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Hawthorne and the Burden of Calvinism:
Expiation, Gender, and Narrative Form

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ABSTRACT

HAWTHORNE AND THE BURDEN OF CALVINISM:
EXPIATION, GENDER, AND NARRATIVE FORM

By

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Hawthorne's uneasy relationship to his Calvinist past influenced his attitude toward both his profession and women. A product of a nineteenth-century Puritanic American culture, which insisted upon meek, subservient women supported by strong men with "useful," stable occupations, Hawthorne felt obligated to justify to himself his role as "a writer of storybooks." His perpetual effort to atone for his sinful vocation was exacerbated by a keen awareness of his own failure--failure to produce, failure to publish, and failure to find a large, sympathetic audience, while many of his female contemporaries were selling enough books to make a comfortable living. Thus, his "scribbling" sisters intensified his own sense of guilt because their success contributed to his failure.

In his fiction, Hawthorne found a way to respond both to his ambivalence about his artistic vocation and to his professional jealousy of successful women writers. On the one hand, he creates chaste maidens, who, by their acquiescence to men, placate the Puritan within the author by upholding the Calvinist notion of male superiority and authority. On the other hand, he also creates powerful, independent women, who, because they are threatening to men,

are gradually renounced and finally damned.

In each case, the damnation of his dark, sexually alluring women is more interesting than the deification of his pale maidens because his initial portrayal of the former is positive. However, they all undergo a gradual diminution at the hands of the narrator, often merely a spokesperson for Hawthorne, who consistently maintains that his motives are pure and his objectivity unquestionable. In other words, Hawthorne begins well, but ends by manipulating the text so that his once strong heroine has decided to renounce her independence, repress her sexuality, and embrace the conventional role of the woman. Hawthorne's moral is clear: Women are not to compete with men in the world of fiction or anywhere else. Taking this position salves his Puritanically-laden conscience and contributes to his success as a writer by persuading women to withdraw from the literary marketplace.

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INTRODUCTION

When Herman Melville reviewed Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse in 1850, he delivered a first--but by no means the last--verdict on Hawthorne's Calvinistic tendencies:

> Certain it is...that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance. At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more: this black conceit pervades him through and through.[1]

Every reader of Hawthorne is initially overwhelmed by the sense of doom or foreboding that accompanies the agony of his characters as they struggle for absolution from secret (or public) and often inherited sin, an absolution which, in most cases, they never achieve because their creator is so thoroughly ambivalent about precisely that "Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin" of which Melville warned.

Critics of Hawthorne have consistently sought to

understand the reasons for his ambivalence. Most notably, he vacillates between an obsession with the doctrine of total depravity and a belief that the human heart and the desires of the flesh are essentially good--that neither guilt, the repression of the sensual, nor purification is necessary. Some critics have blamed this divided loyalty on Hawthorne's inability either to embrace or disavow Calvinism completely.[2] A more accurate view is that he both accepted and rejected it simultaneously, a paradox that is evident in most of his fiction, as Agnes M. Donohue has explained:

> There is the Hawthorne who hates writing and yet desires above all else to be a great and famous writer; the Hawthorne who fears and dislikes women, especially the pseudo-intellectual, "scribbling" women, who surround him, yet tries to present himself as an idyllically happy married man; the Hawthorne who sees man's heart as irredeemably corrupt, yet joins the Brook Farm utopian experiment...; the Hawthorne who complains in the preface to The Marble Faun that America lacks tradition, shadow, and history..., yet sets his own greatest stories and tales in the...Puritan...colonies of the Seventeenth Century.[3]

As Donohue implies here, Hawthorne's uneasy relationship to his Calvinist past is woven inextricably with two other important strands in his life: first, his desire to be a writer; and second, his view of women. Coming from both an American culture of the nineteenth century in which man was supposed to be the head of household (his designated role in the "separate spheres") and a background of strong Puritan forefathers who upheld

the Calvinist notion of male superiority (man being the head of the woman much as Christ is the head of the Church) and of man as the symbol of industry and economic stability, Hawthorne found it extremely difficult to justify to himself his own role as a writer. Hawthorne's crushing awareness of failure--failure to produce, failure to publish, failure to find an audience, failure to fulfill the role of breadwinner--was heightened by his sense that seemingly everywhere around him writers such as Fanny Fern or E.D.E.N. Southworth sold hundreds of thousands of books. He was appalled that these women were gaining more recognition (and more money) than he was. In short, Hawthorne, artist and man, son of Calvinist forefathers and child of the nineteenth century, found his own ambivalent stance toward his art exacerbated by the success of his "scribbling" sisters.

It is my contention in the following pages that Hawthorne contrived, within his art, the perfect narrative devices for dealing with his ambivalence about his own artistic vocation and his uncontrollable envy of more successful women writers. His professional jealousy translates into a resentment against all strong women who, independent from men, make their way in the world. Thus, in his fiction he creates both chaste maidens whose acquiescence to male authority is rewarded, and powerful, dark, sexually alluring women who are forced to acknowledge the error of their ways and are finally damned. The latter

represent the types of women who were threatening to Hawthorne, both personally and professionally, yet in his fiction their damnation always comes as something of a surprise to the reader because in every case Hawthorne's initial presentation of them is thoroughly positive. They are generally portrayed as "spirited, affectionate beings of the flesh, each one a passionate, creative Eros."[4] Hawthorne begins by suggesting that these women exemplify women's true natures as they would exist without the distortion of patriarchal ideology. In each case, however, he gradually changes his narrative stance toward these women, viewing them increasingly as temptresses--copies of Eve--who must be domesticated.

Hawthorne's view of women, although by no means unique, was inherited from his Puritan ancestors. Female power derives from a close affinity with nature, and since in Calvin's system all of nature was defiled by the fall of Adam, this kind of power is evil by definition. In Calvin's own words:

> Original sin...appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all parts of the soul,...producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh'...Our nature being so totally vitiated and depraved, we are, on account of this very corruption considered as convicted and...condemned [by] God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity...This depravity never ceases in us, but is perpetually producing new fruits, those works of the flesh...like the emission of flame and sparks from a

> heated furnace, or like the streams of water from a never failing spring.[5]

In Hawthorne's fiction the "flame and sparks" of the sensual are generated exclusively by his strong independent women. Their sexuality is potent, seductive, and ultimately sinful. Because they are much more "natural" or "earthy," these women are more inclined toward "works of the flesh" than men are. Thus, Hawthorne's inclination to force the woman to suffer, to do penance, and to change her ways has the full support of Calvinism behind it.

Hawthorne begins well, and it is no small wonder that numerous important feminist critics have been fascinated by his brilliant portrayals of strong women characters. But, I argue, he does not--perhaps cannot--maintain the integrity of his female characters to the end. On the contrary, in most of his novels as well as numerous short stories, Hawthorne creates female characters who decide of their own free will to repress both their independence and their sexuality in order to embrace a conventional definition of woman. In this paradigmatic plot structure, the female character, through an act of willful self-denial, chooses a spiritual salvation which is really a kind of emotional damnation and, ultimately, a betrayal of the "wisdom of the human heart" that Hawthorne initially seems to champion.

Yet, as readers, we must ask why Hawthorne sustains this fiction of female penitence and how successful is the heroine's transformation. Because the female character's

turnabout is inconsistent with her previously established character, the narrator must provide his own explanation for the change. I would suggest it is in this very explanation that we find some of Hawthorne's most strained and artificial moments, and, especially, a striking betrayal of the power so evident at the outset of his works. These lapses in plausibility (and artistry) reveal a fundamental disjunction in the narrative form itself, between the ideal and the actual text that Hawthorne writes for his female characters, and, by extension, between the lived world of the writer and the "old ghosts" of his Calvinist past.

NOTES

1. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," The Literary World, August 17, 1850, August 24, 1850, pp. 125-27, 145-47.

2. Agnes McNeill Donohue, Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985) pp. 1-34.

3. Ibid., p. 6.

4. Nina Baym, "Hawthorne's Women: The Tyranny of Social Myths," The Centennial Review, 15 (1971), p. 261.

5. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), Vol. I, pp. 274-75. While there is no evidence to suggest that Hawthorne read Calvin's Institutes, he was well acquainted with their Reformation theology through his obsession with his own Puritan family history and his thorough study of the sermons of Puritan clergymen.

CHAPTER ONE

The Fall and Rise of Hester Prynne

Hester Prynne is unquestionably the most famous of Hawthorne's dark ladies. She emerges not really from the prison door, but rather from the midst of the tension created by Hawthorne's divided commitment, which is established first in "The Custom-House" and carried through The Scarlet Letter. Although he suggests that his custom house sketch could be "wholly omitted without loss to the public or detriment to the book,"[1] Hawthorne's relationship to his heroine cannot be fully understood if the analysis begins with the throng awaiting Hester's appearance from the "iron-clamped oaken door" of the prison. It is in "The Custom-House" that Hawthorne establishes correspondences between his own relationship to the custom house and Hester's relationship to the Puritan community of the seventeenth century. In this carefully described journey through the custom house, Hawthorne prepares his reader first for the discovery of Surveyor Pue's record of Hester in the attic with its "naked rafters," "aged cobwebs," and "dusky beams" (58), and finally for her emergence from the prison door in Boston. "The Custom-House" begins a slow motion progression into a history with which Hawthorne takes great pains to identify himself.

Along this backward-moving path is a series of clues which help to connect the past with the present, and to

place Hawthorne himself in the past.[2] The first is the custom house entrance, which is guarded by an "enormous specimen of the American eagle [which appears to] warn all citizens...against intruding on the premises which she overshadows with her wings...She has no tenderness, even in her best moods,...and is apt to fling off her nestlings with a scratch of her claw, a dab of her beak..." (37). Hawthorne's dwelling on this emblem suggests his inability to overcome the sting of rejection he feels from his Puritan forefathers. Certainly he views himself as a nestling flung out of the nest by his ancestors, who, like the eagle, had "no great tenderness":

> No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine...would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. 'What is he?' murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. 'A writer of storybooks. What kind of business in life...may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!' (42).

Hawthorne's next effort to exorcise this past, peopled as it is with members of his own lineage, is to introduce his first ancestor, William Hathorne, the definitive Puritan patriarch, "a soldier, legislator, judge,...ruler in the church,...a bitter persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who...relate an incident of his hard severity toward a woman of their sect" (41). William's son, John, a magistrate in the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692, "inherited the

persecuting spirit" (41) to such an extent that Hawthorne believes the blood of the innocent still stains "his old dry bones, in the Charter Street burial-ground" (41). The stain exists in the present, though the sin was committed long ago. No professed Calvinist would find this phenomenon difficult to understand, in spite of the fact that it is expressed by a writer who pledged allegiance to no church or specific religious creed. John Hathorne's persecution of the Quaker woman serves to entwine Hawthorne's real history with Hester's fictional one. Here, then, is the first indication that Hawthorne is establishing a correspondence between himself and his heroine, a correspondence made complete when he discovers the embroidered letter wrapped in Surveyor Pue's manuscript.

The dusty room in the second story of the custom house is Hawthorne's final stop on his journey into history. The attic room, full of "bundles of official documents" and other "rubbish" (58), is in fact a kind of crypt. Hawthorne finds himself "poking and burrowing...with the saddened, weary, half-reluctant interest, which we bestow on the corpse of dead activity" (60). This "corpse" bears a clear resemblance to those "dry bones" in the Charter Street burial ground. Further, both crypts contain a stain to which Hawthorne is connected by blood kinship. The one in the burial ground is the guilt resulting from a historically verifiable sin; the second, a worn and faded, but still distinctly red A wrapped in a small package. When he placed

it on his breast, he "experienced a sensation, not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat; and as if the letter were not of red cloth, but red-hot iron" (62). Here is the final and most convincing proof of his intimate connection with Hester. In the nineteenth century he feels the heat of her stain, to which he is about to assign a history, one that is intimately connected with his own.

The package containing the letter was a commission, bearing the seal of Governor Shirley and bestowed upon one Jonathan Pue, who, according to Felt's Annals of Salem, became surveyor in 1752.[3] Hawthorne insists upon the historical verity of Hester's story as outlined in Pue's own documents, which were found inside the parchment commission along with the tattered A:

> ...the main facts of that story are authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue. The original, together with the scarlet letter itself,...are still in my possession, and shall be freely exhibited to whomsoever, induced by the great interest of the narrative, may desire a sight of them (63).

This strong contention for "the authenticity of the outline" allows Hawthorne to accomplish a very clever sleight-of-hand--he becomes, instead of creator and narrator of Hester's tale, merely an editor of Pue's supposedly historically accurate story. In other words, he assumes another identity, which allows him to "prate of the

circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself, but still keep the inmost Me behind the veil" (36, emphasis mine). In addition, although he admits to allowing himself a certain amount of editorial license, "nearly altogether as much...as if the facts had been entirely my own invention" (63), his role as editor allows him to lift from himself as narrator the burden of interpreting or explaining Hester's inconsistent actions and to place it upon the reader, who may choose to lay it aside. After all, Hester's choices may be inexplicable, but who is prepared to argue with Pue's yellowed manuscript, which verifies her actions as historically factual? Hawthorne maintains that he is merely filling in details between "the main facts of that story" (63). An editor, then, has obligations that are very different from those of a "writer of storybooks." At the end of "The Custom-House," Hawthorne is ready to make one last step backward in time, leaving the attic room, and revealing the opening scene of the main narrative, the throng of seventeenth century Puritans awaiting Hester's emergence from the prison door.[4]

Characteristically, this narrator initially allies himself with the woman and seems to identify with her predicament. Our first view of her is made to contrast sharply with the remarks of the waiting crowd. She does not appear to us as the stereotypical "malefactress" and "hussy" the throng sees. In fact, with her emergence from the prison comes the first intimation of her strength.

Hawthorne deliberately proves the crowd wrong so that there is little danger of the reader's mistaking their judgments as his:

> Stretching forth the official staff in his left hand, [the town beadle] laid his right hand upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward; until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, an action marked by natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will (80).

Contrary to expectations, Hester is not coarse or gaudy, but "tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes" (80-81). This woman is certainly not the fainting, pale, sickly heroine of many nineteenth-century sentimental novels. Her regal, sensuous beauty and her unsubdued sexuality are presented as admirable. The goodwives and their husbands clustered around the prison door are amazed at her powerful presence: "Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped" (81). In addition, the embroidery around her letter of infamy is her open expression of scorn for the

established order of her society:

> 'She hath good skill at her needle, that's certain,' remarked one of the female spectators; 'but did ever a woman, before this brazen hussy, contrive such a way of showing it! Why, gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our magistrates and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?' (81).

Throughout this first meeting, Hawthorne insists that we see Hester as proud, dignified, strong, and scornfully defiant. His attempt to create the illusion of Hester's power is deliberate, careful, and certainly successful.

It is this view of Hester which most readers, including some feminist critics, retain. Nina Auerbach is one such critic. In her book, Woman and the Demon, in which she traces the fallen woman as she is portrayed through the art and literature of Victorian England, she includes Hester as one example of "a defiant icon, unapologetic in its self-presentation, its purity, and subversion...[Hester's] majestic presence diminishes the gaping spectators that include the reader of her story."[5] Auerbach suggests that the "halo of...misfortune" contributes to the whole air of defiance which Hester exudes and that it is this defiance which gives Hester power. This view maintains that the more the language of sainthood and art is used to describe her, the more powerful Hester becomes:

> From the opening tableau to the conclusion of Hester's 'legend,' where

> we stare at the cryptic symbolism of her tombstone, Hester presents herself pictorially, insisting on our scrutiny. Like her own elaborately wrought letter, she becomes an outsize and troublingly ambiguous work of art whose visual power outshines our ability to 'read' her. Hester's self-created potency is made manifest when the narrator dubs the scaffold on which she is forced to stand 'her pedestal,' adding intimations of art's reigning power to Chillingworth's scathing description of her 'standing up, a statue of ignominy, before the people.' In Hawthorne's portraiture Hester's fall alone enables her to 'stand up,' imbuing her with the overweeping power of creator and created object.[6]

The "opening tableau" is, indeed, a portrait of Hester's defiance, her refusal to submit to the townspeople's or their ruling patriarchs' definition of the scarlet A. Her defiance here is unquestionable, and it does imbue her with a "visual power." In this scene she is still proud; she still possesses a striking degree of sensuality:

> 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. But the point which drew all eyes...was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom (81).

This artistic rendering of the letter which was meant as a badge of shame is an undeniable indication of Hester's insistence upon investing it with her own meaning, not the meaning the town assigns, which is voiced by one of "the

most iron-visaged of the old dames": "'It were well if we stripped Madam Hester's rich gown off her dainty shoulders; and as for the red letter, which she hath stitched so curiously, I'll bestow a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel, to make a finer one'" (81)--that is, a cloth red with her own menstrual blood. The sin is woman's sexuality; therefore, what better token of shame than the menstrual stain?

Auerbach is by no means alone in her belief that throughout the narrative Hester retains this power as well as her ability to define herself. Nina Baym also views Hester as one of the few heroines in nineteenth-century American fiction written by men who is portrayed positively:

> [Hawthorne's] cause as narrator is to obliterate her obliteration, to force the reader to accept Hester's reading of her letter as a badge of honor instead of a mark of negation.[7]

But what is overlooked in both Baym's and Auerbach's reading is the way that Hester's "badge of honor" becomes a "mark of negation" precisely because it comes to symbolize sainthood, or, more accurately, the nineteenth-century version of it that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have defined and traced through British literature of that era:

> The ideal woman that male authors dream of generating is always an angel...In the Middle Ages, of course, mankind's great teacher of purity was the Virgin Mary, a mother goddess who perfectly fitted the female role [Sherry] Ortner defines as 'merciful dispenser of

> salvation.' For the more secular Nineteenth Century, however, the eternal type of female purity was represented not by a madonna in heaven, but by an angel in the house.[8]

The common denominator for all these ideal angel-women is selflessness. "Whether she becomes an objet d'art or a saint...it is the surrender of her self--of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both--that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead."[9] This is the role Hester has, through her own choice, according to the narrator, created for herself; however, her gradual transformation from adulteress to angel, which many critics see as empowering, in fact leaves her more silent and powerless in the end than she was in the beginning. Of course, any character's "free will" is a creation of the author, and Hawthorne deliberately moves Hester away from her initial defiance toward resignation and finally to feminine submission. Her eventual sainthood, which is the result of this submission, robs her of her power completely. At the same time, it is presented as a reward for her humble return to the authority and order of the community, as if powerlessness were an ideal to be worked toward. That her effect on people is mistaken for power does not alter the fact that at the end of her life Hester has no voice in the community--no autonomy, no authority.

* * *

I would like to argue, then, that Hester's change of identity is ultimately negative, and it is foreshadowed even as early as the opening scene on the pillory platform, where she stands as a stubbornly independent human being:

> Had there been a Papist in the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent (83).

Hester here becomes an object capable of reminding some spectators, including the narrator, of works of art depicting the "Divine Maternity." Of course, there are no papists in the crowd, so it is the narrator himself who is turning the reader's attention toward art--specifically religious icons. Even this early in the plot, Hawthorne has begun to silence Hester by transforming her into a sacred emblem which moves people eventually to worship and exalt her, but also robs her of any power she might accrue through her independent speech and living. A few pages later, the narrator exchanges the words "pillory" and "scaffold" for "pedestal," a sly move which signals the direction of the rest of the narrative. Such a substitution of terms subtly signals Hester's passivity--a passivity necessary to the plot of the novel, but also, more profoundly, to Hawthorne's role as the creator of his female protagonist, who must be

made to placate Hawthorne's latent Calvinism.

From the beginning Hawthorne establishes Hester as a woman who does not accept the "adulteress" identity that the town attaches to her. Neither, however, does he grant her full autonomy. He resolves his own authorial ambivalence by contriving her actions in a manner that will suggest her voluntary acceptance of a different, but at least equally debilitating role. He creates a character who invites the identification of the female reader and who willingly chooses a subordinate, saintly role for herself. Thus, he portrays Hester as creating her own sainthood through a series of self-renunciations, each of which contributes to her silence and submission, gradually changing the meaning of the scarlet letter. The more the A takes on the meaning of "able" or "angel," the more it represents the language of the sensual self being denied expression. Yet Hawthorne moves Hester toward this repression in a novel which seems to validate the very sensuality he authorially--as the manipulator of the text--denies.

Hester renounces the outward symbols of her sensuality first. Upon her release from prison, she changes her appearance: "Her own dress was of the coarsest materials and the most sombre hue; with only that one ornament,--the scarlet letter" (107). Her "dark and abundant hair" she wound up and hid under a cap. Her individuality--her self--so evident in the opening scene is subdued. Even this early in the story, then, Hawthorne presents Hester as having

relinquished some of her early defiance in her movement toward a return to the community--to patriarchal authority. Further, in his role as an editor merely reporting the facts, he tells us that Hester's change "was a sad transformation" (182). The emphasis is on her voluntary repression of her sensuality. With his "inmost Me" still safely hidden, Hawthorne is able to absolve himself of any involvement in her decision. He simply maintains that he views the change as unfortunate.

Renunciation of the sensual is not the only way to die to self. For a woman, another avenue is to channel her energy into those few areas viewed as acceptable female activities. Three of these are the "arts" Hester chooses--sewing, ministering to the sick, and mothering. Even more than her subdued sexuality, these are the things which begin to change the meaning of the scarlet letter from "adulteress" into "angel." Hester fulfills her woman's place more than adequately.

Her gift for needlework was obvious to the townspeople from the day she stood on the scaffold, yet, as the author takes care to tell us, "much of the time, which she might readily have applied to the better efforts of her art, she employed in making coarse garments for the poor. It is probable that there was an idea of penance in this mode of occupation, and that she offered up a real sacrifice of enjoyment, in devoting so many hours to such rude handiwork" (108). Thus, she combined self-sacrifice with her work,

elevating herself to a position of sainthood all the more speedily.

Still, there was some call for her finer handiwork:

> Public ceremonies, such as ordination, installations of magistrates, and all that could give majesty to the forms in which a new government manifested itself to the people, were...marked by a stately and well-conducted ceremonial...Deep ruffs, painfully wrought bands, and gorgeously embroidered gloves, were all deemed necessary to the official state of men assuming the reigns of power (106).

These ceremonies required more elaborate needlework, and it is significant that Hester's most artistic creations were used for these rituals. Using "the one art within a woman's grasp" (106), she was in some measure helping to perpetuate the very structure that was suffocating her. In this way Hawthorne puts Hester's own stamp of approval on tradition and the established order, while telling us that this finer variety of her art was merely "filling a gap which must otherwise have remained vacant" (107), and by hinting that the vanity which required this kind of showiness "chose to mortify itself, by putting on, for ceremonials of pomp and state, the garments that had been wrought by her sinful hands" (107).

Those same hands belonged to "self-ordained Sister of Mercy" in the sick-chambers of the town. In this role of nurse-nun she held intercourse with her neighbors only during times of pestilence and trouble. These scenes of

suffering and sickness did more to transform the "badge of shame" on Hester's breast than did anything else. Her ministering to the needs of others and disappearing when trouble was past was the final act necessary to ensure her sainthood:

> There glimmered the embroidered letter, with comfort in its unearthly ray. Elsewhere the token of sin, it was the taper of the sick chamber...In such emergencies, Hester's nature showed itself warm and rich, unfailing to every real demand...It was only the darkened house that could contain her. When the sunshine came again, she was not there...The helpful inmate had departed, without one backward glance to gather up the meed of gratitude...Meeting them in the street, she never raised her head to receive their greeting...This might be pride, but it was so like humility, that it produced all the softening influence of the latter on the public mind (180).

Hester had become not only the mother of Pearl, but also a mother to the entire town. Asking nothing in return for her self-sacrificial nurturing and succor, she became the embodiment of those feminine qualities so lauded by society.

Indeed, according to Calvinistic theology, Hester's conduct was exemplary. However, there is no evidence that she accepted this theology, and here again she parallels Hawthorne. She did not view herself as an adulteress, but believed that her sexual relationship with Dimmesdale "had a consecration of its own" (212). Viewing herself as "standing alone in the world" (212), she created her own private system of morality: "The world's law was no law for

her mind" (212). This is Hawthorne's paradox as well. Hester is acting out the author's dilemma. Hawthorne's assumed identity functions perfectly here. What otherwise could only be seen as hopelessly confusing ambiguity becomes understandable when we recall that Hester's movements are simply being reported by an editor. In a sense, Hawthorne abdicates authorial responsibility and the need to resolve this philosophical quandary by assuming the pose of a reporting narrator whose job it is merely to report such quandaries, not to resolve them narratively. Hawthorne, in his dual role, can make gestures toward his inherited Calvinism through Hester's actions and at the same time comment that those actions are unfortunate. His behind-the-veil identity is still connected to Hester at this point, but Hawthorne the editor is under no such obligation and is therefore not required to assign to her a believable motivation for her outward conformity to theocratic law.

Since "dying to self" was viewed as a necessary prerequisite to salvation, the people of Boston saw Hester as having redeemed herself to some extent and so move her from the scaffold of the pillory to the pedestal of a religious icon. It is this change in Hester's status that many readers view as a positive reward, when in fact it removes her further from the sphere of the human community than did her former position:

> In all her intercourse with society...there was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it.

> Every gesture, every contact, implied, and often expressed that she was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere, or communicated with the common nature by other organs and senses than the rest of human kind. She stood apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt (108).

In other words, the more firm her position on the pedestal, the less power she actually possesses. Her isolation intensifies in proportion to her elevation.

Hawthorne's narrative flirtation with the creation of an independent female is even more clear near the end of the novel when we are told of her inner life. The denial of self which so characterizes her outer life has not yet been internalized. Hester maintains an inner life of rebellion, entertaining thoughts that border on heresy. In fact, it is her very isolation from and powerlessness in society which drive her into herself, a movement Hawthorne sees as dangerous--perhaps even evil. For example, at the governor's mansion, when Dimmesdale defends Hester's right to keep Pearl, he uses as his argument the child's role in keeping "the mother's soul alive, and...preserv[ing] her from blacker depths of sin into which Satan might else have sought to plunge her" (137). What could these depths be that are blacker than adultery? The answer becomes clear in Chapter 13. Hester was becoming a feminist. She began to take on the same rebellious spirit that had caused men of the sword to overthrow governments and "whole systems of

ancient prejudice...She assumed a freedom of speculation" (183). She questions the whole predicament of womanhood, but, we are told, her musings lead only to a wandering "without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm" (184). Hawthorne sees women as ill-equipped to delve into such philosophically thorny issues. Although he maintains a sympathetic stance toward his heroine, he hardly sanctions an open defiance of the traditional order.

