny Lind had agreed to the terms of Barnum's offer and would make a grand tour of America. (Incidentally, he had never seen or heard Jenny Lind, either.) Anxious to discover what the public knew about Jenny Lind, he informs a "gentlemanly conductor" in New York that he "had made an engagement with Jenny Lind, and that she would surely visit this country in the following August." The conductor's response, "Jenny Lind! Is she a dancer?"[48] has become folklore. Barnum took an enormous risk in engaging Lind's services, and had the "enterprise" failed he surely would have gone bankrupt;[49] he remarks that

the conductor's words "chilled me as if they were ice," and consequently "commenced preparing the public mind through the newspapers for the reception of the great songstress" (304).

When Barnum reflected back to Jenny Lind's triumphant opening concert at New York's Castle Garden on 11 September 1850 he remarked:

> The great assembly at Castle Garden was not gathered by Jenny Lind's great musical genius and powers alone. She was effectually brought before the public before they had seen or heard her. She appeared in the presence of a jury already excited to enthusiasm in her behalf. She more than met their expectations, and all the means I had adopted to prepare the way were thus abundantly justified. (316)

Indeed, prior to her arrival in the States, Barnum had properly "prepar[ed] the public mind" by packaging Jenny Lind as a Swedish Diva who was a paragon of virtue and spirituality (304). Barnum pulled the "heart strings" of the American public in order to get to their "purse strings" (315). Through newspaper rhetoric and the dissemination of her romanticized image, Jenny Lind came to mean something to mid-century Americans before she had even reached the shores of the New World. Long before Nike bought the rights to Andre Agassi, Barnum was aware of the power of image. Consider the following anecdote from Life: As public excitement for the arrival of Jenny Lind increased, Barnum says he "was particularly anxious to obtain a good portrait of her" so that he might get her visage out in the public realm (304). Sitting in the Museum one day, he is approached by a "foreigner" who offers Barnum a portrait of Jenny Lind, informing the showman that the singer had recently sat for him in Stockholm. Barnum finds the $50 asking price reasonable, but when he shows it to a friend, "he quietly assured me that it was a cheap lithograph pasted on a tin back, neatly varnished, and

made to appear like a fine oil painting to a novice in the arts like myself. The intrinsic value of the picture did not exceed 37 1/2 cents!" (304). The grand irony of the incident is made clear 40 pages later when Barnum provides a two page list of receipts from the Jenny Lind concerts. After copiously recording the gross totals from each of the cities on the tour, Barnum proudly announces, "TOTAL RECEIPTS OF 95 CONCERTS, . . . $712,161.34. This is a typical Barnumesque anecdote from Life which has been excised from later editions of the autobiography: Barnum takes the bait of the con man and appears to be duped, but the "Prince of Humbugs" cons the con man and turns an ostensible $49 dollar loss into an investment that yields a $700,000 gain.

The public Jenny Lind that Barnum constructed confirmed the values and beliefs of her middle-class American listeners.[50] When American audiences gazed upon Jenny Lind, they saw an ideal representation of their own selves. "The outpouring of public sentiment was, under Barnum's gentle prodding, a tribute to an ideal, designed to reflect credit not only on the object of veneration but the venerators themselves" (Harris, Artist 121). In the Jenny Lind "enterprise" theatricality of self and a culture of sentiment stand side by side and buoy each other up. Private selfhood is intentionally stylized in order to confirm public values. Consider the following account from the Commercial Advertiser of 21 September 1850 where public morality becomes a prerequisite for aesthetic virtuosity:

> The sweetness and compass of her voice, the simplicity, propriety and grace of her manners; the correctness of her taste, and the soundness and strength of her judgment, all combine to make her what she is--the most charming singer of the age. (quoted in Ware 28)[51]

While two words of the passage are used to describe Jenny's musical ability ("sweetness" and "compass"), the remainder of the language is used to represent Jenny Lind as the sentimental ideal. The author continues with his (and it is no coincidence that Jenny Lind enjoyed a mostly male following--one observer noted that 7/8 of the audience of her first concert at Castle Rock was made up of men) praise that is grounded in Jenny's religious character, gradually becoming the moral arbiter who measures self-worth according to personal piety:

> Her earnest desire that the life and example should be on the side of all that is praise-worthy, and her sincere respect for religion and for those who profess it, have made her beloved by the friends of all that is noble and exalting.
>
> We have good reasons for knowing that she holds the Sabbath in high reverence and honor; greatly desires to pass the sacred day in the performance of her religious duties, and is grieved to find that she cannot go to church without attracting a crowd.

The ambivalence here is palpable: the author (and his readers) have been seduced by the ethereal voice of Jenny Lind, but, suspicious of the performing self of the public stage and worried about the aesthetic power of one woman, there is a hard-boiled attempt to figure her into the epistemology a culture of sentiment and of latent Puritanism.

In the American reception of Jenny Lind we begin to see a spectacular acceptance of an adorned public self that is quite contrary to the private self. Jenny Lind was widely known and recognized for her philanthropic sacrifices and her streak of Puritanism, yet the Jenny Lind that was represented to the public was a caricature with these very sentimental ideals distorted and overextended. Less concerned with expressing the private self in the public

realm (Fliegelman's reading of the oratorical Revolution) by mid-century, Americans were comfortable with the radical discrepancies between private and public natures. Indeed, as we see in the figures of Barnum and Lind, the private nature is easily masked and veiled behind the self-stylized public self. In certain situations, the masking of selfhood and the consequential implication of a dynamic self is not only accepted, but applauded and held up as a national figure.[52]

Consider the rhetoric Americans used to describe their Jenny Lind: The following appeared in Boston's Semi-Weekly Advertiser on 25 September 1850:

> She possesses a personal fascination which not only shines through, but for the moment completely glorifies features which are certainly far from beautiful. This charm is partly owing to a simplicity and naturalness of manner which appears to be simple and natural beyond any other which was ever seen or heard of; but in the greatest measure to an expression of countenance, residing chiefly in the eye, which amounts to absolute fascination, and almost to witchery . . . (quoted in Ware 3)

Jenny Lind's artistry is lauded for the way she copies Nature, for the naturalness of her performances, but it is a representation far from Peale's methods of imitating Nature in order to teach and instruct. Jenny Lind--her body and her voice--becomes a work of art, a representation or copy of the natural order that bewitches the viewer and sends (mostly) him into raptures. By mid-century, the Romantic imitation of Nature propels the viewer into a mystical reverie and suggests an ideal world beyond the corporeal. "God revealed Himself not simply in the splendor of His plan (the Linnaen synthesis that captivated Enlightenment philosophers)," explains Neil Harris,

"but in the more specific pleasures and beauties of flowers, sunsets, mountaintops, and butterflies" (Artist 137). "Through Jenny Lind I first became sensible of the holiness there is in art," explained her contemporary and confidante, Felix Mendelssohn, "through her I learned that one must forget oneself in the service of the Supreme" (quoted in Bulman 67). Even William Ellery Channing, who was not referring to Jenny Lind in the following quote from his sermon, "The Essence of the Christian Religion," suggests the nineteenth-century inclination to see certain physical images as "emblems" for the transcendent order: "We think, perhaps, that nature has a beauty of its own, in which we can delight, without reference to any reality above it. But natural beauty is an image or emblem of harmonious qualities of the mind. It is a type of spiritual beauty" (quoted in Wolf, Re-Vision 27). Clearly, Americans saw Jenny Lind in the light of a Romantic, post-Calvinist world view where the manipulation of senses (sight and sound, primarily) through the ostensible imitation of the natural order suggested a spiritual world outside the temporal order or the realm of consciousness and impelled the listener or viewer along the road to self-realization and fulfillment.[53] "The objective of art lay far beyond its own existence or the production of pleasurable emotions. Its purpose was individual fulfillment, attained by uniting the spectator's mind with some great universal expression and reproducing within him the thought which animated the artist" (Harris, Artist 175). Through the manipulation of her vocal chords, Jenny Lind excited the sensory perceptions of mid-nineteenth century Americans and, consequently, she became a physical embodiment that mediated "the discrepancies between the ideal and actual" (Harris Artist, 171).

Yet, ironically, the public Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," the "Nordic Songstress," was hardly the public representation of the unadorned

private Jenny Lind. The above account, not untypical of other contemporary accounts of Jenny Lind, suggests the aestheticization of the (female) body and voice of Jenny Lind that her reviewers were wont to engage in. Jenny's artistry, which her listeners appropriated as a physical mediation, appealed to the nineteenth-century Cult of Sincerity. Ironically, Jenny Lind was loved for the ostensible naturalness of her performances: "Her performances seemed natural rather than artificial, the spontaneous expressions of a great talent" (Harris, Humbug 117). Yet, as we have seen, Jenny's public persona was artificially created by Barnum's grand public campaign to prepare the American mind. In effect, Barnum, the master of honest duplicity, placed a mask of sincerity and naturalness over the public visage of Jenny Lind (as he was so wont to do with his exhibitions) and convinced the American public (or did they convince themselves?) that the simulated Swede was a divine representative of the nineteenth-century cult of sincerity.

Americans rhetorically transformed Jenny Lind into a Divine representative; she became an aestheticized object in the eyes of her critics and spectators. She is frequently referred to as a "seraph" or a "fairy songster"--one reviewer talked about the "divine lamp burning within Jenny Lind" (Ware 29)--and in her biography of Lind Joan Bulman remarked, "The very way she stood on a platform was in itself full of charm, and standing there in her simple pale blue gown with green flowers in her hair and hands she seemed to them transformed before their eyes into a kindly angel" (60). Consequently, an accurate representation of Jenny Lind remained elusive, the inevitable fate of all Platonic conceptions. Nathaniel Parker Willis, who begins to emerge as one of the nineteenth century's commentators most concerned with the problems of representation (recall his thoughts on the

daguerreotype in Chapter One), lamented that fact that no artist had found the correct way to paint Jenny Lind:

> There is great competition to be the painter of Jenny Lind. Mr. Barnum, we understand, has engaged a portrait for his palace of Iranistan. . . . It seems to us that no one of the dozen engravings purporting to represent Jenny Lind has any reasonable likeness to her, as we have seen her. (quoted in Ware 29)

Willis gets to the heart of the nineteenth-century problem of representation, suggesting the subjectivity of perception and calling into question the ability to represent reality:

> And, indeed the longer we live, the more we are convinced that people see the same features very differently, and that one face may make two as different impression on two beholders as if they had been all the while looking on two different faces.

The daguerreotypes of Jenny Lind reveal a plain, almost homely-looking young woman--next to Barnum's exotic Circassian beauties, Jenny Lind was just another face in the crowd. Indeed, a survey of paintings of Jenny Lind are wildly unlike the images of Jenny Lind captured by the daguerreotype and suggest the inclination of Lind's portraitists to apply their imaginative powers in transforming the "real" Jenny Lind into a highly idealized and Romantic Jenny Lind.[54] The portraits of Jenny Lind are done in the most romantic and imaginative style imaginable--when Jenny Lind is converted to oil paints she comes out looking almost exactly like the rhetorical descriptions in the newspapers--thin, ethereal, almost coy, and quite lovely-looking. Furthermore, when she emerged from behind the curtains of the public stage and stood under the enchanting gaslight, a transformation occurred in the public perception of Jenny Lind. In the following, Willis is talking about the

elusive qualities of the stage countenance of Jenny Lind and continues lamenting the inadequacy of reproductions of her image:

> Her living features seem to us illuminated with an expression of honest greatness, sublimely simple and unconscious, and in no picture of her do we see any trace of this. It is a face, to our eyes, of singular beauty--beauty that goes past one's eye and is recognized within--and the pictures of her represent the plainest of commonplace girls. . . . Have we no American artist who can give us Jenny Lind's face with its expression? (quoted in Ware 29)

Through his exhibition of sentimental and sensational culture, Barnum became the consummate public man of the nineteenth century--he supported a sentimental family and confirmed sentimental values through his work in the market economy. Consider the following incident which appears in Life: Following his return from England, where he famously exhibited Tom Thumb before Queen Victoria, in 1847 Barnum "was surprised to find that I had also become a curiosity during my absence" (292). He has become an object of the public gaze, remarking, "If I showed myself about the museum or wherever else I was known, I found eyes peering and fingers pointing at me, and could frequently overhear the remark, 'There's Barnum,' 'That's old Barnum,' etc" (292). As he was sitting in the ticket office of the Museum one afternoon, a man approached the booth and purchased a ticket, inquiring if Mr. Barnum was in the Museum. The ticket-taker pointed to the showman and Barnum acknowledged his own identity. Barnum reports that the man stared at him for a moment, "and then, throwing down his ticket, he exclaimed 'It's all right. I have got the worth of my money;' and away he went, without going into the Museum at all!" (292-293). The incident is rich with the theatricality of selfhood that Barnum so relished: framed in the

booth, Barnum has become his own exhibition--a public "curiosity" displayed before the public. The incident, which nicely illustrates Richard Brodhead's idea about the "reconcentration of self into sight" in nineteenth-century culture,[55] is particularly interesting in regards to an earlier discussion of Barnum's masking his identity from unsuspecting strangers (Cultures of Letters 62). Here in his own element, his "home," the public can contextualize, and then recognize and interpret the showman. Again we see how the culture of exhibition "means" in the sense that it challenges the seer to "read" the display and create meaning. The commodification of self is important here, too, because had the man espied Barnum prior to buying the ticket, we might wonder if the showman would have reported the incident in the narrative. For Barnum, who saw every physical object for its use value in the market, it matters that the man paid to see him.

With his private life safely cast aside, or simply never developed, Barnum exercised his freedoms, through the use of language and event, to stylize a public persona. All of Barnum's biographers have speculated on the possibility that Barnum lived without a private life. Constance Rourke theorizes that

> Perhaps, indeed, Barnum had no personal character. In a strict sense he had no private life. He lived in the midst of the crowd, in the peopled haunts of his great museum, on the road, on the lecture platform, on steamers, in caravans or circus trains, near the smell of sawdust or under the spreading lights of the city. He lived in public; at times it seemed he was the public. (277)

Neil Harris expresses a similar sentiment: "His inner life, if it existed, was carefully shielded. Irony and sincerity move through his rhetoric like revolving stages, and their sets are often indistinguishable" (Humbug 5).

"And in the same way that he kept his personal life separate from his business transactions," adds A.S. Saxon, "so Barnum kept the former discreetly veiled from the readers of his autobiography--a work that, properly understood, is primarily a record of his chief, lifelong business of showman, and that might therefore have been more accurately titled "the Public Life of P.T. Barnum" (7).

Throughout the autobiography, Barnum's field of action is in the public sphere. He never goes home or spends any time talking about his family. It is curious, then, that Barnum concludes his first autobiography with three sections, "Iranistan," "My family," and "Home, Sweet Home." In 1846 Barnum began construction of an enormous mansion in Bridgeport modeled on the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, England, and named it Iranistan. Barnum's mansion became a reflection of his own public persona. "Those who construct their own shelter replicate themselves, at their deepest and most significant level, in their houses," remarks Jack McLaughlin. "They are what they build" (vii). Indeed, all of Barnum's public activities (and nearly all his activities were public) were done in the grand style that reflected his inclination to turn life into a spectacle. In Barnum's world, even the domestic sphere is turned into a place for public examination. Iranistan burned to the ground in 1857, but while it stood, Barnum's mansion was a model of mid-century sentimentality and ostentation. Indeed, theatricality of self and nature existed in mutual inclusion with the conjugal sentimental family.

There are a number of pictures in the 1855 edition of the autobiography. The first is on the frontispiece and is an image of Barnum sitting in rotund comfort. It is left to the reader to imagine what Barnum's family looked like--they never appear in the autobiography. The final picture of the book,

though, is a romantic rendering of Iranistan in all its ostentatious and pastoral splendor. Iranistan was a formidable structure done in a Turkish style with 5 onion-shaped domes decorating the rooftop (4 small domes on the corners and a large dome in the middle). In the front of the mansion there are six slender minarets supporting three piazzas; the minarets and piazzas appear to continue to wrap around both sides of the structure, supporting two-story porches and one-story gazebos which also play host to more onion-shaped domes. Two large, statuesque figures grace the tops of the balustrades leading to the front piazza. Barnum filled his seventeen acres with carriage houses, barns, pavilions and gazebos, all finished in an ornate style. The picture is not without its pastoral suggestions, indeed, the rendering stresses Iranistan as a middle landscape that incorporates the primitive and the civilized.[56] Three bronze deer recline in the foreground of the picture; off in the distance, another group of deer are congregated near an evergreen tree. Shrubbery surrounds the immediate structure (familiar in a late twentieth-century suburban culture, but surely novel in 1848), and strategically planted evergreens and leafy trees are scattered across the grounds and embellish the scene. A woman and child are walking toward Iranistan and, in the distance, standing by the enormous water fountain (a simulation of a hot geyser, no doubt) are two more women with parasols. Behind the mansion (not evident in the picture) Barnum had an artificial pond filled with (authentic) ducks and geese. Of course everything surrounds and seems to be converging on Iranistan--it is the central focus of the view, the figures in the picture, and even the wild animals who patrol the grounds.[57]

The architectural leap from Jefferson's Monticello to Jackson's Hermitage to Barnum's Iranistan is worth making; in the history of American domestic

architecture, Iranistan becomes a model for the increasing acceptance of self-stylization.

Jefferson spent 50 years building, tearing down, and rebuilding Monticello and, still, he never felt he had it right.[58] Like the rewriting of Barnum's autobiography, Monticello, for Jefferson, was a life-long passion that he struggled to perfect and complete. Perched high atop the hills of Charlottesville, Monticello has become a model of Enlightened reasoning and American ingenuity. Isolated from the community, and situated in such a way that the mansion becomes an observation site for the natural order, Monticello was illustrative of the detached, aloof, and intellectual Jefferson.

In many ways, Iranistan was a grotesque parody of Jefferson's mansion--Monticello as the sublime and Iranistan as the ridiculous. The onion-shaped domes certainly resonate with the discrete, scientific, yet dysfunctional dome atop Jefferson's roof. In contrast, Barnum's dome became an enchanting theater of the natural world. Forty-five people could sit within Barnum's dome and gaze through multi-colored, diamond shaped-windows which cast a strange, almost surreal atmosphere over the surrounding landscape. Saxon quotes John Hooker's description of a visit to Iranistan in October of 1849: "It was the most gorgeous display of earthly splendor that I ever dreamed of. It seemed like being transported into a fairy land." On his visit to the dome, Hooker expostulated, "I never saw anything so like enchantment as the effect of those glasses upon the view around. One would give everything an unnatural greenness, the next made it look like mid-winter with everything covered with frost & snow . . ." (157).

Furthermore, William Howard Adams's description of Jefferson's manipulation of the landscape--"a romantic, overcharged vision of a transformed landscape, a pastoral make-believe world of temples, towers, and

statuary"--could just as easily be applied to the grounds of Iranistan (66). In the autobiography Barnum tells us with typical nineteenth-century aplomb that he turned a barren plot of ground into a spectacle of wonder and pastoral beauty: "I should mention," he off-handedly remarks, "that the plot of ground on which my villa is erected, was a bare field at the date of my purchase." But after "transplant[ing] fruit, forest, and evergreen trees," he turned the area into a middle landscape that, in its adornment "would have required an age in the ordinary process of growth" (404).

In Fathers and Children, Michael Rogin nicely historicizes the Hermitage, reading Jackson's mansion in Memphis as the figural home of nineteenth-century sentimental culture. In 1819, Jackson and Rachel moved from a small log cabin into what Jackson called "The Hermitage," a simple, two-story, affair with four columns and a small porch. The 650 acres of the premises housed two primitive log cabins and, symbolically, a church that Jackson erected for Rachel (which became known as "Rachel's Church") in 1823.[59] By the mid 1820s, Michael Rogin notes, "the extended, historically rooted family of eighteenth-century America--the Adamses--was giving way to the conjugal, sentimental family of the market epoch--Andrew and Rachel Jackson" (64). The Hermitage, then, becomes the place that holds and sustains the domestic ideal--Jackson built the Hermitage for Rachel; for as hard and ruthless a man as he was, Jackson did indeed love his wife and the Hermitage becomes his way of protecting and securing her while he was off removing Native Americans and clearing space for plantation owners.

The leap from Jackson's Hermitage to Barnum's Iranistan illustrates the movement from the sentimental tradition into a cultural milieu in which the theatrical and the sentimental live side by side.[60] If Jackson's home "prefigured the sentimental-family ideal" (Rogin 66), then Barnum's

Iranistan looked back in parody and irony. Barnum set up the perfect sentimental family--Charity Barnum (the name is important), sickly, timid, and peripheral to her husband's career, was the ideal domestic wife[61] and we might wonder about her wandering around the grand halls of Iranistan.

In contrast to the simple outbuildings (slave quarters) of Monticello and the Hermitage, Barnum's seventeen acres contained hosts of outbuildings including pavilions, gazebos--even a palatial home for his gardener. Names are important here: Monticello, or "little Mountain," has a suggestively reclusive and demure connotation. "Hermitage," or hideaway, becomes a moniker for the sentimental idea of the home as a refuge from the social and political expectations of the world at large. Iranistan, or "Oriental Villa," contrasts with both the classical and the sentimental ideal, suggesting the increasing American middle-class fascination for imported materials and ideas by mid-century. Jefferson's mansion was remote and aloof, and Jackson, too, sequestered his home from the public view. Barnum, on the other hand, left his grounds and outbuildings open for public inspection--he was the absolute public man and that meant, for him, that the private realm (even as far as the grounds of his home) were open for public scrutiny. Iranistan created quite a bit of public interest when construction was completed. 1,000 guests were invited to an "old fashioned" housewarming party on 14 November 1848. The new mansion made the papers, too. Barnum reports that a "waggish" New York editor interpreted "I-ran-i-stan" to mean "that I ran a long time before I could stan"--jejune humor typical of the nineteenth century (403). Indeed, Barnum's home became a billboard for the advertisement of his self and his business activities. At one time he bought an elephant and commanded his gardener to hook the beast to a plow and break the ground in one of Barnum's fields that lay close to the railroad

tracks with the intent of peaking public interest in the new wild animal exhibits at his Museum by displaying the elephant before the watchful eyes of the public as they traveled into the City. The plot succeeded and in addition to raising revenues at the Museum, Barnum received hundred of letters from agriculturists asking for more information on the effects of using pachyderms for field work.

Conclusion: The Vision Thing and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Exhibition

The exhibition culture that Barnum both participated in and effectively manipulated was based on a cultural phenomenon of seeing. Gregory Green attributes the augmentation and phenomenon of a visual culture to the decline of the Calvinist order:

> The religious injunction against visual excess and embellishment would have severely cut into a show-man's schemes had Barnum not shown America, in practice, where it really lived, that the imposed limitations of Protestantism, both visual and otherwise, could never accommodate the aspirations of the nation. . . . Simply put, Barnum taught American to 'look around with pleasure, and upward with gratitude'" (Barnum 393), but above all, to look around. (386)

A culture of display demands a spectatorship of active vision. Yet what nineteenth-century subjects saw, and the meaning they drew from sight was thoroughly embedded in culture (consciousness) and epistemology. John Berger observes that

> It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what

> we know is never settled. . . . The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe. (7-8)

Barnum's ability to both confirm and challenge public conceptions of self was grounded in a culture where meaning was made from seeing. Vision is "affected" (not determined) by epistemology, and that un"settled" relationship between seeing and knowing precludes seeing from either confirming or undermining dominant ideologies.

