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Outcasts of the Universe: Shyness in Hawthorne and James

Ryan Stuart Lowe
Washington University in St. Louis

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"Outcasts of the Universe": Shyness in Hawthorne and James

by

Ryan Stuart Lowe

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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requirements for the degree
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For all those small but countless moments of friendship and camaraderie, I thank my colleagues—graduate students, professors, and academic staff—at Washington University in St. Louis.

Finally, thanks and love to my wife Sara Flannery Murphy and to baby Miles Eliot Lowe—are you named after Miles Coverdale from *Blithedale Romance* or after Miles from *Turn of the Screw*? We'll never know for certain.

There is one secret,—I have concealed it all along,
and never meant to let the least whisper of it escape,—
one foolish little secret, which possibly may have had something to do
with these inactive years of meridian manhood,
with my bachelorship,
with the unsatisfied retrospect that I fling back on life,
and my listless glance towards the future.

Shall I reveal it?

— Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Preface

> I came across the problem of types, for it is one's psychological type which from the outset determines and limits a person's judgment.
> — Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

I remember reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* for the first time. It was there that I met Miles Coverdale—Hawthorne's sometimes affectionate and sometimes scathing self-parody—who framed the tale as a prurient observer, an unreliable narrator, and a failed hero. I was perplexed by Coverdale's thwarted curiosity, by his ironic self-criticisms; I was maddened by his confession that he was in love with Priscilla rather than Zenobia, choosing the least enticing of Hawthorne's fair maidens over the richest of his dark ladies. But most of all, I was fascinated by Miles Coverdale himself, his personality, his role in the story. These complexities were best encapsulated in an early reflection Coverdale had upon his own place in the novel's plot:

> My own part in these transactions was singularly subordinate. It resembled that of the Chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment, and bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, on the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond. (90-91)

It was this phrase, "singularly subordinate," that struck me: a phrase verging on—though not quite arriving at—oxymoron. In these two words, Coverdale represents himself as subordinate: peripheral, inessential, and contingent to the story he watches; as singular: alone and sometimes

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lonely in his distance from the action that unfolds; but as "singularly subordinate" as if he is in this particular case exceptional. Marginalized, solitary, but *special*.

I began my project reading Coverdale as a *voyeur*—the impersonal Greek Chorus, the vicarious town-hall audience member. He sits in a tree-turret—or perches at a hotel window—people-watching like a Peeping Tom. This loaded term drew me on in directions both illuminating and frustrating: as a trope, the term *voyeurism* carried with it a connotation altogether cold, calculating, and possessive. It turned Coverdale into a Chillingsworth. What gave voyeurism the lie was Coverdale's insistence that he only "*seems* to be set aloof." It seemed to me that Coverdale was misread as aloof by others, by himself—or that he chose aloofness as a working fiction.

In later months, I read James's *Roderick Hudson*, and I was similarly drawn to the figure of Rowland Mallet. I began to wonder if what fascinated me was the figure of the *flâneur*—Coverdale the Minor Poet, Mallet the idle art critic. There was something modern about Coverdale's irony and post-heroic ennui; there was something modern about Mallet's endless tourism. However, these figures lacked the grace and polish that Baudelaire or Wilde would come to embody; as James would tell us, Rowland Mallet lacked the "prime requisite of a graceful flâneur—the simple, sensuous, confident relish of pleasure" (10). What captured these figures was precisely that they were *not* confident; their personality was a rare mixture of aesthetic perception and scrupulous morality. I toyed with the idea of the *moral flâneur*, a contradiction in terms, and this got ever closer to that intense self-consciousness, that burden of care and conscience that rendered Coverdale and Mallet so fascinating to me.

My interest in these figures expanded to include characters throughout Hawthorne's and James's *oeuvres*: Fanshawe, Wakefield, Kenyon, Septimius Felton, Winterbourne, the unnamed

narrator of *The Sacred Fount*, Lambert Strether, and John Marcher, to name a few. I had

inadvertently become obsessed with Hawthorne's "pale males" and James's "poor sensitive

gentlemen."[1] For decades, critics have noted the resemblance, have traced the genealogy—

Robert Emmet Long's *The Great Succession* (1979), Richard Brodhead's *The School of*

Hawthorne (1986) and Dan McCall's *Citizens of Somewhere Else* (1999) are among some of the

best—but I felt that none had pinned down the vital essence that defined and joined these figures

and their authors together.[2]

I decided on the term *shyness*. I wanted to account not only for their voyeurism, their

flânerie, but something more. I wanted to account for their instinct to privacy and solitude,[3] their

guilty orbit around a more robust figure,[4] and their subsequent recoil.[5] I wanted to get at their

thwarted curiosity,[6] their embarrassment—no, their *embarrassability*[7]—and their half-apologetic

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[1] Leland Person used the term "pale males" to describe Dimmesdale, Coverdale, and Kenyon in his article "The Aboriginal Hawthorne" (1991). Henry James himself coined the term "poor sensitive gentlemen" in his NYE preface to "The Beast in the Jungle."

[2] Both Long and Brodhead are primarily interested in how James adapted (and misadapted) Hawthorne's works, while Dan McCall funnels most of their similarities into his conclusion that Hawthorne and James were preeminent artists: "citizens of somewhere else," where somewhere else is the "land of writing itself" (175).

[3] These figures jealously guard their own personal time and space: consider Coverdale's tree-turret, Strether taking a train to the French countryside, or the narrator to *The Sacred Fount* insisting that "I don't enjoy such occasions as these unless I from time to time get off by myself somewhere long enough to tell myself how much I do enjoy them" (84).

[4] Take for example Coverdale watching Zenobia, Rowland watching Roderick, or Winterbourne watching Daisy Miller — in each case, the figure is caught between wanting to come closer and wanting to run away. Rowland Mallet's lament over his attachment might be taken as representative: "I give it up! I don't in the least give it up, you know; I 'm incapable of giving it up" (190).

[5] Hawthorne's suspicions of stronger personalities reveals itself in his talk of sympathies and spheres; James's suspicion led to theories of sexual vampirism.

[6] Throughout their works, revelation is interrupted, then finally foreclosed. It is Coverdale trying to eavesdrop on Zenobia and Westervelt only to have them walk away from his tree-turret; it is the narrator of *The Marble Faun* likening private conversations to the fragments of a letter scattered in the wind; it is the critic in "The Figure in the Carpet" baffled at every turn to uncover the secret meaning hidden throughout Hugh Vereker's *oeuvre*.

[7] James would fittingly title one of his short story collections *Embarrassments*, which included "The Figure in the Carpet," "Glasses," "The Next Time," and "The Way It Came." The pale males and poor sensitive gentlemen seem

self-parodies.[8] I wanted to illuminate their fear of action,[9] their preference for fantasy,[10] their (metaphorical) virginity and even broader renunciations.[11] I wanted to explain the paralyzing self-consciousness,[12] the fixed ideas occasionally veering into obsession,[13] and the insistent fear—cribbed from Hawthorne's notebooks and writ large in "The Beast in the Jungle"—that each of them might be "the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened" (125).

To settle on the term *shyness* is hardly to end matters of definition: the term itself abounds with various definitions and explanations, a term that has only recently come under

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particularly susceptible to embarrassment, as when Coverdale says that "the greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool" (10).

[8] Even Hawthorne himself admits that *The Blithedale Romance* is a vague rendering of his time spent in Brook Farm. Critics have read Miles Coverdale in varying relationships to Hawthorne—from autobiography to self-parody—ever since.

In a letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward, James calls his novella *The Sacred Fount* "a consistent joke" (186); in "The Theory, the Theorist, and the Lady," Marcus Klein notes that James made such a consistent joke of the novella that no one got it — and so the joke was on him (83).

[9] Interestingly, John Marcher's personal narcissism does not extend to action: he says, "It isn't anything I'm to do, to achieve in the world, to be distinguished or admired for. I'm not such an ass as *that*" (72). When turned towards politics, this passivity runs straight into quietism: as when Coverdale says of idealism, "If the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure" (11).

[10] As Vincent Bertolini notes in "The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood in the 1850s," Coverdale muses in front of the fire, preferring imagined love over action. The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* cannot help but imagine sex everywhere he looks.

[11] It appears that Fanshawe would rather die an early death than succumb to the love of Ellen Langton, whereas Septimius discovers that the route to immortality demands a severe test of abstinence. Tales like "The Jolly Corner" and "Beast in the Jungle" read as ghost stories mourning the sex never had. Finally, it is part of Rowland Mallet's strange refusal to court his cousin Cecilia, though she was the love of his life; it is Strether's desire to be "right."

[12] If his New York Edition prefaces are to be believed, James's unifying law of composition was the focalizing force of a center-of-consciousness. As James's writing became only denser and more involved, critics lampooned him for his (too intense) self-consciousness: the joke that "Henry James chews more than he bites off" has been attributed variously to Mrs. Henry Adams, Twain, James Whistler, and even his brother William.

[13] The most extreme of these might be Wakefield's twenty-year self-banishment, and the narrator's all-encompassing obsession in *The Sacred Fount*. In James's short story "The Diary of a Man of Fifty," the Countess Salvi calls the diarist "crazy," to which he says that he is "only too sane"—this prompts a reply from her that resonates from Zenobia to Mrs. Brissenden: "You have at any rate what we call a fixed idea" (481).

scrutiny among psychologists. This is partly because shyness is vernacular: imprecise, equivocal, even fuzzy. At different times, it might describe an emotional state, a personality trait, a lack of social skills, or a weakness of will. As a concept, shyness shares boundaries with dozens of similar terms—awkwardness, reserve, privacy, passivity, modesty, anxiety, shame, embarrassment, introversion, and self-consciousness—although none of these are quite identical. The breadth of meaning in the term *shy* renders it both complex and suggestive—and modern psychologists have shown interest in this term for precisely this breadth and depth of meaning. In works like Brian Gilmartin's *The Shy-Man Syndrome* (1989), W. Ray Crozier's *Understanding Shyness: Psychological Perspectives* (2001) or Susie Scott's *Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence* (2007), psychologists argue that popular conceptions of shyness reflect tacit cultural norms. Understanding the culture behind shyness requires an excavation of the history of shyness, of the ever-evolving definitions that define shy experience and shy narrative.

Etiquette manuals of the nineteenth-century abounded with advice on how best to overcome the *problem* of shyness, especially for young men.[14] In the emerging discipline of psychology, shyness was presented as a puzzle: both Darwin and William James tried to account for what "use"—in evolutionary or pragmatic terms—shyness might possibly have had.[15] For women, shyness was generally folded in with the nineteenth-century ideal of femininity, the "Angel of the House" archetype: as Zenobia said of the fair and fainting Priscilla, the shy woman

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[14] In *The Social Mirror,* Rose Cleveland writes: "Suppose you are a bashful, awkward youth — we say youth instead of maiden, because boys, for some reason, are much more apt to be painfully shy than girls" (237), while in *Manners and Social Usages*, Mrs. John Sherwood claimed, "Women are seldom troubled at the age at which men suffer with bashfulness or awkwardness. It is as if Nature thus compensated the weaker vessel" (403).

In his 1896 article "Morbid Shyness," Harry Campbell speculated that shyness attacked men and women equally, but that "it attracts most attention" in men (806).

[15] Darwin thought it was miscalculated instinct of modesty, a misfire of too much "self-attention" (326). In his *Principles of Psychology* (1890)*,* William James concludes that shyness was one of the "incidental emotions, in spite of which we get along" (II.432).

was the "type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (113). But for men, shyness was taken as a sign of weakness, of impotence, as a flaw to be overcome. It is for this reason that I have chosen to focus on *male shyness* in this dissertation: although I believe that female and male shyness share many of the same difficulties and strategies, the status of the shy man was more conspicuous and more embattled than that of the shy woman.

Over the last half-century, Hawthorne's notorious shyness has often been approached as a failing, both for his life and for his art. In *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), Leslie Fiedler lamented that Hawthorne introduced the "impotent Peeping Tom" figure into American literature, a tradition that he already deemed pre-adolescent in its force and sexuality. In later years, critics moved on to question whether Hawthorne's shyness was simply a self-defensive melodrama—following Nina Baym's *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (1976)—or a cover for his conservative, quietist politics—licensed by Sacvan Bercovitch's *Office of the Scarlet Letter* (1991). In recent years, these criticisms of Coverdale as impotent—or Hawthorne as anti-progressive—have grown persistent enough to push scholars to express their frustration with this trend and take this attitude as their main object of inquiry.[16]

Similarly, Leon Edel framed discussions of Henry James's gender and sexuality for decades following the publication of his five-volume *Henry James: A Biography* (1953-72), leading critics to read James as not only prudish, but impotent, sexually underdeveloped, or even castrated.[17] However, things would go differently with James: when Eve Sedgwick published her controversial article "The Beast in the Closet"—later integrated into *The Epistemology of the*

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[16] See Michael Borgstrom's "Hating Miles Coverdale" or Brenda Wineapple's "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Writer; or, The Fleeing of the Biographied" for recent critiques of the way that Coverdale and Hawthorne are treated, respectively.

[17] See David McWhirter's *Desire and Love in Henry James* for a brief history of James criticism. Interestingly enough, he dismisses readings of James as homosexual as equally laughable (4).

Closet (1990)—critics were suddenly invited to read James's renunciations (personal, fictional) not as sexual absence but as closetedness. In recent years, critics have explored the queer James with increasing confidence: from Hugh Steven's *Henry James and Sexuality* (1998) to Wendy Graham's *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (1999) to Eric Haralson's *Henry James and Queer Modernity* (2003), critics have begun to read James's secrets as something of an *open secret*.

My project reached a turning point when I tried to articulate how the connections I had drawn between Hawthorne and James—between the "pale males" and the "poor sensitive gentlemen"—might be accounted for, given their diverging critical paths. If our appreciation of James and his "poor sensitive gentlemen" had been enriched by the queer trope of the *closet*, then what might the language of queer theory have to say about Hawthorne and his "pale males?" It was in rereading Coverdale's confession that I realized how intimately shyness and the closet might be linked. While other critics have touched on contiguous tropes—the secret for Gordon Hutner, the veiled face for Clark Davis—I would go so far as to define *shyness as closetedness*. To theorize shyness—its psychology, its narratological logic, its strategies and expressions—as closetedness has a two-fold effect: it is first to extend the rich logic of the closet beyond the logic of homosexuality, but it is also to attempt to explain the psychology that makes one person emerge from the closet and another retreat into it. It is to make possible new constellations of authors from Hawthorne and Henry James to Emily Dickinson and Charlotte Brontë, but it is also to sharpen old distinctions between Henry James and Oscar Wilde, between Emily Dickinson and Whitman.

This project thus shares many boundaries with the ever-growing terrain of identity politics, especially gender studies, queer theory, and disability studies. In particular, it resonates with recent projects exploring alternative masculinities: although I admire Leland S. Person's

Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity (2003) for its careful delineation of the multiple

masculinities that an author can employ, I'm even more impressed with Herbert Sussman's

Victorian Masculinities (1995) which stresses not only the ethics but the *economies* of

masculinity as well. My work also draws on those projects that seek to legitimate the

unexpressed and the hidden: projects like Myra Jensen's *Five Fictions in Search of Truth* (2008)

or Anne-Lise Francois's *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (2008).

However, I do not wish to simply co-opt the language of identity politics in order to shore

up the boundaries of a personality type.[18] If I have a model, it might be a work like Sianne

Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* (2005) or Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* (2007)—a study that analyzes

the small, the circumscribed, the backward. In particular, Heather Love argues that in any

narrative of progress, there are "backward" figures that do not fit, but point instead to what (and

who) is left behind in the process. In *Outcasts of the Universe*, I explore shyness as a modern

dilemma, for the shy heroes in the works of Hawthorne and James—like the authors

themselves—find themselves ill-equipped for the broader shifts in American modernity: the

expansion of a competitive market and the idealization of the self-made man,[19] the rise of

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[18] In *Female Masculinities*, Judith Halberstam fears that masculinity studies might uncritically reappropriate the language of feminism; in "The Normalization of Queer Theory," David Halperin fears that the term "queer" is being reappropriated without any regard to its original meaning.

[19] In "Men, Women, and the American Way," Martha Banta argues that American culture was fixated on demarcating the roles of the two genders: money-making men and culture-making women (23), echoing perhaps Ann Douglas's *Feminization of American Culture*.

In "The Man of Action: Henry James and the Performance of Gender," Richard Henke argues that James had to be rehabilitated in early American criticism, not only for his arcane modernism or his expatriation, but also because he was a "sissy" (227ff).

David Greven's *Men Beyond Desire: Manhood, Sex, and Violation in American Literature* (2005) takes the inviolate man as the alternative to—when it is not in fact a caricature of the self-made man.

feminism and with it ever-changing gender norms,[20] the emergence of a self-consciously American canon attempting to defend itself within an increasingly cosmopolitan world,[21] and a slow consolidation of the bachelor, the artist, and the aesthete into the stigmatized figure of the homosexual.[22]

By drawing on the fiction and biographies of Hawthorne and James, I conceptualize shyness as offering alternative models of social and sexual engagement in the nineteenth century. This project begins with Hawthorne—and his years of living as a recluse—before opening outward to consider how he interacted with the larger world in ever broadening circles: Hawthorne's short stint at the social reform community Brook Farm and his later international travels. It is where Hawthorne ends that James might be said to begin: a young man learning to use the international scene to his advantage, though he was not prepared to accept the increasingly-open sexual proclivities of his era. In tracing these expanding circles, I chart two trajectories for the shy hero—alienation from and reconciliation to the wider world—while remaining attentive to their many emotional and erotic strategies that emphasize indirection, broken reciprocity, and hidden circuits of desire.

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[20] In *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990)*,* Gillian Brown offers a strong critique of masculine prerogatives and privileges in a changing American culture, while Leland Person offers an apologia of masculinity in his *Aesthetic Headaches* (1988).

In recent years, critics such as Stacey Margolis have offered a more nuanced approach: in her *The Public Life of Privacy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (2005), Margolis discusses the ways that both men and women sought power in a changing gender arena.

[21] Both Sarah Wilson and Marianne DeKoven discuss the intersection of a national consciousness with the advent of cosmopolitanism; however, Michèle Mendelssohn's *Henry James, Oscar Wilde, and Aesthetic Culture* (2007) may represent one of the most nuanced renderings of these traditions.

[22] In "The Haunted Closet: Henry James's Queer Spectrality," John Fletcher discusses how gay stereotypes grew to absorb other marginalized identities such as the bachelor and the dandy (58). This slow process of consolidation is particularly vital to understanding Haralson's *Henry James and Queer Modernity* and Wendy Graham's *Henry James's Thwarted Love*.

I open my dissertation by considering Hawthorne's shyness as it was mythologized in the nineteenth century. In the decades that followed his death, biographers attempted to explain—or extenuate—Hawthorne's reclusiveness in many ways. In my introductory chapter "Portrait of the Artist as a Shy Man," I distinguish five distinct strategies in accounting for the author's notorious shyness: the romantic, the environmental, the psychological, the skeptical, and the ethical. Writers like Emerson and Lathrop sought to romanticize Hawthorne, while authors like James sought to render him pitiable; critics like Melville and Fields sought out the melancholy that caused him to withdraw, while Hawthorne's family sought out the reverence; finally, critics like W. C. Brownell leveled a resounding critique of his shyness as pose.

Drawing on the emerging discourse of disability studies—works like Tobin Siebers's *Disability Theory* (2008) or Michael Davidson's *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body* (2008)—I argue that the critical afterlives of Hawthorne's shyness track an evolving concept of how personality is first interpreted to expand "genius," then later to limit it. In biography, generations moved from romantic and ethical definitions of shyness towards the increasingly psychological and environmental, a move that anticipates and illuminates the general move of modern criticism to this day.

In my second chapter, "Shyness as Closeting," I discuss one of the most controversial heroes in American fiction, Miles Coverdale. Considered cold, voyeuristic, impotent, vindictive, and immature by many modern critics, the shy narrator of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale* Romance reveals our cultural ambivalence towards shyness itself. I propose the shy hero as the inverse of the tomboy—a figure described in Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998)—or a fellow to such non-reproductive figures such as the bachelor—a figure described in Katherine Snyder's *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel* (1999). Like these figures, the shy hero can be both a

universal and pathological figure in the nineteenth-century imagination—many stories begin with him, but they cannot end with him.

As Peter Brooks argues in *Reading for the Plot* (1984), the typical novelistic plot is constantly in tension with the possibility of an early or unsatisfying resolution—or none at all. Drawing on various studies of the Bildungsroman—most importantly, Franco Moretti's *Way of the World* (1987)—I argue that shyness becomes the mark of youth, courtship, and vocation. However, the shy hero cannot stay shy forever: the psychic energy of the novel tends towards educating him out of his reticence and into uncloseting himself. Those who fail to outgrow their shyness frustrate the plot with their stubborn *backwardness*, immaturity, and inhibitions. My study points to how the shy hero—like the bachelor, the tomboy, and other such figures—might be phase-related, moving from the center to the margin over time.

Next, I consider Hawthorne's travels to Europe in the later years of his life—and Henry James's transatlantic journeys a generation later. In my third chapter "The Importance of Being Bewildered," I explore Hawthorne's ambivalent encounter with Italy as reflected in his *French and Italian Notebooks* and *The Marble Faun*. I argue that modern definitions of cosmopolitanism draw on an extroverted paradigm of personality: one encapsulated by a figure like Oscar Wilde, who presents himself as being comfortable *everywhere*. What do we lose when we ignore the shy cosmopolite, figures like Hawthorne and James who appreciate the world, even though they were comfortable *nowhere*?

In turning to James's discussion of Hawthorne's provincialism in his biography of Hawthorne, I consider how James reflected on, reacted to, and reappropriated his predecessor's international outlook. Although a growing critical interest has pushed some scholars to read the cosmopolitan impulse earlier and earlier—as seen in works like Amanda Anderson's *The Powers*

of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment (2001)—I find especially provocative Jessica Berman's suggestion in *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (2001) that cosmopolitanism was a concept ever-evolving in James's era. In a slight corrective to Adeline Tintner's contention that James did not attain to a cosmopolitan outlook until his later period, I argue that this is only because James himself helped redefine the concept in grappling with both Hawthorne and his defenders.

My dissertation then moves on to unite the international theme with sexual politics. Critics have discussed at length the emergence of tourism in the nineteenth-century: from Martin and Person's recent anthology *Roman Holidays* (2002) to George Dekker's *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism (*2005) to Nicola Watson's edited collection *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* (2009), critics have discussed the emergence of tourism as a salient feature of modernity. In my fourth chapter "Tourist Love," I argue that Henry James drew on the bourgeoning trope of tourism in order to consolidate a new genre—what I call the tourist love story—that would come to resolve certain contradictions between the experienced traveler and the tacky tourist, the cosmopolite and the cultural virgin.

In my reading of *Roderick Hudson,* I wish to complicate the general trend among scholars who read the shy Rowland Mallet as either heterosexual or homosexual by arguing that his tourist sensibility warps his relationships to both men and women more than his pronounced preference for either. In particular, I argue that the tourist love story offers a sexual script particularly well-suited for shy heroes. James offers erotic circuits that move through indirection: tourism offers shy heroes an alternative script to follow, a new *alibi* for closeness. Although this script comes under attack even within the bounds of James's novel, I argue that the tourist love story is essentially a *shy* love story, one that still moves us today.

In my final chapter "The Tolerance of Talk," I turn my attention to James's difficult novel *The Sacred Fount* in order to discuss the boundaries of shy action. Departing sharply from critical consensus, I theorize *The Sacred Fount* as an allegory of shyness that offers us two competing discourses: that of the shy and self-absorbed narrator and that of the extroverted socialite Mrs. Brissenden. Read this way, the novel becomes an arena of competing psychologies, each complete with its own philosophy of gossip, sexuality, and action.

This chapter thus supplements the work of earlier critics who analyzed how certain orientations of desire might warp literature in peculiar ways: the voyeurism in Dana Brand's *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (1991), the eavesdropping of Ann Gaylin's *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust* (2002), the unreliable narrator as theorized in Jonathan Auerbach's *The Romance of Failure* (1989), and self-effacing narration as described in Audrey Jaffe's *Vanishing Points* (1991). In particular, I am drawn to Gilles Deleuze's discussion of masochism in his work "Coldness and Cruelty" (1989), as I argue that at its root *The Sacred Fount* narrates the logic of psychological masochism.

All of these threads intersect in a short epilogue on the complexity of *The Ambassadors,* a novel that unites exceptional marginality, arrested development, closeting, cosmopolitanism, tourist love, and gossip together to create a unique masterpiece of shy heroism. I close with some reflections on the many meanings of *coming out* for Lambert Strether—and for James—and how the logic of the closet, much like shyness itself, is defined by approaches and retreats. In the end, shyness frustrates us as readers and challenges our preconceptions of what love stories ought to look like. It is worth asking how shyness itself—gay or straight—is in fact queer.

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

Dissertation — Prof. Milder — 2009-2012

Chapter 1

Portrait of the Artist as a Shy Man

"Biography first convinces us of the fleeing of the Biographied—"
— Emily Dickinson, letter to Higginson (1885)

In his critical biography *Hawthorne*, Henry James would introduce his subject with a lament: "The data for a life of Nathaniel Hawthorne are the reverse of copious, and even if they were abundant they would serve but in a limited measure the purpose of the biographer. Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters" (1). Nevertheless, this dearth of material did not stop James from adding his work to a growing list of studies on the life of the author: the editor James T. Fields's several chapters from *Yesterdays with Authors* (1871), H. A. Page's *Memoir of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1872), son-in-law George Parsons Lathrop's *Study of Hawthorne* (1876), and several smaller sketches had already preceded James in weaving together a narrative, often quoting each other and treading the same narrow ground.[1]

The publication of Hawthorne's notebooks—the *American Notebooks* in 1868, the *English Notebooks* in 1870, and the *French and Italian Notebooks* in 1871—by his wife and son-in-law provoked further interest and concerns. Defending the publication, Lathrop would insist

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[1] Both Page and Lathrop would quote George W. Curtis's chapter on Hawthorne in the collection *Home of American Authors* copiously, while Henry James would quote Lathrop's biography at length, sometimes admitting to no knowledge or interest in specific episodes of Hawthorne's life.

that "the man of note who lets his riches of reminiscence be buried with him inflicts a loss on the world which it is hard to take resignedly" (14). But in his review of the *French and Italian Notebooks*, Henry James would raise an alarm:

> These liberal excisions from the privacy of so reserved and shade-seeking a genius suggest forcibly the general question of the proper limits of curiosity as to that passive personality of an artist of which the elements are scattered in portfolios and table-drawers. It is becoming very plain, however, that whatever the proper limits may be, the actual limits will be fixed only by a total exhaustion of matter. […] Artists, of course, as time goes on, will be likely to take the alarm, empty their table-drawers, and level the approaches to their privacy. The critics, psychologists, and gossip-mongers may then glean amid the stubble. (172)

The threat is perhaps misplaced, as if Hawthorne hadn't already burned countless letters, sketches, stories, and all but a dozen copies of his apprentice novel *Fawshawe*. James was voicing distress on behalf of the writers who would follow Hawthorne, including himself. In concluding his review, James insisted that the intrusion was for nothing, anyway: "His journals throw but little light on his personal feelings, and even less on his genius […] With all allowance for suppressions, his entries are never confidential; the author seems to have been reserved even with himself" (172).

In particular, Hawthorne's early years of reclusion frustrated attempts at narration. George W. Curtis would summarize his early years, "Graduated with Longfellow at Bowdoin College, in Maine, he had lived a hermit in respectable Salem, an absolute recluse even from his own family" (292-293), while James would describe those years as engendering "a state of solitude which was the young man's positive choice at the time—or into which he drifted at least under the pressure of his natural shyness and reserve" (26-27). As Brenda Wineapple notes in her essay "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Writer," the thinness of Hawthorne's biography represented then as it does now a certain lacuna, a blank space: the less we know about Hawthorne, the more we

create him as an object of our fancy (190). Hawthorne's reserved life invites critics and biographers to project their ideas about shyness, genius, and art into the void.

In *Yesterdays with Authors*, Fields would preface his discussion of Hawthorne: "A hundred years ago Henry Vaughan seems almost to have anticipated Hawthorne's appearance when he wrote that beautiful line, 'Feed on the vocal silence of his eye' " (39). This "vocal silence" was at the root of Hawthorne's power to readers, critics, and biographers. It was the invitation to dive into—or project onto—Hawthorne's silences that offered a sense of depth. In a popular anecdote (later recycled by both Page and Lathrop), George W. Curtis offers his first impression of Hawthorne at a dinner party at Emerson's house:

> There were various men and women of note assembled, and I, who listened attentively to all the fine things that were said, was for some time scarcely aware of a man who sat upon the edge of the circle […] No appeal was made to him, nobody looked after him, the conversation flowed steadily on as if everyone understood that his silence was to be respected. […] So supreme was his silence that it presently engrossed me to the exclusion of everything else. There was very brilliant discourse, but this silence was much more poetic and fascinating. Fine things were said by the philosophers, but much finer things were implied by the dumbness of this gentleman with heavy brows and black hair. When he presently rose and went, Emerson, with the slow, wise smile that breaks over his face like day over the sky, said: "Hawthorne rides well his horse of the night." (299-300)

The figure of Hawthorne makes a surprising shift in his attention from periphery to center: he is first described as sitting "upon the edge of the circle," only to finally take center stage in Curtis's mind; while he is first described as mute, his silences slowly become ever more expressive. It is genius presented not as expression, but invitation. As Emily Dickinson would say of Hawthorne—one shy artist speaking of another—"he appalls, entices" (qtd in Brodhead 204).

There are many versions of Hawthorne, propagated by critics and biographers; it is typically the result, if not the aim, of biography. Critics were not satisfied by merely acknowledging Hawthorne's shyness. This shyness became the crux of a problem, a difficulty, a riddle. In this chapter, I distinguish five threads in explaining the author's shyness. I begin with

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the romantic ideal of the author in which isolation is seen as a mark of genius, best encapsulated in a (mis)reading of Emerson's *Society and Solitude.* Second, I consider a model in which shyness is figured as a product of environment, a reading that informs much of Henry James's biography *Hawthorne*. Third, I explore the psychological reading of shyness as morbidness, presciently rendered in Melville's early review "Hawthorne and His Mosses." Fourth, I consider a more skeptical view of shyness as pose and self-handicap, most famously rendered in W. C. Brownell's essay "Hawthorne" at the turn of the century. Finally, I conclude with an ethical reading of shyness, proposed by Hawthorne's closest family and friends.

What becomes clear throughout these competing narratives is that Hawthorne is not the only subject under debate. Drawing on the insights of disability studies, I argue that the critical afterlives of Hawthorne's shyness reveal several nineteenth-century anxieties about the intersections of personality and "genius." As critics note, the goal of disability studies is not only to interrogate the definitions and contours of disability, but ability.[2] Hawthorne's critics were not only invested in exploring his shyness, but in explaining how his limitations might have shaped (and contributed to) his art. Did the source of creative talent lie in a broadening of one's worldview or a constriction of it? Were authors built from or contaminated by networks of influence? Was Hawthorne a representative American or a distorted, sickly, morbid one? Was Hawthorne's shyness the product of his environment, his temperament, or simply a well-played act to obscure further weaknesses? Early critics and biographers tackled these questions as a means of defining not only Hawthorne, but also talent, art, and America.

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[2] For example, Tobin Siebers in *Disability Theory* argues that definitions of disability and ability go hand in hand: the former encompassed by a short, finite list, while the latter is perceived as infinite potential—at least until it is bound by limitations (9-10). Erving Goffman notes in *Stigma* that everyone falls short of the ideology of unspoiled ability in some way (128).

The Romantic Reading: The Pure Substance

> "He makes one of a group, and thinks in wretched unanimity with the throng: incumbered with the notions of others, and impoverished by their abundance, he conceives not the least embryo of new thought; […] while the true genius is crossing all publick roads into fresh untrodden ground."
> — Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*

In 1857, Ralph Waldo Emerson would write what would become the first essay in his late collection *Society and Solitude*. He opened this essay with a character sketch of a local "humorist" he'd met in former years. The unnamed figure "had good abilities, a genial temper and no vices; but he had one defect […] there was some paralysis on his will" (9). The character sketch is nothing short of a portrait of a shy man—and in the years following its publication, many critics assumed that the figure described was a sly caricature of Nathaniel Hawthorne.[3]

Plenty of correspondences might be suggested. Emerson states that when his shy humorist "bought a house, the first thing he did was to plant trees. He could not enough conceal himself" (10); we might think of Hawthorne's zealous cultivation of trees around his house The Wayside—or the building of his house-turret which contemporaries joked was so that he might be on the lookout for when friends were coming, so he'd know when best to retreat.[4] Likewise, when Emerson writes that "the most agreeable compliment you could pay him was to imply that you had not observed him in a house or a street where you had met him," the line resonates with accounts that Hawthorne would turn his back on friends when they observed him at parties.

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[3] Early critics who (mis)read the shy figure in "Society and Solitude" as Hawthorne include an anonymous reviewer in "Mr. Emerson on Shyness" in *The Spectator* (1870), G.A. Simcox in the *Academy* (1870), Samuel Smiles's chapter on shyness in his book *Character* (1881), and Frank Stearns' *Life and Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1906).

[4] In reminiscing about a meeting with Hawthorne as a young man, Howells describes how the older gentleman took him up to the hill-top surrounded by trees and said "certain of the pleasant fields below us belonged to him; but he preferred his hill-top, and if he could have his way those arable fields should be grown up to pines too" (54).

Emerson adds that the shy humorist "would have given his soul for the ring of Gyges,"[5] which gestures towards Hawthorne's sketches and short stories that veered into voyeurism, into invisibility and self-escape. We might think of Hawthorne's statement that "the most desirable mode of existence might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry" in his sketch "Sights from a Steeple"; we might recall his wish to no longer see his own face in "Monsieur du Miroir."[6] Emerson's further joke—that "his dismay at his visibility had blunted the fears of mortality"—might recall to us Hawthorne's courtly letters to Sophia in which he imagines a world in which people might mingle without bodies, without social calls in which he might be called to perform.[7]

On the other hand, cannier readers might notice the discrepancies: Hawthorne might have desired the Ring of Gyges, but he would have balked at giving up his soul for it. When Emerson's humorist says that he cannot wait "to shuffle off [his] corporeal jacket to slip away into the back stars, and put diameters of the solar system and sidereal orbits between [himself] and all souls," we realize that Emerson is describing a man without curiosity, a man with only the desire for distance. And when Emerson says that "God may forgive sins, but awkwardness has no forgiveness in heaven or earth," we might be doubly skeptical—if only because Hawthorne seemed unaware that God forgave sins.

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[5] "The Ring of Gyges" is mentioned in Book Two of Plato's *Republic* as an invisibility ring. During the dialogue, Glaucon asks whether a man with such a ring could possibly be moral, given freedom from consequences.

[6] Discomfort with embodiment seems to be a common trait in shy people: both Hawthorne and James were uncomfortable with photographs, as discussed by Davis Clark and Laura Saltz respectively. In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe is made exceptionally uncomfortable by mirrors.

[7] In *Vanishing Points*, Audrey Jaffe would call anyone aspiring to invisible impersonality an "Asmodean narrator," after the devil in Lesage's *Le Diable boiteux* who magically lifts the roofs off every house in Madrid (16).

Hints like these suggest that the original humorist is not Hawthorne but rather—like so many of the "friends" in his essays—Emerson himself.[8] Nevertheless, the resemblance was so striking that contemporaries would associate the shy humorist with Nathaniel Hawthorne. More importantly, Emerson offered in "Society and Solitude" an American adaptation of the Romantic theory of genius,[9] one that biographers would echo in their own discussions of Hawthorne's shyness for decades. Emerson puts it best by saying that certain individuals have "that necessity of isolation which genius feels. Each must stand on his glass tripod if he would keep his electricity" (11).

What is especially American about Emerson's romantic formulation is his insistence that genius must inevitably put the individual at odds with society: "No man is fit for society who has fine traits. At a distance he is admired, but bring him hand to hand, he is a cripple" (12). Emerson cannot help but draw a link between ability and disability. In this sentence, he suggests that genius unfits the artist for ordinary society; however, Emerson opens his essay with a catalogue of shy traits—a paralyzed will, a hypersensitivity to society, a fear of visibility—which he only later insists are the signs of a personal "electricity." Although Emerson may have meant to suggest the inherent loneliness of genius, his model also suggested that all forms of loneliness carried with them a tincture of Romantic genius.[10]

Some readers faulted him for this implication: after all, not every social "cripple" is a genius! In an 1870 article in *The Spectator* entitled "Mr. Emerson on Shyness," an anonymous

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[8] See the notes in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Letters and social aims*, ed. Alfred Riggs Ferguson, Joseph Slater, and Jean Ferguson Carr (n171) for evidence that Emerson is describing neither Hawthorne nor Edwin Whipple but himself.

[9] The Romantic definition of genius might be said to begin with Edward Young, the German Romantics, and Coleridge. See Raymond Williams's (aptly named) *Culture and Society* for a discussion of how the term "genius" shifted as England centered the Romantic period.

[10] In his formulation of the shy genius, Emerson may be creating what Tobin Siebers calls a "pathology of superiority." As Sieber notes, "It is easy to mythologize disability as an advantage" (63).

critic identifies Emerson's "graphic and humorous account" as a portrait of Nathaniel Hawthorne. However apt he finds the portrait, he faults Emerson for his "questionable" discussion of shyness:

> Now, surely Mr. Emerson has confounded two utterly different things when he describes the symptoms and when he gives his interpretation. What he describes so finely is shyness — which he does not interpret. What he interprets is the capillary repulsion, so to speak, of genius for all menacing and alloying substances, which he hardly describes. (326)

The critic's use of scientific language mimics Emerson's own: the "symptoms" and interpretation, alloys and substances, and the "capillary repulsion" between genius and what would only dilute it. The critic reviews shyness as a "malady" and a "morbid self-consciousness"; he rebukes Emerson for subtly conflating shyness with genius. He admits that genius may come part and parcel with a jealousy of what he calls "alien influences." However, he insists that shyness is the horror of "mere observation," and it is likely to affect "the least remarkable intellects quite as powerfully as the most remarkable" (326).

The anonymous critic admits the difficulty of figures like Hawthorne and Cowper who unite shyness and genius: "When they exist together, it is no doubt impossible accurately to discriminate them" (326). In their intermixture, it is hard to tell which symptoms belong to jealous self-guarding and which to the "malady" of shyness. Citing Goethe, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë,[11] and George Eliot as examples of authors who might have been shy, he insists that inevitably "their own genius is too strong for it […] in other words, genius must be quite secondary to the discomforts of feeling,— in order to give that word its fullest meaning" (326-327). This is to say not only that shyness and genius are independent of one another, but that they compete with one another. Rather than saying that shyness is a mark of genius, the anonymous

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[11] I would personally disagree with Charlotte Brontë, whom I would include with Hawthorne and Cowper as a shy author. See Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë.*

critic of Emerson's essay argues that shyness obscures genius—if it doesn't obliterate it altogether.

Whatever their disagreements, both Emerson and his critic are certain about one thing: people (especially talented people) ought to strike a compromise between solitude and society. The anonymous critic urges shy individuals to "make a rush into the enemy's territory," while Emerson concludes with this careful statement: "Solitude is impracticable, and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy" (18). It is this truism that might be said to inform the first major biography of Hawthorne, and it is an idea that has echoed throughout discussions of Hawthorne's engagement of the world ever since.

The first major biography was written by H. A. Page, pseudonym for Alexander Hay Japp.[12] The overall argument of Page's biographical sketch may be summarized in six words: "He needed solitude; he needed society" (85). Page describes Hawthorne in this way:

> He was a haunted man, who craved contact with men and the world to quicken the imagination and make it fix on some one point; and this being once attained, he then needed absolute retirement till the work was done. […] But when he had once written out his conception, the need for contact with the real world returned in double force. (59-60)

Hawthorne's life was thus represented as being distributed into cycles between others-as-inspiration and self-as-reflection. It is in this light that Page reads Hawthorne's occasional turn to politics, to business, to Brook Farm, to travel. (Mercenary concerns like money were rarely an explanatory factor to early biographers.)

What makes his account distinctive is its emphasis on the function of both, the world for inspiration and the cloistered study for production: "Repelled from men by the innate shyness of

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[12] H. A. Page is one of seven pseudonyms for Alexander Hay Japp. ("H. A." inverts his first two initials, and "Page" inverts the placement of the consonants of "j" and "p" in his last name.) Although he would also write biographies of Thomas de Quincey and Thoreau, the Hawthorne memoir was the first extended work in his career.

his nature, he was ever drawn to them by that triumphant need of utterance which betrays the artist" (84). Page sketched a portrait in which Hawthorne's life was forged by two competing needs: the need for solitude and the "triumphant need of utterance." In fact, Page would go so far as to say, "This necessity, indeed, was what saved him" (60). Resonant with Emersonian idealism, the romantic definition of Hawthorne's shyness would echo throughout biographies. Lathrop would recapitulate the terms; James would state that Hawthorne's life was a tension between "his evasive and his inquisitive tendencies" (55).

But if Hawthorne were balancing self-reflection and outward engagement, it was an odd balance. Although Hawthorne wrote prolifically in his journals, Henry James lamented that these journals showed little insight into the art that followed them: the realist tone of his journals rarely made its way into the "moonshiny" romance of his tales.[13] If it is true that he built his novels on a kernel of experience, the concrete experience was often so much prefatory material: "The Custom House" is an odd if not superfluous introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, much like his consul experiences would have served *The Ancestral Footstep* had it ever been finished. Even in *The Blithedale Romance*, his most autobiographical novel, many readers are tempted to agree with the preface that Hawthorne has used good material only to "establish a theatre [...] where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics" (2). The moralized plot and the touristic setting of *The Marble Faun* often feel concurrent, not interwoven.[14]

Contrary to what Page might say, the weaving of experience and imagination in Hawthorne feels very incomplete. What is truly shy about Hawthorne is not his constant need to

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[13] In "The Other Hawthorne," Robert Milder discusses this bifurcation between the realist tone of his notebooks and the allegorical style of his stories.

[14] W. C. Brownell might have said it best when he played on Hilda's statement in *The Marble Faun*: "[Hawthorne] did not find sermons in stones. He had the sermons already; his task was to find the stones to fit them" (78-79). See my third chapter for a discussion of *The Marble Faun*.

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balance between society and solitude, but rather the peculiar proportions in which Hawthorne felt this balance was achieved.[15] Hawthorne would say as much in a letter to John Motley, begging off a meeting, "I wonder at your lack of recognition of my social propensities. I take so much delight in my friends, that a little intercourse goes a great way, and illuminates my life before and after" (qtd. in Lathrop 264). Where Hawthorne's shyness enters into Emerson's model of society and solitude is a matter of proportion: different personalities require different proportions of solitude. If Emerson found solitude "impracticable," then Hawthorne showed how practicable—and comfortable—solitude might be.

This romantic theory of shyness would resonate in later critics, debating how best to balance self and others.[16] Maurice Beebe would describe these dual forces by adopting two phrases from Henry James's later novels: "ivory tower" narratives in which artists learn to abstain from life in order to better serve art and "sacred fount" narratives where artists take their variegated experiences and converted them to art directly.[17] As Beebe's structure suggests, romantic readings of genius are incomplete: they pose shyness and isolation as positive choices, but what if these restrictions were not choices at all? It would be a young, Europeanized writer who would raise the question of whether Hawthorne's shyness was impressed upon him not by choice but by circumstance. Henry James's biography took as its central conceit the influence of nation and community on a budding writer, igniting a discussion of what readers could expect from American literature and American novelists to come.

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[15] It is this sense of proportion that prompts Lathrop to describe Hawthorne's home, The Wayside, as "small, but the proprietor might have carved on his lintel the legend over Ariosto's door, *Parva, sed apta mihi*" (244-245). The translation: "Small, but suitable for me" would suggest that shy sense of being satisficed with less.

[16] Given his belief in the importance of Emerson, it comes as no surprise that Matthiessen emphasizes the tension between self and society in all of his subjects, including Hawthorne. In *Men Beyond Desire*, David Greven sees Hawthorne's characters as radically pitched against society in defense of the self.

[17] In my fourth chapter, I consider how James's *Roderick Hudson* may be seen as a competition between these two competing forces – Roderick valuing experience and Rowland valuing sacrifice.

The Environmental Reading: The Flower in Thin Soil

> "I conclude, that Poetic Genius is not only a very delicate but a very rare plant."
> — Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*

When drawn into a discussion of his own works, Hawthorne likened his sketches and short stories to pale, small flowers. Near the end of his introductory sketch "The Old Manse," Hawthorne writes that his tales and essays "blossomed out like flowers in the calm summer of my heart and mind" before deciding that they are merely a "bouquet" of "idle weeds and withering blossoms" (26). The metaphor is apt: "bouquet" captures the miscellaneous nature of the collection, while the idea of the tales "blossoming out like flowers" captures Hawthorne's process as organic and leisurely—the very tone he takes in the sketch where he leads his readers over the grounds of the Old Manse.

