REWRITING WOMEN HAWTHORNE, FULLER, BRONTE

REWRITING WOMEN: NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND THE WORKS OF MARGARET FULLER AND CHARLOTTE BRONTE

By

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the disparaging remarks Hawthorne made about the inferior work of the "damned mob of scribbling women" he was both interested in, and ultimately threatened by his feminine counterparts. By their very existence female authors threatened to displace him, since their writings challenged the cultural ideal of womanhood, an ideal created by the traditional patriarchal aesthetic he participated in. Hawthorne dealt with this threat by rewriting, and therefore controlling those he feared. In The Blithedale Romance he fictionalized the life of the nineteenth century feminist, Margaret Fuller. As "Zenobia" Fuller is depicted as a tragic, sinful figure who strains fruitlessly against the natural bonds of her sex. Although Hawthorne is believed to have turned once again to Fuller's life for inspiration when he wrote The Marble Faun, this thesis argues that He was also influenced by Villette, Charlotte Bronte's final novel. The similarity between these two works suggests that Hawthorne rewrote, re-interpreted portions of Bronte's work in his own novel in an effort to establish control over a voice which threatened the primacy of his own.

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In his book The Production of Personal Life Joel Pfister writes that he has "long thought it curious that some of Hawthorne's 'mosses' from 1843 and 1844 seem dramatically at odds with the idyllic domesticity described in his introduction and their [the Hawthornes'] notebooks" (Pfister 14). Indeed, "The Birthmark" (1843), one of the most well known of those "mosses" is a thinly veiled depiction of sexual tension and control within the family circle. As such it almost irresistibly tempts one into biographical speculation: it is, as Pfister has observed, an odd production since Hawthorne was simultaneously writing to Margaret Fuller that he and his wife " . . . have been very happy this winter . . . and should consider ourselves perfectly so now, only that we find ourselves making advances all the time" (Hawthorne, "Letters", 304).

There is, however, evidence to suggest that Hawthorne carried the germs of "The Birthmark" in his brain long before he and Sophia Peabody settled into connubial bliss or unease. In his notebook for 1837 he jotted:

> A person to be in the possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand; he

tries to make it better, and ruins it entirely:--

> A person to spend all his life and splendid talents in trying to achieve something naturally impossible -- as to make a conquest over nature -- (Hawthorne, "American Notebooks", 312-313)

These two jottings, which ultimately formed the basis of "The Birthmark", were connected by the feminine: as man's possession she is something which "he tries to make . . . better, and ruins . . . entirely"; as "Mother" Nature, she is that which he must conquer. Thus the man's struggle to conquer nature simultaneously becomes a thinly veiled effort to possess and conquer the feminine.

I wish to examine this story in detail because I believe that it may be considered to be a precursor to Hawthorne's later works: the overt theme of the control and "improvement" of the female later becomes a covert action taken by Hawthorne himself in both The Blithedale Romance (1852) and The Marble Faun (1860). It is as if Hawthorne became the protagonist of his early story as he subtly and silently edited, rewrote, and otherwise remade two women and their works. To understand this process of "rewriting", however, I must first return to "The Birthmark" itself.

In "The Birthmark" Aylmer, a "man of science" becomes obsessed with a tiny, hand-shaped, blood red birthmark on his wife Georgiana's otherwise perfect cheek. Since Georgiana "'came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature . . . this

slightest possible defect, which we hesitate to term a defect or a beauty, shocks [Aylmer] as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection'" (Hawthorne, "The Birthmark", 119). Aylmer's evident repulsion induces in Georgiana a state of self-loathing. Secluded by her husband she willingly submits to a series of experiments designed to remove her "'imperfection'". The "cure' kills her. During the final tableau (in which Georgiana dies the calm, languishing death which was **de rigueur** in Victorian fiction) the wife comforts her husband/murderer, who has "aimed loftily . . . [and] . . . done nobly." Her exhortations absolve him from guilt: "Do not repent that, with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best that earth could offer" (130).

It is evident that Georgiana's birthmark is meant to symbolize her mortal being, the essence which includes both her mortality and her sexuality. The narrator tells us that:

> The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust (120).

Judith Fetterley writes that the birthmark is "something not acquired but inherent, one of Georgiana's givens, in fact equivalent to her" (Fetterley 25). It is described in terms which are reminiscent of a woman's reproductive organs: "a crimson stain upon the snow", it is called "the bloody hand" by Georgiana's fastidious detractors (Hawthorne 119). This

obvious connection between the birthmark and female physiology indicates that "the object of Aylmer's obsessive revulsion . . . is Georgiana's 'physical system.' and what defines this particular system is the fact that it is female" (Fetterley 25). Indeed, we are told that by ". . . selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow,decay and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object . . ." (Hawthorne 120). Georgiana's imperfection is her ineradicable femaleness.

In spite of Hawthorne's attempt to back-date the story (it is set in the eighteenth, rather than the nineteenth, century) Aylmer's efforts to "correct" his wife are highly topical. Joel Pfister notes that "The Birthmark" reflects nineteenth century middle class America's "Compulsion to remake the female body". According to Pfister, this compulsion "is not a natural manifestation of a universal male psyche; rather, it says much about historically produced gender roles" (Pfister 29). The production and definition of the female 'role' was not a nineteenth century innovation; what makes that era significant is the proliferation of a social class whose very existence was dependent upon that role. Historian Stephen Blumin claims that the formation of the middle class was not simply linked to women's work: "it **was** women's work. By mid-century, increasingly privatized and 'feminized' emotional relations within family life

distinguished families as middle class" (3).

Nineteenth century science sturdily buttressed the conviction that this rigid definition of sexual roles was natural. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenburg point out that contemporary science turned the woman into "the product and prisoner of her reproductive system." They observe that:

> Medical wisdom easily supplied hypothetical mechanisms to explain the interconnection between the female's organs of generation and the functioning of her other organs. The uterus, it was assumed, was connected to the central nervous system: shocks to the nervous system might alter the reproductive cycle -- might even mark the gestating fetus -- while changes in the reproductive cycle shaped emotional states (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 335).

The theory that all of a woman's energies were focused upon reproduction led, in turn, to her exclusion from the public sphere. Any attempt to step outside of her biologically designated sphere would be detrimental, both to herself and to the next generation, which would be fatally weakened by the redirection of natural energies most properly directed towards their production and nurturance.

Thus the woman's social role was defined by her reproductive organs. As the nineteenth century biologized the woman's role the woman herself was effectively pathologized: "Doctors connected not only the paralyses and headaches of the hysteric to uterine disease but also ailments in virtually

every part of the body" (335). Any attempt to evade the woman's natural role would inevitably result in mental or physical illness. Even in the fulfilment of her role the woman was made weaker than the man by her regular physiological upheavals and the inherent physical, emotional and intellectual instability which made her unsuitable for the public sphere.

The woman's inherent pathology stemmed from her sexual organs and could only be "cured" by the control and manipulation of those organs. This conviction lead to scientifically sanctioned brutality: in 1843, the same year "The Birthmark" was published, J. Marion Sims began performing the first experimental gynaecological surgeries upon female slaves. Clitoridectomies, ovariotomies " . . . and new techniques of sexual surgery were developed to obtain 'scientific' mastery over the 'flaws' of female sexuality and procreativity" (Pfister 22).

The sexual control of women is, of course, intimately linked to the maintenance of the social roles discussed above. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg point out that these 'empirical' observations were used "with particular vehemence in those areas in which social change implied stress in existing social arrangements" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 332). "Scientific" pronouncements, like the surgical experiments which are their counterparts, are attempts " . .

. not simply to re-order a body, but to require a body to conform to a **symbolic role** , a compensatory role, that middle class women, in these times of cultural stress, were directed to play" (Pfister 57). The control of the body, of the sexual organs, was actually an attempt to **inscribe and control meaning.** Woman (and woman's body) meant wife, mother and home.

That Hawthorne had ambivalent feelings about this matter is clear. On one hand "The Birthmark" may be considered to be a feminist allegory, since Aylmer's attempts to edit his wife's sexuality and re-inscribe it with his own version of perfection ostensibly meets with failure. Joel Pfister maintains that "we might . . . take Hawthorne's postnuptial tale as an allegorical **warning** to middle class culture . . . [that such inscription] . . . can be deadly, particularly for women" (54). At the same time however, Aylmer's "failure" may also be considered a success since that which he most abhorred -- Georgiana's essential, feminine self -- has been destroyed. Judith Fetterley writes:

> It is testimony at once to Hawthorne's ambivalence, his seeking to cover with one hand what he uncovers with the other, and the pervasive sexism of our culture that most readers would describe "The Birthmark" as a story of failure rather than as the success story it really is -- the demonstration of how to murder your wife and get away with it (Fetterley 22).

It is not difficult to discern the source of

Hawthorne's ambivalence. His sketch "The Old Manse", which prefaced the collection of stories in which "The Birthmark" was reprinted, extolled the virtues of the Hawthornes' first home. Hawthorne's evident endorsement of domesticity, already mentioned above, undermines his critique: Joel Pfister points out that "Hawthorne's allegory displaces middle class discourse from the story; his critique does not confront this discourse directly" (Pfister 58). Hawthorne, in Julia Fetterley's words, "cover[s] with one hand what he uncovers with the other" by presenting the story as an allegory of failed idealism instead of explicitly examining the power that Aylmer exerts over his wife.

Fetterley notes that Aylmer's idealism is a mechanism "whereby hatred can be disguised as love, neurosis can be disguised as science, murder can be disguised as idealization and success can be disguised as failure" (Fetterley 23). Aylmer is obsessed with Georgiana's **physical** appearance: she is an "exemplum of woman as beautiful object, reduced to and defined by her body" (24). Aylmer's perfect quest for the feminine ideal is actually a disguised hatred of the feminine. By killing Georgiana he eliminates the feminine being. What takes its place is the perfect possession, the physical object. The fact that Aylmer separates the soul from that body is immaterial: although we are told that he has "failed" he has, in fact, succeeded, since he has vanquished the

abhorred feminine and converted his "possession" -- Georgiana's body -- into the perfect object he desires.

Aylmer's act of inscription -- his attempt to fix Georgiana in the role of the object of his design -- initially seems to be an act much more drastic than those of Hawthorne's medical contemporaries. By controlling woman's reproductive organs, nineteenth century medical men controlled the woman's meaning, identifying her social role with her biological one. When it stopped short of surgery this ideology, while limiting, did not routinely result in physical death. Yet the two modes of inscription -- the medical and the fictional -- are linked: the identification of the woman's biological role with her social role effectively precludes any other. Aylmer's act of inscription, his elimination of the feminine, precludes any other role but that of the Aylmer-perfected (and therefore created) object.

Aylmer's act of inscription, like those of Hawthorne's medical contemporaries, is based on the assumption that the woman is inherently flawed. "In Hawthorne's analysis the idealization of women stems from a vision of them as hideous and unnatural; it is a form of compensation, an attempt to bring them up to the level of nature" (Fetterley 25-26). Yet the assumption that women are somehow beneath nature is a paradox, since **Nature,** "our great creative Mother", is also feminine. Therefore by conquering the feminine (in the shape

of Georgiana), Aylmer is assuming control of Nature herself.

> [A]t an earlier period, [Aylmer] had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man . . . . The unwilling recognition of the truth . . . that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine . . . keeps her own secrets . . . (Hawthorne 122).

Symbolically, Aylmer refers to his hitherto unprofitable attempts to fully understand the way in which nature effects human genesis "because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana" (122).

Judith Fetterley points out that this passage "is striking for its undercurrent of jealousy, hostility, and frustration toward a specifically female force" (Fetterley 27). Aylmer is consumed with what, for lack of a better term, can only be described as womb envy. His attempts to match and eventually to surpass "our great creative Mother" may be seen as efforts to appropriate the maternal role: the curtained room in which he secludes his wife is the prototype of an incubator, an artificial womb. During Georgiana's initial tour of the laboratory Aylmer presents her with his imperfect children -- pictures which seem to be, but never are, real life and growing flowers which wither at a touch. His

journals present a long record of miscarriages and stillbirths: "His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach" (Hawthorne 126). This separation from the act of creation produces in Aylmer a sense of frustration and exclusion:

> Out of Aylmer's jealousy at feeling less than Nature and thus less than woman -- for if Nature is woman, woman is also Nature and has, by virtue of her biology, a power he does not -- comes his obsessional program for perfecting Georgiana. Believing he is less, he has to convince himself he is more . . . for he creates in spite of, against, and finally better than nature (Fetterley 28).

Aylmer projects "imperfection" onto Georgiana, who, as his possession, is an object to be imbued with meaning, responded to and acted upon. Her birthmark is, according to observers, either charming or hideous. Although her husband declares her spirit bears "no taint of imperfection" her body is a possession which is his to perfect.

Under her husband's influence Georgiana accepts this evaluation of herself.

> And as she identifies with him in her attitude toward herself, so she comes to worship him for his hatred of her and for his refusal to tolerate her existence. The process of projection is neatly reversed: he locates in her everything he cannot accept in himself, and she attributes to him all that is good and then worships in him the image of her own humanity (32).

Georgiana's acceptance of Aylmer as the arbiter of perfection makes her a willing participant in her own death. Her act of

self-destruction, taken at her husband's behest, is an acknowledgement of his nobility. "Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honourable love -- so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthier nature than he had dreamed of" (Hawthorne 128).