Deception and misrepresentation of self are the by-words of the nineteenth-century culture of exhibition. "At one and the same time, things are what they are as well as what they are not" (139). Roland Hagenbuchle's paraphrase of the Aristotelian bi-form is helpful in understanding Barnum's manipulation of seeing and knowing and his methods of the public presentation of self and Other. For instance, Jenny Lind temporarily became the divine creation that the American public transformed her into being. A combination of Barnum's cagey manipulation of the public mind and Jenny's angelic voice inclined the public and the press to rhetorically turn her into an angel incarnate. First hand accounts of a Jenny Lind concert reveal a confusion between Jenny Lind as a human being and Jenny Lind as a benevolent and mellifluous agent of the Divine. Of course, Jenny Lind was never anything more than a plain-looking young woman from Sweden with a voice that gave listeners goose bumps. Yet, for a time, she became more than that. When the public mind seized on Jenny Lind, the singer from Sweden took on a cultural significance that raised her above the ordinary person--she became for a time, more than "Jenny Lind," she became a public persona with the power to raise intense emotions and the public fever. By the same reasoning, Joice Heth was never really Washington's nursemaid, and similarly when Barnum blacked himself he did not become an African

American, yet . . . for a time, indeed, for a few fleeting moments, while they engaged their audiences in public discourse on the public stage, Jenny and Joice and even Barnum did indeed become the people, the "selves," that the public imagined them to be. Their non-essence (angelic Diva, nursemaid of Washington, and African American), for a short, stylized period of time, became their essence--all were transformed by public perception into some self that was other than what they really were; that is, both were defined according to what they were not. And it was their ability to perform those non-essential selves, their aptitude for histrionics, that deceived their audiences and/or sent them into spiritual reveries. The biform suggests the discrepancy between the public and private nature of the individual and raises questions of personal identity and essential selfhood in the face of the public gaze.

The upshot is that this culture of exhibition and display (a culture of the masses) was one in which theatricality of the self was integral. It simply had to be. The very essence of an exhibition implies a site of subjectivity where meaning is located somewhere between the footlights of the stage and the footfalls of the audience. Indeed, the exhibition culture of the second quarter of the nineteenth century was primarily textual: Joice Heth and her company of public displays served as texts of antebellum culture--they were read and interpreted by a credulous and demanding American mass culture. To exhibit is to hold something up for question, to deny its totalizing teleology. And it is in the reading, the interpretation, of these human and public displays that a sense of theatrical selfhood emerges. The public exhibition, like the act of writing autobiography, defies official closure. Even after Joice Heth's death, Barnum (with Levi Lyman's help) shamelessly continued the charade by starting a rumor that Joice was not really dead, that she was alive

and well and living in Hebron, Connecticut, and that the woman's body on whom the Doctors performed their postmortem operation was one "Aunt Nelly" who had recently passed away and whose dead body was brought as a stand-in for Joice. Similarly, each of Barnum's many editions (additions) to his Life, is a narrative display of a temporal slice of an every-changing P.T. Barnum. Barnum as much as admitted this in the preface to Struggles and Triumphs:

> All autobiographies are necessarily egotistical. If my pages are as plentifully sprinkled with 'I's' as was the chief ornament of Hood's peacock, 'who thought he had the eyes of Europe on his tail,' I can only say, that the 'I's' are essential to the story I have told. It has been my purpose to narrate, not the life of another, but that career in which I was the principal actor.

Couser identifies this passage from Struggles and Triumphs as an example of Barnum's insistence on his narrative exhibitionism, explaining, "Here Barnum admits to being a literary peacock--an exhibitionist in print. His reference to the plurality of the book's 'I's' may also hint at the multiplicity of the autobiography's supposedly singular first person" (67). Moreover, Barnum's use of the image of a peacock with ornamentation illustrates how far selfhood had come in American discourse since the Revolution. Fliegelman terminates his study of an American culture of performance with the culmination of the Revolution when the unadorned public man proudly exhibits his private self in the public square. Barnum, however, becomes an example of the adorned public man of the mid-nineteenth century--a man of varying social selves who, through his guarded and concealed private life became the quintessential public man of the age.

Notes

[1]The allusion is to Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life," a popular nineteenth-century poem published in Knickerbocker in 1838.

[2] Barnum destroyed the plates of the 1855 edition and, consequently, extant copies are rare. The 1869 and 1889 editions are out of print but the reader of Barnum's autobiography has a host of blue-penciled editions to chose from. Most of Barnum's biographers consider George Bryan's 1927 edition of the autobiography to be the truest version of all three editions. The blue-penciled editions, however, are ultimately a problem for the reader who is interested in charting the dynamic tone and scope of each of Barnum's autobiographies. For a detailed printing history of Barnum's autobiographies see Toole-Stott I: 147-53.

[3]For the implications of this announcement on the publication history of the autobiography, see Toole-Stott I: 147-53; IV: 24-25.

[4]Barnum has, of course, been the subject of numerous other critical studies and they are referenced in the essay as they are used.

[5]Although the two men shared incompatible world views, both demonstrate an interest in the manipulation of the physical world and the sensory world. Like Edwards, Barnum was interested in the "potentialities of sensation." See Harris, The Artist in American Society (171).

[6]Unless otherwise noted in internal citations, all subsequent quotations from Barnum's autobiography will be from Life.

[7]On 11 April 1841, 14 years before the publication of his Life, Barnum published a fictionalized autobiography of his life in the New York Atlas. "The Adventure of an Adventurer, Being Some Passages in the Life of Barnaby Diddleum," is a fascinating parody of Barnum's (BARNaby diddleUM) experiences up to that point and an early example of Barnum's search for ways to inscribe experience and define his self through language.

[8]Scenes like the following are contrasted in the narrative with scenes where Barnum is recognized by the public and will be discussed below.

[9]The barber shop is a curious place in the literary discourse of the mid-nineteenth century. In American Beauty Lois Banner talks about the barber and hairdresser shop as spheres in which the artificial presentation of self was created. See Chapter Two, "Beauty as Business." Barnum relates two incidents in Life that take place in a barber shop. The first incident reads like a precursor to the first scene of Melville's The Confidence Man: Traveling on a steamboat on the Mississippi one day Barnum recalls an incident where he entered a barber shop abroad the boat and manages to convince the unsuspecting mulatto that he is the Devil (334).

[10]Barnum lavishly displays his capacities for duping his friends and neighbors. There are only two instances in the autobiography where

someone takes one over on Barnum. The first was Joice Heth who managed to convince Barnum that she was indeed the nursemaid of George Washington. The second is told as an isolated anecdote near the end of Life when Barnum tells the reader about a woman who tricked him into believing that his coach was going to be highjacked on the road to Baltimore. Barnum buys guns for protection and sends all his money back to New York (339).

[11]There is a host of secondary literature regarding the nineteenth-century confidence man and the manner in which I have concluded this paragraph comes close to Gary Lindberg's definition of a confidence man in The Confidence Man in American Literature: "a manipulator or contriver who creates an inner effect, an impression, an experience of confidence, that surpasses the grounds for it. In short, a confidence man makes belief" (7).

[12]For a discussion of the "major" negative reviews of Barnum's book see Harris, Humbug (224-231). Most of the negative reviews came from the pens of Southerners and Englishmen and it is important to realize, based on where these less-than-favorable reviews were coming from, that Barnum and his book were a confirmation of a North-eastern, industrial-capitalist, middle-class set of values. His deceptions and consequent revelations were a threat to the Southern reader and his bombastic rhetoric went unappreciated by the British critics.

[13]There is a discrepancy here. Bryan uses a passage that he attributes to John Fitch. Harris uses the same passage and attributes it to John Fish. Barnum married Nancy Fish in September of 1874, and Harris mentions that this John Fish was his future brother-in-law.

[14]As the English press attacked Barnum particularly hard, Barnum must have relished this high praise from an Englishman. See "Barnum for President," Punch 29 (1 September 1855): 89; and "Revelations of a Showman," Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, American edition 40 (February 1855): 187-201.

[15]See Bode, The American Lyceum; Scott; and Baskerville for discussions about lectures and lyceums.

[16]See Cross, for a discussion of religious revivals and the exhibition of religious sentiment. For a discussion of Barnum's political activities in the early 1830s and his reactions against "hysterical Christianity," see Saxon 40.

[17]See Trachtenberg (6-12) for an similar reading of Peale's self-portrait.

[18]See Sellers, Chapter Six.

[19]Rourke's reference here is to the popular lecture that entertained Americans from the 1830s until the end of the century. Poe was not the only writer using the catastrophe as a narrative device. See Koguchi; Gatta; and Wallace.

[20]Barnum's Museum, perhaps the "most famous place of entertainment in nineteenth-century America," displayed more than freaks, of course

(McNamara 219). For a full discussion of the contents of the Museum, see Saxon Chapter Five, "Wonders of God's Universe."

[21]See David Rothman for an extended discussion of nineteenth-century asylums and penitentiaries.

[22]I am thinking of the "consensus" school of American culture. See Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad; and Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen, eds. Ideology and Classic American Literature.

[23]Also see White.

[24]On the representation of Other on the American stage, see Moody, especially Chapter Two, "Native Themes and Characters."

[25]Both of these incidents, early examples of Eastern simulations of frontier life, would be worth further analysis in a discussion of Barnum's manipulation of the image of the American Wild West. In the Woolly Horse episode, Barnum purchased an odd-looking horse from an Indiana native and passed it off to the public as one of the animals that General Fremont had brought back from his expedition to the Rocky Mountains. The obvious duplicity was soon discovered by Fremont's father-in-law, Thomas Hart Benton, but no legal action was taken against Barnum because Fremont himself was off in the Western territories and unable to be reached. The Great Buffalo Hunt was an early Wild Bill Cody show attempting to simulate the dangers and excitement of the Wild West. Barnum bought 700 feeble buffalo earlier in 1843 and advertised a grand spectacle in Hoboken where a brave frontier hero would re-enact the herding of the wild and dangerous beasts. Barnum was right in his suspicion that the event would not go off as planned--the buffalo, terrified by the crowd headed straight for the nearest swamp upon being released from their cages. The spectators did not mind, though, because Barnum let everyone in for free. What they did not realize at that time, though, was that Barnum had made a deal with the owners of the ferries that shipped the people from Manhattan to Hoboken and realized his profits from the public circuitously.

[26] For instance in Chapter IX "The American Museum," Barnum relates the incident with the editor from the Knickerbocker who tricks Barnum into admitting the duplicity of his artifacts in the American Museum. Barnum ultimately comes out on top, however, when he tells the editor a new wonder is coming to the museum--a fish that grows legs. The editor is amazed and then, finally dismayed when he visits Barnum and discovers that the spectacle is only a tadpole.

[27]Barnum and Lyman made a lame attempt to continue the hoax even after Joice's death. Lyman wrote an article for the New York papers arguing that Joice Heth was in fact not dead, but alive and well in Connecticut. He also asserted that the Joice Heth that was being displayed to the public was an automaton. See Saxon 68-74.

[28]It is interesting, of course, that Sanford would "free" himself from Barnum in the South and Barnum's language shows that the irony was not lost on him.

[29]See Fiedler "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey." Also see Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel--an obvious critical precedent to Lott's study.

[30]In his account of the St. Louis stage, Sol Smith, Barnum's close friend reports another blackfacing incident involving Barnum. In 1840, Barnum had organized a new troupe of traveling players and the center of the show was the African American dancer, Master Jack Diamond. Barnum hired a white dancer to black his face and square off with Diamond in a dancing match for an ostensible $500 wager. The event was fixed, the blackfaced man paid to yield to Diamond's "masterful" moves. Harris mentions this incident in Humbug (28).

[31]See Couser 57.

[32]Consider the excerpts from a letter that Barnum wrote to Thomas Ritchie, the editor of the Washington Union, and also the father-in-law-to-be of Anna Cora Mowatt, on 14 December 1850: denying the accusation that Jenny Lind had donated money to an "association of abolitionists," Barnum "feels no hesitation" in speaking for Jenny Lind by declaring that "this lady never gave a farthing for any such purpose, and that her oft expressed admiration for our noble system of government convinces me that she prizes too dearly the glorious institutions of our country to lend the slightest sanction to any attack upon the union of these states" (Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum 52).

[33]See Buckley (472-75) for a detailed discussion of Barnum's Herald.

[34]For a discussion of this episode and Barnum's role in it, see Saxon 60.

[35]Barnum's complexities, or inconsistencies, are evident in the reading of a letter three years prior to the Lucy Stone letter when he talks about Jenny Lind thusly: "I know as well as any person that the merits of Jenny Lind are the best capital to depend upon to secure public favor, and I have thus far acted upon this knowledge" (Selected Letters of P.T. Barnum 50).

[36]Barnum is referring to the opening of his mansion in Bridgeport, Iranistan.

[37]See Saxon, (Chapter Five), "Wonders of God's Universe" and Harris, Humbug, (Chapter Two), for detailed discussions of the cultural implications of Barnum's Museum. Also see Buckley (481) for a derivative, but concise (based on Harris) discussion of the Museum.

[38]Barnum was a man ahead of his time, setting precedents for the popular mass gatherings of the post-Woodstock era. Recently, I attended an outdoor concert at Detroit's Pine Knob Arena and could not help but think of Barnum when, as I walked toward the arena, I heard a voice over the loudspeaker informing all concert-goers that the "No-Readmittance" policy would preclude them from entering and then leaving the area--an obvious holdover from the "teetotaling" nineteenth century.

[39]See Lyman Abbot's recollection of Barnum's Museum in Silhouettes of my Contemporaries (9).

[40]Peter Buckley talks about the irony of the Jenny Lind tour following on the heels of the Astor Place Riots of 1849 and the labor unrest of 1849 (472).

[41]Is it much of a surprise to learn that Hawthorne and Whitman were unimpressed with Jenny's voice? Hawthorne, who heard her in England when he was serving at the American Consulate in Liverpool said that, "on the whole, [he] was not very much interested in her" (quoted in Werner 132). Hawthorne met Jenny Lind in 1856 and Jenny, probably not aware of Hawthorne's impressions of her singing, complimented him on The Scarlet Letter and talked generally about American society. See Mellow (441) for a discussion of this meeting. In the New York Evening Post, Whitman remarked, "The Swedish Swan, with all her blandishments, never touched my heart in the least. I wondered at so much vocal dexterity; and indeed they were all very pretty, those leaps and double somersets. But even in the grandest religious airs, genuine masterpieces as they are, of the German composers, executed by this strangely overpraised woman in perfect scientific style, let critics say what they like, it was a failure; for there was a vacuum in the head of the performance. Beauty pervaded it no doubt, and that of a high order. It was the beauty of Adam before God breathed into his nostrils" (quoted in Wagenknecht 40).

[42]For a discussion of Jenny Lind's "Puritanism" and her early career in Europe, see Bulman.

[43]See Klamkin.

[44]See Nye, Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860 14. Also, see Susan Davis, for a discussion of crowd action during antebellum Christmas festivities in Philadelphia.

[45]See Labaree.

[46]See Ward.

[47]See Klamkin.

[48]The conductor was probably thinking of the French ballet dancer, Fanny Elssler, who successfully toured the States in 1840.

[49]Barnum engaged Jenny Lind for the sum of $150,000 (she agreed to do 150 concerts at $1000 apiece) which he was obliged to place in the hands of London's Baring Brothers prior to her departure for the States. There were other fees: $25,000 for Julius Benedict, Jenny's director and accompanist and $12,500 for Giovanni Belletti, a baritone who would also accompany Jenny. In order to raise the initial monies, Barnum sold and mortgaged several properties and still had to borrow the remaining deficit. See Saxon (165) and Harris (118).

[50]It is important to stress that Jenny Lind appealed to a middle to upper class audience. High demand for concert tickets drove up prices, making her inaccessible to the working classes. The "masses" Barnum refers to in the

following passage refers to the emerging demand for middle class, respectable entertainment: "The carriages of the beau monde could be seen in front of her hotel at all fashionable hours, and it was with some difficulty that I prevented the fashionables from monopolizing her altogether, and thus, as I believed, sadly marring my interests by cutting her off from the warm sympathies which she had awakened among the masses" (308). Note that Barnum calls Jenny Lind his "interest." In addition, the honesty of the preceding comment, which is about as private as Barnum gets in the autobiography, is a great contrast to the disingenuosness of the following advertisement that he reprinted in Life just four pages earlier: "Perhaps I may not make any money by this enterprise; but I assure you that if I knew I should not make a farthing profit, I would ratify the engagements, so anxious am I that the Unites States should be visited by a lady whose vocal powers have never been approached by any other human being, and whose character is charity, simplicity, and goodness personified" (304).

[51]This sort of rhetoric, the aestheticization of virtue, resonates with Jonathan Edwards's The Nature of True Virtue, although the nineteenth-century rhetoric is clearly laced with ideas of sentiment that were not foreign for Edwards, yet, escaped being the focus of his ideas.

[52]This statement, of course, has to be qualified. The inessential self and the masking of the private self were to be nefarious actions throughout the nineteenth century. Melville explores the continuing problems of selfhood and self (mis)representation in The Confidence Man, and Karen Haltennun has written a critical study about the continuing fear of the con-man in nineteenth-century society. The point here is that under certain circumstances (i.e. the active invocation of sentimental culture), the self-stylized presentation of the self is less of a danger, indeed, a profitable "enterprise" in nineteenth-century society.

[53]For a brief discussion of the ends nineteenth-century Americans went to in order to see Jenny Lind, and for a brief descriptions of the accounts of Lind that they left behind, see Buckley 499.

[54]See Harris (128) for images of the daguerreotyped Lind and portraits of her.

[55]For a late-nineteenth century analysis of the phenomenon of self and sight, see Fischer.

[56]See Marx.

[57]For a discussion of larger trends in nineteenth-century architectural history see Clark.

[58]McLaughlin says, "Jefferson built one house, tore much of it down, doubled its size, and continued to alter, remodel, improve, and add to it for decades" (14).

[59]The Hermitage burned to the ground in 1834 (six years after Rachel's death) and Jackson rebuilt it in 1836 with considerable augmentation. The new mansion, a stately and demure two-story structure with six classical columns

and a two-story portico in the front of the house, is the one that visitors to the Hermitage see today.

[60]George Bryan reports that Barnum once called on Jackson at the Hermitage (xxxvi).

[61]See Banner's discussion of the "steel-engraving lady" of women's magazines of the period in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four

Theatrical Selfhood and the Autobiographical Fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Unlike Mowatt and Barnum, who were both partial to histrionics, Hawthorne was terrified of the public sphere; he was a retiring figure who was compelled to become an actor in antebellum American as a result of the profession he chose. Hawthorne is famous for his reticence. In Yesterday with Authors, Hawthorne's publisher, James Fields, recalled Hawthorne as someone who "wandered lonely as a cloud," and "who had, so to speak, a physical affinity with solitude"(39). In a letter to Hawthorne of 1 June 1851, Melville demonstrates his almost desperate wish to be befriended by Hawthorne, subtly commenting on Hawthorne's quiet demeanor as well as his own garrulousness:

> I talk about myself, and this is selfishness and egotism. Granted. but how help it? I am writing to you; I know little about you, but something about myself. So I write about myself,--at least, to you. Don't' trouble yourself, though, about writing; and don't trouble yourself about visiting; and when you do visit, don't trouble yourself about talking. I will do all the writing and visiting and talking myself. (Correspondence XIV: 192)

Sophia's sister, Lizzy Peabody, also commented on Hawthorne's reserve, but remarked that "every word [he spoke] was loaded with significance though there was nothing oracular in his manner." Lizzy added that she "never saw anybody who listened so devouringly" (quoted in Mellow 115).

Hawthorne, born in 1804, is the oldest of the group I have assembled in this study. Barnum was born in 1805 and Mowatt in 1819. Hawthorne's career

as an American romancer began in the early 1820s--a full decade before Barnum would enter his first exhibition and nearly twenty years prior to Mowatt's first stage appearance. Furthermore, the work of Hawthorne's fiction I am most concerned with, The Scarlet Letter, was published in January of 1850--four years prior to Mowatt's autobiography and five years before Barnum's Life.

In their own day, Mowatt and Barnum occupied the center stage (to varying degrees, of course) of nineteenth-century popular culture. Barnum increasingly held the public attention from the 1830s until his death in 1891. Mowatt was a public figure to a lesser degree than Barnum, but from the mid-1840s until the late 1850s, New York certainly paid more attention to her than it did to Hawthorne. Recall that Mowatt's autobiography sold 20,000 copies. Furthermore, remember that her dramatic hit, Fashion, became one of the most popular American plays of the nineteenth century. Now, consider that it took five years for The Scarlet Letter to sell a mere 10,000 copies.

Compared to Mowatt and Barnum, Hawthorne was ignored in antebellum America. It was his involvement in political scandals and his U.S. government positions, as well as the fiction he produced, that gave him a public name. His removal from the office at the Salem Custom House in 1849 was about as much notoriety he would experience as an American public figure. In Yesterday with Authors, James Fields recalls visiting a despondent Hawthorne following his removal from the Custom House in 1849. Informing Hawthorne that he was interested in publishing more of his work, Hawthorne demonstrated his ostensible obscurity in antebellum America when he replied: "Who would risk publishing a book for me, the most unpopular writer in America?"[1] Later, after the publication of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's name would be popular enough that his friend, Franklin

Pierce, would ask him to write a campaign biography for his, eventually, successful bid for the Presidency.

Hawthorne was caught betwixt and between allegiances to an older, patrician, New England sensibility and the rising middle class of Jacksonian America. Mowatt and Barnum are representative figures of the new middle class sensibility and illustrative of what Robert Wiebe has called "the opening of American society." Barnum and Mowatt operated in New York City while Hawthorne is primarily associated with the world of Boston, Salem, and New England culture. By 1850 New York was quickly replacing Boston as the most important American city as the manufacturing, fashion, and literary publishing markets began to flourish around the ports of New Amsterdam. In The Profession of Authorship in America, William Charvat explains the developing polarities of American society in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, arguing that it was during this time that a struggle between a "homogeneous patrician society" (New England culture) and a "rising materialistic middle class without education and tradition[2] (nascent New York culture) developed and was eventually won by the cultural demands and expressions of the new middle class (64).[3]

His marginal status at mid-century provides Hawthorne with some interesting things to say about theatrical selfhood. Indeed, Hawthorne's voice is particularly worthwhile because it is the voice of a cultural maverick, a trickster of narrative and language who was at odds with his society and used artistic forms of expression to challenge dominant ideologies.[4] As a retiring figure who made a career out of writing serious fiction, Hawthorne offers a perspective into theatrical selfhood at mid-century not available in the discourses of public figures such as Mowatt and Barnum, who were actors and showpersons before they were authors and autobiographers. Still, the textual

world that Hawthorne has constructed is a literary topos where theatricality of self (especially his authorial self) flourishes. For Hawthorne, the possibilities of theatrical selfhood are approached in a more self conscious manner. Unlike Mowatt and Barnum, who often seem almost flippant about the malleable selves they rhetorically exhibit, Hawthorne seems particularly aware, even concerned about the problem of theatrical selfhood. One of the many tensions operating within the corpus of Hawthorne's fiction is the possibility of a theatrical self at the expense of an essential core of human thought and being. For Richard Millington, "The malleability of self, one begins to suspect, is at once the central hope and the chief anxiety of Hawthorne's work" (49). In the characters and the authorial selves he has created Hawthorne experiments with the implications of theatrical selfhood, demonstrating a highly stylized and self-aware position regarding self-presentation in the public realm.