In Chapter 13, when he compares Hester for the second time to Anne Hutchinson, one nearly believes Hawthorne is approving of Hester's intellectual life by lauding what Hutchinson had done:

> Yet had little Pearl never come to her from the spiritual world, it might have been far otherwise. Then she might have come down to us in history hand in hand with Anne Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect. She might, in one of her phases, have been a prophetess...But in the education of her child, the mother's enthusiasm had something to wreak itself upon (183).

The birth of Pearl, then, prevented Hester from achieving greatness through leadership in a movement of reform. However, as one critic has pointed out, "to reduce [Hester's] ideas to an 'enthusiasm' ready to be 'wreaked' shows the narrator's bias."[10] In addition, immediately after this comparison of Hester to Hutchinson, he tells us with finality that "the scarlet letter had not done its office" (184). As long as Hester has inward leanings toward

feminism, she has not been thoroughly purged. The letter's office, then, is not only to restrict her outward life, keeping her movements within the precincts prescribed for saintly women, but also to burn away any thoughts she may harbor about toppling authority, tradition, the established order of society. These were Anne Hutchinson's intentions, and, as Larzer Ziff points out, Hawthorne condemned her for them:

> Relatively unconcerned about the particulars of Anne Hutchinson's theology or with the legal niceties of her case, in an early essay Hawthorne emphasized three points, all of them startlingly in keeping with the presuppositions of her actual judges. First, he pointed out, Anne Hutchinson was a woman, and, he stated unequivocally, 'Woman's intellect should never give the tone to that of a man: and even her morality is not exactly the material for masculine virtue.' The division line of nature yields absolute psychical as well as physical differences, he argues, and the rules of life are, therefore, naturally in the keeping of men. Second, he makes clear that Mrs. Hutchinson's activity, regardless of the rightness or wrongness of what she said, was destructive of the integrity of the community and therefore imperiled the colony's future. If Massachusetts was to have a significant history, it had to continue along the lines laid down by its male citizens and repress such tangents as hers. And finally, Mrs. Hutchinson committed the sin of separation from her fellows...
>
> [She was] a feminist, gifted with powers beyond those of her fellows and following them regardless of the consequences to her community and unmindful of history or her share in human fallibility. This is the Anne Hutchinson an unsympathetic Hawthorne constructed.[11]

In The Scarlet Letter, Hester resembles the now "sainted Anne Hutchinson" (76), but, as Ziff goes on to point out, what she stood for was still unsupportable.[12] Hester will come to accept the patriarchal structure of the world--not in a defeated, resigned way, but in the satisfied way that results from "seeing the light." Until then, the scarlet letter will not have done its complete work.

But how does Hawthorne continue that work? For one thing, he has arranged that Hester can neither be part of her community nor totally apart from it. Once again, Hawthorne gives Hester the appearance of volition. She chooses to remain in Boston. After her release from prison, she could have slipped from under the tyranny of Puritanic authority by leaving the colony. Instead, she chose to dwell in a thatched cottage by the sea, "out of the sphere of social activity" (105), having been given permission to do so "by the license of the magistrates, who still kept an inquisitorial watch over her" (106). In his description of the spot, Hawthorne uses images of sterility and stubbornness, which become identified with Hester as well. Its location, between the sea on one side and the forest on the other, emphasize Hester's position in the New World. Her native soil is across the sea, while her roots, we are told are in New England. Throughout the novel Hester is actually a citizen of neither world, but inhabits a limbo between the two. Nevertheless, Hawthorne tells us that she

stays of her own volition, although his explanation for this decision is less than satisfactory:

> ...there is a fatality, a feeling so irresistible and inevitable that it has the force of doom, which almost invariably compels human beings to linger around and haunt, ghost-like, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color to their lifetime; and still the more irresistibly, the darker tinge that saddens it. Her sin, her ignominy, were the roots she had struck into the soil (104).

We are asked to believe that an individual's impulse to remain within a group which has inflicted extreme cruelty is more natural than the impulse to flee. Because the reasoning is contrived, the author is compelled to use an authoritative tone in an effort to make the reader accept his version of the truth.

The other explanation Hawthorne offers for Hester's decision to remain in New England is her love for Dimmesdale. While more believable as part of a romance, it is still less than convincing. Once more Hawthorne relies upon stereotypical female qualities to ensure Hester's submission. For the love of a man--one who has "seduced and abandoned her"--Hester again chooses her life of isolation. Passion is transmogrified to female fealty to a man who, superficially at least, does not deserve her devotion.

Neither explanation rings true. On the one hand, it is implausible that a woman like Hester, who sees escape as a solution, would remain, but there is also the lingering

matter of Hawthorne's early identification with his heroine. The inclination to remain is less Hester's than Hawthorne's. He wants her to stay in his place--in order that he need not stay.

For Hawthorne, the only true release from the weight of a patriarchal past is departure. He cannot overcome his own impulse to flee:

> Soon...my old native town will loom upon me through the haze of memory... Henceforth, it ceases to be a reality in my life. I am a citizen of somewhere else. My good townspeople will not much regret me; for--though it has been as dear an object as any...to be of some importance in their eyes, and to win myself a pleasant memory in this abode and burial place of so many of my forefathers--there has never been...the genial atmosphere which a literary man requires, in order to ripen the best harvest of his mind. I shall do better with other faces; and these familiar ones...will do just as well without me (74).

Hawthorne's resolve to escape is firm. His "old native town" stifles his creativity. His hope that his name will be a "pleasant memory" must take second place to ensuring a "genial atmosphere which a literary man requires." If the "harvest of his mind" is "to ripen," he must flee.

Another connection between Hawthorne and Hester is evident in their progeny. Hawthorne tells us that he has fathered children in another land, where he plans to raise them (43). Hester, on the other hand, raises Pearl in Boston and is allowed no such permanent escape. His

children provide release; her child calls her continually back to a stereotypical female role.

The forest scene perfectly captures Hawthorne's authorial ambivalence. He gives Hester a brief release during her meeting with Dimmesdale, but even there her primary purpose is to bolster Dimmesdale's dying spirit. In an effort to breathe new life into him, Hester makes a stirring speech about escaping to freedom:

> And what hast thou to do with all these iron men, and their opinions? They have kept thy better part in bondage too long already!...Leave this wreck and ruin here where it has happened! Meddle no more with it! Begin all anew! The future is yet full of trial and success...Exchange this false life of thine for a true one (215).

Pearl, of course, summons Hester back from this fantasy of escape to the reality of motherhood. Still, Hester has expressed a view of life in the Puritan community that does not comport with Hawthorne's explanation for her choosing to stay in it. Although she is "preaching" to Dimmesdale, these words reveal Hester's desire for herself as well. Clearly, she looks to departure as salvation, but the author effectively blunts this desire by connecting it to her love for Dimmesdale. She wants to leave in order to be with him, not to create a self-defined existence, one in which her own system of morality governs her movements and choices. Further, Hawthorne transforms this love into something satanically seductive. At the time of their interview in

the forest, Dimmesdale finds Hester's allure irresistible. When she turns her "deep eyes" upon him, she is "instinctively exercising a magnetic power" (214) over his spirit in a kind of demonic hypnotism to which he initially succumbs. His encounters after his return to the town demonstrate the evil effect of Hester's hold over him. "At every step he was incited to do some strange, wild wicked thing or other, with a sense that it would be at once involuntary and intentional" (233). During a conversation with one of the "upright and holy" deacons of the church, the minister had to exercise the most rigid restraint "to refrain from uttering certain blasphemous suggestions that rose into his mind concerning the communion-supper" (233). He was again tempted toward blasphemy when he met two pious and pure women from his congregation. Similar encounters continue until his meeting with Mistress Hibbins convinces him that Hester had tempted him into a "bargain very like" the bond between the witch and the Devil (237).

> Tempted by a dream of happiness, he had yielded himself...to what he knew was deadly sin. And the infectious poison of that sin had been thus rapidly diffused throughout his moral system. It had stupefied all blessed impulses, and awakened into vivid life the whole brotherhood of bad ones (237).

At this point, Hawthorne has corrupted even Hester's love for Dimmesdale, which previously he had presented as her motive for remaining in Boston. She has become, at least

momentarily, a temptress--an Eve enticing her man to sin once more.

Subsequently Hester does escape to Europe, but Hawthorne does not leave her there. The similarities he had established between himself and Hester in "The Custom-House" break down here, in the final release. Hester is never allowed to become truly "a citizen of somewhere else." We must assume that, instead of freeing her, those years abroad helped her to internalize her outcast status, for, with yet another emphasis on her free, willful choice, Hawthorne brings Hester back to Boston:

> She had returned...and resumed,--of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it,--resumed the symbol...Never afterwards did it quit her bosom (274).

Hester has, in effect, paid the ultimate price in Hawthorne's place, and through her atonement allows Hawthorne to have it both ways. In her ultimate act of submission, Hester appeases the old ghosts through her 'voluntary' return to the community as an agent of salvation for the wayward. Relinquishing even her rebellious inner life, she becomes a true angel:

> The scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too...Hester Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment (274-75).

Her final status may seem positive, but in fact, in making her a saint, Hawthorne has dehumanized her--rendered her into art: static, acted upon; created, not creating, like the tombstone at which we stare in the end. Even after her death, an icon remains.

Hawthorne's own desire to free himself from his past would eventually direct him toward Europe, to his consulship in Liverpool and an extended stay in Italy. Although the guilt generated by this desire was never completely assuaged, it was partially eliminated by Hester's "voluntary" return to Boston, to her existence on the outside fringe of society. Hawthorne had, through her, left a part of himself there as well. The creation of The Scarlet Letter was itself, therefore, an exercise in escape, art as psychological health.[13] Ironically, it is guilt which finally provides Hawthorne an exit by becoming the driving force behind artistic creation, which in turn liberates him if not from eternal damnation, at least from that "long connection of a family with one spot" (43), which threatens to plunge him into that "wretched numbness" (65) of imaginative dullness and mere routine:

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil (43).

Hawthorne uses his own guilt to construct plots in his

fiction which recount the guilt-induced agony of his characters. But the part of Hawthorne that subscribes to Calvin's doctrine of total depravity prevents him from allowing those characters to achieve total absolution. Calvin's dogma places human beings in the position of having to sin repeatedly and necessarily while at the same time remaining accountable for those sins--that is, though they sin necessarily, they nevertheless sin voluntarily. So says Calvin, and so Chillingworth tells Hester, "By thy first step awry thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment it has all been a dark necessity" (191).

Still, Hawthorne's characters labor to escape their death sentences by engaging in elaborate systems of penance or in consistent good works. Thus, Hester tells Dimmesdale:

> 'You have deeply and sorely repented. Your sin is left behind you, in the days long past. Your present life is not less holy, in very truth, than it seems in people's eyes. Is there no reality in the penitence thus sealed and witnessed by good works? And wherefore should it not bring you peace?'
>
> "No, Hester, no!' replied the clergyman. '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!' (209).

Dimmesdale's reply, of course, is the same that Calvin himself would have made to Hester's assumption concerning the efficacy of good works. On the other hand, Hawthorne's reluctance to embrace Calvinism wholeheartedly can be seen

in the fact that Dimmesdale did spend seven years trying to appease a God he knows full well rejects good works as a ticket to eternal life, which is reserved only for the elect.

In this system, guilt in inevitable. In fact, it is the essential condition of life on earth. For men, however, and for Hawthorne in particular, the anguish of guilt results in eloquence, art or truth. For women, on the other hand, its results are an acceptance of a traditional subservient, passive, nurturing role--and silence.

As narrator, Hawthorne seems to disengage himself from Dimmesdale's morbid self-scrutiny and masochism, accusing the minister of selfishness, egotism, and cowardice. Yet the narrator frequently locates the sources of both art and truth within Dimmesdale's "anguish," suggesting that art is the ability to share the pain of existence while at the same time remaining unexposed:

> While...gnawed and tortured by some black trouble of the soul,...Mr. Dimmesdale had achieved a brilliant popularity in his sacred office. He won it, indeed, in great part, by his sorrows. His intellectual gifts, his moral perceptions, his power of experiencing and communicating emotion, were kept in a state of preternatural activity by the prick and anguish of his daily life. His fame, though still on its upward slope, already overshadowed the soberer reputations of his fellow-clergymen, eminent as several of them were (162).

Dimmesdale's eloquence increases in proportion to the

intensity of his guilt. When he speaks publicly, he does so in "tongues of flame" (162). His "stain" assures his "brilliant popularity," while Hester's prevents her from becoming a prophetess. This situation may be viewed as autobiographical wishful thinking, considering it was written by a man concerned, even obsessed, with fame, who was competing with "scribbling women" in the literary marketplace.

Hawthorne's own sin is writing romances. It seems impossible that he could "placate the Puritan within him and continue to be a writer of romances, for the kind of life the Puritan might approve--working in the custom house and thereby being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation--destroys the qualities and spirit which produce romances."[14] But in fact through The Scarlet Letter he does satisfy the Puritan within him. Hester's suffering transformed her into a good woman who remained bonded to her child, her womanly duties, her isolation, and her marginal status--an outcome sanctioned by Calvinistic theology.

Hawthorne has made a place for himself among the specters of his ancestors, conforming to their expectations by fictionalizing himself as narrator--a narrator who becomes increasingly allied with Dimmesdale's self-centeredness and concern for the admiration of the public. Hester, too, is acceptable to both his readers and his private "old ghosts." She suffers sufficiently for her sin, and her agony is not allowed to produce any form of art

except that which is appropriate for a woman. The narrator has become "morally comfortable"[15] at her expense and yet remains a "writer of storybooks" as well as "a citizen of somewhere else."

NOTES

1. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1983), p. 35. Subsequent references to The Scarlet Letter are included in the text in parentheses.

2. My argument is based on A. Robert Lee's excellent article, "'Like a Dream Behind Me': Hawthorne's 'The Custom-House' and The Scarlet Letter" in Nathaniel Hawthorne: New Critical Essays, A. Robert Lee, ed., (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1982), pp. 48-57.

3. Joseph B. Felt, The Annals of Salem from its First Settlement (Salem: W. and S.B. Ives, 1827). Joseph B. Felt, Annals of Salem, 2nd ed., Salem: W. and S.B. Ives; Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1845-49, Vol. II, p. 380.

4. A. Robert Lee's article contains a perceptive discussion of Hawthorne's use of the "language of thresholds, edifices, doors, houses and chambers, lines of demarcation and separate domain" as metaphors for the passage of time present into time past.

5. Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 165.

6. Ibid., pp. 165-66.

7. Nina Baym, "Thwarted Nature: Nathaniel Hawthorne as Feminist," American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), pp. 58-77.

8. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Have, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 20. Here Gilbert and Gubar quote anthropologist Sherry Ortner in "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" Woman, Culture, and Society, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 86.

9. Gilbert and Gubar, p. 25.

10. David Leverenz, "Mrs. Hawthorne's Headache: Reading The Scarlet Letter," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, vol. 37, no. 4 (March 1983), pp. 552-75.

11. Larzer Ziff, "The Artist and Puritanism," Hawthorne Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), pp. 262-63.

12. Ibid.

13. A. Robert Lee, p. 58.

14. Nina Baym, "The Romantic Malgre Lui: Hawthorne in the Custom House," Emerson Society Quarterly, vol. 19, 1973, p. 21.

15. The phrase belongs to Leverenz.

CHAPTER TWO

Phoebe as Savior

To become "morally comfortable" while remaining an artist is a problem which Hawthorne must face repeatedly; that is, he must forever contend with the essential sinfulness of being a writer. Ironically, it is this struggle which makes his art possible. Because guilt is the locus of artistic creation, Hawthorne is in a kind of double bind. If he were able to disentangle himself completely from Calvinism, his art would suffer because he would be free of the guilt which creates and defines his characters. On the other hand, if he could accept the doctrine unreservedly, he would be obliged to relinquish writing altogether, choosing instead an occupation which would allow him to become "serviceable to mankind" in the practical way sanctioned by the Puritans.

Hawthorne's solution was one which allowed good to come from evil, a concept which, while it contradicted the doctrine of Total Depravity, allowed Hawthorne to redeem the sin of his occupation as a writer of romances.[1] He accomplishes this redemption by repeatedly creating women characters who become the spiritual inspiration for sinful men. Hawthorne insisted that in order to assume this role women must cultivate their own spirituality by suppressing their intellectual capacity, focusing instead upon what he sees as their natural affinity for the spiritual and

inherent ability to nuture.

Hawthorne accepted, then, a prevailing nineteenth-century assumption--that women were spiritually superior to men and should therefore not sully themselves with intellectual pursuits.[2] That he accepted this view of women is obvious in his correspondence to Sophia Peabody, both during their engagement and during their marriage. Clearly, he viewed Sophia as his good angel--his spiritual mentor:

> My dear Sophie, your letters are no small portion of my spiritual food, and help to keep my soul alive, when otherwise it might languish unto death...for I keep them to be the treasure of my still and secret hours, such hours as pious people spend in prayer; and the communion which my spirit then holds with yours has something of religion in it. The charm of your letters does not depend upon their intellectual value, though that is great, but on the spirit of which they are the utterance, and which is a spirit of wonderful efficacy.[3]

Sophia's function is to provide her man with "spiritual food," and the implication is that intellectual activity would rob her of that sacred function by forcing her to renounce the "religion" she was meant to practice.[4]

In Hawthorne's system, a woman must remain pure and angelic if her atonement for man is to be efficacious. If she falls from grace, as Hester Prynne did, she must suffer guilt, and a woman's guilt inevitably drives her back toward her proper "sphere," not toward the creation of art as a man's guilt does. Thus, she can be made into a savior even

if she begins in sin. Like the popular novelists of his day, Hawthorne assumed that only a woman who stayed meekly within a carefully defined area could hold communion with men's spirits and that the slightest movement outside that area "unsexed" her.[5]

Because it requires an active intellect, Hawthorne considered public life one such step outside a woman's God-ordained sphere, often implying that public women were sexually promiscuous. For example, one of Hester's most painful punishments in The Scarlet Letter was being forced to stand before the public on the scaffold of the pillory. If she had not lost her virgin purity, her features would have been seen only where they belonged, "in the quiet gleam of the fireside" or "beneath a matronly veil at church."[6] Because of her sin, she was forced to become a public woman, a phenomenon which was repugnant to Hawthorne.

One group of public women who both horrified and terrified Hawthorne was female writers. In a 1856 letter to Sophia, he reveals his disgust:

> My dearest, I thank God, that, with a higher and deeper intellect than any other woman, thou hast never--forgive me the bare idea!--never prostituted thyself to the public,...as a thousand others do. It does seem to deprive women of all delicacy; (it has pretty much such an effect on them as it would to walk abroad through the streets, physically stark naked.) Women are too good for authorship, and that is the reason it spoils them so.[7]

Hawthorne felt that women were "too good" for such an intellectual pursuit because such activity disturbs their "delicacy," which evidently means their distance from reality. In other words, women lose their ability to atone for the sins of men, which is their birthright and duty by virtue of their sex, if they become writers or public women in any way. Instead, they should be hidden away from the world, meekly offering virtuous influence only to their respective men. Hawthorne's reasoning here has obvious sexual implications. Professional or public intellectual activity on the part of a woman turns her into a prostitute, while her retreat "under a matronly veil" signifies her chastity.

This aversion to women writers can also be seen in Hawthorne's letters to his publisher, William D. Ticknor. In one letter he labels all "inkstained" women "detestable," and in the most often quoted one of all, he calls their work "trash" and exhibits a good deal of professional jealousy:

> America is now wholly given over to a d----d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash--and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the Lamplighter, and other books neither better nor worse?--worse they could not be, and better they need not be, when they sell by the 100,000.[8]

At the time of this 1855 letter, Hawthorne never made enough money from his writing to live comfortably.[9] In fact, he

was forced to accept a consulship during this time in order to support his family.

Both in his fiction and in his letters to Sophia, Hawthorne exhibits almost an obsession for convincing women of the nobility, the loftiness of their purpose. The first extant letter to Sophia is an example:

> No one, whom you would deem worthy of your friendship, could enjoy so large a share of it as I do, without feeling the influence of your character throughout his own--purifying his aims and desires, enabling him to realize that this is a truer world than the feverish one around us, and teaching him how to gain daily entrance into that better world. Such, so far as I have been able to profit by it, has been your ministration to me. Did you dream what an angelic guardianship was entrusted to you?[10]

The religious tone Hawthorne sets here is calculated not only to flatter Sophia by exalting her, but also to instill in her a certain amount of guilt lest she should ever entertain the same heretical thoughts as the women writers. To give up an "angelic guardianship" would be a heinous sin indeed. However, to be forced to remain solely a "purifying" agent for men is an intolerable burden for a woman, requiring, as it does, absolute stasis.[11]

In a later letter, dated September 18, 1840, Hawthorne again impresses upon Sophia the holiness of her mission. She is Christ-like: wholly human, yet wholly divine:

> Sweetest wife,...be as happy as the angels; for thou art as good and as holy as they, and have more merit in thy

> goodness than they have; because the angels have always dwelt in sinless heaven; whereas thy pilgrimage has been on earth, where many sin and go astray.[12]

Having to live among sinners is a real test for a pure woman like Sophia, and having passed the test makes her even more worthy to be worshipped than are the heavenly angels, who have always existed in a sinless realm. Because Sophia is a deity who dwells in a human body, Hawthorne is able to have a sexual relationship with her, yet she is so thoroughly spiritual that she purifies even his sexual desire. In addition, the blending of her humanity and her divinity allows her to effect an atonement for his sin:

> Now good-bye, dearest, sweetest, loveliest, holiest, truest, suitablest little wife. I worship thee. Thou art my type of womanly perfection. Thou keepest my heart pure, and elevatest me above the world. Thou enablest me to interpret the riddle of life, and fillest me with faith in the unseen and better land, because thou leadest me thither continually.[13]

As we have seen, Hawthorne's personal "riddle of life" involves reconciling his identity as a writer with his clear, though tacit, commitment to the values held by his Puritan ancestors. His view of women, then, did not coincide exactly with the popular nineteenth-century glorification of all women. The popular attitude asserted that because of her humility and inferior status, woman was

perfectly suited to be the savior of men in general. Hawthorne, however, was interested in the woman as an atoning agent specifically for the male artist, who sometimes appears as one of the fictional characters who is a representative of Hawthorne himself. However, it is not always necessary for a male artist to appear in the text because Hawthorne himself is one, and his female characters always atone for his real life occupation, whether or not they save a fictional male artist as part of the plot.

Further, in order to realize her atoning power, the man (artist) must be involved with the divine woman on a human level. This concept permitted Hawthorne to write of Sophia's body warming his bed at the same time that he emphasizes her divinity, as he did in his letter of November 20, 1839.[14] He begins by addressing Sophia, the angel of mercy, who ministers to her dying brother in much the same way Hester cared for the sick of Puritan Boston: "You are yourself one of the angels who minister to your departing brother--the more an angel because you triumph over earthly weakness to perform those offices of affection."[15] Later in the letter, however, he addresses her as a flesh and blood woman, whose physical presence he longs for sexually:

> Mine own wife, what a cold night this is going to be! How I am to keep warm, unless you nestle close, close into my bosom, I do not by any means understand--not but what I have clothes enough on my mattress--but a husband cannot be comfortably warm without his wife.[16]

Sophia, then, is a divinity incarnate who functions as her husband's savior, redeeming him from the sin of his frivolous occupation. He knew from firsthand experience that he was not able to save himself and was therefore much in need of a savior. His determination to write was too entrenched to be sacrificed.

The female character who plays Sophia's role most accurately in Hawthorne's fiction is Phoebe Pyncheon in The House of the Seven Gables. Like Sophia, she transforms her man, who, significantly, is an artist, simply through the influence of her character, not through any artistic aspirations or intellectual gifts. Holgrave, the daguerrotypist who resides in one of the rooms of the house, admits to Phoebe the extent to which he depends on her to bring him back to the realm of the blest:

> Could you but know, Phoebe, how it was with me, the hour before you came!...The world looked strange, wild, evil, hostile; my past life, so lonesome and dreary; my future, a shapeless gloom, which I must mould into gloomy shapes! But, Phoebe, you crossed the threshold; and hope, warmth, and joy came in with you! The black moment became at once a blissful one.[17]

According to the love letters, Hawthorne depended upon Sophia in much the same way. According to the letter of January 27, 1841, her passivity, her presence alone effected his salvation:

> Whenever I return to Salem, I feel how dark my life would be, without the light that thou shedst upon it--how cold, without the warmth of thy love. Sitting in this chamber, where my youth wasted itself in vain, I can partly estimate the change that has been wrought...I had walked those many years in darkness, and might so have walked through life, with only a dreamy notion that there was any light in the universe, if thou hadst not kissed mine eyelids, and given me to see.[18]

Holgrave's and Hawthorne's views are nearly synonymous. Each is initially bound by the chains of the past, and each is liberated by the mere presence of his lady. Phoebe is a shining young virgin whose happy glow is made even brighter by its contrast to the darkness of the old house and to the two decaying celibates, Hepzibah and Clifford.[19] The narrator tells us that Phoebe's presence is like "a ray of sunshine [in]...[a] dismal place" (411). Significantly, "Phoebe" is one of the pet names Hawthorne sometimes used in the love letters when he referred to Sophia.

Another attribute which, in Hawthorne's mind, testifies to Phoebe's saintliness is her tendency to exalt and enoble her household chores. For Hawthorne's ideal woman, domestic activities are the only acceptable outlet for creativity and intellect. As long as a woman's energy is directed toward only those few arts "within a woman's grasp,"[20] she may be active instead of passive. Someone is obligated to be "serviceable to mankind," thereby living up to the protestant work ethic, which was so integral to Calvin and

his Puritan followers, and, according to Hawthorne, "it should be woman's office to move in the midst of practical affairs, and to gild them all--the very homeliest, were it even the scouring of pots and kettles--with an atmosphere of loveliness and joy" (421). Phoebe delights in carrying out this "office" because her nature does not rebel against her God-given station in life: "Whatever she did, too, was done without conscious effort," a trait which "betokened the cheeriness of an active temperament, finding joy in its activity, and therefore rendering it beautiful; it was a New England trait--the stern old stuff of Puritanism, with a gold thread in the web" (417).

Assigning to Phoebe the ability to spiritualize "women's work" is one example of Hawthorne's effort to pacify the demands of his inherited Puritanism while writing fiction. Using his skill as a writer, he can advise women to do the right things and to maintain a cheerfully willing attitude while doing them:

> There was a spiritual quality in Phoebe's activity. The life of the long and busy day--spent in occupations that might so easily have taken a squalid and ugly aspect--had been made pleasant, and even lovely, by the spontaneous grace with which these homely duties seemed to bloom out of her character; so that labor, while she dealt with it, had the easy and flexible charm of play. Angels do not toil, but let their good works grow out of them (82).