In adopting this rhetoric, Hawthorne might have been taking his lead from an old classmate. In 1837, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would write a review of *Twice-Told Tales* that drew on diminutive and feminizing phrases: he called the project "this little work" and a "sweet, sweet book" before stating that "these flowers and green leaves of poetry have not the dust of the highway upon them" (426-427). The trope quickly extended to a description not only of Hawthorne's works, but Hawthorne himself. In his notorious 1848 satirical poem *A Fable for Critics*, James Russell Lowell included a few lines for the no-longer-obscure poet Hawthorne:

> There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
> That you hardly at first see the strength that is there […]
> 'Tis as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
> With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the wood,
> Should bloom, after cycles of struggle and scathe,
> With a single anemone trembly and rathe […]
> When Nature was shaping him, clay was not granted
> For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,

>So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
>From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared,
>And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
>For making him fully and perfectly man. (67)

The lines here suggest the undercurrent beneath the flower metaphor: Hawthorne is explicitly stated to be a mixture of masculine and feminine elements. This mixture is suggested as a compensation for a deficiency: a genius shy and "shrinking," a man lacking the "clay" for a "full-sized" man, and a tree that struggles "for ages" in order to bloom a "single anemone trembly and rathe."[18]

Hawthorne would consolidate this trope by repeating the refrain in his 1851 preface to the reissued *Twice-Told Tales*, stating that his tales "have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade" (*xxiii*). The "flower" metaphor frames Hawthorne as "little," as "gradual," as "pale"—it not only describes the works he produced, but gestures towards the environment in which they came about. His tales—and the teller of these tales—didn't get the proper sunlight; a lack in experience leads to a lack in color. So it is no wonder that biographers would seize on this image to describe Hawthorne's development, his craft, and his process of turning scanty experience into art.

It is this scantiness with which Henry James begins his notorious 1878 biography, *Hawthorne*. Approaching his subject as an expatriate, attempting to win over what he felt was a more sophisticated European audience, James felt that Hawthorne's experience was pinched not only by his shyness but by being "provincial." Although his review might strike us as a little judgmental, James is only using his predecessor's language: his writing "pale," a collection of

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[18] Compare this line to Henry James's comment in *Hawthorne* that the artist and his works are like the "late-coming fruit of a tree which might seem to have lost the power to bloom" (10).

"blank pages," and so on. Critiquing the cultural landscape presented in the *American Notebooks*,

James writes:

> It is characterised by an extraordinary blankness—a curious paleness of colour and paucity of detail. Hawthorne, as I have said, has a large and healthy appetite for detail, and one is therefore the more struck with the lightness of the diet to which his observation was condemned. […] We are struck with the large number of elements that were absent from them, and the coldness, the thinness, the blankness, to repeat my epithet, present themselves so vividly that our foremost feeling is that of compassion for a romancer looking for subjects in such a field. (42-43)

James is struck first and foremost by the gap between Hawthorne's appetite and the diet to which he was condemned. This tension would inevitably serve as the "dramatic element" that James always sought in crafting his narratives.[19] In rendering environment so large a player in Hawthorne's biography, James managed to take the weaknesses in Hawthorne's work—the coldness, the thinness, the blankness—and lay them against the dramatic background of a provincial America.

In particular, Henry James would take the motif of the flower in the shade and broaden it, expand upon it, and make the motif (faintly) heroic. He called Hawthorne "intensely and vividly local," adding that "out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed" (3-4). Unlike the romantic ideal of a genius freeing himself from influence and imitation, James depicts Hawthorne as thoroughly grounded in his environment. The soil of New England is described throughout the biography as "narrow," as "thin," and as "arid." Finally describing the soil as "immitigable granite," James renders Hawthorne's blooming as heroic and yet pathetic: the strange and vague implications of strength to be found in a flower blooming in difficult soil, united with the precarious vulnerability of a flower blighted by such an inhospitable environment. This ambivalence remains throughout

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[19] In crafting his biography, James might have been borrowing the tone of stories like "Four Meetings" and "A Passionate Pilgrim," both stories centered on characters who yearn for cultural experiences but who are thwarted by their environment.

James's biography: is Hawthorne an exceptional American, thriving even in the thinnest of cultural environments? or is Hawthorne simply a weak example of genius, stifled by circumstance?

This ambivalent intersection of environment and personality is a difficult question, even today. It may come as no surprise that the concern of constricted development resonates with other nineteenth-century concerns, especially feminist thought.[20] For example, it resonates deeply with Margaret Fuller's concern in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* of stifling young women, also identified with the flower:

> Plants of great vigor will almost always struggle into blossom, despite impediments. But there should be encouragement, and a free genial atmosphere for those of more timid sort, fair play for each in its own kind. Some are like the little, delicate flowers which love to hide in the dripping mosses, by the sides of mountain torrents, or in the shade of tall trees. But others require an open field, a rich and loosened soil, or they never show their proper hues. (22)

Fuller's expression shares that bizarre ambiguity as to cause and effect: impediments will blight flowers of weaker substance, but certain flowers will "almost always struggle into blossom." But what of the delicate flowers which hide in the shade? Are they weaker flowers—or are they those that struggle to bloom, despite difficult environments? In Brontë's *Villette,* Lucy Snowe tells Paulina that some women "grow in sun, due moisture, and safe protection" while others are hit with "untimely blight" (III.107); we are invited to think of the two characters as opposite ends of the spectrum—and yet few of us would say that Polly is the stronger woman for growing in the sun. What each of these passages reveal is the difficulty of extricating talent from its environment, the difficulty of deciding whether to criticize personalities or the environment that created them.

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[20] As an quasi-feminist himself, Hawthorne's works resonate with simpler versions of these ideas. His *Blithedale Romance* compares two half-sisters: the vivacious but headstrong Zenobia and the pale and blightest seamstress Priscilla. Environment is explicitly recognized as playing a role: Priscilla is the "type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (113).

This is not to say that biographers wouldn't do both. James's reflections on Hawthorne's talent and environment inevitably extended to a broader critique of the nation that *was* his environment. In opening his biography, Henry James would glean a "moral" from the culturally impoverished field of New England: "This moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion" (3). In describing America in terms of an intellectual and cultural climate, James was not only drawing on a metaphor but entering a wider debate about culture and culture building, about climate and national character, about nations on the rise and nations in decline. He was grappling with the same questions that would prompt Thomas Jefferson to argue that America's climate did not produce stunted livestock, Matthew Arnold to distinguish Hellenists from Hebraists, and Ruskin to distinguish rising nations from those of nations in decline.[21]

Much to the irritation of his compatriots, James was describing America—much as Henrietta Stackpole would describe Caspar Goodwood—as simply young.[22] He argued that "history, as yet, has left in the United States but so thin and impalpable a deposit that we very soon touch the hard substratum of nature […] the vegetation has the appearance of not having reached its majority" (12-13). What other writers would define as America's open and expansive possibility—most notably, Emerson in *Nature* or Whitman in *Democratic Vistas*—James would define as dearth, as blankness. Unlike Emerson's fear that they were building sepulchers to their

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[21] Of course, James's pessimistic reading is far from representative: we might imagine how the optimism in a work Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* could serve as the extroverted counterpart to James's *Hawthorne*. The American landscape could be read as thin-soiled, leading to stunted individuals, or as wide open vibrance, leading to larger-than-life Supermen.

[22] In "A Word for Dickens," *Sunday Afternoon,* vol. 2 *(*July-December 1878), a critic notes a "humorous satisfaction rushed into my mind as I pictured to myself Henry James, Jr. in the character of Steerforth's valet, the respectable Littimer, and the American nation, including Hawthorne, deprecatingly enduring his very respectable opinion that we were 'very young' " (444-445).

fathers, James worried that they were a country without fathers; rather than an original relation to

nature, what America needed was history. In particular, James worried that "American

civilization has hitherto had other things to do than to produce flowers" (3). James recalls an

early America, utilitarian and spare. As James unfolded one narrative of Hawthorne's shyness as

drawn from his narrow experience, he was raising a parallel narrative of America as the narrow

country only coming into its majority.

Regardless of whether critics accepted James's broader conclusion, the notion of

Hawthorne as a representative of the culture that produced him has remained a staple of literary

criticism to this day.[23] As his son-in-law George Parsons Lathrop argued, Hawthorne's

reclusiveness might have positioned him especially to prove American ability:

> The ability of American life to produce a genius in some sense exactly responding to its
> most distinctive qualities had yet to be demonstrated; […] Hawthorne, the slowly
> produced and complex result of a line of New-Englanders who carried American history
> in their very limbs, seemed providentially offered for the trial. It was well that
> temperament and circumstance drew him into a charmed circle of reserve from the first;
> well, also, that he was further matured at a simple and rural college pervaded by a homely
> American tone; still more fortunate was it that nothing called him away to connect him
> with European culture, on graduating. (161)

Unlike Jefferson or Franklin, Irving or Cooper, Hawthorne was a genius of which Europe could

have very little part. What James would call Hawthorne's "provincialism" was finally to push

him only to better embody the nation that had produced him. A shy Hawthorne is a purely

American Hawthorne, a true representative of American genius, unadulterated by the rest of the

world.

But other critics would offer an altogether different portrait of Nathaniel Hawthorne: not

as a representative and archetypal author, but instead a lopsided, incomprehensible, morbid

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[23] In *Form and Fable in American Fiction,* Daniel Hoffman gives particular credence to James's critique of
America, suggesting that writers like Hawthorne wrote romances because they had no other material to work with
(99). Other critics like Richard Chase recapitulate the binary of *romance v. novel*, but in a way that is generally more
positive of America and American writers — see *The American Novel and Its Tradition*.

author, representing nothing but himself. In his provocative "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Herman Melville would write that "in one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne" (63-64). If James sought to describe the shallow field of early America, Melville's portrait delved deep. The artist's shyness was not imposed from without, but within. Melville thought that Hawthorne's shyness was the product of hidden sorrow—and critics have sought to sound that sorrow ever since.

The Psychological Reading: The Plummet

> "People sometimes say that fiction is getting too morbid. As far as psychology is concerned, it has never been morbid enough."
> — Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist"

In his 1879 article "The Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne," Anthony Trollope observed that "there never surely was a powerful, active, continually effective mind less round, more lop-sided, than that of Nathaniel Hawthorne" (204). Trollope's account is all the more surprising because he was aware of Hawthorne's own appreciation of him. Trollope quotes a letter from Hawthorne to his editor and publisher James T. Fields:

> It is odd enough that my own individual taste is for quite another class of novels than those which I myself am able to write. If I were to meet with such books as mine by any other writer, I don't believe I should be able to get through them. Have you ever read the novels of Anthony Trollope? They precisely suit my taste; solid and substantial, written on strength of beef and through the inspiration of ale, and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth, and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were made a show of. (205)

Considering the letter a touching compliment, Trollope is only too happy to say that *The Marble Faun* is quite to his taste and equally out of *his* power. But why couldn't Hawthorne write *Barchester Towers*? Trollope notes that Hawthorne's world was a little heavier, a little darker, than most; he was not well-rounded but imbalanced. The British author asked why Hawthorne

gave into fancies neither "jocund as are usually those of the tellers of fairy tales" nor "high-flown as are the pictures generally drawn by the poets"; instead, Hawthorne's tales were "melancholy beyond compare, as though the writer had drawn all his experiences from untoward accidents" (205-206).

After quoting the letter above, both Trollope and James T. Fields would attempt to answer the question: *Was Hawthorne always melancholy?*[24] Fields would answer, "Although the humorous side of Hawthorne was not easily or often discoverable, yet have I seen him marvelously moved to fun, and no man laughed more heartily in his way over a good story" (63). Trollope would answer similarly: "Though a man singularly reticent,—what we generally call shy,—he could, when things went well with him, be argumentative, social, and cheery" (207). The qualifications are perhaps fitting, given that many critics found Hawthorne's description of Trollope as the epitome of a backhanded compliment.[25] In revising Hawthorne's reputation for somberness, both Fields and Trollope would offer only faint praise for his optimistic side, happy "in his way" or "when things went well with him." Even as the terms "cheery" and "social" were linked in Trollope's mind, so were "melancholy" and "shy."

Trollope's response was undoubtedly the product of his own psychology—the solid, substantial, beef-and-ale English writer. If Hawthorne were lopsided, Trollope comes off as terribly well-rounded. It may be hard to imagine critics arguing over Hawthorne's reputation for

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[24] In his *Yesterdays with Authors*, Fields reflects, "I have often been asked if all his moods were sombre, and if he was never jolly sometimes like other people" (63).

[25] Consider especially the review in *The Dublin University Magazine* (October 1879), citing Hawthorne's letter to Fields: "Mr. Trollope seems inclined to accept this as a kind of praise given by one artist to another of a different order […] But what is a work of art? Is it solid and substantial, as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth?" (437).

Also, consider the review in *The Nation* (28 Aug 1879): "Apparently, Mr. Trollope is a trifle exasperated by reflecting upon its truthfulness on the one hand, and on the other upon the total lack of imagination which it charges. […] What he discloses concerning himself is chiefly his utter unfitness to write about Hawthorne at all" (142).

melancholy now that psychoanalytic readings have made Hawthorne's dark side all the more

appealing. But as Dan McCall suggests, the Hawthorne of the nineteenth century canon was built

on his sketches as much as his tales, his children's books as much as his novels, his Celestial

Railroads as much as his Young Goodman Browns. It would require a different critic to stare

into Hawthorne's darker nature without blinking. One of the first readers in this fashion was

Herman Melville in his 1850 review, "Hawthorne and His Mosses, By a Virginian Spending July

in Vermont."[26]

Unlike later critics such as Trollope and Lathrop who would seek to "balance" the

portrait of the depressed Hawthorne, Melville would seek to darken the portrait of a writer

mostly known for his light sketches.[27] As Melville observes, "Where Hawthorne is known, he

seems to be deemed a pleasant writer, with a pleasant style,—a sequestered, harmless man, from

whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated:—a man who means no

meanings" (60). Just before *The Scarlet Letter* would settle the debate, Melville argued that

Hawthorne carried within him a darker side:

> There is no man, in whom humor and love, like mountain peaks, soar to such a rapt
> height, as to receive the irradiations of the upper skies;—there is no man in whom humor
> and love are developed in that high form called genius; no such man can exist without
> also possessing, as the indispensable complement of these, a great, deep intellect, which
> drops down into the universe like a plummet. (60-61)

Whereas Trollope would argue for Hawthorne's depression from a sense of lop-sidedness,

Melville would argue from a sense of symmetry. Melville insisted that what was lopsided was

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[26] Evert A. Duyckinck is perhaps the earliest critic to pose a question of Hawthorne's melancholy: "The tender melancholy which is inspired after reading these tales is, as we have remarked, allied to a kind of fascination. 'I fear thee, Ancient Mariner!' " See E. A. Duyckinck's review in the *Democratic Review* XVI (April 1845): 376-84.

[27] In "Hawthorne's Early Tales: Male Authorship, Domestic Violence, and Female Readers," Leland Person argues that Hawthorne led his early tale collections with softer sketches, saving works of a more violent tone for his *Mosses on an Old Manse* (142).

Hawthorne's reception, not his personality—to call Hawthorne's darker side a "plummet" is to

frame it as the mark of a sensitive measurement, an ability to sound the depths of the universe.

Hawthorne's personality was constantly defined against sunnier personalities. If Trollope

and Hawthorne served as counterpoles, the trope continues ever-on: in his biography *Hawthorne*,

James would note that "Emerson, as a sort of spiritual sun-worshipper, could have attached but a

moderate value to Hawthorne's cat-like faculty of seeing in the dark" (99). This contrast was

perpetuated in (possibly apocryphal) anecdotes such as the one attached to the Old Manse

study—where it is reported that Emerson composed *Nature* while looking out the windows,

while Hawthorne turned his desk towards the wall.[28] In this case, the very contrast is one not

only of light versus shade, but openness versus closetedness.

But it is Melville that most effectively fashions this link between reserve and melancholy.

Expecting resistance to his version of Hawthorne, he adds this qualification: "Nor need you fix

upon that blackness in him, if it suit you not. Nor, indeed, will all readers discern it, for it is,

mostly, insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it; it is not obtruded

upon every one alike" (67). In this disclaimer, Melville reveals Hawthorne's darker side to be an

open secret: only those already attuned to the deep will be able to sound it.[29] To take the

melancholy and sheathe it in ambiguity: this is where shyness meets depression, and it is in fact a

trademark of Hawthorne's work. Throughout his life, Hawthorne sought to closet the darker

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[28] Dan McCall cites this story in *Citizens of Somewhere Else*, but confesses that it may well be apocryphal. Nonetheless, the Concord tour of the Old Manse still reports this anecdote as if it were true (as of my visit in May 2011).

[29] This notion of the *open secret* resonates with the disclaimer that Lucy Snowe makes towards the end of *Villette*. Brontë's novel concludes with two potential endings: one offering hope for the return of the shipwrecked M. Paul, another blighting that hope. She cuts off abruptly with "Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope" (III.350).

I have had conversations with two or three colleagues who have read *Villette* but never considered that Lucy's beloved perished at sea. The death of M. Paul is rendered an *open secret* by an ambiguity that Brontë's novel shares with some of Hawthorne's tales.

elements of his temperament in deference to the Priscillas and Hildas in his audience—his wife

being perhaps the chief of these.[30]

Melville writes, "We see, that suffering, some time or other and in some shape or

other,—this only can enable any man to depict it in others" (60). To readers who recognized the

plummet, Hawthorne's secret sorrow inevitably raised questions. *What caused Hawthorne to be*

so melancholy? His sorrow seemed overpronounced, unrepresentative—and so critics have time

and time again searched for the root of his sorrow. Following the clues of his work, Melville

found it difficult to say whether Hawthorne cultivated a "touch of Puritanic gloom" or whether

he merely mobilized it as a means to an end. Several critics—including Lathrop, James, and

Horatio Bridge—followed suit in pointing to Hawthorne's Puritan background. Taking the

Pyncheons in *The House of Seven Gables* as a type of the Hawthorne family, Lathrop built up

their Puritan background as a heritage of guilt. It was not "symbolic and picturesque […] but a

real overhanging, intermittent oppressiveness," reaching nigh to superstition: "the Hathornes had

now firmly imbibed the belief that their family was under a retributive ban for its share in the

awful severities of the Quaker and the witchcraft periods" (60-61).

Other critics discussed Hawthorne's family rather than his community and his heritage.

James T. Fields describes Hawthorne's father as "somewhat inclined to melancholy, and of a

reticent disposition" (43), while Lathrop describes his mother as "being a very reserved and

thoughtful person" (3). Many critics ponder how the death of Hawthorne's father might have cast

a shadow over the entire family. Speaking of Hawthorne's mother, Lathrop explains:

> The death of her husband cast such a gloom over her life, that she remained a sorrowful
> recluse ever afterwards; the dark shade of her sorrow no doubt falling heavily on the boy,
> and preparing him to receive the more readily the weird impressions which Salem was so
> well fitted to produce. (3)

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[30] See chapter two for a discussion of shyness as closeting in *The Blithedale Romance.*

Critics sought in Hawthorne's past for a "trauma" on which his sorrow—and thus his shyness—might pivot. The death of his father is considered by Lathrop and Page; the accident that lamed him in his youth was considered by Fields and Horatio Bridge. His son Julian would relate a tale in which Hawthorne felt indirectly responsible for the death of his friend James Cilley in a duel. Seeking a traumatic experience in youth as an explanation for future reserve: it is at the root of critical inquiry into Hawthorne's psychology, perhaps epitomized in the groundbreaking work of Frederick Crews, but surfacing in other criticism speculating on everything from invalidism to incest.[31] It is linked to similar inquiries (as Lathrop suggests) in the lives of Scott and Dickens; it is at the center of the century-long obsession among James scholars with the author's "obscure hurt."[32]

But then all these explanations may strike us much like readers who wish to pin down the source of Parson Hooper's depression in "The Minister's Black Veil" or who wish to know whether there was ever a scarlet letter written into Dimmesdale's chest. We know that Hawthorne's life was hardly tragic: Henry James was baffled by the optimism contained within Hawthorne's journals, just as Julian Hawthorne was baffled by the pessimism of his father's

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[31] In *Hawthorne and His Circle*, Julian Hawthorne wrote about how Melville once told him "that he was convinced that there was some secret in my father's life which had never been revealed, and which accounted for the gloomy passages in his books" (33). Two critics went so far as to claim that Hawthorne was part of incestuous relationships within the Manning home: see Gloria C. Erlich, *Family Themes and Hawthorne's Fiction* and Philip Young's *Hawthorne's Secret: An Un-Told Tale*.

Provocatively, Brenda Wineapple insists that Richard Manning was more vital to Hawthorne's self-fashioning than Robert: Richard was injured in a carriage accident, rendering him "semi-invalid," a pose that greatly impressed Hawthorne (193-194)

[32] James did not fight in the Civil War, citing an "obscure hurt" in his autobiography. When Leon Edel postulated that this obscure hurt might be a sign of impotence or even castration, critics followed suit in their speculation. In *Desire and Love in Henry James*, David McWhirter notes that psycho-biographical readings tended to diagnose James "not only as prudish, but as pedophilic, homosexual, impotent, sexually underdeveloped," and even "castrated" (4).

tales. Hawthorne's melancholy is to be found not in his history but in how he interpreted it.[33]

Drawing on literary works as conceits for much of his analysis, Lathrop found a particularly apt

analogy in *Pilgrim's Progress*, one of Hawthorne's favorite works:

> Mr. Great-Heart says of Mr. Fearing: "He desired much to be alone; yet he always loved good talk, and often would get behind the screen to hear it." (So Hawthorne screened himself behind his genial reserve.) […] Mr. Honest asks Great-Heart why so good a man as Fearing "should be all his days so much in the dark." And he answers, "There are two sorts of reasons for it. One is, the wise God will have it so: some must pipe, and some must weep…. And for my part, I care not at all for that profession which begins not in heaviness of mind. The first string that the musician usually touches is the bass, when he intends to put all in tune. God also plays upon this string first, when he sets the soul in tune for himself. Only there was the imperfection of Mr. Fearing; he could play upon no other music but this, till towards his latter end." (71-72)

The analogy, though perhaps a little artificial, is telling for its link between reserve and

depression. Although Lathrop focuses on the idea that sorrow tunes the instrument, the parable

suggests that a man of sorrows is out of tune, playing no other music but the somber bass note.

At root, this is the charge of morbidness. For all the ground that Lathrop's *Study of

Hawthorne* covers, it is most striking for its extended reflection on the intersections between

Hawthorne's reserve, his genius, and any possible accusations of morbid temperament. In short,

Lathrop refuses any such correlation—and he dedicates large portions of his biography to

refuting all evidence to the contrary. He begins with a discussion of the Puritan temperament and

its potential payoffs:

> They were something morbid in their imaginings, but that this morbid habit was a chief source of their power is a mistaken theory. […] Their religious faith, their outlook into another life, though tinged by unhealthy terrorism, was a solid, energetic act of imagination; but when it had to deal with intricate tangles of mind and heart, it became

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[33] Consider Ivan Turgenev's "Diary of a Superfluous Man," describing shyness in terms of melancholy:

> The misfortune of solitary and timid men—those who are timid through self-love—consists precisely in this—that they, having eyes, and keeping them staring wide open, see nothing, or see it in a false light, as though through colored glasses. And their thoughts and observations hinder them at every step. (34)

credulity. That lurking unhealthiness spread from the centre, and soon overcame their judgment entirely. (28-29)

The melancholy of the Puritans is like an infection, spreading from the center and slowly enveloping the entire mind, distorting its judgment. With these stakes, Lathrop began a campaign to refute that Hawthorne's genius was steeped in a morbid imagination—or that he was morbid at all.

In particular, Lathrop insists on a strict demarcation between the artist and the morbid characters he fashioned: "It is a great mistake to suppose that the abnormal or preposterous phases which he describes are the fruit of *self*-study,—personal traits disguised in fiction; yet this is what has often been affirmed of Hawthorne" (286). Lathrop imagines that this charge of morbidness is in part due to Hawthorne's reserve and "seriousness"; citing the manifold characters in Dicken's *oeuvre*, Lathrop insists that once Dickens "raises the laugh at them," we recognize them as external to his psychology. But Hawthorne doesn't laugh—and so we fail to separate character and author, conflating the two:

> Hawthorne's [aim is] to show us that the elements of all tragedies lie within our individual natures; therefore we begin to attribute in undue measure to *his* individual nature all the abnormal conditions that he has shown to be potential in any of us. But in truth he was a perfectly healthy person. (286)

Lathrop's formulation echoes Hawthorne's statement in "The Old Manse," where he insists that "I have appealed to no sentiment or sensibilities, save such as are diffused among us all" (25). It also resonates with the opening to the short story "Wakefield" (1835), where Hawthorne imagines the life led by a Londoner who, for no ostensible reason, leaves his family in order to live in an apartment down the street, living in self-imposed exile for 20 years. The story is as "remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities," but Hawthorne believes the tale to appeal "to the generous sympathies of mankind" (97). Using this tactic,

Lathrop's defense might be said to partake of something of Judith Butler's *double-denial:* Hawthorne was not morbid, but if he was morbid, he was only morbid to the extent that everyone else is morbid.

Lathrop's inquiry—that careful but ever-shaky delineation between personal and universal human traits—resonates with the emerging field of psychology of his time. When Darwin wrote about shyness in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), he began not with tales of the morbidly shy but with "the most peculiar and the human of all expressions"—blushing (330). When William James discussed shyness in the second volume of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), he began with stage fright and modesty (432). Near the end of his biography, Lathrop bristles at a current controversy in which Francis Gerry Fairfield argued "that Poe was the victim of a form of epilepsy" and that all other writers suffered besides; ironically, Lathrop objected to Fairfield's claim, even after forwarding that abnormal phases are part of everyone's temperament and thus equally open to Hawthorne's perceptive treatment.

In fact, Lathrop wanted to have his cake and eat it too: Hawthorne's writing was characterized by morbidness, by melancholy, by isolation—but Hawthorne himself was not. In his prefaces, Hawthorne insisted that he was sympathizing with readers, not the other way around. We can imagine how readers might begin to question these claims as special pleading, as an invariable play of exceptions. It was enough to make later critics of Hawthorne begin to ask just what he was hiding. In particular, W. C. Brownell would raise a suspicion against the shy and reserved author that would go on to characterize many critiques of Hawthorne's persona, even to this day.

The Skeptical Reading: The Invincibly Modest

> "Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast."
> — Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Hawthorne would add a preface to the 1851 reprint of his earliest collection of sketches and stories, *Twice-Told Tales*, in order to reflect on his beginnings as "the obscurest man of letters in America." It is perhaps telling that he calls himself *the obscurest* man—not simply an obscure man of letters—mixing deprecation with a superlative. For even after the breakout success of *The Scarlet Letter*, even after years of considerable success as an author, Hawthorne could not seem to break free of a certain humility. It was this performance of humility that so sickened and annoyed the critic W. C. Brownell. In his notoriously critical work "Hawthorne," part of his *American Prose Masters* (1909), Brownell slowly unfolds his suspicions about Hawthorne's reserve as a pose, tactic, and performance. He begins with the preface to *Twice-Told Tales*, "an admirable piece of self-characterization," and reflects on the qualifications that Hawthorne places on the reception of his work. In particular, he focuses on three exemplary claims:

> "The sketches are not," [Hawthorne] says, "it is hardly necessary to say, profound, but it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so." Again, they "are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable), but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world." And, finally, in words that go to the root of the matter: "Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness." (68)

What is particularly Hawthornesque about these lines is their use of parenthetical asides that undercut his own status and dignity: *the sketches are not profound, it isn't necessary to say that, but it is remarkable that they are sometimes profound, if in fact they ever are, because I didn't*

mean them to be so. The passages are prodigious in their ability to make a claim and then knock it down: the preface to *Twice-Told Tales* is a monument to self-handicapping, self-deprecation, self-effacement, even while seeming just a little self-satisfied. Brownell skewers lines like these with a simple statement: "Now it is evident that intercourse with the world is not opened on these terms" (68).

What Brownell repeatedly objects to in the treatment of Hawthorne as reserved genius is the heroicization of his disability: he begins his critical work by stating provocatively, "Hawthorne was so exceptional a writer that he has very generally been esteemed a great one (63). Rather than insisting on his originality and freedom from influence—as Page and Lathrop did—or lauding his exceptional status in a stunted America—as James did—Brownell wishes to look only at the substance of his accomplishments, to divide the impressiveness of his obstacles from the impressiveness of the result. He insists that

> the world assumes that the recluse issuing from his seclusion should bring with him his warrant for dwelling in it […] If this result is not profound or deeply and permanently valuable, it is asking too much of the heedless world to ask it to accept unconquerable reserve as the reason. […] It may, of course, be said that a recluse is as much entitled to claim attention for trifles as any one else. Only, in that case his status of recluse is immaterial. And, plainly, Hawthorne was not at all disposed to consider it immaterial. He thought it, as others have done, the most material fact about both him and his work, as is plain from his calling his reserve "unconquerable." (68-69)

Brownell is putting forth a generally unrepresentative view of Hawthorne's talent—Hawthorne had been established early and reestablished often in the American literary canon over the century after his death—but in a way, he is only taking Hawthorne's self-deprecations at face-value. In speaking so glibly, Brownell diagnoses a problem in the criticism of the generations before him: both Hawthorne and his critics found his reclusiveness and his unconquerable reserve to be material weights in the scales of his value.

In the nineteenth-century imagination, the mathematical equation for genius was not only the substance of the accomplishments, but also the environment in and the material with which the work was produced. The careless and unlearned pose was seen as a further mark of genius, rather than a deficit: it was a common stereotype for the American poetess, the young artist, and the popular novelist.[34] It was already a common enough rhetorical move that Jane Austen could skewer it playfully in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813): "Your humility, Mr. Bingley, must disarm reproof" (62). It would later become the center of Mark Twain's joke in Emmeline Grangerford: "She could rattle off poetry like nothing. She didn't ever have to stop to think" (144). This general skepticism of humility would find its vent in Brownell's critique: to what extent were Hawthorne's constant apologies and self-reproaches mere attempts to "disarm reproof?" to what extent was his humility—veering close to self-humiliation—an indirect boast?

The popularity of the modesty trope in nineteenth century literature might be said to complicate a separation of the effects of shyness from its source. Brownell's answer is striking if hardly unexpected—he outs Hawthorne's "reserve" as a cover for his lack of power:

> It is impossible to share his uncertainty as to whether the tameness of his touches proceeds from this reserve or from lack of power. The answer clearly is: both. And to go a step further, and as I say to the root of the matter, his unconquerable reserve proceeds in all probability from his lack of power—at least of anything like sustained, unintermittent power that can be relied upon and evoked at will by its possessor. (69)

In puncturing Hawthorne's persona as a self-aggrandizing pose meant to cover an underlying vulnerability, Brownell forwards a claim that would become the foundation for modern skepticism towards Hawthorne's self-made persona. It would echo in Philip Rahv's insistence

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[34] In *The Nightingale Burden*, Cheryl Walker discusses how artlessness was cultivated among women poets (55-56). We might consider as well the mythos surrounding the expansive and unstudied pose of an author like Coleridge, which James would treat cleverly in "The Coxon Fund."

that Hawthorne is afraid of the full experience represented by his "dark ladies,"[35] in the savvy

biographies of Nina Baym and Brenda Wineapple that suggest that Hawthorne is hiding from

potential rejection;[36] it would inform the numerous cultural critiques of Hawthorne—feminist,

postcolonial, critical race, and queer—that deconstruct his claims to being apolitical and

objective.

In his critique, Brownell uses what are taken by modern psychology as the two most

common readings of shy personas: laziness and arrogance.[37] He faults Hawthorne—as James did,

though much more sympathetically—for his lack of ambition, his leisurely push towards

authorship, his untaught and unstudied craft. At the same time, Brownell faults Hawthorne for

using his humility as a cover for his weaknesses, self-handicapping in order to protect his own

ego.[38] As Brownell notes, Hawthorne "persisted with overweening obstinacy of the invincibly

modest" (76).

Unlike any other critic who treated Hawthorne, Brownell went so far as to doubt even the

authenticity of the author's shyness. Brownell notes, "With such a character—so eminent for

good sense, so unsentimental—his much-talked-of shyness is perhaps a fable" (105). In one

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[35] In "The Dark Lady of Salem," Philip Rahv states that the dark lady "dominates all the other characters because she alone personifies the contrary values that her author attached to experience" (367).

[36] In *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career*, Nina Baym wonders "whether behind the display of authorial modesty there may not be a frustrated and embittered imagination"—whether his modesty was real, a mask for authorial anger against an indifferent audience, or an excuse for creative failure (83).

In her article "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Writer," Brenda Wineapple notes how Hawthorne was presented to the public as a "shy, quiet man, chary of public appearances, whose fame was thrust upon him by a literary meritocracy. In other words, Hawthorne's public (and biographers) fell for the ruse" (195).

[37] In *Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence,* Susie Scott argues that shy individuals are often misunderstood as antisocial and misanthropic (10-11) or even "free-riding" (141).

[38] In their psychological study "On Being 'Shy like a Fox': A Self-Handicapping Analysis," C.R. Snyder and Timothy Smith argue that shyness may be a defense mechanism, a self-handicapping strategy especially for men (162ff).

respect, the statement is glaringly incorrect—Hawthorne's shyness was well-documented by friends, family, acquaintances, and strangers—but to call it a "fable" is on the other hand to recognize that a mythology has augmented, if not outstripped, the reality. Did Hawthorne exaggerate his reserve in order to draw on its many dividends? In *Disability Theory*, Tobin Siebers calls it the "masquerade," a Hawthornesque phrase if ever there were one: the individual exaggerating the weaknesses that he fears will be given no accommodation (108-109). Brownell concludes, "He was less shy, perhaps, than taciturn—his own epithet." The difference between the shy and taciturn is a small but substantial alteration: it converts an inability to be social to an unwillingness to be social. As evidence, he cites Hawthorne's experience in England as US consul, especially an anecdote where he turned out "a ready and apt after-dinner orator, an impossibility for a thoroughly shy man" (105-106).

Originally related by James T. Fields in his *Yesterdays with Authors*, this dinner party among others reveal some of the complexities that Brownell himself might have missed in his trenchant critique of Hawthorne's pose as shy artist. Hawthorne's experiences in England tended towards the formal—Hawthorne as Consul or Hawthorne as Special Guest rather than Hawthorne as himself. Fields offers us one example of Hawthorne at a dinner-party that suggests how his shyness was less a clever use of a scripted pose than an urgent desire for *any* script:

> An enthusiastic English lady, a genuine admirer and intelligent reader of his books, ran for her album and attacked him for "a few words and his name at the end." He looked dismally perplexed, and turning to me said imploringly in a whisper, "For pity's sake, what shall I write? I can't think of a word to add to my name. Help me to something." Thinking him partly in fun, I said, "Write an original couplet,—this one, for instance,—
> > *'When this you see,*
> > *Remember me,'* "
> and to my amazement he stepped forward at once to the table, wrote the foolish lines I had suggested, and, shutting the book, handed it very contentedly to the happy lady. (90-91)

What is missing from Brownell's discussion of performance is the centrality of *scriptedness* for a shy artist like Hawthorne. To unmask a performance as performance is not necessarily to explain it. Some people perform because they know what it will get them; others because they do not know how else to act.[39] When Hawthorne painted admiring portraits of extroverts—the dark ladies of his fiction, the talkers in his journals—they always had a special knack for improvisation that he lacked. When he described his seclusion and shyness, he often used the language of entanglement, of complex labyrinths and caverns.

The question of society was *always* a question of performance for Hawthorne: as James noted, "He was silent, diffident, more inclined to hesitate, to watch and wait and meditate, than to produce himself" (26-27). Hawthorne's shyness was not hidden but revealed in all the many tools and strategies that Hawthorne used to ease his self-production: the various personas, the modesty tropes, the scripts. But what if shyness amounted to more than tricks and stratagems— what if Hawthorne's shyness coalesced into a philosophy of its own? To those who knew and loved Hawthorne best—his friends and family—his shyness amounted to a virtue, a reverence for others, a guiding philosophy.

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[39] In *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body,* Michael Davidson ponders if the disabled body might have an aesthetics of defamiliarization—and I wonder if the shy body might have such an aesthetics, too. In *Understanding Shyness: Psychological Perspectives*, W. Ray Crozier argues that smooth social encounters are invisible, scarcely worth noticing—but shyness interrupts them, makes them worth noticing (4). It is partly what Mary Ann O'Farrell calls the "erotics of embarrassment" (21).

The Ethical Reading: Sociable Silence

> "If I would know interior of brick walls, or the mystery of human bosoms, I can but guess."
> — Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Sights from a Steeple"

After reading to the end of Hawthorne's sketch "The Old Manse," after being invited to wander through its orchards and to trace the sluggish Concord river, readers come to this conclusion:

> My conscience, however, does not reproach me with betraying anything too sacredly individual to be revealed by a human spirit, to its brother or sister spirit. […] Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being, and have we groped together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. We have been standing on the green sward, but just within the cavern's mouth, where the common sunshine is free to penetrate, and where every footstep is therefore free to come. I have appealed to no sentiment or sensibilities, save such as are diffused among us all. So far as I am a man of really individual attributes, I veil my face; nor am I, nor have ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people, who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain-sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public. (25)

After what would seem a leisurely and confessional sketch, this disavowal is apt to strike the reader as a slap in the face. While Hawthorne seems to play ambiguously with the possibility that that his soul might resemble the Old Manse—having "inner passages" and "chambers"—he quickly cuts short this possibility. Instead, he likens his soul to a "cavern," towards which readers have advanced only as far as the "mouth"; the reflected light that readers have caught is only the "common sunshine," the sentiments diffused among everybody. We have been touring a parsonage, while the author's soul remains a cave.[40]

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[40] This passage draws a line around Hawthorne's private self kept just out of sight, a horizon line always in recession. In his deconstructive reading of "The Minister's Black Veil," J. Hillis Miller notes that Parson Hooper's sense that the face is yet another veil casts the very act of self-disclosure into doubt: "The story is the unveiling of the possibility of the impossibility of unveiling" (51).

But a closer look reveals that Hawthorne claims his withdrawal is not motivated by caution or fear, but by a sense of ethics. Self-disclosure is a matter of "conscience," of conscientiousness.[41] To reveal anything too "sacredly individual" is framed as a betrayal of the human spirit, both its treasures and its rubbish. As his final sentence suggests, he fears that exhibitionism cheapens the human heart—dissects it, turns it into a "tidbit" for consumption. Hawthorne thus hides his face behind a "veil," the marker of modesty—and of reverence. Even as he pushes the reader away, Hawthorne reveals his own personal sense of the human soul: one worthy of respect, reverence, and privacy.

This belief—what the *House of Seven Gables* calls "the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality" (228)—runs throughout Hawthorne's *oeuvre*.[42] Reverence is what separates Holgrave from Ethan Brand, virtue from the "unpardonable sin." It shows itself in Coverdale's hermitage, a "symbol" of his individuality kept "inviolate"; it reveals itself in Coverdale's wonder that Priscilla had retained her "sanctity of soul" throughout her ordeal. It would recur throughout his journals; writing in an 1843 entry, Hawthorne would insist that he was no lover of secrets:

> I am glad to think that God sees through my heart; and if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there. I can neither guide nor enlighten him. (qtd in Davis 46)

These impossibly high ethical standards for disclosure—so high that it is doubtful even angels can meet them—would almost guarantee that Hawthorne would one day ask himself if he had

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[41] In his article "Outside the Custom House? On the Philosophy of Shyness," Clark Davis describes the veil as "an image of *self-consciousness*—a frequent synonym for *shyness*" (415).

[42] In "Nathaniel Hawtorne and the Virtue of Reverence," William Bartley argues that reverence is key to understanding Hawthorne's style, but the term is no longer in our modern critical vocabulary (383).

ever really talked with half a dozen persons in his life.[43] He would put these standards in the mouths of his dark ladies: Zenobia insists that only an angel—or a madman—could be her intimate counselor; Miriam withdraws from telling Kenyon her secret when he recoils for only a moment. Hawthorne transforms the question of self-disclosure into one of sympathy.

So it should come as no surprise that Hawthorne's shyness takes on this ethical register when described by his family and friends. In his *Recollections*, Horatio Bridge noted how his friend "was careful to avoid infringement upon the rights of others, while thoroughly conscious of his own" (57). Julian Hawthorne would explain the puzzle of his father's reticence by stating, "In Nathaniel Hawthorne the sentiment of reverence was very highly developed, and I do not know that too much weight can be given to this fact" (93). Those who knew Hawthorne sought to transform Hawthorne's shyness as a sensitivity of personal boundaries—not from selfishness, not from weakness, but from respect, self-respect, other-respect.

This concern over reverence would expand to broader explorations of ethics in later critics.[44] In particular, Clark Davis's recent monograph *Hawthorne's Shyness* (2005) asks the question:

> Is shyness merely a flaw or can it be more?—a philosophy, for instance, a way of seeing the self and its approach to the world? […] Is it possible that these strategies arose not out of defensiveness toward the world but from a higher sensitivity to the interactions of individuals and 'others'? (30)

Davis takes the works and the ideals of Hawthorne and weaves them into the work of philosophers like Levinas and Wittgenstein to produce a complex moral philosophy of shyness. In doing so, Davis reveals himself to be perhaps the most sympathetic reader of Hawthorne's

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[43] In an entry from the *French and Italian Notebooks*, Hawthorne writes: "For me, there must first be a close and unembarrassed contiguity with my companion, or I cannot say one real word. I doubt whether I have ever really talked with half a dozen persons in my life, either men or women" (180).

[44] In his work *Secrets and Sympathy*, Gordon Hutner insists that we recognize sympathy not only as one of the central points in Hawthorne literature, but recognize the multiplicity of kinds of sympathy catalogued. In particular, he sees reverence might be thought as a form of sympathy that accepts a necessary distance (157).

shyness in modern criticism; however, this distinction is not without its dangers. As Davis himself admits, he is asking what it means to be shy "in Hawthorne's terms"—and he offers an idealized version of shyness, recapitulating the terms in which Hawthorne wished to think of himself. In particular, to frame shyness as a moral philosophy is to ignore the misgivings that Hawthorne himself had about shyness—not in that he might fail to live up to the virtue of shy morality, but in that in being shy, he might fail to live up to a higher morality altogether. To define shyness as a moral philosophy is to elide the moral ambivalence of shyness, as experienced and related by Hawthorne. As Miles Coverdale would say, "A man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm" (142-143).

In "Hawthorne," part of the series *Homes of American Authors*, George W. Curtis would offer this anecdote of Hawthorne's time spent on the Concord river near the Old Manse, an example of the author's gentle and careful consideration:

> I recall the silent and preternatural vigor with which, on one occasion, he wielded his paddle to counteract the bad rowing of a friend who conscientiously considered it his duty to do something and not let Hawthorne work alone; but who, with every stroke, neutralized all Hawthorne's efforts. I suppose he would have struggled until he fell senseless rather than ask his friend to desist. (301)

What Curtis captures here is Hawthorne's sensitivity to another friend's dignity, but it is hardly the precise law of a moral philosophy. Rather, it is Hawthorne suffering rather than inflicting embarrassment on another; it is second-hand embarrassment.[45] Here, shyness is rendered a matter of sense, not conscience—shyness is not ruled by laws but rendered in fine perceptions. It is the complaint that we might find implicit in the works of Austen, Hawthorne, and James, where the shy characters are sensitive and the gregarious characters are often rude or self-

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[45] In fact, embarrassment has a close tie to shyness: Jen Asendorpf suggests shyness is the "anticipation of embarrassment" (93); W. Ray Crozier separates embarrassment as a temporary state from shyness as a personality trait (19). I personally like the idea of shyness being *embarrassability*.

centered: contrasts between Elinor and Marianne, Coverdale and Hollingsworth, Strether and

Chad. But sometimes the discomfort is needless: not every embarrassment that Elinor suffers is

to the point, not every scruple that Strether worries over is in fact necessary. As Mary Ann

O'Farrell notes in her monograph on the blush, *Telling Complexions*, embarrassment becomes

the mark of cultural sensitivity, maturity, and conscientiousness.[46]

This interpretation of Hawthorne is to render shyness not only highly sensitive but also

highly receptive. It is at the root of descriptions of Hawthorne as "hawk-eyed."[47] It is to

emphasize perception over action, tacit sympathy over explicit dialogue. Curtis would go so far

as to coin a common description of Hawthorne:

> His own sympathy was so broad and sure, that although nothing had been said for hours,
> his companion knew that not a thing had escaped his eye, nor had a single pulse of beauty
> in the day, or scene, or society, failed to thrill his heart. In this way his silence was most
> social. (301)

To call Hawthorne's silence "social" is to redefine the social in terms of receptivity, rather than

expression. The shy individual's relationship to society is receptive rather than expressive; the

shy ethics is one based on moral sense rather than moral action. Hawthorne's curious interest in

others is only rendered unsocial if one privileges the more explicit forms of social interaction.

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[46] O'Farrell notes that the history of the blush is the history of the well-mannered subject (3). In particular, she notes that well-mannered characters blush for others at least as often as for themselves (17).

[47] In a July 29th, 1838 journal entry in the *American Notebooks*, Hawthorne describes a man:

> There was a trace of the gentleman and man of intellect through his deep degradation; and a pleasure in
> intellectual pursuits, and an acuteness and trained judgment, which bespoke a mind once strong and
> cultivated.
>   "My study is man," said he. And looking at me, "I do not know your name," he said, "but there is
> something of the hawk-eye about you, too." (139)

In *Literary Friends and Acquaintances,* William Dean Howells relates an anecdote where Longfellow, upon seeing a portrait of Hawthorne, exclaims: "Yes, it's good; but it hasn't his fine accipitral look" (52). [*Accipitral*: adj., hawk-like]

To pose shyness as a sensibility rather than a philosophy more deeply gathers together the figures in Hawthorne's *oeuvre*, even those that are immoral. For shyness extends not only to Hawthorne's heroes but his villains—and anti-heroes. If the extroverts—Hollingsworth, Robert Danforth, Donatello—can be good and evil alike, there is an occasional clumsiness in them; they lack the irony that permeates the ethics of the pale males in Hawthorne's fiction. For Hawthorne, the shy sensibility was not in and of itself good or evil; it merely shaped ethical possibilities. The shy sensibility could lead to moral clarity but also merciless judgment, to respect for distance but also stern denials of intimacy, to thoughtful narration but also self-important voyeurism. It is a sensibility shared not only across Hawthorne's *oeuvre*, but beyond. Henry James would strip down the moral ideology and expose Hawthorne's shy ethics for what it was: a sensibility on which nothing was lost.