In Hawthorne and History: Defacing It, J. Hillis Miller has discussed issues of selfhood in Hawthorne's fiction by reading "The Minister's Black Veil" as a tale that unveils "the possibility of the impossibility of unveiling"; that is, the story becomes an inquiry into the tropological uses of masking and veiling that Hawthorne employs in the story (51). What, finally, lies behind the artificial mask Reverend Hooper has shrouded himself in? Would an unveiling reveal the essential, the "true," Reverend Hooper? Or would the stripping away of the black veil merely reveal another de-facing device? The "mask behind the mask" theory that Miller posits in his reading of "The Minister's Black Veil" is applicable to the corpus of Hawthorne's fiction because it broaches questions of essential and inessential selfhood and forces the reader to wonder whether selfhood is rooted in essences, or floats amidst the contexts or the symbolic fields of culture. Hawthorne's romances may not

have sold well, but he was a product of his culture and he appropriated the theatricalization of selfhood and used those discourses as a way to introduce his self (quite notoriously, at times) into the public sphere.

Arlin Turner has called Nathaniel Hawthorne "one of the most autobiographical of our writers--in his own way," attributing Hawthorne's inclination to write about himself to the "consistency of his mind, which produced a steadiness of purpose and outlook that shaped everything he wrote" (vi). For Hawthorne, authorship was autobiography, but unlike most autobiographers who gallantly display a self before the reading public, the blue-eyed Nathaniel obscured the self that he presented through his fictional narratives.[5] With more of the sensibilities of a Thomas Jefferson than, say, Ben Franklin, Hawthorne went about the business of authorship and autobiography in a more self conscious and careful manner than Mowatt and Barnum.

William Spengemann, who is also interested in collapsing fiction into autobiography and, consequently, autobiography into fiction, has read Hawthorne's literary production up through The Scarlet Letter as autobiographical discourse. Arguing that the realm of fiction provides a textual world in which a writer's nature is expressed through language, Spengemann remarks that "fiction is the only true autobiography" (138), explaining The Scarlet Letter as Hawthorne's way of introducing himself into the public sphere. "By proceeding inward, away from the pleasant but imperfect exterior," says Spengemann, "and by confronting the horrible but ultimately insubstantial terrors of the buried life, one can discover the absolute self, which is also the exterior world made perfect" (139). I depart from Spengemann when he begins to suggest that Hawthorne believed art had the potential of revealing a true essential self, that Hawthorne's textual

world was a tool for the author to erase the slate (or unmask the face) of selfhood that had been marked up (or obscured) by culture. Unlike Spengemann, I contend that Hawthorne, like Ishmael atop the masthead, was aware of the dynamics of selfhood, and both fearful and strangely fascinated by the possibilities of a self set free on a search for Cartesian essences.[6] In my reading of his fiction, Hawthorne becomes a showman and a trickster whose literary excursions into the limitations of selfhood reveal a malleable and dynamic "Nathaniel Hawthorne."

Selfhood and Nineteenth-Century Sentimental Culture

In The Fall of Public Man, Richard Sennet has lamented the demise of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century public culture which he explains as a phenomenon where personal actions were symbolic acts that reflected back onto the community rather than the self and where communication between individuals could take place in the public sphere. Similarly, Fliegelman has demonstrated that the revolution in rhetoric at the end of the eighteenth century was based in the idea that public speakers expressed their private natures when they articulated themselves in the public realm. By 1850 a Romantic, post-Enlightenment notion of the individual self situated in a social milieu in which it finds itself alien and at odds with the public sphere had replaced the Enlightened notions of the transparency of private life in the public sphere.

In Hawthorne's world, the private self is threatened by the public sphere and the problem of selfhood; the self-stylized presentation of self is embroiled in a social world where private natures and public demands are always working at cross purposes. By 1850, the private world, the interiority, of the individual, is valorized and nurtured within the domestic sphere.[7] In The

Production of Private Life, Joel Pfister has combined textual and cultural analysis to demonstrate how Hawthorne's fiction illustrates the formation of a middle-class consciousness of interiorities at mid-century. For Hawthorne, questions of selfhood are embedded in mid-nineteenth-century discourses of sentimentality and the valorization/cultivation of a private sphere of human activity that works as a corrective against the corruptive influences of the market world.

The domestic arena of sentimental culture was burdened with the task of shaping and supporting the sincere and honest expression of the individual self, and the valorization of sincerity that Fliegelman uncovers in Revolutionary public culture had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, been collapsed into the domestic realm of antebellum America. The turbulent transformations of Jacksonian America--changes from Jeffersonian to Jacksonian republicanism, movement from an agrarian to an urban culture, and the beginnings of a burgeoning capitalist order that fueled the transformation of a nation--made antebellum Americans anxious about the possible duplicitous presentation of self in the public sphere. As a result, the domestic realm was left with the responsibility of insuring that the sincere ideal was propagated in the home. As Karen Haltenun explains, "The broadest significance of sentimental culture between 1830 and 1870 lay in the powerful middle class impulse to shape all social forms into sincere expressions of inner feeling" (xvii).

The public sphere, then, was seen as a topos where selfhood could be manipulated and stylized. And while the domestic realm was absorbing all the sincere self-expression of the individual, the public sphere was believed to be a place run amuck with confidence men and painted women. Of course nineteenth-century subjects devised ways to separate the sincere from the

insincere (daguerreotypes, phrenology, mesmerism, etc.), but the public realm increasingly became recognized as a place where impostors--"good" ones such as Barnum and "bad" ones such as the original confidence man, Thomas McDonald--operated.

Working at Home: Authorship in Jacksonian America

Unlike Mowatt and Barnum, who capitalized on the social and economic turbulence of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Hawthorne found himself victimized by the changes that confronted Americans of the Jacksonian period. Hawthorne, whose mind gravitated toward the interiorities of self, buoyed himself up for a career in literature and wrote his best work while safely sequestered away from the world of markets and protected by the privacy of the domestic realm. In the world of legitimate professional careers, Hawthorne's creative energies simply dried up. Throughout his life, Hawthorne was plagued by the demands of the market and the ostensibly conflicting demands of an intellectual life. The many moves he made back and forth from the domestic to the market world were accompanied by a great deal of anxiety and foreboding: Hawthorne constantly struggled with the necessity of supporting a family and of performing his masculine role, and with the difficulty of developing his artistic talents in the face of a necessary career in the market: Consider Hawthorne's literary production vis a vis his stints in the masculine world of Custom Houses and utopian communities: In September of 1825, Hawthorne graduates from Bowdin and is faced with the prospect of entering and participating in a masculine culture that is increasingly becoming associated with the world of the market economy, and, more importantly, being defined against the domestic realm. Earlier in the year, however, Hawthorne had revealed his

first literary productions to his sister Elizabeth. It is important, of course, that he would be reticent about his literary aspirations before his college friends and introduce his writerly self to the world through his sister. Balking on participation in the market world, Hawthorne conceals himself and engages in a twelve-year literary self-apprenticeship, his "long seclusion," in the garret on Herbert Street. During the twelve-year withdrawal Hawthorne perfects his story-telling techniques by reading voraciously and penning tales such as "The Gentle Boy," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Roger Malvin's Burial," and "The Minister's Black Veil," but it is not until 1834 that Nathaniel Hawthorne was revealed to the public eye--prior to that date, he insisted on publishing his tales anonymously.

Hawthorne worked for a brief time as an editor of American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge (January-September 1836), and finally, after falling in love with Sophia and feeling the pressures of making a living, he took a job as a measurer in the Boston Custom House in November of 1838. His literary production takes a precipitous decline at this time. Retiring from the Custom House in January of 1841 and spending the summer of that year at Brook Farm, Hawthorne thought that the utopian community would provide the perfect atmosphere for an artist who was forced to labor in the market. Finding the community at Brook Farm little removed from the competitiveness of the market world, Hawthorne leaves Brook Farm at the end of the summer, but remains a joint stock holder. At this time, little has emitted from Hawthorne's pen since Twice-told Tales, but in July of 1842, Nathaniel and Sophia are married, move into the Old Manse, and begin a three-year honeymoon of domestic bliss that elicits a collection of tales, Mosses from an Old Manse in April of 1845. The domestic privacy of the Manse allows Hawthorne to pen classic tales such as "The Birthmark" and

"Rappaccini's Daughter."[8] In September of 1845, Nathaniel and Sophia are asked to leave the Manse. The couple (along with two year-old Una) live off of Sophia's savings for seven months until Nathaniel, in April of 1846, begins his famous position at the Salem Custom House. Hawthorne retires from market life again in June of 1849 when he is removed from the Custom House. He has produced one tale, "The Unpardonable Sin" (later renamed, "Ethan Brand"), during this time.[9] The public ignominy surrounding his removal from the Salem Custom House (along with the death of his mother) throws him into a veritable creative frenzy and, writing through the late summer and fall of 1849, Hawthorne completes The Scarlet Letter by January of 1850. The next three years (years free from the demands of the market world) witness two other major novels, Pierce's biography, a third edition of Twice-told Tales, a children's book, and The Snow-Image, a collection of tales.

Authorship in America: The Importance of Being Seen

The absence of his biological father opened up opportunities that Hawthorne might not have enjoyed had Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sr. not died of yellow fever in 1808. T. Walter Herbert talks about the death of Hawthorne's father as a way for Nathaniel junior to create a writerly self. Considering the long tradition of seamanship in the Hawthorne family, Nathaniel's fate most probably would have been guided toward following in his father's maritime career. "The intimate circle of shared bereavement," in the Hawthorne household following Nathaniel Sr.'s death, "provided a matrix for creating a writer selfhood that would not have existed had his ship-captain father been alive to point the way toward a maritime career, or even to present Nathaniel with a tangible figure against whom to rebel" (Herbert 68). Hawthorne seems to have been aware of escaping a life on the

seas, as he self-reflexively comments in "The Custom-House" essay: "From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea; a gray-headed shipmaster, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast. . . . The boy, also, in due time, passed from the forecastle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings, to grow old, and die . . . " (I:10-11).

Similarly, the nascent stage of the American novel provided a fairly "father-less" venue for Hawthorne to develop or rebel against influential literary voices. In 1821 (when Hawthorne was beginning to think of himself as a writer of fiction) through mid-century, writing the Romance was still a spurious activity and a possible threat to the Republic.[10] Furthermore, in 1821 authorship was in the nascent stages of becoming a bona fide professional activity; the aspiring fiction writer had very few precedents to follow. Irving published the Sketch Book in 1819 and Cooper published The Spy in 1821 and while both were formidable figures of a developing American literature they were in turn heavily influenced by European precedents.[11] Hawthorne's first novel, Fanshawe (1828), was an obvious parody of a Scott novel, but afterwards, Hawthorne took up the challenge of developing a particularly American voice grounded in the political and religious history of the colonies. In this way, Hawthorne found himself in an especially American position: with one father killed off and another scarcely even there, he was faced with the prospects of self-creation. This position, of course, was both freeing and terrifying.[12]

Hawthorne's challenge was to negotiate an artistic sensibility in a culture in which authorship was a suspect endeavor. Later in his life Hawthorne

would recall his childhood in a letter to Sophia by employing psychosomatic language that suggests the "fatherless" dilemma of his early years:

> If you know anything of me, you know how I sprang out of mystery, akin to none, a thing concocted out of the elements, without visible agency--how, all through my boyhood, I was alone; how I grew up without a root.

As Herbert suggests, this passage suggests the allurement of memory as revision. As a child, Hawthorne was surrounded by caring and interested adults,[13] and here he is playing upon the fatherlessness of his boyhood and talking about the creation of an authorial self: With no precedents to base the creation of an authorial self upon, Hawthorne imagines himself "concocting" a self out of thin air. Like Mowatt and Barnum, Hawthorne has invented and rhetorically manipulated his writerly self through his literary production; however, for Hawthorne, the prospects of self invention suggest terrifying implications:

> But I cannot overcome this natural horror of being a creature floating in the air, attached to nothing, nor this feeling that there is no reality in the life and fortunes, good or bad, or a being so unconnected. (quoted in Herbert 59)

Unlike Mowatt, who takes her place on the public stage out of necessity, and Barnum, who flippantly and unselfconsciously engages in the theatricalizaton of self and Other, the possibilities of theatrical selfhood and the creation of an authorial self threatened the corporeality of existence of Hawthorne's world and suggested that the face behind the many authorial masks he has donned in his textual universes was really just another mask.

As early as 1821, when he was seventeen, Hawthorne was carving a path for himself as a writer of fiction. In a famous letter to his mother written

before his matriculation at Bowdin (13 March 1821), Hawthorne demonstrates a precocious flare for a stylized, rhetorical argument with an irony and a sense of understatement that would become characteristic of his tales and novels. Moreover, the cryptic and anxious letter suggests that the young Hawthorne was aware of pursuing a career path outside of traditional male expectations:

> I have not yet concluded what profession I shall have. The being a Minister is of course out of the Question. I should not think that even you could desire me to choose so dull a way of life. Oh no Mother, I was not born to vegetate forever in one place, and to live an die as calm and tranquil as--A Puddle of Water. As to Lawyers there are so many of them already that one half of them (upon a moderate calculation) are in a state of actual starvation. A Physician then seems to be "Hobson's Choice," but yet I should not like to live by the diseases and Infirmities of my fellow Creatures. . . . O that I was rich enough to live without a profession. What do you think of my becoming an Author, and relying for support upon my pen. (XV: 138)[14]

Hawthorne does not place a question mark at the end of his query because he has already made up his mind and the psychological maneuver of asking for the most important thing last is a cagey rhetorical move.

Had Hawthorne been aware of the changing social role of the American author during the second half of the nineteenth century, he might have even considered becoming a "Minister." With the development of market capitalism, authors of fiction were compelled to be aware of an increasingly diverse and large (by mid-century America boasted the highest literacy rate in the world) audience that made demands upon the fiction that was produced and, consequently, affected the development of an American literature.

Deciding early in his life that he wanted to be an author, Hawthorne prepared for the kind of career that authorship had offered white American men from the end of the Revolution through the early 1820s. But Hawthorne quickly discovered that the prospects for learned gentlemen writing anonymously for small, homogeneous audiences was quickly becoming an historical anachronism.[15] As a market economy polarized the spheres of men and women and as literary production and consumption gradually became associated with the domestic sphere, Hawthorne found that the precedents for establishing a career as an author were quickly disintegrating as the role of the American author was increasingly caught up with the demands of the burgeoning capitalist economy.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century the profession of authorship in America increasingly became a realm of activity that demanded the author present himself in the public sphere and establish a relationship with his or her diverse reading public. By 1850, authorship meant being seen and heard in the public sphere. Whitman, the Barnum of the literary American Renaissance, was able to perfect the dynamics of public authorship through his bombastic self-promotion. Recall, for instance, the letter from Emerson in praise of Leaves of Grass that he shamelessly printed (without Emerson's permission) in the New York Tribune.[16] Whitman adapted to the changes in the function and the role of the American author, changes, of course, that were precipitated by an expanding market economy and the culture of spectatorship and exhibition that were quickly becoming an integral part of American popular and high culture.[17]

Authorship became associated with being seen by the public and in order to be successful, the writer of creative fiction found it necessary to engage in the type of self-promotion that Barnum and Whitman perfected.[18] "Cultural

entrepreneurs," such as James Fields and William Ticknor, "devised sophisticated techniques for merchandising art, treating the writer's biography and even his appearance as important factors in the selling of his books" (Gilmore 4). Of course the writers of the American Renaissance (except for Whitman) were all rather ambivalent about the public presentation of self. When asked to provide an image of himself for the magazines, Melville replied, "The test of distinction is getting to be reversed; and, therefore, to see one's 'mug' in a magazine, is presumptive evidence that he's a nobody" (quoted in Gilmore 4). In 1848, Hawthorne's publishers requested the author have a daguerreotype made of himself for the purpose of "manufacturing you thus into a Personage" (quoted in Herbert 164). For Hawthorne, the daguerreotype sitting must have seemed like a mockery of his career as an author: he had yet to write the novel that would win him fame, and his time in the Custom House daily threatened the possibility of continuing his career as an author. It's no wonder, then, that T. Walter Herbert notes the dramatic contrast between the 1848 daguerreotype which shows a "wary, hostile, and tightly controlled" Hawthorne and the famous portrait he gave to his mother in 1840, showing the youthful and bright-eyed Nathaniel at the start of his career (Herbert 164).

Hawthorne's decision to become a writer of fiction placed him in a spurious position. In addition to the ostensible lack of material in the new republic, scribbling had yet to become professionalized and, in America, was associated with domesticity and the heightened imaginations of women.[19] While women's sphere gradually became associated with the home and the moral standardization and resuscitation of America's youth, men's sphere embraced the wide-open and profitable markets created by an expanding economy and a vast continent. T. Walter Herbert has argued that

Hawthorne's two careers (author and Custom House clerk and measurer) represent two dichotomous spheres in antebellum America and "embraced a chronic interior tension" (6). Hawthorne shuffled back and forth between the two distinct spheres of market and creative activity and, consequently, acquired a curious sense of doubleness regarding his position in antebellum America. Authorship and manhood did not seem to be compatible. William Spengemann defines Hawthorne's "autobiographical problem" as "his abiding sense of himself as two quite distinct and unrelated persons, one public and typical, and the other private and unique" (135). Yet, the divisions within Hawthorne's sense of himself as public and private figure were not innate, but social constructions based on culturally accepted spheres and the roles men and women were expected to play in each; that is, the divisions within Hawthorne's mind were the result of public expectations of what it meant to be a man or a woman. Hawthorne lamented the time spent cloistered in the garret in Herbert Street because it "seemed a departure from normal manliness" (Herbert 6). The demands of authorship--quiet contemplation and plenty of free time--were quite antithetical to the hurried and risky aspects of the market world. Authorship was performed "at home" and by mid-century, fiction was primarily consumed by women. Middle class white men in antebellum America were expected to participate in the expanding market economy and when Hawthorne decided to pursue a path of literary achievement, he deviated from the expectations of antebellum masculine culture.

It's no wonder then, that upon graduating from college, Hawthorne returned home to Salem to begin what he liked to call his "long seclusion" in his mother's house, or the "Castle Dismal"--there was simply no other place to go, except "home," in order to prepare for the business of authorship.

Although his twelve-year "hibernation" has been greatly mythologized--he was never as isolated from society as he and many of his biographers claimed[20]--Hawthorne did indeed sequester himself from the battleground of the market as he sat quietly and contemplatively under the eaves of his mother's house on Herbert Street. In her memories of her brother, Elizabeth Hawthorne reports an incident that took place during the "long seclusion" that is paradigmatic of Hawthorne's precarious position as a man trying to create art in antebellum America: Despite his inconspicuousness after his return to Salem upon graduation from Bowdin, Hawthorne acquired the public reputation of an idler. Wakened to the sound of fire bells one night, Nathaniel ventured out of the house to inspect the scene. On the way, he is chastised by an old woman who "scolded him in threatening terms . . . in her indignation 'at a strong young man's not going to work as other people did'" (quoted in Stewart 322). James Fields further suggests Hawthorne's outsider status in Jacksonian American following his return to Salem in 1825:

> When the whisper first came to the timid boy, in that "dismal chamber in Union Street," that he too possessed the soul of an artist, there were not many about him to share the divine rapture that must have filled his proud young heart. Outside of his own little family circle, doubting and desponding eyes looked upon him, and many a stupid head wagged in derision as he passed by. (69)

Hawthorne found himself in a quandary when he graduated from Bowdin in 1825. His chums left school and dived right into the business of building America as they busied themselves with the pursuit of careers that were quickly becoming professionalized and, hence, legitimized and, more importantly, lucrative.[21] Franklin Pierce, who graduated from Bowdin a year before Hawthorne, began a career in law and politics that eventually won

him the Presidency in 1852.[22] Hawthorne's other pal, John Cilley (two years Hawthorne's senior), was a star in the Maine legislature and was eventually elected to Congress, only to fall victim in an infamous duel in 1838.[23] Hawthorne's best friend and classmate, Horatio Bridge, began a long career of legal and maritime exploits after graduating from Bowdin in 1825.[24] When Hawthorne went to visit Bridge in Maine during the summer of 1835 (a decade after their college graduation), Bridge was involved in the building of a mill dam in Maine; beyond a few tales that were not ill-received, Hawthorne had yet to accomplish any significant feats.

Hawthorne's friends had faith in his talents and while they wanted to see him succeed in carving a name for himself in the nascent field of American literature, they were also convincing in their arguments and attempts to get blue-eyed Nathaniel out of the house and into the man's world of making and counting money. Bridge, especially, was a stalwart believer in the talents of Hawthorne and in addition to loyally searching for government jobs for his friend, Bridge was also instrumental in the publication of Twice-told Tales, promising the publisher to cover the costs of publication should sales be disappointing.[25]

Hawthorne's friends were not aware of the loss of Hawthorne's creative energy when he entered the masculine world of markets. James Fields also encouraged Hawthorne to make his way in the market world, but in his recollections admitted that he did not understand the dulling effects of the market world on Hawthorne's literary talents: "In my ardent desire to have him retained in the public service, his salary at that time being his sole dependence,--not foreseeing that his withdrawal from that sort of employment would be the best thing for American letters that could possibly happen,--I called, in his behalf, on several influential politicians of the day,

and well remember the rebuffs I received in my enthusiasm for the author of the 'Twice-Told Tales'" (49).

Hawthorne lamented the time he spent in the Herbert Street garret, but he was equally rueful about the time he spent in market activities. Indeed, his unwitting entrance in the market world nearly desiccated his literary career, but, as I will argue, Hawthorne devised ways to continue his literary pursuits while embroiled in the market world.

Writing to Longfellow on 4 June 1837, Hawthorne laments his unwitting seclusion from society: "Since we last met--which, I remember, was in Sawtell's room, where you read a farewell poem to the relics of the class--ever since that time, I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead" (XV: 251). It is curious that Hawthorne would posit the beginning of his withdrawal from the "main current of life" with Longfellow's reading of a farewell poem upon their graduation from Bowdoin. The way he has set this up, it almost seems as if Longfellow's poem--his art--drove Hawthorne underground. To Longfellow, Hawthorne would lament: "For the last ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamed about living. It may be true that there have been some unsubstantial pleasures here in the shade, which I should have missed in the sunshine; but you cannot conceive how utterly devoid of satisfaction all my retrospects are" (XV: 251). Like Hester Prynne, Hawthorne performed and perfected his art while a prisoner: Employing metaphors of imprisonment to describe his situation, Hawthorne laments, "I have made a captive of myself and put me into a dungeon; and now I cannot find the key to let myself out--and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out." "Sometimes through a peep-hole," he continues, "I have caught a glimpse of the real world" (XV: 252).