These, then, are the redeeming activities of the woman.

They spring naturally from her character, not from any mental effort. Her goodness does not come from what she does, though Phoebe is skilled in women's work, but her "good works" grow naturally out of her willingness to comply with the righteous laws governing her woman's sphere.[21]

Finally, Hawthorne employs much the same religious jargon when he speaks of Pheobe as he does when he addresses Sophia in the love letters:

> In her aspect there was a familiar gladness, and a holiness that you could play with, and yet reverence it as much as ever. She was like a prayer, offered up in the homeliest beauty on one's mother-tongue. Fresh was Phoebe, moreover, and airy and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore--neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings--had ever been put on, before; or, if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds.
>
> The girl waved her hand to Hepzibah and Clifford, and went up the street; a Religion in herself, warm, simple, true, with a substance that could walk on earth and a spirit that was capable of heaven (496-97).

Here, as in the love letters, Hawthorne is making the woman worthy of reverence and worship and yet accessible. Her earthly station is humble, but at the same time she is holy--even her clothes are pure. Hawthorne calls her "a Religion in herself." Phoebe is able to save her man by acting as a surrogate, adhering to God's plan in Holgrave's (and to some extent Hawthorne's) place.

If she is to be an effective savior, however, Phoebe cannot remain merely a conventional redemptive heroine of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction--a religious angel who persuades passively by her personal example of goodness and light.[22] Her spirituality co-exists with her sensuality, of which she herself is unaware. The men surrounding her, however--Judge Pyncheon, Clifford, and Holgrave--all respond to her on a sexual level. For example, upon first meeting Phoebe, the Judge's spontaneous impulse is to embrace her with "a kiss of acknowledged kindred and mutual affection." But Phoebe recoils from his "dark, full-fed physiognomy...The man, the sex, somehow or other, was entirely too prominent in the Judge's demonstrations of that sort. Phoebe's eyes sank, and without knowing why, she felt herself blushing deeply under his look" (453-54). The distaste she feels is an indication that she has as yet not come to terms with her own sexual nature. Characteristically, Hawthorne bestows the privilege of awakening Phoebe's libido upon the male artist in the story, for her role as savior entails, in part, her voluntary sexual submission and devotion to one man. She must be flesh and blood if she is to carry out the role of atonement.

Even the impotent, emasculated Clifford appreciates Phoebe's femaleness:

> He was a man, it is true, and recognized her as a woman...She was his only representative of womankind. He took

> unfailing note of every charm that appertained to her sex, and saw the ripeness of her lips, and the virginal development of her bosom. All her little womanly ways, budding out of her like blossoms on a young fruit-tree, had their effect on him, and sometimes caused his heart to tingle with the keenest thrills of pleasure (473).

This may be a non-sexual recognition on Clifford's part, but it is certainly an erotic description on the part of the narrator. Hawthorne clearly feels the necessity of portraying Phoebe as a fleshly, sexual, human woman. However, since Clifford is incapable of threatening her sexually, she is free to demonstrate her affection for him with open expressions of physical tenderness.

Like many important Hawthornean women, Phoebe's primary function is to save an artist, and Hawthorne's personal stake in such a redemption is clear. The daguerrotypist and Hawthorne have had many of the same experiences, and Holgrave voices many of Hawthorne's own concerns. For example, Holgrave, like Hawthorne, has been forced to earn his bread in mundane, "serviceable" ways outside the realm of art, yet "he had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him" (504). In addition, he carries the burden of the past on his back like a corpse: "It seemed to Holgrave...that in this age, more than ever before, the moss-grown and rotten Past is to be torn down, and lifeless institutions to be thrust out of the way, and their dead corpses buried, and everything to begin anew" (506). This laying aside of the past was Hawthorne's

goal as well, though, the narrator admits, Holgrave's youthful optimism would inevitably be blunted by age and experience:

> This enthusiasm...would serve to keep his youth pure, and make his aspirations high...And when, with the years settling down more weightily upon him, his early faith should be modified by inevitable experience, it would be with no harsh and sudden revolution of his sentiments. He would still have faith in man's brightening destiny... (507).

Holgrave desires the tearing down of the "rotten Past," and the narrator calls this desire a high aspiration, one he feels will be realized in "the better centuries that are coming" (507). At this point the narrator and Holgrave are nearly indistinguishable. Thus, while it is the narrator who tells us that as concerns the future and the past, "one subject...is but the reverberation of the other" (509), Holgrave pours out his frustration and anger to Phoebe, who acts as the adoring, sympathetic audience, one who soothes Holgrave's tormented soul by listening and never contradicting:

> 'Shall we never, never get rid of this Past...It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body!...A Dead Man sits on all our judgement-seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat all his decisions. We read in Dead Men's books! We laugh at Dead Men's jokes, and cry at Dead Men's pathos! We are sick of Dead Men's diseases, physical and moral, and die of the same remedies with which dead doctors killed their

> patients! We worship the living Deity, according to Dead Men's forms and creeds! Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us...we live in Dead Men's houses; as for instance, in this of the seven gables!'
>
> 'And why not,' said Phoebe, 'so long as we can be comfortable in them?' (510).

Phoebe's brief reply here indicates part of her function--that is, to offer support in the form of inane responses to Holgrave's impassioned rhetoric. To do more, to display her own intellectual power through a more prolonged verbal response would be inconsistent with the passive role in which Hawthorne has cast her. She is allowed only to give succor and validate Holgrave's choices.

Like Hawthorne, Holgrave has tried to sever all ties with the past. He has made what Nina Baym calls "the particularly American response to history":

> [H]e has moved away from his past, even to the extent of leaving behind an old self by creating a new identity with a new name. He has escaped the past by avoiding the forms in which it is preserved and transmitted...
> Holgrave must now discover whether freedom is possible on any terms other than perpetual motion and flight. He hopes to reattach himself to his sources without forfeiting any of his spiritual independence and flexibility...[23]

For a successful reattachment of this kind to be effected, both the artist and the atoning woman must be first connected to the past as Hester and Hawthorne were in "The

Custom-House." In The House of the Seven Gables this connection occurs during Holgrave's account of the legend of Alice Pyncheon, Phoebe's ancestor. This incident also marks the beginning of Phoebe's sexual awakening.

Holgrave is an artist, a man filled with "lawless propensities" (430), and thus, a man after Hawthorne's own heart. Phoebe, however, feels threatened by his unconventional lifestyle and by his somewhat magnetic sexual power. "She was startled...and sometimes repelled...by a sense that his law differed from her own...He made her uneasy, and seemed to unsettle everything around her..." (504). She is unable to behave as comfortably and naturally in his presence as she is in the presence of Clifford because Holgrave represents Phoebe's first experience with the real possibility of a sexual encounter. Hawthorne intends her discomfort to be evidence of her holiness; only a sexually experienced woman would feel at ease in Phoebe's situation. Further, her agitation serves the additional purpose of ensuring Holgrave the traditionally male position of control and power in the relationship. He is empowered by her uneasiness. Hawthorne creates a tableau here, depicting the talented and powerful male leading the shy, trembling virgin into sexual knowledge, a scenario he reproduces several times in his subsequent works.

Holgrave, of course, is a direct descendant of Matthew Maule, the enchanter who, years before, had mesmerized and then humiliated Alice Pyncheon. Alice's father believed

that Matthew Maule had possession of the deed to a tract of land supposedly belonging to the Pyncheons. In exchange for information concerning this deed, Maule demands the seven-gabled house itself and a conversation with Pyncheon's daughter, Alice. Greed overcomes his initial reluctance, and Mr. Pyncheon agrees to the proposition, refusing to intervene while Maule subjects Alice to his power of mesmerism:

> But alas, for the beautiful, the gentle, yet too haughty Alice! A power, that she little dreamed of, had laid its grasp upon her maiden soul. A will, most unlike her own, constrained her to do its grotesque and fantastic bidding...While Alice Pyncheon lived, she was Maule's slave, in a bondage more humiliating, a thousand-fold, than that which binds its chain around the body...Maule had but to wave his hand; and wherever the proud lady chanced to be...her spirit passed from beneath her own control, and bowed itself to Maule (531-32, emphasis mine).

Holgrave has inherited the desire and the power to dominate an attractive young woman, and the implication is that such power is his birthright as a Maule, and more significantly, as a male. (No critic has mentioned the similarity between the name Maule and the word male.) Although Holgrave and his ancestor share similar situations, there is one important difference: Alice was "haughty," but Phoebe is meek.[24] Alice's tragedy is partly due to her father's greed for the family tract of land, but it is mostly due to what Maule perceives as the audacity of

Alice's willingness to "put woman's might against man's might" in a contest of strength and intellectual force. In addition, Maule is threatened by Alice's unconcealed sexual attraction to him: "She was struck with admiration--which she made no attempt to conceal--of the remarkable comeliness, strength, and energy of Maule's figure" (525). Even this slight suggestion of female sexual aggressiveness threatens Maule to such an extent that he commits himself to destroying her:

> [T]hat admiring glance (which most men, perhaps, would have cherished as a sweet recollection, all through life) the carpenter never forgave. It must have been the devil himself that made Maule so subtile in his perception (525).

Devil or no, Maule interprets Alice's action as unabashed seductiveness, which castrates him while it empowers her. Hawthorne maintains that Alice "deemed herself conscious of a power--combined of beauty, high, unsullied purity, and the preservative force of womanhood--that could make her sphere impenetrable, unless betrayed by treachery within" (526). Since she has already robbed him of the traditional male role of bestowing sexual knowledge upon a virgin, Maule's only alternative is to conquer her on an intellectual basis.

Arrogant and powerful, Alice is one of Hawthorne's dark, exotic women, who, like Hester Prynne, must either be driven back to her proper sphere, or like Alice (and later Zenobia of The Blithedale Romance) pay with her life. Alice

displays too masculine a confidence in her sexuality. She has effected a kind of role reversal, which disturbs Maule's comfortable assurance of sexual superiority. In retaliation he commands her, with a wave of his hand, to act as handmaid to his bride on the night of his wedding--that is, to observe him as he occupies his proper male role with another woman.[25]

Phoebe, however, is not at all like Alice Pyncheon. She survives Holgrave's hypnotic retelling of the story because she is a righteous woman, one who remains submissive, malleable, and dependent, never allowing Holgrave to feel that his masculinity is being threatened. Thus, he is not compelled to assault her; she has given him no reason to retaliate. Instead she "leaned slightly towards him, and seemed almost to regulate her breath by his" (534). Her innocence allows Holgrave to protect her, to assert his masculinity by respecting her conventional femininity, which, unlike Alice's, does not elicit male rage. Hawthorne is not so much elaborating Holgrave's even temperament as he is constructing a parable for women: Remaining within conventional bounds, as Phoebe does, ensures man's rightful position of superiority, which, in turn, rescues women from an otherwise inevitable ignominy. Autonomous women cannot escape destruction.

When Phoebe awakens, "as unconscious of the crisis through which she had passed as an infant of the precipice to the verge of which it had rolled" (535), she assures

Holgrave of the "exceedingly attractive" nature of his story and thereby convinces him of her aptitude as his student. Phoebe is the perfect female audience--a woman who would never presume to be an author. She not only has legitimized his talent as a storyteller, but also has established herself as "that one congenial friend--more comprehensive of his purposes, more appreciative of his success, more indulgent of his short-comings, and, in all respects, closer and kinder than a brother--that all-sympathizing critic, to whom [an author] implicitly makes his appeal, whenever he is conscious of having done his best."[26]

The narrator insists, however, that all the credit go to Holgrave for refusing to take advantage of Phoebe while he had the chance:

> Let us, therefore--whatever his defects of nature and education, and in spite of his scorn for creeds and institutions--concede to the Daguerrotypist the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality. Let us allow him integrity, also, forever after to be confided in; since he forbade himself to twine that one link more, which might have rendered his spell over Phoebe indissoluble (535).

In fact, it is not Phoebe's individuality that saved her, but her conventionality. Holgrave had no need "to twine that one link more, which would have rendered his spell over Phoebe indissoluble" because by remaining humble and powerless, she voluntarily allowed him to be dominant. Holgrave has reenacted Maule's story, and Phoebe has saved

him from repeating the original sin. Insisting that we see this outcome as a result of Holgrave's essential integrity is evidence of Hawthorne's own insecurity concerning the way his work was received by the public. He pushes hard here for the credibility of the artist, who, he maintains, has moral fiber and deserves to be trusted and taken seriously. However, in this case, it is Phoebe's character, not Holgrave's, which determines the outcome.

When he finishes his story, Holgrave feels reborn, redeemed from sin:

> 'I never...felt anything so very much like happiness as this moment. After all, what a good world we live in! How good and beautiful! How young it is, too, with nothing really rotten or age-worn in it! This old house, for example, which sometimes has positively oppressed my breath...And this garden...Could I keep the feeling that now possesses me, the garden would every day be virgin soil...it would be like a bower in Eden, blossoming with the earliest roses that God ever made' (536).

At this point, Holgrave is somewhat intoxicated by his sexual arousal, his own power over Phoebe, and her admiration of his storytelling ability. She has, in fact, verified his art. His positive reaction, therefore, is not surprising.

Holgrave's incipient sexual relationship with Phoebe is calculated to convince the reader that Phoebe is undergoing a transformation; she is becoming less a virgin girl-angel

and more a real woman, who feels sexual desire for the first time. Even Clifford senses the change:

> A moment before, she had known nothing which she would have sought to hide. Now, as if some secret were hinted to her own consciousness through the medium of another's perception, she was fain to let her eyelids droop beneath Clifford's gaze. A blush, too--the redder, because she strove hard to keep it down--ascended higher and higher, in a tide of fitful progress, until even her brow was all suffused with it.
>
> 'It is enough, Phoebe!' said Clifford, with a melancholy smile. 'When I first saw you, you were the prettiest little maiden in the world; and now you have deepened into beauty! Girlhood has passed into womanhood; the bud is a bloom! Go, now! I feel lonelier than I did' (542).

Although he is impotent, Clifford obviously had felt a prerogative as a male to claim Phoebe's affections. His loneliness, then, is largely a result of jealousy.

Finally, Phoebe herself admits to Uncle Venner that she has changed, although she still seems unable to articulate the exact nature of the change:

> 'They can never do without you, now--never, Phoebe, never!--no more than if one of God's angels had been living with them, and making their dismal house pleasant and comfortable. Don't it seem to you they'd be in a sad case, if, some pleasant summer morning like this, the angel should spread his wings, and fly to the place he came from? Well; just so they feel, now that you're going home by the railroad! They can't bear it, Miss Phoebe; so be sure to come back!'
>
> 'I am no angel, Uncle Venner...But I suppose, people never feel so much like angels as when they are doing what

little good they may' (543).

Clearly, she is hinting that the more flesh and blood she becomes, the less angelic she can remain. Hawthorne is compelled to convince us that Phoebe becomes an incarnate divinity because only a `human angel' like Sophia is able to redeem the sins of the male artist. Yet Hawthorne has often been criticized for his failure to make Phoebe-the-human-woman believable.[27] She remains, for the most part, a radiant angel who affects her companions by her presence alone. The sexual stirrings she felt with Holgrave in the garden trouble her because the hot blood of sexual desire is unnatural to her divine nature. She consistently withdraws from any move on the part of Holgrave that is too blatantly sexual. The most she can do is give him her hand in a kind of innocuous friendship. The garden experience left her only slightly transformed.

The next time Phoebe is forced to confront her own sexuality is when she returns to the house after a visit to her home. When "a hand grasped her own, with a firm but gentle and warm pressure, thus imparting a welcome which caused her heart to leap and thrill with an indefinable shudder of enjoyment" (610). Here is the first indication that she is beginning to accept the sexual side of her nature, and, ironically, with her acceptance comes a kind of strength, which, of course, she offers to Holgrave. Sounding like Dimmesdale in his forest encounter with Hester, Holgrave beseeches Phoebe: "'You are strong!...You

must be both strong and wise; for I am all astray, and need your counsel. It may be you can suggest the one right thing to do!'" (611). Holgrave now desires to be led out of the chaos of his "lawless propensities" and down the path of cheerfulness and rectitude. Phoebe is beginning to fulfill her purpose. She has at least partially realized her capacity for sexual desire and has offered herself solely, albeit reluctantly, to Holgrave. Their union, however, presents an ongoing critical problem: does their union mean the end of Holgrave's art, the end of those "onward impulses" that "men ill at ease" produce, or does it signal productive balance of faculties?[28]

When Holgrave and Phoebe finally acknowledge their love openly, Phoebe admits that she is frightened by his penchant for the unconventional: "'You will lead me out of my own quiet path. You will make me strive to follow you where it is pathless. I cannot do so. It is not my nature. I shall sink down and perish!'" (615). Holgrave reassures her that he intends to pursue only "the peaceful practice of society" (616) and become a model of a settled husband, devoting himself to the concerns of a family man. Phoebe's only reply is: "'I would not have it so!'" (616). On one level this reply seems to defy explanation. As Holgrave's wife-to-be, Phoebe voices her concern over her fiance's Bohemian tendencies; yet when he renounces everything but his domestic duties, she, in effect, gives him <u>permission</u> to be non-traditional. In fact, she has once again sanctioned his

art. This time, however, her stamp of approval carries more weight, for now she is Holgrave's own good angel, who is able both to keep him connected to things spiritual and to keep him warm in bed. Phoebe has embraced the role of Sophia, a position toward which Hawthorne has been consistently maneuvering her. Unfortunately, he has sacrificed the sense of the narrative to bring her to this point. Thus, his parable, which was meant to teach women how to be a good audience--good listeners--for their men, falls apart, leaving the reader to wonder whether Phoebe's end is fortunate or disastrous.

Hawthorne has presented a portrait of a woman who clearly cannot survive outside the narrow bounds of convention and who hopes her husband will renounce his lawlessness. Nevertheless, she meekly refuses to allow him to become conventional. Although her actions are contradictory and confusing, Phoebe represents Hawthorne's ideal woman--one who remains committed to traditional values while freeing her husband to do what he wants. What path Holgrave will actually take is left in doubt at the end of the novel, but we do know that he will be free to create if he so chooses.

The ending may or may not represent the death of Holgrave's art, but it certainly does <u>not</u> mean the death of Hawthorne's art. As Nina Baym points out, regardless of how we interpret the ending, Hawthorne wins:

> We may understand what Hawthorne is

> doing here in two ways, not necessarily mutually exclusive. On the one hand, [the determinedly happy and conventional ending] may reflect his determination to avoid artistic suicide...On the other, it may well reflect a real conflict within the author, who wrote of his Puritan ancestors in 'The Custom-House' that 'strong traits of theirs have intertwined themselves with mine.' The ending, then, would be both an attempt to deceive the public and to placate the inner judge.[29]

Hawthorne attempts to "placate the inner judge" in all his fiction, and his success often depends upon an atoning woman, who either through her suffering (like Hester) or her naturally angelic character (like Phoebe), save their men.

NOTES

1. Agnes M. Donohue, Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), p. 77. Donohue maintains that Hawthorne was "unable to accept even the remotest possibility of good coming from evil" until he had spent seven years abroad. However, it is my contention that the very fact that he produced several tales, sketches, and romances before his European sojourn disproves her assumption.

2. Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 128-30.

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Love Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne, 2 vols. (Chicago: The Society of the Dofobs, 1907. Rpt., 1976), March 6, 1839, pp. 4-5.

4. My argument for Sophia's role as spiritual guide as seen through her letters is drawn largely from Susan Dennison Sinclair, "Hawthorne's 'New Revelation': The Female Christ." Diss. Duke University, 1981, pp. 57-64; 68-73; 113-15; 121-25.

5. There are several good studies on women as saints. Among them, Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Glenda Gates Riley, "The Subtle Subversion: Changes in the Traditionalist Image of the American Woman," Historian, 32 (1969-70), 210-27; Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1969).

6. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1983), p. 84.

7. Hawthorne, Love Letters, II, p. 248.

8. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "To William D. Ticknor," 6 January 1854, Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor 1851-1864 (1910; rpt. Washington D.C.: NCR, 1972), I, 26-27; "To William D. Ticknor," 19 January 1855, I, 75.

9. Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, A Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 140-41.

10. Hawthorne, Love Letters, I, pp. 4-5.

11. Sinclair, p. 63.

12. Hawthorne, Love Letters, I, p. 222.

13. Hawthorne, Love Letters, I, p.234.

14. Sinclair, p. 69; 72-3.

15. Hawthorne, Love Letters, I, p. 85.

16. Sophia had edited out these words, but they were discovered by Randall Stewart. See his "Letters to Sophia," Huntington Library Quarterly, 7, No. 4 (1944), 387-95.

17. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables in Nathaniel Hawthorne: Novels (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 615. Subsequent references to The House of the Seven Gables are included in the text in parentheses.

18. Hawthorne, Love Letters, I, p. 236.

19. Sinclair, p. 113.

20. Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, p. 106.

21. Sinclair, p. 114.

22. Douglas, p. 45.

23. Nina Baym, "Hawthorne's Holgrave: The Failure of the Artist-Hero." Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 69 (1978), p. 590.

24. Sinclair, pp. 121-23.

25. Frederick Crews, The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 181.

26. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Preface to The Marble Faun in Hawthorne: Novels (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 853.

27. Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), p. 136.

28. Crews, pp. 192-93, feels the marriage means the end of Holgrave's art; Hugh McPherson, Hawthorne as Mythmaker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press., 1969), p. 236, argues that the union is positive because it gives Holgrave the equilibrium and moderation he lacks. Significantly, neither critic seems concerned about what the union means for Phoebe.

29. Baym, p. 598.

CHAPTER THREE

The Disintegration of Zenobia

In The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne portrays, for the first time in his fictions, both a dark woman like Hester and a fair one like Phoebe. They are locked in a battle not only between themselves, but also with the men who surround them. That the entire drama of their battle is presented by Miles Coverdale, the thoroughly ambivalent and often unreliable narrator, creates a good deal of apparent confusion.[1] But, as Frederick Crews has observed, "as the surface world becomes less intelligible, its symbolic value becomes clearer."[2]

Based on his own participation at Brook Farm, an experiment in communal living, and his disillusionment with that experiment, The Blithedale Romance offers one of the best case studies for the ways in which Hawthorne's own ambivalence emerges in his narrative methods. Coverdale, like the narrator of The Scarlet Letter, means to keep his "inmost Me" behind a veil and merely report and comment on the events that occur at Blithedale. From the outset, he establishes the veiled qualities not only of his own personality, but also those of Zenobia and Priscilla, whose secrets and mysteries he intends to reveal without ever exposing his own. "Zenobia," for example, is a pseudonym, which Zenobia wears, according to Coverdale, as "a sort of mask in which she comes before the world, retaining all the

privileges of privacy."[3] He likens this mask to "a contrivance...like the white drapery of the Veiled Lady..." (637). He intends to peer behind both the veil of the lady, who turns out to be Priscilla, and the name-mask of Zenobia in order to reveal a supposedly objective truth, which is in fact merely his own subjective view of reality. Choosing a narrator who manipulates and controls most of the narrative while consistently maintaining that he is merely an objective observer of the action, Hawthorne conveys a conventional Puritan moral without admitting that he sanctions it. The women characters once again bear the burden of Hawthorne's ambivalence and are the center of the narrative obfuscations of the fiction. In The Blithedale Romance, Coverdale keeps himself carefully detached and aloof, thereby reinforcing his image as impartial reporter, while at the same time he methodically probes the hearts and minds of both women.

Coverdale has been the focus of much critical frustration. In particular, his bizzare confession of love for Priscilla at the end of the novel has been termed "the saddest (and most maddening) confession of Hawthorne's fiction."[4] Another critical view is that Coverdale's confession makes sense because it underscores Hawthorne's tendency "to guard himself from any wholehearted participation in the life of the heart or in the life of the mind."[5] Like the majority of the criticism, this observation stops short of investigating Hawthorne's reasons

for this covert behavior. Clearly, "guard[ing] himself" solves his peculiar dilemma. If he were to "participate fully in the life of the heart or...the mind," he would be obliged to throw his lot unreservedly on the side either of the dark, exotic, sensual woman, or of the pale, pure, demure virgin. His position of distance would be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain, and maintain it he must if he is to balance his divided loyalty both to the conventional, repressive morality of Calvinism, represented by Priscilla, and to the unconventional life of the senses, the intellect, and the imagination, represented by Zenobia. Hawthorne embraces the sensual and imaginative enough to remain an artist, but ultimately he must justify his narrative flirtation with the unconventional by validating the traditional. His final confession, then, maddening though it is, is merely the last in a succession of narrative manipulations which validate the repression of the sensual.

Like the narrator's initial presentation of Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter, Coverdale's first encounter with Zenobia reveals his admiration for her intellect and her physical attractiveness. Like Hester, she is an imposing woman with hair "which was dark, glossy, and of singular abundance" (645). Coverdale's sexual attraction to her is unmistakable. He is intrigued by the "glimpse of a white shoulder" (644) which showed between her "silken kerchief" and her dress: "It struck me as a great piece of

good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse." Although he never explains why this peek at her shoulder is fortunate, we understand later that it is because the "glimpse" is just enough to incite his imagination to finish undressing her, and not enough to threaten him with the reality of her naked sexuality.[6]

In addition to her physical beauty, Coverdale praises her fine mind:

> It did one good to see a fine intellect (as hers really was, although its natural tendency lay in another direction than towards literature) so fitly cased (645, emphasis mine).

His recognition of her intellect and his insistence upon rendering her artistically non-threatening to himself comes immediately after they had first been introduced, at which time Zenobia praised his poetry:

> I have long wished to know you, Mr. Coverdale, and to thank you for your beautiful poetry, some of which I have learned by heart...Of course...you do not think of relinquishing an occupation in which you have done yourself so much credit. I would almost rather give you up, as an associate, than that the world should lose one of its true poets! (644).

This is exactly the kind of sympathetic reader for whom Hawthorne pines in many of the prefaces to his works. In fact, Coverdale is merely a stand-in for Hawthorne here, garnering the praise that Hawthorne so coveted. Naturally, Zenobia is endowed with a fine mind so that her appraisal of

his work has validity and is not simply empty flattery.

Coverdale's description of Zenobia, like the narrator's initial description of Hester in The Scarlet Letter, tells us more about him than it does about her. Even this early in the story, he begins to see her as something other than what she actually is because he refuses to confront honestly the reality of such a strong, mysterious, and sensual woman. Instead, he chooses to focus upon his own imaginative recreation of her as a creature who is not quite human.