There are significant similarities between the long-suffering, self-abnegating Georgiana and Judith Fetterley's conception of the feminine reader. In her introduction to The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction Fetterley asserts:

> American fiction is male . . . . In such fictions the female reader is co-opted into participation in an experience from which she is explicitly excluded; she is asked to identify with a selfhood that defines itself in opposition to her; she is required to identify against herself (xii).

A subtle form of social coercion makes the female reader, like Georgiana, lift the potion to her lips.

This connection is clearly significant, since a great number of Hawthorne's readers were female; the gift books in which much of his early output was published, were for predominantly feminine consumption. In 1843, the same year "The Birthmark" was published, "Drowne's Wooden Image" appeared in Godey's Lady's Book (Martin 123). Georgiana was the model to which these women aspired: the perfect Victorian wife, she was dutiful, loyal and self effacing. Yet these

exemplary wifely qualities are rewarded by (and, one might argue, result in) death. For this Hawthorne blames neither society's conception of wifely duty nor the "nobility" of manly ambition: Georgiana does only what is right; Aylmer's only crime is the fact that he has overreached himself. The singularly blameless nature of Georgiana's death is a definite product of Hawthorne's own ambivalence.

In an early portion of this chapter I surmised that Hawthorne's ambivalence most probably stemmed from his personal situation: we have seen from his private correspondence to Margaret Fuller that he rigorously extolled the virtues of his traditional marriage. His ambivalence could just as possibly stem from a sense of recognition, since he himself is in the position of Aylmer. Of "The Birthmark" Joel Pfister observes:

> This domestic experiment in the patriarchal production of womanhood has a singularly **literary** quality. Georgiana discovers that the volumes of her husband's "scientific library" contain "chapters full of romance and poetry". That Hawthorne, like others before him, is experimenting with alchemy as a figure for writing is likely (40).

Pfister goes on to argue that Hawthorne,

> is exploring not simply what a literary alchemist does to a woman in marriage a but what a male author figure does, **in spite of** himself, through plot and forms of representation to a woman in his text. He is questioning how the very form of his art, allegory, sets off deadly stereotypes (42).

Even as Hawthorne critiques the methods that inscribe women

with meaning he cannot help but be aware that he, through the act of writing, participates in that inscription. Georgiana is, after all, his creation, imbued with his conception of ideal womanhood. Her meaning is not her own, it is Hawthorne's: as his creation she can only speak her inscribed, allegorical meaning to her female reader. By refusing to confront Aylmer's culpability Hawthorne, in turn, makes the female reader into a Georgiana, since the reader, like Georgiana, is forced to identify with the aspirations which are antithetical to her. This all inclusive creation of the female is, as we shall see, part of an aesthetic theory so pervasive it places all nineteenth century authors (that is, all male authors) in the role of Aylmer.

By casting Hawthorne as Aylmer I have, by necessity, placed him in an unfavourable light. By implication Hawthorne becomes the feminist's ogre, the diabolical "literary alchemist" who destroys as he creates. And yet the Hawthorne-Aylmer analogy is both apt and necessary, for it will allow me to examine the patriarchal philosophy of creation which led to the creation of both "The Birthmark" and, as we shall see below, Hawthorne's re-creation, through fiction, of two of his female colleagues.

Gilbert and Gubar's examination of the philosophy of patriarchal authorship makes it clear that every nineteenth century author (that is, every male author) could fit into the

Aylmer mould. Each author that Gilbert and Gubar mention (and they mention many) finds in the act of imaginative creation a seminal power which not only rivals the gestative powers of women but also, like Aylmer's act of creation, displaces her entirely. Gilbert and Gubar note that,

> the patriarchal notion that the writer "fathers" his text just as God fathered the world is and has been all pervasive in Western literary civilization, so much so that, as Edward Said has shown, the metaphor is built into the very word, **author**, with which writer, deity and **pater familias** are identified (Gilbert and Gubar 4).

In the aesthetic philosophies of Hopkins, Sidney, Shakespeare, Johnson, Coleridge and Ruskin "the poet, like God the Father, is paternalistic ruler of the fictive world he has created" (5). As sole progenitor the male author, with the pen as his organ, can entirely dispense with the woman's creative force. The author usurps the maternal role, making it solely a paternal one. The author/father

> is the owner of his text and of his reader's attention . . . . [H]e is also, of course, the owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes and events -- those brain children -- he has both incarnated in black and white and "bound" in cloth or leather. Thus, because he is an **author**, a "man of letters" he is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner . . . (7).

His mastery necessarily extends to the women of his creation who, as his possessions, may be manipulated and assigned (or, in what may perhaps be a more appropriate term, inscribed

with) meaning.

By now it is obvious that the theory of patriarchal authorship bears more than a casual connection to the plot of "The Birthmark" itself. Through the generative powers of his own imagination, the male author achieves Aylmer's dream: he moves beyond Aylmer's efforts to fathom the workings of "our great creative Mother" to **supplant** her as creator.

Even Aylmer's method of eliminating the feminine is a part of the patriarchal aesthetic. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, one of the main implications of "the paternity/creativity metaphor is the notion . . . that women exist only to be acted on or by men, both as literary and as sensual objects" (8). The ownership of women which men exert as authors is comparative, in its extremity, to that which Aylmer exerts upon Georgiana. "Aylmer", Judith Fetterley reminds us, "is free to experiment on Georgiana, to the point of death, because she is both woman and wife" (Fetterley xiv). J Marion Sims, the gynaecological pioneer mentioned above, also exerted literal ownership by both borrowing and purchasing female slaves to "correct" their internal organs.

It is Georgiana's death, as much as her husband's prior experimentation, which makes "The Birthmark" such a tidy allegory of the patriarchal aesthetic. Through her death at the hands of the "literary alchemist", her husband, Georgiana has been, in Gilbert and Gubar's telling phrase, "killed into

art" (Gilbert and Gubar 18). As a static object, she is inscribed only with her husband's notion of perfection. Though Georgiana is presented by Hawthorne as a victim she willingly accepts that victimhood, for, as Patmore's proverbial "angel in the house" she must never move out of her ideal passivity. Indeed, it is part of the nineteenth century patriarchal aesthetic that the woman hovers near death in a state of ladylike fragility. This was, notes Ruth Brandon ". . . the fashionable decadent view of the ideal woman: passive, submissive and preferably dead" (Brandon 147). It may not be out of place to state, parenthetically at least, that Sophia Hawthorne, in the years before her marriage, suffered from a vaguely defined, and obviously psychosomatic, illness. It would not, perhaps, be fair to speculate that her evident fragility was what made Hawthorne choose her over her active, feminist sister.

It is, in any case, most important to note that this woman-object is effectively stripped of any creative powers since the patriarchal aesthetic, as we have seen, defined the act of intellectual creation as exclusively **masculine.**

> Lacking the pen/penis which would enable them similarly to refute one fiction by another, women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to **mere** properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts because generated solely . . . by male expectations and designs (Gilbert and Gubar 12).

Women writers, by their very nature, were an aberration, since

they presumed to adopt for themselves the creative powers of men. It has already been noted that women in nineteenth century society where defined by a rigid biological/social role. These roles, of course, were defined by men. If the meaning of "woman" is circumscribed to wife and mother then the female writer, who steps into the role of the masculine creator, is taking a step of unseemly, not to mention potentially threatening, presumption.

Hawthorne, it seems, was not immune to this sense of threat to his masculine prerogative. In a letter to his publisher, William Ticknor, he burst out, ". . . 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" (Hawthorne, Letters to Wm. Ticknor, 75). Hawthorne's usually genial and usually mundane letters to Ticknor are remarkable for the virulent excoriations heaped upon women writers. Most of his complaints are framed in economic terms: a man who was trying to support an increasing family in the competitive market of romantic literature, he did not appreciate dabblers. There is also, behind most of these complaints, the sense that Hawthorne felt that his own territory, the territory of the creator, was being infringed upon. What I wish to argue is that Hawthorne reacted to this infringement by "killing into art" both Margaret Fuller and,

in a more complicated sense, Charlotte Bronte. By rewriting the work of one woman, Charlotte Bronte, and by fictionalizing the life of another, Margaret Fuller, he could control women who were uncomfortably threatening his position of creative deity. Although there were no direct confrontations and no documented rivalries, Hawthorne "killed" both women into art, managing their creative threat by becoming their creator.

In the next chapter I shall examine The Blithedale Romance, which contains the most well known of Hawthorne's pen-portraits, to illustrate the concept of rewriting. It is generally agreed that the character "Zenobia" is, but for some small details of appearance and event, a recognizable portrait of Margaret Fuller. Fuller was a feminist writer and lecturer who was well known to Hawthorne. Like most of the other men of her acquaintance Hawthorne found her vast intellectual arsenal intimidating. By fictionalizing her headlong rush into an unconventional lifestyle (a lifestyle which was considered both foolish and sinful by her contemporaries) Hawthorne was able to eliminate any perceived threat by placing her into a conventional role, one which left the fictional male creator (Hawthorne's alter-ego) intact. Margaret Fuller's random and untimely death is rewritten so that it becomes a just and self-imposed punishment for passion, creativity, and unconventionality.

Critic Harry DePuy contends that Hawthorne's final

novel, The Marble Faun contains yet another portrait of Margaret Fuller. Although this is entirely plausible (the novel is set in Italy, the scene of Fuller's moral downfall) Hawthorne may have had yet another woman in mind when he was writing this work. The Marble Faun bears more than a passing resemblance to Charlotte Bronte's Villette, an English novel published seven years earlier. Most contemporary critics found Bronte's novel disturbing; many others also found it indecent. Bronte's frank, though hardly explicit, depiction of passion evidently both fascinated and repelled Hawthorne: he took several of the situations out of Villette and rewrote them for his own novel The Marble Faun. His rewriting is a measure of his discomfort with Bronte's work: following the same pattern he did in The Blithedale Romance he split the heroine in two. All that was passionate, and therefore implicitly sexual, was projected onto one heroine, who would conveniently die or disappear after Hawthorne was finished examining her. The remaining heroine, the peculiar waxen angel who appears so often in Victorian novels, survives, so that Hawthorne, having examined the passionate woman, may return safely to the status quo.

Chapter Two: The Blithedale Romance and the Rewriting of Margaret Fuller

In 1841 Hawthorne succumbed to the utopian spirit of the times and invested a considerable amount of money and the better part of a year in the Brook Farm community in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Although he became one of the farm's trustees he did not recover the money he invested in the project. In spite of this, the unsuccessful undertaking provided grist for his imaginative mill: the commune provided a setting for The Blithedale Romance, (1852), the only one of Hawthorne's novels to be set in contemporary America.

> In the 'Blithedale' of this volume many readers will, probably, suspect a faint and not very faithful shadowing of Brook Farm, in Roxbury, which (now a little more than ten years ago) was occupied and cultivated by a company of socialists. The author does not wish to deny that he had this community in his mind . . . He begs it to be understood, however, that . . . his present concern with the socialist community is merely to establish a theatre . . . where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives (Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, xix).

This disclaimer is disingenuous, since Hawthorne's heroine, Zenobia, is such a transparent portrait of feminist lecturer, writer and activist Margaret Fuller that the readers of 1852 easily recognized her. A bowdlerized and politely selective version of Fuller's memoirs had been published that same year,

making side by side comparisons inevitable. Modern critics such as Joel Pfister, Louise D. Cary and Robert K. Martin all start their discussions of The Blithedale Romance with the assumption that "Zenobia" is a fictional portrait of Margaret Fuller. A public figure before her death in 1850, Fuller sympathized with socialist experiments and even had her own room at Brook Farm, although she never formally joined the community (Fuller, Letters vol. IV, 15). This last piece of information prompts one to disregard Hawthorne's disclaimer entirely.[1]

It will become clear in this chapter that Hawthorne, though he specifically denies it, almost bodily plunked Margaret into a story of his own devising for the purpose of examining and manipulating her character. Fuller is, in Louise D. Cary's words, "an irritant" to both contemporary apologists and modern scholars simply because she "never fit easily into any environment in which she found herself". (Cary, 31) She certainly irritated Hawthorne, who felt compelled to write and therefore re-create her. In keeping with my argument in the previous chapter I shall argue that

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1 To alert the reader of his attempt at portraiture Hawthorne inserts Fuller's name into the text: Miles Coverdale tells Priscilla (who is **not** the character who represents Fuller) that she resembles Fuller. As Priscilla is delivering a letter from Fuller to Coverdale at the time, the allusion is too pointed to miss. To make sure that the reader does not miss it Coverdale mentions that he was reading an issue of The Dial at the time the letter was delivered.

Hawthorne controls Fuller through this act of creation. By manipulating and distorting some of the events of her life and by rewriting her death, Hawthorne makes Fuller "fit easily" into a particular role, although, as his depiction of Zenobia's defiant rigor mortis shows, Hawthorne was well aware of Fuller's recalcitrant nature.

Fuller was only six years Hawthorne's junior. Her extraordinary life was largely the result of an equally extraordinary education. Her childhood was reminiscent of John Stuart Mill's: she, like Mill, was a manufactured genius. Margaret Fuller's father, a prominent lawyer, zealously crammed her with "masculine" subjects such as the classics, mathematics, languages, and European literature. "I was put at once under discipline of considerable severity, and at the same time, had a more than ordinarily high standard presented to me. My father . . . hoped to make me the heir of all he knew" (Fuller, Essential, 26). Studying late into the night, the young Margaret was often subject to nightmares and other sleep disturbances. Ever practical, she blamed these ailments upon lack of sufficient rest and exercise. Most contemporary medical men would have assumed that they were the inevitable result of the overburdening of an inherently weak (that is, female) mind.