Consider the sorrowful letters he wrote to Longfellow concerning the fate of his career in literature after clerking in the Boston Custom House: In a letter to Longfellow written on 16 May 1839, Hawthorne ruefully predicts the end of his literary pursuits: "If I write a preface [for Twice-Told Tales], it will be to bid farewell to literature; for, as a literary man, my new occupations entirely break me up" (XV: 310). The mixed intentions here are interesting: Hawthorne tells his friend that he may give up the idea of authorship, yet he will do it in protest by authoring his adieu in a preface rather than a conclusion. Hawthorne threatens to give up authorship for good, but he is never convincing in his threats to give up this writing career. At the same time Hawthorne was writing these lamenting letters to Longfellow, he was penning wonderfully passionate love letters to Sophia. Based on the sheer volume and intensity of the love letters, it appears that he was ready to transfer all of his creative energy into his relationship with Sophia, but he was also clearly using the hours spent writing her letters as ways to perfect and explore his authorial self as well as his "lover" self. This may be why, indeed, Hawthorne addressed some of his letters to Sophia to "Mine Own Self."[26]

In Nathaniel's world, Sophia became the agent that pulled him out of obscurity and helped him introduce himself to the world. If art, or the pursuit of the craft, drove him from the masculine world of markets and into a prison where he perfected his trade, a white Dove pulled him out of his dusky garret and alleviated the pains that his ostensibly failed career as a writer had caused. By 1838, Nathaniel and Sophia had been in love for nearly one year (the first love letter is dated 6 March 1837) and Nathaniel's literary journal had been replaced by his letters to Sophia. As he was penning the mournful letters to Longfellow, he was writing highly stylized and literary

essays on love and romance to Sophia. Hawthorne was practicing his trade as much as he was expressing his love when he was writing those wonderful, passionate letters to Sophia. Ten days after he had predicted the end of his literary career to Longfellow, Hawthorne was busy penning one of the hundreds of passionate letters to his fiancée, exclaiming:

> My feelings do not, of their own accord, assume words--at least, not a continued flow of words. . . . I feel as if my being were dissolved, and the idea of you were diffused throughout it. . . . It is very singular . . . that, while I love you so dearly, and while I am so conscious of the deep embrace of our spirits, and while this is expressed by our every embrace of our hearts, still I have an awe of you that I never felt for anybody else. (XV: 316)

Nina Baym has noted the highly artificial stylization of the love letters, observing that Nathaniel and Sophia were "playing at being in love":

> The letters are full of affectation and pose. Although they are deeply sincere, they are also elaborately artificial. Indeed, the writer gets sincere delight from their very artificiality. In love at last, Hawthorne was playing at being a lover, playing at being in love, and the entire correspondence is evidently a game which both he and Sophia were participating with the greatest enthusiasm. (86)

Furthermore, Hawthorne is willing to discuss his worldly troubles with Longfellow, explaining his delay in reviewing Longfellow's Hyperion and Voices of the Night by exclaiming on 26 December 1839, "My heart and brain are troubled and fevered now with ten thousand other matters" (XV: 393). Yet, in his letters to Sophia of 24 December 1839 and 1 January 1840, Hawthorne's worldly worries are muted and veiled behind his effusions of love. Herbert explains Hawthorne's unwillingness to reveal his worldly cares

to Sophia as a result of his need to keep his "Dove" sacred and free from the taints of the market world (121). "Privatized expectations compulsively fed upon a nineteenth-century middle class sentimental discourse that represented womanhood as a human hearth whose domestic function was to keep a beleaguered masculinity, chilled in the marketplace, emotionally warm and secure" (Pfister 6). In ostensibly losing his life in literature, he has found it in his future life with Sophia and, moreover, while the duties of the Custom House preclude his literary production, his love for Sophia (a domestic, private, almost religious affection) only fuels his imagination, prompting imaginative expressions that will later be employed in his Romances.

Hawthorne used his letters to Sophia to smooth out the turbulence that participation in the market made within his creative life and he seems fairly comfortable, even excited, by the highly stylized self he projects into those letters. He often talks about how she affected his private world, how she freed him from the prison he made for himself on Herbert Street.[27] As evidenced in a letter written to Sophia on 4 October 1840, Hawthorne clearly saw his fiancée as the instrument of his spiritual redemption and the savior from the prison of his imagination. Moreover, I am arguing that Hawthorne's relationship with Sophia (as expressed in the letters) was the medium Hawthorne used to bring himself out of the seclusion of Herbert Street and make his authorial appearances in the world. "[A]nd here [the Herbert Street attic] I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all," he wrote to Sophia on 4 October 1840 (XV: 494). To Sophia, Hawthorne explains that he is finally beginning to understand the purpose of the prison of solitude he has inflicted upon himself. Had he

"made [his] escape into the world" before meeting Sophia, he "should have grown hard and rough . . . and my heart would have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. . . . But living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart, and had these to offer to my Dove." Hawthorne's language is extraordinarily anti-masculine at this point--the world of the market corrupts and jades the self, precluding the fulfillment of love and spiritual romance. His apprenticeship in the "Castle Dismal" effectively cloistered him from the corrupt machinations of the market world and preserved his innocent self. It is curious that at the time Hawthorne was writing this letter to Sophia, he was also considering moving to the utopian community at Brook Farm which he, no doubt, imagined as a place removed from the strictures of society imposed by the market world. Hawthorne concludes his letter of 4 October by metaphorically turning Sophia into his creator:

> Thou only hast revealed me to myself; for without thy aid, my best knowledge of myself would have been merely to know my shadow--to watch it flickering on the wall, and mistake its fantasies for my own real actions. Indeed, we are but shadows--we are not endowed with real life, and all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream--till the heart is touched. That touch creates us--then we begin to be--thereby we are beings of reality, and inheritors of eternity. (XV: 495)

Recalling Hawthorne's earlier statement of concocting himself from nothingness (which was actually written after the letter of 4 October), it seems that Sophia's intervention in Nathaniel's life has worked as a second creation, possibly a re-birth. The language of love that Hawthorne employs here is highly stylized and literary and the life he imagined himself to have

lost in literature is re-directed back into the expressions of his feelings for Sophia.

Hawthorne's language in these letters reveals a great deal about masculine culture in the nineteenth century. His desire to be seen, to be known, to step out into the wider world and make his mark is typical. Indeed, by 1840, his college chums had all done their part in introducing themselves to the new republic. But for Hawthorne, and the profession he chose, the prospects of "stepping out" were more equivocal and difficult, and the hermitage that, upon graduation, was supposed to serve as a training ground, gradually became a center for the incarceration of the self. Hawthorne understood what all the changes of antebellum America were about, but like Melville (to a lesser degree than Melville, actually[28]) and like Thoreau (who Hawthorne increasingly came to admire[29]), but unlike Emerson (whom outlived Hawthorne and became increasingly reconciled with the market economy[30]), he was never able to embrace fully the transformations of authorship in antebellum American.

In The Imperial Self, Quentin Anderson uses Hawthorne as an example of a mid-century author concerned with the self in society. "Hawthorne was sure that only in society," Anderson explains, "despite its faults, can we become human, and he took society for granted as the ground of our humanity" (ix). For Hawthorne, society was a stage on which the scenes of human activity were acted out and "the qualities and energies of manhood and womanhood were deployed" (65). In Hawthorne's textual world, then, being seen and working in the public realm carries a necessary importance that is linked with the changing function of authorship in America. In his Notebooks, he is always calling attention to himself as a recluse; he liked to think of himself as a man outside of the public sphere, yet he yearns to be

seen and to see in turn. Authorship, then, for Hawthorne, becomes a performance that gets his self into the public realm and turns him into an actor on the public (capitalist) stage.

Aware of the importance of seeing and appearance in public, Hawthorne became a show-man in his own right, casting veils and donning masks in efforts to keep the public guessing. In Hawthorne's textual world, the manipulation of appearances is as important as it was in Barnum's Museum. Michael Bell says, "we should remember that the art of the romancer, for the Hawthorne of the prefaces, involves not the casting off of masks--he vows at the beginning of the Custom House for instance to keep the inmost me behind its veil--but the manipulation of appearances to insinuate deeper truths" (48).

In The Shape of Hawthorne's Career Nina Baym has argued that up until 1850, Hawthorne was primarily interested in writing for his nineteenth-century audience and, specifically, confirming the values and beliefs of the hegemony. For Baym, the early Hawthorne was overly self-conscious about his position within antebellum society and, as a result, his early fiction is laced with ambivalence about the social implications of waving the unfurled imagination and the responsibility of the artist/individual within a given community.[31] By 1850, the period Baym calls Hawthorne's "Major Phase I," Hawthorne had become more comfortable with his position as an author in America, and, consequently, was more inclined to subvert, or at least call into question, dominant epistemologies. Baym states her purposes clearly in the preface:

> For the first twenty-five years he worked under the influence of a commonsense attitude about imagination and the artist's place in society; he put forward very modest claims for literature and for

> himself as a literary man. With The Scarlet Letter he broke through to a much more aggressive position, one clearly linked to American and English romanticism; he describes his "conversion" in "The Custom House." (8)

Baym's argument demands certain qualifications--what does one do, for instance, with the tale of 1832, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," which clearly questions the glories of the American Revolution at a period when flag-pole patriotism and literary nationalism were common currents of the young republic's literary discourse? Also, what are the "links" between English and American Romanticism?[32] This idea of Hawthorne's gradual development, even evolution, into a confident and, hence, combative, authorial persona, is an interesting way to begin thinking about how Hawthorne dealt with the problem of selfhood in the second quarter of the nineteenth century as it broaches the issue of Hawthorne's gradual willingness to challenge cultural trends.

Baym declares that the authorial persona of the Twice-told Tales (first published in 1837; reissued in an expanded, two-volume edition in 1842 and then re-published again in 1851) is cautious and self-conscious, more interested in "decorum" (55) than contest, and "show[s] the writer projecting back onto society what he assumes to be society's values" (53). Interestingly, "in order to perhaps better grasp its aesthetic assumptions," Baym encourages the student of Hawthorne to conceive of the works of the Twice-told Tales period as "performance rather than creation" (57, my italics). I'm intrigued by Baym's argument and its suggestion that, somehow, Hawthorne in his early phase(s) was less true to his essential authorial position than he became in, what she calls, his "Major Phase"(s). The suggestion, of course, is that as an overly-self conscious author, ambivalent about his position within the

framework of a social system in which fictional authorship was suspect, Hawthorne the writer was putting on a show (much like Oberon in a story from Twice-told Tales, "Passages from a Relinquished Work"[33]) for his readers by disguising his more subversive intentions and interests. If the early phases were "performance," then, as Baym says, the "Major Phase"(s) were bona fide "creations" that naturally emitted from the very soul of the writer. Hawthorne's career, it seems, progresses from superficial experimentations with language into projections of his essential nature into the literary works he produces. There is no doubt that Hawthorne's career evolved and that, as Baym contends, he gradually became more comfortable with his place as an author of American letters. Yet, the model she sets up is curiously similar to the very Victorian notion that the Great Writers somehow exuded their best works from the very essence of their being.[34]

For my reading of Hawthorne's literary production up through The Scarlet Letter, all of his attempts at authorship, indeed, his very conception of what it means to be an author, is indeed a performance, or an inquiry into the stylization of self and an attempt to both present and obscure the self, in all its changing forms, to his readers. Hawthorne's performances, however, were quite different from Whitman's methods of self promotion. For Hawthorne, authorship involved a negotiation between his private desires to create fiction and public expectation of the writer's role in antebellum America. His literary performances are attempts to cryptically, even flirtatiously, introduce himself to his readers. The idea of "Nathaniel Hawthorne" is lurking around and behind all of the textual characters (including the voices of the prefaces) but, like the characters he creates, "Nathaniel Hawthorne" is a subject of culture who tempts us with the disturbing proposition that behind the veil he removes is only another veil.

Hawthorne was aware of the authorial personas he was creating and he was always bemused by his readers' inclination to read his own self into the literary personas. In the 1851 preface to Twice-told Tales, Hawthorne amuses himself with the conception of his self that readers have formed after reading Twice-told Tales:

> This kindly feeling, (in some cases, at least,) extended to the Author, who, on the internal evidence of his sketches, came to be regarded as a mild, shy, gentle, melancholic, exceedingly sensitive, and not very forcible man, hiding his blushes under an assumed name, the quaintness of which was supposed, somehow or other, to symbolize his personal and literary traits. He is by no means certain, that some of his subsequent productions have not been influenced and modified by a natural desire to fill up so amiable an outline, and to act in consonance with the character assigned to him; nor, even now, could he forfeit it without a few tears of tender sensibility. (IX: 7)

What is intriguing here is that Hawthorne would remark that his "subsequent productions" may have been influenced by the public persona that his (limited) readership had attributed to the author. It suggests that if the early work was a "performance," then subsequent productions (which would include The Scarlet Letter, as Hawthorne re-wrote this preface a full year after its publication) were written with the intention of maintaining this public persona and showing his readers what they wanted to see without giving away the self behind the authorial veil. Indeed, Hawthorne reminds the reader that the tales "are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart . . . but attempts to open an intercourse with the world" (IX: 6). The tales, then, become mediums of self-expression, perhaps even personal letters that attempt to explain or introduce the authorial self to the

community. Commenting on Hawthorne's 1851 arrangement of the Tales, Nina Baym remarks: "It is not difficult to see that although ideas of balance, variety, and reader appeal surely played their part in Hawthorne's decision, the overriding criterion was the presentation of the author. . . . Each tale and sketch needed to be tested against the final impression of himself that Hawthorne wanted his readers to receive" (69). Similarly, Michael D. Bell (who oftentimes sounds very much like Baym) comments: "If we wish to understand the author, we must understand how he has both hidden and revealed his own 'essential traits' by projecting them into his characters--including, of course, the character 'Nathaniel Hawthorne' who addresses us in the prefaces . . . " ("Arts of Deception" 45). Since I am arguing against Spengemann regarding the existence of an essential self that can ultimately be revealed, I am less concerned with uncovering that elusive "Nathaniel Hawthorne" than I am with looking at the rhetorical devices he uses to create, conceal, and reveal a self. In this way, Twice-told Tales (and, I will argue, Mosses from an Old Manse and The Scarlet Letter) are as autobiographical as they are fictional and represent attempts of the author to introduce and stylize a public self.

Hawthorne would not have been at odds with critics who have read his fiction as a series of literary performances. In the preface to The Snow Image (1851), Hawthorne addresses his readers who believe fiction reveals the identity and the private nature of the author by remarking that a person "who has been burrowing . . . into the depths of our common nature, for the purposes of psychological romance" will be amused by the "talk about his [the author's] external habits, his abode, his casual associates, and other matters entirely upon the surface." Reminding us that "These things hide the man," Hawthorne suggests that, "instead of displaying him. You must make quite

another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits" (XI: 4). This is curious, especially when we realize that Hawthorne's characters themselves have very few "essential traits." Indeed, as is the case in The Scarlet Letter, the main characters of that tale are continually revising and remodeling themselves, casting off and donning any number of social selves and masks in their attempts to negotiate their own private sense of self with the demands of the public sphere and the secret desires and machinations of their own hearts.

In the autobiographical preface to Mosses from an Old Manse (1846), Hawthorne ostensibly reveals more of his self to the public than he had in previous works.[35] Hawthorne and Sophia were very protective of their space and privacy in the Edenic atmosphere of the Old Manse. When Margaret Fuller proposed that Ellery Channing and his wife board with the Hawthorne's, Nathaniel firmly refused, explaining to Fuller that "the comfort of both parties would be put in great jeopardy," and further remarking that "Had it been proposed to Adam and Eve to receive two angels in their Paradise, as boarders, I doubt whether they would have been altogether pleased to consent" (quoted in Mellow 214). Yet, in this extended account, the rather indolent and bemused Hawthorne cordially invites the reader into his abode, providing a pleasant tour of the house and region, and gently leading the reader along: "Perhaps the reader--whom I cannot help considering as my guest in the old Manse, and entitled to all courtesy in the way of sight-showing--perhaps he will choose to take a nearer view of the memorable spot" (X: 6). As Hawthorne continues to show the reader around the grounds and reveal more of his own self, the hyphenated aside comes to seem comical and baiting. The irony of the aside and Hawthorne's ostensible

good nature becomes palpable as Hawthorne gradually reveals his antipathy to hospitality and courtesy when it comes to revealing his true self. Performatively, it may have been uttered under Nathaniel's breath in an almost notorious, sinister fashion. This is certainly Hawthorne putting on a show.

Hawthorne begins with a tour around the surrounding countryside: "Come," he beckons after leading us through an old Indian village, "we have pursued a somewhat devious track, in our walk to the battle-ground" (X: 8). Along the way, he reveals a few anecdotes of local history, and takes us through his orchard and garden as well as the venerable library of the Manse. Hawthorne introduces his male friends (his "buddies"?) from the neighborhood: Mr. Thoreau makes a cameo and Hawthorne goes on an exciting canoe ride with W.E. Channing. Mr. Emerson is mentioned and lightly satirized. Later, the talk turns from realistic sketches of the natural landscape (his canoe ride with Channing is pleasant reading) to more psychological interests, and we notice Hawthorne reaching his ostensibly favorite place--"cloud land." As the preface evolves, Hawthorne's interest and authorial vision become increasingly abstract and "other-worldly." (In Herbert's paradigm, this would have been the perfect time to introduce Sophia.) There is talk of ghosts in the Manse: "Houses of antiquity . . . are so invariably possessed with spirits" and the apparition within the garret of the old Manse (whom Hawthorne affectionately refers to as "our ghost") was known to "heave deep sighs" in the corner of the parlor and rustle over papers "as if he were turning over a sermon" (X: 17). The ghosts, of course, are references to the former inhabitants of the manse, clergymen who practiced for their Sunday performances, as well as an echo of Hawthorne's former self who was sequestered away in the attic of his mother's house.

Hawthorne is reticent about his domestic life: the Manse decade is highlighted by his marriage to Sophia (9 July 1842) and representative of Hawthorne's recent removal from public life. The Old Manse that Hawthorne begins to introduce his reader to is not necessarily the Old Manse he shared with Sophia. Indeed, she does not even appear in Hawthorne's tour, and knowing about Sophia's inclination to stay at home, we might imagine her hiding in the closet.[36] At the Old Manse, Hawthorne and Sophia enjoyed three years of domestic tranquillity and perhaps these omissions have motivated the concluding sentiments of the prefatory essay. Slightly apologetic, and overtly disingenuous, he excuses himself for "babbling through so many pages about a moss-grown country parsonage, and his life within its walls" (X: 32). Of course, he had divulged very little, almost nothing, about his life in the Manse and almost triumphantly draws our attention to this when he exclaims that he "has not betray[ed] anything too sacredly individual to be revealed by a human spirit . . . " (X: 32). Quickly, the kindly tour-guide who, until this point, has been expressing the utmost courtesy (and, we have been led to believe, forthrightness) to his guests, very unapologetically, almost gleefully, reveals how very little he has divulged of his self:

> How narrow--how shallow and scanty too--is the stream of thought that has been flowing from my pen compared with the broad tide of dim emotions, ideas, and associations, which swell around me from that portion of my existence! How little have I told!--and, of that little, how almost nothing is even tinctured with any quality that makes it exclusively my own! Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being, and have we groped

> together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. (X: 32)

Taken by itself, this passage reveals a common theme of Hawthorne--the incommunicability of human emotions and sentiment.[37] However, read in the context of the Twice-told Tales preface where "the Author" suggests that the malleable public persona has been manipulated to fit the expectations of his audience, the concluding remarks of "The Old Manse" can be read as an inquiry into the possibilities, even the necessity, of self-stylization and the theatricalization of a public self. "The Old Manse" portrait, then, becomes more than an essay on the foibles of human communication and a fairly clear statement regarding the malleable nature of self. For Hawthorne, theatrical selfhood became a tool to obscure the self from the demands of the public sphere; he seems pleased that despite his thirty-page ramble over the territory of the self, he still hasn't given anything away. His exclamation points are not lamentations, but celebrations. In many ways, Hawthorne, who earlier promised to be such a congenial host, has tricked the reader, admitting to not being "one of those supremely hospitable people":

> So far as I am a man of really individual attributes, I veil my face; nor am I, nor have ever been one of those supremely hospitable people, who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain-sauce, as tidbit for their beloved public. (X: 33)

Kenneth Dauber has also pointed to this passage, using it as an example of Hawthorne's ostensible ambivalence regarding essential selfhood and querying, "What is Hawthorne saying? If 'the inner passages' of his being remain concealed, why boast about it? Is Hawthorne proud of his superficiality? . . . . Hawthorne, we imagine, is not really in the surface he speaks. The 'common sunshine' exists only to conceal the uncommon

darkness, the real self he invites us to learn" (164). But Dauber, unlike Spengemann, does not stop here, continuing the questioning by wondering if Hawthorne had difficulty believing in Cartesian selfhood: "Or we imagine, perhaps, that Hawthorne does not himself understand this real self. . . . We presume a Hawthorne behind Hawthorne--revealing himself, concealing himself--but the true object of our reading" (164).

So an essay that started out so congenial and friendly almost turns nasty at the end. Hawthorne veils his face, wears the mask, reveals that he has been concealing his self, and wonders about the possibilities of essential selfhood.

It is worth lingering over Hawthorne's use of the old Manse as a narrative device. As I demonstrated in the Barnum chapter, domestic architecture is a inviting mechanism for suggesting the interior life and Hawthorne (who was very interested in the semiotics of architecture) does not lose his chance here. "The Old Manse" essay begins with an extended representation of the Manse and its former inhabitants, clergyman, mostly, who, as I have noted, still seem to live there with Hawthorne and Sophia. Our first glimpse of the structure is through "two tall gate-posts of rough-hewn stone" and the view is unimpeded by the gate itself which has "fallen from the hinges, at some unknown epoch" (X: 3). The last occupant, a "priest," passed away nearly a year previous, so the path to the front door is overgrown and two "vagrant" cows and a horse meander around and chew the foliage. Hawthorne wants the reader to know that this domestic sphere is removed and polarized from public life, not like the grounds of Iranistan which were open for public inspection: there are "glimmering shadows, that lay half-asleep between the door of the house and the public highway," which gives the structure itself a "spiritual medium" that does not seem to belong to the "material world" (X: 3). Even passing strangers cannot pierce the shadowy interlude between

highway and threshold, so the abode provides an equitable amount of privacy. Hawthorne reveals that he is the first layman to occupy the Manse, which effectively distances himself from his fellow clergymen, but also helps to establish himself in the position of a mediator, although rather than reconciling God and man, Hawthorne takes responsibility for bridging the gulf between fantasy and fact. [38] As he takes up his position in the old home that had housed generations of "priests," Hawthorne puts on the clerical garb and leads us around his abode (until about page 30, the reader is indeed a part of Hawthorne's flock). He is so gentle and amiable, we might even want to sit down under an venerable oak tree and lay our burdens at his feet, maybe even confess some hidden sins. Yet, the concluding passages reveal what the author has been concealing and he continues to use architecture to suggest these ideas.

