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Darkness, Dreams, and Dungeons in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun and Selected Shorter Works.

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Darkness, Dreams, and Dungeons
in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun
and Selected Shorter Works

by

Helen M. Richards

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee

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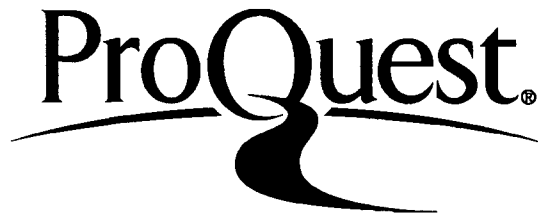
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Oct. 31, 1978

Professor in Charge

Chairman of Department

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Abstract

Darkness, Dreams, and Dungeons
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Helen M. Richards

Hawthorne's preoccupation with the multifaceted problem of the psychological effects of guilt spans his entire career. His exploration of the question reaches its deepest level in The Marble Faun, although his theme's intensity is somewhat weakened by the work's long, discrete descriptive passages and by myopic characterization, particularly with respect to Hilda. Despite its flaws, however, The Marble Faun is not the "failure" some critics have found it to be.

This study examines three guilt-related motifs that were especially haunting for Hawthorne. All are used with unusual effectiveness--and surprising touches of optimism--in The Marble Faun. Hawthorne sustains throughout the romance that dreamlike atmosphere that reflects his view of man's tenuous hold on reality, but by linking reality with morality he makes it a goal well worth pursuing. He uses dark-light imagery not only to delineate character and establish mood but also to enrich his portrayal of a bright life darkened, but at the same time deepened, by suffering and love. Finally, he couples his re-creation of the image of the heart as a dungeon with the assurance that redemption is possible when that "foul cavern" is emptied of its burden of guilt.

Darkness, Dreams, and Dungeons
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and Selected Shorter Works

Introduction

When Hyatt H. Waggoner originally wrote his critical study Hawthorne, he described The Marble Faun, the author's last completed romance, as a work of "unintentional confusion and failure of embodiment" which foreshadowed the "paralysis of the unfinished romances" that occupied Hawthorne's waning years. According to Waggoner's reading at that time, The Marble Faun was a seriously flawed work, "bare where it should be rich," marred by a "mechanical repetition of devices that had ceased to be functional, of symbols that no longer symbolized anything, of plots ever more intricate to hide the fact that they were meaningless."¹

During the interim between publication of the 1955 and 1963 editions of his study, however, Waggoner's opinion of The Marble Faun changed to such a remarkable degree that he entirely rewrote the chapter dealing with it. Although he still felt that there was in the romance "a very large gap . . . between intended and achieved meaning," he had come to regard it as a work whose "subtle and delicate" strength

¹Hawthorne (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1955), pp. 200-01, 221.

outweighed its obvious weaknesses and to feel that it was "more worth reading than most American novels of the nineteenth century." "How I managed to miss the Faun's virtues almost completely ten years ago," he wrote in his Preface to the Second Edition, "I cannot now understand."²

It is precisely because its weaknesses are so much more readily seen than its strengths that The Marble Faun has commonly been perceived as inferior to the earlier romances. In addition, because of its position in the canon as Hawthorne's last completed long work, it is tempting to conclude that many of its unique qualities may be attributed to a beginning deterioration in the author's skill. For many readers--especially those for whom The Scarlet Letter is the standard by which everything else in Hawthorne must be judged--The Marble Faun is too prolix, too obviously moralistic, too redundant in symbolic content. It is too burdened with material transferred in its raw state from the Italian Notebooks, runs a frequently heard comment, and left in unrefined lumps to obstruct the progress of an already slow-moving story. Moreover, the delineation of character that Hawthorne strives for is never achieved: His heroine, whom he certainly intended to portray in the most saintly light, comes across instead as rigid, cold, and unforgiving, while his hero behaves, as one critic puts it, like "one of the most perceptive muttonheads in our fiction."³ It is not surprising,

²Hawthorne, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1963), pp. 221, 224-25. Preface, n. pag. Subsequent references to Waggoner's critical study are to this edition.

³Roy Harvey Pearce, "Hawthorne and the Twilight of Romance," Yale Review, 37 (1948), 493.

then, that a number of critics, detecting, as they see it, unmistakable signs of waning ability, tend to place The Marble Faun in the author's "declining" phase, which yielded such anti-climactic fragments as the unfinished romances, rather than in the period of major creativity, which produced The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, and the somewhat less familiar Blithedale Romance.

It seems evident to even the most sympathetic critics that at the time he wrote The Marble Faun Hawthorne was beginning to have trouble with the romance as a genre, but this does not necessarily reflect a general decline in artistic powers. John Caldwell Stubbs is one critic who, while denying that the uncompleted romances are "bankrupt of ideas," believes that "The Marble Faun seems to have exhausted [Hawthorne's] capacity to push the romance form further."⁴ Nina Baym also sees The Marble Faun as a kind of watershed work. Although the romances that followed it often "display the highest craftsmanship," Baym writes, there are also within them a lack of coherence and evidence of loss of purpose. The Marble Faun, in which Hawthorne carries the investigation of all his concerns beyond the bounds of the earlier romances, says Baym, "has a valedictory air about it."⁵

Roy Harvey Pearce attributes the "failure" of The Marble Faun to the fact that at the time Hawthorne wrote it, the day of the romance had passed; the world "was fast becoming a world for novelists, not romancers." (Hawthorne's problem, in Pearce's view, was not unique:

⁴The Pursuit of Form (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 163.