After the death of her father Fuller, burdened with the education of her younger brothers and sisters, began to

teach and write for magazines. In 1839 she presented a series of lectures for Boston women on popular and learned subjects such as poetry, mythology, ethics, education, and the Ideal. Both Sophia Peabody and her active, feminist sister Elizabeth were regular members of the audience. "The Conversations, at a cost of $20 per winter series, proved both a fine bargain and a success not only for their director but for the women themselves . . . many of whom were attracted by Fuller's emphasis on Self-culture for both sexes" (Cary 37).

Fuller expounded her doctrine of intellectual and spiritual equality in her essay "The Great Lawsuit." Published in the July 1843 edition of The Dial, "The Great Lawsuit" later became the basis for Fuller's Women in the Nineteenth Century (1845), the first book length tract on the condition of women in America. (Cary 31) Written in a style at once exhortatory and arcane, "The Great Lawsuit", in spite of its heavy encrustation of classical, Biblical and literary allusions, is a bold feminist manifesto, one which was both shocking and revolutionary to nineteenth century America.

In her essay Fuller asserts that the maintenance of individual inequality through the social institutions of slavery and marriage will ultimately prevent humankind from fulfilling its potential for development. In her defence of women's rights she proclaims:

As the friend of the negro assumes that one man

> cannot by right hold another in bondage, [so] should the friend of woman assume that man cannot by right, lay even well-meant restrictions on woman. If the negro be a soul, if the woman be a soul, apparelled in flesh, to one master only are they accountable. There is but one law for all souls . . . (Fuller, "Lawsuit", 1395).

Fuller argues that the social role of women binds them to the private sphere and thus prevents them from adequately directing their own spiritual and intellectual growth. Women who seek to move beyond the constraints of their social role can not help but envy the masculine freedoms and the attainments which are their fruit.

> Ye cannot believe it, men; but the only reason why women ever assume what is more appropriate to you, is because you prevent them from finding out what is fit to develop the strength and beauty of women, they would never wish to be men, or manlike (1403).

Yet the feminine journey of spiritual and intellectual growth, if it is to truly result in moral progress, must out of necessity be chaste. As beacons for others, reformers must not fall into error: "Those who would reform the world must show that they do not speak in the heat of wild impulse; their lives must be unstained by passionate error; they must be severe lawgivers to themselves" (1409-10). Fuller's own words would eventually trip her up: passionate, adventurous and unconventional she did not, in the end, maintain the puritan mores so essential to the life of a nineteenth century American reformer.

While in New York in 1845, Fuller conducted a sexually

and emotionally unfulfilling affair with James Nathan. "[B]affled by her mixture of sexual honesty and prudery," Nathan eventually stopped answering her letters and left for his home in Berlin (Parker 1382). Fuller left for Europe the next year with the hope of contacting him. She managed to support herself during her travels by becoming a foreign correspondent for the New York Tribune, possibly becoming one of the first women to hold that position.

The trip to Europe provided sexual, as well as professional liberation. While in Paris Fuller met Georges Sand, a novelist whom she greatly admired. The betrousered, cigar-smoking Sand, an advocate of "free love", had had a much publicized affair with the poet Alfred de Musset, who eulogized their relationship in Les Nuits (1835-37). Adding to Sand's influence was the exiled Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who apparently speculated that Fuller would be unable to appreciate Europe fully with her virginity intact (Parker 1382).

Fuller moved on to Italy, where she became absorbed in recording the tensions of Italian politics, tensions which led to the revolutionary outbreaks of 1848. At the same time she became involved with Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, the revolutionary scion of a minor noble family. Uncomplicated, unintellectual and eleven years Fuller's junior, Ossoli was not the intellectual equal Fuller had dreamed of. Nonetheless, the

young man loved Fuller wholeheartedly. She evidently returned his affections: by the beginning of 1849 Fuller was pregnant. She kept the news of her liaison and of her child's birth from her friends and family until July, 1849 when she and Ossoli withdrew to Florence after the fall of the short-lived Roman Republic. Scandalized family and friends later claimed that she married Ossoli, although it is not certain that this reputation reparation has any basis in fact. In May, 1850, the little family sailed for America. They never reached their destination: the ship was wrecked off Fire Island in July of that same year.

All of this would have been well known to Hawthorne of course, since Margaret Fuller had been a particular friend of Sophia Peabody during the "Conversations" period of 1839. Indeed, Sophia "was so inspired by Margaret that in appreciation of her 'conversations' she composed for her what Bell Chevigny describes as a 'rapturous sonnet': "'To a Priestess of the Temple Not Made With Hands'" (Pfister, 96). When apprised of Nathaniel and Sophia's wedding plans in June, 1842, Margaret Fuller addressed a letter to "My dear Sophia" expressing her congratulations. In the extravagant style which was her trademark, Fuller expresses her wholehearted approval of the match:

> And for daily life, as well as in the long account, I think there will be great happiness, for if ever I saw a man who combined delicate tenderness to

> understand the heart of a woman, with quiet depth and manliness enough to satisfy her, it is Mr. Hawthorne (Fuller, Letters, vol III, 66).

Calling their love "wise and pure and religious" Fuller casts the relationship in the role of the ideal marriage which she described at great length in "The Great Lawsuit". In this essay Fuller speaks of " . . . the higher grade of marriage union, the religious, which may be expressed as a pilgrimage towards a common shrine. This includes . . . home sympathies, and household wisdom . . . [and] intellectual communion . . . It must include all these" (Fuller, "Lawsuit", 1412). Fuller's prediction of happiness for the Hawthornes seems to have been fulfilled, for it was to her that Hawthorne wrote expressing his marital bliss in the letter that I quoted at the opening of the previous chapter. Fuller's fall from grace -- her failure to uphold the chaste spiritual and intellectual ideal which was to be the basis for relationships between men and women -- was not easily forgiven by Hawthorne. Eight years after Fuller's random, watery death and six years after he had published his own pen portrait of her, Hawthorne commented in his journal:

> Thus there appears to have been a total collapse in poor Margaret, morally and intellectually; . . . It was such an awful joke, that she should have resolved . . . to make herself the greatest, wisest, best woman of her age, and, to that end, she set to work on her strange, heavy, unpliable, and in many respects, defective and evil nature, and adorned it with a mosaic of admirable qualities . . . She took credit to herself for having been

> her own Redeemer, if not her own creator; and, indeed, she was far more a work of art than any of Mr. Mozier's statues. But she was not working on an inanimate substance . . . there was something within her that she could not possibly come at, to re-create it and refine it; and, by and by, this rude old potency bestirred itself, and undid all her labour in the twinkling of an eye (quoted in Cary 45-46).

Hawthorne's damning summation of Margaret Fuller's career undoubtedly stems from a perception of its essential hypocrisy: the differences between the image and the life -- between the ideal social reformer "unstained by passionate error" and the American sojourner who seemingly abandoned all such moral strictures -- was too great to pass without such criticism.

In both The Blithedale Romance and his later journal entry Hawthorne implies that Fuller's own unchangeable "evil" nature, her sexuality, caused her to compromise and, finally, to betray her ideal. Cary argues that this conception of Fuller would have been

> . . . defensible . . . if he had not fudged a bit on the chronology. Allen points out that when she was writing her feminist pieces, Fuller was practising what she preached, and that, conversely, during her liaison with Ossoli, she no longer preached personal morality. Fuller had simply moved beyond public feminism to private gratification (Cary 45).

This movement from public duty to private gratification signals that Fuller managed to step even farther away from the social role which she had been assigned; it also may be seen

as a way of resolving the conflicting statements make in her earlier work.

In spite of its revolutionary premise, "The Great Lawsuit" shows how gender roles may be assumed to be natural even by those who are trying to transcend them. The acceptance of the conventional role is not immediately evident, since Fuller declares that "There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" -- a statement which signalled a profound departure from the rigid definitions of the gender roles of the time (Fuller, "Lawsuit", 1421). Champion of the female voice, Fuller praises what she calls "the triumphs of female authorship":

> These have been great and constantly increasing. They have taken possession of so many provinces for which men had pronounced them unfit, that though these still declare there are some inaccessible to them, it is difficult to say just **where** they must stop (1413).

At the same time, however, Fuller accepts the woman's traditional artistic role of inscribed object. In "The Great Lawsuit" she notes: "More native to [women] is it to be the living model of the artist, than to set apart from herself any one form in objective reality: more native to inspire and receive the poem than to create it" (1421).

This conflict between the two roles -- between the woman as the creator and the woman as the object created -- may be explained by Fuller's early literary influences.

During the 1830's she was profoundly influenced by Goethe in the area of religion and philosophy -- so much so that she once seriously considered writing his biography (Parker, 1381). Goethe is, at best, a dubious model for a burgeoning feminist. As Gilbert and Gubar note:

> The famous vision of the 'Eternal Feminine' (**Das Ewige Weibliche**) with which Goethe's Faust concludes presents women from penitent prostitutes to angelic virgins in . . . [the] role of interpreters or intermediaries between the divine Father and his human sons . . . Once again, therefore, it is just because women are defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power . . . that they become numinous to male artists (Gilbert and Gubar 21).

It may be argued that Fuller was finally able to resolve the conflict expressed in "The Great Lawsuit" -- that is, the conflict between the feminist role of woman as intellectual creator and the Goetheian role of woman as object "killed into art" -- by creating herself. Louise D. Cary, quoting Albert von Frank, notes that "'[Fuller's] artistry was not of the written word, but of the life she made for herself"' (Cary 47). Fuller eventually managed to transcend the traditional feminine role by stepping entirely outside of it: abandoning the mores, occupations and behaviours expected of middle class women, she embarked on an ambitious and scandalous act of self-creation, one which simultaneously encompassed the intellectual, sexual and spiritual realms.

In his journal entry Hawthorne caustically notes that

> adorned [her character] with a mosaic of admirable qualities, such as she chose to possess; putting in here a splendid talent, and there a moral excellence, and polishing each separate piece, and the whole together, till it seemed to shine afar . . . (quoted in Cary 45).

In Hawthorne's view Fuller's bold acts of intellectual self-creation are merely adornments, since they do not fundamentally change what he calls her "defective and evil nature". Hawthorne trivializes Fuller's achievements by biologizing her, making her frank acceptance of sexuality a weakness. Viewed in this way, Fuller's life could only be considered to be a failure, since, unable to overcome the demands and weaknesses of her feminine physiology (a physiology which, as we have seen, was inherently pathological) she "proved herself a very woman after all, and fell as the weakest of her sisters might". For all of her boldness, and her frightening intellect, Fuller was defined, and finally limited by her femininity. "On the whole, I do not know but I like her the better for it" Hawthorne smugly concluded (Cary 46). In a few short and private paragraphs he placed Fuller, unequivocally defining her as a victim of her own unchecked sexuality.

It should be noted that Hawthorne's earlier pen-portrait of Fuller, which appeared in his second novel, The Blithedale Romance, shows neither such unequivocal hostility nor such

pitying condescension Why he was later moved to judge Fuller with such harshness is not known; perhaps the change and uncertainty which her revolutionary attitudes represented were a greater personal threat to Hawthorne at the time of his journal entry than they did when he wrote The Blithedale Romance.

In his book The Production of Personal Life Joel Pfister notes that Hawthorne "seems both drawn to and repulsed by the more petrifying aspects of his art" (Pfister 102). As I noted in the previous chapter, stories such as "The Birthmark" show that Hawthorne was aware of the deleterious effect social construction had on women. Yet Hawthorne, though he could criticize the social construction of women, could not forego the pleasures of constructing them himself. Indeed, he could not help but feel profoundly threatened by women such as Margaret Fuller. If such women usurped the role of creator by creating both themselves and fictional beings, what was to become of the deposed author, Hawthorne himself? Indeed, Robert K. Martin notes that these are the very sentiments Hawthorne projects onto Miles Coverdale, his fictional alter-ego (Martin 136).

What is interesting about The Blithedale Romance is the fact that Hawthorne chose to demonstrate his anxiety by nominally abdicating his post. The preface to the book is written in third person (Hawthorne refers to himself as "The

author") and the "I" of the text is that of an imaginary alter-ego, Miles Coverdale.

Coverdale is both a participant and a creator; a self-described minor poet, he, rather feebly and superficially, attempts to impose meaning upon the people and events around him. Indeed, as Robert K. Martin has noted, "the novel as a whole is the record of Coverdale's attempt to construct a meaning, one meaning, out of the myriad of events he observes or imagines" (134). Coverdale's physical weakness and his eventual artistic impotence (he stops publishing poetry) are linked: seemingly without real strength he cannot, as he would in the patriarchal artistic tradition, act upon people. Without the power to create those around him he can act only as a threatened voyeur. Indeed, he seems to play out Hawthorne's worst fears, even though it is Hawthorne himself who is pulling the strings and controlling the "phantasmagorical antics" of each character.

Having scarcely established himself at Blithedale before Hollingsworth arrives with the anonymous, abject Priscilla, Coverdale exercises his creative facilities immediately. On the spur of the moment he tries to place the unknown girl in an appropriately feminine, artistic category by imagining her as the forlorn heroine of a romance. Zenobia, who as a magazine writer, is Coverdale's artistic rival, destroys this construction at once. Priscilla, she

declares, is not the mysterious, romantic figure of a romance.