Following the passage where Hawthorne reveals his masking, Hawthorne concludes the essay by detailing the move from the old Manse. "In fairy-land [the domestic sphere of the old Manse], there is no measurement of time; and, in a spot so sheltered from the turmoil of life's ocean, three years hastened away with a noiseless flight, as the breezy sunshine chases the cloud shadows across the depths of a still valley" (X: 33). The existence of Fairy-land, it appears, is contingent upon its aged-ness and remoteness of the abode and when carpenters "next appeared" and consequently disturbed the domestic tranquillity by "making a tremendous racket," Hawthorne realizes it is time to pack up and move on. As the carpenters "vex the whole antiquity of the place with their discordant renovations" they transform fairy-land into a virtual reality. Most disturbing and, indeed, the event that precipitates the move is the removal of the vines (obscuring agents) that have been climbing across the Manse: "Soon, moreover, they divested our abode of the veil of

woodbine, which had crept over a large portion of its southern face. All the aged mosses were cleaned unsparingly away; and there were horrible whispers about brushing up the external walls with a coat of paint . . . " (X: 33). It is no surprise, of course, that Hawthorne, who safely veils his own face, finds this improvement "little to his taste" and precipitates the drinking of a "farewell cup of tea" to the old Manse (X: 33).

In the tales that follow, Hawthorne continues to use masking tropes as a way to explore issues of selfhood and persists in presenting his self to the public. Moreover, the tales in the Old Manse collection are untypically autobiographical in their oblique and muted presentation of the authorial self. Indeed, in tales such as "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Monsieur du Miroir," Hawthorne introduces his own self into the text as he uses his characters and creative personas to continue to veil his face. In "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne doubly inscribes himself into the text by naming himself as the translator of the tale that comes from the pen of a Frenchman by the name of M. de l'Aubepine (French for Hawthorne). Similarly, "Monsieur du Miroir" is a playful inquiry into the discrepancies between public and private identities and a self reflexive tale that ruminates over his public self as it appears to the private Hawthorne.

Theatrical Selfhood in The Scarlet Letter

"Insincerity in a man's own heart," Hawthorne wrote in his notebooks sometime between 1836 and 1837, "makes all his enjoyments, all that concerns him, unreal; so that his whole life must seem like a merely dramatic representation" (Hawthorne's Lost Notebook 38). This is Hawthorne the moralist, acknowledging the American cult of sincerity and without the thick sense of irony he would develop in his later work. By 1850, the middle-aged,

world-weary Hawthorne had become something of a cynic. Near the end of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne draws forth the moral of the tale: "Be true! Be true! Be true!" he exclaims, sentimentally encouraging his readers to learn a lesson from his characters who are not "true." But by 1850, Hawthorne could not simply let the moral stand as an unambiguous exhortation. "Show freely to the world," he continues, "if not your worst, then some trait whereby the worst might be inferred" (I: 260). Might be inferred? A quintessentially ambiguous and ironic moral, Hawthorne's advice nods toward the values of a sentimental cult of sincerity yet also undermines those ideological beliefs and supplants them with the suggestion of the necessity of masking the private self in the public sphere. Be as true as you need to be, Hawthorne seems to be saying, but don't give too much away. The different tone of Hawthorne's notebook and the moral of The Scarlet Letter is emblematic of the nineteenth-century's gradual acceptance of theatrical selfhood. "Gradually," notes Haltennun, "the sentimental demand for perfect sincerity was losing its tone of urgency and being replaced by a new acceptance of the theatricality of social relationships" (157).

Hawthorne wrote the following entry in his American Notebooks: "A dying exclamation of the Emperor Augustus, "Has it not been well acted?" An essay on the misery of being always under a mask. A veil may be needful, but never a mask" (VIII: 23). Hawthorne liberally employed tropes of masking and veiling through the corpus of his fiction, but in The Scarlet Letter, he comes nearest to writing the proposed essay on the necessity of veiling of the self and the nefarious repercussions of masking. Hawthorne's definition of "masks" and "veils" is enigmatic; indeed, the entire phrase that states veiling is a more acceptable form of self-presentation poses more questions than it answers. A mask or a veil effectively obscures or defaces the

wearer and both present similar problems of interpretation of the individual. What does Hawthorne mean when he states that a veil may be necessary, but never a mask? The Scarlet Letter is about the problem and the necessity of fragmented and stylized social selves and through the masking and veiling devices of the text, Hawthorne manages to explain and clarify the distinctions between the masking and veiling of the self. Hawthorne was particularly self-conscious about the private self he was projecting to his readership and, consequently, questions of self-stylization and malleable selfhood that he deliberated over within his own life get projected into the characters and literary devices of his fiction. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne suggests that theatrical selfhood is necessary in order for the individual to negotiate a sense of him or herself within the standards and expectations of the public sphere. When malleable selfhood is exercised in order to find a middle ground between individual desires and pubic expectations, Hawthorne nods his head in approval and even applauds the efforts. However, there are limits to the efficacy of theatrical selfhood in Hawthorne's world. When the self is manipulated in order to engage in activities that threaten the order of society and/or obscure dark motivations, when the individual ceases to negotiate between the private and public spheres and dives into the gratification of individual consciousness, or the Cartesian vortex of essences, theatrical selfhood becomes a problem without a solution.

In the opening chapter of The Scarlet Letter, during Hester's dramatic crossing of the prison-door threshold, Hawthorne introduces ideas concerning the dynamics of appearing and being seen in public, concealing and revealing of self, and ontological questions concerning Cartesian and Lockean selfhood. As Richard Broadhead has observed, Hester's first act of the novel is to brush off the hand of the beadle, who "prefigured and re-

presented . . . the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law," as he prepares to lead her out of the prison and into the Puritan community (Hawthorne, Melville and the Novel 56). After repelling the strong arm of the State, Hester prepares to meet the public gaze:

> When the young woman--the mother of this child--stood fully revealed before the crowd, it seemed to be her first impulse to clasp the infant closely to her bosom; not so much by an impulse of motherly affection, as that she might thereby conceal a certain token, which was wrought or fastened into her dress. (I: 52)

After briefly considering the possibilities of concealment, her second act of the novel, then, is a brazen act of revelation:

> In a moment, however, wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm, and, with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at her townspeople and neighbors. (I: 52-3)

When Hester initially stands before her accusers, she is confronted with two distinct modes of self-presentation: Either she can attempt to conceal the emblem of her shame, or openly reveal her letter to the community. Her first impulse, of course, is to conceal, but, according to Hawthorne, she judges wisely and removes Pearl from her breast and, with a "haughty smile," confronts the public gaze of the community. Ironically, this moment, which is undoubtedly Hester's lowest point in the text, turns out to be her redemption from a life of false pantomime and masquerade because it is here that she acknowledges the role she has to play; it is here that she makes a decision to be an actor, to play out the histrionic role that the Puritan community has imposed upon her. From the first scene of the novel, then,

Hester is associated with revealing, although it is her concealment of the father of her child that really upsets the moral order of the Puritan community. Hester's revelation, then, is ironic--in revealing the letter on her breast and expressing her haughty smile (a smile similar to the one the author of the Mosses preface may have worn) Hester suggests a notoriousness that will eventually confuse the moral code of the Puritan community through the manipulation of the community-imposed sign. Yet, in this first scene Hester decides to wear her veil, her costume, candidly and in Hawthorne's textual world, her decision to openly wear the community-imposed sign allows her to do "cultural work." For Hawthorne, veiling and the donning of multiple social selves is imperative. As Anderson observed, being human, for Hawthorne, meant operating in a community. But in Hawthorne's textual world being a part of a community also means the individual is required to negotiate a sense of his or her self within the public sphere. The gap between private selfhood and the expectations of the public gaze is bridged by the crafty and political manipulation and performances of social selves. Hester understands this early and although the knowledge never brings her instant karma, it allows her to operate in the cultural milieu in a more effective, certainly more healthy way than her lover, Dimmesdale, or her former husband, Chillingworth, the two other players in the novel who also engage in the histrionic presentation of self, albeit with more duplicitous and less successful outcomes.

The opening scene immediately establishes the very visual aspects of The Scarlet Letter. The romance is about seeing and the problems of interpreting signs, it is about exhibition and the public gaze. "The novel," Michael Gilmore says of The Scarlet Letter, "presents a social environment in which seeing and being seen, observing others and being gazed at in turn, constitute

the principal forms of human activity" (72). Unlike Reverend Hooper of "The Minister's Black Veil," Hester is on display; she is denied the right to hide her face, so she engages in strategies that subvert the original signification of the letter. Hawthorne surely had Reverend Hooper in mind when the narrator of Hester's tale comments on her inability to shield her visage: "There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature,--whatever be the delinquencies of the individual,--no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame" (I: 55). As a woman, Hester is denied the right to hide her face and to speak her voice; indeed, her only right in the novel is a negative one--the right not to speak. When she finally attempts to plead her case (this time in an effort to save Pearl from being taken from her) in chapter VIII, "The Elf-child and the Minister," she appeals to Dimmesdale: "'Speak thou for me!' cried she. 'Thou wast my pastor, and hadst charge of my soul, and knowest me better than these men can. I will not lose the child! Speak for me!'" (I: 113).

Upon her removal from the prison, Hester becomes the object of the public gaze, an exhibition for the masses. The first sentence of the novel represents one of the many public gatherings/processions of the text: "A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes"(I: 47).[39] In its representation of public spectacle and a world of spectators, the novel begins to illustrate aspects of nineteenth-century exhibition culture that I uncovered in the Barnum chapter. "For Hawthorne's main characters in particular," remarks Gilmore, "the condition of being scrutinized by others is the dominant fact of their lives" (72). It is no coincidence, of course, that

Hawthorne has Hester initially reveal her letter in the marketplace. The letter, a finely wrought piece of work, becomes a work of art and it, along with the author of the piece, is held up for public scrutiny. "Come along, Madam Hester, and show your scarlet letter in the market-place," the beadle sardonically suggests (I: 54). The language here is curiously self-reflexive as we recall Hawthorne's inclination to describe his years in the garret on Herbert Street with metaphors of confinement. Indeed, when Hester emerges from the prison, she is in the selfsame position that Hawthorne found himself upon terminating his twelve-year literary apprenticeship and exhibiting his goods and his name (recall that he published anonymously until 1834) for public consumption.

Stepping across the threshold, Hawthorne employs language that suggests the display of self in an exhibition culture: a lane opens and an "irregular procession" follows (this is not the very regular procession of chapter XXI, "A New England Holiday," where the Puritan magistrates and clerics demonstrate their stately power). Hester's former haughty expression melts in the midst of the public gaze: "For haughty as her demeanour was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample on" (I: 55).

In this first, dramatic, scene of the novel, Hawthorne manages to express his own ambivalence about his writerly, masculine self in antebellum America by using language and images that resonate with his own precarious position as an author. When Hester finally makes her first of three appearances on the scaffold, she finds herself in a middle world, a no man's land, but especially a no woman's land. The Governor and his cohorts "sat or stood in a balcony of the meeting-house, looking down upon the

platform," and the crowd, comprised of "a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fasted upon her, and concentered at her bosom," stood below (I: 57). With the general populace below her and the magistrates above, Hester engages in a dramatic moment of backward imagination as her vision proceeds over the tops of the head of the people and latches on to images of her childhood in England. Hester uses the past as a shield against the demands of the marketplace; she effectively uses history to obscure the uncomfortable position of the present: "Her mind, and especially her memory, was preternaturally active, and kept bringing up other scenes than this roughly hewn street of a little town. . . . Reminiscences, the most trifling and immaterial, passages of infancy and school-days, sports, childish quarrels, and the little domestic traits of her maiden years, came swarming back up her . . . " (I: 58).

Selfhood and the Language of Sartorial Significations: The Scarlet Letter

Dress was a social issue at mid-century, and although the women's dress reform movement and Amelia Bloomer's infamous costume did not break onto the social scene until one year after the publication of The Scarlet Letter, sartorial significations and their ideological implications were part of the social discourse.[40] Americans searched out means to suggest proper ways of behavior and adornment of the body and, as Haltennun shows in her monograph, family magazines such as Godey's filled that need. Similarly, Arthur Schlesinger remarked, "From the late 1820s on this literature [of family magazines] poured forth in a never-ending stream. An incomplete enumeration shows that, aside from frequent revisions and new editions, twenty-eight different manuals appeared in the late 1850s--an average of over three new ones annually in the pre-Civil War decades" (quoted in Roach The

Visible Self 21). Yet, as Haltenun argues, by mid-century, fashion had become a means for the expression of theatrical selfhood in the public sphere: "In the late 1840s and the 1850s, the sentimental critique of fashionable dress, etiquette, and mourning ritual was giving way to a worldly acceptance of self-display, social formalism, and ceremonial ritual as appropriate expressions of middle class position" (153).

In American Beauty, Lois Banner argues that by mid-century fashion became a way for the middle-class American woman to assert herself within the confines of nineteenth century notions of womanhood: "Among the possible options for distinction and advancement for women, fashion had a powerful appeal. It provided intricate paths to influence and achievement; its complexities equaled those of masculine business and professions" (24). In addition, the gradual acceptance of cosmetic stylization in the nineteenth century suggests how American women were increasingly using various accouterments to present themselves in the public sphere. Traditionally, hairdressers and cosmeticians were anathema in a republican society, but by mid-century, the influence of the Parisian fashion world affected the way middle and upper class urban women presented themselves in public. Rouge, which had previously been worn primarily by prostitutes, became commonly used by urban woman to cover blemishes and embellish facial features.[41] In addition, hair dressers found thriving businesses in New York and hair styles became the topics of women's magazines.[42]

Earlier in the century, the English satirist, Thomas Carlyle ruminated on the symbolic nature of fashion and clothing in Sartor Resartus (1834), a work that was originally titled "Thoughts on Clothes." Hawthorne (the American ironist) uses sartorial significations and personal accouterments to broach issues of selfhood. In Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, Roy Male suggests

Hawthorne's use of sartorial significations to broach ontological issues in The Scarlet Letter:

> As the spirit is clothed in flesh and the flesh is clothed in garments, so ideas are clothed in words. The outer garments may be true to the inner reality: Hester's ascension [up the scaffold] is a mute utterance made manifest by the letter which society has vested upon her and which she has embroidered. Or they may be false covering: Dimmesdale's ascension at the close depends upon his willingness to divest himself of the priestly robe. Most of the garments in the book are accurate reflections of character. (102)

Clothing becomes a part of material culture that suggests Hester's position in the face of the larger social order. Describing Hester's garb as she leaves the prison and enters the public sphere, Hawthorne notes:

> Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion, in prison, and had modeled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity. (I: 53)

In ostensible defiance against the community's efforts to fashion her spirit, Hester becomes a creator/artist who pursues beauty at the expense of the moral concerns of the larger society. Later in the novel, after Hester has become the community's most delicate embroiderer, fashioning all the ruffs and bands and fancy gloves that the magistrates wear in the processions of State, Hawthorne has stripped Hester of her gorgeous adornments: "Her own dress was of the coarsest materials and the most sombre hue; with only that one ornament, --the scarlet letter,--which it was her doom to wear" (I: 83). The letter still blazes in all its finery on her breast, but the oriental beauty of

her garments has been transferred to Pearl who now "was distinguished by a fanciful, or, we might rather say, a fantastic ingenuity" (I: 83).

Hester has conformed her sartorial significations to the Puritan expectations, but Hester's needlework circulates throughout the community and, in effect, provides her with a voice that she is ostensibly denied due to her fallenness. The magistrates, either too obtuse or vain, do not recognize the implications of Hester's "work" nor do they realize the rate of exchange she receives for her handiwork. Hester's art, which consists of the ability to "add the richer and more spiritual adornment of human ingenuity to their fabrics of silk and gold" (I: 82), is evidenced everywhere except on the visage of the bride-to-be: "Her needle-work was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarfs, and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little cap; it was shut up , to be mildewed and moulder away, in the coffins of the dead" (I: 83). Hester, as the village embroiderer, adorns the outer garb--she is the embellisher of self, the hand that stylizes the self and, consequently, challenges the notions of essential, static selfhood. It is no mistake, of course, that Hester's needlework is primarily displayed during state functions and processions and decorates the (Old World) theatricality of the events.[43]

Hawthorne's self-reflexivity, his attempts to introduce his self and his craft to the public, are operating as subtexts within The Scarlet Letter. For instance, Hester's craft, her "delicate and imaginative skill" (I: 81) and her tenuous position within the community is a reflection of Hawthorne's own sense of his self as a man writing in a cultural milieu where masculinity was associated with endeavors outside of the home. Hawthorne's art, like Hester's, is superfluous, not necessary for the general betterment of the social order and this is what prompted Emerson to remark that "N. Hawthorne's

reputation as a writer is a very pleasing fact, because his writing is not good for anything, and this is a tribute to the man" (Journals VII 465). Michael Gilmore suggests this much when he calls Hester "the first full-length representation in American literature of the alienated modern artist" (85). Ostensibly, Hester conforms to the dictates of the Puritan codes, but quietly resists through "her needlework and her silence" (85). This is very similar to the position Hawthorne took up in antebellum America.[44] As Michael D. Bell has argued in "Arts of Deception," Hawthorne inoculates his Romances against all apparent subversive possibilities by rhetorically pushing them into cloud-land in the prefaces and pretending to be ignorant of the radical nature of Romance writing in antebellum America. Hawthorne may as well have been writing about his self and craft when he said of Hester: "In this manner, Hester Prynne came to have a part to perform in the world. . . . In all her intercourse with society, however, there was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it" (I: 84).

Hawthorne's use of language to describe the scarlet letter and its relationship to Hester's and his own sense of self is worth further consideration. In "The Custom-House" essay, Hawthorne prepares the reader for the importance of the sartorial expressions of the text. Digging among the lost papers and relics he happened upon in the garret of the Custom House, Hawthorne discovers the "greatly frayed and defaced" scarlet **A** (I: 31). Prior to finding the foolscap paper that outlines the story of Hester Prynne and, consequently, explains the history of the letter, Hawthorne speculates on the former use of the finely embroidered piece: "It had been intended, there could be no doubt, as an ornamental article of dress; but how it was to be worn, or what rank, honor, and dignity, in by-past times, were signified by it, was a riddle which (so evanescent are the fashions of the world in these

particulars) I saw little hope of solving" (I: 31). Without a history, the letter is a free-floating sign that carries very little meaning except a certain mystical curiosity: Hawthorne's eyes (like the eyes of the Puritan crowd when they first gaze upon the letter) "fastened themselves upon the old scarlet letter, and would not be turned aside" (I: 31). He intuits a larger significance in this tattered piece of cloth, but can't break the code without the clues of history. "Perplexed" and "cogitating" over the past use of the letter, Hawthorne thrusts the essay into its most dramatic moment when he places the **A** on his breast and effectively becomes Hester (I: 31). At this moment he is the only character to wear the letter besides Hester (and who would choose to do so, we might ask): Pearl tries to make a few facsimiles and it is believed that Dimmesdale has one inscribed upon his chest. It is the ancient piece of cloth and not the brief narrative explaining its significance that transmits the passion and the pathos of Hester's story into Hawthorne's breast. Brandishing the letter, Hawthorne nearly brands himself when he "experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat" (I: 32). Too hot to handle, the seemingly innocuous artifact becomes a "red-hot iron" and, shuddering, Hawthorne "involuntarily" (apparently, the discomfort was pleasing) lets it fall to the ground (I: 32). In Hawthorne's world, the significance of placing the letter on his breast and feeling the heat of its significance is a metaphorical act with wide-ranging implications. With this gesture, Hawthorne introduces, and resolves it seems, his thematic concern regarding the battle between the head and the heart. This story-teller, this "Nathaniel Hawthorne," is not the cold and calculating scientist or husband of the earlier tales who scrutinizes the physical world with their frosty intellects; "[T]he symbol communicates its social meaning only to the inner sense of the lonely Hawthorne," argues Charles Feidelson, "not to his analytic

and rational public mind . . . " (36). Rather, as the heat burns into his chest, Hawthorne introduces himself as the bearer of Hester's sufferings and the translator of her plight into the minds of his nineteenth-century readers.[45]

Clothing, sartorial significations, matter in The Scarlet Letter, and Hawthorne uses the language of clothing and ornamentation (covering/embellishing of the self) to broach larger issues of concealing and revealing and selfhood. Referring back to the language of the opening scene of the novel, we recall Hawthorne remarking that Hester deliberated over concealing the letter "which was wrought or fastened into her dress" (I: 52). As Michael Rogin has argued in his study of Melville, clothing is an extension of the self and, in literary discourse, clothing becomes a device that suggests the language of interior selfhood at the same time it is used as a way to mask, disguise, or veil, the self.[46] It matters whether the letter is either "wrought or fastened into" Hester's dress and it also matters that Hawthorne is unwilling to say which it is--wrought or fastened. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne is problematizing selfhood, wondering about the essential and inessential characteristics of the self and sartorial devices aid him in highlighting these issues. Is the self "fastened" or is it "wrought"? Is it simply tacked on to a more formidable being, or is it broken down and molded according to outside forces and machinations?

When something is fastened, it is attached or joined in an unnatural and, most importantly, a temporary fashion. To fasten is to impose an object upon another. An article can be fastened into a garment so that is fixed and immovable, yet it still remains alien to the original weave of the fabric; it can never be a part of the original make up of the piece. There are sexual implications here, too, as "fastening" implies securing something from opening, or locking something up. Furthermore, "fasten" can be used as a

signification to alienate an individual as in "fastening blame" on someone (as the Puritan community does to Hester). Finally, vision is fastened, and just like the letter is (possibly) fastened into Hester's dress, so is the vision of the Puritan community fastened onto the sign of her fallenness.

"Wrought," however, has a more permanent and essential connotation than the signification of "fasten." On one hand, something that is wrought is finely and elaborately constructed. In one of the definitions in the OED, "wrought" is defined as "Decorated or ornamented, as with needlework; elaborated, embellished, embroidered." By attacking the community-imposed sign as she does--that is, by finely constructing the letter A, and turning it into an ornament as well as a badge of shame--Hester plays a part in the definition of her public self and in this way, her self-assertion speaks for her sense of theatrical selfhood. In addition to performing and executing her duty as the town's seamstress, Hester becomes an embroiderer, or embellisher of her own outer garb (external self) and engages in the public stylization of her own self. Hawthorne, a "notorious" reader of detective fiction and the sensational press,[47] has created in Hester Prynne a character whose public infamy and whose manipulation of self through the use of masks and disguises (the letter as mask) comes to seem like a curious echo of Burroughs.[48] Hester as roguish? Her refusal to accept the guilt of her passion that she shared with Dimmesdale, "What we did had a consecration of its own," along with her increasing ideas of radical individualism point her in that direction (I: 195). Furthermore, the confinement of Hester in the Puritan prison and the notorious signification that her name acquires are similarities she shares with the textual world of Burroughs' narrative.

Yet, to stop there (as anyone who argues that Hester is subverting the Puritan dictates through her embellishment of the letter is doing) is to pull

up short. In the face of public imposition, Hester enacts her private rebellion and the result is neither a wholly triumphant Hester (she never really gets what she wants), nor a victorious Puritan community (they have been tricked by Hester, but especially by Dimmesdale--although they get to enjoy good theater around the third scaffold scene). For while "wrought" has a suggestion of intricacy and handiwork about it, there is also a connotation of overpowering domination in the word. In another entry for "wrought" the OED reads: "Of metals: Beaten out or shaped with the hammer or other tools." When iron is "wrought" it is hammered and beaten into shape; that is, it is formed by softening the metal (heating) and then twisting it into the desired configuration. Wrought iron is different from wrought tapestry--one is an embellishment and the other involves the wholesale transformation of a physical element at the hands of a master craftsman. Consequently, Hester's self has been wrought, not solely from the imposition of the State, nor entirely by her own doing, but from the reciprocal interaction and creation of meaning between her private attempts at self-fashioning and the public imposition of her "self" as a fallen woman.