⁵The Shape of Hawthorne's Career (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 229, 250, 252.

Melville, for one, also met with failure when he took to Pierre "assumptions about artistic form and meaning which [played] him false.") "'The Marble Faun,' says Pearce, "is to 'The Scarlet Letter' . . . as twilight is to burning daylight."⁶

Waggoner, on the other hand, argues that the "twilight of romance" theory does not hold up, since while it is true that Hawthorne's career began late in the Romantic movement, "the 'twilight of romance' had in fact already set in before even The Scarlet Letter was written." If Hawthorne "was 'old-fashioned' at the end of his career," Waggoner writes, "he was not very much less so in the middle of it, when he was doing his best work."⁷

From about 1845 Hawthorne's notebooks began to play an increasingly important role in his creative process. The notebooks, which he had by then been keeping for a decade, were filled with impressions of people and things, and story ideas that occurred to him from time to time. The merging of impression and idea was something he had long thought about in a conscious way. The best method, he wrote, was not "to insist on creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter . . . [but] to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of to-day, and thus to make it a bright transparency . . ."⁸--to start with an exterior setting, in other words, and work inward.

The Marble Faun is without doubt the work in which this creative

⁶Pearce, 504, 506.

⁷Waggoner, pp. 232-33.

⁸"The Custom-House," Introd. to The Scarlet Letter, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. William Charvat et al (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962), I, p.37.

process was put to its greatest test. It is, for some, the one in which the process fails most noticeably. Malcolm Cowley, who calculates that more than two-thirds of the romance consists of descriptive passages taken from the Italian notebooks, writes that "the novel combines his two worlds, but without fusing them; inner drama and outer setting tend to separate like oil and water."⁹ Kenneth Dauber and Hugo McPherson agree. Dauber believes that Hawthorne relies too much upon description, substituting iteration for substance, and allowing his "Cook's tour" ultimately to dominate the book;¹⁰ while McPherson writes that the "large chunks of guide-book description," reflecting Hawthorne's immoderate use of his notebook material, are employed "in a manner that obscures rather than deepens his statement."¹¹

With respect to these charges even Waggoner cannot rise to Hawthorne's defense. Although he finds some passages in which description and art criticism "work," Waggoner nevertheless believes that overall there is too much inert material about Rome and about art, material which Hawthorne simply "lifts" from the notebooks in the vain hope of adding thematic density. These long, tedious passages, Waggoner writes, "are a burden the story is simply incapable of

⁹"Hawthorne in the Looking-Glass," Sewanee Review, 56 (1948), 559.

¹⁰Rediscovering Hawthorne (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 217, 219.

¹¹Hawthorne as Myth-Maker (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 158-59.

carrying."¹²

Consciously or unconsciously, it seems, critics have a tendency to censure The Marble Faun for lacking the spare texture and verbal economy that characterize The Scarlet Letter. Since masterpieces do have a way of outshining an artist's other achievements, it is not surprising that The Marble Faun when examined in the shadow of The Scarlet Letter may take on the aspect of a twilight romance. When viewed in wider perspective and in a somewhat less pitiless light, however, The Marble Faun may be seen not only to illuminate a number of earlier stories, but also to take on a sheen of its own. One such way of looking at the work is as the culmination of a lifetime of experimentation with concepts, themes, and techniques. It is a rather traditional view, as comments from a number of critics show.

Carlos Kling, for example, calls The Marble Faun "the cream" of Hawthorne's "ripened moralizing interests," a work which brings together "all his ripest observations upon life."¹³ Frederick C. Crews agrees, although he tempers his assertion with the qualification that in The Marble Faun Hawthorne's "former concerns . . . are handled with timid ambiguity."¹⁴ McPherson, who sees the romance as marking "a thematic progression" from ideas contained in the tales, calls it "another realization of Hawthorne's multi-dimensional theme, another

¹²Waggoner, p. 223. Interestingly, however, in the 1955 edition Waggoner had written that "Hawthorne makes his setting work for him. . . . The Roman background enriches the theme" (p. 208).

¹³"Hawthorne's View of Sin," Personalist, 13 (1932), 125.

¹⁴The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 215.

face of his poetic oeuvre."¹⁵ For Pearce, it is Hawthorne's sketches that form "the very structural core" of The Marble Faun, a work that, in his view, "was always immanent in Hawthorne's fiction."¹⁶ Although he does not deal with The Marble Faun specifically, Clinton S. Burhans' general observation concerning the development of Hawthorne's art--his "constantly deepening and broadening exploration of the problem of sin and evil"--is germane. "It is significant," Burhans states, "that [Hawthorne's] early writing so abundantly foreshadows the qualities of his mature work."¹⁷

In exploring the problem of sin and evil (for which he often employs the term "guilt" synonymously), Hawthorne uses a variety of symbols and images, many of which are exceedingly complex. Not only do separate symbols merge or overlap; often a single symbol is used to convey a number of different, even contradictory, meanings. One of his leading emblems, for example, is the human heart, which, although usually portrayed as a dungeon or prison, a tomb, a "foul cavern"¹⁸ in need of purification, may also represent hearth and home and, occasionally, purity itself. Waggoner in his discussion of "Rappaccini's

¹⁵McPherson, p. 170.

¹⁶Pearce, 500, 503.