> 'She is neither more nor less . . . than a seamstress from the city . . . There is no proof which you would be likely to appreciate, except the needle marks on the tip of her fore-finger. Then, my supposition perfectly accounts for her paleness, her nervousness, and her wretched fragility. Poor thing! She has been stifled . . . and has drunk coffee and fed upon dough-nuts . . . and all such trash, till she is scarcely half alive; and so as she has hardly any physique, a poet, like Mr. Miles Coverdale, may be allowed to think her spiritual (Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, 24).

And yet Miles' construction of Priscilla continues, in spite of Zenobia's scorn: in health Priscilla "'deserves some verses . . . She is the very picture of the New England spring; subdued in tint and rather cool . . . the best type of her is one of those anemones'" (45).

The symbolism is quite pointed here, for Priscilla, unlike Zenobia, wears native (and therefore 'natural') wildflowers, obvious symbols of purity, innocence and humility. These, of course, are meant to contrast with the hothouse bloom Zenobia wears. This flower, "so brilliant, so rare, so costly . . . 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" (10).

It should be noted that the hothouse flower -- along with a suitably elaborate dress -- was one of Fuller's best known affectations (Cary 36). Fuller, like Hawthorne's

fictional creation, was an arrogant, extravagant, big-boned woman. The only significant difference between Margaret Fuller and Hawthorne's fictional creation is the latter's possession of physical beauty.

> At first it may seem that Hawthorne is avoiding charges of undue malice by making Zenobia beautiful, or that he is evening the odds between biographer and subject, but more probably he knew well enough that his audience would simply fail to credit the sexual allure of any homely woman. In that sense Zenobia's beauty is a truly terrible condescension to Fuller (36-37).

It is, perhaps a tribute to Fuller's powers of attraction that her powerful charisma was not based upon conventional good looks.

Evidently Fuller's charisma was considerable, for Coverdale gives ample descriptions of the fictional Zenobia's sexual attributes. Quick to assign meaning, he decides that the flower is "a talisman . . . a subtle expression of Zenobia's character" (Hawthorne 10). As unsubtly as the strictures of Victorian language will allow, Coverdale obsessively mulls over the meaning of the "talisman", representing it as flourishing, exotic and sexual. A sexual symbol, the flower takes on a Mapplethorpian aspect as Coverdale's contemplation of it leads him into prurient speculation.

> 'Zenobia is a wife, -- Zenobia has lived and loved! There is not a folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!' --irresistibly that thought drove out all other conclusions as often

> as my mind reverted to the subject (35).

Coverdale finally reveals the extent of his voyeurism by concluding,

> A bachelor always feels himself defrauded, when he knows, or suspects, that any woman of his acquaintance has given herself away. Otherwise the matter could have been no concern of mine. It was purely speculative, for I should not, under any circumstances, have fallen in love with Zenobia (36).

Nonetheless the "riddle" of Zenobia's sexual past (Coverdale admits that his conclusions are "purely speculative") -- makes Coverdale "nervous" (36). One may only assume that this nervousness is a euphemism for sexual desire.

With such ample description of Zenobia's sexual attributes -- too ample to be quoted here -- it is made more than sufficiently clear that Priscilla, the pale, timid anemone, is Zenobia's foil. Priscilla's symbol -- one which is given a much more prominent position than the wildflowers -- is the purse that she begins to net almost immediately after her arrival.

The purse has a variety of meanings. Its "peculiar excellence . . . lay in the almost impossibility that any uninitiated person should discover the aperture" although it opens "to a practised touch". Coverdale "wonder[s] if it [the purse] were not a symbol of Priscilla's own mystery" (25-26). Of course, Coverdale knows that it is -- he was sold one by Priscilla's father, the debauched aristocrat turned itinerant

peddler, "Old Moodie".

Priscilla's economic exploitation

> dramatizes the fate of women's art in the nineteenth century, as it is transformed from the individual cottage labor of Hester to industrial labor for the benefit of male owners and task masters. Ever the victim of men, Priscilla can only turn her art in upon herself, creating objects that symbolize her status as manipulated organ -- a vagina opening at male will -- or an empty receptacle for the display of the gold earned by her own unacknowledged labor (Martin 134).

Priscilla's appeal, for Coverdale and the men around her, is her sexless malleability. Her purses are anonymous, ownable, and easily encoded with a chosen meaning: they "would open as wide as charity or prodigality might wish" (Hawthorne 26).

The purses do not only demonstrate the fate of women's art: they also symbolize the fate of Priscilla herself. After many twists and turns of the plot we learn that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady, a medium who has escaped the control of the vicious Professor Westervelt. The mouth of the purse, then, may be seen to represent the Veiled Lady's mouth, a mouth which opens "as wide [as the owner] might wish". Although The Blithedale Romance evidently explores "two different stereotypes of femininity (and masculinity, although this latter aspect has not been much explored)" (Martin 131) it also examines the ownership of the female voice. Who may speak for the Veiled Lady, the symbol of the woman as biddable object? Who may rightfully inscribe meaning onto the

contemporary woman "killed into art"?

From the beginning it is evident that Zenobia wishes to speak for her contemporaries. Indeed, her numerous pronouncements about the nature of gender roles seem to have been lifted straight from the various writings of Margaret Fuller. Fuller's assertion that "there is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" is repeated by Zenobia with the playfulness that marked some of Fuller's letters to Hawthorne. When the sedentary Coverdale arrives at the commune Zenobia remarks that

> we women . . . will take the domestic and indoor part of the business as a matter of course . . . [T]hese, I suppose, must be feminine occupations, for the present. By and by, perhaps, when our individual adaptations begin to develop themselves, it may be that some of us who wear the petticoat will go a-field, and leave the weaker brethren to take our place in the kitchen (Hawthorne 11).

The similarity between Zenobia's feminist pronouncements and Margaret Fuller's writings becomes much more noticeable in "Eliot's Pulpit", the fourteenth chapter of the novel. Zenobia uses Fuller's exhortatory style to proclaim that

> The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttles [women], as with two gigantic hands at our throats! We mumble a few weak words, and leave a thousand better ones unsaid. You let us write a little, it is true, on a limited range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and immediate. It is with a living voice alone that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart! (95-96)

When it is compared to the various excerpts of Fuller's writing quoted above, Zenobia's outburst seems nothing less than a tidy paraphrase of "The Great Lawsuit". In an earlier chapter of The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne paraphrases Fuller directly and without acknowledgement. "How can [a woman] be happy after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the subsistence of her whole life?" (15). In "The Great Lawsuit" Margaret Fuller writes that "It is a vulgar error that love, **a** love to woman is her whole existence" (Fuller 1425).

Although Zenobia's story "The Silvery Veil" is most obviously a plot device -- through it she reveals that she knows Priscilla's true identity -- it may also be seen as an allegorical depiction of the woman's role. Priscilla, as the Veiled Lady, becomes the quintessential woman, the object acted upon. The Veiled Lady is imprisoned by the gauze which masks her true being. "I am a sad and lonely prisoner, in a bondage which is worse to me than death" she tells Theodore (Hawthorne 89). Although she speaks through the gauze, her utterances are controlled by the man who exploits her. Thus the veil may be seen as the woman's traditional role which, by inscribing her with a pre-determined meaning, prohibits her from "fully [developing] the strength and beauty of women" (Fuller, "Lawsuit", 1403).

To be relieved of the circumscription of the veil the

Veiled Lady requires the co-operation of Theodore. This is a peculiarly ambiguous development: the woman cannot step out of her role without a man's help, help which he has no reason to give, since it may involve some danger to himself. Before raising the veil he must accept her as she is, rather than accepting -- or rejecting -- a being which may or may not conform to his fancy. Earlier, Theodore and his friends had imagined the Veiled Lady to have "the face of a corpse . . . the head of a skeleton

. . . a monstrous visage, with snaky locks, like Medusa's" (Hawthorne 87).

The lifting of the veil -- that is, the destruction of the accepted role of women -- involves the murder of the domestic angel. Who knows what horror may take her place? Joel Pfister notes that this image of Medusa is significant, since "Medusa is the quintessential image of the powerful female stereotyped as horribly corporeal and grotesque" (Pfister 92). Unable to accept the possibility of the powerful woman, Theodore refuses to kiss the figure behind the veil. The Veiled Lady then becomes lost within her prison.

The introduction of the Medusa puts Zenobia, rather than Priscilla, behind the veil. Zenobia, of course is a Medusa, a threatening figure. As a woman she is also a potential victim, since her actions are limited by the role society has assigned to her gender. She describes her

circumscribed role in terms of suffocation: society "throttles" women, putting "two gigantic hands at our throats!" (Hawthorne 94) Zenobia is being suffocated by the veil. The temporary substitution of Zenobia for Priscilla in the role of the Veiled Lady is apt, since Zenobia seeks to speak for all women. Theodore then, could be Coverdale, or, even Hawthorne himself. Both have the power to release the hidden "Medusa", the strong woman, through art, and both ultimately refuse to do so (Pfister 93-94).[2]

Yet even as Zenobia champions the feminist cause, her position is almost immediately denigrated. Upon hearing one of her vehement tirades, Coverdale remarks that

> women, however intellectually superior, so seldom disquiet themselves about the rights and wrongs of their sex unless their own individual affections chance to lie in idleness or to be ill at ease. They are not natural reformers, but become such by the pressure of exceptional misfortune. I could measure Zenobia's inward trouble by the animosity with which she now took up the general quarrel of woman against man (Hawthorne 96).

Zenobia has taken up the cause because she herself has failed to achieve the woman's significant "single event" of marriage and motherhood. More importantly, Zenobia's position becomes ineradicably tainted by her unnamed association with the sinister Professor Westervelt.

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[2] Although Pfister's discussion of the Medusa is part of his discussion of the appearance of Zenobia's corpse I find that the Medusa, and the man's fear of her, is applicable to The Veiled Lady as well.

An unscrupulous exploiter of women, Westervelt is an unalloyed villain: his dandified exterior barely camouflages a nature which is essentially corrupt.

> . . .[H]e had no fineness of nature; there was in his eyes (although they might have artifice of another sort) the naked exposure of something that ought not to be left prominent. With these vague allusions to what I have seen in other faces, as well as his, I leave the quality to be comprehended best -- because with an intuitive repugnance -- by those who possess the least of it (72).

The unnamed quality seems to be an evil sexuality. Westervelt, with his phallic, Garden-of-Eden walking stick, a stick "with a wooden head carved in vivid imitation of that of a serpent" has the air of a gentlemanly Lucifer (Hawthorne 72). Far from being generative, his sexual power is linked with corruption and decay. " . . . [T]all and comely as his figure looked, he was perhaps but a wizened little elf, gray and decrepit, with nothing genuine about him, save the wicked expression of his grin" (75).

Although Coverdale is ostensibly unaware of Westervelt's identity it is interesting to note that the villain, who exhibits Priscilla as a medium for profit, is a conjuror and is therefore, metaphorically at least, in the same position as an author. Aylmer, it will be remembered, is an alchemist and all three -- alchemist, magician and author -- create, and in some sense appropriate, women. Westervelt controls, interprets and appropriates Priscilla's oracular

utterances, Hawthorne rewrites and manipulates Margaret Fuller and Aylmer -- the model I have chosen to represent the male author -- makes his wife into the object he desires.

This connection is almost immediately suppressed, however, by Coverdale's attempts to discover the nature of the mysterious bond between Westervelt and Zenobia, a bond which, at first, is almost entirely created by Coverdale himself.

> . . . I began to think it the design of fate to let me into all of Zenobia's secrets . . . But Zenobia's utterance was so hasty and broken, and Westervelt's so cool and low, that I could hardly make out an intelligible sentence on either side. What I seem to remember, I yet suspect, may have been patched together by my fancy, in brooding over the matter afterwards (82).

The implied connection with Westervelt gives Zenobia's character sinister undertones. Her sexual appeal, originally a source of prurient exotica, becomes a dangerous thing when coupled with her desire to speak for the Veiled Lady. The connection with Westervelt, and thus with sexuality, makes her an unworthy spokesperson, for, as Coverdale notes, Westervelt's influence "inevitably degrades the high, debases the pure, deforms the beautiful. It must be a mind of uncommon strength, and little impressibility, that can permit itself the habit of such intercourse and not be permanently deteriorated" (81).

An incorrigible voyeur, Coverdale moves from his observation post in the vine hung trees to the back window of

a hotel so that he may, with dubious inadvertency, further observe Zenobia and Westervelt through the windows of the house they apparently share. Although the presence of Zenobia and Priscilla in the company of Westervelt is never explained, it is implied that Zenobia has somehow inveigled Priscilla into the sinister hands of her exploiter. Clearly Zenobia, through her association with Westervelt has, in Coverdale's words, "permanently deteriorated" -- the healthy sexuality which initially make her appear "an admirable figure of a woman" (10) now makes her act as a temptress and daemon. A "Lioness", she speaks to the importunate Coverdale "in a whisper so full of scorn that it penetrated [him] like the hiss of a serpent" (137). One can hardly help but think of Westervelt's serpent-headed cane.