For example, he immediately tempers his physical attraction to Zenobia by hinting that she is somewhat abnormal:

> Her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have, or than they could afford to have, though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of Zenobia's entire development (645).

She is a bit too atypical when measured against most women. Although Coverdale refrains from calling her large stature a fault, his pointing it out does contribute to the effect he intends to produce: Zenobia is not normal, perhaps not even human. Even the exotic flower she wears in her hair is unnatural:

> It was an exotic, of rare beauty, and as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just slipt it from the stem. That flower has struck deep root into my memory. I can both see it and smell it, at this moment. So brilliant, so rare, so costly as it must have been, and yet enduring only for a day, it was more

> indicative of the pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair (645).

Coverdale implies that such a flower can exist only in the unnatural atmosphere of the hot-house, not in the harsh world of reality where normal, flesh-and-blood men and women move. He means to prove that weird creatures like Zenobia and her flower would be wise to be more conventional in order to improve their chances for survival in the hostile environment he intends to create for them.

One of the purposes served by this undermining of Zenobia's humanity is to absolve Coverdale of the guilt engendered by his own sexual attraction to her:

> Assuredly, Zenobia could not have intended it--the fault must have been entirely in my imagination--
> But...something in her manner irresistibly brought up a picture of that fine, perfectly developed figure, in Eve's earliest garment. I almost fancied myself actually beholding it (646).

He pictures her naked, admits to licentious thoughts, then salves his guilty conscience by rationalizing that "Her free, careless, generous modes of expression often had this effect of creating images which though pure, are hardly felt to be quite decorous when born of a thought that passes between man and woman" (646). On the surface, he assures us that Zenobia is not a seductress, yet his explanation shifts the blame onto her. His erotic fancies are her fault

because she refuses to be the passive virgin she should be. Since his erotic thoughts would never have occurred had Zenobia been an ordinary woman, he is able to lay his sin at her feet.[7] Ironically, the Zenobia Coverdale blames is a Zenobia of his own making. The narrator's guilt, then, is the impetus behind the erection of the artificial construct which is replacing the real Zenobia. Sexual fantasies are only indecorous when they are "born of a thought that passes between man and woman", not between man and a manufactured structure of his own imagining.

This refusal to confront the sin of his own sexual arousal soon manifests itself in another way: He simply denies that he is sexually attracted to Zenobia. He represses his own sexuality by de-sexing the woman. Zenobia did not "convey the idea of especial gentleness, grace, modesty, and shyness, but of a certain warm and rich characteristic, which seem, for the most part, to have been refined away out of the feminine system" (647). Zenobia's openly sexual demeanor, like Alice Pyncheon's, gives Coverdale (and Hawthorne) license to reject and ultimately destroy her. It will be "refined away out of" male perceptions of her. Coverdale, like Maule, insists upon the traditional male role of awakening the woman to sexual knowledge, and if she already has sexual knowledge, she will be transformed either into an angel, like Hester, or into a monster, as Zenobia eventually is. Thus, initially Coverdale insists that Zenobia is too fantastically

attractive and sexual to be real, that she is too appealing for her own good, and that anyway he cannot be held responsible for erotic thoughts prompted by a woman who is not human. Then he negates everything he has said by maintaining that she is not the kind of woman whom he finds appealing. She is neither gentle, gracious, modest, nor shy enough for him. Once again, Hawthorne has sacrificed narrative consistency in order to force a woman to bear the weight of his personal guilt.

With his own re-creation of Zenobia firmly outlined in his imagination, Coverdale proceeds to judge all her actions against his image of her. He scrutinizes even her most trivial, natural gestures and measures them against his unrealistic expectations. For example, he castigates her for casting off her wilted hot-house flower because such an action does not become the larger-than-life figure he has made her:

> Looking at herself in the glass and perceiving that her one magnificent flower had grown rather languid,...she flung it on the floor, as unconcernedly as a village-girl would throw away a faded violet. The action seemed proper to her character; although, methought, it would still more have befitted the bounteous nature of this beautiful woman to scatter fresh flowers from her hand, and to revive faded ones by her touch (650).

Zenobia's action irritates the narrator because it is so clearly human and natural and therefore out of line with his image of her.[8] And he faults her with an authority only an

"objective," "detached" narrator can muster.

Since Coverdale has made it impossible for Zenobia to live up to the image of herself which he has generated, he is able to denounce her as the cause of all manner of evil simply by contrasting her actions with what he expects of her. Further, he has provided himself with an excuse for rejecting her sexuality and excusing his own, all before he has spent one night in the old farmhouse, even before all the members of the commune have arrived. Hawthorne deliberately constructs this scenario, which ensures that every move Zenobia makes will go amiss, before the introduction of Priscilla, who represents yet another standard against which to measure Zenobia. Priscilla is a real woman, who restores to the men their traditional masculine roles.

Priscilla's entrance gives Coverdale the perfect opportunity to make Zenobia look evil by contrast. In order to accomplish this goal, however, he must force into the text his own interpretation of the interaction between the two women because there is nothing in their responses to one another that would work to Zenobia's detriment. In other words, without the authorial intrusion of Hawthorne, speaking through Coverdale, Zenobia's reactions to Priscilla would seem perfectly natural. When she enters the room, Priscilla looks pasty and weak. She was "dressed in a poor, but decent gown, made high in the neck, and without any regard to fashion or smartness. Her brown hair fell down

from beneath a hood, not in curls, but with only a slight wave; her face was of a wan, almost sickly hue, betokening habitual seclusion from the sun and free atmosphere, like a flower-shrub that had done its best to blossom in too scanty light" (655). In other words, Priscilla possesses all those proper attributes which, according to Coverdale, Zenobia lacks: grace, modesty, shyness, passivity, gentleness, and most important of all, a non-threatening--almost non-existent--sexuality. Her dress, "made high in the neck," contrasts sharply with Zenobia's provocative gown, which exposes her bare shoulder. Already the contrast between the two women has worked toward Zenobia's damnation. Coverdale can feel superior to and in control of Priscilla. She facilitates his need for a sexual encounter without feeding his guilt or exacerbating his fear of castration. Therefore, Priscilla is worthy of a reward from the narrator. Because Zenobia possesses a personality and a physical appearance which consistently outshine those of Priscilla, Coverdale will manipulate the narrative so that finally it is Priscilla who becomes the heroine and savior, and Zenobia who is utterly destroyed.

Coverdale is so single-minded in his mission to "report" Zenobia's defects that he often damns her for expressing opinions even he himself holds. For example, he tells us that it "was hardly possible to help being angry with her, from mere despair of doing anything for her comfort" (655). Yet when Zenobia responds to Priscilla in a

similar fashion, Coverdale denounces her for being hard-hearted:

> [Priscilla] stood near the door, fixing a pair of large, brown, melancholy eyes upon Zenobia...She evidently saw nothing else in the room, save that bright, fair, rosy, beautiful woman...Once, she seemed about to move forward and greet her...but, finally, instead of doing so, she drooped down upon her knees, clasped her hands, and gazed piteously into Zenobia's face. Meeting no kindly reception, her head fell on her bosom.
>
> I never thoroughly forgave Zenobia for her conduct on this occasion (656).

He refuses to accept in Zenobia a stance that he himself has admitted taking. The implication is that all women should admire Priscilla's "shrinking violet" personality as a model to be emulated. Zenobia's response to her--"'Is she crazy? Has she no tongue?'"--would be entirely natural and justifiable if it had come from a man, but Zenobia is not allowed to experience the kind of response that Coverdale reserves for and justifies in himself.[9]

Coverdale's inability to forgive Zenobia for failing this test places him in the position of moral judge of her behavior, a position he continues to occupy throughout the novel. Coverdale is angry because Zenobia does not rush to mother, to nurture, Priscilla. Zenobia's failure here is presented as a failure of her femininity.[10] However, the actual reason for the narrator's harsh judgment of Zenobia was established before Priscilla's appearance on the scene. Like Alice Pyncheon, Zenobia's comfortably open display of

her sexuality and Coverdale's awareness of her sexual knowledge saps him (and all the men) of their superiority, their ability to control and manipulate her. For this sin, Zenobia must pay.

Shortly after this scene, Hawthorne creates a circumstance which provides narrative distance for his narrator and is calculated to convince the reader that Coverdale's observations are objective and therefore true. It is the first and also the weakest in a series of such narrative manipulations. Coverdale becomes ill and is confined to his room, where he lies in bed and allows his imagination free rein.[11] His feverish brain breeds fantastic speculations:

> ...there is a species of intuition--either a spiritual lie, or the subtle recognition of a fact--which comes to us in a reduced state of the corporeal system. The soul gets the better of the body, after a wasting illness...Vapors then rise up to the brain, and take shapes that often image falsehood, but sometimes truth (671).

The narrator admits that the musings of a feverish mind could be either truths or lies, yet at the same time he maintains that during this type of delirium "the soul gets the better of the body," a strong hint that he believes in the spiritual truth of his speculations.

Not surprisingly, Coverdale focuses exclusively upon Zenobia during his illness. When she brings him his gruel, he "recognized no severe culture in Zenobia; her mind was

full of weeds" (669).[12] The gruel is bad, and he is overwhelmed by the "hardihood of her philosophy." Increasingly, he indulges in scathing attacks on her feminism: "A female reformer, in her attacks upon society, has an instinctive sense of where the life lies, and is inclined to aim directly at that spot. Especially, the relation between the sexes is naturally among the earliest to attract her notice" (669). In fact, Zenobia has hit Coverdale's tender spot. She has made him uncomfortable with his conventional ideas concerning sex roles and has disturbed his assurance of his own superiority as a man. In retaliation, he says she has a "mind full of weeds." So much for her admirable intellect, which he formerly praised.

Still in his sick bed, Coverdale begins to focus on Zenobia's body and upon the possibility that she may be sexually experienced. This time, however, he can excuse his physical attraction to her by blaming it on his illness. It cannot possibly be his fault; she is simply too much woman for him, and that, of course, is her fault:

> She should have made it a point of duty, moreover, to set endlessly to painters and sculptors, and preferably to the latter; because the cold decorum of the marble would consist with the utmost scantiness of drapery, so that the eye might chastely be gladdened with her material perfection, in its entireness...The native glow of coloring in her cheeks...the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust--in a word, her womanliness incarnated--compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty

> to gaze at her. Illness and exhaustion, no doubt, had made me morbidly sensitive (669).

Coverdale is incapable of accepting, or even recognizing, Zenobia's humanity. She should have felt it her duty, he says, to turn herself into marble so that Coverdale and others like him could gaze upon her nude figure without guilt. Dispensing with this strong, sensual, and therefore threatening woman by turning her into art would allow Coverdale to feed his erotic fantasies and eliminate his guilt at the same time. Of course, Zenobia does not sit as a model for painters and sculptors as she should have; instead, she forces Coverdale to close his eyes. She has refused to be a statue, so Coverdale portrays her as a temptress, whose "deportment (though, to some tastes, it might commend itself as the utmost perfection of manner in a youthful widow or a blooming matron) was not exactly maiden-like" (671).

Furthering his twisted assessment of Zenobia as a being who is not quite human, Coverdale again turns his attention toward her flower, which, he again insists, "was actually a subtile expression of Zenobia's character." Her flower is as weird and unreal as she is:

> I noticed--and wondered how Zenobia contrived it--that she had always a new flower in her hair. And still it was a hot-house flower--an outlandish flower of the tropics, such as appeared to have sprung passionately out of a soil, the very weeds of which would be fervid and spicy. Unlike as was the flower of each

> successive day to the preceding one, it yet so assimilated its richness to the rich beauty of the woman, that I thought it the only flower fit to be worn; so fit, indeed, that Nature had evidently created this floral gem, in a happy exuberance, for the one purpose of worthily adorning Zenobia's head. It might be that my feverish fantasies clustered themselves about this peculiarity, and caused it to look more gorgeous and wonderful than if beheld with temperate eyes. In the height of my illness, as I well recollect, I went so far as to pronounce it preternatural (670).

He is fashioning an alien being out of Zenobia--something "outlandish" and unearthly. His effort introduces into the narrative an artificial, strained tone. Like Hester, Zenobia is undergoing subtle changes, orchestrated by the author-narrator-participant, Coverdale. Zenobia is by now "somehow false" or unreal.[13]

Still in his sickbed, Coverdale becomes what he calls a "mesmerical clairvoyant" (671), who has the power to see into Zenobia`s past, a past which will, of course, provide him with even more ammunition to use against her:

> One subject, about which--very impertinently, moreover--I perplexed myself with a great many conjectures, was, whether Zenobia had ever been married...If the great event of a woman's existence had been consummated, the world knew nothing of it... (670-71).

The possibility that Zenobia is not a virgin both enrages and excites Coverdale. However, he emphasizes his own virtue by underscoring his effort to stifle these erotic

thoughts:

> I strove to be ashamed of these conjectures. I acknowledged it as a masculine grossness--a sin of wicked interpretation, of which man is often guilty toward the other sex (672).

Coverdale's confession here gives him license to indulge himself further: "Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!" (672). Although this knowledge ruins Coverdale's chance to impart sexual knowledge to Zenobia, he feels that it also means that any man, including himself, has the right to possess her. He has brought her down to the level of a prostitute; therefore, her "folded petals" must open upon request.[14]

Clearly, both Coverdale and Hawthorne feel that once virginity is lost, the woman becomes something of a prostitute--fair game for any man. Thus, when Zenobia refuses to divulge her secrets to him, he becomes angry and resorts again to vicious attacks on her traditional femininity, like her ability to cook:

> ...her gruel was very wretched stuff, with almost invariably the smell of pine-smoke upon it, like the evil taste that is said to mix itself up with a witch's best concocted dainties... Whatever else her gifts, Nature certainly never intended Zenobia for a cook (673).

Hawthorne, who believed that women should attempt no more than the domestic arts of needlework and cooking, can be

heard in Coverdale's musings. If she cannot cook, is sexually experienced yet unconnected to a man, and is well known by the public, she must be a witch (or a whore, as he implicated in his letters to Sophia).

Another way that Coverdale saves himself from Zenobia's sexuality, intellect, and independence, is by protesting that he would not have fallen in love with her "under any circumstances" (672). Because she is too much woman for him and therefore cannot possibly fulfill his needs, he turns her first into a mythic goddess, then likens her to a work of art, and finally hints that she may be a witch. To fall in love with such a fallen woman, a woman who may, in fact, not even be quite human, is out of the question for Coverdale, and he denies even the possibility. He will instead destroy her and force Priscilla into her place so that he may be elevated by and necessary to a woman. In order to make this bizarre turn of events believable, Coverdale resorts to some very shaky narrative manipulation.

First he tells us that Priscilla reminds him of "plants that one sometimes observes doing their best to vegetate among the bricks of an enclosed court, where there is scanty soil, and never any sunshine" (675). This description comes as no surprise; it is consistent with Coverdale's prior description of her. Yet a few sentences later, he compares her to Margaret Fuller:

> ...her air, though not her figure, and the expression of her face, but not its features, had a resemblance to what I

> had often seen in friend of mine, one of the most gifted women of the age...It was a singular anomaly of likeness co-existing with perfect dissimilitude (676).

This description does surprise the reader. In his determination to replace Zenobia with Priscilla,[15] Hawthorne tries to transfer some of Zenobia's qualities to Priscilla, and in the process sacrifices the logic of the narrative. Coverdale's observation of the resemblance between Priscilla and Margaret Fuller, although ludicrous and impossible to believe, is probably Hawthorne's attempt to make the substitution more acceptable to his readers, but it can also be seen as evidence of his hysterical fear that the timid, subservient Priscilla may fall prey to the sin of feminism, which, as he made clear in The Scarlet Letter, is even blacker than adultery. On the other hand, if Priscilla allows Coverdale to save her, Coverdale himself will be saved from the threatening sexuality of Zenobia in the same way that Holgrave was saved because Phoebe allowed him to save her. In woman's submission lies salvation for men.

As Zenobia consistently refuses to be cast in the role of savior, Coverdale's anger increases, exhibiting itself in his obsession to make her natural actions seem malevolent. When Priscilla and Zenobia gather wild flowers together, for example, Coverdale takes great pains to make Zenobia appear to be a monster who is trying to corrupt the innocent, virginal Priscilla:

> They had found anemones...houstonias... columbines...long-stalked violets, and...white ever-lasting flowers, and had filled up their baskets with the delicate spray of shrubs and trees...Zenobia, who showed no conscience in such matters--had also rifled a cherry tree of one of its blossomed boughs; and, with all this variety of sylvan ornament, had been decking out Priscilla. Being done with a good deal of taste, it made her look more charming than I should have thought possible, with my recollection of the wan, frost-nipt girl, as heretofore described. Nevertheless, among those fragrant blossoms, and conspicuously, too, had been stuck a weed of evil odor and ugly aspect, which, as soon as I detected it, destroyed the effect of all the rest. There was a gleam of latent mischief--not to call it deviltry--in Zenobia's eye, which seemed to indicate a slightly malicious purpose in the arrangement (682).

He quickly changes his opinion that the adornment is "charming" and "done with a good deal of taste." Because he will allow none of Zenobia's actions to be innocent or benevolent, he soon forces the weed to symbolize some awesome and evil power designed to "destroy the effect of all the rest." Coverdale is close to assigning Zenobia demonic power here, a power closely allied to her intellect and sexuality, the very qualities Coverdale (and Hawthorne) find most threatening in a woman.[16] He sees her as trying to imbue the virginal maiden with these same qualities. Priscilla, at all costs, must be protected from Zenobia's "malignant" influence: the fair maiden must remain purely pretty, helpless, and virginal.[17] If she does not, Coverdale cannot save her and thereby <u>be saved</u> by her.

At this point, a bitterly resentful Coverdale admits that Zenobia is fully capable of taking care of herself: "With her native strength, and her experience of the world, she could not be supposed to need any help of mine" (700). The fact that she is not a properly helpless woman angers Coverdale and elicits a familiar response. He denies that he wishes to protect her, just as he had earlier denied any physical attraction to her once he realized she was unattainable.

Priscilla now becomes the focus of Coverdale's attention. Unlike Zenobia, she has not usurped a masculine position by being self-sufficient. She is weak and pitiful, dependent upon a man's protection, and Coverdale is determined to be that man. He says he "would have gone far to save [her]." Of course, this stance places Coverdale in competition with Hollingsworth, who, Coverdale fears, will destroy the delicate, helpless Priscilla:

> [Hollingsworth takes] the simple solace of a young girl's heart, which he held in his hand, and smelled, too, like a rosebud. But, what if, while pressing out its fragrance, he should crush the tender rosebud in his grasp (700).

Coverdale has finally maneuvered himself into a position from which he can play the hero. His strategy is two-fold. First, he will rescue Priscilla from the villainous Hollingsworth, and in her gratitude Priscilla will make Coverdale the object of her hero-worship in Hollingsworth's place, a position Coverdale feels he

deserves: "A man--poet, prophet, or whatever he may be--readily persuades himself of his right to all the worship that is voluntarily rendered" (700).

The second part of Coverdale's strategy is to complete the process of replacing Zenobia with Priscilla. To accomplish this purpose, Coverdale resorts once again to assigning a malicious motive to each of Zenobia's actions, while carefully molding Priscilla to fit his idea of the ideal female savior. Priscilla's playfulness is "effervescence," while Zenobia's is malignant deviltry. Coverdale scrutinizes the interaction between the two women and consistently interprets it in a manner that makes Priscilla seem innocent, the unfortunate victim of Zenobia's malice. Coverdale's interpretation is obviously intended to bias the reader in favor of Priscilla, yet he continues to insist that his role is that of a "chorus in a classic play":

> My own part, in these transactions, was singularly subordinate. It resembled that of a chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment, and bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, on the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond. Destiny, it may be--the most skillful of stage-managers--seldom chooses to arrange its scenes, and carry forward its drama, without securing the presence of at least one calm observer (716-17).

To label himself a "calm observer" at this point in the narrative is nearly laughable. Coverdale (and he is closely

allied with Hawthorne in this) has ascribed characteristics both to Zenobia and to Priscilla which are wholly contrary to their natures in order to articulate a moral that will assuage his own guilt, and it is this goal which has taken over the narrative in the form of authorial intrusions and an artificial, authoritative tone. Still, he consistently inserts the disclaimer that he is merely a reporter.

In an effort to prove his objectivity, Coverdale leaves Blithedale, retreating to his sanctuary in the trees. "Reporting from afar, he continues to exalt Priscilla and degrade Zenobia. From his "leafy cave," for example, he overhears Zenobia's conversation with Westervelt, during which she refers to her relationship with Priscilla as suffocating, one which will eventually strangle her. Further, Zenobia is aware of the reason her own defeat is inevitable. It is, as she later explains, that

> '[Priscilla] is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it. He is never content, unless he can degrade himself by stooping towards what he loves. In denying us our rights, he betrays even more blindness to his own interests, than profligate disregard of ours!' (739).

What Zenobia does not seem to realize is that man elevates himself by stooping to a woman like Priscilla, who satisfies not only his need for purity, but also his need for dominance, authority, control.[18] The angel-woman then saves him from himself, and, in his eyes, from women like Zenobia. Coverdale admits to the wind, "If any mortal

really cares for [Priscilla], it is myself, and not even I, for her realities--poor little seamstress, as Zenobia rightly called her!--but for the fancy-work with which I have idly decked her out!" (720). Zenobia's reality will be sacrificed so that Coverdale may embrace the "gentle parasite," the "fancy-work" of his own imagination.

Coverdale's opinions of Zenobia's reformist activities now become even more caustic. He reduces her to a revengeful, bitter woman, intent on sexual reform, not from any admirable motives, but because "her affections chance to lie in idleness, or to be ill at ease" (738). He concurs with Hollingsworth's harsh contention that "women who take [a] social stand" of that kind are "poor, miserable, abortive creatures, who only dream of such things because they have missed woman's peculiar happiness, or because Nature made them really neither man nor woman!" (740).[19] Since the motives behind Zenobia's reformist movements are false, Zenobia herself is an artificial entity, neither male nor female.[20] Coverdale can dismiss her and concentrate on unveiling Priscilla, since she has not yet "missed woman's peculiar happiness":

> No doubt, it was a kind of sacrilege in me to attempt to come within her maidenly mystery,...but I could not resist the impulse to take just one peep beneath her folded petals (742).

Coverdale now separates himself completely from Blithedale, and rents a room in town. Ever the

eavesdropper, he spies on Zenobia and completes the project he began at Blithedale--the destruction of Zenobia by presenting her every move in an increasingly negative light.

On this, his first night in town, he falls asleep and dreams that "Hollingsworth and Zenobia, standing on either side of my bed, had bent across it to exchange a kiss of passion. Priscilla--beholding this--for she seemed to be peeping in at the chamber-window--had melted gradually away, and left only the sadness of her expression in my heart. There it still lingered, after I awoke; one of those unreasonable sadnesses that you know not how to deal with, because it involves nothing for common-sense to clutch" (766).[21]

Pointing out that it makes no "common-sense" is one of Coverdale's coy methods of remaining aloof. In truth, however, the dream has unnerved him and rekindled his anger and resentment toward Zenobia. In the dream, Zenobia has again exhibited the cruelty which Coverdale has ascribed to her. She has ignored Priscilla's feelings and has used her own overpowering, aggressive sexuality to rob the pale maiden of the man she loves. Priscilla, on the other hand, responds in a properly passive, feminine fashion. She simply pales away under Zenobia's powerful presence. When Coverdale awakes, he vows that he will find "how to deal with" Priscilla's sorrow. His fury is clearly that of the jealous suitor, but although he refuses to make the admission, Zenobia, not Priscilla, is the source of his

jealousy. The display of passion between Zenobia and Hollingsworth is more than he can bear, especially since he is still fuming about Zenobia's not requiring his male protection. His insistence upon revenging poor Priscilla is merely an effort to ennoble his rage by disguising it as righteous indignation.

Shortly after he awakes from his dream, he peers through the window of the house across the street and sees both Zenobia and Priscilla: "Zenobia was attired, not in the almost rustic costume she had heretofore worn, but in a fashionable morning-dress. There was, nevertheless, one familiar point. She had, as usual, a flower in her hair, brilliant, and of a rare variety, else it had not been Zenobia" (768). Unfortunately for Coverdale, Zenobia also sees him spying on her and, "with eyes which, as my conscience whispered me, were shooting bright arrows, barbed with scorn across the intervening space" (771), pulls the curtain shut. Intent upon denigrating Zenobia, Coverdale calls her action, even though it is a perfectly normal reaction to his violation of her privacy, "one of those pitiless rebukes which a woman always has at hand, ready for an offence (and which she so seldom spares, on due occasion...)" (771). This is the final "insult inflicted" by a woman who dares to refuse Coverdale a peep beneath her petals.[22] Zenobia is doomed by a narrator with a bruised masculine ego who is manipulating the text against her. He portrays her as unspeakably cruel because she refuses to

play the submissive woman role. "Even her characteristic flower, though it seemed to be still there, had undergone a cold and bright transfiguration; it was a flower exquisitely imitated in jeweller's work, and imparting the last touch that transformed Zenobia into a work of art" (775). Zenobia has lost all semblance of humanity. She has become a "work of art," albeit a hideously fearful one. Her transformation finally complete, she can be tossed aside without remorse. One does not mourn for the destruction of inanimate objects in the same way one mourns the death of a person. Like the narrator of The Scarlet Letter, Coverdale-Hawthorne had tried to make Zenobia submissive and capable of saving herself and thus redeeming him, through her love for Hollingsworth, a love that is completely outside her character. His effort failed. "She was too powerful for all [his] opposing struggles." So he forces her to witness the triumph of "the poor, thin, weakly characters of other women" (776), who, he implies, are always the ultimate victors. He tells her that he has "sometimes fancied it not quite safe, considering the susceptibility of her temperament, that [Priscilla] should be so constantly within the sphere of a man like Hollingsworth. Such tender and delicate natures, among your sex, have often, I believe, a very adequate appreciation of the heroic element in men. But, then, again, I should suppose them as likely as any other women to make a reciprocal impression. Hollingsworth could hardly give his affections to a person capable of

taking an independent stand, but only to one whom he might absorb into himself" (778). We are to believe that he is educating Zenobia for her own good and because he must shed the "intolerable burden of despondency" he insists he feels for Priscilla. In reality, however, he is punishing Zenobia for rejecting him.