¹⁷"Hawthorne's Mind and Art in 'The Hollow of the Three Hills,'" Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 60 (1961), 293.

¹⁸The often-quoted term is from "Earth's Holocaust," in Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches, introd. Hyatt H. Waggoner, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 522. Subsequent references to the tales and sketches, which appear in the text, are to this edition.

Daughter," for example, notes the relationship between the clear, refreshing water of the fountain and the "incorruptible purity" of Beatrice's heart.¹⁹ In a thesis fundamental to Hawthorne's thought, the terror of the image of the human heart as a dark chamber is mitigated by the certainty that those who are able to penetrate the gloom of its innermost recesses will find true beauty and light.²⁰

Similarly, although another of Hawthorne's favorite metaphors, the dream, most often suggests nightmare, it may sometimes have pleasant connotations as well. In the story of the search for the Great Carbuncle, for instance, while most of the adventurers, variously described as selfish, evil, vain, and foolish, have an exhausting night of "feverish wakefulness," Hawthorne allows the innocent young protagonists a peaceful, refreshing night's sleep, blessed by "visions of unearthly radiance" ("The Great Carbuncle," p. 219). Nevertheless, as Jerry A. Herndon emphasizes, "Hawthorne's most characteristic use of dream imagery in fiction registered the presence of evil."²¹

Perhaps the most pervasive motif in Hawthorne, and the one that is most significant in terms of structure as well as theme, is that of the interplay of light and darkness. "The light in Hawthorne," writes

¹⁹Waggoner, pp. 112-13. Waggoner remarks that this relationship "has not generally been . . . recognized." However, John W. Shroeder anticipates Waggoner's point in his article "'That Inward Sphere': Notes on Hawthorne's Heart Imagery and Symbolism," PMLA, 65 (1950), 106-19. See, especially, 107, 110.

²⁰For a discussion of Hawthorne's notebook entry in which this idea is developed, see pages 87-91 of this paper.

²¹"Hawthorne's Dream Imagery," American Literature, 46 (1975), 538.

Richard Harter Fogle, "is clarity of design. . . . The 'dark' in Hawthorne, that blackness which Herman Melville applauded in him, is his tragic complexity. His clarity is intermingled with subtlety, his statement interfused with symbolism, his affirmation enriched with ambiguity."²² The interplay of light and shadow represents the very essence of Hawthorne's art, as he himself wrote: "Lights and shadows are continually flitting across my inward sky, and I know neither whence they come nor whither they go; nor do I inquire too closely into them. It is dangerous to look too minutely at such phenomena. It is apt to create a substance, where at first there was a mere shadow."²³ Shadow, although it often appears in Hawthorne as part of the traditional use of light-dark imagery to connote good and evil, can also represent the stuff of which dreams are made and the veil that hides from too close scrutiny the dungeon that is the human heart.

Hawthorne's images of darkness, dreams, and dungeons, then, are interrelated, often, but by no means always, suggesting evil or guilt. They are used with telling effect in a number of the tales and sketches and are brought together in a climactic probing of deep psychological and moral questions in Hawthorne's last completed romance, The Marble Faun.

²²Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 4.

²³Love Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1839-1863 (Chicago: The Society of the Dofobs, 1907; rpt. Washington: NCR/Microcard Editions, 1972), p. 192.

Darkness

" . . . their collected torches illuminated this one, small, consecrated spot, the great darkness spread all around it, like that immenser mystery which envelopes [sic] our little life. . . ." ²⁴

I

Probably the most widely quoted phrases dealing with Hawthorne's "dark" side are to be found in Melville's review of Mosses from an Old Manse, ²⁵ a review which, in the words of one modern critic, "has had a profound and controversial impact on modern evaluations of both Hawthorne and Melville."²⁶ Melville's terms "blackness, ten times black," "power of blackness," and "blackness of darkness," in particular, have become a permanent part of the Hawthorne lexicon. One should not, however, overlook the fact that although Melville in his

²⁴The Marble Faun: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. William Charvat et al., (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), IV, pp. 26-27. Subsequent references to The Marble Faun, which appear in the text, are to this edition.

²⁵Literary World, 7 (1850), 125-27, 145-47, rpt. in B. Bernard Cohen, ed., The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 29-41. Taking note of the fact that Mosses had been in print for four years by the time he read it and wrote his review, Melville commented gracefully that probably during that time "the book, like wine, was only improving in flavor and body" (Cohen, p. 30).

²⁶Cohen, p. 29.

discussion does lay stress on Hawthorne's "mystical blackness," he does not ignore "the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul," "the bright gildings of the skies he builds over you," or "the wondrous effects he makes [blackness] produce in his lights and shades."²⁷ This chiaroscuro effect, certainly one of the more remarkable aspects of Hawthorne's work in general, is especially striking in The Marble Faun²⁸ and most notably so in his delineation of the character of Miriam.

Although she is usually included with Hester and Zenobia as one of Hawthorne's "dark ladies," Miriam is to a surprising extent associated also with light, and the range of her emotions reflects the kaleidoscopic interplay of sun and shadow that characterizes the mood of the romance itself. We begin very early to be aware of her quicksilver temperament. In the opening scene, as Miriam hints at her "dark future," Kenyon notices that her face is suddenly "pale and tear-stained." But then her mood changes: "Let it go as it came," she says, "like a thunder-shower in this Roman sky. All is sunshine again" (p. 14). The evanescent light which plays about her person gives Miriam an elusive quality that sets her apart from the others. She resembles, we are told, "one of those images of light, which conjurers evoke and cause to shine before us, in apparent tangibility.