Another Kind of Inquest

I have traced these many versions of Hawthorne in order to pin down what others made of Hawthorne's shyness. These numerous threads contradict each other, if they do not contradict themselves. Hawthorne meant to protect his genius from too overt an influence, but then it was an arid culture that failed to influence him. Hawthorne was too sensitive to everything—or he was so sensitive to the negative that he was insensitive to everything else. Hawthorne exaggerated his shyness in order to hoodwink the world into thinking he was a better artist than he was; Hawthorne insisted that his psychology was much like everyone else's—and thus understated his shyness in order to hide himself.

In tracing these multiple threads of explanation for Hawthorne's shyness, we might imagine that we are doing partly what Hawthorne suggested we do in his preface to his collection *The Snow-Image*, though we are tracing his reception rather than his works: "You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of [an author's] essential traits" (8). Hawthorne himself became a fictitious character when he was refracted through the words of those who knew him—and those who met him—and those who sought to explain him.

A true understanding of Hawthorne's shyness will come from a combination of these factors: aesthetic, environmental, psychological, performative, ethical. Insofar as other authors are shy, they may find themselves a different mix of proportions. Henry David Thoreau stole into the woods near Walden Pond, a move that some contemporary critics felt was a sign of a morbid psychology, but which most people now read as an expression of romantic genius.[48] Emily Dickinson was first heralded as an untaught recluse, completely isolated from American culture—or a figure of thwarted love—only recently to be seen as a self-conscious coquette, attempting to map out a space of free play out of enclosed spaces.[49] Henry James framed his personal scruples as sacrifices to art, but later critics would see his sexual abstinence as a symptom of his "obscure hurt" and a lack of masculinity. Over the years, Hawthorne's image as shy artist has risen and fallen—the sensitive soul gave way to the romantic genius to the all-

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[48] In his review "Thoreau," James Russell Lowell critiqued Thoreau's distance: "To try to be natural implies a consciousness that forbids all naturalness forever. It is as easy—and no easier—to be natural in a *salon* as in a swamp, if one do not aim at it, for what we call unnaturalness always has its spring in man's thinking too much about himself" (306).

[49] In *The Poet on the Second Story*, Jerome Loving describes the myth of "thwarted love" in Emily Dickinson's life (10), but instead insists that she used loss as an empty space to map out her art (4). In *The Nightingale Burden*, Cheryl Walker notes the "secret sorrow" trope among women writers, but insists that it was a tactic for withdrawal from public life (88ff).

American artist to the psychologically tortured pessimist to the conservative veiling his quietism in poses of distance.[50]

Ultimately, what the varying treatments of Hawthorne's shyness reveal is the full range of opinions on the intersection between personality and art. What lies behind all of these explanations is our inability to let shy secrets alone: it must be the effect of a deeper psychology, an original aesthetic experience, an ulterior motive. Hawthorne "appalls" and "entices" us. His shyness as an affect or as an effect invites us to explore him, to explain him. What is expressed can be immense—what is unexpressed can be infinite.

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[50] Although Hawthorne became part of the canon of American literature early, his fortunes have risen and fallen: in the heyday of Matthiessen and other New Historicists, Hawthorne became something of an All-American; Crew's *Sins of the Fathers* opened the gateway to darker, more psychological readings; and ever since Sacvan Bercovitch's *Office of the Scarlet Letter*, many readers have become critical of his conservative quietism.

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Chapter 2

The Blithedale Romance: Shyness as Closeting

Few characters are as notorious in American literature as Miles Coverdale, the first-person narrator of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. Coverdale has been characterized as an impotent Peeping Tom,[1] as biased and unreliable,[2] as cold-blooded, unfeeling, and self-centered, as a failed artist,[3] as misogynistic and deeply troubled by women,[4] as a stopgap for the novel's own vital weaknesses,[5] and as indirectly—if not directly—responsible for the novel's tragic

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[1] In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler blames Hawthorne for introducing the "impotent Peeping Tom" figure into American literature (343). In *Secrets and Sympathy*, Gordon Hutner argues that due to his meddling Coverdale isn't nearly as subtle as the observers in Henry James's novels (108).

[2] Louise D. Cary argues that Coverdale is Hawthorne's biased vehicle for harshly criticizing Margaret Fuller through the figure of Zenobia (35). Barbara and Allan Lefcowitz suggest that "certainly he is not to be trusted either as narrator or as an emotional touchstone" (273-274). In "Winterbourne and the Doom of Manhood," Robert Weisbuch asserts that Coverdale is a morally bankrupt narrator (85).

[3] In *Politics of the Novel*, Irving Howe argues that Coverdale is a "moony narcissist" (163ff). James H. Justus argues that Coverdale is a man who cannot love, crippling him both as an artist and a man (21ff). Martin FitzPatrick believes that Hawthorne is satirizing Coverdale because he is a failed artist and is therefore not subtle enough in his perceptions and sympathies (33).

[4] Minaz Jooma argues that Coverdale is discomfited by Zenobia's ability to break free of definitions (329). In *Domestic Individualism,* Gillian Brown reads Coverdale's speculation on Zenobia's death as voyeurism (129) and his attraction to Zenobia as objectifying (111).

[5] In *The Sins of the Fathers*, Frederick Crews writes that "Hawthorne, finding his literal plot hopelessly distorted by irrational fantasy, turned the book into a self-critical comedy by attributing that distortion to his narrator" (194ff).

ending, thus earning the title of "unpardonable sinner" at least once in modern criticism.[6] Two

unsigned critics of the novel put it most bluntly in the first decade of its publication: the first

critic, from the *American Whig Review*, notes that "Miles Coverdale, the narrator of the tale, is to

us a most repulsive being. A poet, but yet no poetry in his deeds. A sneering, suspicious,

inquisitive, and disappointed man,"[7] while the second critic in *Blackwood's Magazine* merely

exclaims, "What a meddling, curious, impertinent rogue, a psychologized Paul Pry, is Miles

Coverdale, the teller of the story!"[8]

Taken together, the character sketch offered by many critics looks strikingly like that

offered by Zenobia, one of the novel's principal characters. Finding Coverdale yet again prying

into her affairs out of a sense of "duty," Zenobia cuts him down:

> Bigotry; self-conceit; an insolent curiosity; a meddlesome temper; a cold-blooded
> criticism, founded on a shallow interpretation of half-perceptions; a monstrous scepticism
> in regard to any conscience or any wisdom, except one's own; a most irreverent
> propensity to thrust Providence aside, and substitute one's self in its awful place,—out of
> these, and other motives as miserable as these, comes your idea of duty! (157)

As in so many moments of the novel, Hawthorne himself anticipates our possible dissatisfaction

with Coverdale, echoing the critique through the mouthpiece of his characters. But in doing so,

Zenobia unravels her own point by overstating her case: the accusations come so close and fast

as to make it almost impossible for a reader to take it in all at once, while a second perusal tends

to elicit a critical response similar to Coverdale's own: "You partly wrong me, if not wholly"

(157).

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[6] Angela Mills argues that Coverdale is responsible for the polarization of Zenobia and Priscilla and that he starts a "whisper campaign" against Zenobia early in the tale (101ff). In their controversial article "The Coverdale Romance," McElroy and McDonald argue that Zenobia did not commit suicide, but that Coverdale murdered her (9). In *Secrets and Sympathy*, Gordon Hutner argues that Coverdale fits Hawthorne's definition of an "unpardonable sinner" (138).

[7] Unsigned review, *American Whig Review,* 16 (November 1852): 417-24.

[8] Unsigned essay, "Modern Novelists—Great and Small," *Blackwood's Magazine* 77 (May 1855): 562-66.

For despite the many critics who describe Miles Coverdale as weak or biased or prurient or cruel, he is not without his admirers. There are critics who find him idealistic and sympathetic,[9] perceptive and observant, conspicuously modern in his outlook,[10] occasionally heroic,[11] and often simply misunderstood.[12] In a contemporary review in *Graham's Magazine*, we find a more positive outlook from Edwin Percy Whipple—perhaps Hawthorne's favorite critic—when he writes:

> [the events of the novel] are presented as they appear through the medium of an imagined mind, that of Miles Coverdale, the narrator of the story, a person indolent of will, but of an apprehensive, penetrating, and inquisitive intellect. […] What is lost by this mode, on definite views, is more than made up in the stimulus given both to our acuteness and curiosity, and its manifold suggestiveness. We are joint watchers with Miles himself.[13]

It becomes a sort of subjective opinion whether Coverdale's being "inquisitive" belongs with his being "penetrating" and "acute" rather than with his being "sneering," "suspicious" and "disappointed." More importantly, when Whipple notes we are "joint watchers" with this unreliable narrator, he makes the case that we are more implicated in Coverdale's vision than we'd care to believe.

It is partly this double-sidedness which continues to make *The Blithedale Romance* such a critically rich novel: Coverdale is a prurient voyeur, but then so are we as readers; Coverdale is

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[9] In *The Romance of Failure*, Jonathan Auerbach suggests that Coverdale gives up his own sphere of influence in order to mediate others' (113). Benjamin Scott Grossberg finds Coverdale interested in—above all else—not being exclusive in one's attentions, be they sexual or sympathetic (16).

[10] In her biography of Hawthorne, Brenda Wineapple joins various scholars in reading Miles Coverdale as one of the first modern antiheroes: "an antebellum Prufrock" (250). In his article "Death of a Hero? Winterbourne and Daisy Miller," R. P. Draper suggests that Winterbourne is a proto-Prufrock as well (603).

[11] Douglas Anderson finds Coverdale's rejection of Hollingsworth—that pivotal "No!"— to be "genuinely heroic" (43).

[12] Many critics note how Coverdale is misread by other characters during the course of the novel. But in "Eros and Ideology: At the Heart of Hawthorne's Blithedale," John N. Miller also insists that, in current criticism, Miles Coverdale is often "bashed" and read unsympathetically (17). This critical outrage is ultimately the opening gambit of Michael Borgstrom's "Hating Miles Coverdale."

[13] Edwin Percy Whipple, "Review of *The Blithedale Romance*." *Graham's Magazine* 41 (1852): 334.

a little passive, but then so is the hero of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* on which

Hawthorne modeled him; and Coverdale is indolent and impotent, but then so are many

antiheroes of modernity. What lies at the center of the controversy is the valence of the *shy hero*,

a figure of inaction, curiosity, and self-consciousness. Coverdale encapsulates within himself the

best and worst qualities of shyness: observation veering into inaction, curiosity veering into

voyeurism, self-effacement veering into self-pity, ironic self-awareness veering into cynical

hyperconsciousness. In short, he is a discerning observer but a somewhat disappointing hero.

This paradox of the shy hero—representative and pathological, both central and peripheral—is

vital to understanding *The Blithedale Romance* and, through it, the tradition of the

Bildungsroman.

For shyness is not inherently in tension with the history of the *Bildungsroman*: indeed,

the shy, passive, naïve but overcurious hero might even be said to occupy a special position.[14]

This is partly because the rise of the novel coincides with the rising popularity of

associationist—"blank slate"—philosophies of human development like those of Locke, Hume,

or Hartley; it is partly a reflection of Romantic idealizations of both innocent childhood and self-

determining quests for vocation.[15] As such, the *Bildungsroman* dramatizes the belief that the

impressions made upon a young and naïve observer are extremely important—and extremely

interesting.

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[14] In *Season of Youth,* Jerome Hamilton Buckley argues that one of Dickens' alternate titles for *David Copperfield* is more fitting: *The Copperfield Survey of the World as it Rolled*, since David Copperfield is predominantly one who watches, rather than acts (34-35). In Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World,* Franco Moretti argues one of the main weaknesses of the English *Bildungsroman* is that it typically splits the roles of action and observation between the figures of villain and hero, respectively (201).

[15] In *Season of Youth,* Jerome Hamilton Buckley reads Romantic works like *The Prelude*, *Don Juan*, and *Sartor Resartus* as predecessors to the *Bildungsroman* (9). In the epilogue to *Apprenticeships*, Thomas Jeffers summarizes many theories on the historical underpinnings of the rise of the *Bildungsroman*—though in his case, they are mostly economic, rather than philosophical. See also Ariès' project *Centuries of Childhood.*

This faith undergirds the logic of even the earliest *Bildungsromane*: in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, a mentor tells the hero that "everything that happens to us leaves its traces, everything contributes imperceptibly to our development" (257). Therefore, many self-education novels begin with a hero who is shy—that mixture of curiosity and passivity—because this quality makes him particularly susceptible to experience. Hawthorne's childhood was fed on the romances of Scott, the confessions of Rousseau, the novels of Fielding, Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, and Byron's *Don Juan*; we have reason to believe that he was casually familiar with Goethe's *Faust* and maybe his *Wilhelm Meister*;[16] perhaps most importantly, Hawthorne was reading *David Copperfield* during the years 1850-51.[17] The *Bildungsroman*, in particular, had a script that he knew by heart.

But Hawthorne was not always interested in following scripts. In a fragment of his unfinished romance *The Ancestral Footstep*, Hawthorne reflected on a desire to surprise his readers, even to disappoint them. As the plot unfolded, Hawthorne hoped that the novel would end in a manner "unexpected by everybody, and not satisfactory to the natural yearnings of novel readers" (444). What are we to make of his hope that the ending be unsatisfactory? After more than a century of his holding a shifting but steady place in the literary canon, modern critics must be careful not to overlook Hawthorne's desire to challenge what he felt were his readers' expectations.

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[16] In *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge*, Jac Tharpe argues that certain word choices in Hawthorne's "Night Sketches" suggest a familiarity with Carlyle's translation of *Wilhelm Meister*. Tharpe argues that Coverdale is a figure in dialogue with the "spiritual chameleon[s]" of Goethe's novels: "Coverdale was probably a highly complex yet oversimplified combination of Wilhelm Meister and a reaction against him and against influence in general" (37).

[17] See Marion Kesselring's *Hawthorne's Reading*, a transcript of the Salem library logs between 1826 and 1850. See also Randall Stewart's *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* and James R. Mellow's *Hawthorne in his Times* for a more generalized sense of the novels that Hawthorne read in his childhood and adolescence.

Nowhere is Hawthorne's desire to disrupt the "natural yearnings" of readers more

conspicuous than in his third major novel, *The Blithedale Romance*: though the novel starts with

two men and two women, it does not end in a double marriage;[18] though the novel begins with

mysteries and secrets, the curious Coverdale leaves many questions unanswered;[19] though it

begins with a wealthy estate under (secret) dispute, the inheritance is destructive rather than

redemptive;[20] and though many of the characters at the outset of the novel stand to gain courage,

faith, or compassion, they learn only resignation or defeat.[21] Many contemporaries of Hawthorne

disliked the novel, and it fared the worst of all his major works both commercially and

critically.[22]

How *The Blithedale Romance* does and does not fit readerly expectations is often at the

center of the novel's controversy. In Peter Brooks' psychoanalytical definition of plot in *Reading*

for the Plot, there are official plots that are constantly in danger of being either prematurely

discharged or not discharged at all: tension forms as readers fear that the plot will run astray of

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[18] In *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel*, Katherine Snyder reads *Blithedale* as an evasion of the Victorian double marriage; she draws attention to the excess of erotic energy that leads nowhere in the novel (68). In "*The Blithedale Romance*: A History of Ideas Approach," Hans-Joachim Lang argues that the reader "is free to match the two virtual couples in such a way that a 'weak' and a 'strong' character are brought together—Coverdale and Zenobia, Hollingsworth and Priscilla! The characterizations in the Preface […] leave little doubt that Hawthorne very carefully matched his four figures" (88ff).

[19] In *The Sins of the Fathers*, Frederick Crews notes that "no narrator ever had worse luck than Coverdale in learning the most essential facts about the figures whose story we are supposed to enjoy" (194-195).

[20] See Angela Mills' " 'The Sweet Word,' Sister" or Kent Bales' "The Allegory and Radical Romantic Ethic of *The Blithedale Romance*" for readings of the inheritance plot in *Blithedale*.

[21] See Irving Howe's *Politics and the Novel* for a reading of how Hawthorne punishes his characters, rather than allowing them a form of education or maturation.

[22] Emerson believed the story was "disagreeable" and the sketches "not happily" drawn; Hawthorne's friend George Hillard wished that the novel could have ended "without killing Zenobia" or at least with "a drier and handsomer death." His publisher James T. Fields wrote to one of Hawthorne's British admirers that the novel was not selling well; he concluded, "I hope Hawthorne will give us no more Blithedales."

See Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1948. p. 122-123.

expectations (109). The queerness of the shy hero throws into high relief the demands and prices hidden in the *Bildungsroman*; the shy hero Coverdale constantly approaches these conventions and yet so constantly misses (or mis-executes) them.[23] There is a texture to this misexecution that I would like to linger on, to get right: it is not quite satire, not quite subversion, and yet is resistant, reluctant, and reserved.

In the end, I would argue that the many analytical difficulties that face critics of *Blithedale Romance* arise from a modern ambivalence surrounding shyness itself: the hero who observes but doesn't act, the hero who takes note but doesn't take risks, and the hero who loves but never speaks up. As modern critics, we are both fascinated and frustrated by such a character—but why? In this chapter, I would like to forward my own definition of *shyness as closeting*. The final valence of shyness—be it positive or negative, representative or pathological—depends on a climactic moment of self-determination. As a conspicuously shy hero, Miles Coverdale unsettles and plays against the many moments of the *Bildungsroman* that might make it function in its expected way; it is best read as an *anti-Bildungsroman*, a novel of non-education and non-development. As I will be argue later, it may be Nathaniel Hawthorne's protest against the genre.

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[23] This is not to reproduce merely what Franco Moretti notes is a common mistake of modern readers — to address novels that aren't *Bildungsromane* as if they were, often in terms of "failed development" (11). This paper argues that Hawthorne is challenging through *Blithedale Romance* some of the demands that are naturalized under the conventions of the genre itself.

A Will of One's Own: Developing Consciousness and *The Blithedale Romance*

> "But what I want you to be, Trot […] is a firm fellow. A fine firm fellow, with a will of your own. With resolution. With determination. With character, Trot—with strength of character that is not to be influenced, except on good reason, by anybody, or by anything. That's what I want you to be."
> — Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*

We must be careful when using the term *Bildungsroman*—the genre itself is slippery, as conceded by genre theorists like Bahktin, Franco Moretti, and Jeffrey L. Sammons.[24] However, most critics agree that the education of the *Bildungsheld* works by accumulation: as the naïve observer gains more knowledge, he moves from a state of passivity to states of attraction and repulsion; he begins to interpret and test before finally accepting or resisting the information given him.[25] In certain cases, this insistence on tracing influence pushes the narrative all the way back to childhood—as in *David Copperfield* or *Jane Eyre*—or if not, then it often begins with the adolescent crisis of vocation—as in *Wilhelm Meister* or *Waverley*.[26]

So it may come as no surprise that we are introduced to Miles Coverdale, the narrator of *The Blithedale Romance*, as a young man returning to his bachelor apartments after watching a performance by the Veiled Lady. In this opening chapter, we learn that Coverdale has made the resolution to leave Boston, a neat inversion of the standard *Bildungsroman* plot in which a provincial youth travels to the city to seek his fortune: here, the dandy Coverdale is moving to

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[24] See Bahktin's "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" and Jeffrey L. Sammons' "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification" for particularly outspoken discussions of the difficulties of the category itself.

[25] This simple definition overlaps with the theories of Mikhail Bahktin, Franco Moretti, Thomas Jeffers, Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Jeffrey L. Sammons, and George Levine, though it hardly encompasses them: both Sammons and Bahktin finds historical time as important as individual evolution; Franco Moretti distinguishes between *Bildungsromane* centered in "classification" and "transformation"; and Buckley insists on a broader autobiographical impulse.

[26] Thus we might get a sense of how singular James's *The Ambassadors* is—the novel of Strether's self-education begins in late adulthood; it is a novel of reeducation, an *Umbildungsroman*.

the country to escape the press of urban capitalism.[27] He is soon to join the socialist community of Blithedale, perhaps in search of "the most romantic episode of his own life," a possibility for the narrator as it was once for the author.[28]

He is an artist-narrator. He's a young man hoping to discover his calling. Perhaps most tellingly, no word better describes him than *bachelor*. In *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel*, Katherine Snyder notes that the bachelor is also that strange combination of a representative and yet pathological figure, though she never pins down what makes the bachelor so paradoxical.[29] For far from seeming strange, Miles Coverdale seems a typical bachelor—a representative culled from the *Waverley* novels and Ik Marvel's *Reveries*.[30] In short, we are offered a character who resembles the naïve, idealistic youth, hoping to experience something new that will contribute to his personal development; as described in the preface, we are offered a portrait of "the Minor Poet, beginning life with strenuous aspirations" (3).

In such an introduction, we are promised such beginnings, growth, experience, but then this narrative arc already feels blighted, even in the early pages: the preface acknowledges that his aspirations "die out with his youthful fervor" even before we see Arcadia blighted by an April snowstorm. Many *Bildungsromane* are told in retrospect, offering us as readers an insight

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[27] In *Season of Youth*, Jerome Buckley argues that the majority of *Bildungsromane* require their heroes to leave the pastoral and move to the city (17). See also George Levine, *How to Read the Victorian Novel* (83).

[28] *The Blithedale Romance* is, of course, heavily based upon Hawthorne's own experience at the socialist community Brook Farm. In particular, Hawthorne was hoping that Brook Farm would satisfy his pursuit of a vocation.

[29] In *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel: 1850-1925*, Katherine Snyder begins with the bachelor as both a representative and abnormal figure (4); however, she never determines the locus of this contradiction, merely concluding that bachelorhood is a site of contradiction: old/immature, gregarious/reclusive, indulgent/miserly, worldly/naïve, and unfeeling/oversensitive (28).

[30] In "Fireside Chastity: The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood in the 1850s," Vincent J. Bertolini argues that the bachelor is a sanitized and safe figure in the antebellum American imagination. See Walsh, *Hero of the Waverley Novels* for a discussion of the passive hero as representative of British decorum.

into naïve optimism with the good-natured irony of a more resigned—a more *mature*—

viewpoint.[31] However, there is something in Coverdale's irony that threatens to overtake and

overwrite his earlier idealism, revealing not a mastery of past events but a trivialization of

them.[32]

       This irony is partly due to the fact that, once there, Coverdale does not care nearly so

much about socialist reform as he cares about three particular socialists: Hollingsworth, the "self-

concentrated Philanthropist"; Zenobia, "the high-spirited Woman, bruising herself against the

narrow limitations of her sex"; and Priscilla, "the weakly Maiden, whose tremulous nerves

endow her with Sibylline attributes" (2-3). As he becomes entangled in their story, Miles

Coverdale admits his obsession with these three friends:

> He and Zenobia and Priscilla—both for their own sakes and as connected with him—
> were separated from the rest of the Community, to my imagination, and stood forth as the
> indices of a problem which it was my business to solve. […] Here was the vortex of my
> meditations, around which they revolved, and whitherward they too continually tended.
> In the midst of cheerful society, I had often a feeling of loneliness. For it was impossible
> not to be sensible that, while these three characters figured so largely on my private
> theatre, I—though probably reckoned as a friend by all—was at best but a secondary or
> tertiary personage with either of them. (65)

This passage seems to promise us as readers several possible avenues for the protagonist's

development. When Coverdale insists that the ladies are interesting "both for their own sakes and

as connected with him," he reveals his attraction to each woman as well as an interest in the love

triangle from which he is (partially) exiled. When he uses the phrase "indices of a problem," we

recognize that he is subtly substituting an epistemological question for the sexual one. But

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[31] George Levine suggests that maturation in the *Bildungsroman* is almost always framed as the casting away of naivete, even if it crushes romantic idealisms in the process (83-84).

[32] Hawthorne goes one step further in making Coverdale's retrospective an expression of his ultimately pessimistic temperament: "For my part […] my past life has been a tiresome one enough; yet I would rather look backward ten times than forward once. For, little as we know of our life to come, we may be very sure, for one thing, that the good we aim at will not be attained" (70).

whether the question is epistemological or sexual, the "vortex" betrays his absorbing obsession, one that lends shape to his experiences and anchors his meditations. At the root of his shyness are these feelings of disproportionate influence: Coverdale is surrounded by cheerful society that cannot cure his loneliness; his meditations revolve around his friends, but he is "at best a secondary or tertiary character" with them.

In a sense, the novel's overarching concern with "spheres and sympathies"—a tendency that Henry James found obnoxious in his predecessor[33]—might be said to reflect Coverdale's own obsession with (and resentment of) the way that individuals exert one-sided influence on one another. Throughout the novel, characters bend and warp each other with the force of their personality. The plot in which the mesmerist Westervelt bends the will of Priscilla in creating the Veiled Lady is only the most overt example of psychic manipulation in the novel. The bold Hollingsworth bends Coverdale towards his philanthropic obsession, while the vibrant Zenobia plays with her half-sister's sympathies. When Zenobia remarks that she is surprised that Coverdale isn't improved by Hollingsworth's "strong and noble nature," she's revealing her own emotional leanings more than those of Coverdale (64). When Coverdale fears that a girl as susceptible as Priscilla should not be "so constantly within the sphere of a man like Hollingsworth," he's secretly lamenting that she isn't more susceptible to his own charms.

Among such charismatic individuals, Coverdale occupies a position of relative weakness. The novel is rife with Coverdale's gravitations towards others' spheres. In the opening chapters, Coverdale becomes ill and finds himself drawn to both Zenobia and Hollingsworth during his convalescence; he notes that "the spheres of our companions have, at such periods, a vastly

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[33] In the section on *The Blithedale Romance* in his critical biography *Hawthorne*, Henry James remarks, "Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes—a taste of the same order as his disposition, to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies" (136).

greater influence upon our own than when robust health gives us a repellent and self-defensive

energy" (43). During his forest walk, he encounters Westervelt who infects Coverdale with his

cynicism:

> I recognized, as chiefly due to this man's influence, the skeptical and sneering view
> which, just now, had filled my mental vision in regard to all life's better purposes. […]
> There are some spheres the contact with which 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. (94-95)

What Coverdale so often resists, and so often protests, is an overlapping of spheres and of mental

visions because they threaten his individuality: Zenobia's energy makes him nervous,

Hollingsworth's egotism makes him suspicious, and Westervelt's familiarity makes him hostile.

But what is the content of Coverdale's individuality? The fact that Westervelt can "fill" his

mental vision with cynicism suggests that it was previously less than full. It implies at the very

least that his is not the "mind of uncommon strength and little impressibility" that can withstand

such charisma. Instead, Coverdale's mind is offered as an empty vessel to be filled with new

ideas, as a soft material to be impressed upon. Coverdale's response is thus typical: if he cannot

answer or accommodate Westervelt's mental vision, he must flee it; upon first meeting him,

Coverdale finds the stranger's familiarity so repulsive that he renders him an enemy to be

shunned and beats a hasty retreat.

In his impressibility, Coverdale resembles the classic *Bildungsheld*, though he certainly

differs in the level of his obstinacy. For Coverdale resists the kinds of influence or impression

that pass for education in other *Bildungsromane*: the early stages of the developing observer's

journey of self-discovery are often a collision with various viewpoints which he often takes up

with too much naiveté.[34] Most *Bildungsromane* take what Hawthorne calls spheres of

influence—be they social, practical, or even sexual—and turn them towards a pedagogical end: it

is the Tower in *Wilhelm Meister* or the South American journey for Walter Hartright in *A

Woman in White*; even love stories—like David Copperfield's first marriage with the child-wife

Dora Spenlow—can be converted into learning experiences. But rather than bending them

towards pedagogy, *The Blithedale Romance* takes all spheres of influence in order to *eroticize

them*.[35] While many shy heroes learn through a process of addition and accumulation, Coverdale

operates on a defensive process of subtraction.

The paradox of Coverdale's position is that while it is in practice defensively

individualistic, yet it is in imagination polyamorous. Coverdale's retreat to the tree-turret in the

forest captures this shy paradox perfectly: "this hermitage was my one exclusive possession

while I counted myself a brother of the socialists. It symbolized my individuality, and aided me

in keeping it inviolate" (92). The description of a man as "inviolate" is a description of a man

who sees his own individuality not as something fluid and organic to grow, but something

hermetic and pure to fence off; it is a description of a man who dares not sacrifice his control

over his individuality, lest he learn too much—even about himself.[36] But the very same tree-

turret that symbolizes Coverdale's individuality is itself a marriage of heterogeneous plants:

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[34] Levine argues that much of what *Bildungsroman* protagonists "do" is navigating and negotiating social conflict and corruption (82). Consider Wilhelm Meister's acknowledgement "that experience was sadly wanting to him; and hence on the experience of others, and on the results which they deduced from it, he put a value far beyond its real one" (171). It is in only in the late stages of his development that Wilhelm is able to see through Aurelia's bitterness, Laerte's misanthropy, or Jarno's cold intellect.

[35] In *The School of Hawthorne*, Richard Brodhead sees this as *Blithedale*'s main contribution to James's *The Bostonians*: the impression that all ideologies have a personal—and therefore sexual—foundation, making political persuasion also a form of sexual seduction (148-149). In *The Public Life of Privacy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature,* Stacey Margolis argues that everyone in *Blithedale* sees politics as a love story, taking on "prophylaxes" to protect themselves (42).

[36] Douglas Anderson characterizes Coverdale as having an "epidemiological imagination" (48). On the other hand, David Greven characterized Coverdale as a "failed inviolate man" (168).

A wild grapevine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and, after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy. (91)

The grapevine oscillates between parasitism and symbiosis, between a luxurious ornamentation and a coercive force that pushes other plants together: it is a smaller organism shaping the growth and proximity of other plants, marrying (or strangling?) them by binding them together.[37] Like the vine, Coverdale very clearly gains shape as a character through his close attention to his friends, but in doing so he may do violence to their future growth—and leave himself with nothing else in the event of their collapse.

Even in retreat, Coverdale cannot get away. After months of revolving around the problem of his three friends, Coverdale resolves on leaving Blithedale in terms that approximate both the form and function of the hero's flight and eventual return:

Musing on all these matters, I felt an inexpressible longing for at least a temporary novelty. I thought of going across the Rocky Mountains, or to Europe, or up the Nile; of offering myself a volunteer on the Exploring Expedition; of taking a ramble of years, no matter in what direction, and coming back on the other side of the world. (129)

It is the educational journey of the Romantic poet, the aspiring student, or the up-and-coming soldier. Coverdale fantasizes about putting distance between himself and the knot of dreamers that so enthrall his attention. But instead he simply returns to town, where he inadvertently takes up a hotel room that overlooks Zenobia's city residence.[38] For it seems that the voyeur-protagonist Miles Coverdale can only skip from peripheral orbit to peripheral orbit. What is first

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[37] Kent Bales hypothesizes in his article "The Allegory and the Radical Romantic Ethic of *Blithedale Romance*" that polygamy is the only suitable solution to the problems of the four characters, recapitulating Coverdale's fantasy as the necessary action (52). Benjamin Scott Grossberg argues in "Coverdale's Queer Utopia" that Coverdale's hermitage becomes a metaphor both for his fluid and polyamorous desire and for its harmful effects (15).

[38] In their article "The Coverdale Romance," John Harmon McElroy and Edward L. McDonald suspect that this may not be a coincidence, a moment that belies Coverdale's more invested interest in Zenobia than he would otherwise admit (5).

proposed as a journey that might free or educate him becomes merely another presentation of the "old problem in a shape that made it more insoluble than ever" (145). For what is ultimately at stake for Coverdale is the question of distance: even when he retreats into the tree-hermitage, he spends all his time musing on his friends; even self-exile is just another chance to position himself voyeuristically nearer to his old interests.

For the paradox of Coverdale's personality is that when he makes "a prey of other's individualities," he really keeps nothing for himself; although he is vulnerable to the influence and magnetism of others, he is not open to it. In the process of rendering himself inviolate, he also renders himself hollow. When Coverdale confesses at the end of the novel that "I have made but a poor and dim figure in my own narrative, establishing no separate interest, and suffering my colorless life to take its hue from other lives" (225), it resonates with the famous opening lines of *David Copperfield*: "whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (1).[39] But it is an inverted allusion, for David's caveat occurs at the beginning of the novel; writing *The Blithedale Romance* two years later, Hawthorne places Coverdale's lament at the end.

It is here that I would like to distinguish the two versions of the shy hero—the morbid consciousness and the representative type—for Coverdale is ultimately drawing attention to his problem and shortcoming: a "separate interest." In order for the novel of self-education to have its education, the observer cannot remain an observer. Like the tomboy, the shy hero is accepted,

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[39] In *Vanishing Points*, Audrey Jaffe is especially interested in protagonists who invite readers to imagine them as *not* the main character of their story—for she imagines this impersonality is what aspiring to the position of omniscient narrator looks like (112-113).

even prized, as a representative of youth, naïveté, idealism, sharpness—but as Judith Halberstam

notes, the tomboy is expected to grow out of it.[40]

The novel of education can begin with the shy hero, but it cannot end with him. As

Franco Moretti notes in *The Way of the World*, the novel of self-culture is underpinned by

teleology, a direction, an endpoint:

> Where the classification principle prevails—where it is emphasized, as in Goethe and by
> the English novelists, that youth "must come to an end"—youth is subordinated to the
> idea of "maturity": like the story, it has meaning only *insofar* as it leads to a stable and
> "final" identity. (8)

The hero of the *Bildungsroman* must make the transition from passivity to activity by finding a

separate interest: he becomes a failure if he cannot. Personal character, a purpose, a working

philosophy: these are the things that Coverdale seeks to find in the company at Blithedale; they

are precisely the advantages that Hollingsworth offers when trying to persuade Coverdale to join

hands with him—but then they are Hollingsworth's interests, purpose, and character. Coverdale

confesses that he never develops these, that even twelve years later he is still pondering the

excitement and pleasure of his summer at Blithedale. In closing the novel with a confession of

aimlessness—for it is really only at the closing of a novel that we can be sure that the

Bildungsroman has not culminated in "maturity"[41]—Coverdale separates himself distinctly from

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[40] See Judith Halberstam's short section on tomboys in her introduction to *Female Masculinity*. Compare to Coverdale's brief remarks on Priscilla's tomboyishness:

> Girls are incomparably wilder and more effervescent than boys, more untamable and regardless of rule and
> limit, with an ever-shifting variety, breaking continually into new modes of fun, yet with a harmonious
> propriety through all. Their steps, their voices, appear free as the wind, but keep consonance with a strain
> of music inaudible to us. Young men and boys, on the other hand, play, according to recognized law, old,
> traditionary games, permitting no caprioles of fancy, but with scope enough for the outbreak of savage
> instincts. For, young or old, in play or in earnest, man is prone to be a brute. (68)

[41] Thomas Jeffers argues that the meaning of a *Bildungsroman* isn't stamped and fully articulated until the hero's death (1).

the shy heroes of the *Bildungsroman* who find a lover, a calling, or a philosophy. Instead, Coverdale confesses that he has found none of these.

That the valence of Coverdale's story is so wrapped up in where he ends up is illustrated by his encounter with Mr. Moodie, a caricature that is partially a warning.[42] Mr. Moodie is the very portrait of shyness and isolation: a man who would "rather have us glance him sidelong than take a full front view," a man who hides himself behind the patch on his left (or is it his right?) eye,[43] a man who drinks not to make merry but to bring his spirits merely "up to the ordinary level of the world's cheerfulness" (77). Upon meeting him, Coverdale imagines himself taking on Moodie's view of the world: "In the wantonness of youth, strength, and comfortable condition,—making my prey of people's individualities, as my custom was,—I tried to identify my mind with the old fellow's, and take his view of the world, as if looking through a smoke-blackened glass at the sun" (78).[44]

What separates Coverdale from Mr. Moodie is not an essential but a potential difference. At their meeting in Blithedale, Moodie's appearance serves as a possible future for our shy hero: "When my eyes are dimmer than they have yet come to be, I will go thither again, and see if I did not catch the tone of his mind aright, and if the cold and lifeless tint of his perceptions be not then repeated in my own" (79). The wreck of Moodie's life becomes a sort of "what if" for the narrator, even as Coverdale's character is (inevitably) a sort of "what if" for Hawthorne

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[42] Franco Moretti argues in *The Way of the World* that in the English *Bildungsroman*, the bland main character is both offset by marked caricatures who both offer him definition and insulate him from action. In *How to Read the Victorian Novel,* this is ultimately George Levine's reading of the hero's many psychological doubles in *David Copperfield*.

[43] Mr. Moodie's eye patch shifts from the left eye at the Blithedale lunch (77) to his right eye in the tavern (165); though probably an authorial oversight, this shift might also suggest Moodie's subtle duplicity—his feigning of half-blindness as sure as his feigning of poverty.

[44] There's an echo here in Moodie of Reverend Hooper from Hawthorne's 1836 story "The Minister's Black Veil"— the veil that obscures the visage of, but also distorts the vision of, the wearer.

himself.[45] The question that arises is: do the qualities that Coverdale shares with Moodie represent a phase in his development? will Coverdale grow out of his vicariousness, his voyeurism, and his shyness?

Modern psychologists have recently distinguished a slip in our vernacular uses of the word "shy." In particular, they distinguish between *shyness-as-state* and *shyness-as-trait*: the shyness that everyone experiences from time to time and the shyness that defines a personality.[46] Similarly, the shy hero is a figure that oscillates between the commonplace and the pathological: the crucial difference lies in the permanence or evanescence of his watching and waiting.[47] This dynamic is important for other figures that seem to oscillate between statuses of normativity and abnormality. It is the waiting, the lingering, the *loitering* that makes the bachelor, the tomboy, or the shy hero pathological. The author who insists on the difficulty of the transition—or the costliness of its price—risks creating a figure who is pathological rather than sympathetic, who is a failure rather than a success. I have called Miles Coverdale the "shy hero" of this tale, but the shy hero begins a novel. He cannot end one. In failing to find a separate interest—in failing to act—Coverdale is revealed to be something else entirely: a failed hero, an anti-hero, a post-hero.

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[45] In *Citizens of Somewhere Else*, Dan McCall argues that Coverdale is Hawthorne's projection of what he feared he might have become, had he not married Sophia (28).

[46] In "Social psychological perspectives on shyness, embarrassment, and shame," W. Ray Crozier acknowledges that the term shyness itself is conflated between temporary state and personal trait, at least in vernacular usage (19).

[47] This is Freud's definition of perversion in his *Three Essays on the History of Sexuality:* perversion as arrested development, either due to lingering on the intermediate steps of sexual activity (16) or to restraining sexual aims altogether because of disgust or shame (18).

In *Deep Gossip*, Henry Abelove speculates that this kind of thinking was licensed by the invention of *foreplay* in the 18th-century, where non-reproductive sex acts became preliminary rather than ends in and of themselves (27).

Blithedale as Post-heroic: An Awfully Sophisticated Pass

> "I have already hinted that the dainty, squeamish, and fastidious taste acquired by a surfeit of idle reading had not only rendered our hero unfit for serious and sober study, but had even disgusted him in some degree with that in which he had hitherto indulged."
> — Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*

The tone of *The Blithedale Romance* is tricky to pin down: it can be hard to tell whether or not Hawthorne is being satirical, whether or not Coverdale is being unreliable, whether or not the romance might not actually be a melodrama, rather, or a farce.[48] This is partly because Coverdale is so often ambivalent towards the happenings of and towards his own place in the story. It is ultimately a matter of faith and skepticism: Coverdale speaks the rhetoric of heroism and sentimentalism, though he no longer believes in it.[49] Coverdale's tone is above all else half-hearted: he can describe his entrance into an idealistic venture, but only after musing on its failure for twelve years afterward; he can desire the chance to be heroic, but fear looking ridiculous even more. Coverdale is caught between idealism and irony, and this warps his relationship to the genres he occasionally wishes to inhabit.

The tragedy of *Blithedale* is partly that Miles Coverdale so very much *wants to be* the hero of the story. Early on in the novel, he frames the sexual dynamics of the novel in terms of a medieval romance. Talking of Priscilla's growing infatuation with Hollingsworth, Coverdale notes that

> when a young girl comes within the sphere of such a man, she is as perilously situated as the maiden whom, in the old classical myths, the people used to expose to a dragon. If I

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[48] In his article, "The Modern Tragedy of Blithedale," Kenneth Kupsch argues that both Coverdale and Zenobia veer into melodrama after being romantically rejected (16); in his article "Miles Coverdale and Hawthorne's Irony," Martin FitzPatrick argues that Coverdale makes melodrama where he might have made tragedy, and thus Hawthorne keeps the narrator-protagonist at arm's length simply because he is not subtle enough (33-35).

[49] See Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* for an early tracing of this loss of faith, particularly in the figure of the pure and virginal "fair maiden" (292).

had any duty whatever, in reference to Hollingsworth, it was to endeavor to save Priscilla from that kind of personal worship which her sex is generally prone to lavish upon saints and heroes. […] In honest truth, I would really have gone far to save Priscilla, at least, from the catastrophe in which such a drama would be apt to terminate. (66-67)

What is peculiar in Coverdale's rhetoric is its mixture of nostalgic hero-rhetoric and modern hero-doubt. For Coverdale at once identifies Hollingsworth as the vicious dragon that might devour Priscilla—the monster that must be defeated—and then he immediately disparages the "personal worship" that is lavished upon saints and heroes. Coverdale at once underwrites the rhetoric of heroism and undercuts it: to be the hero in Coverdale's world is also to be, potentially, the monster.

So instead Coverdale subtly daydreams about rescuing Priscilla from the knot of intrigue that slowly envelops her, while every attempt at heroism is choked by his fear of ill-fitting the part. Hollingsworth recognizes this ambivalence in Coverdale: he says, "You only half believe what you say" (121). But the problem isn't always that Coverdale is not earnest, but that he's too well-read. In perhaps the most telling moment of almost-chivalry in the novel, Coverdale considers protecting Zenobia from the prying intelligence of Westervelt but then capitulates to the professor's charms, noting that "it would be quite a supererogatory piece of Quixotism in me to undertake the guardianship of Zenobia, who, for my pains, would only make me the butt of endless ridicule, should the fact ever come to her knowledge" (87). The word "Quixotism" tips us off to the underlying dilemma: both Nathaniel Hawthorne and Miles Coverdale have read *Don Quixote*, and so they recognize the marks of a knight-errant, but they have also seen the knight made the butt of a joke.[50]

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[50] In *Apprenticeships*, Thomas Jeffers argues that the standard *Bildungsheld* learns from his literary predecessors: i.e. David Copperfield getting ideas from *Roderick Random*, or Wilhelm Meister identifying closely with Hamlet (64). In contrast to this, Coverdale only cites literary predecessors and precedents—e.g. Cervantes, fairy tales, Arcadia—in ways that only seem to disillusion him.

When Coverdale begins his narrative with the reflection that "the greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool" (10), he is speaking as one who is—above all else!—an introvert who fears being laughed at. For Coverdale, the ultimate impediment to becoming the hero is not the challenge of the ordeal but the anticipation of ridicule from the very people who should be his allies. In the end, Coverdale is too self-conscious, not too self-centered. Even though the first several chapters of the novel continually recapitulate Coverdale's insistence that, if he is not sincere now, he certainly was earnest at some point, Coverdale is established by the judgments of others as an ironist. He is accused of laughing away what little enthusiasm he has left at the sight of an early and unexpected snowstorm, and his suggestion of "Utopia" as the name for the new socialist community is "unanimously scouted down, and the proposer very harshly maltreated, as if he had intended a latent satire" (34-35).

What begins originally as Coverdale's sense of humor very quickly becomes self-defensive irony, for it is only too late that he realizes how his position in the community fashions both the way he is expected to act and the way he is received. Coverdale speaks in laughter, and thus is laughed with, sometimes laughed at. Hollingsworth speaks only in firm and hard lines, and thus he is received in the same; Coverdale wryly notes how Zenobia "never laughed at Hollingsworth, as she often did at me" (63). Coverdale does not take himself seriously enough, though he is often forced into it by the misunderstandings of others: when Hollingsworth labels Coverdale's dreams as "nonsense," Coverdale replies self-defensively that "I wish you would see fit to comprehend […] that the profoundest wisdom must be mingled with nine-tenths nonsense;

Hawthorne's juvenile work *Fanshawe* includes a similar joke about Quixotisms: Melmouth and Edward playfully describe themselves as knights-errant, although the older gentleman Melmouth seems more ironic than impetuous Edward (168)

else it is not worth the breath that utters it" (120). But the claim is in some sense true: for it is Hollingsworth's singleness of vision that creates what Coverdale recognizes as both the hero and the dragon, neither of which are positions that the Minor Poet himself can inhabit.

Many critics have suggested that Coverdale is in fact the anti-hero of this novel, but it might be better to call him the *post*-hero: one of the first in a line that spans through the overly-cerebral centers of consciousness in James's fiction to Eliot's Prufrock and beyond.[51] At its logical extreme, Coverdale's tone becomes one of world-weariness and ennui: Coverdale confesses that he "by no means wish[es] to die. Yet, were there any cause in this whole chaos of human struggle, worth a sane man's dying for […] methinks I might be bold to offer up my life" (226-227). But here Coverdale confesses in these lines not only his *desire* to be heroic, but his *doubts* as to whether such a thing can be truly possible any more: possible for a hero/dragon, perhaps, but not for a Minor Poet. Coverdale believes that there remain no causes in which a "sane man" might be heroic; to be heroic—like Don Quixote, like the self-centred Philanthropist—you must be a little mad.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's attitude towards the traditional clichés of romance, of heroism, of sentiment is revealed here as world-weary, genre-weary, and a bit too self-aware. Zenobia's suicide—itself a pastiche of Victorian narratives already common at the time[52] and a faithful

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[51] I borrow the term from Douglas Anderson's article "*The Blithedale Romance* and Post-Heroic Life," though he uses it in a different context: that Hawthorne is part of a generation of men who saw themselves as the sons of the Revolutionaries, thereby experiencing an inevitable anxiety of comparison (34-35).