Coverdale is left with one more task. He must manipulate the text once more in favor of Priscilla in order to make her appear worthy to take Zenobia's place. Upstaged by the dark, exotic woman throughout the narrative, Priscilla has become almost invisible by comparison. While she must remain "a poor pallid flower" so that Coverdale's traditional role as male protector and sexual teacher may remain secure, she must also acquire some color and personality so that her taking over of Zenobia's position is believable.[23]

Coverdale begins by cloaking her in mystery, the eeriness of which is intended to translate somehow into power: "[She] had strange ways; strange ways, and stranger words, when she uttered any words at all. Never stirring out of the governor's dusky house, she sometimes talked of distant places and splendid rooms, as if she had just left them. Hidden things were visible to her,...and silence was audible. And, in all the world, there was nothing so difficult to be endured, by those who had any dark secret to conceal, as the glance of Priscilla's timid and melancholy eyes" (795). If Zenobia had exhibited any of these same

"preternatural manifestations," Coverdale would certainly have maintained that she was in league with the devil. In Priscilla, however, they translate into a heavenly gift: "There was something about Priscilla that calumny could not meddle with; and thus far was she privileged, either by the preponderance of what was spiritual, or the thin and watery blood that left her cheek so pallid" (796). This contention flies in the face of Priscilla's previously established character. Hawthorne is so desperately trying to elevate Priscilla and to assign to her some depth that he must once again resort to a description of her that is inconsistent with her character. If she is beyond calumny because of her deep spirituality, it is only because Coverdale is obsessively determined to make her appear so. She must remain unblemished in his imagination. Even after her meeting with the diabolical Westervelt, Coverdale vouches for Priscilla's innocence:

> Poor maiden! How strangely had she been betrayed! Blazoned abroad as a wonder of the world, and performing what were adjudged as miracles--in the faith of many, a seeress and a prophetess--in the harsher judgment of others, a mountebank--she had kept, as I religiously believe, her virgin reserve and sanctity of soul, throughout it all (808-09).

Having established Priscilla's character to his satisfaction, Coverdale returns to his "leafy cave" at Blithedale to fashion an effective ending for his story. However, he misses an important occurrence--the explosive

confrontation between Zenobia and Hollingsworth. Characteristically, he uses his own imagination to reconstruct the scene in a manner that supports the images of both Zenobia and Priscilla which he has created. He concludes that "Hollingsworth [was] all that an artist could desire for the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft; in Zenobia, the sorceress herself, not aged, wrinkled, and decrepit, but fair enough to tempt Satan with a force reciprocal to his own; and, in Priscilla, the pale victim, whose soul and body had been wasted by her spells" (819). He has accomplished his purpose: Zenobia has been reduced her to a she-devil, and Priscilla has been elevated to the status of a saint. In the process, Coverdale, too, has rid himself of his guilt by eliminating the threat Zenobia represented. The one woman triumphs and the other is defeated through the narrative manipulations of an author-participant-narrator who believes that his ideal female audience can only be secured by eliminating the threat represented by women who, like Zenobia, possess an independence and intellectual force which renders male mentors unnecessary.

* * *

Like Hester, in The Scarlet Letter, Zenobia is portrayed as a fiercely defiant, independent, beautiful woman, a portrayal which, initially, is presented in a

positive light. But, in each case Hawthorne is compelled to bring the woman down to defeat by the end of the novel. In Hester's case, the defeat was her transformation from adulteress to able angel. On the other hand, Zenobia's downfall is her transformation into a monster. Both images leave the woman powerless, robbed of her independence.

In The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne uses a second woman as savior. Priscilla has given Coverdale a pure object for his love, a love from which everything sexual has been "spiritualized" away. In addition, she has redeemed Hollingsworth, who has become truly human in her presence. During their conversation after Zenobia's death, Coverdale is surprised at the positive change in the great philanthropist:

> 'I have come, Hollingsworth,' said I, 'to view your grand edifice for the reformation of criminals. Is it finished yet?'
>
> 'No--nor begun!' answered he, without raising his eyes. 'A very small one answers all my purposes.'
>
> 'Up to this moment,' I inquired, 'how many criminals have you reformed?'
>
> 'Not one!' said Hollingsworth, with his eyes still fixed on the ground. 'Ever since we parted I have been busy with a single murderer!' (852)

Guilt, remorse, and the "pallid posy" at his side have humanized Hollingsworth, have rid him of the "all-devouring" egotism that had consumed him. Guilt imbues Hollingsworth with wisdom, while Priscilla finally achieves what she had been made for, "woman's peculiar happiness"--helpmeet to her

man.

Hawthorne is not obligated to force the dark woman to become a pale lady in this novel; Priscilla provides that role. Yet he cannot resist attempting to coerce Zenobia into "seeing the light." Although he remains ambiguous to the end about whether she ever does actually internalize her proper status,--that of the weak, submissive caretaker of man, like Priscilla--he does contrive at least to make her acknowledge the wisdom of choosing the traditional "woman's sphere."

The most obvious effort in this direction is Hawthorne's allowing Zenobia to fall in love with Hollingsworth in the first place. But even more telling are the responses of Zenobia and Coverdale to Hollingsworth's ravings about "woman's place," the most abrasive of which occurs in Chapter 15 when the group is gathered at Eliot's pulpit, their accustomed Sunday afternoon spot near a rock in a "wild track of woodland." Hollingsworth, in the fashion of a true Puritan minister, gives the sermon:

> [Woman's] place is at man's side. Her office, that of Sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning Believer; the Recognition, withheld in every other manner, but given, in pity, through woman's heart, lest man should utterly lose faith in himself...All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities, void of every good effect, and productive of intolerable mischiefs! Man is a wretch without a woman; but woman is a monster...without a man as her acknowledged principal...

> The heart of true womanhood knows where its own sphere is, and never seeks to stray beyond it (739-40).

Of course Priscilla is not disturbed by this "sermon"; we would not expect her to be. She gave Hollingsworth a "glance of...entire acquiescence and unquestioning faith." She is a static character--a submissive, unattached angel in the beginning; a submissive, married angel in the end. What is surprising, however, is Zenobia's reaction. Coverdale reports "much to [his] surprise and indignation, too, that she only looked humbled. Some tears sparkled in her eyes, but they were wholly of grief, not anger. 'Well; be it so,' was all she said. 'I, at least, have deep cause to think you right' (740). Her reaction here rings false because it is so abruptly out of character. Coverdale claims to find it incomprehensible as well. His only attempt to explain is to say that "women almost invariably behave thus...What does the fact mean? Is it their nature? Or is it, at last, the result of ages of compelled degradation? And, in either case, will it be possible ever to redeem them?" Hawthorne always resorts to lame explanations of the motivation of his strong women when they suddenly and "voluntarily" choose to behave in a conventional, submissive manner.

His effort to force Zenobia into the mold of the pale, virginal maiden is thinly disguised. But he continues to make the effort. When the group rises to leave the woods, Coverdale watches Hollingsworth and Zenobia:

> [They] went...in close contiguity, but not with arm in arm. Now, just when they had passed the impending bough of a birch tree, I plainly saw Zenobia take the hand of Hollingsworth in both her own, press it to her bosom, and let it fall again!
>
> The gesture was sudden and full of passion; the impulse had evidently taken her by surprise; it expressed all! Had Zenobia knelt before him, or flung herself upon his breast, and gasped out--'I love you, Hollingsworth!'--I could not have been more certain of what it meant (741).

Zenobia's shadow is "tremulous" as she walks the rest of the way home. Hawthorne's point here is the same one Sophia made in her letter to her mother: Zenobia's reformist zeal, which had sprung only from her personal discontent from the lack of a love object in her life, has been overshadowed by her love for a man. However, now that she has found woman's peculiar happiness, she voluntarily channels her energy in its proper direction--toward a man.

After she has been cast aside for the newly wealthy Priscilla, Zenobia gives voice to what she has learned. Her speech is another example of Hawthorne's determination to present Zenobia as having changed her behavior as a result of seeing a better way. She has become a woman who is acceptable by Hawthorne's Calvinist standards. In fact, she recites the moral that is <u>required</u> by Hawthorne's Calvinism:

> 'There are no new truths, much as we have prided ourselves on finding some. A moral? Why, this:--that, in the battlefield of life, the downright stroke, that would fall only on a man's steel head-piece, is sure to light on a

> woman's heart, over which she wears no breastplate, and whose wisdom it is, therefore, to keep out of the conflict. Or this:--that the whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common cause against the woman who swerves one hair's breadth out of the beaten track. Yes; and add, (for I may as well own it, now,) that, with that one hair's breadth, she goes all astray, and never sees the world in its true aspect, afterwards!' (827-28, emphasis mine).

Here, again, the emphasis is on the woman's willful rejection of her own selfhood. Zenobia now admits that because she has swerved "one hair's breadth" out of the path of tradition, she is befuddled and confused. Her apprehension of the world has become distorted and chaotic. The tone of her speech implies regret that she learned the great lesson of a woman's existence too late to save herself.

Now that she has redeemed herself by acknowledging the true and proper sphere of woman, she can go on to atone for Coverdale/Hawthorne, first by giving him permission to immortalize her story in writing:

> '...it is a woman's doom, and I have deserved it like a woman; so let there be no pity, as, on my part, there shall be no complaint. It is all right now, or will shortly be so. But, Mr. Coverdale, by all means, write this ballad, and put your soul's ache into it, and turn your sympathy to good account...As for the moral, it shall be distilled into the final stanza, in a drop of bitter honey' (827).

Coverdale/Hawthorne, of course, did not need her permission

to write the story; he intended from the beginning to record it:

> [Zenobia] should have been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart, which impelled me (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in other lives, and to endeavor--by generous sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned me--to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves (772).

In this self-congratulatory passage, Coverdale expresses his belief in his own finely tuned sensibilities. He has the delicate, observant, and intuitive eye of the artist, and the implication is that his mission is holy, God-ordained. Although it is addressed to the reader, this passage is meant to convince Hawthorne himself that all of Coverdale's voyeurism is justifiable; it is for a good cause, and therefore the end justifies the means. Further, if he can teach the woman to forsake her evil ways, that end will sanctify his own unholy occupation. Zenobia's permission, then, only augments his already firm resolve.

Only one more act is required of Zenobia--she must <u>choose</u> to die for her sin. She drowns herself in the river at Blithedale, but Hawthorne is not content to leave her there. Instead, he describes in gruesome detail the mutilation that occurs when her body is dragged from the water with an iron hook. This woman, who, like Alice

Pyncheon, has had the audacity to pit her strength and intelligence against those of men, must be denigrated one more time so that Coverdale may feel justified in his rejection of her: "She knelt as if in prayer. With the last, choking consciousness, her soul, bubbling out through her lips, it may be, had given itself up to the Father, reconciled and penitent. But her arms! They were bent before her, as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility. Her hands! They were clenched in immitigable defiance" (837). Zenobia had to die because she refused to change. Instead, she remained defiant to the end, even while "her soul [was] bubbling out through her lips." There is no place among the living for a woman like her. Thus, Coverdale, the perfect narrator to chronicle Hawthorne's opinion of strong, unconventional women, feels that his total rejection of her is justified and that his declaration of love for Priscilla is righteous.[24]

Each time Hawthorne creates a strong, independent woman, she is either destroyed or transformed into an angel or a shrinking, subservient sycophant. His determination to force these women to pay for their sin generates a suicide in The Blithedale Romance. In his next novel it results in a murder. Hawthorne leaves the United States and places his characters among the ruins of the mysterious Rome of The Marble Faun, where the fair, virginal Hilda is elevated at the expense of the dark, exotic Miriam.

NOTES

1. Judy Rae Smith, "Hawthorne's Women and Weeds: What Really Happens in the Garden." Diss. Indiana University, 1979, p. 105.

2. Frederick Crews, The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 195.

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hawthorne: Novels (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 637. All future references to the novel are to this edition and will be included in the text in parentheses.

4. Terence Martin, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p. 159.

5. Louis Auchincloss, "The Blithedale Romance: A Study of Form and Point of View," Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal, 2 (1972), p. 58.

6. Smith, p. 110.

7. Smith, p. 111.

8. Smith, p. 112.

9. Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark, p. 146. Fogle maintains that "Priscilla is deliberately sent to Zenobia to be 'cherished' and that the dark lady's attitude toward the fair maiden proves to be her 'moral failure.' Martin, p. 158, agrees.

10. Smith, p. 114.

11. Smith, pp. 115-17.

12. Edward Wagenknecht sees Coverdale's reference to Zenobia's "mind full of weeds" as a symbol of her unsexed self. See his Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 142.

13. Hyatt Waggoner, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 177.

14. Smith, p. 117.

15. Smith, p. 117.

16. Judith Fryer makes this point on p. 217: "...he has Zenobia, with malicious intent, stick a weed 'of evil odor and ugle aspect' in the crown of flowers with which she bedecks Priscilla; flowers are always associated with

Zenobia's sexuality, and the weeds are an attempt to degrade it, to make it ugly, like the weeds of her mind and the rank growth of her heart."

17. Smith, pp. 119-20.

18. Smith, p. 124.

19. See Sophia's letter to her mother, asking what she thinks "of the speech which Queen Margaret Fuller has made from the throne. It seems to me that if she were married truly, she would not longer be puzzled about the rights of women...Home, I think, is the great arena for woman, and there, I am sure, she can wield a power which no king or conqueror can cope with." Recorded in Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Circle (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1903), p. 257.

20. Smith, p. 124.

21. Crews, p. 204, argues that the dream results from Coverdale's unresolved Oedipal conflict.

22. Smith, pp. 125-26.

23. Smith, pp. 127-28.

24. Smith, p. 133.

CHAPTER FOUR

The "Transformation" of Miriam and Hilda

From 1853 to 1860, the Hawthornes lived in Europe, where Hawthorne held the consulship at Liverpool till 1857. When this assignment ended, he and Sophia travelled to Italy, where they lived first in Rome, then in a villa near Florence, and finally in Rome again. While in Florence during the summer of 1858, he began work on what was to be his last completed romance. By the end of January, 1859, he had finished the first draft, and on November 9 of the following fall, the completed manuscript was in the possession of his English publishers. On February 28, 1860, the book came out in London as Transformation and a few days later in Boston as The Marble Faun.[1]

In The Marble Faun Hawthorne once more pairs a dark, strong, independent woman with a fair, virginal maiden; however, the plot of the novel more nearly resembles that of The Scarlet Letter than that of The Blithedale Romance. The extent of Hawthorne's tolerance for sexually experienced, strong women is even more limited in The Marble Faun than in any of his previous romances. Zenobia never quite compromises her natural state completely, a fact that disturbs Coverdale greatly. He can only hope that her rigid corpse signifies an attitude of prayer to and not defiance of God the Father, but he is not wholly convinced at the end of the novel. Hester, too, retains her radical and

heretical thoughts, even though all outward evidence of her sensuality and haughtiness has been subdued. Although her guilt forced her into a "voluntary" return to the community, she continued to wander in the "labyrinths" of feminism, hoping for a day when the relations between men and women would be overhauled and set right. Miriam, on the other hand, although her anguish is no more severe than Hester's or Zenobia's, actually renounces her independence, not only outwardly but inwardly as well. In other words, Hawthorne's consistent effort to transform his dark heroine into a proper, conventional lady finally succeeds fully. Neither the reader nor the narrator is left with nagging doubts about Miriam's penitence.

In addition, the pale maiden, Hilda, although she resembles her predecessors in many ways, is dealt with differently than was Priscilla or Phoebe. For the first time, the angel-virgin must undergo a transformation in order to become, in the end, Hawthorne's most stereotypically ideal woman. Hilda is of the sisterhood of Phoebe and Priscilla, a virginal New England maiden, but she is not exactly like either of them. She is not simple and pitiful like Priscilla; neither is she the compassionate domestic angel like Phoebe. Neither of these previous fair, blond maidens needed changing. Their ability to save their men was a natural outgrowth of their passive personalities, their native tendency being to allow men to dominate and protect them. Priscilla's devotion to Hollingsworth, for

example, is wholly passive; her "sympathy with his purposes" is "silent,...unalloyed with criticism."[2] Her only skill is in making fine silk purses with secret openings, which, as one critic points out, is "as much a symbol of Priscilla's kind of sexuality as the flower is of her older sister's; she wears her sex, as the women of her class in her day were intended to do, in a secret place, while Zenobia flaunts it abroad; and the upshot of the fable is that Priscilla's conformism triumphs, but Zenobia's rebellion destroys her."[3] Priscilla gains her ends even without the domestic accomplishments that Phoebe possesses. When Coverdale last sees her as she walks with Hollingsworth, there is a protective and watchful quality in her husband, "as if she felt herself the guardian of her companion, but, likewise, a deep, submissive, unquestioning reverence, and also a veiled happiness in her fair and quiet countenance" (843-44). She fits Hollingsworth's, Coverdale's, and Hawthorne's definition of true womanhood perfectly, so of course she is happy.

Phoebe, too, was a New England maiden, but she did not wear her virginity like armor. It was a natural attribute of a protected country girl, who grew up outside male society. Hers was a domestic virginity, which not only protected her from the aggressive masculinity of men like Judge Pyncheon, but also saved Holgrave-Maule from repeating the sin of his ancestor.

Hilda, however, cannot rightly be called

"domestic." She does not perform actual household tasks. Tending the shrine of the Virgin Mary and feeding the doves are very different activities from those connected with domestic virginity, such as sewing, cooking, and housekeeping. Her virginity does not translate into domesticity or into the desire to be protected and dominated by a man. Her maidenhood is not soft, but steely; not submissive and pliant, but militant and stern. Her studio is part of a tower dedicated to the Virgin Mary, where, dressed completely in white, she practices her art. Her favorite paintings are religious, generally portraying good triumphing over evil. Her virginity is not simply a natural attribute of her womanly goodness; it is the central fact of her existence. Her attitude toward the statue of the faun, which represents man in the state of nature, reveals her feelings concerning sexuality: "'It perplexes me,' said Hilda thoughtfully, and shrinking a little; 'neither do I quite like to think about it'" (862). This reaction is similar to Phoebe's reaction to Holgrave, by whom, she says, she is "sometimes repelled...He made her uneasy" (504). However, Phoebe's reaction comes from her fear of her own sexuality, whereas Hilda's indicates a real distaste for and withdrawal from sexuality:

> 'Ah, the Faun!' cried Hilda, with a little gesture of impatience. 'I have been looking at him too long; and now, instead of a beautiful statue, immortally young, I see only a corroded and discoloured stone' (866).

Implicit in Hilda's "immortally young" is the idea of immortally chaste, a perception she can only maintain by not gazing too long at the marble figure.

While Phoebe's and Priscilla's proper sphere was the refuge and protection of a man's arms, Hilda's is her elevated tower, high above the sordidness of the Roman streets, where, according to Miriam, she dwells "'in...maiden elevation,...above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for your nearest neighbors. I should not wonder if the Catholics were to make a Saint of you, like your namesake of old'" (896).

• Hawthorne does not sanction this type of virginal purity because it is of no value to men. In addition, a woman's artistic activity always makes him uncomfortable. In order to act as a savior, the virgin in the tower must be brought down into the arms of a man, to whom she will be subservient and whom she will allow to awaken her sexually. A virgin who refuses this contact with a man, thereby relinquishing her redemptive function, is on the same level as the dark, mysteriously powerful woman, who, though she is sexually experienced and therefore sinful, refuses to "open her petals" to any male who desires to peer beneath them.

Thus, while Miriam is generally considered the threatening one of the pair, several critics have pointed out the attributes of Hilda that are dangerous to men. One such critic is Nina Baym, who points out that "men seize

eagerly on the cult of virginity to rationalize, legitimatize, and ultimately idealize their flight from passion. They feel threatened by Miriam's sexuality, and they fear it; yet Hilda, whose name means 'battle-maiden,' has the remorselessness of a steel blade' and is the true castrator."[4] Frederick Crews calls Hilda "a fragile, childlike, impregnable and impenetrable maiden," who offers man only a "vaccination against bodily thoughts."[5]

Whether or not they are paired with dark women, Hawthorne's pale maidens always live happily ever after in the end. However, in The Marble Faun, for the first time, Hawthorne is compelled to change the natures of both his heroines. Hilda must descend from her tower to the home and hearth of a man, and Miriam must renounce her independence and sensuality as Hester did, and, unlike Hester, actually internalize the renunciation.

Although Hilda's choice to live an existence isolated from men must be changed in order for her role as savior to be effected, all other aspects of her character are perfectly in line with those of Hawthorne's ideal woman. For example, she has renounced her previous intention to create her own original art, deciding instead to become a copyist:

> ...she ceased to aim at original achievement in consequence of the very gifts, which so exquisitely fitted her to profit by familiarity with the works of the mighty Old Masters. Reverencing these wonderful men so deeply, she was too grateful for all they bestowed upon

> her--too loyal--too humble, in their awful presence--to think of enrolling herself in their society...All the youthful hopes and ambitions, the fanciful ideas...of great pictures to be conceived in her feminine mind, were flung aside,...and relinquished without a sigh (899).

Not surprisingly, the narrator gushes his approval of Hilda's decision:

> It strikes us that there is something far higher and nobler in all this--in her thus sacrificing herself to the devout recognition of the highest excellence in art--than there would have been in cultivating her not inconsiderable share of talent for the production of works from her own ideas...She might thus have gratified some tastes that were incapable of appreciating Raphael. But this could be done only by lowering the standard of art to the comprehension of the spectator (901).

Hawthorne's own professional jealousy has again found its way into the narrative. He assumes that because she is a woman, Hilda's original creations would be inevitably inferior to those of the male masters, "those great departed ones, whom she so loved and venerated" (901). Clearly, Hawthorne longs for a society whose women are all in agreement with this "feeble girl." In fact, he cannot resist an autobiographical authorial intrusion:

> Would it have been worth Hilda's while to relinquish this office, for the sake of giving the world a picture or two which it would call original; pretty fancies of snow and moonlight; the counterpart, in picture, of so many

> feminine achievements in literature! (902).

Although he tells us that Hilda's talent is "not inconsiderable," Hawthorne belies himself by reducing what would have been Hilda's own original paintings to "a picture or two," and "pretty fancies." Compared to that "damned mob of scribbling women," who continue to produce the sentimental "trash" with which he is forced to compete, Hilda is a saint. In a way, she is already saving male artists by perpetuating their work instead of competing with it. Thus, for the narrator, Hilda sacrifices a second-rate, "feminine" creativity in favor of the old masters' genius. She has chosen a life of service to talented men, to be the handmaiden of dead men's images. Except for the fact that she has no man in her personal life, Hilda is exactly the type of woman the narrator (and Hawthorne) finds it safe to appreciate.

In addition, Hilda never upstages the men around her by displaying too much intellectual power. Hawthorne is careful to point out that her ability to interpret works of art comes not from her mind, but from her heart:

> ...it was Hilda's practice to flee abroad betimes and haunt the galleries till dusk. Happy were those...whom she ever chose to be the companions of her day; they saw the art-treasures of Rome, under her guidance, as they had never seen them before. Not that Hilda could dissertate, or talk learnedly about pictures; she would probably have been puzzled by the technical terms of her

> own art. Not that she had much to say about what she most profoundly admired; but even her silent sympathy was so powerful that it drew your own along with it... (903, emphasis mine).

The ability to analyze and interpret verbally is too much an intellectual (and therefore masculine) activity for a woman. The "silent sympathy" of women is what the male artist desires, and Hilda fulfills this desire. She is the incarnation of the "Gentle, Kind, Benevolent, Indulgent, and most Beloved Reader" who, Hawthorne fears in the Preface, is probably only to be found "under some mossy grave-stone" (854). Yet he manages to create just such a sympathetic audience, always a blond virgin, in his fiction.

Since Hilda already possesses a proper feminine reverence for the authority and superiority of the male artist, Hawthorne's task is merely to extend that worship to an individual male artist, Kenyon. Hilda must be made to see that her admiration for the Old Masters is only one of the requirements for a proper woman. She must take the additional step of overcoming her distaste for sexuality just enough to allow a man to assume the traditional male role in her personal life. Hawthorne will bring Hilda down from her tower--but first he must deal with Miriam.

The narrative progression of The Marble Faun does not deviate from Hawthorne's previously established pattern. The Phoebes, Priscillas, and Hildas of his world triumph at the expense of the Hesters, Zenobias, and Miriams because

domestic virginity is man's redemption. Hawthorne chooses the pale maiden each time (and in the process de-sexes and humbles the others) both because he is unable to accept the sexuality of his dark women and because his Puritanically-laden conscience demands it.[6]

By choosing Rome as his setting, Hawthorne is able to allow his female artists to live alone in an atmosphere supportive of their artistic freedom, to come and go as they please without fear of personal harm or impropriety. Initially, Hawthorne seems to approve of such freedom:

> This young American girl [Hilda] was an example of the freedom of life which it is possible for a female artist to enjoy at Rome. The customs of artist-life bestow such liberty upon the sex, which is elsewhere restricted within so much narrower limits; and it is perhaps an indication that, whenever we admit woman to a wider scope of pursuits and professions, we must also remove the shackles of our present conventional rules, which would then become an insufferable restraint on either maid or wife (896-97).

However, this freedom is available only under one condition--woman's purity:

> The system seems to work unexceptionally in Rome;...purity of heart and life are allowed to assert themselves, and to be their own proof and security...(897).

Hilda possesses such purity, but, Hawthorne already hints, Miriam does not. Her mysterious past, exotic

appearance, and unsubdued sexual vitality creates suspicion even though Hawthorne suggests she is less suspect in Rome:

> There was an ambiguity about this young lady, which, though it did not necessarily imply anything wrong, would have operated unfavorably as regarded her reception in society, anywhere but in Rome. The truth was, that nobody knew anything about Miriam, either for good or evil (868).

But we soon learn that Roman men have the same preconceptions about women as do men everywhere else.[7] Their scrutiny of Miriam is based on her unconventional appearance and demeanor: "[She] had great apparent freedom of intercourse; her manners were so far from evincing shyness, that it seemed easy to become acquainted with her, and not difficult to develope [sic] a casual acquaintance into intimacy. Such, at least, was the impression she made upon brief contact, but not such the ultimate conclusion of those who sought to know her...She resembled one of those images of light, which...shine before us,...only an arm's length beyond our grasp; we make a step in advance, expecting to seize the illusion, but find it still precisely so far out of our reach" (869). It matters not that Miriam actually "kept people at a distance"; the fact that she oversteps the bounds of maidenly decorum is enough to make men question her morals. Like Alice Pyncheon and Zenobia, if she assumes the attitude of a sexually experienced, assertive woman, then refuses to open herself to men, she

ensures her own destruction by provoking the retaliation of men. Again like her predecessors, Miriam's dilemma is her own fault--she is too sexually attractive for her own good:..."the world did not permit her to hide her antecedents without making her the subject of a good deal of conjecture; as was natural enough, considering the abundance of her personal charms..." (870). A victim of her sexuality, Miriam also creates her position by adopting a sexually free demeanor and then obstinately refusing to reveal herself.