²⁷ See, especially, Hubert H. Hoeltje's article on "Hawthorne, Melville, and 'Blackness,'" American Literature, 37 (1965), 41-51.

²⁸ For an extremely detailed analysis of Hawthorne's use of light in The Marble Faun, see Marjorie J. Elder, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Transcendental Symbolist (Columbus: Ohio Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 147-61.

only an arm's length beyond our grasp . . ." (p. 21). After she has seen the Spectre of the Catacomb (who is both her Model and an odious reminder of her shadowy past), her own grip on light becomes more tenuous: Her torch is held "with a nervous grasp, the tremour of which [is] seen in the irregular twinkling of the flame" (p. 29).

Hawthorne reinforces the light imagery which surrounds Miriam by the use of repeated references to her eyes, a fact that is not surprising considering the crucial role they play in the precipice scene. Following an early reference to the "laughing gleam in her dark eyes" (p. 34), Miriam's eyes are seen to fill with tears when she contemplates the futility of Donatello's love for her. Shortly thereafter, having decided to seize the happiness of the moment, she brightens up, as though there were "an inward flame . . . dancing in her eye-beams" (p. 82). Then, as her mood again becomes melancholy, we are told that the light in her eyes seems "as far off as that of a star . . ." (p. 89).

Hilda's eyes, as might be expected, are described as "spotless" (p. 338), while Kenyon observes the scene in which he finds himself with "clear, natural eye-sight" (p. 438). The Model, as befits a spectre, consistently hides his face, and remains throughout, despite his many guises, but another version of the mysterious figure who had first been glimpsed in "a broad-brimmed, conical hat, beneath the shadow of which a wild visage was indistinctly seen . . ." (p. 30). When he reappears as the Capuchin monk lying in the nave of the convent-church, however, his eyes, half-closed in death, seem to cast a "severe, reproachful glance" at Miriam and Donatello (p. 191).

Donatello in the first part of the romance is a figure of light. He hates darkness, "except it be in a grotto . . . [and] even there, if a stray sunbeam steal in, the shadow is all the better for its cheerful glimmer" (p. 42). His love for Miriam causes him instinctively to hate the Model, who repeatedly flings his shadow "into the light which Miriam diffuse[s] around her . . ." (p. 36). When he enters Miriam's "shadowy chamber," he introduces a "bright ray," (p. 47), and when he leaps from a tree to her side it is as though "the swaying of the branches had let a ray of sunlight through" (p. 76).

Hawthorne uses two other light-related images, the mirror and the fountain, to show how the lives of Miriam and Donatello are becoming more and more interrelated. ". . . his own mood seemed to brighten Miriam's," we are told, "and was reflected back upon himself" (p. 77). Trevi Fountain, first described as "glistening, and dimpling in the moonlight" with its "precious water" that "sparkles forth, as pure as the virgin . . ." (pp. 143-44), begins almost immediately to take on ominous significance as, in a foreshadowing of the Model's death, we read that "over a central precipice fell the water" (p. 144). Mirror and fountain images merge as the fountain reflects the shadows of Miriam, Donatello, and the Model leaning over it. "Three shadows!" Miriam exclaims. "Three separate shadows, all so black and heavy that they sink in the water! There they lie on the bottom, as if all three were drowned together" (p. 147).

As the four young friends explore the Forum shortly before the Model's death, Hawthorne reveals a strong philosophical tendency in

Miriam's nature that emphasizes her basically dark and deterministic view of life. It is almost as though she knew what would happen in the next scene and sadly accepted its inevitability. Miriam's metaphorical musings also touch upon the idea of life's illusoriness that is central throughout to the delineation of her character, a point that will be discussed more fully later.

Standing at the spot where according to legend the gulf had opened many centuries before to swallow up the brave Curtius and his steed, Kenyon remarks whimsically that he wishes he might have shared the experience of all those ancient Romans who peered over the chasm's brim and glimpsed the "half-shaped monsters and hideous faces" in the depths below. Miriam replies that everyone looks into such an abyss "in moments of gloom and despondency; that is to say, in [their] moments of deepest insight." When Hilda, with puzzling obtuseness, asks where such an abyss might be found, she herself never having "peeped into it," Miriam tells her to wait and it will open for her. Then Miriam continues:

The chasm was merely one of the orifices of that pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere. The firmest substance of human happiness is but a thin crust spread over it, with just reality enough to bear up the illusive stage-scenery amid which we tread. . . . we must step very daintily, not to break through the crust, at any moment. By-and-by, we inevitably sink! (pp. 161-62).

In the Model's death scene, eye and light imagery merge in flashing climax. A sense of foreboding is established as Donatello instinctively glances about "with a watchful air" (p. 170). Then, as

Donatello and Miriam stand at the precipice, the Model emerges from his hiding place, an "empty niche" which has been "shaded from the moon" (pp. 170-71). Suddenly, it is all over. The Model lies on the stone beneath the cliff, a lifeless "dark mass," and Miriam and Donatello are once again alone.

She . . . looked wildly at the young man, whose form seemed to have dilated, and whose eyes blazed with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him. It had kindled him into a man. . . . The glow of rage was still lurid on Donatello's face, and now flashed out again from his eyes. . . . "I did what your eyes bade me do, when I asked them with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice!" . . . Could it be so? Had her eyes provoked, or assented to this deed? . . . Looking back . . . she could not deny . . . that a wild joy had flamed up in her heart, when she beheld her persecutor in his mortal peril. . . . "And my eyes bade you do it!" repeated she (pp. 172-73).