[52] The convention of the fallen woman who drowns herself was already a cliché by the time Hawthorne used it in *The Blithedale Romance*: whether the narrative took shape in an image like that of George Frederic Watts' *Found Drowned* (1849-50) or in words like Thomas Hood's "Bridge of Sighs" (1844), there was often an implicit move towards romanticizing the fallen woman's death, beautifying it, making it into an emotional appeal to one's sympathies. See Lynda Nead's *Myths of Sexuality* for a summary of the rise of the Victorian "fallen woman" narrative.

rendering of Hawthorne's own experience of discovering a drowned woman[53]—becomes a

critique not only of the sentimental convention, but of readers who romanticize drowning.

Coverdale laments, "Has not the world come to an awfully sophisticated pass, when, after a

certain degree of acquaintance with it, we cannot even put ourselves to death in whole-hearted

simplicity?" (218). Whatever issue we might take with Coverdale's glib attitude and indecorous

metaphors,[54] his response resonates with his own idleness, banal poetry, and self-aware irony.

Coverdale's world is a fallen one: a world that has fallen into an oversaturation of narrative

convention. After reading so many novels in his bachelor's quarters, everything shows

ludicrously.

Later, in a conversation between two admirers of the young suicide—Coverdale the

aspiring lover, Westervelt the once-loved, both standing before Zenobia's grave, discussing the

purport of her death[55]—we are offered a second critique in Westervelt's mouth: "It was an idle

thing—a foolish thing—for Zenobia to do […] She was the last woman in the world to whom

death could have been necessary. It was too absurd! I have no patience with her" (220). In its

denial of sympathy for Zenobia's action, Westervelt's counterargument becomes almost a

lampshade hanging, an authorial concession to genre-savvy audiences. For the professor's

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[53] The true original of Zenobia's drowning is a nineteen-year-old Miss Hunt, whose drowned body is described in a July 1845 entry of Hawthorne's journals. Hawthorne notes that she was a "girl of education and refinement, but depressed and miserable for want of sympathy" (254). Hawthorne draws on his own journals copiously when adapting the description of Zenobia's drowned body: he retains the rigor mortis and death-pallor; he omits the bleeding from the nose and the purpling skin.

[54] In *Domestic Individualism*, Gillian Brown takes issue with Coverdale's attitude to Zenobia's body, arguing that he reappropriates it into a safe, unilateral mode of voyeurism. In her article "Spectating the Spectator," Minaz Jooma also critiques Coverdale for fearing Zenobia's gaze and argues that he finds in her death a comfortable interruption of reciprocity.

[55] It's the closest thing to homosociality in the second half of *Blithedale*, a near-perfect reflection of Sedgwick's model in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, which predicts a "scene wherein male rivals unite, refreshed in mutual support and definition, over the ruined carcass of a woman" (76). Another critic who reads the grave as a contested ground to be overwritten by male sexualities is Benjamin Grossberg in his "Coverdale's Queer Utopia" (20).

outlook is directed at the proportions between character and action—a question of genre—rather than at an actual question of feeling. In this respect, Westervelt succeeds as Greek Chorus where Coverdale fails, for the professor is able to "detect the final fitness of incident to character"—or rather the final unfitness. It is here that we get a sense of Hawthorne's dual status as an author who chooses to use melodramatic conventions and yet as a critic cannot believe in them.[56]

This pessimism undercuts not only Hollingsworth's heroism and Zenobia's self-presentation, but also Coverdale's narration. For as narrator, Coverdale must witness large portions of the story himself in order for the narrative to cohere and make sense—even though Coverdale admits that he is peripheral, not essential, to the plot. This narratological concern might lead to an unusual amount of coincidence in novels like *David Copperfield*,[57] but not so for our Coverdale. As Frederick Crews notes in *The Sins of the Fathers*, "no narrator ever had worse luck than Coverdale in learning the most essential facts about the figures whose story we are supposed to enjoy" (194-195). Both Hawthorne as author and Coverdale as character insist on the complexity, difficulty, and only occasional transparency of secrets.

Thus, though Coverdale eavesdrops when he hears Zenobia and Westervelt speaking in confidence beneath his tree-turret, the pair soon enough walks out of hearing range, leaving the voyeur-protagonist with only snippets of dialogue that do not cohere into any real conversation. When Coverdale wryly observes that "real life never arranges itself exactly like a romance" (97), it is a surprising moment of tough-luck realism. Coverdale brushes against possible moments of

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[56] Gorman Beauchamp also notes how Coverdale's consciousness is anticipated in the structure of Hawthorne's short story "Earth's Holocaust," where there is a split between an enthusiastic spectator and a wry ironist (47).

[57] In *David Copperfield*, it is given that though we might meet Mr. Micawber first as David's landlord, we might later run into him in Dover or as sharing a house with Tommy Traddles—who himself is one of David's old classmates, met by coincidence at a party held by Mr. Spenlow, his current employer, ad nauseam.

Franco Moretti critiques this tendency towards "serendipity" as English novelists relieving their main characters' curiosity without also tainting them with selfishness or voyeurism (194).

revelation—Westervelt walking out of earshot, Zenobia letting the curtain down, or the trial for

her life missed by only a half-hour—which are then immediately curtailed, as if Hawthorne

merely wishes to drive home the fact that *real life doesn't work this way*.[58] We catch a glimpse

of what William Dean Howells might have found in *Blithedale* to be an incipient model of

American realism.[59] But it is also a metafictional moment—inevitable whenever a character in a

novel observes that his fictional story does not reproduce itself as fictional stories do—for

Hawthorne could choose to make the former lovers stop under the tree. Instead, he chooses not

to, in order to stress that gap between Coverdale's desire to know and the tenuousness of chance

on which shy characters depend for this knowledge. The moment hangs a lampshade on the

serendipity of the nineteenth-century novel even as it is a hint at the voyeuristic Coverdale's

subtle duplicity: he continues the story simply by "patch[ing] together" the dialogue with his

fancy (97).

It is in these moments of insufficient knowledge (and when is his knowledge not

insufficient?) that Coverdale's narratorial privilege is exposed, if only for a moment. Coverdale

is indeed, as Zenobia insists, "turning the whole affair into a ballad" (205-6). However, to

suggest that *Blithedale* reflects this presumptuousness uncritically is to ignore Coverdale's own

personal scruples:

> It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation to devote ourselves too
> exclusively to the study of individual men and women. […] If we take the freedom to put

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[58] In his article "Fictions of the Panopticon," E. Shaston Bumas argues that Coverdale has a will to omniscience, but is frustrated by the tropes of romance, rather than of realism (133). Maybe missing the irony, Louise D. Cary argues in "The Problem of Moral Accountability in Fictional Biography" that Hawthorne reveals his glib attitude to biography by letting Coverdale invent what he cannot overhear (34).

[59] In his autobiographical *Literary Friends and Acquaintances,* Howells writes, "When I put my finger on the *Blithedale Romance* and said that I preferred that to the others, [Hawthorne's] face lighted up, and he said that he believed the Germans liked that best too" (55).

For Hawthorne's influence on Howells, see Richard Brodhead's *The School of Hawthorne*, particularly chapter five.

a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and of course patch him very clumsily together again. (64)

Coverdale's scruples play themselves out carefully in this passage: everything is a matter of scope. It is not an error in devoting oneself to the study of people, but rather in devoting oneself too exclusively. By the end of the passage, Coverdale has turned character sketches into acts of remarkable violence: tearing bodies to pieces, patching them up, creating monsters out of deformity. Character description becomes a Frankensteinian endeavor.[60] But the word "patch[ing]" recurs in both Coverdale's descriptions of his mode of storytelling and his mode of characterizing—as characters walk out of earshot, their dialogue must be patched together; as Coverdale rarely knows his friends as well as he would like, he must in part invent them. Coverdale's position as storyteller-liar is only conspicuous because Hawthorne refuses to let his storyteller know more than he does. While the end result is grotesque, it is a grotesqueness born not of malice but of social ignorance and marginality. Coverdale fears that his monsters are patched together simply because he secretly wishes to destroy the figures in total, but sometimes his monsters are patched together because all he knows is patches.

With an author this stubbornly cynical, it may come as no surprise that the hero is equally ironic, skeptical, and post-heroic. This ambivalence tends to make reading a novelist like Hawthorne at once rewarding and yet so frustrating: in *The Blithedale Romance*, we can deconstruct the clichés of romantic heroism, of sentimental self-immolation, of gothic revelation. The "awfully sophisticated pass" is one in which the stories of the past enslave and choke the stories of the present: although *The Blithedale Romance* is Hawthorne's most modern novel, it is

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[60] In *Secrets and Sympathy*, Gordon Hutner suggests that Coverdale resembles Frankenstein (109), but only in order to emphasize his self-importance and lack of sympathy—hardly a generous reading of a self-conscious metaphor that the character supplies himself.

not without its hauntings. And though Coverdale claims that they lie on different ends of the spectrum of intellectual culture, Zenobia's mind is not the only one that is "full of weeds."

The Meaning of Coverdale's Confession

> "Perhaps this is but a punishment, which I am suffering, because I did not soon enough disclose myself to you, because I hesitated to display myself entirely as I was—"
> — Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*

It may come as no surprise that nearly every mention of heroism—and nearly every revelation—in *The Blithedale Romance* is connected to questions of courtship or sexuality. At the center of the *Bildungsroman* is the marriage plot—and particularly how the hero manages (or mismanages) to live up to it. If the *Bildungsroman* was first and foremost a response to the shift from a feudal system to a free market—where social mobility put pressure on individuals to find their personal callings[61]—it put a parallel pressure on falling in love. The increasing power of the middle class manifested itself in novelistic representations of middle-class characters overcoming the boundaries of class by redeeming (or seducing) the aristocrat, of concerns over upper-class money being overwritten by concerns of middle-class virtue.[62] As noted in comprehensive histories of the family, marriage escaped the sovereignty of an extended family

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[61] In *Apprenticeships,* Thomas Jeffers suggests that "growing up became a problem when people's roles ceased to be 'feudally' prescribed, and could to some extent be written by themselves" (51).

[62] In *The Origins of the English Novel*, Michael McKeon sees this dialectic as a joining of aristocratic and progressive ideals into a conservative logic, representing a compromise that is also a reflection of English ideology. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong argues that the English novel is an anticipation of the rise of middle-class virtue.

network and found sanctuary in nuclear family in the eighteenth century.[63] These shifts—social mobility, atomized individuals—altered the script of the marriage plot.

Thus, the typical impediments between lovers became less the products of external pressures: a class interest, the wishes or prohibitions of parents, or familial factions.[64] Instead, they became increasingly internal: a bad first impression, an inability to compromise on values— or shyness.[65] This became increasingly so in the society and literature of Britain approaching the nineteenth century; in the United States, with its atomized families and idealization of self-sufficiency, this may be said to have begun almost as the norm. While the early novel might resolve itself with an escape from a (step)parent's tyranny or the unexpected inheritance of an estate, the marriage plot during the nineteenth century increasingly pushes characters towards psychic and social moderation. In the nineteenth-century novel, the man of aristocratic stature with too much force (Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mr. Rochester) must learn humility, while the girl with too much passion (Marianne Dashwood, Christina Light) must learn restraint. In contrast, the man with too little energy (Wilhelm, David Copperfield, Walter Hartright) must learn courage, self-expression, and a little nerve.

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[63] See Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage: In England 1500-1800*, Edward Shorter's *The Making of the Modern Family*, or Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818.*

[64] Both Ruth Perry in *Novel Relations* and Katherine Sobba Green in *The Courtship Novel* note that the marriage plot shifted from concerns of money to concerns of atomized individuals falling in love turning into the nineteenth-century.

[65] In Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Wilhelm describes it this way: the dramatic hero is active, courageous—and external events hold up the plot; novelistic heroes are passive, "retarding"—for their personality holds up the plot (185-186).

In *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush*, Mary Ann O'Farrell argues that the well-mannered subject impedes the marriage plot while the unmannered and impulsive precipitate it (24).

The demands of these new romantic conditions would reveal themselves in the anxieties

of artists: a particularly salient case might be Matthew Arnold's "A Farewell," part of his

Switzerland series, where he laments that young women find him lacking in strength and will:

> They seek to find in those they love
> Stern strength, and promise of control.
>
> They ask not kindness, gentle ways—
> These they themselves have tried and known;
> They ask a soul which never sways
> With the blind gusts that shake their own […]
>
> I too have long'd for trenchant force,
> And will like a dividing spear;
> Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,
> Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear. (ll. 23-28, 33-36)

There is always in Arnold's poetry a sense that the standard on which he is measured is not one

he was born for: he experiences a feeling of being left out or left behind, a feeling bitter as it is

anxious. It is the position of a middle-class young man for whom the tyranny of wealth, rank, or

social connection has been overthrown, but for whom this standard has been replaced by a

mandate no less stringent, posing as the standard of (masculine) virtue. The shifting sexual

politics of the mid-nineteenth century leaves authors like Arnold—and characters like

Coverdale—resenting the narrowness of what they view as a monolithic gender ideal as surely as

Maggie Tulliver resents the misevaluation of so many dark-haired heroines in George Eliot's *The

Mill on the Floss*.

For Coverdale is a man of too little energy. As had been said before, the default position

of the hero of the *Bildungsroman* is that of passivity, of observation: even Karl Morgenstern, the

critic who originally coined the term *Bildungsroman*, criticized the German prototypes he found

in Goethe and Wieland as too passive and not masculine enough.[66] The events of the narrative

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[66] See Fritz Martini's discussion of Morgenstern in his essay "*Bildungsroman* — Term and Theory" (11).

are meant to mold Coverdale into the proper character: through arguments, through seductions, through trials, and more. But how is this character recognized, stamped, and legitimated? What Zenobia's Legend suggests is that the hero must finally discover himself by naming his desire through a self-defining *utterance*. These moments of self-expression—be they the choosing of a profession or professing a love—stand as proof that the education has actually occurred: Wilhelm's abandoning theatre and confessing his love for Natalie, David Copperfield's calling to journalism and his confession of love to Agnes, or Lucy Snowe's founding her own school and her exclamation "My heart will break!" as Emmanuel Paul says goodbye.[67]

This utterance as exclamation in *Villette* is perhaps most typical, for the self-expression becomes a moment of rupture that both interrupts and vindicates the earlier period of passive perception. It is here that character is established, that the hero of the *Bildungsroman* makes his or her transition into developed selfhood. In these moments of outburst and self-expression, the preceding narrative of passive absorption is transformed into the act of stockpiling impressions, of filling a vessel that now stands ready to run over with newly created desire or personal character.[68] The final valence of the shy hero—be it positive or negative, representative or pathological—depends on a climactic moment of self-determination.

This is ultimately the lesson offered in "Zenobia's Legend." In this improvised tale, a young man named Theodore sneaks into the Veiled Lady's dressing room to discover her secret identity. Like Coverdale, Theodore is a young man who insists on prying into others' secrets.

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[67] In *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience*, Anne-Lise Francois begins with the observation that our modern society—and especially the modern critic—is obsessed with expression (xvi).

[68] It should be noted that most *Bildungsromane* have multiple moments of self-expression: in *David Copperfield*, for example, the hero takes considerable effort to run away from the Murdstones to seek out his Aunt Betsey, in addition to the final plot turn towards Agnes. In *Villette*, Lucy's confession of love to M. Paul as well as her attempt to find work in France and her eventual attempt to leave the same job in order to start her own school can be seen as moments of considerable self-expression.

Both are given a choice between engagement and idle curiosity, heroic resolution and voyeuristic prying.[69] Once she discovers him hiding behind the screen, the Veiled Lady offers Theodore a choice: to kiss the woman with the veil between them and pledge himself to her, or to lift the veil and lose her forever. But what is beneath the veil?

> Some upheld that the veil covered the most beautiful countenance in the world; others […] that the face was the most hideous and horrible, and that this was her sole motive for hiding it. […] Again, it was affirmed that there was no single and unchangeable set of features beneath the veil; but that whosoever should be bold enough to lift it would behold the features of that person, in all the world, who was destined to be his fate. (102)

In the end, Theodore insists on raising the veil, reserving the right to kiss later—and thus reveals the Veiled Lady, that "glimpse of a pale, lovely face beneath; just one momentary glimpse" who then disappears forever. The allegory is multifaceted: it is a critique of what Hawthorne calls the "wrong[s] done to womanhood" by the "contemptuous interpretation[s]" of young men (105-6); it is a reflection on how our "fates" may depend on an act of faith that becomes self-fulfilling.[70] Most importantly, it is a warning to Miles Coverdale for how his skeptical reticence may end in a forfeiture of what he truly desires.

It is for this very reason that "Miles Coverdale's Confession," the final chapter of *The Blithedale Romance*, stands as a keystone to the overall meaning of the narrative: the confession

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[69] In *Secrets and Sympathy*, Gordon Hutner postulates that Coverdale's problem is that he believes that everyone has a secret (113). In *Domestic Individualism,* Gillian Brown reads Zenobia's Legend as a warning to Coverdale about his lack of engagement (114); alternatively, Clark Davis argues that it is in fact a warning to Hollingsworth (112).

[70] Consider a poem written by Hawthorne and appended as "the song of Faith Egerton" in the original publication of his tale "The Three-Fold Destiny":

> "O, man can seek the downward glance,
>   And each kind word,—affection's spell,—
>   Eye, voice, its value can enhance;
>   For eye may speak, and tongue can tell.
> "But woman's love, it waits the while
>   To echo to another's tone;
>   To linger on another's smile,
>   Ere dare to answer with its own." (qtd. in Lathrop 180)

bears resemblance to the climax of so many tales of self-cultivation, and yet it still remains so insufficient.[71] The confession is perhaps the most controversial portion of the entire novel: Coverdale loved Priscilla! What does it mean for the rest of the story? Many critics resist that the confession is even true, insisting that Zenobia is the more likely sexual object.[72] Therefore, recent critics that take the confession at face-value instead pride themselves on considering a difficult attraction with which we as modern readers rarely have full sympathy.[73] Other critics see the difficulty of Coverdale's confession as a symptom of Hawthorne's own hang-ups: sexual, spiritual, literary, or otherwise.[74] And finally, some critics read the confession as a performative moment at odds with the rest of the novel, a position perhaps supported by the afterthoughtness of its addition and its stylistic departure from the rest of the novel.[75]

I believe that the full meaning of "Miles Coverdale's Confession" is inseparable from the implicit demands of the *Bildungsroman*. The final chapter is mostly devoted to the wreck of

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[71] The final chapter of The Blithedale Romance was not a part of the first draft of the novel. The belatedness of Hawthorne's fitting "Miles Coverdale's Confession" into the story at all may make the final chapter of the novel seem at once the inevitable addition for an author who has had a chance to consider the organic whole of the story as well as something of an afterthought.

[72] In "The Dark Lady of Salem," Philip Rahv suggests that "the emotional economy of this story is throughout one of displacement. It is evident on every page that the only genuine relationship is that of Coverdale to Zenobia; the rest is mystification" (377). In *Hawthorne's Mad Scientists*, Taylor Stoehr suggests the confession will "strike the reader as a pathetic joke when it finally surfaces at the end of the novel" (194).

[73] Though in many of these cases, it is often what Priscilla stands for, rather than her actual attractiveness that is argued as the governing principle in the novel. For example, Richard Hall argues that while Zenobia's worth is perfectly analyzable, Priscilla's is not, creating her emotional appeal (42). Gillian Brown argues that Priscilla is attractive to Coverdale because she is indeterminate, because she "never solidifies into certainty" (122).

[74] Some critics substitute Hawthorne's wife Sophia for Priscilla, arguing that the confession makes perfect sense within the frame of the author's biography, if not the novel. In his book, T. Walter Herbert argues: "Whatever subsequent readers have felt about *Blithedale*, Sophia can hardly have been startled, or felt tricked, when Coverdale reveals at the end of the work that he has been in love throughout with Priscilla" (29). In *Citizens of Somewhere Else*, Dan McCall argues that in confessing his love for Priscilla, Coverdale is legitimizing Hawthorne's own writing style which, like the young seamstress, is thin, wan, and delicate (29).

[75] Martin FitzPatrick argues that Coverdale's confession is a "placeholder" for a real revelation (43). Gordon Hutner argues that "the final confession completes the narrative by making a closure out of a problematic act of disclosure" (117).

Coverdale's personal development: he confesses that he has made "a poor and dim figure in my own narrative," that he has established "no separate interest" (225), that he is a man who preys on other people's lives but has developed nothing of his own. He reflects: "As Hollingsworth once told me, I lack a purpose. How strange! He was ruined, morally, by an overplus of the very same ingredient, the want of which, I occasionally suspect, has rendered my own life all an emptiness" (226). The logic of the marriage plot dictates that Hollingsworth, the man of too much energy, will learn humility and restraint, while Coverdale, the man of too little energy, will gain a sense of self. But Hollingsworth is crushed, not bent, while Coverdale has remained aimless as surely as he remained a bachelor.[76]

After saying all this, he makes one final confession. As it is perhaps the most controversial portion of the novel—and I will argue at the center of understanding Miles Coverdale—it is worth quoting at length:

> Life, however, it must be owned, has come to rather an idle pass with me. Would my friends like to know what brought it thither? There is one secret,—I have concealed it all along, and never meant to let the least whisper of it escape,—one foolish little secret, which possibly may have had something to do with these inactive years of meridian manhood, with my bachelorship, with the unsatisfied retrospect that I fling back on life, and my listless glance towards the future. Shall I reveal it? […]
> The confession, brief as it shall be, will throw a gleam of light over my behavior throughout the foregoing incidents, and is, indeed, essential to the full understanding of my story. The reader, therefore, since I have disclosed so much, is entitled to this one word more. As I write it, he will charitably suppose me to blush, and turn away my face:
> I—I myself—was in love—with—Priscilla! (227-228)

In the final lines of the novel, Coverdale confesses his secret love, a confession meant to "throw a gleam of light on" the entire narrative. Yet the confession for many critics seems to be not the missing piece of the puzzle, but the portion of a new puzzle altogether: the confession doesn't explain anything, but instead demands a rereading of the novel in order to even process its

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[76] When Hollingsworth demands evidence of his selfishness, Zenobia replies, "It is all self! […] Self, self, self!" which is echoed ironically in Coverdale's confession: "What, after all, have I to tell? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" (201, 225)

claims.[77] What possible secret could account for "years of meridian manhood," for a life of

eternal bachelorhood, and for a dissatisfaction reaching both far into the past and far into the

future? Coverdale's confession is a performative moment, uttered in a melodramatic stutter,

complete with blush and a turn of the face. Retroactive, revelatory, revolutionary—and yes, a

little melodramatic, a little camp—what else does his confession resemble if not a dramatic act of

uncloseting?[78]

      Of course, Coverdale is not coming out as a homosexual. In fact, of the two women in the

narrative, he is confessing a preference for the more conventional woman: the "type of

womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (113). Can there be such a thing as a

closeted heterosexual? In *Epistemology of the Closet,* Eve Sedgwick defines "closetedness" as a

performance "initiated as such by the speech act of a silence" (3). We differentiate our shy

heroes from other heroes by their reticence—by their silence—by their illegible desires. To what

extent might *shyness itself be defined as closeting?* For I believe that what frustrates modern

readers about Miles Coverdale is the suspicion that he never says what he truly thinks—his true

opinions swaddled in irony—and that he never stakes his true desires on any one person or any

one purpose. In this chapter, I have argued that the classic plot of the *Bildungsroman*—defined

as it is by a teleology of development—pathologizes the hero who fails to develop in certain

prescribed ways; throughout these tales, shy heroes are expected to grow out of shyness,

bachelors are expected to get married—and we find this catharsis when these heroes *out*

themselves.

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[77] Kenneth Kupsch suggests that Coverdale's confession is so controversial because it substantially changes the meaning of *Blithedale* (1); like Nabokov's *Lolita* with its belated revelation of the rival Quilty, the ending of *Blithedale* demands a re-reading, where old details might take on new meanings (3).

[78] In his recent piece "Hating Miles Coverdale," Michael Borgstrom notes this resonance in passing: "Coverdale's confession is not unlike a coming-out story." However, he does not consider any further implications beyond a note that in this confession, "disclosure supplants dialogue" (380).

It is this implicit expectation that Hawthorne attempts to meet in his final chapter. But

even as the confession attempts to mimic the typical climax of a *Bildungsroman,* it falls so short

of its expected function. For the confession comes much too late: as Coverdale himself admits,

"It is an absurd thing for a man in his afternoon,—a man of the world, moreover, with these three

white hairs in his brown mustache and that deepening track of a crow's-foot on each temple,—

[…] to talk about" (227). But more than age, it is simply late too in the novel: for though many

novels reach their climax dangerously late—in *Wilhelm Meister,* the hero also speaks his desire

in the final chapter—there is still time for requital, for recognition, for denouement. But if there

were a time for Coverdale to speak up, it was stepping forward—as Hollingsworth did—at the

town hall meeting to rescue Priscilla. Or it was in confessing his love to Zenobia when she

thought it a "pity" that she had not thought of winning his heart rather than that of the stern

philanthropist.[79]

Instead, the confession occurs in the final line of the novel: a moment of *anagnorisis*

robbed of its *peripeteia*, a revelation with no turning point.[80] True or false, revelatory or

performative, the moment of self-expression that Miles Coverdale undergoes is too late by any

stretch of the imagination: for though it might offer release, it can offer no change. It continues

to baffle critics even today because it at once so radically changes our interpretation of the

narrator, without touching the *narrative* at all. Beyond this, it is a confession in retrospect:

Coverdale himself *was* in love. Is he now? What is the point of confessing a now-dead passion,

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[79] Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* might be the best analogue for *Blithedale* in creating a closeted heterosexual, unable to own up to his real desires: throughout the tale, the protagonist Stevens continually fails to express his love for Miss Kenton. He is even given a final chance at the end of the novel, after years have passed—but he denies himself.

[80] One critic offers an interesting analysis of this kind of moment: Anne-Lise Francois defines an "open secret" as a way of imparting knowledge such that it cannot be claimed and acted on, thus freeing us from the ethical imperative to turn knowledge into action (3).

save in keeping with his raking over of old coals? This is less Miles Coverdale's confession—it is more Miles Coverdale's apology. And the possibility that the confession might not even be true!—the very possibility acknowledges how much Coverdale has become absorbed in observations without digesting them, how Coverdale has built up his consciousness out of other people's desires and not fully developed a separate interest of his own, how little Coverdale sees about even himself.

A Revisiting that is also a Rebuke: Protesting Blithedale

> "About the present, it was better to be stoical: about the future—such a future as mine—
> to be dead."
>   — Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*

It is worth pondering why Hawthorne revisits Brook Farm in his third major work and in this manner. We might presume that he was initially interested in illuminating the "most romantic episode" of his life, a modern portrait of society that would serve him as diggings into the past had served for novels before. Yet questions remain: why revisit it in 1852, ten years after the event? and why revisit it through the guise of Miles Coverdale? If it is safe to say that the character of Coverdale is at once a reflection and a distortion of some of Hawthorne's personal qualities, there remains the question of plot: why follow Coverdale in a plot of frustration, regret, uneven sexual competition, and subsequent paralysis?

To echo the question of an anonymous reviewer of *The Christian Examiner*, why revisit Brook Farm—a scene which Hawthorne himself visited while engaged to Sophia—as a solitary bachelor?[81] *The Blithedale Romance* is the first of Hawthorne's major works to introduce two

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[81] From an unsigned review in the *Christian Examiner* 55 (September 1852): "We leave to the help-meet of the author to settle with him the issue that may arise from this description of himself as a bachelor" (294).

heroines at once. *The Scarlet Letter* had only a "dark lady" (Hester Prynne), while *Fanshawe* and

The House of Seven Gables only a "fair maiden" (Ellen Langton, Phoebe). *The Blithedale*

Romance is notable for offering a contrast—the dark lady Zenobia and the pale maiden

Priscilla—and thus a choice, a pattern which would later be reproduced in *The Marble Faun* and

the unfinished *Septimius Felton*. What is introduced along with this contrast is competition, for

the comparisons given license by this binary—and given voice through Westervelt and

Zenobia—deprecate Priscilla's spirituality as sickliness. It is hard not to read these jabs as

Hawthorne's own, as qualifications of a choice that he made himself: for unlike Theodore,

Hawthorne did kiss the Veiled Lady, and that lady became Sophia Hawthorne; like

Hollingsworth, he finds himself a little diminished in the choice.[82] Beginning with Philip Rahv,

many critics have approached the figure of the dark lady in Hawthorne's fiction as a mode of

sexual fantasy—however complicated, ambivalent, or submerged the fantasy might be—and so

they read *The Blithedale Romance* as an older Hawthorne's reflection on the (hypothetical)

choice that he made.[83] The dark lady Zenobia—perhaps a vague imitation of Mary Silsbee,

perhaps a more beautiful version of Margaret Fuller or Elizabeth Peabody—was the veritable

road not taken.

Yet if *Blithedale* is a revisiting of this choice, it is a strange one, for there is no real

choice for Coverdale: he is relegated to a marginalized position rather early, overshadowed and

outcompeted by the sexual magnetism of Hollingsworth.[84] In revisiting Brook Farm as the

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[82] Leslie Fiedler would argue that American writers' faith in the fair maiden began to flag right around Hawthorne's generation—later manifestations of the character tend to be weakened, ironic, or revealed as fraudulent (292).

[83] In *The Hero of the Waverley Novels*, Alexander Walsh goes one further: the fantasy in dark/light pairings is wish-fulfillment—the fantasy of walking down a street with a woman in each arm—a potential *ménage-a-trois* (80-81)

[84] Roberta Weldon argues in her "Tyrant King and Accursed Daughter" that Mr. Moodie subtly pits Hollingsworth and Coverdale against one another (33). In *Mesmerism and Hawthorne: Mediums of American Romance*, Samuel

bachelor Miles Coverdale, Hawthorne cannot help but place a stronger male as an obstacle to his

chance at even making the choice again.[85] Early on in the novel, Coverdale confesses that "it is

an insufferable bore to see one man engrossing every thought of all the women, and leaving his

friend to shiver in outer seclusion" (117). Hawthorne is not revisiting Brook Farm to entertain a

new choice or to justify an old one, but instead to reflect merely how the choice itself can be

undermined by something as arbitrary as a too narrow standard of masculinity.

Even as he entertains the possible sexual permissibility of the socialist community,

Hawthorne protests against the sexual competition that underwrites it[86]—and in particular, the

sexual monopoly that occurs when one form of masculinity so substantially outcompetes others.

This is perhaps parodied in Coverdale's imagined future for Blithedale, the tales of "Father

Hollingsworth and Uncle Coverdale" (119), as if the protagonist can serve only in an avuncular

position to Hollingsworth's children since he himself has no procreative potential. It is this

monopoly that turns what seems a choice into a catch-22, for Coverdale is often offered two

choices with only one inevitable result. At Eliot's Pulpit, Coverdale is rebuked for making light

of Zenobia's feminism, and then equally rebuked for espousing feminist ideals: for the right

answer is not to say this or that, but to simply *be Hollingsworth*, who is Zenobia's favorite, be

his replies misogynistic or not.[87]

Chase Coale argues that when Coverdale hesitates in granting Moodie a favor, he "unknowingly establishes his
insignificance—and thus distance—from the events that he will later relate in the romance" (109).

[85] In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, René Girard might call Coverdale a "masochist," one who chooses his rivals for
the strength of their opposition, who seeks out disappointment as a hard truth (176-77).

[86] See David Greven's *Men Beyond Desire* for its suggestion that Hawthorne's *Blithedale* critiques the "free love"
movement for its insistence on compulsory sexual performance and competition (138). The eponymous hero of
Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* serves as an even better example of this critique.

[87] It is at once Hawthorne's protest against sexual monopolies and his chance to overthrow a straw man equivalent
of feminism by allying Zenobia with a male who espouses misogynistic views. A similar straw man effect can be
found in James's *The Bostonians* when Verena Tarrant falls for Basil Ransom.

Underlying much of Coverdale's voyeurism is a latent disgust with all forms of competition: he partly joins the Blithedale project in part to escape the city, and he is dismayed when he realizes that the community's agrarian produce will have to force its way into the marketplace eventually. He idealizes and delights in his falling sick upon first arriving at Blithedale, a moment which places him comfortably as the center of the other characters' attentions: Hollingsworth tends to him, Priscilla knits him a sleeping cap, and Zenobia makes him porridge, pine-smell and all.[88] Later, after being pushed to the sidelines romantically, Coverdale wishes that at least Hollingsworth could make his choice and be done with it, so that he could have the "alternative of solacing himself with what the more fortunate individual has rejected" (117). For in many senses, this is precisely what Coverdale is waiting for all along—at different points of the novel, he is in love with both Zenobia and Priscilla, but he is loath to compete—be it from a fear of rejection, feelings of ineptitude, or general laziness.[89]

The plot of *The Blithedale Romance* subtly underwrites this disgust, for it is competition itself that leads to many of the tragedies in the Blithedale community in the first place. A binary logic underwrites so much of the tragedy of the novel: Mr. Moodie chooses which of his daughters to bestow his inheritance upon instead of splitting it evenly; Hollingsworth insists that Coverdale be either with him or against him in his philanthropic project, leading to their falling out; and finally the simple casting of Zenobia and Priscilla as opposites by men like Coverdale

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[88] In this, Coverdale bears some resemblance to Hawthorne himself, who as a child injured his foot playing games— and was consequently petted and spoiled afterwards, perhaps increasing his recovery time as he feigned invalidism. See Chapter One for how past traumas were integrated into biographical explanations for Hawthorne's shyness.

[89] In this sense, the shy protagonist Miles Coverdale might be said to resemble the shy protagonist Frederick Winterbourne. In "Daisy Miller," Winterbourne is rather flirtatious with Miss Miller in the first half of the novella; it is only once a second man—Giovanelli—comes on the scene that he becomes more and more distant, angry that he might have to compete for Daisy's affections.

and Westervelt, pitting the sisters against one another.[90] In the case of Hawthorne's novel,

shadowy competition actually short-circuits psychological development, rather than generating

it: how different would Zenobia's inner struggle have been, had she known Priscilla to be her

half-sister? how different would Hollingsworth's choice have been, had Mr. Moodie been

egalitarian with his inheritance, dividing it amongst his daughters? *The Blithedale Romance*

would be a completely different novel. Instead, in the face of such pressure, Hollingsworth

follows the money, Zenobia follows the poisoned tongue of Westervelt, and Coverdale retreats.

It is in making competition conspicuous that Hawthorne complicates the *Bildungsroman*,

a genre which in its early stages included little to no sexual competition at all: Wilhelm is the

only man in love with Natalie, Waverley the only possible suitor for Rose Bradwardine, and

David Copperfield's worries that Agnes Wickfield is falling for another young man are revealed

as merely unsubstantiated fears. But competition becomes a disruptive element in later

Bildungsromane: in *Great Expectations*, Pip is frustrated by other competitors not only once, but

twice during the novel, while in *Jude the Obscure*, sexual competition and counter-competition

lead to the destruction of nearly every character in the novel. The problem with competition in

the *Bildungsroman* is this: when competition enters the field, it is not enough to grow as an

individual, but one must grow relative to other individuals—that is, outgrow them, or grow more

quickly.

The question of competition was not a neutral one for Hawthorne himself. In his

childhood, he lamented, "Why was I not a girl that I might have been pinned all my life to my

Mother's apron?" (qtd. in Wineapple 39). In his middle age, he struggled to make enough money

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[90] See Kent Bales's "The Allegory and the Radical Romantic Ethic of *Blithedale Romance*" and Angela Mills's " 'The Sweet Word,' Sister" for descriptions of how the either/or logic pervade and undermine the Blithedale community and facilitate the novel's tragic ending.

to support himself and his family, shifting from home to home. His conflicted relationship to Democrat politics, including his time at the Salem Custom House where he was placed on the grounds that his friends described him as apolitical, was cut short by political partisanship in 1848—a product of the spoils system that engendered the famous diatribe that now awkwardly prefaces *The Scarlet Letter*. Later, in the same year he wrote *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne would cast a stake in his friend Franklin Pierce's run for president by writing the candidate's campaign biography—a biography that emphasized Pierce's ability to compromise and inevitably to avoid any controversial stance on the slavery question; it was a political venture that promised rich benefits, but also the possibility of public disgrace. And so perhaps it is no surprise that when he revisited the idea of Brook Farm in 1852, he did so only to offer a tale of egotism and misspent energy. Hawthorne's novel is post-heroic because he himself did not relish the competition on which heroism is founded, because both Coverdale and Hawthorne himself cannot stomach the inevitable violence done in seeking out what was one's own.

Like *David Copperfield* or *Jane Eyre*, Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* draws copiously on the author's life, reappropriating journal entries or biographical details. But the *Bildungsromane* epitomized by these British counterparts have been touched up: they are revisitings that are also idealizations, granting to their life stories a greater purpose and teleology. That is to say, Dickens and Brontë revisit their own pasts to beautify them—but Hawthorne revisits his past in order to make the gap between the true and the once-possible only darker, more pessimistic, more cynical.[91] The inheritance that rescues Jane or Wilhelm serves only to poison Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla; the journey across the Alps that educates Teufelsdrockh or David is transformed into a perch near a hotel window; the confession that

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[91] In *Season of Youth,* Jerome Buckley argues that *Great Expectations,* published a decade after *David Copperfield* and *The Blithedale Romance,* is Dickens' darker and harsher version of the *Bildungsroman* (42).

marks Lucy Snowe or Edward Ferrars or Walter Hartright as a developed consciousness marks Miles Coverdale as a voyeur, for his confession is yielded only in isolation, in retrospect, and far too late.

The *Bildungsroman* aims at that moment of self-expression: it is the moment of catharsis, it is the moment of overcoming obstacles that are often inside the character. So what happens when these obstacles aren't overcome? What happens when the character starts a career of self-cultivation, observes and interprets, thinks and feels, but never speaks, but never acts? It is at that precise moment when he crosses a line between principal and pathological figure, between archetype and failure, between developing consciousness and failed hero. Fewer and fewer heroes will successfully make this transition as the novel moves towards and into the twentieth century. Dostoevsky's Underground Man confesses that he cannot become anything: "neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect" (5). Henry James's heroes are occasionally suspected of not learning their lessons—Lambert Strether's denial of Maria Gostrey is almost as controversial as Coverdale's confession, often interpreted as an equally misguided expression of self—and what else can we say of John Marcher or Frederick Winterbourne but that they fail to uncloset their desires properly? T. S. Eliot's Prufrock bespeaks a stylized rendition of this: the man who does not dare disturb the universe and who, like Coverdale, sinks into the ennui of old age and the pangs of even older obsessions.

What the voyeur Miles Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance* puts into sharp distinction—and what Hawthorne, through Coverdale, is resisting—is the wish-fulfillment that lies behind the classic *Bildungsroman*: inheritances that save rather than destroy, journeys that clarify one's perceptions rather than rousing them, and an ease in finding the appropriate spheres in which one's character can unfold. In creating a shy, closeted hero who so readily irks readers

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and whose conduct is altogether "not satisfactory to the natural yearnings of novel readers,"

Nathaniel Hawthorne succeeds in representing failure and cultivates his own garden plot of non-

cultivation: we might ask along with Coverdale, "Will not Nature shed a tear? Ah, no! She

adopts the calamity at once into her system, and is just as well pleased" (225).

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Chapter 3

The Importance of Being Bewildered

> In short, the place was a concentrated extract of the world at large, where one might at the same moment be a recluse and a cosmopolitan.
> — Julian Hawthorne, *A Dream and A Forgetting*

In his 1879 biography *Hawthorne*, Henry James would reflect on Hawthorne's international travels: "Hawthorne was close upon fifty years of age when he came to Europe… and I know nothing more remarkable, more touching, than the sight of this odd, youthful— elderly mind, contending so late in the day with new opportunities for learning old things" (148). His phrase "this odd, youthful—elderly mind" trips up the flow of the sentence with its slippery revision from youth to maturity. The phrase makes Hawthorne into a doubly precious figure by uniting two vulnerabilities: the inexperience of youth and the inflexibility of old age. Throughout the rest of the passage, James emphasizes both Hawthorne's "inexperience" and his "rigidity of opinion," his being untaught and—to an extent—unteachable.

 "He was exquisitely and consistently provincial," writes James, adding that the English and Italian notebooks were "a triumph, not of initiation, but of the provincial point of view itself" (148). In this, James makes Nathaniel Hawthorne a representative of "the *éclaireurs*"—literally, "those who light the way"—part of the vanguard of American expatriates who travelled abroad

in the 1850s, uncertain of what to make of Europe or how best to live there.[1] After spending fifty

years in relative seclusion in small American towns, Hawthorne would become an international

traveler. He would spend seven years abroad, serving as Consul at Liverpool and then travelling

through France and Italy—and this experience considerably shook up his understanding of what

it meant to be an American and an artist.[2]

By labeling him as "provincial" and lacking true "initiation," James used his biography of

Hawthorne to work through a problem that he himself faced. How do you get beyond the

provincial? How do you enjoy the triumph not only of initiation, but of belonging? It is not hard

to see an echo of Hawthorne's predicament in James's own circumstances when he writes:

> It is, I think, an indisputable fact that Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world, and the most addicted to the belief that the other nations of the earth are in a conspiracy to undervalue them. They are conscious of being the youngest of the great nations, of not being of the European family, of being placed on the circumference of the circle of civilization rather than at the centre. (153)

Just like Hawthorne, James couldn't help but be nationally self-conscious. He was writing the

biography to be included in Morley's *British Men of Letters*, a series in which Hawthorne would

be the only American author and James the only American biographer represented.[3] In doing so,

Henry James negotiated a rather complex mixture of desires: to defend American culture as an

American artist and to reconcile himself as critic to the "European family"; to pay tribute to

Hawthorne as a literary predecessor and to put him in his place; to critique the earlier generation

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[1] Henry James describes the "*éclaireurs*" in his 1907 biography *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*. Like his 1879 biography *Hawthorne*, this biography is a strange mixture of engagement with the early generation of American expatriates, his own time spent in Rome in the early 1870s, and his later years. See John Carlos Rowe's "Hawthorne's Ghost in James's Italy" and Denis Donoghue's article "*William Wetmore Story and His Friends*: The Enclosing Fact of Rome" for a discussion of the writing project.

[2] For a careful analysis of how Hawthorne's Consular services fit in with an overall system of art patronage in the 19th-century, see Amanda Claybaugh's article, "The Consular Service and US Literature: Nathaniel Hawthorne Abroad" (284ff).

[3] There would be 39 authors represented in the study: no female authors and only one female biographer—Margaret Oliphant, writing on Sheridan—would be included in the project. The other authors and biographers were a mix of English, Scottish, and Irish writers.

of Americans living at the "circumference" of civilization and to lay the groundwork for future Americans who wished to live at its "centre." In this work that is half intellectual history and half literary criticism, Henry James analyzed the provincial in Hawthorne as a means of exorcizing the provincial in himself.

Consequently, when he describes Hawthorne's experience of Rome, James is quick to criticize: he calls his literary predecessor an "ordinary tourist" whose observations are "extremely superficial," who experiences a "great deal of discomfort and depression in Rome," and whose journals ultimately reveal Hawthorne as "dislocated, depressed, even slightly bewildered" (153-56). What word better describes Hawthorne's initial experience of Europe than *bewildered?* To be "bewildered": literally, to lose one's path, as if in a wilderness. If Hawthorne were "bewildered," it was not in the vast wilderness of untamed America but in the ruins of Italy with its tangle of Roman history and Catholic guilt and pre-Raphaelite genius and Italian politics all coming down upon his head. Over the years, many scholars have taken these criticisms at face-value,[4] even if they also admit James's peculiar motivations.[5] In particular, modern critics have chosen to critique Hawthorne's Italian novel *The Marble Faun* as the work of a naïve, provincial tourist.[6]

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[4] In *The Great Succession: Henry James and the Legacy of Hawthorne,* Robert Emmet Long accepts James's focus on Hawthorne's insularity, noting that James's *Roderick Hudson* can be seen as a cosmopolitan answer to *The Marble Faun* (6ff). In *The School of Hawthorne*, Richard Brodhead agrees that James manages to make himself appear initiated at Hawthorne's expense (136ff).

[5] In "Intimacy and Form: James on Hawthorne's Charm," Neill Matheson notes that "anxiety of influence" remains the main critical paradigm in reading James's *Hawthorne* (121). In *Henry James as a Biographer: A Self Among Others,* Willie Tolliver insists that James uses the biography as a mouth for his own personality: James's persona "never leaves center stage" (72).

[6] In "The Persecution of Religion in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun,*" Martin Kevorkian begins with the observation that *The Marble Faun* has become "a kind of whipping boy for American literary history," generally criticized as the product of a "blinkered," bourgeoisie tourist (133). For notable examples of this tendency, see Nancy Bentley's *Ethnography of Manners* and Geoffrey Sanborn's *Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader*.