As I explained in the Joice Heth section of the preceding chapter, the public sphere is a web of conflicting and competing meanings and signs. Meaning in the public sphere is a system of negotiations between public and private and dominant and marginal voices. In Learning to Curse, Stephen Greenblatt uses a Bakhtinian framework to suggest that actions and language within a social milieu are disordered. The original intentions that motivate cultural production (speeches, novels, film, letters on women's' breasts) never square up with the effect those productions have on the larger culture. "The apparently isolated power of the individual genius turns out to be bound up with collective, social energy," explains Greenblatt (Learning to Curse 165).

Actions are discharged into the complex web of the social milieu and the implications of those actions are refracted and reflected, distorting and adapting original significations. "A gesture of dissent may be an element in a larger legitimation process, while an attempt to stabilize the order of things may turn out to subvert it" (Learning to Curse 165).

With her voice taken from her and the symbol of shame fastened upon her breast, Hester finds herself a perambulatory site of ideological discourse.[49] Unable to speak, she is spoken to, but the intent of the exhortations is not so much for her edification (she is already a "fallen woman" with little hope of redemption). The famous letter that Hester wears on her breast is a community-imposed sign that defines the mission and values of Puritan Boston as much as it categorizes Hester as an adulteress. The Puritans of Boston, then, begin to see Hester according to the way they see themselves and Hester becomes a text who (that?) performs the same ideological function as the crime narratives of the seventeenth century.[50] Consider the following passage from Chapter V, "Hester at Her Needle":

> Clergyman paused in the street to address words of exhortation, that brought a crowd, with its mingled grin and frown, around the poor sinful woman. If she entered a church, trusting to share the Sabbath smile of the Universal Father, it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse. (I: 85)

Richard Slotkin has argued that ideology is commonly passed through a culture by oral discourse: "sermons, polemics, credos, [and] manifestos" serve as rhetorical devices to propagate the dominant ideology (82). The clergyman's words are spoken not to admonish Hester as much as they are used as an example for the larger society on how not to act and to define the trajectory of the Puritan society.

Yet, through her quietude--her refusal to name the father of her child--Hester works some witching spells on the nefarious effects of ideology and the ability of the community to use her as an ideological tool. The scarlet letter upon Hester's breast is the mythical symbol that propagates the Puritan ideology. The letter is a stigma for its bearer and a locus of discourse for the Puritan authorities. But because Hester refuses to name the father of her child, the letter remains an arbitrary sign--its meaning changes with social and personal circumstances. When the relationship between ideology and mythology is arbitrary, the power of ideology breaks down. Without a fixed locus of meaning (which is impossible--even in death), concepts become relative to the particular historical circumstances. "Although it must address contradictions, a culture's mythology and ideology must be mutually compatible to a considerable degree, if the culture is to have any coherence" (Slotkin 84).

So there is a certain amount of ideological slippage that occurs in The Scarlet Letter. At the beginning of the narrative the **A** upon Hester's breast is a symbol of the negative effects of dissent from Puritan standards. By asserting her only right (the right not to speak, not to name her cohort), Hester Prynne illustrates one way of veiling her self and/or breaking down hegemonic authority. (Recall that other masker of Hawthorne's corpus, Reverend Hooper, also refuses to reveal his reasons for wearing the black veil.) For as much as the letter serves to define the mission and agenda of the Puritan community, Hester manages to subvert the intentions of the letter by turning it into a veil, or a tool of ideological deception. Hester grabs hold of the **A** and struggles with the Puritan community for control of the meaning of that signification.

The word "adultery" is never mentioned in the text and the letter gradually becomes associated with words such as "able" and "angel." By Chapter XIII, the letter is no longer a symbol of sin, but a symbol of her calling": "Such helpfulness was found in her,--so much power to do, and power to sympathize, that many people refused to interpret the scarlet **A** by its original signification" (I: 161). In the eyes of the community, the isolated pariah of the early chapters becomes "our Hester--the town's own Hester" by the end of the novel (I: 162). Without a connection between child and father, mother and father, the symbol remains arbitrary and the individual self "fastened" to the symbol continually open for interpretation.

Hester's strategies of self-fashioning only go so far, though. Despite the change in the original signification of the letter, Hester's social self is still wrapped up in the symbol. While the community might fall prey to the ideological slippage, Hester's own daughter retains the original signification of the letter. In Chapter XIX, "The Child at the Brook-Side," Pearl proves that the tentacles of ideology reach even into the depths of the forest. In the previous chapter, ironically entitled "A Flood of Sunshine," Hester strips the fastened symbol, loosens the dark tresses of her hair, and briefly enjoys a few moments of unadulterated freedom. She effectively unmasks herself with these gestures, but the liberty is short-lived: Pearl returns from her ramble and insists that her mother assume her customary garb. Without the symbol of her social self, Hester steps beyond the limits of culture, beyond the public definition of self and is unrecognizable. Behind the veil of the letter, it seems, there is nothing.

Hester engages the Puritan community in a battle of signs; they have accused her and attempted to "fix" her public/social self in an effort to define their own sense of who they are. This should begin to sound familiar,

because it is the same model of negotiated selfhood that I have set up in order to talk about Barnum and his experience with Joice Heth and Jenny Lind. Nineteenth-century audiences read themselves into the public exhibitions Barnum paraded before them. Jenny Lind and Joice Heth reflected the ideological trends and epistemological patterns of their viewers. But cultural meaning was created somewhere between the public persona that the women projected out into the public sphere and the manner in which audiences interpreted their images. Negotiating their selves into the public spheres, the images of Jenny Lind and Joice Heth took on a life of their own after they were offered to the public's observation. Similarly, the "Hester Prynne" of the concluding chapters of The Scarlet Letter is a social subject created from the intense negotiations and exchanges between Hester and the Puritan community.

The men who are connected to Hester spend most of their time attempting to conceal their past and/or their other selves, and sartorial devices help them to do this. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth pay a heavy price for the parts they play in the masking and disguising of their selves. While Hester uses garments and adornments to manipulate her self and negotiate a space within the Puritan community, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth adorn themselves in order to conceal deep, dark secrets.

When Chillingworth comes to Boston and sees his wife standing in public ignominy he commits to exploiting his anonymity and exploring the possibilities of malleable selfhood in the New World. Hawthorne tells us that when he made his "advent" into Boston he seemed to have appeared from nowhere. His "first entry on the scene" had "an aspect of mystery which was easily heightened to the miraculous" as he "drop[s] down" from the sky" or, Hawthorne cautions, possibly from the "nether earth" (I: 121). When we

first meet Chillingworth, he is "clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume" and his "heterogeneous garb" conceals his physical deformity (I: 60). Chillingworth's long absence from civilization was spent in the company of Indians where, in addition to taking on their sartorial expressions, the scholar also became adept in the art of alchemy.[51] Chillingworth goes undercover in order to sniff out his wife's lover. "Irked" that the culprit is not standing on the scaffold of infamy along with Hester, Chillingworth ominously remarks to a passing stranger, "But he will be known!--he will be known!--he will be known!" (I: 63). The repetition of the phrase (which resonates with the moral of that tale that Hawthorne draws at the end--"Be true! Be true! Be true!") and the exclamation marks give the statement an intensity and obsessiveness that defines Chillingworth's character throughout the tale. During his first meeting with Hester, Chillingworth effects his dubious masquerade when he changes his name from Prynne to Chillingworth, decides to represent himself as a physic/alchemist, and commits himself to a life of false performance. When Hester, who has recently received a lesson on the importance of being honest, queries, "Why not announce thyself openly, and cast me off at once?" Chillingworth replies without answering, exacting his intention of wearing the mask of the deceiver: "It may be because I will not encounter the dishonor that besmirches the husband of a faithless woman. It may be for other reasons. Enough, it is my purpose to live and die unknown. Let, therefore, thy husband be to the world as one already dead, and of whom no tidings shall ever come. Recognize me not, by word, by sign, by look! Breathe not the secret, above all, to the man thou wottest of" (I: 76).[52]

Chillingworth continues to effect his performance and begins to sound like Hawthorne's self-created authorial self:

> [Prynne/Chillingworth] chose to withdraw his name from the role of mankind, and, as regarded his former ties and interests, to vanish out of life as completely as if he indeed lay at the bottom of the ocean . . . This purpose once effected, new interests would immediately spring up, and likewise a new purpose; dark, it is true, if not guilty, but of force enough to engage the full strength of his faculties. (I: 118-19)

Cloistering his former self away, Roger Prynne "vanish[es] out of life" and "concocts" a new identity under the appellation of Roger Chillingworth.

> In Pursuance of this resolve, he took up his residence in the Puritan town, as Roger Chillingworth, without other introduction than the learning and intelligence of which he possessed more than a common measure. . . . It was as a physician that he presented himself, and as such was cordially received. (I: 119)

Chillingworth, in effect, becomes a confidence man who misrepresents his self to the Puritan community in order to effect his nefarious mission of revenge.

The consequences of Chillingworth's performance are not happy. In Hawthorne's world, Hester saves herself by openly wearing her letter and her newly wrought self, but Chillingworth's concealment and manipulation of his self effectively deforms his mind and his body. Mid-way through the narrative, Hawthorne reveals that respectable townspeople had noticed a "remarkable change" in old Roger Chillingworth since he took up residence with Dimmesdale. Upon his arrival, "his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like," but now "there was something ugly and evil in his face"; indeed "his visage was getting sooty with smoke" (I: 127). Hester, too, notes the transformation of her husband. Remembering him best as a "studious man, calm and quiet" Hester is shocked by the "eager, searching,

almost fierce, yet carefully guarded look" of Chillingworth (I: 169). He is anything but calm and quiet in the narrative; indeed, Chillingworth, as he stamps his feet and raises his hands in the air and speaks in italics and exclamations, makes the largest racket of all the characters in the novel. "In a word," notes Hawthorne, "Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of a man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil . . . " (I: 170).

Throughout the novel, Hester is associated with revelation. Although she never reveals the name of her lover, she openly and ostentatiously wears the letter on her breast and she finally breaks her promise with Chillingworth and reveals herself to Dimmesdale as the self-proclaimed physician's wife. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, perpetually denies the fact that he is an actor performing a role and this constant self-betrayal, or hypocrisy, wears him down to the point that he collapses on the scaffold.

Dimmesdale wears a costume and his clerical outfit becomes an ironic symbol of the wide gulf between public and private selves. For Dimmesdale, the sartorial coverings he uses are disguises that obscure his body and the guilt of his mind. Dimmesdale uses dress to engage in the language of performance; his clerical outfit gives him a voice and a justification to surreptitiously speak about his own plight in his public sermons. Dimmesdale is talking about himself within the subtext of his Sunday sermons; the clerical costume becomes a way to obscure his own personal guilt and shame yet project his Christian messages out to the public realm. Despite the charade he enacts, Dimmesdale is still very real to his parishioners and although he wallows in guilt and misery, and his private self is worlds away from how the public perceives him, he effectively performs his role to his parishioners. Charles Feidelson argues that, through misrepresenting himself to the congregation, Dimmesdale is "nothing at all"-

-neither an effective minister nor, to Hester, an effective lover. According to Feidelson, Dimmesdale "always comes round to 'the contrast between what I seem and what I am," or, in other words, Dimmesdale is daily confronted with the paradoxes of private and public selfhood in the public sphere, or the Aristotelian bi-form that I explained in the Barnum chapter (66). Dimmesdale is both a good man and a bad man. According to his own moral standards and those of the Puritan community, he has sinned and has probably damned his soul to hell. Yet, when Dimmesdale walks the streets or ascends the pulpit, he is the town's goodly minister and his parishioners, not aware of the hidden guilt and sin of the man, perceive him as they expect to see their spiritual leader.

As the narrative progresses, Dimmesdale gradually loses more and more of his clothing, exposing more of his physical body to the world as Hawthorne prepares the reader for the third scaffold scene. With each bit of clothing that is stripped away or removed from his body, his guilty past is slightly more revealed. In Chapter X, "The Leech and his Patient," Chillingworth sneaks into Dimmesdale's chamber, catches the minister napping, and surreptitiously begins to poke around Dimmesdale's body, looking for clues: "The physician advanced aside the vestment, that hitherto, had always covered it even from the professional eye" (I: 138). In his role as public performer, Dimmesdale conceals the mark of his guilt with his clerical garb.[53] Dimmesdale shudders and Chillingworth turns away with a "wild look of wonder, joy, horror!" (I: 138). What Chillingworth found that made him stamp his foot on the floor and throw his hands upward remains a mystery in the text, but what matters here is the removal of a piece of clothing to reveal a hidden sign.

Dimmesdale loses a glove during his midnight vigil on the pillory--the first of his two appearances upon the scaffold of shame, which increasingly becomes a stage for the dramatic actions of the text. Perhaps the minister lost his glove as he was descending the scaffold, for the next morning (a Sunday) as he descends the pulpit-steps after delivering a "discourse which was held to be the richest and most powerful" of his career, "a gray-bearded sexton met him, holding up a black glove," informing the minister that the devil, intent on usurping God's power in Boston, set it in this most out-of-bounds place (I: 157). Fooled by the belief that pure words transmit from a pure heart, that public discourse reveals the private self, the sexton cannot imagine Dimmesdale, who has just preached a sermon that had brought souls to the truth, engaged in surreptitious midnight activities.

Early in the narrative, as Hester is getting ready to emerge from the prison, a surly Puritan woman commiserates over the authorities' refusal to deal more harshly with the sexually deviant woman. The "autumnal matron," less forgiving, but perhaps more knowing than the magistrates, realizes that Hester is getting off easy by simply having to wear a badge of shame: "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead," she exclaims. "Why look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the street as brave as ever" (I: 51). Hester does not conceal her badge, but she does walk the streets as bravely as she did before her fall. Dimmesdale's guilt compels him to brand himself, to deface his body, but his clothing hides the self-imposed badge of shame and allows him to perform the same social role he did prior to the adulterous act. Dimmesdale's self-inflicted wounds from his flagellations for penitence become the signs he cannot bear in the public realm, but which he necessarily inscribes into his own body. The flagellations, however, become no more real

than the garments of mock holiness that he uses to cover them and Male calls them nothing more than pantomimes: "So long as they are covert, the minister's gestures are but a mockery of penitence, and his cloistral flagellations, fasts, and vigils are unavailing" (100). Dimmesdale, of course, pantomimes his way through the entire novel. His favorite gesture--holding his hand over his heart--becomes a metaphorical form of false confession that is so transparent that even little Pearl can see through the duplicity: When the girl greets her mother with a facsimile of the **A** on her breast Hester asks her if she knows why her mother wears the letter to which the little girl replies, "Truly do I! It is for the same reason that the minister keeps his hand over his heart" (I: 178-79). Pearl sees the charade because she has not been formed by the Puritan ideology that precludes people such as the sexton from imagining the darkness of his minister's soul.

In the forest, Dimmesdale can confess his charlatanism to Hester when he responds to Hester's statement that he lives a holy life:

> There is no substance in it! It is cold and dead, and can do nothing for me! Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none! Else, I should long ago have throw off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment seat. Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret! (I: 192)

The fear of Fifth column is introduced into the narrative after Hester confesses her concealment of the plot against Dimmesdale: "The very contiguity of his enemy beneath whatever mask the latter might conceal himself, was enough to disturb the magnetic sphere of a being so sensitive as Arthur Dimmesdale" (192-93). The irony, of course, is the fact that the head of the plot is the dyed in the wool Puritan, Chillingworth. Earlier in the

narrative he alludes to a religious conversion (again, ironically brought on by his commitment to the discovery of Hester's paramour) or at least a renewal of a once-forgotten faith: "My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all that we suffer" (I: 174). Ironically, it is the resurgence of his dusty faith that leads him on his path of mutual assured destruction: "It is our fate," he cries. "Let the black flower blossom as it may!" (I: 174). And it is the suggested apostates--Hester and Dimmesdale--who have clearly been associated with the Old World and Popery, who suffer from the machinations of Chillingworth's (who, at this point, begins to sound like John Endicott) and become his victims.[54]

Hester's confession is followed by a resounding plea that is pivotal to the issues at stake here. In a rather nineteenth-century, middle-class rhetorical flourish, Hester expresses her faith in the future, in the inevitable progress of (American) culture when she encourages Dimmesdale to seize the wide world by the shoulders: "Is the world so narrow?" she queries, then exclaims, "Begin all anew! . . . There is happiness to be enjoyed! There is good to be done! Exchange this false life of thine for a true one" (I: 197) At this point, Hester's utopian sentiments are almost amusing. We know, and expect her to realize, that Dimmesdale isn't going anywhere and her promise of happiness simply doesn't ring true. At this point, Hester is being less of an effective performer than a jejune cheerleader. Concluding her encouragement, Hester utters perhaps the strangest words of the text. Observing, Chillingworth's nefarious self-creation, Hester imagines Dimmesdale can do the same, only with more blessed effects. "Preach! Write! Act! Do anything save to lie down and die! Give up this name of Arthur Dimmesdale and make thyself another, and a high one, such as thou canst wear without fear or shame" (I: 198). Why "Act!" we might rightfully ask? In

Hawthorne's world, preaching, acting, and writing seem to be activities requiring similar talents, and Hawthorne seems to have been interested in conflating the three activities. Earlier, Hawthorne had referenced clerical and authorial careers when he made mention of the generations of "priests" who lived in the old Manse--one of the "priests," of course, being Ralph Waldo Emerson--and I have suggested that he used his authorial powers to perform a part in antebellum American. Dimmesdale balks at Hester's encouragement, exclaiming himself: "O Hester! thou tellest of running a race to a man whose knees are tottering beneath him! I must die here. There is not the strength or courage left me to venture into the wide, strange, difficult world, alone!" but when Hester promises to accompany him on his journey (mission? apprenticeship?) she inflicts him with perhaps the falsest sense of security imaginable (I: 198).

The scene in the forest demonstrates the limitations of theatrical selfhood in Hawthorne's fictional world. In Puritan Boston, Hester is able to do a fair amount of cultural work by subverting the sign and using it as a mask. Yet, she cannot leave Boston. Hawthorne rhetorically wonders about this in Chapter V, "Hester at her Needle," when he questions why Hester did not fly New England and return to her home: ". . . free to return to her birthplace, or to any other European land, and there hide her character and identity under a new exterior, as completely as if emerging into another state of being . . . " (I: 79). For Hawthorne, the answer to the question is simply that we make our own realities and the world that Hester had made for herself (and which had also been made for her) was the only one to which she had access. For Hester, there was a "fatality" to her situation in Boston which compelled her to "linger around and haunt, ghost-like, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color to their lifetime" (I: 79). The move to Boston and

the consequential events proved the "stronger assimilation" and she experienced a "new birth" in the New World. This, of course, is more irony--in 1850 when everyone else is writing about America as the land of rebirth from the desiccated English culture, Hawthorne sends over an Englishwoman to be reborn into a world of fate and doom.

Dimmesdale's confession/death scene is effected through the tearing away of his outer garments and the revelation of the self-imposed badge of shame he wears on his breast. Although he has obscured his guilt beneath his clerical gown throughout the entire narrative, Dimmesdale's confession and death are revealed by Hawthorne as a triumph of the spirit against baleful, mitigating forces. The language Hawthorne uses to represent Dimmesdale's confession resonates with the opening scene of the novel when Hester revealed her letter to the public gaze upon her removal from prison. Dimmesdale, too, metaphorically rescues himself from the prison of his guilt by revealing his sin in the public sphere:

> With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed! But it were irreverent to describe that revelation. For an instant the gaze of the horror-stricken multitude was concentered on the ghastly miracle; while the minister stood with a flush of triumph in his face, as one who, in the crisis of acutest pain, had won a victory. (I: 255)

It is only in unmasking himself that Dimmesdale is able to triumph over his condition and die a very sentimental death, which Hawthorne enacts in the finest nineteenth-century fashion. Making his peace with Hester and Pearl, Dimmesdale manages to explain his plight and his expiration as a performance illustrative of God's grace. Unlike Hester, Dimmesdale sees no consecration in their affair. "The law we broke!--the sin here so awfully

revealed!" Dimmesdale cries, "Let these alone be in thy thoughts." Yet Dimmesdale manages to turn his death into a sign of God's mercy, explaining the trials he has suffered as the agent of his salvation:

> God knows; and He is merciful! He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost for ever! Praised be his name! His will be done! Farewell! (I: 256)

The catalogue of sufferings enables Dimmesdale to die his death of "triumphant ignominy" before the public gaze. Even in the revelation of his sin, though, Dimmesdale is sufficiently ambiguous enough to confuse the people as to the cause of his passing, the reality of the letter on his breast, and his relationship with Hester. Hawthorne does not seem to be too concerned about how the people interpret Dimmesdale's death and the meaning of the letter on his chest (if we can even believe it exists). In fact, Hawthorne seems to be amused, even delighted, that the community refuses to see Dimmesdale for what he is--a sinner just like them. For Hawthorne, the fact that seeing is inextricably intertwined with ideology is a social dynamic worth celebrating. The intentions of Dimmesdale's confession collide with the community's expectations and his words and gestures, rather than exposing his sin, become (for many) confirmation of his saintliness. Dimmesdale's death, like the death of Little Eva--that other famous nineteenth-century sufferer--becomes a Christian conversion experience. He feels good about himself and can die a noble death because he feels he has revealed his guilt in the public sphere. Yet, Dimmesdale's confession and death becomes an event needful of

interpretation. A part of the public holds the belief that Dimmesdale had nothing to do with Hester except served as her minister and that, upon realizing he was dying, decided to turn his death into a "parable" in order to remind the living that the human condition of fallenness closes the artificial gap between the saints and the sinners: "It [Dimmesdale's death] was to teach them, that the holiest among us has but attained so far above his fellows as to discern more clearly the Mercy which looks down, and repudiate more utterly the phantom of human merit, which would look aspiringly upward" (I: 259).

Hawthorne provides us with a textual world that deals with the problems of concealing, revealing, and performing in nineteenth-century America. By 1850, the problems of theatrical selfhood had become so prevalent that even a retiring and reticent figure such as Hawthorne was broaching these issues in his literary discourse. For the performing self/selves that Hawthorne presents in his fiction, life is a carnival of masks and charades that are negotiated between the private realm and public expectations. Like Barnum and Mowatt, Hawthorne uses theatrical selfhood in his fiction as a literary device that obscures the self and challenges the possibilities of essential human nature. More self conscious than Mowatt and Barnum and, ultimately, more aware of the limitations and potential problems of the theatrical self in the cultural milieu, Hawthorne expresses his ambivalences toward the possibilities of malleable selfhood at the same time that he is stylizing an authorial self.

Notes

[1]Although it is not relevant to my discussion, Fields' description of his initial discovery that Hawthorne was busily writing a novel which would become The Scarlet Letter is a wonderful anecdote that is seldom discussed in Hawthorne scholarship. Following the amusing story of Hawthorne's attempt to conceal his manuscript from Fields and then his eventual handing over of the m.s. for Fields' perusal, Fields remarks: "However, we soon arranged for his appearance again before the public with a book" (51).

[2]It would not be difficult, of course, to contest Charvat's assumption that the developing middle classes were without "tradition."