Had Miriam's eyes really provoked or assented to the deed? Her first reaction is one of incredulity. When she echoes Donatello's accusation, there is at least the possibility that it is not so much an admission of guilt as an exclamation of stunned disbelief. Looking back later, Miriam seems to see the whole thing through a glass, darkly, for we are told that when she relived the scene in her mind, she "beheld herself as in a dim show" (p. 171). Yet later, Hawthorne shatters any doubts the reader may have had as to Miriam's guilt when he has Hilda, who must be regarded as a thoroughly reliable witness, relive the scene: "It revealed all your heart, Miriam!" she says. "A look of hatred, triumph, vengeance, and, as it were, joy at some unhopèd for relief!" "Ah, Donatello was right, then!" Miriam murmurs. "My eyes bade him do it!" (p. 210).

As the scene shifts to Monte Beni, Donatello's attempt to cope with the knowledge of his own capacity for evil is described by Kenyon in terms of eye imagery: Although Donatello "gropes blindly about him for some method of sharp self-torture," says Kenyon, he has gained "inward sight," a "perception of deep truths" (p. 282). Donatello's outward blindness is emphasized by the fact that the only "feathered acquaintances" who have not deserted him are the two owls who live in "the darkest corner" of the dreary tower (p. 254). The bit of hopeful sunshine that Hawthorne allows to penetrate the shadows now surrounding both Miriam and Donatello is ephemeral. Donatello, whose eyes are described as shining "with a serene and hopeful expression" after he has been blessed by the bronze Pontiff at Perugia (p. 314), is later seen as a penitent wearing a "featureless mask . . . through the apertures of which the eyes [throw] an unintelligible light" (p. 392). Miriam, whose eyes beam with a "new, tender gladness" as she anticipates reunion with Donatello (p. 286), is in the final scene observed beneath the great Eye of the Pantheon, her "upturned face . . . invisible, behind a veil or mask, which form[s] a part of the garb" (p. 459).

The masks and veils associated with Donatello and Miriam toward the end of the romance are a bit puzzling. Knowing Hawthorne, we may assume that they are to be perceived in two ways, the real and the metaphorical. Where worn as part of Donatello's penitential garb, the veil may obviously be taken as a symbol of his period of soul-searching and later rebirth into a higher state. With Miriam, however, the situation is different. Although she is described as a "female penitent" (p. 459), she has never actually undergone a purgatorial experience,

and she seems to feel no remorse for her complicity in the Model's death. Indeed, her position seems to be that by threatening to expose the "terrible event" in her past which culminated in a crime of which she was innocent, the Model in effect caused his own death and perhaps even deserved to die. "I shudder at the fatality that seems to haunt your footsteps," says Kenyon sympathetically, after listening to her story, "and throws a shadow of crime about your path, you being guiltless." "There was such a fatality," Miriam answers. "Yes; the shadow fell upon me, innocent, but I went astray in it, and wandered . . . into crime" (p. 430).

There is some validity to Baym's suggestion that during the last third of the romance Miriam and Donatello have become "a composite figure."²⁹ The idea is given credence by Kenyon's observation that "the grasp of their hands, uniting them so closely, [seems] to set them in a sad remoteness from the world . . ." (p. 447).³⁰ Yet this idea of compositeness should not be pushed too far, for while it is true that Kenyon thinks of Donatello and Miriam as linked in remorse (p. 435), nothing in Miriam's proposal of the fortunate-fall idea indicates that she sees herself as having risen from the depths through repentance to "a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness . . ." (p. 434).

²⁹Baym, p. 244.

³⁰Crews sees their bond as purely sexual. The sense of evil into which Donatello is initiated, Crews contends, "is ultimately a euphemism for knowledge of sexuality." In fact, says Crews, the entire romance "dwells on the very existence of sexual passion as if this were the most hideous of the world's evils" (p. 219).

Miriam and Donatello are, however, linked by the fact that they have lost their association with light. Both drift in and out of the shadows with covered eyes. When they appear separately, they are dressed as gloomy penitents. When they appear together, although they are dressed in colorful peasant costumes, "their disguised figures" as they approach Kenyon "[come] between him and the sunlight" (p. 426). And when he sees them, fleetingly, at the Carnival, "the countenance of each [is] covered with an impenetrable black mask" (p. 443). To Kenyon's plea, "Pray give me a little light on the matter [of Hilda's whereabouts]," they only look at him silently "through the eye-holes of their black masks" (p. 447).

The dual masks are clearly symbols of the darkness and isolation that have resulted from shared sin and sorrow. Yet while Donatello voluntarily surrenders to the gens d'armes (pp. 450-51), Miriam, who believes "there is no such thing as earthly justice" (p. 433), apparently escapes to an uncertain future in her penitential veil and robes.³¹ Thus Baym's idea is not totally satisfying, since Miriam and Donatello, although they share at least a moral guilt, are parted at the end by their separate and unequal punishment.