But James's appraisal of Hawthorne's travels was not wholly negative. Even if he felt that Hawthorne was out of his depth in writing it, James concedes that *The Marble Faun* might be "the most popular of Hawthorne's four novels, […] and is read by every English-speaking traveler who arrives there, who has been there, or who expects to go" (160). Even though James suggests that Italian novels written by English writers "always have about them something second-rate and imperfect" (161), the aspiring writer himself had already set his novel *Roderick Hudson* and his novella "Daisy Miller" in Italy.[7] And whatever his true opinion of Hawthorne's naiveté or insight, Henry James himself chose to bend his tales through the eyes of characters who felt "slightly bewildered." After all, James himself would write in his preface to *The Princess Casamassima* that "if we were never bewildered there would never be a story to tell about us" (*AN* 63).

James's *Hawthorne* offers us a rich intersection of two cultural transitions: Hawthorne's movement from provincial American to international tourist and James's parallel movement from tourist to cosmopolitan. It was an ongoing process, the younger generations beginning where the older generation left off: "An American as cultivated as Hawthorne, is now almost inevitably more cultivated, and, as a matter of course, more Europeanised in advance, more cosmopolitan" (162). Over time, modern critics have focused on that cultivated product—the cosmopolitan, the citizen of the world—as a matter of course. However, what interested James was not his predecessor's final triumph over experience, but rather the initial encounter with the foreign. In this chapter, I would like to capture some of that initial panic. What if Hawthorne's bewilderment opened a potentially productive site for development, both intellectual and

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[7] In "Henry James's American Girls in Darkest Rome," Daniel Mark Fogel discusses this contradiction at length (89).

aesthetic? What if bewilderment was the prelude to a deeper—and occasionally cosmopolitan—

appreciation of the world?

Nathaniel Hawthorne would explore these questions throughout his *Italian Notebooks*—

but as Andrew Loman laments, no one has explored cosmopolitanism in Hawthorne's later

works.[8] In this chapter, I argue that *The Marble Faun* might be read as Hawthorne's deepest

exploration of cosmopolitanism, reflecting the sentiments of the generation he was born into—

and of the generation that would succeed him. If critics have been unable to see beyond the

novel's gothic machinations and allegorical flourishes, it is because Hawthorne drew on his own

personal encounters with the foreign—his moments of boredom in art galleries, his cold and

bitter winters in a foreign city, and his bewilderment before the immense gravity of Roman

history—in order to fashion his romance. As W. C. Brownell notes, "[Hawthorne] did not find

sermons in stones. He had the sermons already; his task was to find the stones to fit them" (22).

If we would understand Hawthorne's cosmopolitanism, we must read the stones, not the

sermons.[9]

Over the years, modern critics have fashioned a model of development from

provincialism to cosmopolitanism that relies almost entirely on a register of comfortableness: as

travelers gain in sophistication and nuance, they should become more comfortable with the

foreign, with the aesthetic, with the international. In contrast, I would like to offer a model of *shy

cosmopolitanism*, an alternative to the more forceful travelers—like Melville, Hiram Powers, and

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[8] In his article "Cosmopolitan Detachment in Hawthorne's 'Prophetic Pictures,' " Andrew Loman argues that Hawthorne criticizes both cosmopolitanism and provincialism. He adds that very little work has been done on positive ideals of cosmopolitanism in Hawthorne's later work (81ff).

[9] In *Realism and the Romance: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and American Fiction*, Elissa Greenwald notes how the *Italian Notebooks* may be read as caught between detailed records and the search for symbols (40). In "*The Marble Faun* and the Waste of History," Millicent Bell takes this bifurcation between fact and symbolism as the main object of her analysis.

Oscar Wilde—that Hawthorne and James met in their various travels. In doing so, I consider

what is lost when our modern ideals of cosmopolitanism ignore shyness: a sense of being out of

place, a sense of feeling uncomfortable and lost and bewildered, and a set of strategies for

imagining and exploring the international scene.

The Gemlike Flame and the Cold Stone: Hawthorne, Pater, and James

> "For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of
> enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the
> fleeting and the infinite."
> > — Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life"

While wandering through the Uffizi gallery in Florence, Nathaniel Hawthorne trembles at

the thought of seeing the "mystery and wonder of the gallery," the Venus de' Medici. His

apprehension marks him as an early American tourist both excited and intimidated by the wealth

of experience presented to him. In his *Italian Notebooks*, he writes:

> I indeed was almost afraid to see it; for I somewhat apprehended the extinction of another
> of those lights that shine along a man's pathway, and go out in a snuff the instant he
> comes within eyeshot of the fulfillment of his hopes. My European experience has
> extinguished many such. I was pretty well contented, therefore, not to find the famous
> statue in the whole of my long journey from end to end of the gallery. (4)

Hawthorne mixes both experience and naiveté in this account. He knows that the Venus de'

Medici is in the famous Uffizi, but he wanders the entire length of the gallery without being able

to locate it. He is already familiar with the idea of the statue from photos and descriptions and

vague reports, but he balks at comparing the full weight of these imaginings with the concrete

statue itself. Henry James noted that Hawthorne's life was defined by a constant tension between

his "evasive" and "inquisitive" tendencies: it is in moments like these that Hawthorne's evasive

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impulses overthrows his inquisitive sense. Although Hawthorne would eventually see the famous statue in subsequent visits, his first approach is in fact a retreat.

Rather than considering his travels an expansion of new vistas, Hawthorne describes his "European experience" as the extinction of old fantasies. It is with his *inexperience* that he most identifies; it is his innocence that is expansive, not his cultural experience. Thrown into the midst of a sea of objects, Hawthorne becomes bewildered: "How is it possible to give one's soul, or any considerable part of it, to a single picture, seen for the first time, among a thousand others, all of which set forth their own claims in an equally good light?" (109). Hawthorne's experience of art does not inspire him as much as exhaust him, his introversion a defense mechanism against a thousand claims upon his attention.

It is this ambivalence that Henry James would develop into a conceit while describing Hawthorne's late travels. James writes that "we are unable to rid ourselves of the impression that Hawthorne was a good deal bored by the importunity of Italian art […] Already, in England, he had made the discovery that he could easily feel overdosed with such things" (160). It is in fact a central concern for Hawthorne, the provincial traveler: how do you make sense of a flood of experience? James heightens this dilemma for Hawthorne with sly language: the phrase "importunity of Italian art" renders art demanding and intrusive; the word "overdosed" suggests that Italian culture is a medicine, but at dosages too potent for Hawthorne's constitution.

In responding to Hawthorne's cultural bewilderment, James was bringing to bear not only his own experiences but the aesthetic philosophies prominent at the time. In particular, James's outlook on taste-building is particularly indebted to the writings of Walter Pater. In 1873, Pater published his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, including essays on Leonardo da Vinci,

Botticelli, and Michelangelo.[10] After this collection of essays, he placed his controversial

"Conclusion," arguing for a more open relationship to artistic impressions.[11] Pater's famous

axiom—"to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in

life" (210)—might be said to serve as a starting point for the aesthetes in James's fiction from

Rowland Mallet to Gilbert Osmond.[12]

However, Hawthorne often found himself indifferent to what he saw: "I found myself not

in a very appreciative state, and, being a stone myself, the statue […] was at first little more to

me than another stone" (142). Counter to Pater's "gemlike flame," Hawthorne becomes a cold

stone. Had Hawthorne been alive to read Pater's Conclusion, he would have agreed more with

the problems that Pater poses than his solutions. In particular, Hawthorne would have

sympathized with Pater's description of the dizzying array of impressions that assault an

individual caught in "the race of the mid-stream." Pater describes our initial encounter with the

world in this way: "At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects,

pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand

forms of action" (208). It was this "flood" that most baffled and surprised Hawthorne—it was

their "sharp and importunate" surface that Hawthorne first felt—and it was ultimately the

thousand forms of action and reaction that Hawthorne felt incapable of producing.

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[10] In "Alive in the Grave: Walter Pater's *Renaissance*," Wallen notes how Pater would later revise this title from Studies in the History of the Renaissance to Studies in Art and Poetry, deemphasizing the role of history in his analysis, which was always considered historically flimsy by contemporaries (1033). Gabriel Roberts agrees with this assessment, saying that Pater's art criticism is subjective, generic, and vague (418).

[11] Jeffrey Wallen contrasts Pater's education as *openness to experience* with Arnold's education as *the best that is thought and said* (1036-37). In *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism*, Carolyn Williams insists that the conclusion is better read as an introduction (11).

[12] In his work "Falling into Heterosexuality," Leland Person argues that Pater's aestheticism licenses James's own aestheticism, particularly his interest in nudity in art (110).

Walter Pater meant to take the immensity of external experience and reduce it to a simple injunction: *enjoy*. However, it is precisely the sheer immensity of the "flood of external objects" that kept Hawthorne the shy traveler from full enjoyment. In his notebooks, Hawthorne offers an important protest to aestheticism, one separate from the moral outrage that would label Pater's "Conclusion" a manifesto of hedonism or atheism.[13] In a journal entry, he complains of staying too long in a gallery, a complaint that with him is perennial:

> I soon grew so weary of admirable things, that I could neither enjoy nor understand them. My receptive faculty is very limited, and when the utmost of its small capacity is full, I become perfectly miserable, and the more so the better worth seeing are the things I am forced to reject. I do not know a greater misery; to see sights, after such repletion, is to the mind what it would be to the body to have dainties forced down the throat long after the appetite was satiated. (50)

This metaphor of being force-fed sweets offers an important limit to the aesthetic optimism of artists and critics such as Pater and Wilde.[14] While contemporary critics might have criticized Pater's "Conclusion" for its hedonism or its godlessness, Hawthorne's first complaint was only a matter of sustainability. For Pater, the finite quantity is time: he uses the metaphor of the pulse and pulsation, of which "a counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life" (210).[15] For Hawthorne, the finite quantity is *appetite*: he uses the metaphor of the stomach,

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[13] In *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism*, Carolyn Williams argues that Walter Pater was widely misread as proposing "relativism, objectivism, nihilism, and hedonism" in his Conclusion (12). In "The Vice and Abuse of Philosophy in Walter Pater's *Renaissance*," Gabriel Roberts notes that Pater was applauded for poetic language, then simultaneously criticized for ahistoricism and decadence (408).

[14] In *Henry James, Oscar Wilde and Aesthetic Culture*, Michele Mendelssohn argues that James and Wilde might be taken to represent two branches of 19th-century aestheticism: James representing American aestheticism and Wilde British aestheticism (4).

[15] The pulse/pulsation is notably ambiguous: our limited count of pulses as in the finite beat of our hearts versus Pater's injunction to get in as many "pulsations as possible" into the given time, suggesting the eroticized "pulsation" of pleasure.

of which its "small capacity is full."[16] What Pater's model elides are precisely those personal

limits—an introverted temperament, a finite sympathy, or general inexperience.[17]

This sense of personal limits would go on to inform some of the most striking scenes of

bewilderment in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*. In the chapter entitled "The Emptiness of

Picture Galleries," Hilda wanders melancholy through the galleries of Rome, suffering the "icy

demon of weariness" and "irreverent criticism" that Hawthorne himself lamented. She is unable

to feel anything about paintings that she once felt before: "she had lost—and she trembled lest it

should have departed forever—the faculty of appreciating those great works of art" (382). In the

chapter "The Deserted Shrine," Kenyon wanders "depressed, dislocated, and bewildered"

through the streets of Rome.[18] While Kenyon wanders lonely and depressed, his heart resonates

with the worst and dreariest aspects of the Eternal City:

> This was the time, perhaps, when Kenyon first became sensible what a dreary city is
> Rome, and what a terrible weight is there imposed on human life, when any gloom within
> the heart corresponds to the spell of ruin that has been thrown over the site of ancient
> empire. He wandered, as it were, and stumbled over the fallen columns, and among the
> tombs, and groped his way into the sepulchral darkness of the catacombs, and found no
> path emerging from them. (465)

It is here that Hawthorne translates his personal experiences of bewilderment into psychological

chiaroscuro for his characters. Kenyon's loss translates into being lost: among the sepulchers and

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[16] In a more unusual take, Oliver Herford argues in "The Roman Lotus: Digestion and Retrospect" that Henry James's early obsession with his bowel movements led to his metaphors of devouring Italy but occasionally being unable to do so (54ff).

[17] In *Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain agrees: "Our pilgrims compress too much into one day. One can gorge sights to repletion as well as sweetmeats" (582). Twain's first travel narrative is perhaps most in line with Hawthorne's sense of being overdosed—in later works, like *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain tends to be more glib and inexhaustible. See Melton's *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism*.

[18] His bewilderment mirrors Hawthorne's own personal feelings upon first arriving in Rome: "Our impressions were very unfortunate, arriving at midnight, half frozen in the wintry rain, and being received into a cold and cheerless hotel, where we shivered during two or three days; meanwhile seeking lodgings among the sunless, dreary alleys which are called streets in Rome" (53).

fallen columns, he cannot find a path.[19] A person's appreciation of the world—especially when

at its most surprising, foreign, novel—depends greatly on personal mood.

Hawthorne's resistance would inform James's complex philosophy, a union of Paterian

sensibilities with Hawthornesque doubts and qualifications.[20] In his travel piece "Florentine

Notes," James himself would admit that "we have our moods of mental expansion and

contraction […] so it is that in museums and palaces we are alternate radicals and conservatives"

(290-291). To what extent is this push and pull—this tension between one's *inquisitive* and

evasive tendencies—an important part of developing taste? What James would add to Pater's

aestheticism was a further revision of the "pulse"—a unit of excitement that includes both the

systolic and diastolic, the beat and the release—by emphasizing the cycles of approach and

retreat.

After many visits to art galleries and museums, Hawthorne became less and less

overwhelmed with the flood of external objects. In another journal entry, Hawthorne writes,

"Among such a multitude, with only one poor mind to take note of them, the stamp of each new

impression helps to obliterate a former one" (29). Here, Hawthorne's taste-building exercise

operates much like a palimpsest: the new overwrites the old, the flood of objects pushes his

initial ideas and feelings ever further downstream. But somewhere in this midstream, Hawthorne

would write, "I am sensible, however, that a process is going on, and has been ever since I came

to Italy, that puts me in a state to see pictures with less toil, and more pleasure, and makes me

more fastidious, yet more sensible of beauty where I saw none before" (30). It is bewilderment

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[19] In his *Aesthetic Headaches,* Leland Person notes that while Donatello's narrative is one of moving from statue to flesh, Kenyon moves from a man of flesh to a man of marble (167).

[20] James's novel *Roderick Hudson* could be best described as a competition between Pater's injunction to enjoy and Hawthorne's fear of taking in too much too fast. The aesthetic paradise of James's Italy is constantly haunted by the perils and promises of hunger, digestion, and finally surfeit and drunkenness.

that teaches the novice; it is this journey from ecstasy to indifference—from gemlike flame to cold stone—and back again that builds up an aesthetic personality.

An Aesthetic Company: On the Margins of the Cosmopolitan

> The delight of Clerval was proportionably greater than mine; his mind expanded in the company of men of talent, and he found in his own nature greater capacities and resources than he could have imagined himself to have possessed while he associated with his inferiors.
>   — Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

In reading Henry James's biography of Hawthorne, it is easy to imagine Hawthorne as a solitary *flâneur*, but then this was not true. For although Hawthorne had trouble making much of the *art* that he encountered, his encounters with *artists* were far more important. If Hawthorne was easily overdosed with art, he was not so easily overdosed by his conversations with artists like William Wetmore Story and Hiram Powers. What Hawthorne found in these friendships was a glimpse into the lives of men more cosmopolitan than himself.

In *Hawthorne*, Henry James wondered if it might be impossible for "a shy and susceptible man" like Hawthorne to enjoy the international scene: "For a stranger to cease to be a stranger he must stand ready, as the French say, to pay with his person; and this was an obligation that Hawthorne was indisposed to incur" (154). It is in fact a central dilemma to the shy American abroad: to what extent is a shy traveler destined to be an "outsider" and "a stranger" in the countries he visits? Modern critics have adopted this critique, challenging Hawthorne—and perhaps not surprisingly, James himself—for not crossing the divide between

the traveler and the foreign.[21] But Hawthorne himself was aware of this dilemma. In one journal

entry, he laments that he's unable to understand Miss Fredericka Bremer, a Swedish author:

> She talks English fluently, in a low quiet voice, but with such an accent that it is
> impossible to understand her without the closest attention […] A more intrepid talker
> than myself would have shouted his ideas across the gulf; but, for me, there must first be
> a close and unembarrassed contiguity with my companion, or I cannot say one real word.
> (180).

In passages such as this, it is interesting to note how quickly Hawthorne confesses not only a

linguistic difficulty but a social one.[22] He interprets his linguistic difficulties through the lens of

his embarrassment and his inability to be "more intrepid." In one respect, Hawthorne unwittingly

draws analogies between his provinciality and his shyness. He imagines others braver than

himself crossing the gulf between the tourist and the foreign.

It is Hawthorne's shy and susceptible side that opened up to the artists in Europe.

Throughout Hawthorne's life, we see in him the shy individual's fascination with charismatic

personalities. From "dark ladies" like Margaret Fuller to hardened men like Herman Melville to

long-time friends of social means like Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne was content to remain in the

orbit of such figures, to observe them—and judge them, when necessary. While travelling

abroad, Hawthorne found himself drawn to outspoken American expatriates like Hiram Powers

and William Wetmore Story, both sculptors who exuded a personal warmth and charisma to

which the shy author responded deeply. Story's sculpture *Cleopatra* would become Kenyon's

main set piece, while a joint trip to see an unearthed Venus would make its way into the final

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[21] While James criticizes Hawthorne for not knowing the English and Italian people he writes about, modern critics
have criticized James for similar mistakes. Mark Kemp argues that *The Marble Faun* avoids politics and Italian life
in forging a fantasy of ahistorical, stateless, and apolitical subjectivity (210). In "Italy and the Artist in Henry
James," Agostino Lombardo criticizes James for creating nothing but flat Italian stereotypes, clearly lacking any
intimacy with the people in Italy (230).

[22] While in France, Hawthorne was frustrated by the language barrier: "It gives a taciturn personage like myself a
new conception as to the value of speech, even to him, when he finds himself unable either to speak or understand"
(12).

scenes of *The Marble Faun.* Hawthorne would adapt Powers' sculpture depicting his daughter "Luly's Hand" to Kenyon's sculpture of Hilda's hands, while his reflections on Powers' expatriate status would be copied almost verbatim into the conclusion of his final romance.[23]

Hawthorne's notebooks are full of references to Hiram Powers, with whom he struck up a friendship during his stay in Florence. He would write, "I do not know a man of more facile intercourse, nor with whom one so easily gets rid of ceremony" (303). Throughout the Florentine section of his journals, Hawthorne reports the thoughts and opinions of his friend more than his own—the shy author finds the "mill-stream" of his talkative friend very pleasant:

> I have hardly ever before felt an impulse to write down a man's conversation as I do that of Mr. Powers. The chief reason is, probably, that it is so possible to do it, his ideas being square, solid, and tangible, and therefore readily grasped and retained. He is a very instructive man, and sweeps one's empty and dead notions out of the way with exceeding vigor; but when you have his ultimate thought and perception, you feel inclined to think and see a little further for yourself. He sees too clearly what is within his range to be aware of any region of mystery beyond. Probably, however, this latter remark does him injustice. (55)

Readers might recognize the thread of "square, solid, and tangible"—the "exceeding vigor"—in Powers as the counterpart to Hawthorne's own shadowy, twilight mind. Hawthorne even ventures that slightest of criticisms, if only because the charismatic individual speaks with too much force to appreciate the "regions of mystery beyond."[24]

This "mill-stream" of talk sweeps along with it not only an immensity of aesthetic questions and concerns, but a wide array of disciplines, fields, and categories. If Hawthorne were

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[23] In "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Transnationality," John Carlos Rowe argues that Hawthorne modeled Kenyon on Hiram Powers, Hilda on Harriet Hosmer, and Miriam on Maria Louisa Lander (100). However, I would urge caution on searching for exact originals for any of these figures: they seem more a pastiche of both the actual and the imaginary.

[24] His discussion of Leigh Hunt contains a similarly backhanded compliment, even though the two figures—Powers and Hunt—are quite different. In his essay "Up the Thames," he describes Leigh Hunt as "exceedingly appreciative of whatever was passing among those who surrounded him, and especially of the vicissitudes in the consciousness of the person to whom he happened to be addressing himself at the moment" (301). In Hawthorne's opinion, gregariousness renders people slightly capricious and impulsive.

to think himself provincial and narrow in his understanding of the wider world, he would find an

excellent counterpart in his idealized version of Hiram Powers, whom the shy author sketches as

something of a renaissance man: dabbling in engineering and mechanics, speculating on

advances in medicine, and manufacturing organs—or at least "reeds for organs"—Powers would

elicit this outburst in Hawthorne's notebooks, "I wonder what he has not been!" (99). The source

of Hawthorne's admiration is clear: he appreciates (to borrow a phrase from Melville) his

friend's *manysidedness*.

Hiram Power's expansive manners complemented Hawthorne's recessive personality

nicely; the shy author faithfully recorded many of the talkative sculptor's thoughts and

speculations. In one instance, Hawthorne made an entry describing one evening conversation

atop his friend's terrace, where they discussed "innumerable things" from music to "instinct and

reason" to whether animals have souls. His notes conclude with a debate concerning the

existence of other sentient beings, either living alongside humanity or on different planets.[25]

Cosmopolitan in the literal sense of the word, Hawthorne describes this conversation with

genuine warmth: "Mr. Powers and I pervaded the whole universe; but finally crept down his

garret-stairs, and parted, with a friendly pressure of the hand" (101).

It is in conversations such as these—uniting both a broad range of subjects and a "close

and unembarrassed contiguity"—that offered Hawthorne a safe space to articulate his own ideas.

He absorbs two ideas for tales from conversations with William Wetmore Story, while

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[25] It is Hawthorne—with his haunted mind, Gothic storytelling, and painful awareness of isolation—who suggests
that there are "beings inhabiting this earth, contemporaneously with us, and close beside us, but of whose existence
and whereabout we could have no perception, nor they of ours, because we are endowed with different sets of
senses" (100). On the other hand, it is Powers who offers his theory that "beings analogous to men—men in
everything except the modifications necessary to adapt them to their physical circumstances—inhabited the planets,
and peopled them with beautiful shapes" (101). Although self-indulgent in its bent, the two artists reveal their own
psychological idiosyncrasies in their speculations.

suggesting one idea for sculpture to Miss Hosmer over tea.[26] Hawthorne discusses with Powers

the idea that artistic taste is quite separate from a moral sense, while he discusses nudity in

sculpture with countless colleagues, revealing a prudishness for which James and modern critics

have profusely criticized him. But critics have typically overlooked the process in which

Hawthorne successively learns how to articulate his ideas: though it is in viewing art galleries

that Hawthorne notices that "some unwritten rules of taste are making their way into [his] mind"

(166), it is in talking with friends that Hawthorne learns to articulate them.

These friendly impulses inform *The Marble Faun* down to the root: with its gothic plots

and allegories aside, critics have failed to note how the novel is first and foremost a story of

friendship.[27] In the first chapter, we are introduced to "the four friends" Miriam, Hilda, Kenyon,

and Donatello—two women and two men, two Americans and two Italians—wandering the

sculpture gallery of the Roman Capitol. Throughout the novel, the characters discuss art and

culture in much the same terms that Hawthorne discussed them with his friends: Kenyon

discusses nudity in art with Miriam, American and Roman history with Donatello, and

Catholicism with Hilda. Together, they comprise a miniature aesthetic community, a small

offshoot of the larger community described in the novel.

Over the years, critics have argued over the nature of the expatriate community of

Americans in Italy. Some critics say that they take on the superficial gloss of the tourist,[28] while

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[26] Hawthorne entertains an expanded version of Bluebeard and a tale about a widower who condenses his first wife's body into a precious stone after conversations with Story; he proposes that Miss Hosmer sculpt a literal Niobe, bursting into tears (138, 230).

[27] *The Marble Faun* is striking for its focus on friendship, even if it ultimately defers to a double marriage plot. The only other work in Hawthorne's *oeuvre* that might be said to explore the subject is perhaps "Egotism, the Bosom Serpent," moving on to include the frame narrative expected in the aborted series *Allegories of the Heart*.

[28] Tourism remains one of the most useful lenses for understanding Americans abroad in the 19th-century. See Paul R. Baker's *The Fortunate Pilgrims* and the collection *Roman Holidays: American Writers and Artists in Nineteenth-Century Italy,* edited by Robert K Martin and Leland S. Person.

others have used a postcolonial lens to suggest that they might present a subtler form of cultural colonization.[29] But these American and British artists are neither tourists nor colonists; instead, they can be said to aspire to something akin to cosmopolitanism. In his description of the artist community in *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne describes their ideas and pursuits all tending towards enlarging not their national stock, but "*the world's* stock of beautiful productions" (158, emphasis added). For many of the expatriates that Hawthorne met, the artist community was neither a temporary waypoint nor an extension of their homeland, but their ideal home. In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne writes:

> One of the chief causes that make Rome the favorite residence of artists—their ideal home which they sigh for in advance, and are so loath to migrate from, after once breathing its enchanted air—is, doubtless, that they there find themselves in force, and are numerous enough to create a congenial atmosphere. In every other clime they are isolated strangers; in this land of art, they are free citizens. (159)

The heroes and heroines of *The Marble Faun* are famously isolated—Hilda is an orphan, Miriam has forsaken her past, and Donatello is the last of the Monte Beni line—but find community among artists and travellers.[30] As a shy individual, Hawthorne sympathized with individuals who found themselves to be "isolated strangers." Here in Italy, Hawthorne saw how they crossed that

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[29] In "*The Marble Faun* and American Postcolonial Ambivalence," Mark A. R. Kemp argues that *The Marble Faun* is about American expansionism, citing the artist colony as an "imperial" force (223). In "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Transnationality," John Carlos Rowe claims that Hawthorne's American liberalism (91) and his publication *The Marble Faun* (98) can both be considered a form of cultural colonization.

However, these critics conflate political and economic capital with cultural capital: as suggested in not only Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* but in James's *Roderick Hudson*, the expatriate Americans travel to Rome not to colonize it but to be culturally *colonized*.

[30] The artist community of Italy bears a striking and important resemblance to the reform community detailed in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. In both cases, Hawthorne reveals his fascination with a community that is at once voluntary and utopian.

However, we can anticipate Hawthorne's conservative critique: there appears to be scarcely any "mutual affection among the brethren of the chisel and the pencil. On the contrary, it will impress the shrewd observer that the jealousies and petty animosities […] still irritate and gnaw into the hearts of this kindred class of imaginative men" (159). It is hard not to read echoes of *The Blithedale Romance* in this community of artists, still forced against one another because of their economic dependence on the world outside their utopian fraternity.

gulf. There are the early stirrings of a cosmopolitan impulse even in this description: a collection

of artists who find themselves isolated in every other clime, the "land of art" suggesting beyond

Italy a virtual space of artistic creation, expanding beyond national distinctions.[31]

From art to artists, Hawthorne became slowly introduced to the early stirrings of

cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, he was not without his doubts: what became of a man's

nationality when he embraced the "land of art," the aesthetic lifestyle, the international scene?

For example, Hiram Powers's expatriate status would become the original kernel of Hawthorne's

thinking on the subject of the American abroad. Upon first meeting Powers in Florence,

Hawthorne would write this description:

> He talks of going home, but says that he has been talking of it every year since he first
> came to Italy; and between his pleasant life of congenial labor, and his idea of moral
> deterioration in America, I think it doubtful whether he ever crosses the sea again. Like
> most exiles of twenty years, he has lost his native country without finding another; but
> then it is as well to recognize the truth,—that an individual country is by no means
> essential to one's comfort. (*CE* 14:280)

At times, Hawthorne felt that he would rather not go home to America—at other times, he felt

sick and tired of the foreign world around him. If his aesthetic education pushed Hawthorne to

broaden his American provincialism, the ideals of cosmopolitanism asked him to imagine what it

might mean to lose one's native country without finding another. In *The Marble Faun*, he would

confess to feeling beset by the world—and yet explore the growth made possible by this liminal

space.

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[31] Dan McCall's book *Citizens of Somewhere Else* posits a "land of writing" (175), very similar to Hawthorne's
"land of art."

Beyond Bewilderment

> Walt Whitman, a cosmos, of Manhattan the son, […]
> I speak the password primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
> By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same
> terms.
> — Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

Writing about *The Marble Faun*, Henry James writes that "the subject is admirable, and so are many of the details; but the whole thing is less simple and complete than either of the three tales of American life, and Hawthorne forfeited a precious advantage in ceasing to tread his native soil" (165). In this critique, James admires the subject and the details, but sees the foreign setting as sacrificing his native and local elements that made his earlier work stronger. But what if the forfeiture of a native advantage *were* Hawthorne's subject? This possibility eluded James—as it has many a modern critic since—because of the sheer weight of allegory that is placed upon the novel.

While staying at the ancient Florentine country house of Monte Beni, the American sculptor Kenyon is treated to a glass of mysterious wine. While known only as "Sunshine," critics have noted how the wine mirrors Donatello's allegorical connections to innocence, the Golden Age, and more.[32] However, this metaphor carries with it also a vague moral about home. The delicate virtues of the wine lie in its fixity of location, for it never travels beyond the

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[32] The Golden Age readings are typical, given the "felix culpa" reading invited by the novel's iconography. See Sheila Teahan's "Hawthorne, James, and the Fall of Allegory in *Roderick Hudson*" and Todd Onderdonk, "The Marble Mother: Hawthorne's Iconography of the Feminine."

A surprising recent development is a tendency to read the racially-ambiguous Donatello as representing the issue of free blacks in antebellum America: see Blythe Ann Tellefsen's "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Vision of America in *The Marble Faun*" (463ff) and Arthur Riss's "The Art of Discrimination."

Kendall Johnson is one of the few critics to discuss the metaphor's rootedness. He writes in *Henry James and the Visual* that Donatello's family is a dead "genius loci," circumscribed by place (58-9).

confines of the castle of Monte Beni. When Kenyon suggests marketing the wine, the butler

replies:

> To speak out all the truth, there is another excellent reason why neither a cask nor a flask
> of our precious vintage should ever be sent to market. The wine, Signore, is so fond of its
> native home, that a transportation of even a few miles turns it quite sour. And yet it is a
> wine that keeps well in the cellar, underneath this floor, and gathers fragrance, flavor, and
> brightness, in its dark dungeon. (260)

Beyond considerations of the moral plot—that the Golden Age is lost if tampered with, that

innocence is lost if exposed to experience—Hawthorne here also expresses in part his suspicion

that geographical dislocation quickly destroys the virtues of the native. The wine is perfect

precisely because it is rooted to a particular family, to a particular soil. We imagine that the

marketplace would ruin the Sunshine wine both because it would force the wine out of its native

environment, but also it would force the wine to be bought, sold, and finally mass-marketed; in

other words, the marketplace would not allow the wine to stay as it is—small.

The other symbol of a home beset is Hilda's tower, the Dove-Cote, where she tends a

shrine to the Virgin.[33] As one of the more piquant images in the novel, it lies at the intersection

of many of Hawthorne's themes:

> At one of the angles of the battlements stood a shrine of the Virgin, such as we see
> everywhere at the street corners of Rome, but seldom or never, except in this solitary,
> instance, at a height above the ordinary level of men's views and aspirations. Connected
> with this old tower and its lofty shrine, there is a legend which we cannot here pause to
> tell; but for centuries a lamp has been burning before the Virgin's image, at noon, at
> midnight, and at all hours of the twenty-four, and must be kept burning forever, as long
> as the tower shall stand; or else the tower itself, the palace, and whatever estate belongs
> to it, shall pass from its hereditary possessor, in accordance with an ancient vow, and
> become the property of the Church. (68-69)

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[33] In the *Italian Notebooks,* Hawthorne records the original story. A monkey steals a baby and climbs a tower; after a
Roman nobleman's prayers return the child to safety, he builds a shrine in thanks (218-19). Naturally, Hawthorne
leaves the original source out of the novel.

The Virgin Shrine is a hermitage—much like Hawthorne's "Sights from a Steeple" or Coverdale's tree-turret—a space both detached from and loftier than the world below.[34] Hilda is a young American Protestant tending a shrine to the Virgin Mary, a position of concession and cultural reappropriation.[35] As such, her position is constantly beset: for the lamp must be forever kept alight lest the tower immediately pass into the possession of the Catholic Church. In a similar way, the moral laws that Hilda and Kenyon obey throughout the novel seem equally strict: one false move, and they will forfeit their homes, their religion, even their nationality. The ambiguities these characters face are not only internal but external, not only ethical but spatial—and much of their force draws from feeling lost and out of place. It is the status of the expatriate American who faces what James calls in his *Transatlantic Sketches* the "worst of trouble—trouble in a foreign land" (186).

Given these challenges, how do the Americans Hilda and Kenyon respond to the larger world? Cosmopolitanism born of bewilderment frames two scenes near the end of the novel, incidentally two of the most memorable: Hilda's confession and Kenyon at Carnival.[36] In his critical biography, James confessed his admiration for Hilda's storyline in the otherwise allegorical narrative: "If I have called the whole idea of the presence and effect of Hilda in the story a trait of genius, the purest touch of inspiration is the episode in which the poor girl deposits her burden" (168). Although Hawthorne is by no means free of the anti-Catholicism that

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[34] In "The Choice of Innocence: Hilda in *The Marble Faun*," Emily Schiller notes that the dove cote is cold and inaccessible (379). In "Fuller, Hawthorne, and Imagining Urban Spaces in Rome," Brigitte Bailey notes that Hilda's space suggests sexual freedom in Rome, something that Hawthorne felt ambivalent about (184).

[35] Olivia Gatti Taylor argues in "Cultural Confessions: Penance and Penitence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*" that Hilda unites the personal conscience of Protestantism with Catholic grace (149-150).

[36] Hilda's confessional scene bears a striking resemblance to Lucy Snowe, heroine of Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, who in a moment of crisis finds solace in a Catholic confessional. This also fits in with Lucy Snowe's difficulty in confessing her vulnerability, her fears, and her loneliness in what is ultimately an institutionalized conduit for her own repressed feelings.

marked his Anglo-American compatriots during the nineteenth century, he was drawn to what he considered the warmer attributes of Catholicism: its pageantry, its communal rituals, and its personally-mediated confessionals.[37] In general, critics have discussed this scene in terms of its religious fluidity, either admiring or resisting Hawthorne's open-mindedness.[38] Instead, I would like to discuss how this scene uses cosmopolitan rhetoric to advance a temporary merger between Protestantism and Catholicism.

At the height of her bewilderment, Hilda enters the Vatican and is inspired by the confessionals arrayed in the southern transept. Surrounded by confessionals, Hilda is wracked with doubt:

> "Do not these inestimable advantages," thought Hilda, "or some of them at least, belong to Christianity itself? Are they not a part of the blessings which the system was meant to bestow upon mankind? Can the faith in which I was born and bred be perfect, if it leave a weak girl like me to wander, desolate, with this great trouble crushing me down?" (404)

In considering the barriers between Catholicism and Protestantism, Hilda appeals to an overarching identity—the Catholic confessionals are part of a larger Christian framework, open to all sects. However, Hilda's impulse is not simply acquisitive: not only do the strengths of the Catholic Church invite reappropriation, but the shortcomings of the Protestant faith demand supplementation.

Watching an Italian woman exit a confessional, Hilda speaks to her with sympathy; it is remarkably one of the few times where an Italian character is given a name, Teresa.[39] Noting the

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[37] For a quick glance at anti-Catholic sentiments in American literature, see Jeffrey Alan Melton's *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism* and Martin Kevorkian's "Reading the Bloody 'Face of Nature': The Persecution of Religion in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun.*"

[38] Hawthorne's most avid supporter might be Olivia Gatti Taylor, who writes in her article "Cultural Confessions: Penance and Penitence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*" that *The Marble Faun* is the Catholic counterpart to the Puritan *Scarlet Letter* (135).

[39] Other minor Italian character named are Tomaso, Donatello's butler, and Panini, the artist who paints *Innocence, Dying of a Blood Stain*. The dearth of any real interaction between Hawthorne and Italians in his notebooks—and

woman's relief after confessing, Hilda responds: "I am a poor heretic, but a human sister; and I rejoice for you!" (405). Her mind ablaze, Hilda circles around the transept, reading the gilt inscriptions on the multiple confessional booths:

> She went from one to another of the confessionals, and, looking at each, perceived that they were inscribed with gilt letters: on one, Pro Italica Lingua; on another, Pro Flandrica Lingua; on a third, Pro Polonica Lingua; on a fourth, Pro Illyrica Lingua; on a fifth, Pro Hispanica Lingua. In this vast and hospitable cathedral, worthy to be the religious heart of the whole world, there was room for all nations; there was access to the Divine Grace for every Christian soul; there was an ear for what the overburdened heart might have to murmur, speak in what native tongue it would. (405-406)

It is here where Hilda, daughter of the Puritans, begins to waver. Although her religious crisis is presented as one of seduction, her national crisis might be stated as one of decentering. Hilda must read the gilt letters on the confessionals that present a multiplicity of languages, ranging from Italian ("Italica") and Dutch ("Flandrica") to Polish ("Polonica"), Albanian ("Illyrica"), and Spanish ("Hispanica"), each described in that most transnational of languages, Latin. It is a dizzying array, and so Hilda has "almost completed the circuit" when she stumbles upon the confessional inscribed with the words: "Pro Anglica Lingua." Finding her own "mother-tongue" included in this cosmopolitan menagerie of nations, Hilda ends her hesitation—and enters the booth to confess.

In framing this scene, Hawthorne presents us with precisely the same peripheral-center relationship proposed by James in his biography: Hilda, described by her friend Kenyon to be as provincial a girl as any with "whom [she] grew up in [her] native village," now stands in the Vatican, possibly the "religious heart of the whole world." Her impulse—to imagine the Vatican offering "access to the Divine Grace for every Christian soul"—might be said to approximate a level of cosmopolitanism. It is her initial state of bewilderment that enables this scene. Hilda

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the flatness of any social presence in *The Marble Faun*—ultimately limits any claims to be made for Hawthorne's cosmopolitanism.

responds to her "mother-tongue" as if it were her "mother's voice from within the tabernacle" (406), for Hilda is both literally and metaphorically an orphan—her parents lost, her motherland far away. The blurring of these orphan states is acknowledged by Hilda herself in speaking to the priest: "I am a motherless girl, and a stranger here in Italy" (409).

To see oneself as a metaphorical orphan is to be open to a form of metaphorical adoption.[40] Hilda ultimately retreats and scorns the suggestion of religious conversion—and so this cosmopolitan impulse is ultimately curtailed. However, in her state of bewilderment, the Catholic Church's broad and open appreciation for all nations seems admirable—in her state of "equipoise," Hilda retreats ever so lightly from her appreciation. In the aftermath, her backhanded compliment—that Catholicism would be an amazing religion if "its ministers were but a little more than human, above all error, pure from all iniquity"—is in a sense seconded by Hawthorne himself in turning the priest towards priestcraft after the confessional catharsis is over.[41] It is only in the state of bewilderment that Hilda remains decentered enough to be open to the Catholic Church's admirable qualities—the enemy of cosmopolitan impulses is not bewilderment, but equipoise.[42] When the novel moves to a kidnapping plot—in a plot twist so difficult that Hawthorne later added an epilogue trying to explain its ambiguity—Hawthorne offers bewilderment to the as-of-yet unbewildered Kenyon, climaxing in the Carnival scene at the end of the novel

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[40] In "The Art of Discrimination," Arthur Riss argues that Hilda's disillusionment frees her to love Kenyon (269). However, this observation can also be reversed: Kenyon steps in to fill the role of confidante, funneling any further emotional development to be gained from bewilderment into the marriage plot.

[41] Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* might be said to undergo a similar strategy of backtracking: although Lucy Snowe uses a confessional at the end of Book One—and although M. Paul is always represented sympathetically—the institution of the Catholic Church is thoroughly undermined by the venal priest that opposes Lucy Snowe's relationship with M. Paul in the third and final book of the novel.

[42] It is her complacency that pushes many critics to resent Hilda: in " 'A Linked Circle of Three' Plus One: Nonverbal Communication in *The Marble Faun*," John Idol argues that Kenyon joins Miriam and Donatello in sympathetic understanding of the world, but not Hilda (148).

Kenyon's experience of Carnival is perhaps a sly revision of an earlier scene in the novel; together, they might serve as bookends to the novel. In "The Sylvan Dance, Hawthorne paints a picture of a temporarily cosmopolitan gathering: an impromptu dance that lures in Donatello and Miriam among a host of unlikely guests. However, he is quick to add one exception to the broad cast of contadinas, French soldiers, German artists, Swiss guardsmen, and English gentlemen dancing together in the Villa Borghese. At the very edge of this swirling mass is an American: "The sole exception to the geniality of the moment, as we have understood, was seen in a countryman of our own, who sneered at the spectacle, and declined to compromise his dignity by making part of it" (109). It is here that bewilderment becomes resistance; it is here that openness becomes short-circuited by disgust. Though the other national stereotypes are embodied by costume or profession, the American is strangely disembodied—he is a mere exception, a refusal, a sneer. He remains a stubborn figure of provinciality in an otherwise cosmopolitan space.[43]

In figuring this American non-participant, Hawthorne is foregrounding the transition he underwent himself: from a bitter, weary, and annoyed tourist in 1858 to a more relaxed and appreciative traveler on a return visit in 1859.[44] To a certain extent, this is because Hawthorne had developed a sense of shy participation. In his second account of Roman Carnival, Hawthorne notes that there are degrees of participation—marginal positions that allow for pleasure without requiring performance:

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[43] In his article "Where is Hawthorne's Rome? *The Marble Faun* and the Cultural Space of Middle-Class Leisure," Richard Millington claims this stubbornness as representing both Kenyon and Hilda in general, coyly adding that "Real Americans don't dance" (21). In the paragraphs that follow, I attempt to add nuance to this characterization.

[44] In his first year in Rome, Hawthorne writes with an undeniable sneer, "Sunshine would have improved it, no doubt; but a person must have very broad sunshine within himself to be joyous on such shallow provocation" (66). However, in the following year, Hawthorne's journal entries are much more intimate and optimistic towards the celebration. Hawthorne is more attuned to the "tokens" of the approaching celebration, and he admits that he and his family "have followed up the Carnival pretty faithfully, and enjoyed it as well" (223).

> I was, yesterday, an hour or so among the people on the sidewalks of the Corso, just on the edges of the fun. They appeared to be in a decorous, good-natured mood, neither entering into the merriment, nor harshly repelling; and when groups of maskers overflowed among them, they received their jokes in good part. (224)

Hawthorne finds himself yet again at the margins, but he finds that there is where he wishes to be. It is in this spirit that he pens the famous Carnival scene where Kenyon wanders the Corso in search of his beloved Hilda.

Much like shy Miles Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*—or the shy narrator of James's *The Sacred Fount*—the American sculptor Kenyon imagines the party crowd as a site of struggle, confrontation, and embattlement: the "ammunition" of sugar plums, the "gentler warfare" of flowers, the occasional "salvo" of confetti, and the flour hanging in the air like smoke over a battlefield (496-497). Kenyon is playfully skewered by members of the crowd: harlequins strike him with wooden swords, damsels dance rings around him, and a horned fiend blows seeds into his face. A gigantic female figure plays at seduction; once rebuffed, she shoots him with a popgun packed with lime dust, leaving him to a coroner's jury who pronounces him dead. Among this cosmopolitan crowd, the climax of the novel is rendered in mock-heroic strokes—suggesting that the shy individual's struggle to negotiate the social scene is, of course, a matter of perspective— substituting social mortification for physical violence. In heroically searching for Hilda, the shy Kenyon can only suffer a mock-form of martyrdom.[45]

What Kenyon must learn in these narrow streets is what Hawthorne learns "just on the edges of the fun." Unlike the sneering gentleman in the early scene of *The Marble Faun*—and unlike Coverdale, who runs from the crowd—Kenyon must resign himself "to let it take its

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[45] In "Hawthorne and the Anxieties of the Carnival," Robert K. Martin emphasizes the bewilderment present at Carnival for the middle-class Kenyon who must give up play (38). More in line with my reading is John Michael's "The Moral of the Stones in Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*," where he calls Hawthorne's description of Kenyon at Carnival a form of masochistic self-portraiture (156).

course." Much like Hawthorne himself, Kenyon neither enters fully into the merriment, nor

harshly repels it. The rescue scene takes place when Kenyon has planted himself under a

balcony, outside of the "turbulent stream of wayfarers"—what Pater would have called the

"flood of external objects"—a position just on the margins of the social scene. Although Kenyon

cannot be as cosmopolitan as his friends Donatello and Miriam—out in the thoroughfares of the

parade—he can get close enough to see, to feel, to experience, even if he is ultimately looking

for his lost love.

Americans Going Nowhere

> "I am not much an advocate for traveling, and I observe that men run away to other
> countries because they are not good in their own."
>   — Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Culture"

Whatever claims might be said for Hawthorne's inclinations to cosmopolitanism, critics

have tended to dismiss them with a simple fact: at the end of *The Marble Faun*, the hero and

heroine go back to America. Based on a journal entry written when Hawthorne departed from

Florence, this famous passage in *The Marble Faun* lays out his reasoning for the return, while

also articulating what the shy author believed to be the final fate of the cosmopolite:

> They resolved to go back to their own land; because the years, after all, have a kind of
> emptiness, when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore. We defer the reality of
> life, in such cases, until a future moment, when we shall again breathe our native air; but,
> by and by, there are no future moments; or, if we do return, we find that the native air has
> lost its invigorating quality, and that life has shifted its reality to the spot where we have
> deemed ourselves only temporary residents. Thus, between two countries, we have none
> at all, or only that little space of either in which we finally lay down our discontented
> bones. It is wise, therefore, to come back betimes, or never. (521)

This passage reveals Hawthorne's final repudiation of the possibilities of cosmopolitanism. The

cosmopolitan became for him a negative category, defined by "a kind of emptiness," a state of

"deferment," a sacrifice of national identity in being caught between two countries. Although Hawthorne recognized in this work of fiction—and in his notebook reflections on his expatriate friends—that there was an admirable potential in the cosmopolitan, he can only in the end register cosmopolitanism as exile, absence, and loss.