Although Coverdale was initially both fascinated by and appreciative of Zenobia's sexual vitality, he is now repelled by it, seeing it as evidence of evil. Hawthorne's references to Margaret Fuller's "strange, heavy, unpliable, and, in many respects, defective and evil nature" are fully illustrated in his fiction (Hawthorne quoted in Cary, 45). The overstated opulence of Zenobia's surroundings, the "gorgeousness with which she surrounded herself" is reminiscent of Hawthorne's earlier description of Fuller's mosaic of intellectual gifts, and social graces (Hawthorne 131). Clearly Hawthorne felt that Fuller's intellectual

acquirements amounted to window dressing, since they papered over the cracks of pride, sarcasm and sexuality, the defective points in her nature. Coverdale feels the same way about Zenobia: "'She should be compelled to give me a glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real'" (132). All of Zenobia's good qualities are false since, as conscious acquisitions, they mask her essential personality. Coverdale's assessment of Zenobia echoes the judgements Hawthorne later passed on Fuller.

Coverdale is both attracted to and repelled by Zenobia's sexual and intellectual gorgeousness. Resisting this attraction he

> malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking in simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste (132).

Although Priscilla is in the next room, the description of Coverdale's meeting with her is delayed until the following chapter, a device which emphasizes her separation from the luxuriant, colourful, and tainted Zenobia. Priscilla "was now dressed in pure white, set off with some kind of gauzy fabric, which -- as I bring up her figure in my memory . . . seems to be floating about her like a mist" (136). Coverdale's comment that Priscilla "is as lovely as a flower" -- a comment reminiscent of his earlier comment at

Blithedale, likening Priscilla to the wildflowers she had gathered -- elicits a sour retort from Zenobia. "Well, say so, if you like . . . you are a poet, -- at least as poets go, now-a-days, -- and must be allowed to make an opera-glass of your imagination, when you look at women" (136). At this point, however, Zenobia's rebukes carry no weight, since they are so clearly the result of malice. As her attachment to the philanthropist Hollingsworth is unwittingly thwarted by Priscilla, Zenobia moves into direct competition with her antithesis. As Robert K. Martin notes, Zenobia and Priscilla are not only

> rivals in love but rivals for power. For what is enacted . . . is the battle over a culturally dominant image of woman. Priscilla's maidenly self must be sacrificed if Zenobia's regal, sensual self is to be allowed its play (Martin 132).

If Priscilla, as the Veiled Lady, represents the archetypal woman imprisoned in her role, she also represents a specific cultural image of femininity. Her main characteristic, as I have noted is her malleability, a characteristic which is particularly evident in the following exchange with Coverdale.

> 'Priscilla . . . when do you go back to Blithedale?' 'Whenever they please to take me,' said she. 'Did you come away of your own free will?' I asked. 'I am blown about like a leaf,' she replied. 'I never have any free will' (Hawthorne 138).

Priscilla is always an object to be moulded and acted upon.

As such she conforms to the woman's artistic role -- a passive object, she can be both created, interpreted, and controlled by men.

Although I have noted that Coverdale, as narrator and creator, constantly attempts to impose meaning upon Zenobia and Priscilla he is not powerful enough to choose one woman -- and therefore one cultural image -- over the other. Although he incidentally "creates" Priscilla by imposing a spiritual, virginal image upon her, his 'creation' is immediately struck down by Zenobia. If, as Robert K. Martin says, Priscilla and Zenobia are rivals competing for the prize of the dominant cultural image of women, Coverdale and Zenobia are both competing for the right to **create** that cultural image. Although Miles Coverdale is, ostensibly, a superior talent -- he publishes poetry while Zenobia produces magazine fare -- his position as perpetual voyeur suggests that he is no match for Zenobia's creative energies. Indeed, at the end of his account, Coverdale gives us some idea of his poetic stature when he writes that "Doctor Griswold -- as the reader of course knows -- has placed me at a fair elevation among our minor minstrelsy, on the strength of my pretty little volume, published ten years ago" (197).

The American editor and critic Rufus Griswold published The Female Poets of America in 1848, only four years before the publication of The Blithedale Romance. In his

introduction Griswold notes that it "is less easy to be assured [of] the genuineness of literary ability in women" since women, although they possess "the most exquisite susceptibility of the spirit" often have "no power to originate, nor even, in some sense, to reproduce" (Griswold quoted Gilbert and Gubar 9). If this is the "minor minstrelsy" of which Coverdale is speaking, it is easy to see why he is unable to create the cultural image he wants.

It is the brawny Hollingsworth, rather than the puny Coverdale, who is powerful enough to delineate the feminine ideal. An ex-blacksmith obsessed by a grand scheme of prison reform, Hollingsworth is, by his own definition, characterized by "an inflexible severity of purpose". This inflexibility is reflected in Hollingsworth's response to Zenobia's feminist tirade: staunchly patriarchal, he opposes her with "customary bluntness" (97).

> 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 woman; but woman is a monster . . . without man as her acknowledged principal! (97)

Echoing Coverdale's assumption that only women burdened by personal dissatisfaction take up the feminist cause, Hollingsworth concludes that feminists 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!" (97)

Hollingsworth "creates" the sentimental ideal by setting out its specifications and choosing the woman that matches them. Instead of acting as Hollingsworth's rival Zenobia, surprisingly, falls into line. Submitting her will to his she says that she has "deep cause to think [Hollingsworth] right. Let man be but manly and god-like, and woman is only too ready to become to him what you say!" (98)

Zenobia's submission to Hollingsworth serves to biologize a political debate, since she is driven by emotion rather than reason. Like all women, Zenobia's "nervous system and emotions prevailed over her conscious and rational faculties" (Rosenberg and Smith-Rosenberg 334). Coverdale observes that she is behaving the way women "invariably" do and debates as to whether or not this behaviour is the product of "nature" or "the result of ages of compelled degradation". It is, however, implied that all of Zenobia's acts are prompted by the stirrings of the former: in love with Hollingsworth, she is seen taking his hand to "press it to her bosom, and let it fall again" (Hawthorne 99). Although Hollingsworth briefly takes up with Zenobia (solely for financial reasons, Coverdale suspects) he generally favours Priscilla. Usually grim and quiet, Hollingsworth smiles most often in Priscilla's direction. We are told that Zenobia "would have given her eyes, bright as they were, for such a

look" (55).

Unlike Zenobia, Priscilla submits to Hollingsworth with the innate passivity which, for the Victorians, was synonymous with womanly goodness. Priscilla greets Hollingsworth's pronouncement of woman's natural inferiority with "a glance of . . . entire acquiescence and unquestioning faith". Coverdale notes that

> [s]he seemed to take the sentiment from his lips into her heart, and brood over it in her perfect content. The very woman whom he pictured -- the gentle parasite, the soft reflection of a more powerful existence -- sat there at his feet (98).

Priscilla's acquiescence, like Georgiana's acceptance of the fatal potion, reminds one once again of Fetterley's female reader. Priscilla 'reads' -- through Hollingsworth's verbal pronouncements -- her place in society and accepts it. Like Georgiana, who views her birthmark through her husband's eyes, Priscilla "identifies with [Hollingsworth] in her attitude toward herself" (Fetterley 32). Though the quote I have just used refers to Aylmer and Georgiana it neatly describes Hollingsworth and Priscilla as well. As a "gentle parasite" Priscilla fulfils the nineteenth century ideal: "[w]eaker in body . . . she was . . . dependent upon the stronger, more forceful male, to whom she necessarily looked up to with admiration and devotio." (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 338).

The symbolic choice of what Robert K. Martin has called the "culturally dominant image of woman" (Martin 136)

is made by Hollingsworth -- the culturally dominant image of man -- during the town-hall performance of "that celebrated and hitherto inexplicable phenomenon, the Veiled Lady" (Hawthorne 157). Deaf to all others, Priscilla, the enthralled medium, reveals herself only to Hollingsworth.

> How strangely had she been betrayed! . . . Within that encircling veil, though an evil hand had flung it over her, there was as deep a seclusion as if the forsaken girl had, all the while been sitting under the shadow of Eliot's pulpit . . . at the feet of him who now summoned her . . . And the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto environed her. She uttered a shriek, and fled to Hollingsworth, like one escaping from her deadliest enemy, and was safe for ever! (162)

The reader recalls -- and is meant to recall -- that Zenobia, during the climax of her fable of "The Silvery Veil"threw a piece of gauze over Priscilla's head. Although Zenobia's stated purpose is the liberation of women, this liberation can be achieved only by this symbolic eclipse of the sentimental ideal -- the stereotype which Priscilla represents. Hawthorne, through Coverdale, hints that he has reservations about this ideal -- it will be recalled that Priscilla, at one point is referred to as a "gentle parasite". It is clear, however, that any alternative to this ideal is a betrayal, since it delivers the sentimental ideal into the hands of Westervelt -- the "Lucifer" who represents the dangerous and rude old potency of sexual desire. Thus

the creation of the Priscilla figure is not simply

> a matter of proposing a weaker, softer alternative to the strong woman; it represents, as Michael Davitt Bell has argued, a cultural displacement in which sentimentality is praised against the challenge of women's rights and the possibility of social reorganization (Martin 131).

Social reorganization is represented as an anarchic carnival rather than a viable alternative. The woodland masquerade which has crowned Zenobia queen in chapter twenty-four is a disorderly, nightmarish, anxiety producing world. "As Mikhail Bakhtin has argued, the carnival is a sight of particular anxiety, since it collapses the boundaries of gender, allowing for a literalized realm of possibility and indeterminacy" (Martin 138). Robert K. Martin concludes that "the carnivalesque threatens the attempt to fix a stable self by revealing gender and sex to be more the products of external signs than of any internal 'reality'" (138). Thus Coverdale is 'threatened' with stabbing, scalping and immobilization -- all acts which could symbolize ritual castration and impotency. "The whole fantastic rabble forthwith streamed off in pursuit of me, so that I was like a mad poet hunted by chimeras" (Hawthorne 169).

The possibilities presented by carnival are immediately foreclosed by the final rejection of Zenobia by Hollingsworth. Zenobia is judged and found unworthy, although Hollingsworth claims he does not "pretend to pass sentence" (171). Nonetheless all of the roles have been assigned and

clothed in the imaginary similes of Coverdale, similes which sound suspiciously like those which would be used by that well known Salemite, Hawthorne himself.

> I saw in Hollingsworth 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. Had a pile of faggots been heaped against a rock, this hint of impending doom would have completed the suggestive picture (171).

Soon after her last interview with Hollingsworth Zenobia, who has presumably been made heartsick by his rejection, drowns herself in the nearby river.

Louise D. Cary notes that Hawthorne, by fictionally turning Fuller's death into a suicide, transforms it from a random event to a formal tragedy. "The seeds of Zenobia's destruction, her intellectual pride and her evil (that is, sexual) nature, are there from the beginning. In the Greek tradition, character and destiny are inseparable, and Zenobia's flaws are destined to be fatal" (Cary 44). Zenobia, like Fuller, falls "'as the weakest of her sisters might'" (46). Her fall is biologically determined, for it is the product of sex and emotion, two of the weaker characteristics of her gender.

Zenobia's death allows for the triumph of Priscilla, the sentimental ideal. Robert K. Martin notes that this

eclipse is parallelled by the social eclipse of Coverdale himself.

> Changes in sex roles have implications for both sexes, but they run in complementary, rather than in parallel tracks: thus the emergence of the sentimental ideal for women is accompanied by the eclipse of the sentimental ideal for men and its replacement by the muscular 'brawn' represented by Hollingsworth (Martin 131).

Ostensibly, of course, Coverdale **has** been eclipsed. It is Hollingsworth, not Coverdale, who "creates" the womanly sentimental ideal by choosing Priscilla over Zenobia. Indeed, Coverdale admits to defeat in the final chapter, since Priscilla, the woman he presumably loves, remains with Hollingsworth and becomes his caregiver. And yet, paradoxically, Hollingsworth is punished for his choice -- His choice causes Zenobia's suicide. Obsessed by guilt after this "murder", he retreats into obscurity and seclusion, leaving Coverdale to construct the tale as he likes. Coverdale's claim to failure, therefore, is singularly unbelievable.

Coverdale resumes control over events by telling them. Moving from the role of voyeur to creator Coverdale styles Zenobia as an unsuccessful Ophelia.

> She had seen pictures, I suppose, of drowned persons in lithe and graceful attitudes. And she deemed it well and decorous to die as so many village maidens have, wronged in their first love . . . But in Zenobia's case there was some tint of Arcadian affectation that had been visible enough in all our lives, for a few months past (Hawthorne 189).

Seeing that Zenobia's knees are bent, Coverdale presumes that she died in an attitude of prayer, even though her clenched fists indicated "unmitigable defiance". (188) Even to the end Zenobia rages against the role in which she was placed.

Joel Pfister argues that Zenobia's suicide allows Hawthorne "to draw our attention to the way the literary way, that Coverdale tries to stereotype [Zenobia]."

> In several instances Hawthorne encourages his reader to develop a critical distance from Coverdale in order to problematize the politics and strategies of his narrative prestidigitations (Pfister 89).

Pfister claims that Zenobia's drowning and Coverdale's attempt to construct an image of Ophelia out of it, are "a parody of the way her [Zenobia's] society stereotyped women" (89). Pfister admits, however, that Hawthorne makes "no sustained effort . . . to engender something other than that which he criticizes" (102). This, Pfister adds, is because Hawthorne himself either will not, or cannot give up the role of creator, a role which, for him, involves the creation of the very "jointed dolls and wax angels" he parodies (102). The mind which created the rigid, agonizing death of Zenobia could also create the peaceful, passive death of Georgiana.