³¹It is worth noting that when two of the revelers mention the arrest incident, they describe the "contadina" (Miriam) as having been masked, while there is no mention of a mask when they speak of Donatello. Although this does not constitute absolutely conclusive proof, it seems reasonable to deduce that while Miriam's eyes at this point remain covered, Donatello is unmasked (p. 451). In any case, Edgar A. Dryden (Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Poetics of Enchantment [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977], p. 119) errs when he states that Miriam and Donatello are both arrested at the Carnival, since Miriam reappears shortly thereafter in penitential garb (p. 461). We also have Kenyon's word in the Postscript that Donatello is in prison, while Miriam is "at large" (p. 467).

II

This was not the first time that Hawthorne had baffled a reader who attempted to look too closely behind the symbolic veil. His tale "The Minister's Black Veil" had been perplexing readers for more than two decades by the time The Marble Faun was in print, and it is still being debated, as the search for its "meaning" goes on.

Rather inexplicably, considering the artful ambiguities that abound in his own tales, Poe in his well-known critique objects to the "mysticism" that characterizes "The Minister's Black Veil," among other tales.³² (Perhaps, as Harry Levin has suggested, Poe "liked to mystify [but] did not like to be mystified.")³³ Poe believes that, rather than being a symbol of universal guilt, Hooper's veil is intended to conceal his own specific crime--a "crime of dark dye" involving the young woman at whose funeral he officiates--a crucial point which Poe feels will be missed by "the rabble" and understood only by "minds congenial with that of the author."³⁴

Modern critics are inclined to wonder whether Poe's mind was as congenial with Hawthorne's as he evidently supposed. Perhaps, instead, he may have fallen victim to one of the devices Hawthorne often uses to trap unwary readers. Crews is one who feels that the three witnesses who supply the only evidence we have of an "explicit

³²Rev. of Twice-Told Tales, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Graham's Magazine, 20 (May 1842), 300.

³³The Power of Blackness (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), p. 136.

³⁴Rev. of Twice-Told Tales, 299.

liaison" between Hooper and the girl are quite unreliable. One, he reminds us, is described as "a superstitious old woman," while the other two are said to have "a fancy" that they see "the minister and the maiden's spirit . . . walking hand in hand" (p. 188). "That the fancy is shared," says Crews, "is no sign of its truth."³⁵

Neal Frank Doubleday agrees: "Poe has apparently seized upon a preternatural suggestion the narrator records without assenting to it-- a suggestion such as we learn to expect from Hawthorne." The "fancy" of the two parishioners, Doubleday adds, "hardly suggests 'a crime of dark dye.'"³⁶

H. J. Lang, on the other hand, accepts Poe's interpretation, although he differs on the question of degree. Poe is correct, he believes, in connecting Hooper's veil with the dead girl (who is buried, as Lang points out, on the same day the minister starts wearing the veil). Lang adds, however, that although "theoretically, the reader's imagination may range over the whole moral spectrum from the lightest gray to the blackest black," it is important to temper such imaginings with what is known about the minister's character: He has a temperament, we are told, such that "even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime" (pp. 189-90). ". . . his conscience," says Lang, "[is] over-tender and his penitence excessive."³⁷

³⁵Crews, p. 109.

³⁶Hawthorne's Early Tales (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1972), p. 174.

³⁷"How Ambiguous is Hawthorne?" in Hawthorne, ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 92-93.

The darkness with which Hooper's veil is associated is accented by its juxtaposition, in a variety of images, to whiteness and light. Hooper's sermons acquire a power of dreadful darkness that causes his parishioners to quake but at the same time brings them to "celestial light" (p. 194). When he officiates at a wedding, the effect of his veil on the guests is such "that a cloud [seems] to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles" (p. 189). The sadness of Hooper's long life, "irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions," is poignantly suggested by the image of the years "shedding their snows above his sable veil" (p. 194). Probably the most pervasive dark-light image, however, is Hooper's "sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil" (p. 191). The minister's smile and the suggestion of light, which some have taken to have a spiritually positive meaning, are assumed by E. Earle Stibitz to be ironic, since the smile is not "a true smile or the light clearly light, as the faintness of the whole image makes evident"38

If, as Doubleday believes, "Hawthorne doubtless assumed that Mr. Hooper's deathbed speech would be accepted as a sufficient interpretation of the tale,"39 he assumed too much, for the explanation that he has worn the veil as an emblem of universal guilt ("I look around me," Hooper cries, "and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" [p. 197]) has

38 "Ironic Unity in Hawthorne's 'The Minister's Black Veil,'" American Literature, 34 (1962), 184.

39 Doubleday, p. 172.

for many readers raised more questions than it has answered.

Fogle, for instance, asks: Why, if the veil symbolizes the human condition, should it "isolate its wearer with a poignancy unfelt by other men and leave him lonely and alone?" The question has no answer, but, as Fogle points out, "we are not compelled to accept [Hooper's] reading of the matter. We may, if we like, consider it rather a veil upon his understanding, whose gloomy shade conceals from the eyes behind it as much as it discloses."⁴⁰

Stibitz feels even more strongly that Hooper is self-deceived and thus finally fails to understand, himself, what the veil has come to mean:

Hooper in his stubborn use of the veil parable of one sin is unconsciously guilty of a greater one--that of egotistically warping the total meaning of life. . . . The veil is no longer merely a symbol of the fact of hidden sin or sorrow, but it is also, more dominantly, a symbol of Mr. Hooper's prideful adherence to a destructive idea--the sin of a spiritual egotism that enables him to see the mote in another's eye and blinds him to the beam in his own.⁴¹

The nature of the sin that Miriam's and Donatello's masks and veils symbolize does not need to be guessed at. The crime of dark dye is known but, as in "The Minister's Black Veil," the true significance of the veil is ambiguous. "Veils," says Dryden, ". . . reveal as well as conceal and as such suggest a hidden connection between

⁴⁰Fogle, pp. 38-40.