[3]Charvat goes on to conclude that "The whole Romantic movement in American may be considered in part as a protest against the new bourgeois." It's a statement that makes me go, "Hm . . . " as I think about critical studies such as David Reynolds' Beneath the American Renaissance which argues just the opposite of Charvat's formulation. However, Charvat's idea is not too different from the kinds of things Michael Davitt Bell is doing in his essay "Arts of Deception" where he argues that Hawthorne was deviously, even notoriously, introducing the Romance to America under the guise of innocuous and conservative pretensions.

[4]The critical debate over Hawthorne's social and political conservatism or radicalism is led, on one side, by Sacvan Bercovitch who explains Hawthorne as a cultural conservative. See The Office of the Scarlet Letter and "Hawthorne's A-morality of Compromise." On the other side, critics such as Michael Bell argue that Hawthorne intended to subvert the status quo of antebellum America through the Romances he produced. See "Arts of Deception."

[5]Kenneth Dauber takes this formulation a step further, arguing that the tradition of the American Romance is essentially an adventure in American autobiography. Explaining his take on Charles Brockden Brown, Dauber discusses the implications of authorship becoming professionalized in America: "Rhetoric is replaced by poetics. Autobiography becomes fiction or, in the case at hand, romance--the tradition of the so-called American romance--which I see as fiction in the process of a constant return to its lost autobiographical origins" (xviii).

[6]For a discussion of Melville's flirtation with Cartesian essences in Moby Dick, see Rogin, Subversive Genealogy 109.

[7]As Pfister argues, the cultivation of the private self was a gender specific responsibility that fell to middle class women: "Privatized expectations compulsively fed upon a nineteenth-century middle-class sentimental discourse that represented womanhood as a human hearth whose domestic function was to keep a beleaguered masculinity, chilled in the marketplace, emotionally warm and psychologically secure" (6).

[8]Pfister notes the irony of Hawthorne penning these tales, which illustrate the dangers of the conjugal household, in the midst of his blissful honeymoon.

[9]See Arlin Turner's biography of Hawthorne (176) for a discussion of Hawthorne's frustrating attempts at literary production while engaged at the Custom House.

[10]See Bell's excellent discussion in "Arts of Deception" regarding the subversive elements of writing Romance in antebellum America. Also, note that Emerson, another cultural maverick, expressed his admiration of Hawthorne's tales for the exact reason most readers of antebellum fiction distrusted the literary imagination: "N. Hawthorne's reputation as a writer is a very pleasing fact," Emerson recorded in his journal, "because his writing is not good for anything, and this is a tribute to the man" (quoted in Mellow 205).

[11]See Charvat, Literary Publishing in America, especially Chapter Two.

[12]For the state of American literary history and the a discussion on the development of authorship from the immediate post-colonial era up through the Civil War, ee Charvat, The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870.

[13]See Chapter Two of Turner's biography on Hawthorne for a discussion of his early years.

[14]This is an echo from a letter Nathaniel wrote to his mother on 7 March 1820: "Shall you want me to be a Minister, Doctor or Lawyer? A Minister I will not be" (XV: 117).

[15]For a history of the development of literary production in America see Charvat's Literary Publishing in America.

[16]Whitman was tireless (some thought tiresome) in his self promotion. See Kaplan, especially 21-22, 207-212.

[17]On high and low culture in antebellum America, see Levine, Highbrow/ Lowbrow.

[18]The idea of self-promotion was unheard of in the 1820s when Hawthorne was breaking onto the literary scene. By 1850, however, as we have seen in the figures of Barnum and Mowatt, promotion of self was imperative to success in the world of market capitalism. The same was true in the literary world. See Charvat, The Profession of Authorship, Chapters Three and Four.

[19]Even so, America up until 1850 seemed comfortable with its shallow literary tradition. In addition to the difficulty that men faced with writing imaginative fiction, women, as Mary Kelley argues in Private Woman, Public Stage, experienced similar obstacles: women writing, or stepping out on to the stage of the public sphere were as notorious as male writers of the Romance.

[20]See Mellow (passim) for discussions of Hawthorne's shyness in public.

[21]See Bledstein (Chapter Five) on the professionalization of careers in American culture.

[22]Hawthorne, of course, wrote Pierce's campaign biography, intending to reap the benefits of knowing people in high places if Pierce's run was successful. Following his election, Pierce granted Hawthorne the American Consulship in Liverpool.

[23]See Mellow (107-111) for details and circumstances surrounding Cilley's death.

[24]For a brief biography of Bridge see Simpson's introduction to Bridge's Journal of an African Cruiser (v-x).

[25]Bridge pushed the publication of Twice-Told Tales by, unbeknownst to Hawthorne, guaranteeing the publisher, Goodrich, $250 against possible losses. See Herbert (75) for a discussion of Bridge's role in the publication of Twice-Told Tales.

[26]See Cowley for the sentimental version of Nathaniel's and Sophia's relationship. See Herbert (passim) for a more penetrating look at the couple's life together.

[27]See Hawthorne's letter of 4 October 1840 (XV:494-96).

[28]See Bell, "Arts of Deception," for a discussion of Melville's more radical rebellion from the demands of the market on the mid-nineteenth-century author.

[29]See Gilmore (85-86) and Mellow (259) on Hawthorne's relationship with Thoreau.

[30]See Gilmore (Chapter One) for a discussion of Emerson and the market.

[31]Baym's ideas begin what seems to have become the central focus for Hawthorne scholars to this date, namely, whether Hawthorne was a cultural conservative or whether he challenged the ideological assumptions of his day.

[32]See Bell, The Development of American Romance, especially Chapter One, for a discussion of the differences between English and American Romanticism.

[33]See Millington's excellent discussion of "Passages from a Relinquished Work" in Chapter Two where he argues that the tale is an attempt by Hawthorne to present his self to the public.

[34]See Auerbach (Chapter One) on the nineteenth-century reception of Shakespeare. See also Lawrence Levine (Chapter One) on the popular revisions of Shakespeare on the public stage in nineteenth-century America.

[35]Baym reminds us that the framing of Mosses is similar to Hawthorne's earlier collection of tales, The Storyteller (a manuscript sent to Goodrich in 1834 that was eventually broken up and published in individual pieces in The American Monthly Magazine) a series of tales that are linked by the travels and experiences of a traveling story-teller (39).

[36]On Sophia's disinclination to leave home, see Herbert 171-77.

[37]See J. Hillis Miller (57) for a discussion on the theme of incommunicable selfhood in Hawthorne's fiction.

[38]The Old Manse was built in 1770 by Reverend William Emerson (Ralph Waldo's father) and next occupied by Reverend Ezra Ripley.

[39]For a discussion of Hawthorne's use of public processions see my essay, "Stylized Public Processions and the Literary Carnivalesque in the Fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne."

[40]For a critical analysis of antebellum women's fashion see Haltenun, Chapter Three, "Sentimental Culture and the Problem of Fashion." On Amelia Bloomer and the effects of her fashion designs on antebellum Americas, see Banner 86-87, 94-98.

[41]See Sennet (65-70) for a discussion of the use of cosmetics in Elizabethan England.

[42]See Banner (36-40) for a brief history of hairdresser establishments in antebellum America. See Halttunen (84, 86, 161, 163) for discussions of antebellum hairstyles.

[43]See Newberry for a discussion of Hawthorne's association of Hester with the Old World through her needlework finery.

[44]It is important to distinguish between Hawthorne's artistic radicalism (Bell) and his political conservatism (Bercovitch).

[45]Of all of Hawthorne's literary production, The Scarlet Letter is perhaps the most passionate. He wrote the text in a feverish fit of frustration and sorrow following his removal from the Custom House and the death of his mother. Writing to her mother, Sophia reported on Nathaniel's condition at the time: "He writes immensely. I am almost frightened about it. But he is well and looks shining" (quoted in Mellow 303). After he completed the novel, Hawthorne wrote to his friend Bridge and told him that after reading the final chapters to Sophia, so affected was she that, according to Hawthorne, it "broke her heart and sent her to bed with a grievous headache--which I look upon as a triumphant success!" (quoted in Leverenz 263). Later, Hawthorne would admit that he, too was influenced by the first full reading of the manuscript recalling that "my emotions when I read the last scene of The Scarlet Letter to my wife, just after writing it--tried to read it, rather, for my voice swelled and heaved, as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean, as it subsides after a storm" (quoted in Leverenz 264). Sophia's famous headache and Nathaniel's unusual display of emotion have been mined by reader-response critics.

[46]See Rogin, Subversive Genealogy, especially Chapter One.

[47]See Reynolds, especially Chapter Nine, for a discussion of Hawthorne's reading of crime literature.

[48]See Reynolds (118-127) for a discussion of The Scarlet Letter in terms of popular crime fiction of antebellum America.

[49]A clarification of terms is important here: Ideology is shared patterns of belief; it is, according to Richard Slotkin, "an abstraction of the system of beliefs, values, and institutional relationships that characterize a particular culture or society" (70). Ideology is the force that appropriates a "face" to the individual in a given society; it sets the parameters for individual behavior and thought, and provides the subject with a social identity. In a coherent cultural order, ideology and mythology work in tandem; that is, mythology collaborates with a culture's dominant ideology. Mythology, "a body of traditional narratives that exemplifies and historicizes historical ideology," then, works as the symbol that delivers meaning to the concepts of ideology (Slotkin 70). See also Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology and Ideology.

[50]See my discussion on crime narratives in Chapter One.

[51]On Hawthorne's representation of alchemy in his fiction see Stich; Swann; and Luther.

[52]John Updike, who has re-written The Scarlet Letter in a trilogy, has made himself out to be Chillingworth's critical proponent. See his novel, Roger's Version.

[53]Frederick Newberry has discussed the implications of Dimmesdale's insistence on wearing vestments of the Anglican faith, observing that in specifying Dimmesdale's sartorial covering as a "vestment," clerical garb worn by Anglican priests, Hawthorne does not mean to "transform Dimmesdale into an Anglican priest but to suggest a mixture of Anglican and Puritan in him" (240).

[54]For a discussion of Hester as an icon and her association with Catholicism, see Newberry 234.

Chapter Five

From the Pulpit to the Platform: Emerson and the Lamentation of Theatrical Selfhood

My life is for itself and not a spectacle.

--Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson shares none of the theatrical sensibilities of the figures in this study. Emerson's idealism--his radical individualism and his insistence that the individual's essential nature could be uncovered--becomes an obvious critique of the men and women who are the focus of the preceding essays. Through his essays and lectures, Emerson expounded jeremiadic warnings concerning the drift of self into fragmentation and theatricality. Emerson was not impressed with actors and manipulators of self, encouraging his listeners to "Always scorn appearances, and you always may," and "Insist on yourself, never imitate" ("Self-Reliance" 59, 83). Emerson was clearly at odds with the way nineteenth-century Americans were beginning to perceive themselves in relation to the expanding industrial, capitalist culture. He was a lone voice of the American nineteenth century calling for a retreat of the self back from the kind of self-stylization we saw in the figures of Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne. In one of his journal entries, Emerson listed Barnum as one of the "charlatans" of the nineteenth century (XII: 378) and in another he exclaims that Barnum, along with a host of other nineteenth-century figures, was no "country[man]" of his (XIV: 334). Emerson did not celebrate the adorned public men and women who make up this study and he set himself apart from his contemporaries who were willing

to accept a fragmented self and use that in order to negotiate their way in a new world order. Rather than create public personas that catered to the demands of public expectations and negotiated between public culture and private needs, Emerson declared that men and women should shuck off the accouterments of civilization, pay no heed to ideological demands of the public, and valiantly search for the natural Cartesian essence. "My life is for itself and not a spectacle," Emerson declared in "Self-Reliance"(53).

In "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," which F.O. Matthiessen called "probably the most illuminating account of the intellectual movements of our eighteen-thirties and forties which has yet been written" (6), Emerson summed up the epistemological undercurrent of the age, paying close attention to his own mantra of the divinity of the individual self:

> The key to the period appeared to be that the mind had become aware of itself. There was a new consciousness. The modern mind believed that the nation existed for the individual, for the guardianship and education of every man. This idea, roughly written in revolutions and national movements, in the mind of the philosopher had far more precision; the individual is the world. (308 my italics)

Like his predecessor, Stephen Burroughs, and his contemporaries, Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne, Emerson was working out of the liberal tradition of autonomous individuals free from the authority of the State. Emerson turned the world of his Fathers, the world of Puritanism and Calvinism, inside out; he took the prescribed world of the deity that ostensibly lay outside physical experience and collapsed it into the consciousness of the individual reality. Instead of reaching outward and upward in a painful state of grace,

Emerson bore inward--he was a metaphysical mesmerist, Melville called him a "diver"-- in an attempt to reconcile the individual with his or her own self.

In ways he probably would not have been comfortable with, Emerson's brand of (what Quentin Anderson has called) "secular incarnation" resonates with the cultural implications of antebellum theatrical selfhood (41). Emerson's self-reliance and radical individualism suggests a world in which individual experience becomes the only reality; when the individual creates his own reality, the parameters of experience, as well as the possibilities of the theatrical self or the self-stylized persona, are decidedly broadened. The tension between Emerson's imperial self and the fragmented self of antebellum America is palpable in the body of his work. For Emerson, explains Anderson, "the only authority was within . . . [w]e all became actors and spectators in our private theater" (41). The scions of the past do not play a part in the development of the individual self. Rather, individuals are their own fathers and the development of American selfhood is phoenix-like in its perpetual re-creation. And the nineteenth-century problem of theatrical selfhood that I am uncovering is related to Emerson's vision of radical individualism. When the past drops away and the individual claims his or her subjective reality for the universe, the possibilities of a malleable self freed from the strictures of State and Church emerges.

Unlike Hawthorne, who saw the necessity of masking until it threatened the social order, Emerson (who seemed to care little for social cohesion) was wary of self-stylization. Although Emerson was not interested in negotiation, masking, or the re-writing of self for ideological purposes, the reality of a fragmented, theatrical self was so palpable in nineteenth-century America that even the age's most vociferous challenger of theatrical selfhood found himself constructing ways to mend what he saw as a cultural crisis. "A man

may ride alternately on the horses of his private and public nature," he explained in "Fate," expressing the divided and dynamic nature of self in the nineteenth century, "as the equestrians in the circus throw themselves nimbly from horse to horse, or plant one foot on the back of one and the other foot on the back of the other" (47). For Emerson, the fragmentation of the self was perilous (this is suggested in the image of men throwing themselves from moving horses) and rather than re-writing self in the image of public culture, Emerson writes in an attempt to uncover the "aboriginal self." For Emerson, nineteenth-century men and women such as Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne "became trapped into continually meeting expectations that had nothing to do with the way in which he, the inner man, perceived himself. Forced to develop a public persona with which his private self could not come to terms, he became a constant spectator of himself" (Cayton Emerson's Emergence 225).

Emerson remained recalcitrant toward the trends of the nineteenth century because he was never able to reconcile his Coleridgean sense of Reason and Understanding with the nineteenth-century American notion of creating reality and meaning through sight.[1] In this way, Emerson continued to separate himself from the epistemological assumptions of his contemporaries. Distinguishing between perception (Reason and the vision of the soul) and opinion (the Understanding that facilitates everyday existence), Emerson argues that the perception never errs--to it "perfect faith is due" ("Self-Reliance" 65). On the other hand, the "willful actions," or the Understanding, roves and is unstable ("Self-Reliance" 65). Opposed to the perception (which, for Emerson, is the only way of Knowing, the only reality the individual can conceive), Understanding is contingent on the individual's subject position within a particular culture. In a statement that

almost seems to be directed at the epistemological structures of seeing and knowing that someone such as Barnum exploited, Emerson declares in "Self-Reliance":

> Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for, they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time, all mankind,--although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun. (65 emphasis added)

When Emerson talks of perception as fatal, he means that the perception is incontrovertible and the effect of individual destiny. Barnum, who thrived on the exploitation of whimsical sight, demonstrated to nineteenth-century Americans that seeing (or Emerson's Understanding) created meaning, that perception was a dynamic that was negotiated through Understanding between the individual and the physical world. For instance, in the operational aesthetic that Neil Harris sees working in Barnum's sites of public pleasure, individuals create meaning through interaction with the various hoaxes that Barnum presented to them. The "Fejee Mermaid," Joice Heth, and "The Great Buffalo Hunt," as well as nearly every other exhibition Barnum presented to the American public, were "aesthetic[s] of the operational," that stemmed from "a delight in observing process and examining [the ostensible hoaxes] for literal truth" (Humbug 79). "In place of the spiritual absorption" that was inherent in the vision of Emerson, "Barnum's exhibitions concentrated on information and the problem of deception. Onlookers were relieved from the burden of coping with more abstract problems. Beauty, significance, spiritual values, could be bypassed in

favor of seeing what was odd, or what worked, or was genuine" (Humbug 79). Quite dissimilar from Barnum's way of seeing, the aesthetic operating in the world view of Emerson was an aesthetic of selfhood, or the delight in observing and probing into the depths of the aboriginal, spiritual self. Emerson is arguing that perception, the universal vision of the soul, makes up the individual's way of seeing and knowing and this cannot be altered or tainted by the duress of ideological demands or images.

While Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne were experimenting with the possibilities of theatrical selfhood, Emerson was warning about its problems. Rather than celebrating the creation of a public self, which all of the figures in this study assiduously attempt, Emerson lamented the apparent mitigation of the needs of the private self. For Emerson, suppression or expression of the private nature for the sake of public expectations or exploitations was akin to a loss of liberty and, at least for the Emerson of "Self-Reliance," this phenomenon was a product of a burgeoning market economy: "Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater" (49-50). Emerson's insistence on individual nonconformity--perhaps the pivotal characteristic of Emersonian individualism--from the strictures of the social order is not assimilable into the theatrical manipulations of self that the figures of this study engage in. In many ways, their negotiations with public culture seem to have breached Emerson's adage, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. . . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (50). For Emerson, conformity to the ideological expectations of public culture is akin to the donning of social masks and veils. Obedience to institutions and the forms of culture obscures the self: "If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible society, vote with a great

party either for the government or against it, spread your table like base housekeepers,--under all these screens I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are" (54). The language here is important: It does not really matter how the individual performs on the stage of social interaction. Radical or conservative, Unitarian or Catholic, when the individual pays heed to external (and hence, artificial) laws and uses them as a mirror for the self, s/he veils the essential character of his or her nature. Unlike Hawthorne who cagily employed discourses of theatrical selfhood in his narratives as a way to both shroud and introduce his writerly self, Emerson speaks out against the implications of masking and disguising. Incidentally, here Emerson is carrying on a discourse of the artificial construction of authority that the Founding Fathers struggled with as they broke from England and attempted to set up a social order that appeared to derive straight from the natural order of things but that, to their knowledge and fear, was no less artificial than the monarchy from which they were removing themselves.[2] By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, though, the discussion has moved from the problem of the artificiality of institutional hierarchies to the question of whether the individual self owes allegiance to the forms of culture and society.

As the preceding essays suggest, the figures of this study demonstrate that Emersonian thinking may have been slightly outside the experience and possibilities of many nineteenth-century Americans. Emersonian radical individualism--the belief in the essential nature of an aboriginal self--is implicitly muted and questioned in the lives and literary discourses of the three figures of this study. Each engage in his or her own brand of radical individualism, but it is one far removed from the Emersonian ideal. For Mowatt, Barnum, and Hawthorne, self-reliance is about the ever-changing

aspects of the aboriginal self and the ability of the individuals to negotiate their way through the ideological expectations of public culture. More interested in the possibilities of malleable selves, none seem too concerned about uncovering Emerson's core self unless it is for the sole purpose of presenting a stylized persona to the public. Mowatt's experience is especially important here. Unlike Barnum, and even Hawthorne, who gleefully delight in their expression of theatrical selfhood, Mowatt engages in the dynamics of masking and veiling the private self in the public realm as a way to survive the ideological expectations of what it meant to be a middle-class woman acting on the public stages of antebellum America. The cultural paradox here is, of course, glaring because the Emersonian world view of self-reliance and individualism has come to signify the core of the creation of an American national identity. As encouraging as statements such as "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think" are, they fail to ring true for the individuals of the preceding essays ("Self Reliance" 53).

On the Stump: Emerson as a Public Figure

On 18 January 1866 a citizen of Rock Island, Illinois, eager to enjoy a pleasant evening on the ice might have been surprised to see the following notice tacked outside the local skating rink:

> Emerson lectures tonight
>
> Go to Babcock's Hall. There will be no skating. (quoted in Scott 84)

Considering the development of Emerson's career--from the pulpit to the platform--and his engagement with antebellum public culture it would seem the Boston Brahmin would have been more amenable to the stylized presentation of self. Emerson began his career in 1826 as a Unitarian minister

who preached the inspired word of God to his parishioners. When Emerson died in 1882, he had become one of the most popular lecturers in America.

In 1832, six months after the death of his first wife, Emerson resigned his pastorate, sailed for Europe and, upon his return, gave his first lecture, "The Uses of Natural History," in Boston on 5 November 1833. Emerson began his first lecture series in 1835 and consistently appeared in lyceum lecterns across the country until 1876. Throughout the years, Emerson would energetically take to the Lyceum trail in late fall, endure the demands and discomforts of nineteenth-century travel, and not return to Concord until the early spring. From 1850 until the late 1870s he traveled to Boston, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and went as far south as Charlottesville, Virginia.

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s his lecturers were public events--in Rock Island in 1856, he was advertised in the local newspaper as "the Celebrated Metaphysician" (quoted in Scott 80), and one enterprising midwestern town scheduled a social dance after one of Emerson's lectures--"Tickets to Emerson and ball, one dollar"--read the public advertisement in the local newspaper (quoted in McAleer 498).[3] By the 1850s, Emerson had become a popular public figure and had effectively transferred his oratorical skill from the explication of the Divine Will to the exhortation of the divinity within the individual soul. Freed from the constraints and limitations of institutional religion, Emerson enjoyed the liberties of expressing his ideas of radical individualism as well as his observations on nineteenth-century culture.

Emerson celebrated the intellectual freedoms the lyceum would afford. When he informed his brother of his decision to leave the ministry he commented: "I have relinquished my ecclesiastical charge at E. Lexington & shall not preach more except from the Lyceum. . . . My pulpit is the Lyceum platform" (quoted in McAleer 292). Emerson continued to make connections

between his life in the pulpit and on the platform: to his friend Thomas Carlyle Emerson would confess "I find myself so much more and freer on the platform of the lecture-room than in the pulpit, that I shall not much more use the last" (quoted in McAleer 291). In a journal entry from 1856, Emerson highlighted the relationship between the pulpit and the platform when he wrote, "I look upon the Lecture-room as the true church of to-day, and as the home of a richer eloquence than Faneuil Hall or the Capitol ever knew" (quoted in Matthiessen 23).

In light of the ostensible freedoms the American revolution provided for the individual self, it is surprising how radical Emerson's early lectures and essays were taken to be. Consider the famous Divinity School Address of 1838, where he told Harvard's old-guard that their Sunday sermons were less interesting than a passing snowstorm. The commotion that the Divinity Address elicited suggests that the autonomous self was still a problem in antebellum America and that the dictates of the Church, at least in New England, prescribed the workings of the soul and mind. Curiously, however, as Emerson's career progressed and he gradually carved a niche out for himself as America's most popular and famous lyceum speaker, his reputation as a literary maverick was re-shaped and by the 1850s, Emerson was enjoying the pubic adulation of Boston's blue-bloods as well as the respect of the midwest's pioneering spirits. His movement, then, from the pulpit to the platform, seems to suggest that Emerson, despite his suspicion of the public realm, profited from an increasing acceptance of the theatrical self.