Miriam's mixed heredity is another issue that is described in a typically Hawthornean manner. "There was something in her blood, in her mixed race, in her recollections of her mother,--some characteristic, finally, in her own nature,--which had given her freedom of thought, and force of will" (1211). Hawthorne assigns the same independence and force of will to his steely fair maiden, but it is softened by her virginal demeanor. Miriam's "mixed race," is "hopelessly intermingled" between whore and virgin, the only positions open to a woman according to male perception. Because she throws men off balance by sending what they perceive as mixed signals, Miriam provokes their rage and threatens their belief in their own superiority. Hawthorne's insistence that Miriam was "plucked up out of a mystery," that she "had its roots still clinging to her" (871), implies an intention on his part to strip her of her mystery, forcing her to take on the purity he requires of

women.[8]

In a case which parallels Zenobia's, Miriam undergoes a diminution at the hands of the men who surround her. For example, in "Miriam's Studio," the chapter which explores her workshop and her art, the narrator interprets Miriam's sketches for the reader. First, however, he prepares us for his interpretation by prefacing it with a long digression about the feminine activity of sewing:

> There is something extremely pleasant...in this peculiarity of needlework, distinguishing women from men. Our own sex is incapable of any such by-play aside from the main business of life; but women...have always some little handiwork ready to fill the tiny gap of every vacant moment. A needle is familiar to the fingers of them all...And they have greatly the advantage of us, in this respect. The slender thread of silk or cotton keeps them united with the small, familiar, gentle interests of life, the continually operating influences of which do so much for the health of character, and carry off what would otherwise be a dangerous accumulation of morbid sensibility...it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristics, when women of high thoughts and accomplishments love to sew (884).

In this passage the narrator has established a general "truth" about women, setting up an ideal which Miriam fails to meet, for in the very next sentence she lets her "handiwork" drop to her lap, a "sign of trouble, quite as trustworthy as the throb of the heart itself." Hawthorne accomplishes a good deal here. First, he has made it clear

that men perform "the main business of life" without the side effect of "morbid sensibility." When women disconnect themselves from typical domestic activities, they are sure to suffer from morbidity. Supposedly, then, whatever concerns cause Miriam to drop her sewing are morbid or diseased--something is clearly wrong with her. However, in her next comment to Donatello, who has come to visit her, she contradicts the narrator's implication. She admits that she is "a little sad, perhaps; but that is not strange for us people of the ordinary world, especially for women." The narrator insists upon interpreting what is clearly a trivial, natural action as a symptom of abnormal morbidity, while Miriam herself claims it is merely normal female behavior.

Miriam's ideas continue to conflict with those of the narrator and Donatello throughout the chapter as each of the narrator's initial reactions to her work are subsequently reinterpreted. Each of her sketches show "the idea of woman acting the part of revengeful mischief towards man." As Donatello looks at the first one, the narrator describes it as "a very impressive sketch, in which the artist had jotted down her rough ideas for a picture of Jael, driving the nail through the temples of Sisera. It was dashed off with remarkable power..." (887). This relatively positive first impression, however, soon disintegrates. Created by a woman with "morbid sensibilities," the sketches generate the narrator's second opinion, which he states just one sentence

after his initial one:

> [Miriam's] first conception of the stern Jewess had evidently been that of perfect womanhood, a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty; but, dissatisfied either with her own work or the terrible story itself, Miriam had added a certain wayward quick of her pencil, which at once converted the heroine into a vulgar murderess (887).

The implication is that Miriam's original intent was admirable. She had set out to portray "perfect womanhood," but some discontent on her part thwarted her purpose. The fault lies in Miriam's character, in her "morbid sensibility." Thus, what she creates, in the narrator's final judgment, is unacceptable.

In the next sketch, Miriam "had attempted the story of Judith, which we see represented by the Old Masters so often." Once more the narrating voice initially describes the painting as an impressive work--"a passionate and fiery conception" (887). But some aspect of Miriam's character transforms her work into something evil and grotesque:

> ...she had given the last touches in utter scorn...of the feeling which at first took such powerful possession of her hand. The head of Holofernes,...being fairly cut off, was screwing its eyes upward and twirling its features into a diabolical grin of triumphant malice, which it flung right at Judith's face (887).

We are to infer that none of the "various styles" of the Old

Masters' representations of this scene is as morbid and diabolical as Miriam's is.

The last work represents "the daughter of Herodias, receiving the head of John the Baptist...Miriam had imparted to the Saint's face a look of gentle and heavenly reproach, with sad and blessed eyes fixed upward at the maiden; by the force of which miraculous glance, her whole womanhood was at once awakened to love and endless remorse" (888). In all three revenge paintings the narrator interprets the male victim's face as somehow reproachful, an interpretation that lends support to the moral he insists Miriam was attempting to convey: "She failed not to bring out the moral, that woman must strike though her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive that impelled her" (888). Her art destroys her own heart, and her change of intent causes remorse. She would be better off employing herself with "by-play aside from the main business of life," where she could avoid such horrible consequences.

Again, Miriam's own explanation of her paintings contradicts the narrator's claims: "They are ugly phantoms that stole out of my mind; not things I created, but things that haunt me" (888). This remark suggests that there was no change of intent on her part, that the finished sketches, the depiction of women's gory revenge on men, are consistent with her initial impulse. She meant to depict violence, and she succeeded, but the narrator insists that the violence on the canvas results from some terrible flaw inside the

artist. This defect accounts for Miriam's choosing to be an artist instead of a domestic angel devoted to a man.

The second set of paintings is as ambiguous as the first, although Miriam does not comment on these. The narrator finds "the feeling and sympathy in all of them [to be] deep and true" (889). They were domestic scenes, one of which depicted "the lover winning the soft and pure avowal of bashful affection from the maiden, whose slender form half leans toward his arm, half shrinks from it" (889). What the narrator sees in this sketch closely resembles the scene between Phoebe and the daguerrotypist in the Pyncheon garden, thus betraying the narrator's own desire: He wants Miriam to become Phoebe, a woman who submits herself to man, allowing him to play a traditionally masculine role. It is a desire he intends to realize through his handling of her character throughout the rest of the romance.

Another of Miriam's works in this second set of sketches shows an infant's shoe, about which the narrator fantasizes that it came from the "warm and pure suggestions of a woman's heart,...thus idealizing a truer and lovelier picture of the life that belongs to a woman...So considered, the sketches intimated such a force and variety of imaginative sympathies as would enable Miriam to fill her life richly with the bliss and suffering of womanhood..." (889). These observations, however, are made before he notices the figure "portrayed apart," bearing Miriam's face, which haunts these pictures of domestic contentment.

Instead of applying Miriam's words to these paintings and calling them also images "that haunt" her, the narrator interprets them as figures of self-sacrifice, "betokening that the artist relinquished, for her personal self, the happiness which she could so profoundly appreciate for others" (889). One critic accurately points out that "this image of self-sacrifice will recur, again positively toned, in connection with Hilda. It is another subservient female image, the image of the martyr."[9]

Neither the narrator nor Donatello, then, accepts Miriam for what she is; instead, both insist upon seeing her the way they want her to be--simple, happy, domestic, and subservient to men. But Miriam stubbornly refuses to be defined by their terms. In fact, she reacts sharply when Donatello expresses his feelings about her last painting--the painting later identified as a self-portrait. The face in the sketch is "so beautiful, that she seemed to get into your consciousness and memory, and could never afterwards be shut out, but haunted your dreams, for pleasure or for pain; holding your inner realm as a conquered territory, though without deigning to make herself at home there" (891). Donatello is impressed by the beauty of the portrait and recognizes the likeness: "'The resemblance is as little to be mistaken as if you have bent over the smooth surface of a fountain...It is yourself!'" (891-92). He is not quite satisfied with the expression on the face, however: "'If it would only smile so like the sunshine as you sometimes

do...Cannot you make yourself smile a little, Signorina?'" Miriam's resentment of this suggestion is obvious in her reply: "'I advise you...to look at other faces, with those innocent and happy eyes, and never more to gaze at mine!'" Her reaction to Donatello's response to her painting is displeasure and rejection. Because he wishes her to change the expression to fit the "sunshine" he finds in her beauty--to fit <u>his</u> perception of her--she rejects him and thwarts his attempt to perceive her portrait as one of a pleasant, sunny, idealized lady, the kind of lady characteristic of his naive love. She rejects the narrator's preconceived notions of femininity and Donatello's effort to perceive her as something she is not.

The viewing of the portraits, then, functions as a kind of test for Miriam, and she fails. She refuses to become what both the narrator and Donatello want her to become--that is, the kind of woman presented by the narrator at the beginning of the chapter, one who escapes her "morbid sensibility," finding peace of mind and heart in the "by-play aside from the main business of life."

Like the narrator and Donatello, Kenyon also refuses to see and accept Miriam as she is. His stance toward her resembles Coverdale's toward Zenobia. His initial acceptance of her begins to deteriorate after he sees her with her model, the mysterious Capuchin monk who shadows Miriam wherever she goes. Previously, Kenyon accepted Miriam's "good qualities as evident and genuine, and never

imagining that what was hidden must therefore be evil" (871). Now, however, he expresses to Hilda new reservations about Miriam's integrity, doubts that Hilda does not share at this point: "'I am sure that she is good, and generous; a true and faithful friend, whom I love dearly, and who loves me as well! What more than this need I be sure of?'" (943). Clearly, Kenyon does not share Hilda's buoyant faith. Like Coverdale with Zenobia, Kenyon is uncomfortable not knowing everything about Miriam. "'But she is such a mystery!'" he says in exasperation. He makes the typically male assumption that a woman as alluring as Miriam has no right to deny him entrance into her mysteries. She will be punished for guarding her privacy, for shutting the curtain in his face.[10]

Ironically, Miriam does offer Kenyon a chance to satisfy his curiosity about her past. After viewing his newly sculptured "Cleopatra" in his studio, she decides to confess to him--to reveal the dark secret which hangs over her like a cloud. She finds his "Cleopatra" wonderfully powerful:

> 'What a woman is this!' exclaimed Miriam...'Tell me, did she never try--even while you were creating her--to overcome you with her fury, or her love? Were you not afraid to touch her, as she grew more and more toward hot life, beneath your hand? My dear friend, it is a great work!' (958)

Miriam is comfortable in her resolve to trust Kenyon with her secret because she sees her own nature shadowed

forth in Kenyon's statue. She understandably, but mistakenly, assumes that Kenyon feels sympathy for the type of womanhood he has created. This misperception is a crucial mistake, for the unabashed manner in which Miriam points out the erotic power of the woman in the statue takes Kenyon by surprise. Her candid assessment threatens his sexuality, and he responds with a denial of any such awareness or recognition, maintaining that he did not actually create this woman at all; rather she somehow sprang forth of her own accord. At the same time, however, he unwittingly admits his own lust:

> 'I know not how it came about at last...I kindled a great fire within my mind, and threw in the material...and, in the midmost heat, uprose Cleopatra, as you see her' (958)

At this point, Miriam is still oblivious to the hint given here that Kenyon is unwilling to accept in the flesh the type of woman he has created in art. She continues to praise unreservedly the eroticism of the statue:

> 'What I most marvel at...is the womanhood that you have so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements. Where did you get that secret? You never found it in your gentle Hilda. Yet I recognize its truth.'
> 'No, surely, it was not Hilda,' said Kenyon.--'Her womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil' (958).

Kenyon's revulsion at the very thought of Hilda serving as

the model for Cleopatra underscores his need to elevate his beloved maiden to an inhumanly pure status.

Kenyon's determination "to vindicate his mistress's maidenly reserve" (953) also shows itself in Miriam's earlier reaction to his sculpture of Hilda's hand. When she sees it, Miriam comments that he "must have wrought it passionately, in spite of its maiden palm and dainty finger-tips." Kenyon instantly voices his vehement denial that anything connected to Hilda could be "wrought with passion." He successfully separates Hilda from his sexual arousal and in so doing tacitly admits that his lust is prompted by Miriam. In addition, he is able to rid himself of any guilt associated with the masturbatory gratification he experiences. Because Miriam <u>appears</u> to be sexually experiences, Kenyon does not hold himself responsible for her presence in his erotic fantasies. She must bear the blame for his desire. Miriam's suggestion that Hilda could be the source of his passion, however, repulses him. His virgin must remain chaste even in his imagination in order to satisfy his own need for purity, for salvation from women like Miriam.[11]

Since Miriam is as yet unaware of the truth of this situation, she continues to focus upon the part of Kenyon that caused him to "kindle a great fire within [his] mind" and create the statue of a voluptuous and powerfully erotic woman. She does not realize that Kenyon is capable of accepting female power only in marble, not in the flesh.

Thus, she moves toward him, intending to divulge her secret to someone she now considers her kindred spirit. Kenyon responds by shrinking from her and denying any possibility of intimacy. He emphasizes the Platonic nature of their relationship by telling her he thinks of her only as a sister. The narrator tells us that "his reluctance, after all, and whether he were conscious of it or no, resulted from a suspicion that had crept into his heart, and lay there in a dark corner" (960). Certainly the dark suspicion refers, in part at least, to the reservations and suspicions Kenyon harbors about Miriam's checkered past. But the truth of which he struggles to remain unconscious is that Miriam, the fallen woman, is the inspiration of his art.[12] When Miriam herself begins to sense his unwillingness to acknowledge her influence fully, she closes herself to him and withdraws in anger. His denial of his sexual attraction to her is his way of negating her power. He thinks of her only as a sister, he says, thereby robbing her of any credit as the locus of his artistic power while keeping his impure thoughts safely hidden under the guise of fraternal affection.

Kenyon turns to Hilda for sanctification in much the same way Hawthorne turned to Sophia. Hawthorne explains what Kenyon expects of her in terms similar to those of his own love letters:

> 'Dear Hilda, this is a perplexed and troubled world! It soothes me inexpressibly to think of you in your

> tower, with white doves and white thoughts for your companions, so high above us all, and with the Virgin for your household friend. You know not how far it throws its light--that lamp which you keep burning at her shrine" (946).

The light certainly extends far enough to illuminate Kenyon, for he has found the way to hold at bay those prurient thoughts he has for Miriam. Like Zenobia, Miriam will become a victim of her sexuality because Kenyon has transferred all blame to her. She will be sacrificed to man's need for purity. She realizes that only a man who accepts her as she is may be trusted with her secret:

> 'Unless I had his heart for my own,...it should never be the treasure place of my secret. It is no precious pearl,...but my dark-red carbuncle--red as blood--is too rich a gem to put into a stranger's casket' (961).

* * *

Up to this point, Miriam has stubbornly refused to accept the image of herself that the men around her, including the narrator, have constructed. Characteristically, however, Hawthorne manipulates her will so that she "voluntarily" accepts the self-sacrifice necessary to place her at last in the proper woman's role. As in the case of Hester, he accomplishes this transformation through a sin and the guilt resulting from it. Miriam's suffering, like Hester's, not only forces her to accept the image of herself which already exists in the

minds of Kenyon, Donatello, and the narrator, but also allows her to redeem and humanize Donatello. At the same time, the sin humanizes Hilda enough to bring her down from the tower to live by the fireside with Kenyon.

The sin in question, of course, is the murder of Miriam's model, who accosts Miriam and Donatello as they walk together one midnight. Knowing Miriam's hatred of the man, Donatello struggles with him, and when Miriam's eyes communicate her desire for the monk to die, Donatello throws him over the edge of the Tarpeian Rock to his death. Since he has sinned for her sake, Miriam instantly recognizes that she and Donatello are joined forever and as instantly accepts a bondage of guilt and self-sacrifice on his behalf.

When the first ecstatic hours of this sinful union are past, Donatello plunges into despair and no longer cares whether he is with the woman he once loved. But guilt has had the opposite effect upon Miriam; it has taught her to assume her proper role. Donatello has become "her man," and she has suddenly chosen to devote her life to assuaging his agony. In a scene reminiscent of Hester's encounter with Dimmesdale in the forest, she offers Donatello her strength:

> 'Forget it! Cast it all behind you!' said Miriam, detecting, by her sympathy, the pang that was in his heart. 'The deed has done its office, and has no existence any more' (999).

Although "the scarlet letter had not done its office," for Hester, "the deed has done its office" for Miriam. The

torment of guilt eventually taught Hester to become, supposedly of her own accord, a proper woman, but Miriam learned the same lesson more quickly and her transformation was thorough and irrevocable.

As Donatello's guilt increases in intensity, Miriam becomes increasingly the nurturer--the strong, self-abnegating mother, comforting her child:

> "Rest your head on me, dearest one! Let me bear all its weight. I am well able to bear it; for I am a woman, and I love you! I love you, Donatello! Is there no comfort for you in this avowal? Look at me!...Gaze into my soul! Search as deeply as you may, you can never see half the tenderness and devotion that I henceforth cherish for you. All that I ask, is your acceptance of the utter self-sacrifice...with which I seek to remedy the evil you have incurred for my sake!' (1016).

The narrator tells us, however, that "all this fervour on Miriam's part" was met by Donatello's "heavy silence." The more of herself Miriam sacrifices, the more withdrawn Donatello becomes. He has retreated into a remorse where the woman's attractions can move him only minimally--the same kind of self-indulgent, melancholy brooding Dimmesdale engaged in.

Despite the fact that Miriam's self-sacrificing "tenderness and devotion" place her in her proper sphere, she is still impure because of her past unconventional, passionate attitudes. Like Hester, she will gradually realize that she can never be united with her man--her

sacrifice saves him, but for her there is no reward. Thus, she will eventually submit to his will and aid him in purging himself of his love for her, which, like Dimmesdale, he will accomplish as an act of penance.

Finally Miriam urges him to depart from her, as she hopes the separation will ease his misery, and Donatello leaves Rome for Monte Beni, his estate in the Apennines. Once there, he subjects himself to more self-imposed (and self-absorbed) acts of penance. He finds, significantly again like Dimmesdale, that he cannot ease his guilt. Peace will come to the fallen man only when he is reunited with his female partner in sin and repudiates her influence in his life, as Dimmesdale does on the scaffold just before his death.

With Donatello's departure, Miriam goes to Hilda`s tower for comfort and advice, but Hilda, who has witnessed the murder, refuses to compromise her own purity by offering succor to Miriam. When Miriam reaches out to her, Hilda "put forth her hands with an involuntary repellent gesture, so expressive, that Miriam at once felt a great chasm opening itself between them two. They might gaze at one another from the opposite sides, but without the possibility of ever meeting more" (1023-24). Hilda fears she may be tainted by Miriam's "powerful magnetism." Thus, the militant virgin allies herself with men in her damning judgment of her friend. Unlike the earlier romances, here the dark woman views the judgment of the virgin as

righteous, so thoroughly has Miriam internalized the image of herself which she had previously repudiated. "'There is certainly a Providence on purpose for Hilda, if for no other human creature'" (1002), Miriam says. Aloof and superior, Hilda is a goddess whose perfection automatically damns everyone else by comparison.[13] As Miriam approaches the virgin's tower, Hawthorne make Hilda's position quite clear:

> Had [Miriam] been compelled to choose between infamy in the eyes of the whole world, or in Hilda's eyes alone, she would have unhesitatingly accepted the former, on condition of remaining spotless in the estimation of her white-souled friend (1020).

In none of the previous romances has female guilt produced so thoroughly the effect for which Hawthorne was striving. Miriam actually believes she is capable of staining the harsh whiteness of Hilda's spotless robes. Rather than add to her sin by forcing Hilda to commiserate with her, she steals away alone, dejected, having accepted, as Hawthorne points out, "a sentence of condemnation from a supreme tribunal" (1026).[14]

After receiving her sentence and leaving Hilda's tower, Miriam, like Hester, hides her sensual beauty under a cloak of mourning. She then follows Donatello, silently and secretly, to Monte Beni, where she lives in hiding, hoping that some day he will need her again. Her mission is to continue her effort to comfort and heal Donatello, which for so many of Hawthorne's heroines is the action which redeems

both them and their men. Kenyon's report to Miriam when they meet in the chapel clearly reveals what happens to a man when guilt is allowed to operate on his conscience:

> 'A wonderful process is going forward in Donatello's mind...The germs of faculties, that have heretofore slept, are fast springing into activity. The world of thought is disclosing itself to his inward sight. He startles me, at times, with his perception of deep truths...Out of his bitter agony, a soul and intellect...have been inspired into him' (1087).

Donatello's sin and guilt have changed him from nature boy to mature, adult male whose new intellectual depth allows him to ponder "deep truths." He has, in fact, turned his attention from Miriam to philosophical and moral issues--the "main business" of life. His transfiguration is in stark contrast to Miriam's, as her reply to Kenyon's report indicates:

> 'Ah, I could keep him here!...And how sweet a toil to bend and adapt my whole nature to do him good! To instruct, to elevate, to enrich his mind, with the wealth that would flow in upon me, had I such a motive for acquiring it!...Who else has the tender sympathy which he requires? Who else, save only me--a woman, a sharer in the same dread secret, a partaker in one identical guilt--could meet him on such terms of intimate equality as the case demands? With this object before me, I might feel a right to live' (1087).

Like Hester in the forest scene, letting down her luxuriant hair when Dimmesdale's desire for her is rekindled, Miriam

softens and becomes feminine again at the thought of spending her life in service to the man she loves, only now it is a proper type of feminine warmth because it is directed toward service and loyalty to one man.

Kenyon also understands that Donatello needs Miriam in order to develop a mature soul, and he voices Hawthorne's own belief when he says that a male is not the friend and guide Donatello needs, that "between man and man there is always an insuperable gulf" (1089). But Kenyon's motives are suspect. He has adopted the attitude of a priest toward Miriam and uses this position of patriarchal moral authority to further his deflation of her and his elevation of Hilda. The narrator tells us that "Kenyon could not but marvel at the subjection into which this proud and self- dependent woman had wilfully flung herself" (1088). He secretly delights in this transformation, and though he admits that he does not know what passed between Miriam and Hilda, he deems Hilda right: "...the white, shining purity of Hilda's nature is a thing apart..."

It is but a short step for Kenyon to assume a similar role. His aspirations toward the ideal, his association with such a godly creature, infuse him with a priestly function,[15] a function he again performs by arranging a meeting between Miriam and Donatello to take place, appropriately, under the statue of Pope Julius in Perugia. Once there, Kenyon further deflates Miriam by "desexualiz[ing] the future union of [her] and Donatello."[16]

Their union must not be physical, he says, because their "bond is twined with such black threads" that they are forbidden "to look upon it as identical with the ties that unite other loving souls." There is to be "no holy sanction on your wedded lives" (1121). Clearly, the "holy sanction" is reserved for Hilda and Kenyon. What is reserved for Miriam and Donatello, on the other hand, is "sacrifice, prayer, penitence, and earnest effort toward right things." Kenyon's position at Monte Beni and Perugia places him in a safe, comfortable relationship with Miriam. He is no longer forced to deal with his own sexual arousal because Miriam's attractiveness has been subdued. In addition, as moral arbiter of the sinful woman's future, he can sentence her to a sexless life with Donatello. If he cannot have her, no one else can either.

Miriam, like all Hawthorne's dark heroines, is deserted by everyone. Wearing the black veil of the penitent, she wanders through Rome, praying at various shrines. Within the plot of The Marble Faun, Miriam's abandonment is part of her penance for her secret crime. Within the Hawthorne canon, however, her isolation results directly from what Hawthorne deems to be her real sins--her aspiration to be an intellectual, and worse, a female artist. For this sin she is forced to submit to her role of atonement, and is left to suffer alone for her sins.

* * *

Once Miriam is discarded, Kenyon turns his full attention toward capturing the angel-Hilda, who must now be brought down from her tower into the arms of Kenyon, who has a good deal of authorial help with the process. Hilda must be made human enough to become a wife; otherwise her purity cannot save Kenyon. At the same time, however, she must retain her virginal innocence; even her former resolve to live her life without a man, although Hawthorne does not sanction it, must be justified. Like Priscilla, Hilda must remain absolutely guiltless, and like Zenobia, Miriam must bear all the guilt. So Hawthorne, in a long authorial intrusion, contrives to place the blame on Miriam for the collapse of Hilda's manufactured idealism, a collapse that Hawthorne sanctions and intends from the outset to bring about. The knowledge of sin, he tells us, "takes substance and reality from the sin of some guide, whom we have dearly loved." This knowledge and the "chill and heavy misery" it brings occurs because we have erected a pedestal and placed this friend upon it, "that one friend being to us the symbol and representative of whatever is good and true--when he falls, the effect is almost as if the sky fell with him, bringing down in chaotic ruin the columns that upheld our faith...We stare wildly about us, and discover...that it was not actually the sky that has tumbled down, but merely a frail structure of our own rearing" (1125-26). Our initial assumption is that Hawthorne is instructing us not to foster such unrealistic expectations. Instead, he blames the

idealized friend (Miriam, in this case) for not "walking heedfully amid the defilement of earthly ways! Let us reflect, that the highest path is pointed out to us by the pure Ideal of those who look up to us, and who, if we tread less loftily, may never look so high again!" (1126). Hawthorne has once again sacrificed the reality of the dark woman for the ideal of the maid.[17]

But before Hilda may be brought down to kneel at Kenyon's feet, he must sacrifice his art, for its sexual nature would stain Hilda's purity as surely as the sinful Miriam would. Thus, Kenyon explains that "'Imagination and the love of art have both died out of me'" (1209). However, as one critic has so perceptively pointed out, "we cannot be certain that Kenyon will abandon his art, but we may feel sure that there will be no more feline Cleopatras or broodingly beautiful fauns."[18] Hilda saves him, then, by purifying his art and his imagination. Kenyon rationalizes his denunciation of art by identifying Hilda with life and the Venus with marble, but, as Frederick Crews explains, Hawthorne "seems to be saying that Kenyon's human love is supplanting his cold aesthetic taste...Yet when we reflect that vapid Hilda is here dethroning a supple and lovely Venus, the surface meaning becomes exactly reversed." He replaces the Venus with the Virgin, an act which is "simply a form of panic."[19]

Kenyon turns his back upon everything that might be construed as unconventional. Even his budding belief in the

felix culpa, or fortunate fall, must be repudiated. This idea, that the fall of man was also his salvation since it necessitated the sacrificial death of Christ, is mentioned several times late in the story. When Kenyon enunciates the theory to Hilda, suggesting that "sin...is...merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state" than Adam enjoyed before the fall, Hilda "shrink[s] from him with an expression of horrour which wounded the poor, speculative sculptor to the soul. To Hilda this idea makes "a mockery...of religious sentiment...as well as moral law" (1236). Instantly, Kenyon, acknowledges the necessity of returning to the safety of orthodoxy and begs forgiveness from his female savior:

> 'Forgive me, Hilda!' exclaimed the sculptor...I never did believe it! But the mind wanders wild and wide; and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole-star above, nor light of cottage windows here below, to bring me home. Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as with a celestial garment, all would go well. Oh, Hilda, guide me home!' (1236).