But Hawthorne's reluctance was in fact James's reluctance, too. In *Hawthorne*, Henry James would have us believe that he begins where his predecessor left off:

> An American of equal value with Hawthorne, an American of equal genius, imagination, and, as our forefathers said, sensibility, would at present inevitably accommodate himself more easily to the idiosyncrasies of foreign lands. An American as cultivated as Hawthorne, is now almost inevitably more cultivated, and, as a matter of course, more Europeanised in advance, more cosmopolitan. It is very possible that in becoming so, he has lost something of his occidental savour. (162)

The progression of international understanding is well under way—Americans are "inevitably more cultivated," "as a matter of course." Where Hawthorne encountered the strange new world in his fifties, James has grown up with Europe as a child and is now living there in his thirties. James argues that it is similar with many Americans growing up in his generation. However, what he shares with Hawthorne is the same fear that he will lose something of his Americanness—what James calls that "occidental savour"—in remaining abroad so long.

In making this statement about cosmopolitanism, Henry James was in fact entering a debate that was taking place among American authors and critics at the time. The very terms of international travel and citizenship were under dispute: the word "tourist" was only just beginning to be distinguished from the more authentic "traveler,"[46] while the word "cosmopolitan" was only just beginning to be accepted as an occasionally positive term.[47] What

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[46] See James Buzard's monograph on tourism, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to "Culture," 1800-1918*, for a smart introduction to the history of tourism and touristic consciousness.

[47] In her monograph *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, Jessica Berman argues that the term "cosmopolitan" was originally a pejorative term, leading up to James's generation (35).

critics have failed to recognize is that rather than making a break with Hawthorne's model of the American in exile, Henry James continued to define the American abroad as dislocated and bewildered. The history of James's use of this term—and the varying responses he received from critics who panned his biography—reveal how "cosmopolitanism" remained an ambiguous and ambivalent term for James as it did for many Americans in the nineteenth century.

For example, in the *Encyclopedia of Political Science* (1883), a short entry is made for the term "COSMOPOLITANISM," wedged between longer entries on "CORRUPTION IN POLITICS" and "COST OF COLLECTION OF TAXES." Here, the definition offered is far from objective—even in its own encyclopedic entry, it cannot be given a wholly affirmative definition:

> COSMOPOLITANISM is a sentiment which embraces the whole human race. The cosmopolitan is a citizen of the universe, therefore he finds the popular patriotism which confines all its love to the country of one's birth too narrow. There is nothing better than cosmopolitanism when it is an extension of patriotism, when it is genuine philanthropy; but what shall we say of the man who wishes to substitute for patriotism a sentiment so vague that it lacks body and becomes a misty unreality? Does he not mistake the shadow for the substance? (674)[48]

The word was hardly popularized in Hawthorne's time—he himself used it only once or twice—but it is hard not to see that even a generation later, the popular American sentiment towards cosmopolitanism bears a similar thread to those reflections written down in *The Marble Faun*. We hear echoes of Hawthorne's "deferring the reality of life" in this passage in rendering cosmopolitanism a sentiment "so vague that it lacks body and becomes a misty unreality."

When defining cosmopolitanism, James grapples with American ideology as much as with Hawthorne his literary predecessor. The reception of James's biography raises this tension

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[48] "Cosmopolitanism." *Cyclopaedia of Political Science, Political Economy, and of the Political History of the United States, vol. 1.* Ed. John J. Lalor. Chicago: Cary and Co, 1883.

between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. In *The Penn Monthly*, one critic responds to James's suggestion that Hawthorne was "provincial"—and Thoreau was "parochial"—by stating, "Mr. James aspires, I believe, to be cosmopolitan. But it is surely better to be patriotic first, and cosmopolitan second, than to be cosmopolitan first, and patriotic last, or not at all" (795).[49] In the *National Quarterly Review*, another critic complains that James's "fine condescension […] prompts and compels us to ask,—who is this bumptious youth who has so far outgrown his American old clothes?" (503).[50]

Among hurt American egos and condescending replies to condescension, Thomas Wentworth Higginson offers the most thoughtful reply to James's newfound cosmopolitanism. In his 1879 *Short Studies of American Authors,* Higginson engaged with James as a particularly young author, not only compared to literary figures like Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Poe but compared to James's future career. Given the publication date, Higginson would have in mind James's early short stories, novels like *Roderick Hudson* and *The American*, and the critical biography *Hawthorne*. At the center of his discussion is James's status of an estranged American: "When he draws Americans in Europe, he is at home; when he brings Europeans across the Atlantic, he never seems quite sure of his ground" (56). Here, Higginson is stating a preference for works like "Daisy Miller" over "An International Episode"—or *The American* over *The Europeans*.

It is with this asymmetry that Higginson offers a qualification to James's international mindset when he concludes, "The truth is, that Mr. James's cosmopolitanism is, after all, limited:

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[49] "A New Estimate of Thoreau." *The Penn Monthly* (October 1880).

[50] "Review of the English Men of Letters Series." *The National Quarterly Review* (April 1880).

to be really cosmopolitan, a man must be at home even in his own country" (57).[51] It is a critique

that would be picked up across other American critiques of James's early works. In the *Primers*

for the People series (1883), a critic would state, "A cosmopolitan should begin by knowing his

own country; and this is just where Mr. James's ignorance is most palpable. He may know Paris,

but he is laughably ignorant of Boston. He may be at home in London, but New York is to him

an unknown land" (10).[52] In the *Saturday Review* (1885), one critic compares James unfavorably

to his close friend, William Dean Howells: for although they are both accomplished American

authors who write in the realist style, they are nonetheless different:

> The most striking and radical difference between the two writers is that Mr. James
> is cosmopolitan and Mr. Howells is American. […] Mr. Howells has been in Italy; but he
> felt no temptations to belong to other nations, and he remains an American. Mr. James is
> not a New-Yorker, though he was born in New York; nor a Bostonian, though he has
> lived in Boston: he is not even an American, and as certainly he is not an Englishman or a
> Frenchman. […] To say this is to say that Mr. James is a foreigner even in the land of his
> birth. (517-18)[53]

This critique emphasizes the Hawthorne definition of the expatriate: exile, homelessness, a

compromise of multiple countries in order to come at last to nowhere at all.[54] It is in this light

that we must approach James's early works, for the definition of cosmopolitanism has shifted

drastically over the years. Cosmopolitanism today is conceived as comfort, as being comfortable

everywhere—but James had imbibed enough of the early, provincial outlook of his compatriots

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[51] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Henry James, Jr." *Short Studies of American Authors*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1880.

[52] "Henry James, Jr." *Primers for the People: vol. 1, A Primer of Criticism.* Baltimore: The People's Publishing Co, 1883.

More hilariously, the critic adds, "[James] is the Benedict Arnold of American literature—the traitor to his country in letters as Arnold was in arms" (7).

[53] "Review: *The Rise of Silas Lapham.*" *The Saturday Review* (Oct. 17, 1885): 517-518.

[54] In "The Man of Action: Henry James and the Performance of Gender," Richard Henke discusses how this national prejudice against the expatriate continued to keep James out of the American literary canon during the 1930s and 40s (229).

to define it negatively: not many countries but none; not a citizen of the universe but a citizen of nowhere.

It is in light of this debate that James's early works take on a more divided, ambivalent position, for James has become "by force of circumstance" a cosmopolitan—but he is uncertain whether he has not gone astray. It is Rowland Mallet's "quarrel" with his own country; it is Winterbourne's state of being "booked for a mistake" (206). It is only in *The Portrait of a Lady* where we begin to see a certain acceptance of the term—enough that James can see the joke in it:

> "He is what is called a cosmopolitan," Isabel suggested.
> "That means he's a little of everything and not much of any. I must say I think patriotism is like charity— it begins at home."
> "Ah, but where does home begin, Miss Stackpole?" Ralph inquired. (107)

For critics like Adeline Tintner to intimate that James does not really attain to a cosmopolitan mindset until the 1890s is to miss a key point: throughout James's early years, the definition of cosmopolitan was still in a state of flux. If James attains a cosmopolitan outlook in his later years—as we would recognize it today—it is only because he himself has helped redefine it.[55]

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In January 1882, Henry James would meet Oscar Wilde for the first time.[56] Meeting in Boston, their first encounter revolved around definitions of home. Wilde was visiting America

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[55] This evolution was by no means without its backlash. For example, in *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, Jessica Berman discusses at length the rise and fall of the magazine *Cosmopolitan*, originally a mouthpiece for cosmopolitan ideals, only to be co-opted by nationalism in the age of yellow journalism (28ff).

Likewise, Henry James would revisit this problem in later works, most notably *The American Scene*. See Martha Banta's "Men, Women, and the American Way."

[56] As two authors who would later be claimed by the homosexual community, they have often been imagined as occupying opposite poles of queer identification: Oscar Wilde, the performative homosexual, and Henry James, the

for the first time, while James had returned after more than a decade in Europe. The meeting is

here summarized by Richard Ellmann:

> It was not a successful visit. James remarked, "I am very nostalgic for London." Wilde could not resist putting him down. "Really?" he said, no doubt in his most cultivated Oxford accent. "You care for places? The world is my home." He felt himself to be a citizen of the world. […] By the end of the interview James was raging. (179)

The moment reads almost like an exchange from one of James's novels: a comfortable and

somewhat presumptuous individual makes a joke at an acquaintance's expense, never quite

suspecting how it might be received. Wilde teases James the way that Daisy Miller teases

Frederick Winterbourne, or the way that Christina Light teases Rowland Mallet, which is not to

say that Wilde was flirting with James exactly, but rather that Wilde's misstep—and James's

misreading—partakes of some of the very miscommunications dramatized in *Roderick Hudson*

and "Daisy Miller."[57] It would be many years before James could forgive Wilde for the perceived

insult.

But there is more at stake in this encounter than hurt feelings, for the scene encapsulates a

tension between two different ways of viewing the world: Henry James feeling uncomfortable in

his own homeland, longing for London; Oscar Wilde making a splash in America with his

outrageous manners, claiming to be comfortable everywhere. At root, Wilde and James are

offering us two competing definitions of cosmopolitanism. For much like the character of

Gabriel Nash that James would base upon him in *The Tragic Muse*, Oscar Wilde has gone on in

popular conceptions to embody a cosmopolitanism in which the world at large is his home—

where a national origin is indeed hard to locate or pin down—for everywhere he is comfortable.

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closeted homosexual. See Hugh Stevens' "Queer Henry *In the Cage*" for a summary of how these two authors have obtained such iconic status (124).

[57] See Shelley Salamensky's article "Henry James, Oscar Wilde, and 'Fin-de-Siècle Talk': A Brief Reading" for a brief discussion of this encounter, its relationship to *The Tragic Muse*, and to both James's and Wilde's personalities.

In contrast, James embodies a cosmopolitanism in which everywhere he goes, he is slightly *uncomfortable*, slightly irked, slightly bewildered. Wilde's was a *positive* cosmopolitanism—it claimed everywhere—while the cosmopolitanism that belonged to James was *negative*—it claimed nowhere.[58] Wilde's manner, much like that of Daisy Miller or Christina Light, was ultimately to play with contradictory values; on the other hand, James's manner—much like that of a Winterbourne or a Rowland Mallet—was ultimately to obsess over them, to take them seriously, perhaps even too seriously, and thus to sometimes miss the punch line.[59]

In recent years, many critics have come to celebrate and theorize the cosmopolite—or rather, to celebrate Wilde's cosmopolite.[60] Even when critics discuss Jamesian cosmopolitanism, they follow Adeline Tintner's lead in defining cosmopolitanism as the state of being free from "national limitations and attachments" as a "citizen of the world" (9). In defining it as such, we inevitably exclude James's early years—those years of initial discomfort—from the portrait.[61] In the end, we might ask ourselves what is lost when our modern ideals of cosmopolitanism ignore that Jamesian shyness that embodies a sense of being out of place, a sense of feeling uncomfortable and lost and bewildered, though ultimately dedicated to the international scene. It is a bewilderment that James inherited partly from Nathaniel Hawthorne—though as he insisted himself, James inevitably went further and came out on the other side.

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[58] In another sense, James and Wilde might be dramatizing the distinction posed by Timothy Brennan in his work *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*: the tension between the cosmopolitan as an analytical category versus a normative projection (1-2).

[59] In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Kwame Anthony Appiah worries that some thinkers imagine cosmopolitanism to be an overturning of cultural differences—or a flattening of them (57, 158ff).

[60] See Jeffrey Alan Melton's book *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism* for a study that parallels this split between James and Wilde, encapsulated in Twain's progression from *Innocents Abroad* (1869) to *A Tramp Abroad* (1880).

[61] In *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James,* Adeline Tintner argues that critics tend to focus on James's early writings that focus on the "international problem." She adds that it is only in later works that James is truly cosmopolitan (1ff). Both Angus Wrenn and Jessica Berman agree with this assessment.

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Chapter 4

Tourist Love: Travel, Romance, and *Roderick Hudson*

" 'Italy,' I answered softly, too; and for a moment we looked at each other. She looked
as pretty as if, instead of showing her photographs, I had been making love to her."
— Henry James, "Four Meetings"

Surrounded by couriers and tourists, Frederick Forsyth Winterbourne waits in a hotel

lobby for a pretty American girl. It is not the typical setting for a Victorian courtship scene: the

drawing room, the secluded garden, and the social party give way to the hotel. For the shy and

scrupulous Winterbourne, the place seems too public and common: "it was not the place he

should have chosen." However, when Daisy Miller finally joins him, the young man is struck by

the suggestiveness of their situation: "he felt as if there were something romantic going forward.

He could have believed he was going to elope with her" (167). But then they would never dare—

they are only going to see the Castle of Chillon, a popular Swiss tourist attraction.[1]

At the publication of "Daisy Miller" in 1878, it was safe to say that Winterbourne and

Daisy were not the only American travelers abroad.[2] Between guidebooks and tour guides and

travel literature, railways and steamboats and hotels, Americans were adapting the Grand Tour

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[1] The Chateau de Chillon quickly became a popular tourist attraction after Lord Byron described it in his poem "The Prisoner of Chillon."

[2] In his 1964 monograph *Americans Abroad*, Foster Rhea Dulles notes that American tourism to Europe boomed during the nineteenth-century, beginning with a trickle of 5,000 travellers per year at the beginning of the century, expanding to 30,000 travellers in the middle of the century to almost 100,000 by the end of the century (44, 102).

into a middle-class way of life.[3] The rise of tourism changed not only how Americans spent their leisure time, but it also offered readers a new kind of love story. James's novella "Daisy Miller" encapsulates this impulse, which may be the key to its popularity. Beginning with a hotel in Vevey, pivoting on a trip to the Castle of Chillon, and ending with a midnight viewing of the Coliseum in Rome, the novella unites tourist and sexual desire. In this tale, tourist impulses facilitate an otherwise tentative love story: the shy hero uses tourism as both an alibi and a catalyst to the romance that takes place within the frame of international travel. This intersection of tourism and romance characterizes a hybrid-genre that has up until now been undertheorized by critics, which I call the "tourist love" genre.

This genre might be said to begin with Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), where a shy and sensitive English traveller falls in love with an Italian *improvatrise* while touring continental Europe. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, this tradition would be developed and explored in works such as Scott's *Waverley* (1814), Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872). But no author has defined—and been defined by—this genre more than Henry James. We can look over the broad expanse of James's *oeuvre*, from the sudden and unexpected friendship that binds Clement Searle and the narrator in "The Passionate Pilgrim" to *The Europeans* where Felix and Gertrude's courtship revolves around fantasies of travelling across Europe. We can consider the tourism-seduction that Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond hoist upon Isabel Archer in the middle chapters of *The*

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[3] In *Going Abroad*, William Stowe suggests that this expansion was due both to an increase in disposable wealth in America and the advancements of railroad and steamship technology (6ff). In his *Historical Geography of Recreation and Tourism in the Western World,* John Towner has written about how the itineraries of nineteenth-century American tourists were a mixture of the typical eighteenth-century preoccupations with Italy and France, combined with the Romantic attraction to the natural scenes in England, Scotland, and Switzerland (99ff).

Portrait of a Lady and the almost-courtship between Maria Gostrey and Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*.

Time and time again, these scenes of tourism stand in for varying scenes of camaraderie, courtship, and seduction. But what does it mean to tell a love story as if it were a travel narrative? In *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush*, Mary Ann O'Farrell discusses how women might find "a way of telling [their] own story as if it were someone else's" (41).[4] Tourist love might be said to tell a love story as if it were another story altogether. This shy technique of veiling one's tale in another story—or circulating one's own desires through another person—can be a means of protecting yourself from rejection; it can even be a means of gaining new leverage to express oneself. In so many of James's tales and novels, characters who feel an attraction to others—be it sexual, romantic, fascinative, or undefined—express their interest in gestures of tourism: they tour the house at Middleshire, or they travel across Italy.

Nowhere is this intersection of tourism and romance more conspicuous than in Henry James's first major novel *Roderick Hudson*.[5] Written three years before the breakout success of "Daisy Miller," the novel *Roderick Hudson* is defined by its complicated and ambitious blend of tourism and the love story, making it one of the most important experiments in the tourist love genre. The novel begins with a proposed tour of Italy and a marriage proposal—though not between the same people. The novel is notable for its fluidity of desire and its permeability of boundaries: if the young artist Roderick is impulsive in proposing marriage to Mary Garland,

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[4] In particular, Mary Ann O'Farrell is analyzing the climax of *Persuasion*, in which Anne Elliot couches her own desire in that of "woman in general" (40).

[5] Although it begins the New York Edition of his works, James's suggestion that *Roderick Hudson* was his first attempt at a novel is patently untrue: both Bartel and Saint-Amour have discussed the self-fashioning at work when James pushed his first short novel *Watch and Ward* (1871) to the wayside.

then the patron-mentor Rowland is no less impulsive in offering to carry Roderick to Rome for his education.[6] In this way, the two become parallel propositions, the prospect of travelling companions engaged together just as any newlyweds.

In *Roderick Hudson*, Henry James uses the novel form to capitalize on the pleasures and interests of tourism in a manner unprecedented by those who came before him. Where *The Marble Faun* gives us two tourists living in Rome—Hilda and Kenyon—a novel like *Roderick Hudson* gives us nine or ten: the artists Roderick Hudson, Sam Singleton, Augusta Blanchard, and Gloriani; the patrons Rowland Mallet and Mr. Leavenworth; high-aspiring Mrs. Light and her (half-American) daughter Christina; and finally the Puritans from Northampton, Roderick's mother and Mary Garland.[7] What was once a solitary wanderer in *Waverley*—or a simple dyad in *The Marble Faun*—or even a love triangle in *Corinne* or *Middlemarch*—now becomes a constellation of tourists, a web of approval and disapproval, and a multiplication of desire both spoken and unspoken. To this day, the novel has intrigued and baffled critics who simply wish to pin down the desires, sexual or otherwise, of its various characters.

Since its publication, critics—including James himself in his preface to the 1907 New York Edition—have questioned the execution of the heterosexual scripts between Mary Garland and Rowland, Christina Light and Roderick; others have posited unexpected cross-relationships

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[6] Some critics note the peculiarity of both men falling in love with Mary Garland just prior to their departure to Rome. When Roderick notes that "it's rather droll, certainly, to engage one's self to a girl whom one is going to leave the next day, for years" (53), we as readers can imagine that it is less droll than simply convenient. As Rene Girard notes in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, among homosocial rivals, desire is contagious (96).

[7] There is a flurry of critical debate on who might constitute an exemplar in *Roderick Hudson*. In terms of artists, Maurice Beebe suggests Roderick as the tragic hero, Craig Milliman nominates Gloriani, while both Paul Saint-Amour and Elizabeth Duquette suggest that Sam Singleton's trajectory as proving the most inspiring. On the other hand, Natasha Sajé believes that Christina Light is the "only character equipped for greatness" (163).

that remain submerged.[8] More importantly, recent critics have given special attention to the

homosocial link between Roderick and Rowland, a link that veers into the homoerotic—or the

proto-homosexual—or the homosexual in fact.[9] In general, queer readings of the novel focus

their attention on the first three chapters of the novel with a closing remark on Roderick's

death.[10] Accounting for this tendency, Leland Person argues in his article "Falling into

Heterosexuality: Sculpting Male Bodies in *The Marble Faun* and *Roderick Hudson*" that the

sexuality of the novel remains fluid until the appearance of Christina Light, who funnels the

sexual economy of the plot into a melodramatic heterosexual narrative, full of flirtation, jealousy,

and rejection (130).

However, if this reading describes Roderick's ultimate trajectory, it does not account for

Rowland Mallet, the shy aesthete whose desire remains ambiguous beyond the initial chapters

and refuses to be tamped down. In his 1907 preface, James himself would insist that multiple

layers of attraction would need to be scrutinized in order to explain Rowland's behavior:

> Rigidly viewed, each of these upheavals of [Rowland's] sensibility must have been
> exclusive of other upheavals, yet the reader is asked to accept them as working together.
> They are different vibrations, but the whole sense of the situation depicted is that they
> should each have been of the strongest, too strong to walk hand in hand. (*AN* 17-18)

For Rowland is enmeshed in a wide web of possibly erotic and emotional relationships, bound

not only to Roderick, Christina, and Mary, but also Augusta Blanchard and his cousin Cecilia. A

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[8] In *Henry James and Sexuality,* Hugh Stevens argues that the love triangle fluctuates between heterosexual and homosexual readings, depending on the center of the love triangle (106). On the other hand, Ronald Emerick describes the sexual dynamics of the novel as a "love rectangle" rather than a love triangle: Rowland loves Mary Garland, who loves Roderick, who loves Christina Light, who loves Rowland (353).

[9] In *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, Eric Haralson calls the novel proto-queer: "*Roderick Hudson* is not 'about' homosexuality so much as it *about* to be about homosexuality" (45). In "Henry James's Permanent Adolescence," John R. Bradley argues that *Roderick Hudson* is a failed novel unless you take into account the homoeroticism in the story.

[10] Both Gregory Woods and Eric Haralson tend to focus on the bookends—Northampton, first touching down in Rome, and Roderick's death—in their discussions of the homoeroticism in the novel. See Woods's "The Art of Friendship in *Roderick Hudson*" and Haralson's *Henry James and Queer Modernity*.

proper theorization of Rowland's sexuality must account for what James calls the "later patching-up" of Mary Garland when she herself comes to Rome, as well as his minor flirtations with Christina Light and his increasing distance from his male friend Roderick.

In many ways, the answer is simply this: Rowland Mallet is not so much in love with men or women as he is in love with tourists.[11] To put it more precisely, Rowland's tourist sensibilities define his erotic and psychic life more than any simple identification of sexual orientation. In this chapter, I theorize "tourist love" as a shy mode of desire that gains its erotic tension from a transfer of cultural knowledge between an informed tour guide and a "virginal" tourist. In doing so, James reconciles the competing discourses of the tourist and the traveler, a growing preoccupation of the nineteenth-century imagination. For the shy heroes and heroines of James's tourist love stories, the scaffolding of tourism offers an alibi—and a catalyst—for intimacy and romantic desire. However, they face a crisis when the vacation comes to an end: the often unhappy endings of James's tourist love stories reveal an ambivalence towards the emotional and cultural dividends of travelling. Understanding the conventions of this genre explains not only the erotic economies of *Roderick Hudson* but also how the tourist love story might continue to move us, even to this day.

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[11] In "Subjunctive Biography," Eric Savoy distinguishes gay studies from queer theory—the former emphasizing an essential sexual orientation, while the latter emphasizes a more slippery object-choice. He argues that what makes James a powerful storyteller is his insistence on slippery eroticism—he refuses to write a "gay" novel (254-5).

Tourists, Tour Guides, and Tourist Love

> "On my telling him that I was a fellow citizen he stopped short, deeply touched, and, silently passing his arm into my own, suffered me to lead him through the other apartments and down into the gardens."
> — Henry James, "The Passionate Pilgrim"

Tourist love thrives on eroticizing cultural education: Corinne educates Oswald, Flora educates Waverley, Winterbourne educates Daisy. This script runs through *Roderick Hudson* in complex and complicated patterns, counter to the simpler presentation of "Daisy Miller." At the Castle of Chillon, both Daisy Miller and Winterbourne play their respective parts. Daisy wears a "travelling costume," while her responses seem particularly performative: "she tripped about the vaulted chambers, rustled her skirts in the corkscrew staircases, flirted back with a pretty little cry and a shudder from the edge of the oubliettes" (DM 168). Her movements about the tourist site are disguised flirtations, and her responses are framed to be pretty. On the other hand, the shy Frederick Winterbourne sticks to the script of an experienced traveler: he has already been to the castle and knows the history, the architecture, and ultimately "some of the objects of interest in the view, with which [Daisy] appeared quite unacquainted" (146).[12]

Daisy can only exclaim, "I never saw a man that knew so much!" which is ultimately a concession to the parts that they are each playing: Daisy plays the tourist and Winterbourne the tour guide. (He even bribes the custodian of the site in order to better perform this duty.) Frederick Winterbourne finds pleasure not only in the security of his script, but in the "original reflections" that Daisy expresses. In this phrase, the word "reflections" captures at once her personal thoughts but also the indirect circuit of Winterbourne's pleasure as he experiences—through Daisy—the Castle of Chillon as if for the first time (168-9). The new tourist might be

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[12] As Dean MacCannell notes in *The Tourist*, no sight-seeing is possible without an interpreter of the sight itself, be it a knowledgeable companion, a signpost, or a travel guide (41).

said to occupy a space of *cultural virginity*; tourist love operates on a power dynamic of first-time energy and second-time knowingness.

In James's *Roderick Hudson*, the structure of this desire is provided even before it is given an object. Before the story has truly begun, the main character Rowland Mallet fantasizes about a transfer of cultural knowledge. In the first chapter, we're told that he would like nothing better than to "go abroad and with all expedition and secrecy purchase certain valuable specimens of the Dutch and Italian schools," and then present these masterpieces to "an American city, not unknown to aesthetic fame, in which at that time there prevailed a good deal of fruitless aspiration toward an art-museum" (5-6). Rowland's fantasy centers on exercising his excellent taste on behalf of an artless beneficiary. He does not share this dream with his cousin Cecilia, but merely says that he feels like "a man of genius, half finished"[13]—to which she replies, "What an immense number of words […] to say you want to fall in love!" (7). These two motifs—the desire to offer a charity of culture and the (proposed) desire to fall in love—finally coalesce into a single motivation: the mentoring of the young artist Roderick Hudson.[14] For Roderick is the local genius in need of training, an American innocent who would benefit from a European tour—and Rowland leaps at the opportunity to show him Italy.[15]

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[13] This conceit would first appear in Henry James's short story "The Madonna of the Future," where the failed Mr. Theobald laments, "I am the half of a genius! Where in the wide world is my other half?" (762). Unlike Rowland, Mr. Theobald is a failed artist looking for inspiration, whereas Rowland Mallet is looking for an artist to inspire.

[14] If readers are puzzled by how quickly Rowland brushes off Cecilia—the girl that was once the love of his life—we need only look at how quickly their opinions on Roderick diverge. Cecilia likes Roderick "just as he is," while Rowland hopes to improve him through travel and education. For Rowland, tourist love demands a transfer of knowledge and experience from one party to the other; his cousin Cecilia prefers to leave Roderick in a state of arrested development.

[15] In "Where is Hawthorne's Rome? *The Marble Faun* and the Cultural Space of Middle-Class Leisure," Richard Millington notes how nineteenth-century Americans treat tourism as a special kind of play—play that is secretly work, performing an "ideological labor" of acculturation and taste-building (12).

Piqued by the promise of Roman statues and Catholic cathedrals and pre-Raphaelite colors, Roderick agrees to travel with Rowland to Italy. Their first scene abroad shows them as tourists, visiting the Villa Ludovisi:

> They had wandered out into the gardens, and were lounging away the morning under the spell of their magical picturesqueness. Roderick declared that he would go nowhere else; that, after the Juno, it was a profanation to look at anything but sky and trees. There was a fresco of Guercino, to which Rowland, though he had seen it on his former visit to Rome, went dutifully to pay his respects. (RH 77)

Roderick spreads out lazily on the grass, speaking about art in a pseudo-religious way; with his poetic and performative gestures, the young artist lends romance to their sight-seeing. In strict contrast, Rowland goes to see a fresco of Guercino, motivated by a sense of duty, as if ticking a tourist site off the list. In this scene and elsewhere, Rowland and Roderick complement each other: Rowland's patronage makes the journey possible, and his careful planning gives it a comprehensive shape, but it is Roderick's passion that lends the plotted trip spontaneity, and his emotional outbursts give individual moments weight and meaning.

Critics have argued that Rowland and Roderick go on to become the joint-heroes of the novel.[16] However, I would add that their sense of "balance" depends on a play on touristic conventions. Although Rowland describes himself as a half-finished "genius," he is really a half-finished tourist. In their joining of experience and innocence, Rowland and Roderick comprise a psychic version of Murray's guidebooks. Popularized in the 1830s and ubiquitous in James's era—Mary Garland herself carries one throughout the novel—the Murray guidebooks were noted for their union of romantic and pragmatic perspectives. The guidebooks were prized for mixing practical advice written by John Murray himself with romantic quotations and reflections

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[16] Both Natasha Sajé and Richard Henke suggest that we as readers divide the position of "main character" or "hero" between both Roderick and Rowland.

cribbed from Byron, Shelley, Petrarch, and Tasso.[17] The conventional tourist experience was thus marketed to guidebook readers as a union of pragmatism and poetry. Rowland and Roderick offer us the perfect fusion of culture and energy, of critical perception and artistic aspiration, of critic and artist.[18]

It is this transfer of cultural knowledge that fuels the relationships of the novel. After three months in Rome, Rowland reflects on how far his relationship with the young artist has come:

> The vivacity of his perceptions, the audacity of his imagination, the picturesqueness of his phrase when he was pleased,—and even more when he was displeased,—his abounding good-humor, his candor, his unclouded frankness, his unfailing impulse to share every emotion and impression with his friend; all this made comradeship a pure felicity, and interfused with a deeper amenity their long evening talks at cafe doors in Italian towns. (83)

While touring Europe, Roderick's enthusiasm for Italy becomes contagious: the "vivacity of his perceptions" and the "audacity of his imagination," the shifting highs and lows of his critical opinion, his overflowing good humor all combine to enhance Rowland's sense of their friendship. In particular, it "interfuse[s]"—that is, it mixes, blends, pours into—"their long evening talks at cafe doors in Italian towns" with a deeper amenity.[19]

In the increasingly complex international scene reflected in his fiction, James uses tourist love to organize his American travelers. Standing among urbane expatriates, carefree coquettes, nervous Puritans, and striving artists, the sights of a city like Rome become the tourist hub—

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[17] See Barbara Schaff's excellent article "John Murray's *Handbooks to Italy*: Making Tourism Literary" for a summary of John Murray and the business of tourism in the early 19th century.

[18] In "Winterbourne and the Doom of Manhood in *Daisy Miller*," Robert Weisbuch notes that this is ultimately the fantasy behind Winterbourne and Daisy Miller's possible love affair: taste married to energy (68).

[19] This interfusion resembles what George Dekker describes in *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism* as the ideal of congenial travel companions, defined in the Romantic period as a free flow of emotions while on tour (22).

while the shy, sensitive cosmopolite Rowland becomes the central conduit. We might imagine how this constellation might appeal to the young James: in his early letters, he writes of his original ecstasy upon reaching Rome; he writes to friends and family about how much he would love to show them the sites.[20] James's personal experiences in Europe attest to how he sublimated his loneliness into the pose of a consummate traveller. His tourist love stories operates on an economy of impressions—who has had them, who is having them for the first time, and who is having them through others. Rowland Mallet is one such tour guide whose pleasure is defined by this transfer of knowledge: he helps others cross the Atlantic, he helps others understand the Old World, he facilitates the pleasure of others in touring Italy—and thus he catches some for himself, reflected in their growth.

In fashioning love stories between a first-time cultural virgin and a second-time tour guide, James was mediating an especially American anxiety. The distinction between the tacky, ignorant tourist and the nuanced, proper traveler was beginning to dominate the thoughts of tourists and travel-writers in James's era, a preoccupation reflected in works like Twain's *Innocents Abroad* or James's own *Transatlantic Sketches*. Twain called his tour group a "strange horde […] that called themselves Americans, and seemed to imagine in some unaccountable way that they had a right to be proud of it" (645); he would moan and groan about their

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[20] He would eventually guide William and Alice around the popular sites of Europe himself, ameliorating their difficulties and cultivating their enthusiasms. But even for those he did not escort across the continent, the fantasy of travel held a particular fascination. In a letter to Henry James, the young Mary Temple writes:

> My darling Harry—(You don't mind if I am a little affectionate, now that you are so far away, do you?) […] I shall miss you, my dear—but I am most happy to know that you are well & enjoying yourself. I wish I were there too. If you were not my cousin I would write to ask you to marry me & take me with you—but as it is, it wouldn't do. (qtd. in Novick, "The Young Master," 191-192)

pretentiousness, their gullibility, and their relic hunting.[21] James captures a similar ambivalence

in his sketch "The After-season in Rome," where he pointedly remarks: "One may say without

injustice to anybody that the state of mind of a great many foreigners in Rome is one of intense

impatience for the moment when all other foreigners shall have departed. One may confess to

this state of mind, and be no misanthrope" (TS 180).

As Dean MacCannell puts it: "Tourists dislike tourists" (10). Authors like Twain sought

to diffuse American anxieties in the travel narrative genre by treating tourists with careful irony.

In contrast, the tourist love story would reconcile these distinctions between the tourist and the

traveller in something akin to a marriage plot, a distinction not rendered in inevitable antagonism

but dissolved in their mutual attraction. What causes annoyance in the individual's travel sketch

becomes the dynamo for attraction and seduction in a tourist love story. The tourist love in

Roderick Hudson eroticizes cultural knowledge, promising it in the safest terms to the uninitiated

tourist—and promising it a second time to the seasoned traveler.

Sight-seeing

> "I do not know if I deceive myself… but it seems to me that we become dearer to each
> other by admiring together monuments which speak to the soul by their true grandeur."
>   — Madame de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*

What does tourist love do to the tourist gaze? We might begin with a comparison of two

moments of sight-seeing, one imagined and one real. Let us first consider Daisy's journey to the

Castle of Chillon in "Daisy Miller": the old castle is deserted when Winterbourne and Daisy

arrive, leaving the two tourists "quite to themselves." The tourist site becomes a private space

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[21] As Jeffrey Alan Melton describes in *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism*, Twain reveled in the satiric
deflation of his fellow travellers (5ff). In "Americans and Anti-Tourism," Shirley Foster discusses in detail how
uncomfortably the pose of tourist sits alongside that of the anti-tourist (176).

with all the legitimacy of a public one—it is an intimate setting, although they are never precisely alone. It is here that the act of sight-seeing upholds, facilitates, and enables the romantic narrative of the novella: they explore the Castle of Chillon, which they use as a license to explore each other. Daisy finds "a great many pretexts in the rugged embrasures of Chillon for asking Winterbourne sudden questions about himself" (DM 169). In the end, tourism becomes a *pretext* for romance—a maneuver, an alibi—a common ground on which to explore personal correspondences. Tourism inevitably shapes the way in which romance can be expressed, just as we imagine Daisy and Winterbourne's conversation being shaped by the "rugged embrasures" of Chillon.

This privacy is contrived—perhaps markedly so. Let us compare the fictional scene with James's first journey to the Castle of Chillon as described in his travel piece "Swiss Notes." Travelling with a female friend, James relates his bewilderment before the crowds:

> When I went, Bädecker in hand, I found a huge concourse of visitors awaiting the reflux of an earlier wave. "Let us at least wait till there is no one else," I said to my companion. She smiled in compassion of my naiveté, "*There is never no one else*," she answered. "We must treat it as a crush or leave it alone." (TS 66)

James arrives at the tourist site with Baedeker in hand and Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon" in his heart, but he is to be sorely disappointed. What James wants is what he read: Byron wrote his popular poem just after the continent reopened to tourists after the Napoleonic Wars—and he was describing a prisoner living in the sixteenth century.[22]

In *The Tourist Gaze,* John Urry distinguishes precisely between these two modes of touristic vision: the "romantic" gaze, emphasizing the isolated individual's encounter with the picturesque scene, and the "collective" gaze, absorbing the hustle and bustle of crowds, even

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[22] As James Buzard notes in "The Uses of Romanticism: Byron and the Victorian Continental Tour," the idolatry surrounding Byron as Romantic traveller posed a paradox: what Byron saw, thousands of tourists in future generations would clamor to see (34).

crowds of fellow tourists (43). Throughout his collection *Transatlantic Sketches*, James grappled

with the romanticized experiences rendered by predecessors such as de Staël, Byron, and

Hawthorne. He continually measured the gap between what was expected and what was

experienced: James expressed his disappointment with Roman Carnival, and he mourned the

crowds in the Vatican, the Palatine, and even the Corso. However, when James turned to fiction,

he would switch between the individual, emotive vision and the cluttered, anonymous vision

strategically. Winterbourne and Daisy could find themselves alone in the Castle of Chillon, even

though they take a crowded ferry across the Lake Geneva to get there. The tourist landscape

becomes a trope in service of the personal, facilitating intimacy as needed. Although James's

prosaic travel writing emphasizes realism, his love stories draw on the romantic tropes more

indicative of an earlier era: the Coliseum at night, the empty cathedral, the secluded art gallery.

This variance in tone belies James's intent: tourism as a fictional trope is meant to redistribute

interest, to intensify it at moments and to diffuse it at others.

It is with this redistribution in mind that I return to *Roderick Hudson*. Although the

romance between Rowland and Mary Garland has been widely criticized for its aridity and

improbability, I argue that this relationship begins to gather real substance in the final chapters of

the novel when Miss Garland herself crosses the Atlantic.[23] Upon reaching Rome, she is in need

of a chaperon, a position that Rowland eagerly fills:

> It became natural in this way that, Miss Garland having her mornings free, Rowland
> should propose to be the younger lady's guide in whatever explorations she might be
> disposed to make. She said she knew nothing about it, but she had a great curiosity, and
> would be glad to see anything that he would show her. (RH 310)

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[23] My argument differs sharply from critical consensus. Paul Sergi Speck argues that Rowland's relationship with Mary Garland remains static, for only accidentals and incidentals change, not "essentials" (301). Henry James admits, both inside and outside the novel, that the romance seems improbable; in his preface to *Roderick Hudson*, he admits that of all the spells that young women cast upon young men, "Mary Garland's way doesn't, indubitably, convince us" (*AN* 17).

Here, tourism serves as an *alibi* for intimacy: it seems only "natural" that Miss Garland and Rowland might spend time together. On Rowland's side, he can ask what "explorations" she is "disposed to make," while at the same time imagining her enthusiasm in the site as a sign of her enthusiasm in him. On Mary Garland's side, she can spend a lot of time with a young man who is not her fiancé, but write it off as knowing "nothing about it"—nothing about the sites, nothing about the young man, nothing about any potential impropriety.

So Rowland takes her to see St. Peter's and the ruins of the Palatine, defines the term *architrave* for her and relates the histories of numerous buildings. This triangulation—two tourists, looking at a tourist site rather than each other—might represent the real pleasure inherent in tourist love. Rowland craves both the opportunity and the alibi to share experiences with someone—because he doesn't dare to seek these opportunities out specifically. A tour of sights and sites shields him from rejection and risk:

> The sense of novelty was evidently strong upon Miss Garland, and the light of expectation was in her eye. She was restless and excited; she moved about the room and went often to the window; she was observing keenly […] Rowland felt, in all this, that her intelligence, here, would have a great unfolding. He wished immensely he might have a share in it; he wished he might show her Rome. (212-213)

For what Rowland desires most is for others to have "great unfoldings" and for himself to have "a share in it." The unfolding of one's consciousness before a new world—in this case, the Old World—creates a space in which the shy hero can get inside their consciousness as well. As a shy individual, Rowland keenly feels the barriers between himself and others, but the ecstasy of tourism serves to soften and tear down these barriers, if only temporarily: as Mary Garland herself says, "I am overwhelmed. Here in a single hour, everything is changed. It is as if a wall in my mind had been knocked down at a stroke" (303-304). What tourist love offers Rowland is an

entry point: in the act of mentoring an unfolding mind, Rowland hopes that there will be some space left there for himself to inhabit.

The qualities that might disqualify Rowland for a more direct romantic route—his reserved shyness, his role as observer, his interests aesthetic more than erotic—make him particularly well-suited for the tourist script of indirection. Furthermore, Mary Garland's engagement to Roderick marks any bolder attachment unthinkable to the scrupulous American tour guide. It is striking that so many tourist love stories facilitate a relationship that would otherwise be taboo: in *Corinne*, Lord Oswald travels with the Italian *improvatrise* though he is actually promised to her half-sister Lucile; in *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke is married when she meets Will Ladislaw in Rome; and in *The Ambassadors*, Lambert Strether is engaged to Mrs. Newsome when he meets Maria Gostrey. Tourism inevitably serves a double purpose for the tourist hero: it offers him an alibi to spend time with someone, and it offers him plausible deniability if he oversteps. To borrow a phrase from May Bartram, the heroine of "The Beast in the Jungle," it allows two lovers to "look most things in the face," though they dare not look at "each other" (101). Tourist love offers a particular space of free play for shy heroes and heroines to explore the vaguer emotions that lie somewhere between interest and love, the vaguer practices that lie between flirtation and courtship.

James himself hovered constantly in this emotional limbo, leaning both towards and away from his tourist lovers. His long-time friend Elizabeth Boott resembles the novel's Augusta Blanchard: both painters of underwhelming appeal, both enjoyed horseback riding in the Roman *campagna*, and both developed a slight crush on their occasional male companions, who brushed them off with nonchalance.[24] On the other hand, Rowland's mixture of infatuation and judgment

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[24] The novel *Roderick Hudson* deals with Augusta Blanchard almost peremptorially: "The breath of reproach passed her by with folded wings. And yet Rowland wondered why he did not like her better" (<u>RH</u> 71). Met with the gentlest

towards Roderick might resonate with the author's later attraction to the sculptor Hendrik

Andersen[25]—if it doesn't more relevantly resonate with the crush James would develop on the

Russian painter Paul Zhukovsky the very next year.[26] At the root of *Roderick Hudson* is

unrequited passion—at the root of tourist love, a redistribution of excess and exhausted interest.

From Lizzie Boott to James to Zhukovsky, James was no stranger to unrequited desire and

displaced interest.

However, to call these tactics *shy* is also to point out some of their shortcomings. This

blurring of object-choice can lead to wishful thinking and self-deception—as it did for Elizabeth

Boott pursuing James, as it did for James pursuing Zhukovsky—and as it possibly does when

Rowland catches Mary Garland making "notes of her likes and dislikes in a new-looking little

memorandum book" and wonders "to what extent she reported his own discourse" (RH 314).

What if Miss Garland writes around their talk, discounting it and preferring those experiences

that are exclusive, rather than shared? For tourism not only facilitates romance, but also

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indifference, Miss Blanchard moves onto the more interested—if more artistically crude—Mr. Leavenworth. Elizabeth Boott later would go on to marry another artist, Frank Duyenack.

In Augusta Blanchard, we must assume that James was projecting the type of friendship that he had often experienced with women: a close but sexually detached friendship, finding its quintessence in James's relationship with Constance Fenimore Woolson.

[25] I had a recent conversation with Leland Person, Jr. on the subject of how *bizarre* it is that Rowland's crush on Roderick Hudson resembles so clearly James's crush on Andersen. It is likely that James was simply projecting a general attraction to young aesthetes in his 1875 *Roderick Hudson*, only to be drawn to Andersen in his later years for reasons that hadn't changed since then.

On the other hand, Daniel Murtaugh has already noted how the New York Edition of *Roderick Hudson* accentuates the homoerotic elements of the novel. We should consider the role in which James's friendship with Andersen played in this revision.

[26] Both Sheldon Novick and Peter Brooks discuss James's crush on Paul Zhukovsky remarkably well. Novick was the first scholar to notice the traces of James's crush, revealed in how James chased Zhukovsky across Europe, lingering in Paris even after his lease on apartments ran out (348), as well as James's hastily made and unmade travel plans (400ff).

Brooks develops Novick's thesis with more nuance: James belying his sexual attraction in odd turns of phrase like "debauchery of the imagination along with purity of life," slowly leading to an increasing distaste for Zhukovsky's notoriously sexual lifestyle (39ff).

competes with it. We might consider the dual-genre of novels like Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* as analogies for this tension. While nineteenth-century readers found these novels to be two works for the price of one—both travel guide and gripping romance—modern readers more interested in the romance are likely to feel that the scenery threatens to overpower the plot.[27] In this respect, the sight-seeing elements of the tourist love story resemble less and less an alibi, more and more a barrier.

This trope of tourism-as-barrier might be best captured in the many technologies of tourism scattered throughout the novel. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag writes about modern tourism: "Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter… this gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, and move on." She adds that the camera appeals especially to people "handicapped by a ruthless work ethic—Germans, Japanese, and Americans" (10). Throughout *Roderick Hudson*, characters make use of tools that can reroute their interests and desires into other channels: impressions translated into journal entries, sights faithfully recorded in sketchbooks, emotional reactions anticipated by Byronic poetry, details found in and interpreted through guidebooks—all nineteenth-century equivalents of the modern-day pocket camera.