⁴¹Stibitz, 182, 190.

secrecy and self-revelation"42 Yet self-revelation, as we have seen, seems to come only to Donatello, and not to Miriam. Why, if Donatello's fall is fortunate and Miriam's is not--or if Miriam has not fallen at all--do they both cover their faces in the same way? The question, like the question of Hooper's sin, remains unanswerable.

III

Two of Hawthorne's early tales that seem on the surface to be quite unlike may be seen to be surprisingly similar when one focuses on the author's use of light-and-dark imagery to portray religious and psychological extremes.

In "The Maypole of Merry Mount," the dichotomy is between the harsh repression of the Puritans and the unrestrained sensuality of the "gay colony" of Merry Mount--"jollity and gloom . . . contending for an empire" (p. 198). The story begins with the Merry Mounters dancing around the Maypole in a colorful celebration honoring Edgar and Edith, the Lord and Lady of the May, who that very evening are to become "partners for the dance of life." But as the last "solitary sunbeam" gives way to the "evening gloom," a "pensive shadow" is cast over the "lightsome" young couple (pp. 201-02, 205). The blackening sky foreshadows the entrance of John Endicott, that iron "Puritan of Puritans," and his "darksome" followers who come to assert their jurisdiction over the New England wilderness that has been set aside for them as God's "peculiar people." As he stands over the Maypole which he has hewn down, Endicott proclaims that the fallen symbol "shadow[s]

⁴²Dryden, p. 80.

forth the fate of light and idle mirth makers, amongst us and our posterity" (pp. 206-07).

Hawthorne constantly catches the reader off balance in this tale, seeming first to sympathize with and then to condemn the Merry Mounters. In the end Endicott's attitude toward Edgar and Edith softens (although he decrees "stripes" and time in the stocks for the others, with branding and ear-cropping perhaps to come later), and they in turn give up the carefree life, "never [wasting] one regretful thought on the vanities of Merry Mount" (pp. 207, 209-10). The ending, as Michael Davitt Bell points out, "presents problems to the reader who has found the vision of conflict between light and dark more convincing than the final attempt at resolution." If, as Bell believes, Hawthorne intended to end the tale "in balance and hope,"⁴³ it seems that the balance is heavily weighted in favor of the forces of darkness and that the hope, like the deserted home of the Merry Mounters, is destined to become "desolate amid the sad forest" (p. 209) of moral gloom.

Like "The Maypole of Merry Mount," the tale "The Gentle Boy" has historical New England roots and deals in an allegorical way with religious fanaticism and intolerance. The latter tale, however, is concerned not with religion versus paganism but rather with the opposition of two religious groups vying overzealously for dominance in the New World. Again, Hawthorne's sympathies seem to be divided, and one way in which this ambivalence makes itself felt is through images of darkness and light.

⁴³Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 124-25.

As a symbol of true spirituality, the Quaker child Ibrahim, the "gentle boy" of the story, is associated with light. He has a "pale, spiritual face," a "white brow," and bright eyes that seem to "mingle with the moonlight" (pp. 71, 75). When the good Puritans Tobias and Dorothy Pearson take the boy into their childless home, he becomes "a domesticated sunbeam, brightening moody countenances, and chasing away the gloom from the . . . cottage" (pp. 86-87).

Pearson himself, although originally bent on converting Ibrahim to Puritanism, thereby "counteract[ing] the pernicious errors hitherto instilled into his infant mind" (p. 74), is instead drawn toward Quakerism by the example of the boy's love and forgiveness in the face of merciless persecution, especially by the Puritan children who set upon and beat him (p. 90). Pearson's inner turmoil and vacillation are represented by his changing color, which comes and goes, and can "find no resting place" (p. 85).

The character of Dorothy, although lightly sketched, is vital because of its opposition to that of Catharine, Ibrahim's mother, whose "unbridled fanaticism" (p. 84) is clearly a quality that Hawthorne finds especially reprehensible in a woman. Dorothy, first glimpsed in the "red blaze" of the torch that lights her doorway (p. 74), is by contrast warm and tender, a woman of the home.

As with Miriam, Hawthorne intermingles light and dark imagery in his portrayal of Catharine, but with the difference that the nature of the imagery serves to delineate her extremism, making her seem not more human but less so. Her "raven hair" is "defiled by pale streaks of ashes" and the whiteness of her countenance, contrast-

ing sharply with the darkness of her eyebrows, is described as "deathly" (p. 79). Even her smile, in striking similarity to the sad smile of Father Hooper, is "unmirthful," spreading over her features "like sunshine that grows melancholy in some desolate spot" (p. 85).

Catharine, who, as Doubleday points out, "has long mistaken her own will for the will of God,"⁴⁴ is led by the excess of her religious zeal to commit what is for Hawthorne a most deplorable sin, the abandonment of her child. Even though the hands into which Ibrahim is being entrusted are good hands, from the moment Catharine decides to obey "the voice" that tells her to "break the bonds of natural affection" and leave her child with the Pearsons in order to free her for "other work" (p. 85)--presumably the work of fanatical proselytizing--it is clear that Hawthorne intends to hold her strictly to account. Not only is she forsaking her son, a heinous act in itself; she is also quitting the nurture of the true faith, an even greater sin, and one which is certain to bring terrible retribution. On the stormy night when, after years of wandering, she returns to her son at the Pearson home, the cold emptiness of her nature is emphasized by the representation of her figure as "so white from head to foot with the drifted snow that it [seems] like Winter's self, come in human shape, to seek refuge from its own desolation" (p. 97). The "furious blast of wind" that extinguishes the lamp as she enters the house not only foreshadows the gentle boy's death; it also symbolizes the destruction of the true light of faith that results from the fury of religious fanaticism.