Perhaps Kenyon actually realizes that apart from Hilda he would be lost, or perhaps, as Baym suggests, he is "lying like a frightened child to placate her."[20] In any case, Hilda, like Phoebe, has led her man back within the bounds of conventionality by consenting to come "down from her tower, to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household

Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (1237).

NOTES

1. This information is condensed from Randall Stewart's biography, pp. 208-211.

2. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, in Hawthorne: Novels (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 700. All future references to The Blithedale Romance, The House of the Seven Gables, and The Marble Faun are to this edition and will be included in the text in parentheses.

3. Rudolph Von Abele, The Death of the Artist: A Study of Hawthorne's Disintegration (The Hague, 1955), p. 80.

4. Nina Baym, "The Marble Faun: Hawthorne's Elegy for Art," New England Quarterly, 44 (1971), p. 371. Terence Martin, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p. 172, agrees, declaring that Kenyon "is virtually unmanned by the unswerving devotion he tenders to the uncompromising Hilda."

5. Frederick Crews, The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 215-16).

6. See Gloria Erlich, "Hawthorne's Dark Women," New England Quarterly, 41 (1968), 175, who asserts that Hawthorne's maidens "offer no threat to masculinity or purity, and, in fact, they enhance both these qualities in men lucky enough to capture them." Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 173, also maintains that Hawthorne found in Hilda the moral attributes men need. Philip Rahv, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Partisan Review, 8 (1941), 378-80, claims that Miriam's "beauty and love of life" condemn her in Hawthorne's eyes and send him on a desperate search for a virgin who can keep him safe from threats to his masculinity.

7. Judy Rae Smith, "Hawthorne's Women and Weeds: What Really Happens in the Garden." Diss. Indiana University, 1979, p. 144.

8. Smith, p. 145.

9. Robert Brooke, "Artistic Communication and the Heroines' Art in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun," Emerson Society Quarterly, 29 (1983), p. 85.

10. Smith, p. 147.

11. Smith, p. 148.

12. Smith, p. 149.

13. It is this attribute of her purity that Hawthorne must modify before the end of the novel. Hilda's virgin skirts must remain intact, but she must relinquish this traditional male role by humble submitting herself to a man.

14. Smith, p. 155.

15. This may explain why Kenyon is "stung into irreverence" when he learns that Hilda has confessed to a priest, who, in effect, has cheated him out of his desired role. She allowed the priest access to those virgin secrets from which Kenyon has been barred.

16. Baym, p. 365.

17. Smith, p. 158.

18. Baym, p. 375.

19. Crews, p. 239.

20. Baym, p. 375.

CHAPTER FIVE

Epilogue: Parables of Art and Women

Although my focus has been on Hawthorne's novels, as an epilogue and a conclusion, I would like to turn my attention briefly to Hawthorne's tales. The themes and the narrative methods that I have described for the novels pervade Hawthorne's short stories as well, but in the narrower confines of the short story form, the themes, if anything, are even more apparent. As such, the stories form a kind of gloss on the more complex themes of the novels. They are a distillation or even an allegory of Hawthorne's persistent attempt to blame women for the guilts and sins of his male characters, and most especially, for the great Hawthornean male "sin" against a Calvinistic ethos: the sin of being an artist.

To conclude this study of the interrelationships between Hawthorne's own personal guilt over his choice to be an artist and the severe punishment he bestows upon any female character who might have any aspirations to a similar role, I have chosen four stories that I see as representative of Hawthorne's short fiction and particularly interesting variations on the central issue that I have developed throughout.

Two of the stories focus on "dark ladies": in the earlier of the two, "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," the dark lady suffers for her pride and her independence; in the story

that is perhaps his most famous, "Rappaccini's Daughter," the dark lady herself is a deflection of her father-creator-artist, the demonic scientist who uses his daughter's body as the repository of his craft, and who is destroyed, similarly, by the combined craft of another scientist, Baglioni, and his willing apprentice, Giovanni, who chooses his male creative mentor over his female lover.

The final two stories focus on the pale ladies who also embody Hawthorne's views on art. In "The Artist of the Beautiful," lady and art are synonyms, and Annie is as etherealized in the story as Owen's mechanical butterfly--a perfect symbol for Hawthorne's view of the role of women in the artistic process: muses and, ideally, muses created by their men. Finally, in "The Birth-mark," we have the apotheosis of all of Hawthorne's treatments of women and art. A pale woman, Georgiana nonetheless possesses a fatal flaw--not her birthmark, but her unwillingness to see her husband, Aylmer, as the brilliant creator would like to be seen. For this sin, she, too, predictably dies. With her death, we have the culmination of Hawthorne's obsessions, all compressed into one perfect symbol of the woman artist: the bloody hand, the spectral hand--the scribbling hand.

"Lady Eleanore's Mantle"

Philip Rahv traces the "dark lady" in Hawthorne's fiction as a basically unchanging character in the stories written during the last ten or fifteen years of his life.

Rahv views Hester, Zenobia, Miriam, and Beatrice, for example, as essentially the same woman in only slightly different guises: "Invariably she dominates, or seeks to dominate, the men she loves, and her intellectual range equals and at times even exceeds theirs. She not only acts but thinks passionately, solving the problem of the relation between the sexes in a radical fashion and subverting established values and standards."[1] Further, Rahv contends that the dark lady "is above all an ambivalent love-object," and her pale, virginal counterpart is a "dove-like, virginal, snow-white maiden of New England. [They] stand to each other in the relation of the damned to the saved, so that inevitably the dark lady comes to a bad end and the blonde is awarded all the prizes."[2]

Rahv's interpretation is valid, but limited. Hawthorne seldom portrays both types of women within one work of fiction. When he does, as in The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun, Rahv's analysis holds true. However, Giovanni is not offered a blonde virgin as an alternative to Beatrice; likewise, no such angel appears in The Scarlet Letter. Still, as we have seen, the dark woman, when she appears without her pale maiden counterpart, is consistently forced to take on the attributes of the pale maiden, to become the "snow-white maiden of New England" and thus an adequate redeemer of men.

In addition, to accept the view that the dark lady "invariably...seeks to dominate the men she loves" is to

believe that the male perspectives in the narrative are accurate descriptions of women in the real world rather than merely "images" of women generated by male imaginations to suit male needs.

Not to embrace the male version of the story in Hawthorne's fiction is admittedly difficult, for Hawthorne consistently creates a male narrator whose credibility he systematically reinforces. In some cases the author maintains that his narrator is merely an editor who gives narrative form to historical facts--facts which both narrator and author take great pains to verify. In other cases, the narrator is likened to the chorus in a Greek tragedy, merely a distant and disinterested observer of the action, which his objectivity allows him to interpret accurately.

In setting the stage for "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," Hawthorne again insists upon the reliability of the narrator. The story is the third of four tales which comprise the "Legends of Province-House." Each of the tales is preceded by a short preface, all four of which, taken together, actually comprise a fifth tale about the Province-House itself, the audience who listens, the narrator of the prefaces, and the narrator of the legends.

In the first preface, we learn that the Province-House, once the colonial mansion of the royal governors, has been converted into a tavern, and that one of its regular customers is "an elderly gentleman...who seemed to be, if

not a lodger, at least a familiar visitor of the house, who might be supposed to have his regular score at the bar, his summer seat at the open window, and his prescriptive corner at the winter's fireside" (627, 629). The narrator of the prefaces (who, we may assume, is Hawthorne himself) introduces himself to his old gentleman in the hope of "draw[ing] forth his historical reminiscences." We discover that the old man possesses "between memory and tradition...some very pleasant gossip about the Province-House" (629), which he relates in his telling of the legends. Hawthorne admits, however, that because the old man received the stories, "at one or two removes, from an eye-witness,"...this derivation, together with the lapse of time, must have afforded opportunities for many variations of the narrative; so that, despairing of literal and absolute truth, I have not scrupled to make such further changes as seemed conducive to the reader's profit and delight" (629). Hawthorne never neglects to justify his own artistic license.

In the preface to the second tale, Hawthorne identifies his old story-teller as "the old tradition-monger" (641), a label which, along with his advanced age, is calculated to reinforce the old man's reliability as narrator. At this point, Hawthorne is careful to emphasize again his own credibility as a recorder and editor:

> On entering the bar-room, I found, as I expected, the old tradition-monger seated by a special good fire...He

> recognized me with evident pleasure; for my rare properties as a patient listener invariably make me a favorite with elderly gentlemen and ladies, of narrative propensities (641).

Hawthorne has become the "patient listener" that he himself longed for in his own audience--a trusting, unquestioning auditor who maintains absolute faith in the teller. This quality of his has endeared him to the old man, who now introduces himself to Hawthorne as Mr. Bela Tiffany and begins to spin out another legend, but only after his memory has been sufficiently stimulated by wine and the presence of a good listener:

> The old gentleman's draught acted as a solvent upon his memory, so that it overflowed with tales, traditions, anecdotes of famous dead people, and traits of ancient manners, some of which were childish as a nurse's lullaby, while others might have been worth the notice of the grave historian (641).

Maintaining that some of the tales were "worth the notice of the grave historian" is Hawthorne's way of insisting on the historical accuracy of the legends.

Obviously, he has discovered that to become a reporter/editor and thus merely vouch for the truth of someone else's story is easier and more convenient than is admitting that both the story and the teller are his own creations worthy of the reader's acceptance. Twelve years later, he would use the same technique in "The Custom-House," his introduction to <u>The Scarlet Letter</u>. The old

Custom House itself resembles the Province-House in that it, like the Province-House, acts as a gateway into the past. Hawthorne passes through the Province-House's "narrow archway" and steps into history with the help of Mr. Tiffany, a fictional forerunner of Surveyor Pue.

The Province-House is as full of history as the Custom House. It is the place where

> ...ancient governors held their levees,...surrounded by the military men, the judges, and other officials of the crown, while all the loyalty of the province thronged to do them honor (626-27).

Here, as in "The Custom-House," Hawthorne's hope is that the presence of the past will lend to the stories of the present a measure of authenticity that will rob less-than-trusting readers of their skepticism and place them under the artist's control.

By the time the reader arrives at the third legend, then, he/she is expected to embrace unreservedly Hawthorne's interpretation of the tale, for he is merely setting down the narrator's words as a faithful recorder, who, since he is such an ideal and "patient listener," also has the right to edit the text--"to make...changes...conducive to the reader's profit and delight."

Lady Eleanore is another of Hawthorne's dark women, whose story is told and whose behavior is interpreted by the men with whom she comes in contact. Even before she makes her appearance in the Province-House, the narrator, who by

this time is a somewhat inebriated Mr. Tiffany, prejudices his listeners against her:

> Lady Eleanore was remarkable for a harsh unyielding pride, a haughty consciousness of her hereditary and personal advantages, which made her almost incapable of control...[I]t seemed due from Providence that pride so sinful should be followed by severe retribution (654).

The narrator admits that this assessment of her is based only upon "many traditionary anecdotes" (654), not upon any real contact any of the characters have had with the lady. The male protagonists, however assume that this hearsay is valid, basing their opinions and their behavior upon this assumption.

Lady Eleanore's appearance only reinforces the narrator's contention:

> ...the people could discern the figure of Lady Eleanore, strangely combining an almost queenly stateliness with the grace and beauty of a maiden in her teens (654).

Her beauty and haughtiness combine to give her a sexual attractiveness, which presents a threat so powerful that the men who surround her are driven to interpret it as evidence of her arrogance and pride, a self-delusion which allows them to justify their subsequent efforts to humble her. They are comfortable in their belief that their actions toward her and their perceptions of her are for her own good, that they have a moral mission to bring her back

within the bounds of conventionality by de-sexing her.

Although she was damned in the imaginations of men even before her arrival in Boston, Lady Eleanore seals her fate when "a pale young man" (655) name Jervayse Helwyse prostrates himself in her path as she descends from her coach, "offering his person as a footstool for [her] to tread upon." When the governor commands him to rise, Lady Eleanore intervenes:

> 'Nay,' answered Lady Eleanore...'your Excellency shall not strike him. When men seek to be trampled upon, it were a pity to deny them a favor so easily granted--and so well deserved!' (655-56)

The narrator immediately interprets her action here as a result of her "hereditary pride," which, he maintains, causes her to "trampl[e] on human sympathies" (656). Doctor Clarke, who watches the scene with the rest of the crowd, also castigates Lady Eleanore for her behavior, and explains Helwyse's situation to Captain Langford in sympathetic terms: "...it was [Helwyse's] misfortune to meet this Lady Eleanore Rochcliffe. He loved her--and her scorn has driven him mad" (656). The woman's refusal to submit herself to the man who loves her enrages Clarke, who predicts that she will pay dearly for her sin: "...I could well nigh doubt the justice of the Heaven above us, if no signal humiliation overtake this lady, who now treads so haughtily into yonder mansion" (656).

In addition to her appearance, Lady Eleanore wears a

mantle, which, like Beatrice's flower and Georgiana's birthmark, suggests mortality and evil to the men who behold it. The mantle "was the handiwork of a dying woman" (657). "Its fantastic splendor had been conceived in the delirious brain of one on her death-bed, and was the last toil of her stiffening fingers, which had interwoven fate and misery with its golden threads" (662). Thus, Lady Eleanore is welcomed by the "doleful clang" of funeral chimes, "as if calamity had come embodied in her beautiful person" (655). And as Baglioni warns Giovanni of the venomous Beatrice Rappaccini, Dr. Clarke warns Jervayse Helwyse "that [there] never came such a curse to our shores as this lovely Lady Eleanore... [and] that her breath has filled the air with poison" (664).

Convinced of the woman's imperfection or evil, the male protagonist of each tale attempts to exorcise this evil. To Jervayse, Lady Eleanore "seeks to place herself above the sympathies of our common nature" (656), a tendency that he and the other male characters call pride, but which is actually nothing more than a womanly beauty and inner strength that prevents the men from assuming a traditional masculine role.

The potion Jervayse offers Eleanore is intended to purge her of this "evil": It is "a symbol that you have not sought to withdraw yourself from the chain of human sympathies--which whoso would shake off must keep company with fallen angels" (659). In addition, he places the

potion in a "sacramental vessel...which was recognized as appertaining to the communion plate of the Old South Church" (659), and he refers to the potion as "holy wine." Jervayse's expressed intention is to purge Lady Eleanore of her pride, but his actual goal is to reverse their positions--that is, she must become prostrate at his feet and do service to him by acknowledging his rightful, masculine position of authority. Thus, his cause is holy, Christian, and God-ordained.

The male "cure" for female "pride," whether it be in the form of a potion, a scarlet letter, or hypnosis, always results in the suppression or destruction of the woman's beauty and sexual allure or her death or both. Lady Eleanore is no exception: Jervayse spills the contents of the goblet on Lady Eleanore's mantle, and a few days thereafter a smallpox epidemic engulfs the entire city. The plague was assumed to have originated in Lady Eleanore's mantle:

> There remained no room for doubt, that the contagion had lurked in that gorgeous mantle, which threw so strange a grace around her at the festival...The people raved against the Lady Eleanore, and cried out that her pride and scorn had evoked a fiend, and that, between them both, this monstrous evil had been born (662, 663).

Hawthorne's point is that all of society pays for woman's refusal to occupy her proper position in relation to men.

As usual, however, after a period of unbearable

suffering, the dark lady will relent, admit her folly, and allow the man to triumph. Lady Eleanore herself is stricken with the disease, which ravages her beauty, her strength, and her sexual allure. When Jervayse visits her in her sick-room, he finds that her transformation is complete:

> 'Oh, Jervayse Helwyse,' said the voice [of Eleanore]--and as it spoke, the figure contorted itself, struggling to hide its blasted face--'look not now on the woman you once loved! The curse of Heaven hath stricken me because...I wrapt myself in PRIDE as in a MANTLE, and scorned the sympathies of nature; and therefore made this wretched body the medium of a dreadful sympathy. You are avenged--they are all avenged--Nature is avenged--for I am Eleanore Rochcliffe' (665, emphasis mine).

In admitting that Jervayse was right all along, that she had lived a life that was contrary to Nature and to God's will, she gives voice to the masculine point of view. Her "enlightenment" removes the curse from the town, and the mob, led by a triumphant Jervayse Helwyse, burns her mantle in the street opposite Province-House. Man has been saved at the expense of woman and his victory proclaimed sacred and natural.

For those who question this dubious victory and moral of the story, Hawthorne, ever demanding the reader's total trust and belief, cannot resist adding a post-script at the end of the tale. He asserts that "the reader can scarcely conceive how unspeakably the effect of such a tale is heightened, when, as in the present case, we may repose

perfect confidence in the veracity of him who tells it" (666). The narrator is characteristically so far above reproach that Hawthorne himself "could not have believed him one whit the more faithfully, had he professed himself an eye-witness of the doings and sufferings of poor Lady Eleanore" (666). Perhaps Hawthorne regretted having burned the evidence, for in the most famous of all his fictions, he produces a similar kind of evidence in the form of a rotting piece of cloth embroidered with a scarlet A, found in the dusty attic of a custom house.

"Rappaccini's Daughter"

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is perhaps the most difficult to interpret of all Hawthorne's stories. The countless critical responses it has generated not only testify to its elusiveness and ambiguity, but also shed as much confusion as light on the subject. Much of the twentieth-century criticism concentrates upon Giovanni's flawed nature, viewing him as a neurotic male, "another Hawthorne protagonist who regresses to juvenile nausea over female sexuality,"[3] who is intimidated by a sexually powerful woman and afraid of "having his personality swallowed up."[4] Giovanni, then, is too weak or not masculine enough to accept Beatrice.[5] Roy Male reads the story as pure allegory, with Beatrice symbolizing "idealistic" faith, Baglioni, "materialistic skepticism," and Giovanni, a wayfarer who vacillates between the two.[6] Judith Fryer sees

Beatrice as the incarnation of deadly sexuality: Her poison, "bound up with her very essence, makes her a potential destroyer of any man with whom she comes in close contact."[7] All these interpretations have validity, especially Crews' and Fryer's similar contentions that Beatrice's sexual attractiveness is what stimulates the imaginations and castration fears of the men who surround her. However, Richard Brenzo presents perhaps the most convincing argument when he says that what he finds "most striking is the story's concern with the relationships of three men to a woman, who, though she never deliberately harms any of them, and though the men profess to have her good in mind, is nevertheless destroyed by them.[8]

On the surface, the story seems fairly simple and straightforward. A young man, Giovanni Guasconti, leaves his home in southern Italy "to pursue his studies at the University of Padua."[9] He secures lodgings "in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice," but is cheered when he discovers that his window overlooks the exotic and mysterious garden of Dr. Rappaccini, whose daughter tends the flowers there. Having caught sight of both Rappaccini and his daughter Beatrice, Giovanni mentions Rappaccini to his teacher, Professor Pietro Baglioni, and learns from him that Rappaccini "cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment" (982).

When Giovanni and Beatrice develop a friendship in the

garden, Baglioni again intervenes, relating to Giovanni the facts of Beatrice's existence, that she has been nurtured since childhood with poisons, which were so gradually introduced into her system that she became immune to them; poison is now her natural element. Believing that Rappaccini has been purposely exposing him to Beatrice's noxious atmosphere, Giovanni turns on her viciously. He offers her Baglioni's antidote for the poison in her system, and after drinking it, Beatrice dies, condemning both Giovanni and her father.

Like the dark women of Hawthorne's romances, Beatrice is exploited by the men who surround her and forced to pay for, or at least to be punished for, the evil in the minds of these men. In fact, the warped perceptions of the men actually create Beatrice. She, like Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam, is a construct which is eventually used to atone for male sin. In Brenzo's words, "she becomes the focus for these men's fantasies, fears, and desires..."[10] The poison she has imbibed is not merely the literal poison introduced by her father, but also the poison of Giovanni's guilt about his sexual passion and his fear of castration, the poison of Baglioni's professional jealousy, and the poison of her father's self-centered desire for academic fame.[11]

Giovanni's relationship with Beatrice is perhaps the most important since it forms the core of the narrative. He is intrigued with her from the first moment he sees her from his perch above the garden:

> Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers; beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, by her virgin zone (980).

Just as Zenobia was too much woman for Coverdale, Beatrice is too powerfully sexual and beautiful for Giovanni. From the outset, his imagination begins to assign to her attributes that are not quite human. He ignores the merely human qualities which place her outside his fantasies, and focuses instead on his own manufactured perceptions of her:

> 'Here am I, my father! What would you?' cried [Beatrice's] rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house; a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson, and of perfumes heavily delectable (979).

Although we learn later that Beatrice possesses many natural human attributes, Giovanni adheres to his initial impressions. He never admits that his association of Beatrice with the plant is only partially correct, nor does he ever separate his image of her from reality.

After this first observance of Beatrice in the garden, Giovanni, intoxicated by the "oppressive exhalations [which] seemed to proceed from the plants" (980), falls asleep and "dream[s] of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and

maiden were different and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape" (980). Since at this point he is unaware of the poison in her "physical system," the "strange peril" he feels can only stem from his own fears of her overpowering sexuality; she, like Zenobia, is too beautiful for her own good.

When Giovanni awakes from his dream in the morning, the narrator assures us that the light of day has dissipated the "errors of fancy" of the night:

> Neither the sickly and thought-worn Doctor Giacomo Rappaccini...nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both, was due to their own qualities, and how much to his wonder-working fancy. But he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter (981, emphasis mine).

We have seen the "wonder-working fancy" of Hawthorne's other male protagonists operate on the women in the romances and therefore can be reasonably sure that Giovanni will not forsake his "fancy" for reality. Yet here the narrator is telling us that Giovanni is "inclined to take a...rational...view..." Not surprisingly, however, we soon learn that he continues to base his actions upon his created image of Beatrice, not upon her reality or his own rationality.

Baglioni feeds Giovanni's hysteria. Although Baglioni begins his conversation with Giovanni by castigating Rappaccini, he soon realizes that Giovanni is obsessed with

Beatrice and so begins to turn his attention toward her:

> 'I know not, most learned Professor,' returned Giovanni after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini's exclusive zeal for science--'I know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter.'
>
> 'Aha!' cried the Professor with a laugh. 'So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about...I know little of the Signora Beatrice, save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that...she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine!' (983).

Baglioni's professional jealousy is obvious here, and few critics have failed to note the part it plays in the narrative. Brenzo, for example, is most perceptive when he asserts that superficially, at least, "Baglioni appears a benevolent character, concerned with the welfare of his old friend's son, and intent on exposing and frustrating the schemes of Rappaccini. Yet although Baglioni realizes Rappaccini is the source of the evil, Beatrice is the target of his attempt to combat his evil."[12] What he and most other critics have failed to notice, however, is that Baglioni's reaction resembles Hawthorne's own professional jealousy, which also was directed almost exclusively toward women, who, he goes so far as to suggest, are prostitutes if they presume to become writers. Baglioni, too, although he stops short of accusing Beatrice of sexual sin, plants in

Giovanni's mind a related suggestion: "All the young men in Padua are wild about [her]."

That Giovanni sees Beatrice as deadly for the first time after this interview is no surprise. He watches with horror from his window as an insect flying near her suddenly drops dead, and the bouquet of flowers he tosses her seems to wither when she catches it. Of course, the narrator has told us that Giovanni is "somewhat heated with the wine that he had quaffed [with Baglioni],...which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Doctor Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice" (983). Therefore, what he "sees" may be nothing more than a fantasy produced by his feverish imagination:

> She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But, few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance (986, emphasis mine).

Idle thought or no, however, just as Coverdale's fever-induced perceptions from his sickbed damned Zenobia, so Giovanni's fantasies, born of his "swimming brain," damn Beatrice. Both male protagonists recognize, at least partially, that their suspicions are unfounded, but they

continue to behave as though their fancies are rooted in reality. Beatrice is now deadly in Giovanni's eyes because he realizes that she is sought after, or, more accurately, lusted after, by all the young men in Padua. In addition, she is dark, exotic, mysterious, and aloof, characteristics that only add to her allure and her power.

Although he avoids her window for several days, Giovanni cannot put Beatrice out of his mind. He, like most of Hawthorne's male protagonists, is obsessed with penetrating her mystery, thereby "bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience" (986). To make her a "normal" woman requires that Giovanni see her as an angel--that is, he must exchange one fantasy for another, and his first actual meeting with Beatrice facilitates this exchange. According to the narrator, by this time Giovanni is "irrevocably within her sphere," and "it mattered not whether she were angel or demon" (989). This information is intended to show how completely under Beatrice's power Giovanni has come, but what it actually does is underscore the fact that Giovanni, with Baglioni's help, is creating an identity for Beatrice, and although he is unsure at this point just what that identity will be, he can conceive of only two possibilities--angel and demon. Thus, Hawthorne is correct when he has his narrator affirm that "it mattered not whether she were angel or demon," for both images deny Beatrice's reality and therefore render her powerless as a human being.

Throughout his meeting with Beatrice in the garden, Giovanni vacillates between the extremes of "love and horror." At first, Beatrice exhibits enough proper female self-deprecation to allow Giovanni to assume a traditional masculine position of superiority, a position which immediately puts him at ease:

> 'And yourself, lady'--observed Giovanni--'if fame says true--you...are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms, and these spicy perfumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than if taught by Signor Rappaccini himself.'
>
> 'Are there such idle rumors?' asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. 'Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No;...I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes, methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge' (991).

Her denial of her own intelligence makes Giovanni comfortable. All she really knows about flowers is their color and scent and cares nothing even for that much knowledge. However, his uneasiness returns when she warns him to "'Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes.'" He responds with "'Bid me believe nothing, save what comes from your own lips'" (992). His response indicates that he does not wish to believe what he has seen--"the recollection of former scenes made him shrink." Beatrice seems to understand from his reaction that her appearance has condemned her in his eyes, for "she looked

full into Giovanni's eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queen-like haughtiness. 'I do so bid you, Signor!...Forget whatever you have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe!'" (992). Her "queen-like haughtiness" suggests that she resents Giovanni's insistence upon judging her by her appearance--that is, his refusal to see her "essence." Finally, however, she acquiesces, agreeing to allow him to judge her by her words.