It is here that the script of the tourist experience threatens to override even the erotic undercurrents of the plot. For as nineteenth-century Americans in Rome keep their sketchbooks and guidebooks and memorandum books poised between them and history, even so does Mary Garland keep a copy of Murray's guidebook between her and any encounter with Rowland that proves too intense: "But Miss Garland was not looking at him; she had taken up her Murray

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[27] Pointing out that this impatience with scenery is an anachronistic feeling is the opening gambit in Millicent Bell's excellent article "*The Marble Faun* and the Waste of History" (356).

again" (<u>RH</u> 321). The travel guide becomes an odd, psychic form of prophylactic. In one special moment, Mary Garland lets it slip:

> Suddenly, sinking science for the moment, she looked at him very frankly and began to frown. At the same time she let the Murray slide down to the ground, and he was so charmed with this circumstance that he made no movement to pick it up.
> "You are singularly inconsistent, Mr. Mallet," she said.
> "How?"
> "That first day that we were in Saint Peter's you said things that inspired me. You bade me plunge into all this. I was all ready; I only wanted a little push; yours was a great one; here I am in mid-ocean! And now, as a reward for my bravery, you have repeatedly snubbed me."
> […] "Then I have played my part very ill."
> "Your part? What is your part supposed to have been?"
> He hesitated a moment. "That of usefulness, pure and simple."
> "I don't understand you!" she said; and picking up her Murray, she fairly buried herself in it. (317-318)

If Mary Garland spends most of her time "buried" in her guidebooks and encyclopedias, she lets her defensive mechanism slip at this precise moment. It is a missed opportunity of large proportions: she is inviting Rowland to claim for himself a more central position in this drama than the one he is currently holding. But Rowland cannot enter into the script of a lover, and he retreats into the script of the tour guide.

Tourist love overlays the useful with the pleasant, it confuses intimacy with indirection, and it authorizes shy desire by letting the tourist (ostensibly) desire something else. In this way, it offers us an alternative romantic plot, one more accessible to the shy protagonist—romance can develop indirectly, unexpectedly, and with plausible deniability. However, the same qualities in tourist love that give license to the vague, indirect, and fluid desires of its heroes can also guarantee that these desires never find their proper closure. Tourist love is not open, but rather it is elastic—under pressure, the rules might bend, but drawn too taut, it gives resistance but will not break. The danger latent in Rowland Mallet's shy technique is that it might lead him to

replace an intimate position with a merely useful one.[28] Instead of being Roderick's friend, he becomes Roderick's patron; in lieu of being Mary Garland's suitor, he becomes her tour guide. If things ever come to a head, it is because the tourist script itself is winding down—beyond the benefits of scripted sights and scripted pleasures, the tourist love story also offers a scripted ending. After all, the vacation can't last forever.

Taking Separate Ways

> " 'We are forever divided,' said Will. 'I might as well be at Rome; she would be no farther from me.' "
>
> — George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

At the end of their daytrip to Chillon, Winterbourne and Daisy seem unable to decide whether their relationship is just beginning or ending. Winterbourne cries out "Oh, don't say such dreadful things!—just at the last!" to which Daisy replies, "The last! I call it the first" (DM 170). Although their romantic story is facilitated by the sight-seeing, it is also by this same process obscured: both characters constantly pull themselves up short when they assume—or express— too much enthusiasm. Caught between their own desires and the script of international tourism, Winterbourne and Daisy Miller question and test their own feelings in a constant cycle of calibration and recalibration.

This cycle of enthusiasm and dismissal is just as pronounced in *Roderick Hudson*. For if the novel begins with the conflation of travelling and marriage, it should come as no surprise that discussions of separation begin to sound more and more like divorce. Some of the most

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[28] Three years later, Henry James would revisit this desire to mentor in *Daisy Miller*, only to deflate it completely, summarized in the rather famous lines:

> "It has never occurred to Mr. Winterbourne to offer me any tea," she said with her little tormenting manner.
> "I have offered you advice," Winterbourne rejoined.
> "I prefer weak tea!" cried Daisy. (139)

passionate appeals that Rowland ever makes—or receives—are in fact about whether he will travel alone or with his companions. Throughout the novel, both young men threaten to take their separate ways in moments of stress or disagreement. After six months of constant companionship, their first break—Roderick to Baden-Baden, Rowland to England for the summer—is precipitated by Roderick's discomfort with Rowland's vicarious watching: "I have a perpetual feeling that you are expecting something of me, that you are measuring my doings by a terrifically high standard. You are watching me; I don't want to be watched" (81-82). This watching draws out the critic in Rowland's personality: judging his friend's artistic production, his friend's training, even his friend's moral behavior.

During this summer, Roderick is effectively escaping his tourist education—and his tourist educator—by taking a vacation from his vacation. Roderick's ambivalence reflects a competition between two definitions of tourism explored in this novel: first, tourism as cultural development, expansive and open-ended; second, tourism as a temporary vacation, pleasure valued precisely for its transitory nature. If Rowland and Roderick were drawn together by their varying levels of experience and innocence, here they are drawn apart by their different work ethics. For all of his dilettantism, the introvert Rowland insists on defining all pleasure as having some enduring pedagogical component; for all his competence, the extrovert Roderick defines pleasure as an end in itself, part of the ups and downs of artistic creation.[29]

As the novel moves forward, these two philosophies of genius diverge, slowly revising the *Künstlerroman* narrative hinted at in the early chapters of the novel. Roderick's first statue,

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[29] In *Henry James's Thwarted Love*, Wendy Graham notes that Rowland interprets Roderick's ups and downs as instability, but wonders if they might be the movements of an inner machine (86).

the Water-drinker, represents youth, innocence, strength, curiosity[30]—for when Rowland notes

that the drinker is "guzzling in earnest," Hudson replies, "Aye, poor fellow, he's thirsty!" (25).

Upon arriving in Italy, the mentor is pleased to find that Roderick's "appetite for novelty was

insatiable" and that he had "a relish for social subtleties and mysteries" (82). However, as the

novel progresses, thirst and appetite turn into an "indigestion of impressions" (78), and later still

the Water-Drinker statue recedes into the background while Roderick Hudson sculpts a drunk

lazzarone, replacing Thirst with Intoxication.[31] The trajectory of Roderick's genius dovetails

neatly with the question of how long he is to stay in Italy—whether the tour and the tourists

derive their power from developing taste or from an oscillation between wonder and repose,

James expresses doubt as to the sustainability of either.

Rowland's fascination with the artist waxes and wanes—and as Roderick appreciates

more or less of Rome, Rowland appreciates more or less of Roderick. Nevertheless, the shy

tourist hero's proposals to separate tend to be emotional bluffs. Rowland takes care of housing,

of carriages—he pays for the trip—and so his greatest discomfort arises from feeling

underappreciated. His separation notices are always conditional:

> "Where shall I go?"
> "Go to some place where you may be alone with your mother and Miss Garland."
> "Alone? You will not come?"
> "Oh, if you desire it, I will come." (328)

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[30] If critics are drawn to Henry James's relationships with younger men in his later years, even here in *Roderick Hudson* we find a fascination with youth—a psychic ephebophilia, if you will. The majority of the characters in *Roderick Hudson* are young: with their individual introductions, Rowland is thirty, Roderick is about twenty-four, Christina Light approximately twenty, Sam Singleton twenty-six, Cecilia twenty-eight, and both Mary Garland and Augusta Blanchard an unspecified age, but "young."

[31] Sheila Teahan reads this move from Water-Drinker to drunk *lazzarone* as the clear mark of allegory, the very trope that James means to purge as he adapts *The Marble Faun* into *Roderick Hudson* (159). In his "A Structural Analysis of Henry James's *Roderick Hudson*," Paul Sergi Speck traces the path of Roderick's sculptures but misses this ironic turn from Water-Drinker to drunk *lazzarone* (293-4).

Mallet's denials are conspicuous for their implicit questions—self-handicapping, self-effacing, Rowland threatens to leave unless his friends ask him to stay. He engages in constant tests of others' affection but finds it difficult to parse their need of his services from their desire for his company. As always, wishful thinking supplies much of his motivation—"I beg you to come with us!" says Mary Garland, and "it need hardly be added that after this Rowland went with them" (420).

Given this push and pull, a central question for this tourist love story is how long Rowland plans to stay with his fellow travelers. If Roderick's story is ultimately the rise and fall of his genius, then Rowland's story revolves around this constant calibration of distance. Setting the bounds of an education—be it for a young sculptor, coquette, or New England girl—could be endless; as Roderick notes, "the curious thing is that the more the mind takes in, the more it has space for" (80). Rowland is finally a man who cannot quite set the proper boundaries to any relationship.[32] Although the question plagues the ending of the book, it may be on Rowland's mind from the beginning:

> "I have launched you, as I may say," [Rowland] said, "and I feel as if I ought to see you into port. I am older than you and know the world better, and it seems well that we should voyage a while together. It's on my conscience that I ought to take you to Rome, walk you through the Vatican, and then lock you up with a heap of clay." (42)

Rowland's language is purposively vague—how long will they "voyage a while together?" The difficulty of mentoring lies in deciding when the journey ends. As a metaphor, "to see you into port" raises the question of proportion and duration. How long is the voyage? does it end in Rome? does it end at Roderick's accomplished genius? does it not end until his death? To see Roderick into port might mean any number of terminals—and Rowland himself doesn't quite seem to know where his relationship to the young American artist truly ends.

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[32] In this respect, he resembles Miles Coverdale—both shy observers get sucked in, even though they realize that their emotional investment

In his preface to *Roderick Hudson*, James himself grapples with a similar question of closure; he poses the authorial dilemma in this way: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so" (AN 5). And so the manner in which Henry James ends his own novel suggests that he has some of the same issues as young Rowland—he is "incapable of giving it up" (RH 266).[33] The novel only ends when Roderick, baffled and bitter, wanders off into the Swiss countryside, disappears in a thunderstorm, and reappears dead at the bottom of a chasm.[34] It is the final, indisputable "see[ing Roderick] into port" that the vicarious Rowland Mallet cannot provide for himself, and which instead must be provided by fate—or the author.[35] If Rowland Mallet is to leave his place as patron, mentor, travel companion, and friend, it cannot be of his own volition—he must be cast off.

But before this scene, there arises a dispute between the two friends that is of no small import, though undertheorized by critics. The last conversation that Rowland and Roderick share reveals much: Christina Light has been interested in Rowland who has been interested in Mary Garland. These revelations offer a final catalyst to the resentment born of Rowland's condescension and Roderick's egotism. It is the confessional moment, the airing of grievances:

> "I resent the range of your vision pretending to be the limit of my action. You can't feel for me nor judge for me, and there are certain things you know nothing about. I have suffered, sir!" Roderick went on with increasing emphasis. [...] "You ask too much,

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[33] What might "giving it up" look like? One might turn to Turgenev—a great influence on James in this period—and his novel *Fathers and Sons*. Turgenev's young heroes Arkadii and Basarov include a shy companion to a bold and turbulent genius; Basarov ends up dying a melodramatic, senseless death just like Roderick. But before then, the two companions part ways voluntarily: Basarov says, "A romantic would say, 'I feel that our paths are beginning to diverge,' but I'll simply say that we've gotten tired of one another" (182).

[34] Whether this is an accident or a suicide is the subject of some debate. In particular, see Andrew Cutting, *Death in Henry James* (30-31).

[35] As Andrew Cutting notes in *Death in Henry James,* this death serves as closure, but also as *foreclosure* (23-24). In both *Roderick Hudson* and "Daisy Miller," death remains that little trace of allegory, dramatizing mistakes and setting them in stone.

for a man who himself has no occasion to play the hero. I don't say that invidiously; it's your disposition, and you can't help it. But decidedly, there are certain things you know nothing about." […]

"These things—what are they?" Rowland asked.

"They are women, principally, and what relates to women. Women for you, by what I can make out, mean nothing. You have no imagination—no sensibility!"

"That's a serious charge," said Rowland, gravely. (332)

When he insists that Rowland cannot "feel" or "judge" for him, Roderick calls into question the vicarious manner in which his friend participates in his life. When the young artist tells the critic that "I resent the range of your vision pretending to be the limit of my action," he insists—just as Zenobia insisted, just as Mrs. Brissenden will insist—that he can and must exceed the voyeur's gaze.[36]

But the alignment of categories that Roderick proposes goes further than this: he defines himself as the ideal extrovert, and Rowland as what he considers the worst kind of introvert. Roderick conflates action and heroism, funneling them into conspicuous heterosexual desire, which is in turn made the marker of imagination and sensibility. In contrast, Rowland's vision is figured as inadequate, clouded by an incapacity to heroism, an indifference to women, and an aesthetic blindness. This criticism goes beyond the tension between their Romantic and Victorian affects, between the artist and critic, between the melodramatic heterosexual and the closeted queer. In this passage, Roderick Hudson offers a resounding critique of the *shy* hero.

It is here and only here that Rowland becomes angry. His reply reminds us of revenge fantasies, imagined and thrown at a self-centered friend with ideal effectiveness. For all the queer criticism of *Roderick Hudson*, not a single critic has recognized this scene as a site of homosexual panic—that uneasy moment when a person, feeling their heterosexual identity being

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[36] Although Rowland Mallet tends to receive gentler criticism than either Coverdale or Winterbourne, he is not without his critics: Kim Bartel argues that though Mallet begins as passive, he slowly becomes more and more coercive as the novel progresses (170); similarly, Paul Sergi Speck argues that we as readers overlook the manner in which Mallet contributes to the tragedies that beset both Roderick and Christina (292).

called into question, erupts into anger, violence, and judgment.[37] But when Rowland Mallet responds with his own justifications—finding Roderick selfish, self-absorbed, and ultimately ungrateful—he articulates not only his personal claims to heterosexuality, but also the overall mode of his desire, his shyness and his voyeurism:

> "What do you know about my sensibilities and my imagination? How do you know whether I have loved or suffered? If I have held my tongue and not troubled you with my complaints, you find it the most natural thing in the world to put an ignoble construction on my silence. I loved quite as well as you; indeed, I think I may say rather better. I have been constant. I have been willing to give more than I received. (333-334)

As much as homosexual panic, his anger constitutes a form of shy panic as well—a backlash against someone who, as Rowland says, places an "ignoble construction on my silence." Shyness—that inexpressiveness, that silence—is misread by Roderick as a lack of desire. Against Rowland's quiet façade, Roderick claims that his patron has "no imagination" and "no sensibility"—and so Rowland insists that he has "loved quite as well" as Roderick, if not better.

Nonetheless, if Roderick emphasizes passion, Rowland eventually returns to that keynote of duty, responsibility, and care. In this confrontation, Rowland says, "I have kept myself in durance on purpose to leave you an open field" (334). In limiting the space of his desire, Rowland believes that he has opened up a space for Roderick to explore his own. He has bowed out from competition—like Fanshawe, like Coverdale, like Ralph Touchett—and calls it virtue. But as the word "durance" suggests, Rowland may have merely imprisoned himself. Rowland insists on being a catalyst, a cipher, a martyr to another's edification; in the interest of witnessing

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[37] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* for a thorough history of homosociality and of homosexual panic. Her overall thesis is that close ties between men—once a common element in patriarchal societies—have become problematized when the category of homosexuality came into sharp distinction at the end of the 19th century.

a "great unfolding," he has forfeited his own space.[38] And in that broad expanse of an open field, Roderick wanders out alone and is swallowed up in a midsummer storm.

When Roderick disappears into the storm, the other Americans return home with their aunts or their filled sketchbooks. Rowland wanders to and from Europe, to and from Northampton, loitering on the edge of Mary Garland's social circle. When his cousin Cecilia calls him the "most restless of mortals," he replies, "No, I assure you I am the most patient!" (482).[39] It is a familiar ending to the tourist love genre: the tourist, returning home, insisting that he has learned or earned something along the way, though his actions seem very close to earlier habits. It is Winterbourne musing on Daisy's love just before returning to Geneva; it is Strether telling Chad not to give his lover up, though Strether must refuse his. Will Rowland's constant attentions to Miss Garland bear any fruit? The original edition of the novel coyly ends on a note that raises this possibility,[40] but I personally wonder if any courtship is possible in Northampton—if Rowland Mallet were to win anyone's affection, he ought to have won it in Rome.

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[38] In her article "Homosociality and the Aesthetic in Henry James's *Roderick Hudson*," Michèle Mendelssohn describes Mallet as a catalyst — he cannot in himself act but rather generates action (518). She also describes him as having no occupation, no home, for Roderick is both of these (538-9).

[39] In his article, "Stasis and Verve: Henry James and the Fictions of Patience," Michael Snediker discusses the endings of *Roderick Hudson* and *Portrait of a Lady*, which both end with idealizations of patience; in *Roderick Hudson,* he argues that "patience" turns inaction into passion (28-29).

[40] Critics have often remarked on how the 1907 NYE revisions push to the foreground Rowland's retrospective turn to Roderick, rather than his yearning look to Mary. See Sofer, "Homosocial Bonds in *Roderick Hudson*" or Murtaugh, "An Emotional Reflection: Sexual Realization in Henry James's Revisions to *Roderick Hudson*."

After Daisy: The Tourist Love Story as Genre

> PRINCESS ANN: At midnight, I'll turn into a pumpkin and drive away in my glass slipper.
> JOE BRADLEY: And that will be the end of the fairy tale.
> — *Roman Holiday*

As Winterbourne waits for Daisy in the hotel lobby, we might recognize the start not only of their daytrip to the Castle of Chillon, but also the consolidation of a new genre. The tourist love story might begin with *Corinne*, might have been expressed in part by Hawthorne or Eliot, but it is with the publishing of "Daisy Miller" that we truly feel "as if there were something romantic going forward" (167). The tourist love genre would occupy James throughout his career: from short stories like "A Passionate Pilgrim" to novellas like "Daisy Miller" to his longer works *Roderick Hudson* and finally his masterpiece *The Ambassadors*. In the years to come, the tourist love genre would be picked up by British authors such as E. M. Forster (*Where Angels Fear to Tread, A Room with a View*) or expatriate American authors like Hemingway (*The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms*), but this genre remains with us most fully in the medium of film. The experiences of travel that were once so tantalizing in print narrative have been made *visual* by cinema; nevertheless, these panoramas rely on the structure offered by love stories in such films as *An American in Paris* (1951) or *Roman Holiday* (1953)—and even more recently in films like *Before Sunrise* (1995), *Lost in Translation* (2003), or *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008).

What so many of these stories reveal is an ambivalence concerning tourism itself. As defined by John Urry, tourism offers us as individuals a *vacation*: a vacating of our workaday selves, a separate space that allows for free play even as it offers us new experiences and new impressions (3ff). But no matter how freeing this tourist experience may be, it is by definition

temporary—be it Strether's months or the single day of *Roman Holiday*, the freedom granted by tourism is bounded by the end of the tour. Strether asks for extensions of his journey, but not for a permanent residence—as Maria Gostrey so painfully learns at the end of *The Ambassadors*, Lambert Strether must return to Woollett because his journey (and his experience of Paris) would mean something entirely different if he were to remain abroad permanently.

At their root, these tourist love stories address the fleeting nature of impressions, of wonder, and—yes—of relationships. Although not every hero and heroine in this genre is shy, nearly all of them struggle to make connections with people, if only because everyone is travelling in different directions, to different places, with different sights to see. Tourist love appeals to the shy hero not only for its indirection, but also for the way it universalizes those disconnects. It is the shy hero telling his personal story of loneliness in the context of a growing sense of everyone's loneliness. What he doesn't understand is that the tourist love script has a momentum of its own, one that even he cannot control.

Any romance that uses the conventions of tourism as a crutch must inevitably deal with the crisis that occurs when the journey draws to an end. The melancholy ending of many tourist love stories should come as no surprise—the tourist scaffolding grants license to vague and untried relationships, but when these relationships are put to the test, the shy hero often acquiesces to things returning back to "normal," to work and worry and ordinary distinctions. Just as Kenyon and Hilda return to America, just as Winterbourne returns to Geneva, just as Princess Ann returns to her unnamed European country—all the tourists feel a little wiser, but the vacation remains a vacation. Rowland Mallet says that "true happiness… consists in getting out of one's self; but the point is not only to get out—you must stay out" (RH 7). It is perhaps the ultimate failing of the tourist love genre: if the tourists could *stay out*, they wouldn't be tourists.

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In the union of tourism and romance, we embark on the story with a great sense of possibility

and passion: we loiter in the hills of the Villa Ludovisi; we wait eagerly in a British hotel with

Strether or a Swiss hotel with Winterbourne. Tourist love begins with such promise—but

unfortunately its end is promised as well.

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Chapter 5

"The Tolerance of Talk": Gossip, Shyness, and *The Sacred Fount*

A casual perusal of James's notebooks reveals just how many of his ideas are taken from scraps of gossip.[1] On February 17th, 1894, Henry James would write down what was to become the central puzzle of his notoriously difficult novel, *The Sacred Fount*. Much like the plot of the novel itself, the conceit begins with a little party talk, an idea offered by Stepford Brooke about May-December marriages:

> The notion of the young man who marries an older woman and who has the effect on her of making her younger and still younger, while he himself becomes her age. […] Mightn't this be altered (perhaps) to the idea of cleverness and stupidity? […] Or the idea of a *liaison*, suspected, but of which there is no proof but this transfusion of some idiosyncrasy of one party to the being of the other—this exchange or conversion? The fact, the secret, of the *liaison* might be revealed in that way. (150-151)

The flow of this entry is telling in its complexity. From romantic mirroring to vampirism, from a physical to a psychic toll, from a statement of fact to a question: might not the symptom open the door to a diagnosis? James begins with the physical—the most conspicuous—and moves increasingly towards the hidden, the unseen, and finally the *secret*. The entry reveals the additive and transitive properties that a single piece of gossip might take on: if this, then maybe that; if

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[1] The following list is far from exhaustive, but some examples include *Daisy Miller*, based on gossip passed on by Alice Bartlett; *The Aspern Papers,* based on gossip offered by Violet Hunt's brother Hamilton (*HJN* 33); *The Spoils of Poynton*, based on gossip from Mrs. Anstruther-Thompson at a Christmas party held by Lady Lindsay (121); "The Author of 'Beltraffio' " draws on gossip about John Addington Symonds (25)

that, then perhaps this… Given a kernel of an idea, James's own inward-turned mind elaborates and complicates the conceit.[2]

Six years later, James would spin out a novella—soon ballooning into a short novel—from this very idea. *The Sacred Fount* begins as an unnamed narrator meets two old friends on a train ride to Newmarch, the country house where they are all staying for the weekend. Both friends are markedly altered since the narrator last saw them: the married woman Grace Brissenden seems noticeably younger, while the manners of the bachelor Gilbert Long have gained in ease and polish. Upon reaching Newmarch, the narrator meets Grace's younger husband Guy—"poor old Briss"—who seems to have aged beyond his years. Surprised and curious, the narrator takes the example of the Brissendens as a clue to finding out what (or who?) has happened to Gilbert Long. The narrator develops his own theory of the "sacred fount," a law of psychic vampirism where "one of the pair… has to pay for the other. What ensues is a miracle, and miracles are expensive" (34). But the novel only *begins* here, continuing the process of addition, multiplication, speculation, and complication that began in James's original notebook entry.

The narrator enlists the help of two other characters—the artist Ford Obert and Grace Brissenden herself—to discover Gilbert Long's secret. Each character offers his or her own hypothesis; critics have been disentangling the mess of theories and counter-theories ever since. Some critics side with the narrator, accepting his version of the story—that Gilbert Long is sucking the wit out of fellow partygoer May Server as certainly as Grace is sucking the life out

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[2] In "Gossip and Gothicism in *The Sacred Fount*," E. A. Sklepowich shares my interest in how the form of gossip and the form of *The Sacred Fount* fit so comfortably close. He also notes the prevalence of gossip in James's later plots, including *Spoils of Poynton, Turn of the Screw,* and *The Golden Bowl* (112ff).

of her husband Guy.[3] Other critics join Mrs. Brissenden in concluding that the narrator is unreliable, if not downright crazy—and that his theories are distorted at best, morbid at worst.[4] Many propose an entirely different conclusion of their own, imagining that the truth lies in some moderation between all principal characters.[5] Faced with an overwhelming indeterminacy, some readers toss their hands up in the air and call the novel unsolvable; others have gone so far to consider the novel as an allegory for epistemological doubt.[6]

Yet for a novel that centers so fully on gossip and sex, it is worth asking how the indeterminacy in *The Sacred Fount* might serve not only as an epistemological but a sexual question.[7] Despite the focus of most modern criticism, the predominant mode of sexuality in this novel is not the hidden liaison, nor is it even the vampiristic transfer of youth, wit, or happiness—the predominant sexual mode is *gossip*, speculating on and fantasizing about and *inventing* the sex lives of others. *The Sacred Fount* is made up not only of many conversations, but many viewpoints and agendas. It takes a supreme presence of mind—or a handy notebook—

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[3] In his article "James's *The Sacred Fount*: The Phantasmagorical Made Evidential," James W. Gargano rails against the "crazy" diagnosis of narrator (49); whereas in "The Museum of What Happens," Michael Wood argues that all of the narrator's main claims are verifiable and verified (258). Other critics, such as Maurice Beebe and Stacey Margolis, accept the narrator's conclusions as most probable.

[4] In her book *Jamesian Ambiguity and* The Sacred Fount, Jean Blackall suggests that we are meant to see through the narrator, although most early critics find his voice more persuasive than James perhaps intended (11-12). In later years, however, critics became more likely to question the narrator; in his article "The Meaning of *The Sacred Fount*," William F. Hall observes that most critics approach the narrator with a psychological reading (122).

[5] Jean Blackall argues that many characters—including Lady John, Guy and Grace Brissenden, and Ford Obert—all perceive parts of the truth, but that it is up to us as reader to put them together (124). In "The Sacred Fount in Plato's Cave," Andre Furlani suggests a complex love rectangle to grapple with the mixed messages that characters offer (725).

[6] While both Sara Chapman and Susan Winnett argue that the unreliable narrator is a major problem for the novel, Sharon Cameron offered what is perhaps the most stringent critique of the novel's indeterminacy in her book *Thinking in Henry James*. The emphasis on indeterminacy is partly critical, as Heath Moon suggests in "Saving James from Modernism: How to Read *The Sacred Fount*," where he argues that current critics want to change *The Sacred Fount* from a modernist to a postmodernist novel (120).

[7] In her article "Homo-formalism: Analogy in *The Sacred Fount*," Stacey Margolis asks why the critical focus is so rarely on the question of sex, given that the novel is ultimately about nothing *but* sex (393).

to master even the happenings of the novel; a reader must know not only what is said, but who says what to whom, and what both characters believe they are saying when they talk to one another. As the novel progresses, even these agendas shift and respond to one another—and thus understanding any conversation in the later half of the novel requires a deep psychology. Every conversation is based not on a shared understanding but on misdirections, misunderstandings, and misspeakings. It's more than a little confusing; it even confuses the characters.[8]

In searching for objective facts, critics have sought out moments of independent corroboration: two characters agreeing on a observation independent of one another.[9] In doing so, critics pare down the novel to a few slender anchors of agreement—and ignore the vast world of disagreement, fascination, and seduction. To understand the novel, we must grasp not only moments of communication but also of miscommunication—not only continuity but the gaps. In this chapter, I argue that the characters in *The Sacred Fount* see the social affairs of others in terms of analogies and metaphors of their own creating—and occasional borrowing. These metaphors rise from certain characters' lips and pass to others; the novel resembles nothing more than an extended game of telephone, where the characters take each fragment of talk and embellish it, add to it, and ignore the parts they can't accept.

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[8] Taken to its extreme, the novel verges on satire and parody:

> "The impression," I explained, "of your taking a decision that presented some difficulty, but that was determined by something that had then—and even perhaps a little suddenly—come up for you. That's the point"—I continued to unfold my case—"on which my question bears. *Was* this 'something' your conclusion, then and there, that there's nothing in anything?"
> [Miss Brissenden] kept her distance. " 'In anything'?" (197)

The indeterminacy of these references lays bare the difficulties of the interpersonal aspect of the novel—for Grace's "decision" is different from the narrator's impression of it, and her "something" is precisely what the narrator is (and we are) trying to find out.

[9] Both Michael Wood and James Gargano insist on locating three anchor points: first, that Grace and Guy's appearances do not match their actual ages; second, that May Server is intellectually depleted; and third, that Gilbert Long is (at least) smarter than the narrator originally gave him credit for.

The "sacred fount" metaphor is but the dominant analogy, crafted by the narrator and adopted by Grace Brissenden and Ford Obert. It serves as a "torch" for Obert; it will make Grace's discernment "sublime." However, they do not come into full possession of the metaphor because they do not share the narrator's particular worldview; instead, as the analogy makes its rounds, it is subject to constant revision. Grace Brissenden readily accepts the narrator's notion that people can be improved by love affairs but cannot accept the "horrid" logic that others might be depleted (184). On the other hand, the detached and ironic Ford Obert accepts the parasitic element of the theory but emphasizes the psychological: it is not beauty or wit but *happiness* that lies at the center of these lovers' mysteries. Other metaphors fill the pages of the novel—most notably the "screen," where a lover feigns interest in a third party to get everyone off the scent of a true affair.

These metaphors become not merely heuristic or analogical: they become an index of a deeper truth about the characters who use them, who fashion them and spread them with their talk. To fully understand *The Sacred Fount*, readers must trace theories and metaphors back to the characters that introduce and use them; in a world of talk, these theories and turns of phrase are often the deepest indexes of a character's true nature, true thoughts, and true feelings.[10] In the metaphor of the sacred fount, we find a crystallized portrait of the introverted narrator; in the metaphor of the screen, we find the portrait of the socialite Mrs. Brissenden. I argue that *The Sacred Fount* is James's most elaborate reflection on the uneasy relationship between the shy observer and those he watches: though it may have its charms and seductions, it is ultimately an

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[10] In "The Meaning of *The Sacred Fount*: 'Its Own Little Law of Composition,' " William Hall subjects the various responses to the "Man in the Mask" painting to this treatment; he believes that the characters' responses reveal their own personalities (173). Similarly, Laurel Bollinger argues in "The Complicated Metaphors of Subjectivity in The Sacred Fount" that it is impossible to know the truth of the plot, for the only detail that is distinct is the sacred fount motif itself (53).

antagonistic relationship. The war that rages between these two characters—and their

metaphors—defines the plot and pleasure of the novel.

The Allegory of the Introvert

> "Unless renewed by a yet further withdrawal towards the inner circle of self-communion,
> I lost the better part of my individuality."
> — Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*

Throughout *The Sacred Fount,* the narrator remains a cipher: we are given neither the

narrator's name nor his profession nor his appearance. We are introduced to the narrator as first

and foremost a nervous consciousness; in the first chapter, he arrives at the train station with a

peculiar mix of anticipation and dread. The novel opens with these lines:

> It was an occasion, I felt—the prospect of a large party—to look out at the station for
> others, possible friends and even possible enemies, who might be going. Such
> premonitions, it was true, bred fears when they failed to breed hopes, though it was to be
> added that there were sometimes, in the case, rather happy ambiguities. One was
> glowered at, in the compartment, by people who on the morrow, after breakfast, were to
> prove charming; one was spoken to first by people whose sociability was subsequently to
> show as bleak; and one built with confidence on others who were never to reappear at
> all—who were only going to Birmingham. (17)

For the narrator, the weekend party at Newmarch becomes "an occasion," a social event that

draws on his own feelings of self-defensiveness before the first sentence ends. The ambiguity of

the phrase "to look out" for others—to seek them out or to practice vigilance upon meeting

them—is seconded by the phrase "possible friends and even possible enemies": is the narrator

uncertain as to who among his friends or his enemies are being invited to this party? or is he

keenly aware of the possibility that strangers might like or dislike him?[11] The narrator both

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[11] In their "Ironic Contingencies in the Language of Hawthorne's Romances," David Stouck and Janet Giltrow argue
that the mark of many paranoid characters in Hawthorne's fiction mix up friend, stranger, and enemy (562).

"hopes" for friendship and "fears" antagonism, even though he is only going to a social weekend in the country.[12]

Joined with this ambivalence, we find the narrator to be hyperconscious of social performances—both in their quality and quantity.[13] His judgments upon "bleak" personalities and people "glower[ing] at" him in the train cars seem not only severe—but it's clear that they prove incorrect. But most striking of all is his lament in building confidence with strangers "who were never to reappear at all—who were only going to Birmingham." Small talk becomes a matter of investment: the narrator jealously reckons both the expenditure put in and the rewards taken out. In these first pages, we recognize the narrator as a party-goer who finds it difficult to parse friends from enemies and a traveler who finds it tiresome to make conversation on the train. What word might better describe this narrator than *introverted*? Self-defensive and disinclined to exert himself socially, the narrator approaches the prospect of a large party with both trepidation and reluctance.

Speaking to Guy Brissenden, the narrator confesses that "I don't enjoy such occasions as these unless I from time to time get off by myself somewhere long enough to tell myself how much I do enjoy them" (84). The introvert finds people exhausting—he requires *distance* from others occasionally in order to enjoy the occasional closeness. Viewed in this light, *The Sacred Fount* becomes the catalogue of the narrator's constant, habitual recalibration of his distance

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[12] In the end, whether friends or enemies, it seems that the narrator runs a greater danger of not being recognized at all: his original dislike of Gilbert Long seems to stem primarily from the fact that Long forgets who the narrator is between dinner-parties—and secondarily from a resentment of Long's good looks (17).

[13] In *Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence*, Susie Scott argues that shyness might be defined as the belief that everyone else moves according to secret, understood, tacit conventions (9). In their "Social anxiety, personality, and the self," Lorne M. Hartman and Patricia A. Cleland define shyness as "too much self-centered 'meta-cognition'" (341).

from others. Much like Miles Coverdale, the narrator considers the pull that others have on him and cultivates a self-defensive detachment:

> It was absurd to have consented to such immersion, intellectually speaking, in the affairs of other people. […] A whole cluster of such connections, effectually displacing the centre of interest, now surrounded me, and I was—though always but intellectually—drawn into their circle. I did my best for the rest of the day to turn my back on them, but with the prompt result of feeling that I meddled with them almost more in thinking them over in isolation than in hovering personally about them. Reflection was the real intensity. (72)

The narrator's plunge into society is rendered in passive language—he "consents" to such an "immersion." The result is dizzying, if not claustrophobic—the narrator is "drawn into their circle," and the "centre" of his interest is "displaced" by "a whole cluster of such connections," which now "surround" him. Is the narrator at the margins of this circle, looking in? Or at the center? Either way, he concludes that "reflection was the real intensity."

The phrase "affairs of other people" has a certain ambiguity to it—an affair being both business in general but also specifically a sexual liaison—but the narrator insists (twice!) that his interest is ultimately intellectual. To be involved "but intellectually" is not to be involved emotionally, socially, or sexually. It is a form of special pleading with which the narrator establishes a certain distance. The novel oscillates between the attraction that curiosity exerts on the narrator and the distance that his shyness would seem to demand. He fears nothing more than "meddling," than "hovering" about his subjects, and so he turns his back on them—or does he? Throughout the novel, we read that the narrator is staring at other character's backs—what the narrator calls the "least scrutable side of the human figure" (140)—offers us the portrait of a shy but curious gentleman who wishes to approach certain circles but cannot find the right means of

access.[14] By turning his back on others, he is managing his fear that others might turn their backs on *him*.[15]

In no work does James better capture the portrait of the introvert than in *The Sacred Fount*: the shy individual caught between a self-defensive protection of his own psychic energy and a fascination with others. Might this be a key to understanding the central image of the novel? For the underlying logic of the sacred fount—that lovers will prey on one another— appeals to the narrator precisely because it defines his relationship to society at large: not because he himself is parasitic and vicarious (though he is), but because he finds the prospect of social outings to be tiring, draining, and depleting. Critics have demonstrated the resonances that the sacred fount imagery might have with the Gothic, the vampire, or the parasitic upper-class.[16] However, they haven't considered the sacred fount as an allegory—a very apt allegory—for introversion itself. Viewed in this way, the metaphor that the narrator presents is first and foremost an indirect reflection of his own psychology.

As a trope, sexual—and social—depletion would figure greatly throughout James's *oeuvre*: in early stories like "Longstaff's Marriage" and "De Grey: A Romance," love and sex could drain a lover until it proved downright fatal.[17] In later works like "The Lesson of the

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[14] Jean Blackall treats the turned back as an epistemological question, but it certainly resonates as a psychological and a social question as well. The turned back can be read two ways: the turned back as blank, impersonal, even illegible—or the turned back as an expression of dismissal, sharp, pointed, and defiant. We can recall the touching scene when the narrator watches husband and wife receding down the hallway to their room as an example of the former; the swift turn of Mrs. Brissenden after the dinner concert is an example of the latter.

[15] In her book *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes how "paranoia is *anticipatory*," arguing that it is precisely full of such preemptions: "No time could be too early for one's having already-known, for its having already-been-inevitable, that something bad would happen" (131).

[16] Most critics agree that the sacred fount seems a metaphor for the vampirism of sex. Other critics argue that it is a social version of the gothic—see E. A. Sklepowich's "Gossip and Gothicism in *The Sacred Fount*—or a metaphor for the decadent upper-classes—see Heath Moon's "Saving James from Modernism."

[17] In "Longstaff's Marriage," a young man on his deathbed wishes to marry the beautiful stranger Diana Belfield; when she refuses him, he comes back to life, but upon their further acquaintance, it is she who passes away. In "De

Master," older gentlemen would advise young men away from the debilitating effects of love.[18]

Beyond the dangers of sex, "The Death of the Lion" recounts a tale of the artist Neil Paraday, overthrown by the excessive attention of his fans; at one point, the narrator writes, "I positively feel my own flesh sore from the brass nails in Neil Paraday's social harness" (49). It is, in fact, a house party that finally kills the novelist.[19] There are few relationships in James's *oeuvre* that are not presented as a sort of *zero-sum* game, a contest of wills. *The Sacred Fount*—ostensibly governed by a literal transference of youth, intellect, or energy—is simply one of the most brutal articulations of this viewpoint. Once the narrator has formulated the analogy of psychic vampirism, it is no longer entirely his: it moves among others, shaping the way they see each other and talk about one another.

To gossip about sexual secrets and their psychic repercussions is—in the narrator's words—to become "conscientiously infernal" (77). The phrase is itself peculiar, suggesting both a fastidious diabolism but also a bedeviled consciousness.[20] The narrator's prurient interest is confined purely to the realm of thought—and talk. However, this interest is not without its own

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Grey: A Romance," the De Grey family is blighted with a curse that every member's first love will pass away unexpectedly; in the tale, Paul De Grey wishes to protect his fiancée and rejects her, only for the curse to ricochet and kill *him*.

[18] In "The Lesson of the Master," Henry St. George warns Paul Overt that his marriage has led to the loss of his creative potential. In "The Diary of a Man of Fifty," an unnamed diarist tries to protect a young man from a coquette. Henry St. George Unlike earlier works, these stories belie a sense that the older gentlemen's warnings may be ill-founded or—in the case of Henry St. George—downright manipulative. See Craig Milliman's "The Dangers of Fiction: Henry James's 'The Lesson of the Master' " for a brief discussion (81).

[19] Ostensibly, it is actually the shock of one of his fans losing his latest—and possibly best—novel. Nevertheless, this tale suggests James's introverted fear of too much society: Paraday's health is moving downhill from the moment he is "discovered" by his fan community. I believe the unnamed narrator is ventriloquizing James when he says that the greatest compliment a fan can give an artist is to buy their books and leave them completely alone.

[20] In *The Lucid Reflector*, Ora Segal notes that the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* constantly uses the verbal construction "negative adjective + logical concept"; the examples he offers are "dreadful logic" and "frenzied fallacy" (160).

rules; standing in the art gallery at Newmarch, the narrator and Ford Obert discuss the acceptable

boundaries of their inquiry:

> "To nose about for a relation that a lady has her reasons for keeping secret—"
> "Is made not only quite inoffensive, I hold"—[Obert] immediately took me up—
> "but positively honourable, by being confined to psychologic evidence. […] Resting on
> the *kind* of signs that the game takes account of when fairly played—resting on
> psychologic signs alone, it's a high application of intelligence. What's ignoble is the
> detective and the keyhole."
> "I see," I after a moment admitted. "I did have, last night, my scruples, but you
> warm me up. Yet I confess also," I still added, "that if I do muster the courage of my
> curiosity, it's a little because I feel even yet, as I think you also must, altogether destitute
> of a material clue. If I had a material clue I should feel ashamed: the fact would be
> deterrent." (57)

Despite their talk of "honor" and "scruples," the rules that the two gentlemen set for themselves

resemble neither etiquette nor moral law, but more like setting the rules of a game. Obert insists

that it be "fairly played"; he wants their conclusions to be the result of a "high application of

intelligence," rather than accurate, just, or generous. By making "facts deterrent," the two agree

not only upon rendering their task higher and lighter, but also upon lengthening the pursuit. The

focus is less on the conclusion of the game than their continued enjoyment of it.

Given this "high application of intelligence," many critics—including Leon Edel in his

authoritative introduction to the work—have identified *The Sacred Fount* as a detective novel.[21]

But then what are we to make of Ford Obert's thorough dismissal of the "detective and the

keyhole"? In this passage, Obert offers us two modes of hunting secrets, even as he dismisses

both of them. The *detective* is at work while the partygoers are at play, committed to prosecuting

the person who commits the crime. However, there is never a question of prosecution in this

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[21] In his introduction, Leon Edel writes "*The Sacred Fount* belongs with the best kind of ratiocinative literature,
even if it is a detective story without a crime—and without a detective. The detective, indeed, is the reader" (15).
Most critics follow Edel in this conclusion, although Paul Giler notes in his article "Deterritorialization in *The
Sacred Fount*" that the novel is more an *anti-detective novel*—its ultimate goal is blankness and resignation to
mystery rather than exposure and resolution (229).

game—only questions of identification and categorization. Similarly, the man who looks into

keyholes is the voyeur, the eavesdropper—he seeks visions rather than abstractions. The man

listening or looking through the keyhole demeans himself because he is ultimately too much

interested in the particular secret, rather than the theory. Neither detective nor voyeurs, the

characters of this novel are *psychologists*. At the turn of the century, the field of psychology was

leaving its infancy behind: James's brother William had published his two-volume work on *The*

Principles of Psychology a decade ago, while Sigmund Freud had published *The Interpretation*

of Dreams only a year or two before.[22]

The narrator approaches the romances at Newmarch as puzzles, as causes for abstract

speculation—because he is not exactly engaged in one. Admitting perplexity over May Server's

flirting, he confesses, "It would have been almost as embarrassing to have to tell them how little

experience I had had in fact as to have had to tell them how much I had had in fancy" (79).

Behind the narrator's obsession is embarrassment—that mixture of self-consciousness and social

recoil.[23] In this quote, we are invited to imagine that what he is "fancying" is not only flirting but

sex. Like many introverts in fiction, the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is a metaphorical if not a

literal virgin.[24] The gap between his experience "in fact" versus his experience "in fancy"

exposes the narrator as something of a romantic daydreamer: his sexuality expresses itself in

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[22] William James's influence on his younger brother is well-documented. For one critic who links William James's psychology to Henry James's *The Sacred Fount*, see Stacey Margolis's "Homo-formalism: Analogy in *The Sacred Fount*," which begins with a rather homoerotic analogy in William James's *Principles of Psychology.*

[23] There are few emotions more in the vein of James's style than embarrassment. James would publish a short story collection entitled *Embarrassments* in 1896; this collection included "The Figure in the Carpet," "Glasses," "The Next Time," and "The Way It Came."

[24] Although we are told that Lambert Strether was once a husband and a father, many critics tend to read him not as a widower but as a bachelor. See Haralson and Dupee.

fantasy. His theory approximates what his experience cannot pin down; his obsession will "pay,"
but as he wryly admits, "to pay it has to borrow" (30).

The act of borrowing—of speculating, imagining, fantasizing—becomes for the narrator
a means of self-empowerment. The narrator reflects on this process when he argues that "I don't
think […] it was my person, really, that gave its charm to my theory; I think it was much more
my theory that gave its charm to my person" (198). The theory of the sacred fount becomes at
once a reflection and an augmentation of his own personality. The two—theorist and theory—
work together to seduce others. More importantly, the sacred fount becomes a tool which the
narrator uses to access that intimidating, difficult realm of sexuality—for his theory becomes the
subject of gossip, of talk that includes him and others. It may seem presumptuous to discuss
gossip as a mode of sexuality; after all, critics tend to discuss *The Sacred Fount* as an example of
overbearing logic, of theory and deduction, of ratiocination run amok.[25] However, to accept the
narrator's self-description as being "but intellectually" involved in the affairs of other people is
to accept uncritically the narrator's worldview; when we do so, we miss exactly how much the
pleasures of gossip begin to resemble the pleasures of sex.

The narrator's talk with Ford Obert is littered with winks, with significant stares—with
the narrator gripping the artist's arm—with Obert reassuring the narrator that they have all night,
or they could meet in town the next day, to talk. The narrator tells his friend, "You excite me too
much. You don't know what you do to me" (151). The more they discuss their theories, the more
their gossip sounds like sex:

> "It was, as we put the matter, the torch of your analogy—"
> "Oh, the torch of my analogy!"

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[25] In "Henry James's Sacred Fount: The Theory, the Theorist, and the Lady," Marcus Klein argues that the narrator
and his theories are ultimately illustrations of sadism (93).