Emerson was sought out by local communities throughout the east and midwest and he made a lucrative living parading from one lyceum lectern to the next. His first excursion to the midwest in May of 1850 netted profits of $560 for a three week stint in Cincinnati (McAleer 494). The following

excerpt from his journals suggests that the profit motive was keen in Emerson's mind as he trudged from lectern to lectern throughout the cold winter months:

> 'Twas tedious, the squalor and obstructions of travel; the advantage of their offers at Chicago made it necessary to go; in short, this dragging of a decorous old gentleman out of home and out of position to this juvenile career was tantamount to this,--"I'll bet you fifty dollars a day that you will not leave your library, and wade and ride and run and suffer all manner of indignities and stand up for an hour each night reading in a hall"; and I answered, "I'll bet I will." I do it and win the $900. (Heart of Emerson's Journals 310)

But Emerson was equally concerned with uplifting the popular imagination and consciousness as he was with making a dollar. To Carlyle, Emerson would explain his role as a public lecturer in the following terms: "There are in this country so few scholars, that the services of each studious person are needed to do what he can for the circulation of thoughts, to the end of making some counterweight to the money force, and to give such food as he may to the nigh starving youth" (quoted in Thorp 21). Emerson did not see himself as a popular entertainer, creating sites of public pleasure. Rather, the Boston Brahmin was interested in challenging his audiences to think for themselves as well as bringing culture to the hinterlands of the republic. In his journals, Emerson expressed his hope that audiences came "to think, not to be entertained," and envisioned the lecture as "a few reasonable words to keep us in mind of truth amidst our nonsense" (XII: 82).

Year after year, Emerson endured his lecture tours through the States, making money and enjoying the sights and the people he met along the way. But it is not clear why his audiences came to see Emerson, nor is it apparent

that the audiences enjoyed their time listening to the sage. The following announcement for an Emerson lecture is tantamount to the way Emerson was received before the general public: "He is stuffed with knowledge on all sorts of subjects. He is an immense man, and we hope those who hear him to-night will understand him" (quoted in Mead 47). The advertiser's "hope" that audiences will comprehend Emerson's esoteric flights of the intellect suggest that, unlike Barnum and Mowatt whose fame was contingent upon their abilities to entertain the general public, Emerson became a public figure by confusing and oftentimes agitating his audiences. Emerson, in short, was the nineteenth-century's "Man Thinking," rather than wo/man acting or exhibiting in the public sphere. A typical review of an Emerson lecture generally expressed mystification. One reviewer admitted, "In the multiplicity of paradoxes which abounded in the lecture, it was hard to tell what Mr. E said or what he meant" (quoted in Mead 42). Accounts of Emerson speaking talk about the sweetness and power of his voice and the charming habit he had of grabbing on to the lectern and softly raising up on the balls of his feet. Audiences were enchanted by his deep and musical voice and by his quiet and gracious manners.[4]

Despite (because of?) their difficulty, Emerson's lectures were perceived as performances by his audiences. Consider the remarks of the London publisher, John Chapman:

> It was the platform which determined Emerson's style. He was not a writer, but a speaker. On the platform his manner of speech was a living part of his words. The pauses and hesitation, the abstraction, the searching, the balancing, the turning forward, and back of the leaves of his lecture, and then the discovery, the illumination, the gleam of lightning which you saw before your eyes descend into a man of

> genius--all this was Emerson. He invented this style of speaking. (quoted in McAleer 486)

But beyond his mannerisms and gestures, audiences were miffed by the contents and lack of organization in an Emerson lecture. Even Lowell, who probably understood Emerson better than most, said, "We do not go to hear what Emerson says so much as we go to hear Emerson" (45). Emerson's lectures performed a very different kind of cultural work than Barnum's public extravaganzas and Mowatt's theatrical performances; in fact, an Emerson lecture managed to irritate and confuse members of his audiences as much as it entertained others. Reviews of an Emerson lecture are wildly diverse ranging from ecstatic appeal to bald-faced frustration to abject misunderstanding. For instance, Lowell could celebrate the peaceful effects an Emerson lecture could have on his audience. Recounting Emerson's lecture at the Robert Burns centenary dinner in 1858, Lowell recalled:

> Every sentence brought down the house, as I never saw one brought down before. . . . I watched, for it was an interesting study, how the quick sympathy ran flashing from face to face down the long tables, like an electric spark thrilling as it went, and then exploded in a thunder of plaudits. I watched till tables and faces vanished, for I, too, found myself caught up in the common enthusiasm, and my excited fancy set me under the bema listening to him who fulmined over Greece. (49)

Other reviews, although they laud Emerson's style, suggest that an Emerson lecture subjected audiences to a certain sense of pain and emptiness. Consider the following excerpt from a review of Emerson's lecture that appeared in the Boston Journal: "There is no other man in America who can, by the mere force of what he says, enthrall and dominate an audience. Breathless attention is given, although now and then his voice falls away so that those

seated farthest off have to strain every nerve to catch the words. . . . The emphatic New Englander listens, incredulously at first, but finishes by saying, "That's so!" (quoted in McAleer 586). The language of the review is curiously cryptic and ambivalent. Comprehension of Emerson's meaning seems elusive and attention is focused on the absence of meaning rather than its presence: The audience gives "breathless" attention and those in the back struggle to hear because Emerson's voice is prone to "fall away." "Strain[ing]" their "nerves," that audience hangs on to catch the elusive words falling from Emerson's tongue. And if audiences walked away from an Emerson lecture with any clear ideas, they were often quite dissimilar from Emerson's own world view. Consider the words of one of Emerson's listeners, a young woman who after hearing one of his lectures declared, "Oh, how deeply do the word and the presence of such a man as Emerson make us feel the utter insignificance, the great inferiority, of ourselves" (quoted in Bode, American Lyceum 222). Emerson, of course, who in "Self-Reliance" would declare, "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty," would have been horrified by this statement, yet who can gainsay what the individual took away from the lecture?

Unlike the "operational aesthetic" which served as the operative principle behind Barnum's creation of sites of public pleasure, Emerson's lectures were too abstruse for most audience members to pull apart, criticize, and make his or her own.[5] Perhaps more than any other nineteenth-century figure, Barnum was successful in creating sites of public pleasure in the expanding market economy. Barnum found forms of culture that appealed to a newly developing mass culture and catered to their changing need throughout his long career. Emerson, on the other hand, hardly instilled his audiences with

the ease and enjoyment that followed a performance by Jenny Lind, or a night in Barnum's Lecture Room. Lowell was amused by the apparent inability of audiences to understand Emerson: "What they do not fully understand they take on trust, and listen . . . " (43). Even George Santayana, the famous American philosopher, understood the gap in understanding between Emerson and his audiences: "His friends and neighbors, the congregations he preached to in his younger days, the audiences that afterward listened to his lectures, all agreed in a veneration for his person which had nothing to do with their understanding or acceptance of his opinions" (quoted in Porte 17).

Emerson and his Audiences: Confirming and Challenging

Because of the many different voices and attitudes Emerson expressed over the course of his career--a different "Emerson" appears in each lecture, essay, and poem--and because of the cultural confusion that an Emerson lesson could inflict on its audiences, Emerson scholars have spent a good deal of time debating whether his literary production finally confirmed or challenged the nascent capitalist society in which it was produced. In a chapter in Representative Man aptly entitled, "The Protest," Joel Porte has pointed to essays such as "The Protest" and the "Divinity Address," in addition to his outspoken condemnation of the removal of the Cherokees from Mississippi in 1838, as evidence that Emerson remained opposed to the social and political trends of his time. In an adamant passage directed toward any critic who dares think of Emerson as a lackey for the developing consumer culture, Porte states, "The view of Emerson as a shallow optimist who approved of, or indeed helped inspire, the mindless boosterism or go-getting spirit so frequently associated with mid-nineteenth-century America is as false to Emerson as it is to our national character" (140). Here, the reader is shown a

progressive and cavalier Emerson who stood on the margins of society. On the other hand, Michael Gilmore has explicated some of Emerson's essays and demonstrated Emerson's "drift toward conservatism" (19). For Gilmore, "Nature" becomes a pivotal text in the Emerson corpus, representing the trend in his thinking from the rather radical stance of "Wealth" and "The Transcendentalist" and toward a reconciliation with the aggressive capitalist impulse. By the end of his career, according to Gilmore, Emerson had come full circle, essays such as "Compensation" and the longer work, The Conduct of Life, suggesting that self-reliance and radical individualism are exercised in the marketplace rather than the fields of the yeoman farmer (30-34).

None of these views of Emerson as conservative or radical acknowledges the complexity of cultural studies that I have been stressing through the preceding essays.[6] The scholarly debate about whether Emerson was a conservative or radical voice in American culture generally misses its mark. Emerson was both conservative and radical. Like Barnum, Mowatt, and Hawthorne, he confirmed and challenged dominant ways of thinking. What is more important here is the idea that Emerson performed cultural work in his society according to the manner in which his listeners and readers created meaning through the consumption of his intellectual wares. The interplay between Emerson and his audience must be considered in order to see the kind of cultural work Emerson did in nineteenth-century America. Unaware of the idea that cultural meaning is created somewhere between the expressions of the stage and the ideological assumptions of the public audience, most scholars have focused primarily on Emerson's texts in their efforts to talk about Emerson as a radical or a conservative. This methodology is less than satisfying, however, because it fails to accommodate

the assumption that individual voices are heard according to their position within the ideological framework of the audience.

Although her scholarship tends to suggest a Marxian dialectic/consensus school interpretation between the interplay of marginal and hegemonic groups, Mary Kupiec Cayton's essay, "The Making of an American Prophet," comes closest to explaining the dynamic of meaning created between Emerson and his audience. In an excellent methodological introduction, Cayton explains her Bakhtinian-based reception theory of the American intellectual tradition, stressing that "[t]he intellectual discourse that emerges from a given culture is made not by 'great men' who transcend the conditions of their age but by communities of listeners who define 'discourse conventions' and by the intellectuals to whom they choose to listen" (598). Cayton outlines a program of reception theory/cultural studies that I have been explaining through the preceding essays: "[I]f historians view intellectual discourse as, in large part, a product of audience construction, then the ideas of individual intellectuals as the audience receives them culturally become an arena in which historians can examine the conflicts between social groups over the hegemonic making of meaning for that culture" (598, emphasis in original).

In an effort to demonstrate the gaps in understanding between Emerson's audiences and the actual language he employed in his works, Cayton examines an excerpt from a lecture Emerson gave in Cincinnati in 1852 and compares it to an interpretation of the lecture that appeared in the local newspaper the following day. Consider the following summary of Emerson's lecture, "Wealth," which appeared in the Cincinnati Gazette in December of 1852:

> One of the most natural enquiries about a person, but partially known, was "what has been his success in life?" The first question asked with regard to a stranger is, "How does he get his living?" All men are consumers, and all ought to be producers. Man is an expensive animal and ought to be rich. Wealth has its source in the application of mind to nature. . . . The art of getting rich consists, not in industry, but in being at the right spot for such getting, and in the right application of forces. . . . (612)

Now consider the following passage from "Wealth" (also reprinted in Cayton's essay):

> As soon as a stranger is introduced into any company, one of the first questions which all wish to have answered, is, How does that man get his living? And with reason. He is no whole man until he knows how to earn a blameless livelihood. Society is barbarous until every industrious man can get his living without dishonest customs.
>
> Every man is a consumer, and ought to be a producer. He fails to make his place good in the world unless he not only pays his debt but also adds something to the common wealth. nor can he do justice to his genius without making some larger demand on the world than a bar subsistence. He is by constitution expensive, and needs to be rich. (612)

The reviewer's notions on the "art of getting rich," and his efforts to embed Emerson's ideas in a material construct demonstrates how he has channeled Emerson's rhetoric through his own ideological assumptions concerning the blessings and promise of a consumer culture. As Cayton illustrates, the reviewer clearly misses the metaphorical use of pivotal words such as "wealth" and "riches," forgetting Emerson's Platonic obsession with using

objects and language as suggestions of the transcendendant ideal. The reviewer has grounded his summary in a material interpretation of Emersonian thinking, turning the lecture in a "how-to," inspirational message on the wonder of technological advances and the inevitable progress of the capitalist venture.[7] Most striking, perhaps, is the reviewers apparent ignorance of the final two sentences of the first paragraph--a "blameless livelihood" and the notion of a society without "dishonest customs" is outside the forces of articulation of this reviewer. Yet, in the cultural context, who can blame the reviewer for his "ignorance"? He effectively turns Emerson's lecture into a "how-to" performance because that was the primary function of the Lyceum series. Antebellum public culture was greedy for public discourses that explained the physical mysteries and mechanical properties of their world as well as provided methods of self-improvement. "The language of technical explanation and scientific description itself," explains Harris, "had become a form of recreational literature by the 1840s and 1850s. Newspapers, magazines, even novels and short stories catered to this passion for detail. Manuals on almost every conceivable activity poured forth from American presses" (Humbug 75). If the medium is the message, it should be no shock that this particular reviewer searches for discourses on self-improvement and ways to get ahead in the market world in Emerson's lecture.

It is tempting to read Emerson's lectures and essays from the 1850s until the time of his death as discourses confirming a sentimental and a capitalist social order. His refusal to experiment with theatrical selfhood and his jeremiads against fragmentation of self make him out to be less outrageous, and much more cautious than the other figures of this study. Surprisingly, his demands for the uncovering of an essential self removed from social

corruption and influence seems much more assimilable into the Sentimental idea of selfhood than the experimental theatrical selfhood that the other figures in this study were employing in the stylized presentation of their own public selves. As Cayton points out, the real irony of Emerson's career as a lecturer was that, despite the fundamentally different way he saw the world compared to someone like P.T. Barnum (who was also a renowned lecturer), by the 1850s Emerson's lectures were doing the very same kind of cultural work that Barnum was doing in the confirmation of a commercial culture (614). Perhaps it was the esoteric and abstruse nature of Emerson's lectures and essays that contributed to the ostensible co-option of his rhetoric and the critical opinion of Emerson's conservatism.

Emerson "worked" at mid-century because something in his rhetoric appealed to the audiences who were coming to hear him speak--even if they could not understand him. Yet it seems short-sighted to suggest that Emerson had become an uncritical or unabashed exponent of consumer culture. Public meaning from Emerson's lectures was created somewhere between the intentionality of Emerson's speeches and the assumptions his audiences brought to his lectures. Emerson became a commodity on the market of a nascent American intellectual culture and, as we know, all markets are driven by public demand. Yet public demand is malleable and open for manipulation and influence from certain individuals and groups. Lowell speaks of the intellectual challenges Emerson posed to his listeners, suggesting that Emersonian rhetoric challenged listeners to search for possibilities outside of their little worlds and seek meaning in places they might not have looked without Emerson's promptings. "Did our own imaginations transfigure dry remainder-biscuit into ambrosia?" Lowell rhetorically asks. "At any rate," he continues, "he brought us <u>life</u>, which, on

the whole, is no bad thing" (460). As the same time, McAleer's description of Boston's blue-bloods gathering on Monday afternoons to hear the predictable and confirmatory rhetoric of Emerson suggests that a good number of Emerson's listeners came to hear him confirm their own positions and places in the world (586). And finally, both were right, because Emerson's rhetorical flourishes and constructions were so ambiguous, so open-ended, that interpretation lay almost solely in possibilities that the individual listener could cull from the lecture.

Emerson and the (continuing) Problem of Antebellum Theatrical Selfhood

In "Self Reliance" and "Experience," Emerson demonstrates that the problem of American selfhood is still evident in the cultural discourse of the mid-nineteenth century. Emerson scholars have talked about the two different versions of the world that Emerson provides in perhaps his most famous essays, "Self-Reliance" and "Experience." It is certainly clear that "Self-Reliance," with its idealistic assertions of radical individualism, contrasts with the somber, oftentimes gloomy tone of "Experience." While both essays provide different explanations regarding the essential nature of selfhood, both take up the problem and lament the possibilities of a fragmented self divorced from its aboriginal essence.

In its implicit argument that the self can and should be a coherent whole, "Self-Reliance" represents Emerson's greatest challenge to the idea of fragmented selfhood and his boldest efforts to heal the breaches between public and private selves. Cayton suggests that "Emerson outlines in his essay a plan for restoring the individual to wholeness within a mass culture. The true self, Emerson claims, is not the self who artificially gives himself over to public opinion, but rather the private self, who is the locus of thought

and feeling" (Emerson's Emergence 228). For the Emerson of "Self-Reliance," the nascent consumer culture and the development of a nineteenth-century mass culture threatens the integrity of the individual self. Emerson believed in an essential core being and he contended that self fragmentation resulted from the individual moving away from an understanding of its essences. For Emerson, who loved to challenged the limitations of language, selfishness is a disregard for the inner self and an overloaded concern for the material, physical body. Emerson encouraged people to be less selfish and more self-ish. The selfish man has not thought of his self enough: "Very likely," notes Mary Kupiec Cayton, "he is so utterly unacquainted with himself, has lived so on the outside of his world, that he does not yet believe in its existence" (Emerson's Emergence 229). For Emerson, individuals are fragmented and alienated from their essential being, but that is an unnatural state that can be improved through the uncovering of the undivided conscious of Nature.

In "Self-Reliance" Emerson asks "[W]hat is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded?" and answers with a resounding affirmation of the eternal unity and connectedness of all things (63). For the Emerson of "Self-Reliance," there is an original source, "the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life" and a "deep force" where "all things find their common origin" (64). Emerson begins his darkest essay, "Experience" (written after the death of his five year-old son, Waldo), with a similar question, but provides an answer that is perhaps the most disquieting passage in the corpus of American literature: "Where do we find ourselves?" Emerson rhetorically queries and replies that we find ourselves midway on a flight of stairs and we know neither what lies ahead or where we have come from. But the inquiry goes beyond the metaphor of spatial location and can be read as a more haunting inquiry into the nature of selfhood (45). With the

optimism of "Self-Reliance" deflated, Emerson seems to be asking where, if not in the essential core of individuality, can the self be located: "Where do we find our selves?" he might have asked. Emerson begins "Self-Reliance" with a rousing, almost intoxicated, celebration of individual genius: "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,--that is genius" (45). But "Experience," the essay conceived on the morning after the feast and celebration of the triumph of individuality, begins with a retreating tone, a questioning of the night's revelries: "But the Genius which according to the old belief stands at the door by which we enter, and gives us the lethe to drink, that we may tell no tales, mixed the cup too strongly, and we cannot shake off the lethargy now at noonday" (45).

Emerson continues his query into the complexities of American selfhood with a metaphor that looks forward to the existential void that would be uncovered by modern European philosophers of the twentieth century. Stranded in the chasm of existence, Emerson searches for elements of sustenance, but wonders if perhaps the eternal and universal waters have not been shut down, or diverted to another source: "We are like millers on the lower levels of a stream, when the factories above them have exhausted the water. We too fancy that the upper people must have raised their dams" ("Experience" 46).

With "Experience," Emerson rethinks the previous assertions of the self as part of a natural unified network and beckons toward a view that the subjectivity of experience was probably the only reality worth talking about. The retreating and reconciling tone of "Experience" contrasts with the former optimism of "Self-Reliance" and remained the scope of Emerson's addresses and essays until the end of his life: "If we cannot make voluntary and

conscious steps in the admirable science of universals let us see the parts wisely, and infer the genius of nature from the best particular with a becoming charity" (83). Consider The Conduct of Life (1860) and "Society and Solitude" (1870) where Emerson contents himself with discourses on the mundane, rather than grapples with broader questions of existence as he did in his earlier essays. And in the work that Emerson produced throughout the rest of his life, he maintained this tone of retreat from universals, contenting himself and his audiences with inquiries, lectures, and essays on the particulars of life rather than searching out the grand continents of meaning. The metaphysical problems of self and society addressed in earlier essays such as "Self-Reliance" (1841) and "Circles" (1841) are considerably watered down in essays such as "Behavior" and "Culture," from The Conduct of Life, and "Domestic Life" and "Farming" from Society and Solitude.

In "Experience," Emerson seems to accept the reality of dynamic selfhood that fails to connect back to Nature. Consider Emerson's powerful insistence of the transformative possibilities of the human soul as expressed in "Self-Reliance": "This one fact the world hates, that the soul becomes; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to a shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. Why, then, do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present, there will be power not confident but agent" (69). In the world of "Experience," however, where the connection to the universal oversoul ("the ever-blessed One") has been questioned, even severed, and where Judas and Jesus part company, the transformative powers of the individual soul are left to free-float and become subjected to the possibilities of theatrical, stylized selfhood. In the world of "Experience" the self has been loosened from its universal threads and is subject to the possibilities and potentials of theatrical

selfhood. Emerson's nod toward the possibilities of a theatrical self is far from flippant and celebratory--the jeremiad continues and Emerson laments the passing of the innocence of "Self-Reliance" and gravely nods toward the evanescence and mutability of self and individual relations. When Emerson declares "There is an optical illusion about every person we meet," he is lamenting the reality of the theatrical self that someone such as Barnum celebrated (52). Recall Barnum's statement that ironically resonates with Emerson's: "Put on the appearance of business and generally the reality will follow" (Life 394). "Illusion, Temperament, Succession, Surface, Surprise, reality, Subjectiveness,--these are thread on the loom of time, these are the lords of life," Emerson cries near the end of the essay (82). Emerson's vision enabled him to see through the nineteenth century's inclination to create meaning through sight rather than critical thinking. Still, when close to the end of "Experience" Emerson declares, "We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them," he enigmatically acknowledges, perhaps even accepts a point of view that all of the figures of this study almost unthinkingly propound (59).

Finally, and just before the final rhetorical flourish where Emerson digs for the old optimism of "Self-Reliance" ("up again, old heart! . . . there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize will be the transformation of genius into practical power"), he acknowledges the fragmentation of his own existence, declaring, "I know better than to claim any completeness for my picture. I am a fragment, and this is a fragment of me" (83).

Notes

[1]See my discussion at the conclusion of chapter 4.

[2]See the discussion in Chapter Four.

[3]On Emerson's midwestern tours of the 1850s and 1860s, see Wasung; Hastings; Schorer; Scott; and Thorp.

[4]Emerson must have been seductive on the platform. The first time his second wife, Lidian, saw Emerson he was delivering a sermon in Boston and according to McAleer, she, sitting next to the pulpit, was sent into a "catatonic state of immobility" (201) by his power of expression. After the service, Lidian was said to have exclaimed, "That man is certainly my predestined husband" (quoted in McAleer 201).

[5]According to Neil Harris in Chapter Three of Humbug, the "operational aesthetic" of Barnum's exhibits was a democratic form of mass entertainment that afforded the viewer the opportunity of deciphering the innerworkings of the hoax or exhibit that Barnum displayed before the public.

[6]I have benefited from reading Mary Kupiec Cayton's cogent and thoughtful historical explanation of Emerson, his audience, and the creation of cultural meaning. See the opening remarks of "The Making of an American Prophet" where she provides a theoretical discussion of cultural discourse and audience construction of meaning (598).

[7]See Cayton's full discussion on the apparent differences between the reviewers interpretations and Emerson's ostensible meaning (612-13).

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