The threat Beatrice poses to Giovanni's masculinity is further diminished by her child-like demeanor and by his realization that she is very likely a virgin:

> Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer-clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters; questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant (992-93).

Because he finds himself in a position superior to that of Beatrice, Giovanni is able to overcome his fear and begin idealizing her. Since he can conceive of no middle ground between damning her and reverencing her, he chooses the latter, at least momentarily. When she exhibits concern for his welfare by warning him away from the poisonous purple

flower he is about to pluck, he is even more sure she does not possess those "dreadful attributes" he had hitherto assigned to her. He returns to his room, ponders his interview with Beatrice, and pronounces her human: "her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable...of the height and heroism of love" (994).

Their meetings in the garden continue, and by all "appreciable signs" they are in love. Yet each time Giovanni makes even a slightly sexual approach toward Beatrice, she "grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation" (995) that he was repelled. If we read the story literally, Beatrice avoids his touch to keep from poisoning him, but, as Brenzo asks, "is there a deeper meaning behind her avoidance of physical contact?"[13] Of course there is: She keeps her distance from him for the same reason Miriam turns away from Kenyon in The Marble Faun. In each case, the woman realizes that the man does not trust her and is incapable of accepting her as she is. Beatrice has demonstrated enough passivity and "maiden reserve" to alleviate Giovanni's fear of castration, but now she refuses to allow him to become her sexual mentor, a refusal which engenders once again "horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of the caverns of his heart, and stared him in the face; [Giovanni's] love grew thin and faint as the morning-mist" (995). We know that Giovanni's shallow love depends upon his image of Beatrice as angel,

and this image begins to give way to his former image of her as monster.

Determined to prove to himself "that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a real angel" (1001), Giovanni decides to put her to a test. He purchases a bouquet of fresh flowers in order to observe from "the distance of a few paces" whether or not her touch would cause the blossoms to wither. Before he has the opportunity to present them to her, however, he notices with "a thrill of indefinable horror," that the "flowers were already beginning to droop" (1000). His worst fear confirmed, he turns his loathing on Beatrice: "'She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!'" (1000). Clearly, the malice he attributes to her exists within his own heart. Yet he remains unaware of the truth of the situation--that his own inner blackness kills the flowers.[14] Instead he transfers the blame to her; she must take his sin upon herself and atone for it.

To effect such an atonement, Giovanni must bring Beatrice fully under his control by destroying her dark mystery and transforming her into a pale maiden who will never allow him to doubt his own masculine power over her.

Giovanni now sees the antidote he has accepted from Baglioni as the perfect tool for transforming Beatrice into a creature whose sexuality he may possess without fear that

his masculinity will be dominated and destroyed. This obsessive drive for control, which is precisely the characteristic he finds most threatening in Beatrice, is evident during his last meeting with her in the garden even before she drinks the antidote. His rage alone is enough to whip her into submission:

> 'Accursed one!' cried he, with venomous scorn and anger...'[T]hou has severed me...from the warmth of life, and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!'
>
> 'Giovanni!' exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunderstruck.
>
> 'Yes, poisonous thing!' repeated Giovanni beside himself with passion. 'Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself,--a world's wonder of hideous monstrosity!' (1002)

His own "venomous" nature destroys Beatrice by denying her reality. She is "thunderstruck" because she assumed Giovanni was sincere when he agreed to judge her by her words alone and not by her appearance, but his vicious outburst makes her realize her error. Beatrice's whole life has been a sacrifice to the will of one man--her father; therefore, she responds to Giovanni's tyranny with forlorn acquiescence: "'Yes; spurn me!--tread upon me!--kill me! Oh, what is death, after such words as thine?'" (1003). She sees no alternative to sacrifice and is willing to allow Giovanni full sway, just as she has allowed her father to

manipulate her all her life.

Not surprisingly, her reaction overcomes Giovanni's wrath by putting him once again in a position of control and dominance: "There now came across him a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself" (1003). She is properly pliable and agrees to be the first to drink the antidote--another sacrificial act, for although there is no explicit evidence to suggest that she knows the antidote will be fatal, the "peculiar emphasis" she gives to the words "'I will drink--but do thou await the result'" (1004), suggests that she suspects as much. Thus, she resigns herself to death and saves Giovanni's life at the same time.

Beatrice's death is the result of the evil motives of the three men: Giovanni desires her sexuality but fears it will destroy him unless he is able to make her a proper woman--an angel who bends to his every whim; Baglioni directs his professional jealousy against her instead of against her father; and Rappaccini demands that she be "obedient enough to do his bidding, and compliant enough to be molded to his standards."[15] They take their revenge on Beatrice instead of trying to exorcise the demons of their own natures. Beatrice does not heal them, either, but she does save them, in a sense, because they are able to escape acknowledging their own sin. As in Hawthorne's novels, the female bears the devastating--and in this case fatal--burden of male sin and guilt.

"The Artist of the Beautiful"

Hawthorne published "The Artist of the Beautiful" in 1844, two years after his marriage to Sophia. Since the subject of the story is the artist's grappling with an unappreciative world and with romantic love, an issue made prominent by Hawthorne's marriage, the parallels to the author's biography are clear. Critics have yet to agree upon what we may conclude concerning Hawthorne's attitudes toward his own art as they are represented in the story, but they have generally stressed Hawthorne's ambivalence about the artist's social role[16] and ignored the issue of romantic love. Their focus instead has been upon the artist's internal conflict between his dedication to the world of the spirit and to the world of time, material, and "utilitarian coarseness" (909).

Certainly this conflict was Hawthorne's own. As he tells us in the preface to Mosses from an Old Manse, the very room in the Old Manse where this and the other stories in the volume were written was, when he first saw it, "blackened with the smoke of unnumbered years, and made still blacker by the grim prints of Puritan ministers that hung around. These worthies looked strangely like bad angels, or, at least, like men who had wrestled so continually and so sternly with the devil, that somewhat of his sooty fierceness had been imparted to their own visages" (1124-25). Unable to practice his art in the presence of

these patriarchs, who viewed his artistic pursuits as the devil's own idleness, he simply got rid of them:

> They had all vanished now. A cheerful coat of paint, and golden-tinted paper-hangings, lighted up the small apartment...In place of the grim prints, there was the sweet and lovely head of one of Raphael's Madonnas...(1125).

He exchanges the condemnation of his Puritan forefathers for the bright inspiration of the Virgin. In a sense, Owen Warland, the artist in Hawthorne's tale, makes the same exchange.

Owen, who "from the time that his little fingers could grasp a pen-knife,...had been remarkable for a delicate ingenuity" (909), has taken over a "watchmaker's business" from the man to whom he was apprenticed, Peter Hovenden. Owen's relatives and Mr. Hovenden had hoped that such an occupation would channel "his strange ingenuity...[into] utilitarian purposes" (910). Nevertheless, Owen sits in what is now his watchmaker's shop striving to create the beautiful in much the same way that Hawthorne sits in his ancient Puritan parsonage, surrounded by symbols of the Protestant work ethic, striving to write stories. In addition, Owen's artistic pursuits, like Hawthorne's, have "destroyed [his] credit with that steady and matter-of-fact class of people who hold the opinion that time is not to be trifled with, whether considered as the medium of advancement and prosperity in this world, or preparation for the next" (910). Both artists must struggle to maintain

what they feel is their artistic integrity while confronting a public which has only contempt for the impractical, lofty enterprises of the spirit.

Owen is ultimately led to victory by his good angel--his muse--Mr. Hovenden's daughter, Annie. Owen has claimed her as his inspiration, as the Madonna who must replace the "matter-of-fact" people in his psyche: "'...if I strive to put the very spirit of Beauty into form, and give it motion, it is for thy sake alone'" (911), he murmurs when he sees her outside his shop window. However, Annie is no painting to be hung on a wall, but a real woman, whose real presence arouses Owen sexually, a fact he cannot reconcile with his perception of her as the inspiration of his art. He admits that the "fluttering of the nerves" her appearance causes, "made his hand tremble too violently to proceed with such delicate labor" (911). Thus, she is both a blessing and a curse, creator and destroyer, but nothing in between. Her sexual attractiveness destroys Owen's art as certainly as it engenders it.

As long as he worships Annie from a distance, Owen creates successfully:

> The night was now his time for the slow process of recreating the one Idea, to which all his intellectual activity referred itself. Always at the approach of dusk, he stole into the town, locked himself within his shop, and wrought with patient delicacy of touch, for many hours...Daylight...seemed to have an intrusiveness that interfered with his pursuits (916).

Daylight brings not only the intrusiveness of those who "depend upon main strength and reality...to earn [their] bread" (908), but also the intrusiveness of his own sexual promptings if he should chance to meet Annie in the street. Closeting her in his imagination, like a painting on a wall, is best for his art.

From one of these productive, nighttime "fits of torpor, he was aroused by the entrance of Annie Hovenden, who came into the shop with the freedom of a customer, and also with something of the familiarity of a childish friend. She had worn a hole through her silver thimble, and wanted Owen to repair it" (916-17). Here is Owen's chance to bring his good angel to his bosom. Annie is not a dark, exotic woman who, free from the restraints of a father or a husband, takes on an identity and authority of her own. She does not threaten Owen in this way, for, as the hole in her thimble attests, she only sits at her father's fireside and sews, as a proper woman should.

Initially, Owen seizes his opportunity:

> ...the thought stole into his mind, that this young girl possessed the gift to comprehend him, better than all the world beside. And what a help and strength would it be to him, in his lonely toil, if he could gain the sympathy of the only being whom he loved! (917)

At this point the artist does not realize that the "being whom he love[s]" exists only in his imagination. Annie the

muse is not Annie the flesh and blood woman. She herself forces Owen to this realization, however, when she reaches out for his delicate creation. Her gentle touch destroys the work of a lifetime, and a "convulsion of intense rage and anguish...writhed across [Owen's] features":

> 'Go, Annie,' murmured he, 'I have deceived myself...I yearned for sympathy--and thought--and fancied--and dreamed--that you might give it me. But you lack the talisman, Annie, that should admit you into my secrets...you have ruined me!' (918)

This verbal abuse foreshadows Aylmer's "Go, prying woman, go!" in "The Birth-mark." The real Annie, like the real Georgiana, is unacceptable to the artist. "He had erred," the narrator tells us, but if we assume the narrator intends to castigate Owen for his mistake, we have erred. Instead, he maintains the artist's mistake was "pardonabl[e]; for if any human spirit could have sufficiently reverenced the processes so sacred in his eyes, it must have been a woman's" (918). True to Hawthornean form, the male artist is absolved by blaming the woman and, in this case, everyone related to her--her father, her fiance, and her baby.

Owen's subsequent life of "riot" and "abuse of wine" (918-19) are also the direct result of the "ruin" Annie caused. He is saved only by resurrecting her immaterial image, which, once restored to its former place in his imagination, leads him back to his art.

Annie, in the meantime, marries the "practical" and

virile Robert Danforth. Her disturbing, intrusive sexuality will no longer disturb Owen or destroy his art. His image of her is safe. Owen Warland has stumbled upon a solution to the artist's dilemma:

> Owen Warland's story would have been no tolerable representation of the troubled life of those who strive to create the Beautiful, if, amid all other thwarting influences, love had not interposed to steal the cunning from his hand. Outwardly, he had been no ardent or enterprising lover; the career of his passion had confined its tumults and vicissitudes so entirely within the artist's imagination that Annie herself had scarcely more than a woman's intuitive perception of it. But, in Owen's view, it covered the whole field of his life...he had persisted in connecting all his dreams of artistic success with Annie's image; she was the visible shape in which the spiritual power that he worshipped, and on whose altar he hoped to lay a not unworthy offering, was made manifest to him. Of course he had deceived himself; there were no such attributes in Annie Hovenden as his imagination had endowed her with. She, in the aspect which she wore to his inward vision, was as much a creation of his own, as the mysterious piece of mechanism would be were it ever realized (921).

Look, but don't touch![17] Cling to the image of the madonna for artistic inspiration, but let a "common" man have her body. As Beatrice Rappaccini explained, "Though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature." The artist must find a way to use the spiritual gifts of woman without contaminating himself with her flesh, for, as one critic has said, "Complete physical possession puts a man

under the spell of [the woman's] deadly innocence and yields him up to Satan, who, to Hawthorne, is somehow a close relative to the...sexually attractive woman.[18]

"The Birth-mark"

"The Birth-mark" has caused nearly as much furor and diversity of opinion among Hawthorne critics as has "Rappaccini's Daughter." Most critical studies, even feminist ones, continue to focus upon the male protagonist of the story. Aylmer has been called noble,[19] idealistic,[20] and devilish.[21] Judith Fetterley sees him as a man who, horrified and repulsed by his wife's body--that is, her femaleness, of which the birthmark is the symbol--demonstrates "how to murder your wife and get away with it."[22] Nina Baym also views Aylmer's action as "murder: sex murder. For [him],...the hand-shaped mark on his wife's cheek becomes the locus of his demonic energies."[23]

What all these critics have in common is that they all see Aylmer's dedication to science as the motivation behind the experiment he performs on his wife. Some readers judge this dedication to be noble, and others, despicable. Fetterley views Aylmer's obsession as simply another vehicle for the destruction of women. Few critics, however, have emphasized the fact that Aylmer has the personality of an artist. Although he is a scientist, he is described in terms that could apply equally well to an artist:

...it was not unusual for the love of

> science to rival the love of woman, in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart, might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which...would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force, and perhaps make new worlds for himself (764).

Since the life of the intellect, imagination, and spirit is the life of the artist as well as of the scientist, Aylmer parallels Hawthorne's personal situation. Further, Hawthorne wrote the story soon after his marriage to Sophia. Aylmer, also a newlywed, must now find a way to reconcile his dedication to his work with his husbandly responsibilities. Both the author and his male protagonist devoted themselves exclusively to their work over a long period of time before marrying. Aylmer had shut himself up in his laboratory, and Hawthorne, in what he called his "dismal and squalid chamber...under the eaves," referring to his room in the Manning house, where he lived with his mother and sisters. Further, the same curiosity and desire for an ideal love that Aylmer exhibits can be found in Hawthorne's letters to Sophia before their marriage:

> Do you not feel, dearest, that we live above time and apart from time, even while we seem to be in the midst of time? Our affection diffuses eternity round about us.[24]

This insistence upon a love that transcends time is implicit in Aylmer's attitude toward Georgiana as well.

Aylmer's impulse, like Hawthorne's, is to create perfect works of art; likewise, both seek recognition and although they have gained a certain amount of admiration, both have become ultimately dissatisfied with their work. The narrator assures us that Aylmer "had made discoveries in the elemental powers of nature, that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe," but that he eventually "laid aside" his most compelling pursuit, "the wonders of the human frame," because he finally recognized "the truth...that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us...to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make" (769). Aylmer relinquishes the effort to create precisely because, according to his own standards, his efforts have failed. Thus, he "left his laboratory,... cleared his...countenance from the furnace smoke,...washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife" (764).

Georgiana performs the same essential function in her relationship with Aylmer as Hawthorne's later heroines perform for their men. She undergoes a test similar to the one Phoebe underwent at the hands of Holgrave in the Pyncheon garden. Aylmer, like Holgrave, must convince himself that his woman is properly appreciative of his

talent and sufficiently dependent upon his male power and authority. Also, since strong correspondences exist between Hawthorne and Aylmer, we may assume that Hawthorne's sympathies lie with Aylmer and that Georgiana's primary function is to become a sympathetic, trusting audience for her husband, the frustrated artist, who, because he feels somehow inadequate, has renounced his "art." Ultimately, however, she fails her test.

What Aylmer wants is assurance from his wife that she has absolute confidence in his talent. Instead, Georgiana exhibits only her willingness to submit to his scheme. Her lack of trust in her husband's intellectual and imaginative gifts, however, is obvious from the beginning. Even when she gives him permission to perform his experiment on her, she doubts his ability:

> 'If there be the remotest possibility of it,' continued Georgiana, 'let the attempt be made, at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me...' (768).

Clearly, she fears the experiment will fail. She views the attempt as dangerous and success as a remote possibility. Her willingness to die rather than live as an object of horror in her husband's eyes endears her to Aylmer, but her mere submission is not enough. He must have from her a total belief in his creative ability: "'Noblest--dearest--tenderest wife!'" he says in response to her previous expression of fear. "'Doubt not my power...I feel myself

fully competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow'" (768). But this reassurance merely elicits a faint smile from Georgiana. She remains a skeptical audience.

This skepticism is the flaw Aylmer intends to purge from her. In order to achieve his goal, "he [leads] her over the threshold" (769) into a world of his own making, where she becomes his captive audience, before whom he parades his works of "art." He expects her to praise these proofs of his talent, "for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her, within which no evil might intrude" (770).

In the rooms where Aylmer confines Georgiana "airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her...[in an] illusion...almost perfect enough to warrant the belief, that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world" (771). For his next trick, Aylmer asks his wife to "cast her eyes" upon a dirt-filled flower pot. When she does, a flower grows immediately from the soil. This miracle almost convinces Georgiana of her husband's awesome talent: "'It is magical!'" she exclaims. But when she plucks the flower, at her husband's urging, it withers and blackens under her touch. "To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention" (771). The result is another failure--Georgiana's features emerge "blurred and indefinable" on

Aylmer's metal plate, which he tosses angrily "into a jar of corrosive acid" (772).

In the long intervals between Aylmer's displays, Georgiana commits the ultimate sin--she rummages through the books in his scientific library:

> ...the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand...The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical life (774).

This book is Aylmer's masterpiece, but Georgiana, although impressed, is not quite the "sympathetic reader" that Aylmer (and Hawthorne) so desperately desires. Within the folio she has discovered her husband's limitations and shortcomings:

> Georgiana, as she read, reverenced Aylmer, and loved him more profoundly than ever, <u>but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore</u>. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed (774, emphasis mine).

Aylmer's plan has backfired. His captive audience is more skeptical than ever. Of course, when he discovers his wife in tears, her face upon the open book, he reacts with thinly disguised anger: "'It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books,' said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased" (775). Even

Georgiana's hasty assurance that the book has made her worship him more than ever does not placate him. He is not interested in being worshipped as a man whose "spirit [is] burthened with clay," but as a god, whose creative genius is beyond question. Thus, he bids Georgiana save her worship until he is able to prove himself to her by removing her birthmark and with it every vestige of her doubt: "'Ah! wait for this one success;...then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it.'"

Still outraged by Georgiana's discovery of his past failures, Aylmer returns to his laboratory, where he prepares to play his trump card. However, when he discovers that his wife has followed him, he lashes out at her in a fit of rage:

> 'Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?...Would you throw the blight of that fatal birth-mark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!' (776)

Finally, then, the truth emerges--the birthmark symbolizes Georgiana's inability to become a perfect audience, a reader, who, through her absolute faith in the power and authority of the artist, validates his art and, by extension, his very existence. Georgiana is a "prying woman" whose ability to read perceptively renders Aylmer's role as interpreter of his own work superfluous. Instead of becoming his ideal reader, Georgiana has forced him to face his own failures and inadequacy.

Before she drinks his potion, Georgiana realizes that she has become Aylmer's latest book, and that if it is a failure, it will be destroyed. She has deep misgivings about his effort; nevertheless, she harbors a hope for his success:

> ...with her whole spirit, she prayed, that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment, she knew well, it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march--ever ascending--and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before (777).

In one sense, Aylmer does succeed--the birthmark is gone. But he also fails--his audience is dead. Yet with her dying words Georgiana legitimizes her husband's art: "'You have aimed loftily!--you have done nobly! Do not repent, that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best that earth could offer'" (780). These words give both Aylmer and Hawthorne permission to pursue the life of the imagination. Hawthorne, of course, allows himself a much larger measure of aesthetic perfection than he allowed his protagonist.

As several critics have suggested, Hawthorne's intent may have been to condemn Aylmer's self-absorbed dedication to his work. However, considering Hawthorne's frustration over women writers, an effort to impress upon women the necessity of passivity and trust in their relationships with men seems more likely. His own life as an artist would

certainly have been easier if all women would have learned this lesson.

* * *

"The Birth-mark" is not the first story in which Hawthorne deals with the theme of the failed artist who relinquishes his work because of an unappreciative public. As I have suggested throughout this study, Hawthorne felt deeply ambivalent toward his chosen vocation as an artist. Wanting it to be a transcendent occupation, taking him above the mundane and vulgar scribblers he despised, he nonetheless envied more popular writers their success. Measured by one standard, Hawthorne succeeded as an artist; measured by the other--financial success, popularity--he was a dismal failure. That failure also seemed to him to reinforce the opinion of his ancestors who, in their Calvinistic souls, would have dismissed him as a dreamer and an idler--of the devil's party.

His women characters bear the burden of Hawthorne's ambivalence toward his art and his own confused attitude concerning his Puritan forebears. They become, I have argued, the fictive embodiments of his own biographical dilemma. And perhaps no where is that dilemma more allegorically figured forth than in his early tale, "The Devil in Manuscript," a tale which illuminates, through the final image of literary conflagration, the depth of Hawthorne's insecurity about himself as a writer.

The story is Hawthorne's early statement on the artist's position in an essentially hostile society. A confidence in his own talent is simply not enough for Oberon, the writer in the story. He must have critical approval as well. Unable to find a sympathetic audience for his work, he begins to see something demonic in his manuscripts and sets fire to the unpublished stories in a frenzy of exasperation:

> '...of all the seventeen booksellers, only one has vouchsafed even to read my tales; and he...has the impertinence to criticize them, proposing what he calls vast improvements, and concluding, after a general sentence of condemnation, with the definitive assurance that he will not be concerned on any terms...These people have put me so out of conceit with the tales, that I loathe the very thought of them, and actually experience a physical sickness of the stomach, whenever I glance at them on the table. I tell you there is a demon in them! I anticipate a wild enjoyment in seeing them in the blaze; such as I should feel in taking vengeance on an enemy, or destroying something noxious' (332).

That Oberon sees a "demon" in his manuscripts is consistent with Hawthorne's underlying belief that writing is sinful, the devil's work. The Hawthorne who accepts his forefathers' judgments easily blames his failure on the devil. After all, a truly godly man would not choose writing as a vocation in the first place. Hawthorne himself set fire to several of his unpublished works. Recalling his early experience as an aspiring author, he wrote in a letter

from his mother's house in Salem: "Here I have written many tales,--many that have been burned to ashes."[25] The 1851 preface to Twice-Told Tales also includes a description of the destruction of some early unpublished tales, and the account closely resembles "The Devil in Manuscript." Two early Hawthorne biographers also confirm Hawthorne's Oberon-like frustration over publishers.[26]

However, Oberon's (and Hawthorne's) decision to burn his work, to consign it to hell where it belongs, is based on the lack of fame he has been able to achieve through his art, not on the guilt he feel about being a writer. Implicit in Hawthorne's reasoning, then, is the belief that a sympathetic audience of the type he later creates for himself in the form of passive blonde virgins and dark ladies forced to become submissive, justifies the sin of writing--or at least makes the sin worth the risk. Thus, he creates Phoebe as an audience for Holgrave, Zenobia for Coverdale, Priscilla for Hollingsworth, Hilda for Kenyon, and Miriam for Donatello. Although neither Hollingsworth nor Donatello is an artist, the woman validates each one's male authority either by inspiring him or merely by becoming a patient listener.

Muses and mistresses, admiring and mute, Hawthorne's pale women vindicate the male artist against the charge of unmanliness implicit in the Calvinistic critique of the imagination, of writing, of everything Hawthorne, as artist, professed to value. Articulate, passionate, creative, and

real, the dark women threaten sexually and artistically, confirming the weakness of the men they confront--Dimmesdale, Maule, Coverdale, Kenyon, Giovanni, Aylmer. To that list one must, finally, add the name of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a nineteenth-century writer and man who could neither believe nor rest content with his disbelief in the larger-than-life women he created but then felt compelled to destroy.

NOTES

1. Philip Rahv, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Partisan Review, 8 (1941), p. 369. Gloria Erlich presents a similar argument in "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," New England Quarterly, 41 (1968), 163-79.

2. Rahv, p. 367.

3. Frederick C. Crews, The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 134.

4. Frederick C. Crews, "Giovanni's Garden," American Transcendental Quarterly, 16 (1964), 407-08.

5. F.L. Gwynn, "Hawthorne's Rappaccini's Daughter," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 7 (1952), 217-19.

6. Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), p. 67.

7. Judith Fryer, The Faces of Eve (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 41.

8. Richard Brenzo, "Beatrice Rappaccini: A Victim of Male Love and Horror," American Literature, 48 (1976), p.152.

9. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," in Hawthorne: Tales and Sketches (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1982), p. 976. All future references to Hawthorne's short stories are from this edition and will be included in the text in parentheses.

10. Brenzo, p. 153.

11. My argument consistently parallels Brenzo's.

12. Ibid., p. 159.

13. Ibid., p. 157.

14. Again, this is Brenzo's argument.

15. Ibid., p. 163.

16. Rudolphe Von Abele, "Baby and Butterfly," Kenyon Review, 15 (1953), 280-92. As Von Abele sees it, "...the final scene of the tale is a dramatic meeting between art and life. A product of heterosexual union is put over against one of androgynous solitude, and from the opposition the former clearly comes away triumphant." Millicent Bell in Hawthorne's View of the Artist (New

York: State University of New York Press, 1962) and Frederick Crews in The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) present similar arguments. Crews invokes Hawthorne's biography when he states, "We shall hardly be amazed when Hawthorne, unlike Owen, finds it impossible to be an artist any longer without making embarrassed apologies to imaginary critics" (p. 170).

17. This phrase is from Gloria Erlich in "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," New England Quarterly, 41 (1968), p. 178.

18. Ibid., p. 179.

19. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction (New York: Crofts, 1943), pp. 104-06; Also, Thomas F. Walsh, "Character Complexity in Hawthorne's 'The Birth-mark,'" Emerson Society Quarterly, 23 (1961), pp. 12-15.

20. F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 253.

21. Hans-Joachim Lang, "How Ambiguous is Hawthorne?" Freie Gesellschaft (1962), 195-220. Rpt. in Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. A.N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 86-98.

22. Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 22-25.

23. Nina Baym, "Thwarted Nature: Nathaniel Hawthorne as Feminist," American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), p. 65.

24. Quoted in David Baxter, "'The Birth-mark' in Perspective," Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal, 4 (1974), 235-36.

25. Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 36.

26. George Parsons Lathrop, A Study of Hawthorne (Boston: Osgood, 1876), p. 135. See also Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1893. (Rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1968), p. 68.

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