I had so groaned it—as if for very ecstasy—that it pulled him up, and I could see his curiosity as indeed reaffected. (152)

The eroticism that underpins their late-night meeting in the smoking room has pushed some scholars to question whether *The Sacred Fount* might not be at root a homosexual parable.[26] But more importantly, gossip is rendered here as a union not of bodies but of interests: "Yours *was* mine, wasn't it? for a little, this morning. Or was it mine that was yours? We exchanged, at any rate, some lively impressions" (147). A shared obsession blurs the boundary between self and other, a slow accumulation—a feedback loop—that renders it difficult for the narrator to tell from whom the theory and the excitement originated. The exchange of impressions—both observations and marks left by a touch—starts slow and eventually becomes fluid, leaving those gossiping unable to distinguish their own personal stakes in a larger obsession.[27]

In the final chapters of the novel, the narrator stays up late hoping to talk with Grace Brissenden even as it is implied that others are waiting for late-night rendezvous. When Grace finally calls for him—well after midnight—the very prospect of gossip takes on the anticipation and implication of a sexual tête-à-tête. Meeting in a secluded corner of the country house, the narrator believes it impossible to ignore "the mere immense suggestiveness of our circumstances" (168). Gossip appeals to the narrator precisely because it creates such privacy and intimacy—a separation between those who gossip and those being gossiped about. The mode of gossip is one that augments the significance of individual social ties; for the introverted

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[26] In "Homo-formalism: Analogy in *The Sacred Fount*," Stacey Margolis reads homosexuality as an allegory for self-knowledge; furthermore, she reads the late-night scene between Obert and the narrator as homoerotic (401). Going even further, Adeline Tintner argues in "A Gay *Sacred Fount*: The Reader as Detective" that the pairings are actually homosexual: Guy and Gilbert Long, Grace and May (227). However, I find most of her evidence for this unsatisfying.

[27] In *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, Eric Haralson argues that in *The Ambassadors*, same-sex desire is buried in small gestures like pats on the back, light touches on the knee, and more (103). Similar moments of contact occur between the narrator and Ford Obert.

narrator, it transforms his friendships into something heavier, a connection based around an interest and a secret.

Meeting in a far corner of the country house where the midnight lamps are lit, the narrator imagines that he and Grace are "*in* the mystic circle—not one of us more; she knew the size of it; and it was our now being in it alone together, with everyone else out and with the size greater than it had yet been at all" (169-170). The narrator carefully defines this circle of two: a carefully guarded space of which only they know the boundaries, the impossibility of letting even one more within it, and the conspiratorial satisfaction of pushing everyone else out. Given this mystic circle, it is no surprise that one of the constant questions asked in this novel is whether a character has talked to anyone else. The model of gossip thus operates on two levels, one insistently contracting, while the other gradually expands. At the level of communication, gossip is a project preeminently exclusive; at the level of subject matter, gossip is omnivorous, outward-turned, and ever expanding—that is to say, not everyone may be talked *to*, but everyone may be talked *about*.

In the motif of the *sacred fount*, Henry James offers us a model of sexuality that works as a zero-sum game, based on the transference of youth and intellect from one party to another. In the words of the narrator, "The sacred fount is like the greedy man's description of the turkey as an 'awkward' dinner dish. It may be sometimes too much for a single share, but it's not enough to go round" (34). In the mode of gossip, however, James offers us a model of sexuality that is potentially inexhaustible: a network of positions, of opinions influencing other opinions, of endless possibilities that resonate with endless fantasies, at least until the mystery is solved—or given up. Not only is gossip too much for a single share, but in "going round" it inevitably grows.

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Miss Briss: The Counter-Allegory

> "What's the use of making mysteries? It only makes people want to nose 'em out."
> —Edith Wharton, *Age of Innocence*

Described as "the great asylum of the finer wit," the idyllic country house Newmarch is

nothing if not a haven for gossips (77). The weekend is spent in "renewals of acquaintance and

much sitting and strolling, for snatches of talk" (24); there are no planned outings, save for meals

and a piano concert, and so the narrator remarks that

> we profited to the full by the noble freedom of Newmarch, that overarching ease which in
> nothing was so marked as in the tolerance of talk. The air of the place itself, in such
> conditions, left one's powers with a sense of play; if one wanted something to play at one
> simply played at being there. (72-73)

As a genre, the country house novel often centers on almost-imaginary places where the rules of

engagement—both conversational and erotic—become looser.[28] The unity of time and place

offered by the country house that takes up almost the entire novel invites us to think of

Newmarch as a sort of magical nowhere—somewhere between Paddington and Birmingham—

where guests "simply play at being there."[29] The novel becomes a complex triangulation of

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[28] The throwaway characters Lord Lutley and Mrs. Froome, who travel together in the "the wondrous new fashion—and their servants too, like a single household—starting, travelling, arriving together" (19), are mentioned throughout the novel with a wink.

For discussions of the country-house genre as read by Henry James, see Adeline Tintner's *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James* and Angus Wrenn's *Henry James and the Second Empire*.

[29] In "Sexual Secrets and Social Knowledge: Henry James's *The Sacred Fount*," Lloyd Davis sees Newmarch primarily as a place of talk (328). In "Deterritorialization in *The Sacred Fount*," Paul Giler defines more Newmarch and the narrator's mind as "pseudoplaces" (230).

gossip: everyone knows—or thinks he knows—something about everyone else. Outside of (possibly) having sex, all the party-goers do is talk.[30]

The most articulate of these talkers is none other than Grace Brissenden. Among so many party-goers, she's perhaps the only character with the wit to match the narrator. She is described as a prodigious figure, one caught in "the flood of life," enjoying a "wonderful sense of success and well-being" (35). Her beauty is "fabulous"—and the narrator is convinced that she enjoys the compliment of "seeing [his] perception in arrest" when he admires her (31, 167). Her wit is "sublime," marked with intelligent smiles and knowing glances—and she is capable of "extraordinary feat[s] of legerdemain" in society (34, 67). When standing face to face with her, the narrator is impressed with the " 'pull' that in social intercourse a woman always has" (165). As the narrator is introverted, Grace Brissenden is the supreme extrovert: many critics see her as the preeminent socialite, taking on the function as official representative of Newmarch—a social world in opposition to the theories of the narrator.[31]

The "sacred fount" is a parable of introversion: a model that bases itself on social vampirism, on depleted energy, and on the expenditure of finite social resources. It is the brainchild of the narrator—shy, uncertain, and defensive. In contrast, it is Grace Brissenden who introduces the theory of the *screen*, a stock motif in the country house novel.[32] She describes screens as "a thing that from time to time such people—don't you know?—make a particular

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[30] In the late 1890s, Henry James cultivated a novelistic style that revolved around dialogue: both *The Awkward Age* (1899) and *The Sacred Fount* (1901) are notorious for being made up almost completely of "talk." Some critics take this to be the influence of his foray into drama; others his shift to a method of dictation in crafting his novels.

[31] Gargano argues that Grace Brissenden is the spokeswoman for the external face of things (55-56). In "Sexual Secrets and Social Knowledge," Lloyd Davis argues that *The Sacred Fount* is ultimately a story of an outside observer seeking to understand a concealed affair, only for the social world of Newmarch to close rank against him with Grace leading the charge (328).

[32] James is obliged to the French novel of the era, especially those by Paul Bourget, for his notion of the "screen." See Tintner's *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James* (222-223).

point of: they cultivate, to cover their game, the appearance of other little friendships" (22). The logic of the screen suggests that many conspicuous relationships are only foils to a deeper attraction to someone else. The screen is a conceptual model that flourishes on an *excess* of sociability; it is a model of social redundancy, misdirection, and deception. Mrs. Brissenden offers us a model that insists on a superfluity of relationships, a blossoming of dalliances, both sincere and feigned; it is a model which ultimately reveals her own personality. For Miss Briss plays with relationships and juggles personas: she "dallies by the way" and cultivates petty romances (126). She gossips, but she ultimately downplays the importance of what she gossips about. In the hands of the socialite, so many sexual secrets collapses into nothing: every affair becomes an *open secret*. Her world is one in which everyone is screening someone else, a world in which people avert their eyes from the truth: when the narrator ventures that dalliances like this rely on "a good-natured world [that] agree[s] not to see," Miss Briss smiles and adds, "It has not only agreed not to see, but agreed not even to look" (65).

In considering Grace Brissenden's worldview, it seems premature to agree with the narrator when he concludes early in the novel that "*she* hadn't a lover. No, she was only eating poor Briss up inch by inch, but she hadn't a lover" (60).[33] After a careful examination of the evidence, we might suspect that Mrs. Brissenden is playing with screens of her own: in fact, the entire search for Gilbert Long's lover is a screen. Grace Brissenden is herself carrying on the affair with Gilbert Long.[34] The narrator meets both Grace and Gilbert Long on the same train,

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[33] Readers might consider the other conversation in which the narrator betrays his blind spots. Speaking to Ford Obert, the narrator considers whom the secret lover of May Server might be: "Grant he's one of us. There are more than a dozen of us—a dozen even with you and me and Brissenden counted out" (58). It is particularly strange that the narrator excludes Guy Brissenden from his search; canny readers should take note of this as one of James's clues to what the narrator has agreed not to see, where not even to look.

[34] My conclusion is hardly a new reading: Jean Blackall and Michael Wood both conclude that Grace and Gilbert Long are the *true* pairing. In his recent biography of James, Sheldon Novick accepts this conclusion as well.

travelling together, while Guy Brissenden takes a later train; Gilbert Long is noted for his good looks, and Grace for her wit. While discussing Grace's own revitalization, Gilbert Long argues that Grace's husband doesn't fully appreciate her beauty by saying, "That's the awfulness, don't you see? of the married state. People have to get used to each other's charms as well as to their faults. He wouldn't have noticed. It's only you and I who do, and the charm of it is for *us*" (20). Gilbert Long's glib judgment reveals him as a bachelor who believes that married gentlemen do not appreciate the beauty of their wives.

So why does Grace plays the dangerous game of putting the narrator on the scent of a hidden liaison in the first place? Initially, the discussion of Long's transformation from dullard to wit seems a compliment; Grace speaks with a self-congratulatory air when she says, "I'm glad you admit, at any rate […] that it does take what you so prettily call some woman's secretly giving him of her best to account for him" (37). But what begins as a game—a tribute to her vanity—shifts more and more into the makings of a scandal. The narrator is infected by Mrs. Brissenden's gossip, but only partially—it takes Grace by surprise when she finds her model expanded and distorted by the narrator's personality.

In the first chapter, Grace suggests that Lady John's attentions to Guy are a screen for her *real* interest in Gilbert Long; later, the narrator counters that Lady John is Long's screen for *someone else*—although the narrator is more than happy to imagine that Lady John *wishes* that her relationship with Long were legitimate. What's notable about the narrator's interpretation of screening is that it does not dissolve the earlier relationships—Guy Brissenden is still very much entangled with Lady John, who is still entangled with Gilbert Long—and thus he lays them on

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However, none of these critics consider the "screen" as itself evidence of the way that Mrs. Brissenden's psychology works.

top of deeper levels of intrigue and sexual interest.[35] The most secret and intense of relationships

will be precisely those in which characters have little to nothing to do with each other:

> "The relation—to do that sort of thing—must be necessarily so awfully intimate."
> "*Intimissima.*"
> "And kept therefore in the background exactly in that proportion."
> "Exactly in that proportion." (36-37)

The logic of the screen expands: the deeper the relationship, the more secret it will be; the more

distant the pairing, the greater the likelihood that the pair has something to hide. This model has

the effect of saturating absence with presence—at its inevitable endpoint, it resembles a sort of

sexual paranoia, converting everything into sexual possibility. Taken to its extreme, gossip can

shelter itself in a shroud of unfalsifiability: nothing can be taken as a refutation of sexual

possibility, for all conspicuous relationships might be symptoms of a deeper interest in someone

else, while any lack of evidence could simply be a very suspicious sign that the lovers must be

dissembling.

Near the end of the novel, the narrator reaches an epistemological breaking point. After

viewing one too many pairings, he wonders, "Was *any* temporary collocation, in a house so

encouraging to sociability, out of the range of nature?" (129). The word "collocation" abounds in

meanings: the most obvious meaning is mere proximity (co-location), but collocation also

includes both linguistics and sex—collocation being two words commonly paired in a language,

but also referring to an archaic term for marriage. As any preliminary survey of scholarship

might suggest, the central mode of gossip in *The Sacred Fount* invites and demands a

consideration of every possible permutation; for the narrator as well as for the critics, it is

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[35] For those who might be interested in keeping track of this progression: the narrator concludes that Lady John is flirting with Guy Brissenden in order to hide her flirtations with Gilbert Long who is flirting with her in order to hide his affair with May Server who is flirting with *everyone* in order to hide her own psychic depletion at the hands of Long.

possible that anyone could be sleeping with anyone.[36] The sexual mode of gossip takes what the

narrator calls "the universal possibility of a 'relation' " as one of its central premises (132).

However, as the novel unfolds, it seems that the narrator moves slowly from the *universal*

possibility of a relation to the *fantasy of universal relations*.[37] It is at this extreme endpoint

where gossip as discovery blends into gossip as fantasy, where suspicion blurs into wishful

thinking. It is where the narrator becomes not a psychologist but an accomplice—for even as he

is seduced by his theories about others, he seduces others with his theories about *them*. The

narrator, thinking himself "but intellectually" involved in the affairs of others, becomes in fact a

matchmaker.

Gossip as Seduction: The Problem with Guy and May

> "Yes, but exposed—how shall I say?—so directly. So intimately. That's surely enough."
> — Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle"

Gossip relies on implication, on suggestion, on nuance. To the narrator, all gossip

becomes a *double-entendre*:

> It could *not* but be exciting to talk, as we talked, on the basis of those suppressed
> processes and unavowed references which made the meaning of our meeting so different
> from its form. We knew ourselves—what moved me, that is, was that she knew me—to
> mean, at every point, immensely more than I said or than she answered; just as she saw
> me, at the same points, measure the space by which her answers fell short. This made my
> conversation with her a totally other and a far more interesting thing than any colloquy I
> had ever enjoyed. (188)

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[36] See John Lyon's introduction to the novel for a particularly apt summation of this phenomenon.

[37] In *Henry James and Queer Modernity,* Eric Haralson argues that *The Ambassadors* partakes of this logic, for Lambert Strether's personality serves only to diffuse and circulate sexual energies among the characters (131). In "Renunciation in James's Late Novels," Nicholas Buchele argues that Strether's own personal renunciation reveals a desire for the free play of sentiment (148).

Instead of having one conversation, the narrator imagines that he and Mrs. Brissenden are having two. Gossip splits the conversation into meaning and form; gossip overlays the first discussion with a second discussion. As the narrator gossips with Miss Briss or Ford Obert or Guy Brissenden, he talks on one level while guessing at what they know but will not say, guessing at what their silences mean and what their assumptions point to. Gossip saturates every word and even the *absence* of words with meaning. It heightens the significance of talk, leading from speculation to hypothesis and (possibly) to invention: as Miss Briss says, "Of course you could always imagine—which is precisely what is the matter with you!" (215).

One exchange in particular might serve as a model for this double-voiced quality of gossip: in the center of the novel, the narrator comes across May Server by herself on the grounds of the country house and hints that someone was looking for her. When May Server appears uncertain as to whom he means, the narrator, "dazzled" by this opportunity, turns it into a trap to see whom she will guess: "Still, however, I had not named him—which was what prolonged the tension. 'Do you mean—a—do you mean?' With which she broke off on a small weak titter and a still weaker exclamation. 'There are so *many* gentlemen!' " (106). In naming no one, the narrator actually speaks two names: Guy Brissenden, who is actually looking for her, and Gilbert Long, whom the narrator suspects to be her secret lover. However, while the narrator waits, we are invited to imagine either of them—and May Server herself is invited to imagine any of the dozens of men who are at Newmarch. More to the point, because May Server never answers the question—the narrator rescues her with his own answer—we are left holding both possibilities in our minds.[38]

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[38] In his personal life, James sometimes used this suggestive level of implication. Most notable is perhaps his letter to Jocelyn Persse (2 Dec 1911), inviting him to the theatre: "They have wired me that a box is reserved for me […] I shall at any rate await you there; but if you are late (*don't* be!) I shall leave word below that you be conducted

Halfway through the novel, the narrator believes he has solved the mystery: just as Grace Brissenden feeds on her husband's youth, so does Gilbert Long feed on May Server's wit. Introverted, introspective, the narrator wonders not only at how these depletions might progress, but how their understanding of these depletions might develop: how aware are the beneficiaries of the sacred fount? how aware are the martyrs? As the weekend party draws to a close, the narrator pays less and less attention on these pairings—the married couple and the hidden liaison—and instead focuses more and more attention on what he imagines to be "sympathetic" pairings: the depleted Guy Brissenden and May Server, as well as the predators Grace Brissenden and Gilbert Long. The sympathy is there: for although everyone else believes that May Server is inappropriately happy, Briss concludes, "She *isn't* happy"—and when he says that "nobody that belongs to her appears ever to have been particularly nice to her," we wonder to what extent he is also describing himself (90-91). After all, Guy seems a caricature of marital neglect: we are introduced to his character wandering the halls of Newmarch, searching for his room, where "he had been put by himself, for some reason, in the bachelor wing" (29); the constant reference to "poor Briss"—adopted not only by the narrator but also Long, Obert, and even his wife—proves both pitying and emasculating. Depressed and prematurely aged, Guy Brissenden is drawn to May Server—an attraction that the narrator interprets as sympathy for each other's depleted state.

But what if it is more than sympathy? When the narrator first speaks with May Server, she offers him a portrait of unrequited attraction—that of others, but also that of her own. May admits that Guy Brissenden interests her:

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thither—with… I hope it's Ms. Black" (*DBF* 108). As an anonymous reader notes on the archived letter, Jocelyn would ultimately marry Ms. Black after James's death (n108).

"Isn't he curiously interesting? But I hadn't," she continued on my being too struck with her question for an immediate answer—"I hadn't managed to interest *him*. Of course you know why!" she laughed. "No one interests him but Lady John, and he could think of nothing, while I kept him there, but of how soon he could return to her."

[…] "And is Lady John interested in our friend?"

"Not, I suppose, given her situation, so much as he would perhaps desire. You don't know what her situation *is*?" she went on while I doubtless appeared to be sunk in innocence. "Isn't it rather marked that there's only one person she's interested in?"

[…] "Do you mean Ford Obert?"

She gave me, with a laugh, one of her beautiful looks. "Yes!" (47)

In this passage, May Server insists on triangulation upon triangulation: she likes Guy Brissenden who likes Lady John who likes Ford Obert. From May Server's viewpoint, the social world is one in which everyone is ultimately interested in someone they cannot have. In describing such a flow of misspent energy, she reveals something of herself: she flirts with everyone at Newmarch, her mode of speech is a little scattered, and she is considered by others to be "all over the place" throughout the novel.

To the narrator, the parallel sacrifice that leaves both poor Briss and May Server depleted offers them a "sympathy"—as a man "infernally conscientious," he cannot help but cultivate their self-awareness of their plight. So the narrator pries into Guy's and May's thoughts, believing that he is offering them further understanding; what he ends up offering them, however, is sex:

"There are so many different ways of being taken."

"For a fellow like you. But not for a fellow like me. For me there's only one."

"To be, you mean, in love?"

He put it a little differently. "Well, to be thoroughly pleased."

"Ah, that's doubtless the best way and the firm ground. And you mean you're *not* thoroughly pleased with Mrs. Server?"

"No—and yet I want to be kind to her. Therefore what's the matter?"

"Oh, if it's what's the matter with *you* you ask me, that extends the question. If you want to be kind to her, you get on with her, as we were saying, quite enough for my argument. And isn't the matter also, after all," I demanded, "that you simply feel she desires you to be kind?"

"She does that." And he looked at me as with the sense of drawing from me, for his relief, some greater help than I was as yet conscious of the courage to offer. "It is that she desires me. She likes it. And the extraordinary thing is that I like it."

"And why in the world shouldn't you?"

"Because she terrifies me. She has something to hide."

"But, my dear man," I asked with a gaiety singularly out of relation to the small secret thrill produced in me by these words—"my dear man, what woman who's worth anything hasn't?" (91-92)

Blinded by his theory—interested only in what is "enough for [his] argument"—the narrator believes that Guy Brissenden is feeling his way towards a joint understanding of his and May's predicament: they are both being eaten alive by their lovers. However, stepping away from the narrator's theories, we recognize that Guy—neglected by his wife—is weighing the possibilities of a love affair. May's sadness turns him to consider his own; May's desire tempts him, even if he is not entirely pleased with her. Although a few critics have commented on this confusion—how much Briss and May's sympathy might veer into flirtation—no one has recognized the role of the narrator: although he believes himself to be a disinterested observer, he in fact seduces fellow party-goers with his talk.[39]

While Guy Brissenden offers qualifications, worries, and denials, the narrator offers extenuations, hedges, and speculation. When Guy balks at the specificity of categories—when he denies being "in love" or even "thoroughly pleased"—the narrator broadens them, insisting that there are "so many ways of being taken." When Guy worries about stepping over lines—for he worries he enjoys May's attention too much—the narrator erases the line, saying "Why in the world shouldn't you?" And when Guy thinks his connection to May means very little—"what does it matter?"—the narrator insists that though it means little, it means "quite enough." The narrator's mode of talk leads to the breaking down of boundaries—of legitimizing small steps

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[39] The critic who comes closest to this exchange is Andre Furlani. In "*The Sacred Fount* in Plato's Cave," he suggests a love rectangle: Long is in love with May Server is in love with Guy is in love with Grace is in love with Long (725). I find more evidence for pairings, rather than a complete circuit of unrequited desire.

where large ones might seem untoward. Among conspirators, the narrator's talk expands possibilities; among confidants, the narrator's talk cultivates them.

When the narrator ends this conversation and sends Guy into the house for tea, he plants the idea of obsession into Guy's mind. He suggests that Guy is secretly "hoping at this moment that you'll find her if you go back to where most of our party is gathered. You're not going for tea—you're going for Mrs. Server" (94). Thus, even more so than he seduces Miss Briss or Ford Obert with talk about others, the narrator seduces Guy with talk about Guy Brissenden. In the end, the narrator becomes something of a matchmaker: an oblivious Cyrano de Bergerac. For he is unable to differentiate between the two layers of conversation that he is playing with: the narrator's *theory* suggests that the two depleted partners will converge, tied together by their "wanting so to know" (95), but the narrator's *words* push Guy not towards an understanding of his idiosyncratic theory but rather towards infidelity.

When Guy goes into the house in search of May Server, the narrator turns back to the groves and finds her there. The conversation that follows lies at the very center of the novel—it lies at the center of the mystery. However, to call it a dialogue is perhaps overgenerous: the narrator talks more than May Server—he talks over May Server—he even talks for her. Believing May to be secretly in love with Gilbert Long, the narrator tries to protecting her by offering her a screen: he tells her that he believes that Guy Brissenden is secretly in love with her. May Server resists his talk at first by suggesting (rightly) that the husband is very much attached to the wife, but the narrator hedges, attenuates, extenuates—he replies, "He *is* in love with her, no doubt, if you take it by the quarter, or by the year […] but isn't there such a state also as being in love by the day?" (109). Resisted on one level, the narrator tries another—the promiscuity that surprised the narrator into his search has now become part of his very rhetoric.

The narrator breaks down those psychic barriers that keep the fastidious May Server and

Guy Brissenden from sexual dalliance; in the absence of a mutual attraction, he invents it.

Taking leave of May Server, he concludes: "I supposed you to have Brissenden in your head […]

because it's evidently what he himself takes for granted. But let him tell you!" (111). The

narrator leaves May as he sees Guy return, leaving behind a love affair he has inadvertently

invented. Blinded by his theory, the narrator believes that he is enlightening the depleted victims

of their plight—the reader, if even a little skeptical of the narrator's theory, sees him literally

turning his back on a tête-à-tête in the trees that he has orchestrated himself.

Gossip is both the conduit of revelation and of suggestion: gossip sometimes creates

where it is assumed to expose.[40] May Server's relationship to Guy Brissenden constitutes a

sexual possibility that is at once *talked about* and *talked into* existence in the world of gossip.

Critics have failed to understand this development and thus are baffled—as is Ford Obert—by

the sudden shift in May Server's personality near the end of the novel: it is ultimately the

possibility of this romantic affair that centers and focuses Miss Server's attentions, returning her

to the intense and focused self that Obert knew when she was married.[41] All in all, he imagines

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[40] Even the narrator is susceptible to this, though in comparison it may appear banal and ridiculous. In speaking of May Server, the narrator imagines himself in love: "Mrs. Briss had put it to me […] I had even whimsically put it to myself—that I was perhaps in love with her" (75). Many critics, especially Jean Blackall, take this cue and conclude that this is ultimately the "joke" of *The Sacred Fount*.

[41] The final conclusion between the narrator and Ford Obert is ultimately cut tantalizingly short:

> I couldn't help jumping straight up—I stood before him. "So that whoever may have *been* the man, the man *now*, the actual man—"
> "Oh," said Obert, looking, luminous and straight, up at me from his seat, "the man now, the actual man—!" But he stopped short, with his eyes suddenly quitting me and his words becoming a formless ejaculation. The door of the room, to which my back was turned, had opened, and I quickly looked round. It was Brissenden himself who, to my supreme surprise, stood there, with rapid inquiry in his attitude and face. (157)

In retrospect, this hint is almost too straightforward—for Ford Obert is almost (or perhaps finally) at a conclusion: that whomever May Server may have been in love with at the beginning of the weekend party, she has begun to develop feelings for Guy Brissenden.

shifts occasioned by sheer inertia—but they are ultimately changes that he himself is causing. The narrator imagines himself as an observer, completely unaware that he is an actor.

Whether or not Grace Brissenden is ever aware of how much the narrator's talk has pushed her husband and May Server together, she seems aware of the effects that both her own neglect and the uninterrupted flow of gossip might have on her husband. The narrator himself plants doubts in Grace's mind:

> "Is it your idea to make out," Mrs. Brissenden inquired in answer to this, "that [May Server] has suddenly had the happy thought of a passion for my husband?"
> A new possibility, as she spoke, came to me with a whirr of wings, and I half expressed it. "She may have a sympathy." (64)

Though the narrator continues to have his theory in mind, he constantly plants the shadows of relationships into the mind of other characters. Though he is involved "always but intellectually" in the affairs of his fellow party-goers, it is precisely in the intellect where fantasy and jealousy are formed. For all that the narrator's talk gets around, it is perhaps inevitable that there should be a recoil, a counterattack. In this battle of wits and words, it is Mrs. Brissenden whose metaphors and methods prove the stronger—for the world of talk ultimately rewards not the introvert, but the socialite.

Re-Nailing Down the Coffin

> "Scandal is gossip made tedious by morality."
> — Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

The novel concludes with a long conversation in a secluded room at midnight between the two major theorists—and the two major theories—that frame the novel. For Mrs. Brissenden, the argument that constitutes the final three chapters of the novel is twofold: to stop the narrator's meddling with Guy and May—his theories, his seductions—and to halt the narrator's

search for Long's lover, who is none other than herself. In the first vein, she insists that he is "carried away," he is "abused by a fine fancy," and he builds up "houses of cards"—in a word, he is "crazy" (192).[42] She despises his theories of depletion as "horrid"—and she believes that he half-invents what he sees:

> "People have such a notion of what you embroider on things that they're rather afraid to commit themselves or to lead you on." […]
> I tried to do justice to this account of myself. "You mean I see so much?"
> It was a delicate matter, but she risked it. "Don't you sometimes see horrors?"
> […] "Is criticism the vision of horrors?"
> She couldn't quite be sure where I was taking her. "It isn't, perhaps, so much that you see them—"
> I started. "As that I perpetrate them?" (206)

In the end, Grace fears that the narrator may make a catastrophe out of mere sexual dalliance; she fears that he is making a fallen woman narrative out of a country house novel.[43] Feeling cornered, Grace exclaims, "I don't suppose you mean […] for me to hang myself!—for that, I assure you, is not at all what I'm prepared for" (169). One half of the "joke" of *The Sacred Fount* lies in the fact that the narrator and Grace are meeting for two very different reasons. Blinded by his theory, the narrator believes that Grace is rallying to throw the veil back over her act of marital predation—her devouring of her husband's youth—while Grace believes that narrator is toying with an exposure of her marital infidelity.

What the narrator supposes to be the "sympathy" of two predators is ultimately the conspiracy of two lovers; his overly complex theories leave him unable to understand the shifts, the reactions, and the feints that conclude the novel. The narrator's theories are static,

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[42] In "The Diary of a Man of Fifty," the Countess tells the unnamed diarist that he is "crazy"—to which he replies that he is "only too sane"—to which she counters, "You have at any rate what we call a fixed idea" (481). In "Osborne's Revenge," the titular narrator obsesses over a friend's suicide, leading others to label him a "monomaniac" (396).

[43] In *The Novel and the Police*, D. A. Miller argues that well-knit communities fear outside lookers—not only because they might uncover what is meant to be unseen, but because they might judge what they see by the wrong rules (38).

archetypal—and thus he fails to understand that constantly shifting world of the country house, where relationships flourish but also disappear as ephemera. The novel concludes with news that Grace has grown tired of Gilbert Long. In veiled terms, she implies that the liaison is over: whether to counter the narrator's curiosity—or to counter Guy's wandering eye—or merely from the typical inertia of the country house—Grace Brissenden expresses her weariness of Long, which concludes with a complaint over his stupidity.[44] If we read this scene as Grace's confession and repudiation, it makes sense of many details that continue to baffle critics: the belated reconciliation of the husband and wife as they slowly move towards their joint room; the narrator's feelings that characters are inexplicably returning to their original stasis; and most importantly that scene in which the narrator observes Gilbert Long alone, standing in the dark, smoking a cigarette on the porch, and looking out into the gardens with a mute stare.[45]

The pairings and re-pairings and repairs that constitute the rise and fall of relationships at Newmarch lie ultimately beyond the narrator's grasp. Even as he seems to approach the truth, the truth has changed—and sometimes because he himself has changed it. The narrator gets the pairings exactly wrong: Gilbert Long and Grace Brissenden are not predators in sympathy, but sexual partners in secret. May Server and Guy Brissenden are unhappy not for depletion but for neglect—and so they turn to each other. Critics have rightly judged that *The Sacred Fount* is ultimately an overdrawn appropriation, critique, and parody of the French novels of the era, of

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[44] This act of casting love interests off is not uncommon. In the first half of the novel, her husband Guy grows tired of Lady John in much the same way. His travelling with her in the train up to Newmarch (and May Server's gossip) suggests that Guy was initially interested, but by the second day, he is bored: "You know I decidedly have too much of that dreadful old woman?" (85).

[45] Most critics ignore these facts altogether. Some critics, like James Gargano, simply misinterpret them—he concludes that Long's sad stare is ultimately evidence for the narrator's theory, rather than counterevidence (56-7).

the sexual dalliances portrayed in novels and plays of talk.[46] *The Sacred Fount* is ultimately what happens when you plant a Henry James character in a country house novel.

As the novel draws to a close, Mrs. Brissenden attacks the narrator on grounds of evidence (for he has refused the "material clue") and summons her own: the word of her husband, Guy Brissenden. When the narrator learns that Grace has discussed everything with her husband, it falls on the narrator with all the force of betrayal and infidelity. In fact, this betrayal resembles nothing so much as it resembles the ending of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*—and with it, *The Sacred Fount* approaches the logic of masochism.[47] In so many of these texts, the vulnerable male cultivates a belief in a closed system—a "mystic circle"—only to find that this exclusivity is a fiction and has always been potentially subject to outside forces. To be outmaneuvered is to be "beaten"—and it is surprising that so many of James's tales insist on frustrated curiosity, especially when it is precisely someone else frustrating it. From "The Story of a Masterpiece" to "The Liar" to "The Figure in the Carpet," the bachelor's plot can be derailed by the ever mysterious confidence (or conspiracy) that a husband and wife share.[48] The "mystic circle" of his talk broken, the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is literally gasping for air, impatient to take the morning train home.

After being outtalked by Grace Brissenden, the narrator cannot help but conclude: "It wasn't really that I hadn't three times her method. What I too fatally lacked was her tone" (219).

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[46] See Tintner's *Cosmopolitan World of Henry James* and Wrenn's *Henry James and the Second Empire*.

[47] In describing the logic of masochism, I am drawing heavily on Gilles Deleuze's "Coldness and Cruelty," a study of Sacher-Masoch. In it, he defines masochism as a pleasure in the act of delaying/frustrating pleasure. More provocatively, he states that masochism and sadism are motivated by completely different aims—and thus should not be automatically paired together (as in Freud).

[48] In all three short stories, James endows the institution of marriage with mystery, often representing husband and wife as an informational conduit disconnected from other channels of knowledge and governed by their own laws of morality. See Jonathan Auerbach's *The Romance of Failure* (169).

The term "method" calls on connotations of ratiocination, logic, and science, while the term "tone" draws us to connotations of presentation, inflection, and style.[49] In a novel of talk, the narrator lacks the right way of speaking—and so he cannot possibly live in harmony with the society of which he wishes so much to be a part. His curiosity hits a sour note; he doesn't "hang together." He imagines catastrophes and turns dalliances into scandals; he turns music to noise. *The Sacred Fount* maps two different ways of experiencing the world and experiencing others: it explores both the introverted mind that invents where it does not detect and the extroverted world of talk that must finally set a firm boundary to his flights of fancy.

In James's novella, this boundary is set with a vengeance—and we cannot help but imagine that James is wreaking vengeance on a particular part of himself. In his letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward, James stated that his novel about Newmarch had gotten out of control, but that he couldn't stop writing it: "So, only, it was that I hatingly finished it; trying only to make it— the one thing it *could* be—a consistent joke" (186). What is there about a joke that is hatingly finished? In what is perhaps Henry James's most self-conscious novel—indeed, it is the only novel written in "the autobiographical style"[50]—*The Sacred Fount* is self-reflective, self-critical, but also self-parodying, self-punishing. I have called the conceit of the sacred fount an allegory for introversion, but it is clear that *The Sacred Fount* is itself an also a warning, an admonition, and finally a blank silence.

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[49] In *Five Fictions in Search of Truth*, Myra Jensen argues that the narrator's lack of tone suggests that he has no personality with which to counter that of Miss Briss (70).

[50] In *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel: 1850-1925,* Katherine Snyder argues that James detested first-person narratives, seeing them as exhibitionistic autobiography, leading to a conflation of narrator and author (112). In *The Romance of Failure*, Jonathan Auerbach poses it as a fear that the objective and subjective might collapse into one another (127).

Ryan Stuart Lowe – *rslowe@wustl.edu*

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Coda

> "I must confess that I did feel a slight sense of alarm—a sense aggravated by the feeling that I was perhaps not on the correct road at all, but speeding off into totally the wrong direction into a wilderness."
> — Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*

If I began this dissertation with the figure of Miles Coverdale, I'd like to conclude with some thoughts on the figure of Lambert Strether. As one of the richest of James's portraits of a shy hero, it may come as no surprise that he unites so many of the threads running through this dissertation. Like James's portrait of the shy Hawthorne, we find something "touching" in Strether, in "this odd, youthful—elderly mind, contending so late in the day with new opportunities for learning old things" (148). We are introduced to Lewis Lambert Strether, "a man of five-and-fifty," as he disembarks from a steamship, stepping down into Liverpool:

> There were people on the ship with whom he had easily consorted—so far as ease could up to now be imputed to him—and who for the most part plunged straight into the current that set from the landing-stage to London; there were others who had invited him to a tryst at the inn and had even invoked his aid for a "look round" at the beauties of Liverpool; but he had stolen away from every one alike […] and had even independently, unsociably, alone, without encounter or relapse and by mere quiet evasion, given his afternoon and evening to the immediate and the sensible. (2)

Unlike his fellow travelers who "plunge straight into the current" or those who turn to one another to create their own intimate community, Strether steals away. Independent, unsociable, alone, he enjoys the stream of the "immediate and sensible." Although we fear that he will be

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overdosed with such things, we are surprised—as other characters are surprised—to find that Strether's mind only unfolds the more to absorb the new world before him.

The world that Lambert Strether encounters is not that different from what the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* encounters: both novels center on an older gentleman entering a social scene in which he feels outmaneuvered, caught in a tangle of romantic and erotic relationships. To match the Brissendens, *The Ambassadors* recounts the story of Chad Newsome, a young man benefitting from a taboo sexual relationship to Marie de Vionnet, a married woman ten years his senior, a relation which requires its own collection of "screens." However, it is how the novels are different that is most striking. Where the narrator is unnamed and disembodied, Lambert Strether is very much embodied.[1] Where the narrator cultivates confusion and misinformation, Strether cultivates reciprocity and mediation.[2] Where the motif of the sacred fount is a *zero-sum game*—winners and losers—Strether concludes that the "virtuous attachment" between Chad and Mme. de Vionnet benefits both lovers immensely.[3] And where the narrator refuses the keyhole and the detective, Lambert Strether is (finally) given a "material clue," a move that frees him from epistemological doubt and pushes him towards a moral decision.[4] Indeed, the entire novel might be seen as teaching Strether the proper *tone* and unteaching him his *method*.

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[1] In *The Romance of Failure*, Jonathan Auerbach is struck by how disembodied the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* is: short of his being male and unmarried, we know next to nothing about him (161).

In "What Maisie Saw," Dan McCall writes about how different *The Ambassadors* would be if it were told in first-person. He writes, "If 'he' is 'I,' Strether isn't nearly as *funny*. He's downright creepy. He's terribly self-important. He's Miles Coverdale" (51).

[2] Maurice Beebe argues that one difference between the heroes of *The Sacred Fount* and *The Ambassadors* is that Lambert Strether never takes advantage of anyone (214).

[3] In "The Complicated Metaphors of Subjectivity in *The Sacred Fount*," Laurel Bollinger argues that *The Ambassadors* is a "naturalized" version of *The Sacred Fount* (65).

[4] One of the most highly-theorized chapters of the novel is the impressionistic scene during the French countryside when Strether comes across Chad and Mme. de Vionnet unexpectedly. We might remember that other famous scene

In tracing the shy affect from Hawthorne to James, it is no trivial question to ask where we end. There are two competing genealogies for the shy hero, each suggesting a different fate. We could move from Coverdale to Winterbourne to the unnamed narrator of *The Sacred Fount*: a colder vein that charts a trajectory of increasing alienation and pettiness that includes T. S. Eliot's Prufrocks and Gerontions, Dostoevsky's Underground Man and Turgenev's Superfluous Man and Ellison's Invisible Man. Or we could instead move from Coverdale to Rowland Mallet to Lambert Strether: a warmer vein that charts a trajectory of increasing intimacy and care. This lineage would move ever onward to show itself in Wharton's Newland Archer, Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, or Ishiguro's James Stevens. The two lineages offer a promise of two different relationships to the wider world: chilly exile versus warm intimacy, alienation versus reconciliation.

Yet the two threads are also intertwined, haunting one another much as Spencer Brydon meets the ghost of his possible self in "The Jolly Corner." The specter of Miles Coverdale haunts the biographies of Hawthorne as the figure of what he might have become—or might always have been; the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* haunts James's *Ambassadors*. Dare I say it? the figure of Coverdale haunts Lambert Strether, too. For both novels conclude their final chapters with declarations that readers have questioned, challenged, not quite believed. They are moments when the shy hero insists that he is being entirely open, yet seems closed—entirely transparent, yet seems opaque.[5] When Coverdale declares his love for Priscilla—when Lambert Strether

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that centers on the "material clue": Gilbert Osmond and Madame Merle sitting together in *Portrait of a Lady*. It is that moment of a broadening consciousness that is ultimately abandoned in *The Sacred Fount*.

[5] In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks describes these moments as a victory contained "within the realm of a moral occult"— a morality that is pre-eminently personal and inward-turned (6). In his article "Renunciation in James's Late Novels," Nicholas Buchele rehearses the general frustration that readers have with the ending of *The Ambassadors*, adding that Strether's own actions seem to contradict his "Live all you can" speech (145-46).

refuses Maria Gostrey's proposal—do these figures uncloset themselves or are they only

retreating further into the closet where they began?

Critics have read the final chapter of *The Ambassadors* variously. In early readings,

critics revolved around the question of whether the novel could be said to have a happy ending or

not: whether his renunciation was a cover for his impotence[6] or whether it were in fact a sign of

his self-sufficiency.[7] Some critics have suggested Strether's decision to be the expression of a

vestigial morality, so refined as to be incomprehensible beyond the closed system of his own

definitions of right and wrong;[8] others emphasize that it is the moral style of the utterance, not its

content, that matters.[9] In recent years, critics have hypothesized that Strether's refusal reveals his

love for someone else: men or women, Chad or Madame de Vionnet.[10] Several critics suggest

that Strether is not rejecting Maria Gostrey as much as the entire marriage plot,[11] while others

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[6] In *Love and Death in the American Novel,* Leslie Fiedler describes Strether's renunciation as a weakness of will: Strether is "the man who *sees* everything but can do nothing, understands everything but can possess nothing" (343).

[7] Many critics have followed Henry James's cues in suggesting that Strether had outgrown the experiences there for him in Europe. In "Lambert Strether and the Negativity of Experience," Collin Meissner agrees that Strether has "come out on the other side" of his experience, even for Maria Gostrey (40).

[8] In his "Henry James and the Relation of Manners to Morals," Yvor Winters argues that James's moral sense is so fine as to feel unsupported and unsatisfactory to the weight of the decisions required (490). In "Strether's 'Penal Form': The Pleasure of Imaginative Surrender," Leland Person argues that the final scene suggests that Strether has closed off his mind to any further new experiences (39).

[9] Peter Brooks argues that James's works are ruled by the logic of melodrama, not tragedy: for tragedy emphasizes the necessary but impossible choice, while melodrama is expression for expression's sake (38). In *Five Fictions in Search of Truth*, Myra Jensen argues that regardless of his real desire, Strether's justifications suggest that he would prefer to be "right" than happy (97ff).

[10] In *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, Eric Haralson argues that we cannot help but wonder if Strether is abstemious because he is not interested in women (105-106). In *Desire and Love in Henry James*, David McWhirter argues that Strether is actually in love with Mme. de Vionnet—a desire that gets rerouted through Chad (80).

[11] In "The Embarrassment of Melodrama: Masculinity in the Early James," Richard Henke argues that Strether is rejecting the sexual script of the marriage plot (281), while Leland S. Person argues in *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity* that Strether is choosing one role—that of bachelor uncle—over the role of lover and husband (33).

argue that in rejecting her, Strether is *choosing* the open space of free play for his imagination.[12] The sheer multitude of possible meanings suggest that this cannot quite be a moment of uncloseting—so then what is it?

In the final scene, Lambert Strether faces the crisis that closes every tourist love story: after sharing tourist experiences, after shedding a certain cultural virginity, after multiple threats to return, after pressing for more time, the *alibi* in the vacation falls apart, leaving the traveler with the choice—to stay or go? Together with Maria Gostrey, he considers their history, a catalogue that essentially encompasses the beginning, middle, and end of the novel:

> He remembered everything, […] falling back above all on the great interest of their early time, the curiosity felt by both of them as to where he would "come out." They had so assumed it was to be in some wonderful place—they had thought of it as so very *much* out. Well, that was doubtless what it had been—since he had come out just there. He was out, in truth, as far as it was possible to be, and must now rather bethink himself of getting in again. He found on the spot the image of his recent history; he was like one of the figures of the old clock at Berne. *They* came out, on one side, at their hour, jigged along their little course in the public eye, and went in on the other side. He too had jigged his little course—him too a modest retreat awaited. (434-35)

It is with this phrase "to come out" that I'd like to end my dissertation. The phrase *come out* has so many meanings in *The Ambassadors*. To *come out* can be to leave America, to travel abroad, to be an ambassador: Strether comes out for Chad, the Pococks come out for both of them. To *come out* can be to show yourself to full advantage—or let your best features come to light: Strether feels that Chad truly comes out when entering a theatre box; Little Bilham says that "ladies of the type" come out in close quarters. To *come out* can be to speak one's mind—as when Waymarsh exclaims "Quit it!"—or to make a hard decision between two contradictory

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[12] In "Renunciation in James's Late Novels," Nicholas Buchele argues that Strether's renunciation is a desire for free play of sentiment (148); a statement that McWhirter agrees with, saying that Strether chooses desire over love (8).

positions. Finally, to wonder "where he would come out" is to suggest that Strether must first take a plunge—he must entangle himself and then *come out* on the other side.

In what possible sense could Strether's "coming out" have to do with coming out of the closet? The values of inner and outer, closed and open, safe and exposed are all confused among these many meanings. To leave Woollett and travel to Europe—is that *coming out*, or taking the *plunge*? Is coming out revealing your *true* self—or growing into a *better* self? Is coming out a matter of *where* you surface—or a matter of *how far* you come out? Strether seems to think that he has come out in a wonderful place—as far out as it was possible to be—yet now believes he must rather bethink himself of getting in again. He concludes by comparing himself to the figures on the "old clock at Berne"[13]—the Swiss figurines moving in a circle, out into the open and then back inside.

Whether Lambert Strether has really come out or not, whether Strether is choosing for himself the life he wants or denying himself his best shot at happiness—his metaphors suggest that "coming out" is a process, full of approaches and retreats—possibly even cyclical. It is why both Strether and Gostrey believe that Chad will relapse: after all, "he has all life before him" (437). It is also why we can be optimistic, even without quite knowing what Strether will do with himself once he returns to Woollett:

> "Shall you make anything so good—?"
> He had sufficiently understood. "So good as this place at this moment?" (437-38)

Even if nothing in Woollett is as good as that moment in Maria Gostrey's garden, it is not to say that Strether won't make his "modest retreat" and then turn outward once again, to find something almost as good. The clocks at Berne come out, go in—and we are invited to believe that at the next hour, the bells will chime and the figures might show again.

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[13] The Zytglogge Tower is a landmark tower in Bern, Switzerland. Every hour, several figurines—including a king and a fool—jig "along their little course in the public eye."

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