Coverdale's self-proclaimed failure (having neither published nor claimed Priscilla for his own) is, like Aylmer's, actually a success. By fixing Zenobia into the role of lovelorn victim and, rather improbably, declaring his love

for Priscilla, Coverdale effectively re-establishes the woman's artistic role. With her marriage and Coverdale's unrequited love, Priscilla simultaneously achieves the conventional role of caregiver and muse. Non-threatening, her creative powers are merely decorative. Zenobia, who threatened Coverdale's creative role by creating herself, has her life and her death interpreted, and therefore re-created, by Coverdale. Although Coverdale's lack of occupation and success indicate that Hawthorne was aware of the eclipse of his own role by the middle-class businessman, he was also aware of the pen's continuing power to order, interpret, and establish control over what could, if left uncontrolled, destroy him.

Chapter Three: The Marble Faun and Villette

It is entirely possible that the publication of The Blithedale Romance did not mark the end of Hawthorne's attempt to re-create Margaret Fuller. Harry DePuy notes that the character Miriam of Hawthorne's final novel, The Marble Faun could be considered to be yet another pen-portrait of Margaret Fuller.

> In Blithedale Hawthorne made certain that no knowledgeable contemporary would mistake his portrait . . . In Marble Faun he was not so obvious, yet he was not a great deal more subtle (DePuy 169).

DePuy argues that The Marble Faun, which is set in Rome and its environs, is to some extent patterned on Margaret Fuller's Italian sojourn. In The Marble Faun the mysterious Miriam is an artist of unknown origin who has been involved in some mysterious crime. Befriended by American artists Kenyon and Hilda, Miriam is also pursued by Donatello, a young Italian count who is apparently besotted with her. DePuy argues that Donatello is an accurate portrait of Giovanni Ossoli, the unsophisticated nobleman that Fuller married. "All who knew Ossoli were in agreement on two things: he was deficient in intellect and he worshipped Margaret" (173). Like Ossoli, Donatello is a young and obscure nobleman who is primarily characterized by his lack of intelligence and his dog-like

devotion. He approaches Miriam "with an appealing air" and a "helpless gesture of entreaty" similar to "the aspect of a hound" (Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, 14). Of uncertain age he is variously described as "a child", "a simpleton" and "the merest unfledged chicken" (15).

Donatello and Miriam are soon united by crime as Donatello commits a murder with Miriam's acquiescence. Fuller and Ossoli, of course, were bound by the more benign crime of illicit sex. DePuy contends that the "blessing" Miriam and Donatello receive from the bronze papal statue in a village square symbolizes the Ossolis' belated marriage (DePuy 172).

Although much of DePuy's argument is believable it soon moves beyond the limits of plausibility. The title The Marble Faun contains Margaret Fuller's initials (M.F.), a coincidence which is "no very profound observation, unless one considers the pains he took to retain a title that nearly everyone (including Henry James) agrees is a virtual misnomer . . . The English one -- Transformation -- is a far better one, as Hawthorne must have realized" (167). In his zealous efforts to connect Margaret Fuller to The Marble Faun DePuy fails to consider that Hawthorne went through a number of unsatisfactory titles. In all probability Hawthorne rejected Transformation because it simply was not descriptive enough. The Marble Faun, while something of a misnomer, does have a hint of romance about it. In a letter to William Ticknor,

Hawthorne suggested two more alternatives, The Romance of Monte Beni and Saint Hilda's Shrine, both of which proved to be unsatisfactory (Hawthorne, Letters to Wm. Ticknor, 85).

Although Hawthorne wrote his condemnatory journal entry about Fuller while he was in Rome gathering atmosphere for his new "romance" I shall argue that his model for The Marble Faun was not Margaret Fuller's life, but Villette, a novel by Charlotte Bronte. The similarities between the two novels indicate that Hawthorne, in some sense, **rewrote** Bronte's novel, by copying and reinterpreting, portions of it. In this way Hawthorne, as we shall see, continued to exert control over the female artist.

In his book The Anxiety of Influence Harold Bloom notes that "[p]oetic history . . . is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves" (Bloom 5). Each poet, before establishing himself, must make an effort to supplant his predecessor.

> Weaker talents idealize; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realization that he has failed to create himself (5).

The problem with Bloom's theory, of course, is that it

is exclusively patriarchal: by defining the relationship between the poet and his precursor as a relationship between a son and his father, Bloom necessarily excludes the female author. "Where, then, does the female poet fit in? Does she annihilate a 'forefather' or a 'foremother'? What if she can find no models, no precursors?" (Gilbert and Gubar 47) In Hawthorne's case, the questions become more numerous and more urgent. What 'father' does Hawthorne displace if his influence is **female**? It may be argued that Hawthorne, like Aylmer of "The Birthmark" seeks to equal, to surpass, and finally to displace a feminine creative force. By displacing this force (here represented by Bronte, instead of Mother Nature) Hawthorne may then establish himself in the patriarchal role of author -- the semi-divine creator who 'fathers' the text and all of the women in it.

In The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne effectively dealt with the female creator (Fuller) by declaring her to be an unfit mother. Though 'Zenobia', Hawthorne's fictionalized feminist, challenges Coverdale's right to create the culturally dominant image of woman, she herself is destroyed by a combination of pride and sexuality, those innate and defective qualities which, given full reign, would have displaced the true ideal, the domestic goddess. By appropriating Fuller's life (that which was, more than any of her writings, her work of art) Hawthorne devalued Fuller's act

of creation by pointing out its defects, replacing her living work of art with a suitable creation of his own. In doing so he assumed the quasi-divine position of author/creator, the very position that Fuller's unconventional feminism threatened. It is this very sentiment which lies behind his subtle and unacknowledged appropriation of Bronte's work.

Although I have used The Anxiety of Influence as a basis for my argument it must be recalled that Bronte, twelve years Hawthorne's junior, was actually his contemporary, rather than his predecessor. Charlotte Bronte was the sole surviving member of a family of isolated, tubercular prodigies when she published Villette in 1853. In August of that same year Nathaniel Hawthorne took up his post as American consul to Liverpool. There is no record of a meeting between the two: Charlotte Bronte was pathologically shy and Hawthorne, known for his diffidence, never sought her out. Although Bronte died in 1855 Mrs Gaskell's popular biography, The Life of Charlotte Bronte kept the controversial author in the public eye. That Hawthorne was familiar with Gaskell's book is evident from the entries he made in his English notebooks. On Sunday, April 19, 1857 he wrote:

> . . . I have had some conversation with Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, who has known Miss Bronte very intimately and bore testimony to the wonderful fidelity of Mrs. Gaskell's life of her. He seemed to have an affectionate regard for her and said that her marriage promised to have been productive of great happiness . . . (Hawthorne, English

Notebooks, 459).

It was through the Shuttleworths that Mrs. Gaskell met the lady-like, unassuming Bronte in August, 1850. Even at that time the solitary privations the sole surviving Bronte endured were becoming legendary. By 1857, incidents of Bronte's life were becoming contemporary literary anecdotes: that August Hawthorne became briefly acquainted with a commercial traveller who spoke vividly

> . . . about Miss Bronte, whom he had seen at the Chapter Coffee House, when she and her sister Anne first went to London . . . [He] described the surprise and incredulity of Mr. Smith when this little, common-place looking woman presented herself as the author of Jane Eyre (555).

Hawthorne concluded that he liked his companion's account of the incident more than that of Mrs. Gaskell.

Mrs. Gaskell was to become the chief architect of the Bronte legend. With the permission of Bronte's husband and father she set about building a posthumous paragon of Victorian womanhood. At Mrs. Gaskell's disposal were nearly three hundred of the letters Bronte had written to her life-long friend, Ellen Nussey.

> Mrs. Gaskell told [Nussey] after reading them through: 'They gave me a very beautiful idea of her character . . . I am sure the more fully she -- Charlotte Bronte -- the **friend**, the **daughter**, the **sister**, the **wife** is known, and known where need be in her own words, the more highly she will be appreciated . . .' . . . The letters had only confirmed her own view of Charlotte's highly principled nature. The woman that had emerged from the letters was no sensualist but instead a high

> minded woman devoted to duty (Gaskell, quoted Fraser, 489).

The insistence on virtue was necessary, for Jane Eyre had been denounced for 'coarseness', a criticism which became increasingly vehement when the literary world was apprised of 'Currer Bell's' gender. John Maynard writes that Bronte, unlike the vast number of her female contemporaries, "was not, and despite the infamous progress of censorship and bowdlerization, never succeeded in becoming isolated from the subversive influence of a different past culture with [different] attitudes toward sexual experience" (Maynard 9). Bronte was a child prodigy who delved unrestrained and unsupervised into the dubiously decent works of Shakespeare, Byron, Milton and various Regency writers. Although Bronte's social conduct -- like her personal moral code -- was impeccable, the Byronic hero with a sexual past, the evidence of her early reading, found his way into Jane Eyre.

The frank discussion of Mr. Rochester's sexual misadventures, however, was not nearly as shocking to Victorians as the vehement anger expressed by Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe. In 1853 Anne Mozley, writing for The Christian Remembrancer noted that 'Currer Bell' "had seemed on her first appearance as an author 'soured, coarse, and grumbling, an alien . . . from society and amenable to none of its laws'" (Gilbert and Gubar 337). Miss Rigby, who reviewed Jane Eyre

for The Quarterly Review in 1848 declared

> Jane Eyre is proud, and therefore she is ungrateful, too. It pleased God to make her an orphan, friendless, and penniless -- yet she thanks nobody, and least of all Him, for the food and raiment, the friends, companions and instructors of her helpless youth . . . . On the contrary, she looks upon all that has been done for her not only as an undoubted right, but as falling far short of it (Rigby quoted in Gilbert and Gubar 338).

Bronte's emphasis on the fulfilment of the woman's emotional needs -- and her society's inability to fulfil them -- made her books shocking to her comfortable, middle-class readers. Through Jane Eyre she proclaimed:

> Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel, they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do, they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (Bronte, Jane Eyre, 141).

It is no wonder, then, that Matthew Arnold disliked both Jane Eyre and Villette.

> [Villette was a] 'hideous, undelightful, convulsed, constricted novel', which reminded him of repulsive aspects of American feminism: 'It is one of the most utterly disagreeable books I ever read -- and having seen her [Bronte] makes it more so. She is so entirely -- what Margaret Fuller was partially -- a fire without ailment -- one of the most distressing barren sights one can witness . . . . Religion or devotion or whatever it is to be called may be impossible for such women now: but they have at any rate not found a substitute for it and

> it was better for the world when they comforted themselves with it (Arnold quoted in Fraser 434).

What a reassurance, then, was the revelation of Bronte's homely domestic tragedy. The fact that the dread authoress **did** spend much of her time knitting stockings, making puddings and devoting her life to the care of her half-blind father and her declining siblings must have, to some extent, modified the vision of the mad and passionate termagant for some. The fact that Hawthorne mentioned Bronte's domestic tragedy possibly shows that her life of duty and self-denial met with his approval. Although he did not discuss Bronte's work, I will suggest that her influence prompted him to make some of the scenes from Villette his own.

Hawthorne did not begin to work on The Marble Faun until several years after Bronte's death. Hawthorne was finally free to resume his chosen career when he stepped down from his post as consul in 1857. He and his family arrived in Rome in the spring of 1858 and on July 14 of that year he mentioned in his pocket diary that he was "sketching plot" for a novel. On January 30, 1859 he wrote: "I finished, it today, the rough draft of my Romance, intending to write it over after getting back to the Wayside" (Hawthorne quoted Pearce et al. xxi-xxii). He ended up finishing it in England and the resultant work was published by Bronte's former publishers and friends, Smith, Elder and Co. Late in 1859

Mrs. Gaskell who, in spite of the efforts of Henry Bright, had never met Hawthorne, wrote to the publisher George Smith: "Do you know what Hawthorne's new tale is about? I do: and I think it will perplex the English public pretty considerably" (Gaskell quoted in Hull 191). Mrs. Gaskell's evaluation proved to be correct: readers were so dissatisfied with the book's inconclusive ending that Hawthorne found it necessary to add an explanatory postscript to the subsequent editions.

The Marble Faun undoubtedly owes its genesis to the Hawthornes' extensive tour of Italy. Part travelogue, part dream-romance, The Marble Faun includes Hawthorne's musings upon Italy, art, history, religion and the effects of good and evil upon the characters of men and women. It is the last subject which forms the clouded centre of this cluttered, and largely confusing, book. Returning to the formula he used in The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne centres the book around four characters, two male and two female. Leaving the male characters relatively undeveloped, Hawthorne concentrates on the two heroines. Hilda, a blonde and virginal Puritan copyist of Roman art, befriends Miriam, a dark, passionate, and inexplicably 'fallen' artist with an unexplained connection to scandal. As in The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne separates passion from innocence, attributing the first quality to sin and the second to passionless purity. The two thus represent what may be considered to be two halves

of a whole which is both superior to, and inferior to men. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg point out: "[t]he Victorian woman was more spiritual than man, yet less intellectual, closer to the divine, yet prisoner of her most animal characteristics, more moral than man, yet less in control of her very morality" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 338). Hawthorne chose to separate these paradoxical characteristics, projecting the superior characteristics on to Hilda and the inferior ones onto Miriam.

The 'Dove' Hilda is the embodiment of Pure Womanhood, an Ideal who lives above other beings in her "Dovecote", a tower which contains a shrine to the Virgin Mary.

> You breathe sweet air, above all the evil scents of Rome: and even so, in your maiden elevation, you dwell above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for your nearest neighbours (Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, 53).[3]

Since Hilda's chill purity must remain untarnished, her contact with evil is necessarily through her observation of others. She witnesses the murder of Miriam's mysterious

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[3] Hawthorne's early endorsement of this cultural ideal may be seen in his early letters to his "Dove" Sophia. In 1843 he wrote: "I feel so sensibly that thou are my chastest, holiest wife -- a woman and an angel" (Hawthorne, Love Letters, 112). Although this letter predates The Marble Faun by twenty years I believe that it does indicate that Hawthorne had some personal, emotional investment in his depiction of the pure ideal.

stalker, the 'Model' (now confusingly identified as a Capuchin monk) by Donatello. Hilda is disturbed not only by Donatello's act of murder but by Miriam's silent acquiescence. Donatello is, after all, only a human "faun", a creature in whom ". . . the characteristics of the brute creation meet and combine with those of humanity . . ." (9). Miriam was someone that Hilda had felt was good: to be good, however, one must be **all** good.

> If there be any such dreadful mixture of good and evil as you affirm, (and which appears to me almost more shocking than pure evil,) then the good is turned to poison, not the evil to wholesomeness (384).

The discovery that good and evil do mix -- the discovery, in short, of human nature -- forces Hilda into a disenchanted odyssey. In her holiest of holies, the picture galleries, she sees the artists' mistresses in the Madonnas and prurience in the blushing painted limbs of Raphael.

The denouement of Hilda's emotional crisis closely parallels that of Lucy Snowe in Villette -- parallels it so closely that it is difficult to attribute the similarities solely to coincidence. Lucy Snowe, like Hilda, is an anglophone, a solitary Protestant who has an emotional crisis while spending the summer alone in a Catholic continental city. Lucy, however, is not a 'Dove' mourning the existence of evil. Rather, she is a lonely, agonized, human creature trapped in the hermetically sealed life of a **pensionnat**.

Lucy's creator acknowledged:

> I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times; her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid (Bronte quoted in Gaskell 485).

Lucy's isolation is made complete during her colleagues' absence over summer vacation. Depressed and without an emotional outlet, she fears for her sanity: "'my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it -- what shall I do? How shall I keep well?'" (Bronte, Villette, 231) Hilda echoes these sentiments in her conversation with the priest in St. Peter's cathedral: "'I grew a fearful thing to myself. I was going mad!'" (Hawthorne 359) Both heroines, after wandering restlessly alone thorough a continental city deserted by summer travellers, end up taking their griefs to a Catholic confessional. For Lucy Snowe, "any solemn rite, any spectacle of sincere worship, any opening for appeal to God, was as welcome to me then as read to one in extremity of want" (Bronte 232).

The act of confession, and the need for human contact, is described in both books in terms which are quite similar. Hilda, seeing a confessional marked "PRO ANGLICA LINGUA", enters it with "inevitable obedience" (Hawthorne 357). Lucy, bidden to enter the confessional by a fellow penitent, is "mechanically obedient" (Bronte 233). Hilda's confession is described as

> a relief! . . . [W]hat a torture had passed away from her soul! It was all gone; her bosom was as pure now as in her childhood. She was a girl again, she was Hilda of the dovecote . . . (Hawthorne 357-358).

Lucy Snowe makes no such claims of renewed girlhood, and yet, " . . . the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated . . . had done me good" (Bronte 234). In both cases the priest, with considered kindness, makes an attempt to convert his supplicant. In both cases this attempt is gratefully rebuffed. Hilda, while refusing to give her soul, offers "My grateful remembrance . . . as long as I live!" (Hawthorne 361) Lucy Snowe notes that " . . . whatever I may think of his Church and creed (and I like neither), of himself I must ever retain grateful recollection" (Bronte 235). In reproducing a scene from Bronte's novel Hawthorne was also unconsciously rewriting a portion of Bronte's life. Although Mrs. Gaskell mentions Bronte's long, hot, continental summer she discreetly edited Bronte's desperate visit to a confessional.

The most interesting things about the confessional scenes, however, are the differences, rather than the similarities, between them. Unlike Hilda, Lucy does not return to some untroubled 'old self'. After collapsing in the street, she awakes in the house of her long lost god-mother. Though Mrs Bretton's house seems to have been miraculously transplanted from England to a thinly disguised Brussels,

Lucy, rather than returning to the old self she had been when she visited it, must, upon awakening, continue her arduous emotional journey.

Unlike Lucy, Hilda is static: fixed in the position of the angelic Dove, she cannot become human without acquiring some stain or weakness. One may argue, of course, that Hawthorne never intended her to be so: the revelation of human nature allows Hilda to develop the quality of human compassion. Later, Hilda asks herself "whether there were not other questions to be considered, aside from that single one of Miriam's guilt or innocence" . Finally, she decides that she was wrong in severing contact with the guilty one:

> Must a selfish care for the spotlessness of our own garments keep us from pressing the guilty ones close to our hearts, wherein, for the very reason that we are innocent, lies their securest refuge from further ill! (Hawthorne 385)

Hilda's development -- from an icy angel, to a warm and humane one -- is meant to parallel Donatello's progression from faun to man. Donatello's development, however, is achieved through his own sin, rather than the sin of a friend. Though Donatello loses his innocence in the conventional fashion, Hilda's personal innocence, though it be apprised of evil, must remain intact.

Hawthorne's decision to divide his heroine in two -- one half sinless, the other sinning -- is prompted by the ideal of Pure Womanhood, an ideal which in turn stimulates the

cautious appreciation of the Cult of the Virgin which is apparent in The Marble Faun. This appreciation does not extend to the Catholic Church itself: like Bronte, Hawthorne is critical of the worshippers' easy access to absolution, which may be obtained by the perfunctory performance of religious duties. At the same time, however, Hawthorne realized that Hilda embodies the ideal of pure and angelic womanhood which the Cult of the Virgin celebrates.

Indeed, Hilda justifies the care she gives to a Catholic shrine to the Virgin with the reasoning that "A Christian girl -- even a daughter of the Puritans -- may surely pay honour to the idea of Divine Womanhood without giving up the faith of her forefathers" (54). The chaste and worshipful life of the **religieuse** is an institutionalized tribute to Hilda's, and perhaps, therefore, women's, state of development. The Church is criticized, not because it pays homage to pure womanhood, but because it uses this ideal to further the religious hierarchy's political ends. When asked to explain her mysterious disappearance and reappearance, Hilda says:

> I was a prisoner in the Convent of the Sacre Coeur . . . but in such kindly custody of pious maidens, and watched over by such a dear old priest, that -- had it not been for one or two disturbing recollections, and also because I am the daughter of Puritans -- I could willingly have dwelt there forever (466).

In the end, Hilda must forgo the "kindly custody of pious maidens", presumably to become Kenyon's "chastest, holiest

wife". A continued stay in the convent would be an evasion of development which, though it ends in sanctioned sexual initiation, is curiously asexual.

No such acceptance of the Cult of the Virgin exists in the virulently anti-Catholic Villette. The emphasis on the performance of religious duty which Hawthorne criticized is abominated throughout Bronte's novel. Far from admitting that the sacraments of the Church "may once have been genuine medicaments", as the narrator of The Marble Faun suggests, we are told in Villette that

> . . . the CHURCH strove to bring up her children robust in body, feeble in soul . . . 'Eat drink and live!' she says. "Look after your bodies and leave your souls to me. I hold their cure -- guide their course: I guarantee their final fate. . . . Lucifer just offers such terms (Bronte 196).

Unlike Hawthorne, Bronte extends her criticism to the cult of the Virgin, that institutionalized tribute to the ideal of pure womanhood. In Villette the young maidens who dress themselves in blue and white (the colours of the Virgin) are dishonest and deceitful, rather than innocent. The well-bred have a manner which is "a delicately balanced combination of insolence and deceit". Their bourgeois counterparts have "an hypocrisy of their own too". Both are carelessly dishonest; when a lie proves necessary they bring it out "with a careless ease and breadth altogether untroubled by the rebuke of conscience" (145). The passive, angelic, and

idealized innocence Hilda represents is also given short shrift. Of Justine Marie, Paul Emmanuel's long-dead sweetheart, Lucy Snowe muses:

> Now, as for Justine Marie, I knew she was well enough; there were girls like her in Madame Beck's school -- phlegmatics -- pale, slow, inert, but kind natured, neutral of evil, undistinguished for good.
>
> If she wore angels' wings, I knew whose poet-fancy conferred them. If her forehead shone luminous with the reflection of a halo, I knew in the fire of whose irids that circlet of holy flame had generation (490-491).

John Maynard notes that Justine Marie is "almost a perfect symbol of the tendency of the nineteenth-century male mind to create sexless, sterile, angelic images of women and invest them with religious emotion" (Maynard 198). M. Paul has created Justine Marie, investing her passive being, with its "weak frame, inactive passions, acquiescent habits" with stellar qualities (Bronte 484). Although this places M. Paul in the traditional position of the author he is imprisoned by his own creation since the cynical, Church sponsored triumvirate -- Mme. Beck, Mme. Walravens and Pere Silas -- exploit this enduring attachment for their own ends.

Villette concentrates much more on the effect of the ideal of pure womanhood upon women themselves. The pupils at Mme. Beck's school possess such unsavoury characteristics because the constant surveillance which serves to uphold the cult of pure womanhood actually perverts it. Hilda, like

Priscilla before her, bears a mantle of innate and impervious innocence which protects her from the wickedness around her. In Villette the school girls are moulded by their oppressive surroundings; their self-respect has been "trained to be crushed, and it rather liked the pressure of a firm heel, than otherwise" (147).

Although Lucy Snowe's response to her students is tinged with more than a hint of xenophobia, it is clear that English birth alone does not automatically provide one with an upright character. Ginevra Fanshawe, a flirtatious English student who is the product of an improvident and status-obsessed family is neither angelic, nor noble, nor innocent. The only character in Villette who approaches Hilda's sainthood is Paulina De Bassompierre. Although Paulina ages from five to eighteen in the novel, she remains essentially infantile. (Maynard 183-185) Paulina never grows up. Instead, she allows herself to be moulded, first by her father, who views her as 'little Polly' and then by Graham Bretton, who sees in her his ideal of pure womanhood. Knowing that "Graham's tastes are so fastidious", Paulina edits her emotions and her letters until they present a chaste, cold sweetness. Living solely for her father and husband, she develops pliability, rather than maturity. John Maynard notes that Bronte's unvarnished characterization of both the insipid and the sinful demonstrates a recognition for the need of

balance between passion and purity (Maynard, 211).

Without this balance there can be no accurate representation of women; indeed, in Villette the sentimental ideal and her sinful counterpart are satirized during Lucy's visit to an art gallery. In "Cleopatra", the nineteenth chapter of Villette, Lucy Snowe recounts, with comical indignation, the pictorial evidence of male conceptions -- or misconceptions -- of woman. The "Cleopatra" is an enormous nude painting of a robust and lusty woman, **le type voluptueux.** Lucy Snowe pronounces the painting to be "an enormous piece of claptrap". (276) M. Paul Emmanuel, the soul of convention, forbids Lucy, an unmarried woman, to look at the canvas. For her edification he provides a collection of pictures depicting "**La vie d'une femme**" in a style which is "flat, dead, pale and formal". "**Quel triste coin! . . . et quels laids tableaux!**" is Lucy's comment. The painting of a woman on the church steps is "the image of a most villainous little precocious she-hypocrite". The others, an "exasperating" **mariee**, a "disconsolate" mother with her "clayey" baby, and a black woman and child respectfully surveying an emblem of the patriarchal state, provide stultifying images of rigidly assigned roles of religion, marriage, maternity and patriotism. Lucy is repulsed by such images. "What women to live with! insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-

giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers." (278) Lucy, as "everywoman" , can find no recognisable representation of herself.

Curiously, the chapter-title "Cleopatra" also appears in The Marble Faun. We know, of course, from Hawthorne's preface that the description of Kenyon's statue of Cleopatra is actually a description of a work by William W. Story, an American artist that Hawthorne met in Italy. (Hawthorne 4) Bronte herself based her 'Cleopatra' on a painting in a Brussels exhibition. (Fraser 331) Although this precludes any definite connection between Hawthorne's 'Cleopatra' and Bronte's, some comparison between the two is valid. Bronte uses art to **criticize** society's stereotypes, while Hawthorne uses art to support his own version of them.

Kenyon's statue is all that Lucy Snowe ridicules. It is "[i]n a word, all Cleopatra -- fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment . . ." with "womanhood . . . so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements." (Hawthorne 127) This combination is not to be found in Kenyon's beloved Hilda, for, he says, "her womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil." (128)

The connection between the statue of Cleopatra and the artist Miriam is so blatantly symbolic that the reader can

hardly fail to notice it. Seeing the statue, Miriam is strongly tempted to tell Kenyon her secret, her "dark-red carbuncle -- red as blood . . . too rich a gem to put in a stranger's casket!" (130) Miriam does not her reveal her secret, which ties her to the "passionate, tender, wicked, terrible" Cleopatra when she tells Kenyon:

> 'You can do nothing for me, unless you petrify me into a marble companion for your Cleopatra there; and I am not of her sister hood, I do assure you! Forget this foolish scene, my friend, and never let me see a reference to it in your eyes, when they meet mine hereafter.' (129)

Naturally, Miriam's disclaimer only serves to direct the reader to a comparison between the two. Miriam's guilty and implicitly sexual nature has been projected onto the work of art. The chapter preceding "Cleopatra" (Chapter XIII, "A Sculptor's Studio") contrasts the absent Hilda with the guilty Miriam. Before unveiling his statue, Kenyon shows Miriam another work of art: a marble model of Hilda's hand, a partial portrait of her cold, unattainable goodness.

> The sculptor sighed, as he put away the treasure of Hilda's marble hand into the ivory coffer, and thought how slight was the probability that he should ever feel, responsive to his own, the tender clasp of the original. He dared not even kiss the image that he himself had made; it had assumed its share of Hilda's remote and shy divinity. (122)

The hand is a fetish, a semi-divine **objet d'art** onto which Kenyon projects his ideal of womanly virtue and his reverence for it. The hand, like the ideal, is Kenyon's creation; in

reverencing it he reverences the production of his own mind. For this reason, Miriam refuses to allow her "dark-red carbuncle" to be put in the casket reserved for Hilda's hand. Like Graham, Kenyon is fastidious.

The most curious thing about this use of art as representation is that both of the women, who have been "killed into art" are both artists in their own right. Hilda "had early shown what was pronounced by connoisseurs a decided genius for the pictorial art" (55). We are told, with some condescension, that her original pictures are "scenes delicately imagined, lacking, perhaps, in the reality which comes only from a close acquaintance with life" (55). Upon arriving in Rome, Hilda gives up original thought and, surrounded by masculine masterpieces, earns her bread as a copyist.

Hilda's occupation forces her to spend long hours in the picture galleries, poring over the works of Renaissance masters. One cannot help but compare her actions to Lucy's, since both women are "reading" masculine representations of women. But while Lucy resembles Julia Fetterley's feminist, resisting reader, Hilda, like Georgiana and Priscilla before her, unquestioningly accepts the painter's depictions of ideal womanhood. Hilda eventually realizes that these portraits are idealized feet of clay portrayed for reasons of lust and politics rather than spiritual love. Her own character never

changes, however, since she, the author's creation, remains the embodiment of that ideal. The depiction of the ideal is criticized, while the ideal itself remains intact.

The essential characteristic of the feminine ideal is the fact that she is created; she does not, in any sense, create. It stands to reason, then, that the creative woman is barred by her creativity from the position of the ideal. Unlike the placid, innocent artisan which is her antithesis, Miriam is tormented and tainted with sin. Even before the monk's death Miriam is bedeviled by some mysterious guilt which is never adequately explained. Although it is hinted that her troubles arise from a twisted family situation, the reader is tempted to believe that the source of Miriam's torment is creativity itself. Her pictures alternate between mocking fantasies of decapitation and wistful paeans to the one significant feminine event, marriage and motherhood. The fact that one of Miriam's pictures depicts the beheading of Holofernes by Judith leads Joel Pfister to suggest that Hawthorne saw himself, the male artist, being "castrated" by his female counterparts (Pfister 172). It is, in any case, made evident that woman's creative urge, when not directed towards child-rearing, can be destructive. Miriam's contrasting productions of sweethearts and baby shoes have a wistful, tender quality which bespeaks her isolation. "In all those sketches of common life, the affections that

spiritualize it, a figure was pourtrayed apart" (Hawthorne 46). Miriam's creativity, her "sin", separates her from the joys of femininity, all of which are based upon one blessed event. The monk who follows Miriam is her partner in the sin which ostensibly keeps her from the ordinary womanly joys. Were he not of such undoubted corporeality, he could be a symbol of her own creative, feminine mind -- a mind driven to dis-ease by the unwarranted and unfeminine strength of its ideas. In spite of his corporeality, the monk does, in any case, almost immediately bring to mind the spectral nun who haunts Lucy Snow in Villette.

Unlike Miriam's monk, the nun of Villette represents Lucy's suppression, rather than her sin. "I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked, when I thought of past days, I **could** feel." (Bronte 175) As the spirit of a **religieuse** who was buried alive, the nun is a perfect metaphor for Lucy's economic, social and emotional internment. It is most fitting that Lucy and M. Paul should see the nun together: M. Paul is the only one who perceives the passionate nature Lucy conceals behind her cold exterior. M. Paul recognizes Lucy's passion and suppression because the two qualities are his own. In spite of his school-room tantrums, M. Paul like Lucy, has few, if any, intimate ties, having long since offered himself as a votary to the sainted Justine Marie. It is only when M. Paul and Lucy escape their

mutual social and emotional internment by allowing themselves to become emotionally involved with each other that the nun is unmasked. The nun's unmasking, unlike the death of Miriam's monk, is ludicrous, rather than menacing: the revelation that the haunting figure is the sensuous cigar-smoking dandy de Hamal suggests that the internal and external barriers which confine and separate Lucy and M. Paul are artificial and easily trespassed. Thus the nun's and her unmasking are a part of Lucy's psychological development. "Lucy's emergence from the frozen, unpleasant girl of the opening to possession of her humanity is presented as essentially one of sexual growth." (Maynard 211) Although Lucy remains celibate, she develops the emotional and affective ties which signal sexual growth.

In Bronte's novel, the patriarchal society which represses creative impulses leads to isolation and breakdown. Much of Lucy's emotional energy is devoted to hiding her inner reserves of passion, imagination, and affection. She literally lives "two lives -- the life of thought, and that of reality" (Bronte 140) Although Lucy is roused from this torpor during her part in the vaudeville, she makes "a firm resolution never to be drawn into a similar affair." Lucy reasons:

> A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new found faculty might gift me a

> world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life (211).

The resumption of her repressive double life leads Lucy into the emotional breakdown that culminates in her visit to the church. In spite of this, Lucy has good reason to suspect that such displays will not "do" -- she later sees Graham Bretton's response to the art of the actress Vashti.

Vashti opens the floodgates of emotion through her art. Her acting "disclosed power like a deep, swollen, winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steely sweep of its descent" (341). This display of feminine creativity is portrayed as a powerful, sexual force -- "It was a marvellous sight: a mighty revelation. It was a spectacle low, horrible, immoral." (339) The last, of course, is the voice of morality. Bronte had seen the French actress Rachel, upon whom her portrait of Vashti was based, and could not shut her eyes to the fact that the actress was as well known for her sexual adventures as she was for her theatrical prowess. Although this is acknowledged, the creative forces which Vashti displays are not condemned:

> Vashti was not good, I was told; and I have said that she did not look good: though a spirit, she was a spirit out of Tophet. Well, if so much unholy force can arise from below, may not an equal efflux of sacred essence descend one day from above? (340)

Graham Bretton's reaction to this display is a mixture

of curiosity and contempt. Lucy concedes: "I suppose that for natures of that order his sympathies **were** callous. In a few terse phrases he told me his opinion of, and feeling towards, the actress: he judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgement" (342). Although Lucy is secretly in love with Graham she buries both his letters and her love, since he could obviously have as little sympathy for her as he did for Vashti.

It is tempting to place Hawthorne in Graham's place, for, although his portrayal of Miriam is obviously sympathetic he judges her, as he judged Margaret Fuller, by conventional moral standards, rather than by artistic pioneering ones. In spite of this Miriam, with her burden of guilt, certainly seems to receive more pity from Hawthorne than Margaret Fuller. Miriam is an Eve figure who drifts into prayerful, penitential obscurity after regrettably tempting Adam-Donatello with her apple-glance. Her true sin is an innate sexual attraction, which made Donatello, like Adam, break the law for her sake. Miriam's sexuality, of course, is part and parcel with her creativity, suggesting that Hawthorne, unlike Bronte, associated feminine creativity with biological conception, childbirth -- and loss of chastity. Indeed, all of Hawthorne's creative women -- Hester, Zenobia and Miriam -- are either obviously sinful or sexually compromised. It is for this reason perhaps that Hawthorne replaced Lucy Snowe

with two heroines. Although Lucy Snowe is not obviously an artist figure she is the teller of her own tale. Such revelatory communication was, in some way, compromising. When Hawthorne expressed his admiration of American author Fanny Fern to Ticknor he asserted:

> [t]he woman [wrote] as if the devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. Generally women write like emasculated men, and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly; but when they throw off the restraints of decency, and come before the public stark naked, as it were -- then their books are sure to possess character and value (Hawthorne, Letters to Wm. Ticknor, 78).

Of a poet named Mrs. Howe he noted: "she has no genius or talent, except for making public what she ought to keep to herself --viz. her passions, emotions, and womanly weaknesses". Although he found her poems "delightful" he concluded that "she ought to be soundly whipt for publishing them" (50). Given such evidence we can perhaps conclude that the shy and virginal Bronte's revelations of "passions, emotions and womanly weaknesses" could only be seen as vaguely indecent.

Behind this charge of indecency lay Hawthorne's fears of the power of this verbal release could presage his own eclipse. Hawthorne's fear of the social reorganization which such writing represented, and Bronte's rebellious championing of it may be seen in the carnival scene which ends both

novels. In Villette Lucy, drugged by a potion which was supposed to make her sleep through M. Paul's departure, wanders freely through the streets of the city. Her egress from the pensionnat is described in the terms of a prison escape. The class-rooms she passes are "great dreary jails" which hold "intolerable memories, laid miserable amongst their straw and their manacles" (Bronte 548). If action may be seen as a form of creativity (as it was in the life of Margaret Fuller) Lucy is creating something -- an explanation, perhaps -- by seeking out M. Paul. Although she mistakenly believes that M. Paul is going to marry his goddaughter, Justine Marie, she does not fear the hangers-on, the "secret junta" which would arrange such a match. "The sight of them thus assembled did me good. I cannot say that I felt weak before them, or abashed, or dismayed" (558). Thus fortified, Lucy symbolically confronts the spectre of her suppression, the nun -- which turns out to be a pillow dressed in the despicable de Hamal's disguise. Although Lucy and M. Paul are not destined to live at peace in the new school building which he found for her to maintain, this does not negate Lucy's access to financial and emotional freedom. The fact that she tells her story so many years later suggests that she did not subside once again into emotional internment after M. Paul's death.

The carnival scene of The Marble Faun, is not obviously based on the night festival of Villette. Hawthorne

witnessed carnival while he was in Italy. It will also be recalled that Hawthorne used just such a scene, for similar purposes in The Blithedale Romance. As in The Blithedale Romance the male creator, Kenyon the sculptor, is threatened by the forces of femininity as the boundaries of gender collapse. That which is weaker becomes the stronger and Kenyon is menaced repeatedly by overpowering damsels. "Five strapping damsels . . . joined hands and danced around him, inviting him, by their gestures, to perform a horn-pipe in the midst". He escapes this group, only to be wooed and pummelled by "a gigantic female figure, seven feet high, at least, and taking up a third of the street's breadth with the preposterously swelling sphere of her crinoline skirts" (Hawthorne 445-446). It is Hilda, the domestic goddess, who throws him a life line in the shape of a rose. Her appearance signals a relieved return to the status quo.

The return to the status quo is also heralded by Miriam's final appearance. No longer an artist, she has resumed her mysterious identity and presumably gone off to perform penance of some sort while Donatello languishes in prison. Although the pair is united in repentance by the blessing of Kenyon and the outspread hands of a papal statue in a market square the latter-day Adam and Eve are separated and destroyed. Kenyon, the male creator whose position as a sculptor is analogous to Hawthorne's position as an author,

survives, with Hilda, the domestic goddess, at his side. In this way, Hawthorne directly contradicts Villette, in which the lone female figure, writing her story, survives. In The Marble Faun the female voice, which Lucy's writing (and Bronte's) represents, is hushed: Hilda, whether or not she marries Kenyon, is only an echo of other (masculine) voices, while Miriam forsakes art for penitential obscurity.

While it is clear that Hawthorne's story directly contradicts Bronte's it is, admittedly, difficult to prove that he lifted all of the situations of The Marble Faun directly from Villette. As we have seen, many of the elements of Bronte's work which Hawthorne duplicates -- the artwork, the carnival and that staple of gothic literature, the menacing religious figure -- can be attributable to other sources. In spite of this the number of the elements which are duplicated and their ordering convinces me that Hawthorne had Villette in the back of his mind while he was writing The Marble Faun. He had told Ticknor in 1855 that a woman only wrote well "if the devil was in her" (Hawthorne, Letters to Wm. Ticknor, 78). Certainly his portrayal of Miriam supports this, for although Miriam is not a evil-ridden villainess she was certainly touched by the sin of creativity. Although he grudgingly admired the productions of his feminine contemporaries Hawthorne could not help but jealously guard his role as the patriarchal author/father, the arbiter of the

cultural ideal.

CONCLUSION

As a writer of romances, Hawthorne was well aware the mechanistic age could only judge him to be both frivolous and impractical. In his introduction to The Marble Faun, he appealed, as always to that one, indulgent, and semi-mythical "Reader". Steadfast in his belief that this personage does exist Hawthorne notes that he "wrote for him, year after year, during which the great Eye of the Public (as well it might) almost utterly overlooked my small productions." Yet after an eight year space between his second novel and his last, Hawthorne cannot help but fear that this being, upon which he based all his hopes, is "Probably under some mossy grave-stone, inscribed with a half-obliterated name, which I shall never recognize." (Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, 2) He could not help but fear that the Reader's ear might already be claimed. He was in competition with Fuller's proclamation that it was the era of the strong, creative woman. Seemingly fulfilling Fuller's prophecy, Charlotte Bronte's voice, (which, according to sales, was not overlooked and unheard) stoutly claimed the Reader's ear for her own. Jane Eyre's "Reader, I married him" was such a bold pronouncement that it could easily have been heard at Hawthorne's expense. Hawthorne retaliated by altering the visions of both Fuller and Bronte to suit his

own. By re-visioning them he made an effort to rise above the clamour and establish his primacy.

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