⁴⁴Doubleday, p. 168.

The extinguishment of Hilda's lamp in The Marble Faun has a more complex and generally less pessimistic meaning. Here, the lamp has served not only as a symbol of faith, but also as an emblem of Hilda's super-human ideal of virtue. Through its extinguishment Hawthorne seems to be suggesting an acknowledgment on Hilda's part of her participation in the imperfections of a fallen world. As with much of the other imagery surrounding Hilda, it is a use of light-dark symbolism that seems strained and somewhat unconvincing.

IV

It is ironical that the one character in The Marble Faun whom Hawthorne intended to portray as lovable, modest, and thoroughly good is perceived by virtually all readers as cold, prideful, and harshly self-righteous. Paradoxically, Hilda, whom, as we shall see, Hawthorne attempted to portray as a symbol of reality as well as morality, seems less real, less human--perhaps, as Waggoner suggests, even less "good"--than Miriam,⁴⁵ toward whom the author's attitude was ambivalent at best. Virginia Birdsall undoubtedly speaks for many when she asserts that "Miriam displays a depth of human warmth and complexity beside which Hilda's white purity seems a spiritual dead end."⁴⁶

One reason for this, of course, is the fact that Hilda, with her tower, her doves, and her eternal flame, is almost blatantly allegorical, and it is difficult to perceive her as a flesh-and-blood character. Yet that is how Hawthorne presents her. To him, although she

⁴⁵Waggoner, p. 222.

⁴⁶"Hawthorne's Fair-Haired Maidens: The Fading Light," PMLA, 75 (1960), 251.

is idealized she is undoubtedly real as well--in many ways a lifelike portrait of his own beloved wife Sophia⁴⁷--and as such she must be judged in human terms for what she believes and does and is. Crews is right when he says that "beyond all her allegorical roles Hilda is a human character within the romance's human plot, and Hawthorne is asking us to believe that her behavior towards her friends is above criticism. To do this he must, in effect, convince himself that misfortune and entrapment in the world's evil deserve no sympathy, for this is Hilda's own position."⁴⁸ The "behavior towards her friends" that Crews (among countless others) finds so reprehensible has to do principally with Hilda's desertion of Miriam following the Model's death. Hilda's perception of Miriam as a threat to her own purity as a result of having witnessed that event opens the chasm between the two women that is described again and again as having placed them in separate worlds. "They might gaze at one another from the opposite sides," the narrator tells us, "but without the possibility of ever meeting more" (p. 207). To Miriam's anguished appeal (" . . . have I sinned against God and man, and deeply sinned? Then be more my friend

⁴⁷Although it is always risky to suggest that fictional characters are based on real-life models, this particular connection is well documented in letters and notebooks. Henry G. Fairbanks (The Lasting Loneliness of Nathaniel Hawthorne [Albany, N. Y.: Magi Books, 1965], p. 135) notes the "promise of a realism truly graphic" held out by the notebooks as having been stifled by Sophia's idealizing influence. One result, says Fairbanks, is the "unnatural coercion [that] maintains the superiority of Hilda in The Marble Faun, another version of Hawthorne's wife."

⁴⁸Crews, p. 216.

than ever, for I need you more!"), Hilda answers:

If I were one of God's angels, with a nature incapable of stain, and garments that never could be spotted, I would keep ever at your side, and try to lead you upward. But I am a poor, lonely girl, whom God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as when she put it on. Your powerful magnetism would be too much for me. The pure, white atmosphere, in which I try to discern what things are good and true, would be discoloured. And therefore, Miriam, before it is too late, I mean to put faith in this awful heart-quake, which warns me henceforth to avoid you! (p. 208).

The whiteness that is associated with Hilda is frequently contrasted, as here, with the "stain" of evil that so fills her with dread. Glancing in a mirror which reflects her own face and that of her portrait of Beatrice Cenci, Hilda fancies that she sees a resemblance. "Am I, too, stained with guilt?" she asks herself in horror (p. 205). In another association with Beatrice, Hilda is herself painted by a young artist who represents her as "gazing, with sad and earnest horror, at a blood-spot which she seemed just then to have discovered on her white robe." Although the artist calls it "Innocence, dying of a Blood-stain!" the less sensitive picture-dealer who buys the painting sees it as depicting, more sinisterly, "The Signorina's Vengeance." "Thus coarsely," concludes the narrator, "does the world translate all finer griefs that meet its eye!" (pp. 330-31).

One striking way in which Hawthorne uses the idea of the "stain" is in the image of the bloody hand. Miriam's violent sketches of woman's revenge upon man are described as "stories of bloodshed, in which woman's hand was crimsoned by the stain" (p. 44). Again, Miriam

and her Model meet in the Borghese Grove and the Model, "with a glance of dark meaning," looks at Miriam's hand and remarks that "men have said, that this white hand had once a crimson stain." Examining her hand, "as if to discover the imaginary blood-stain," he admits that "it looks very white," but adds that he has "known hands as white, which all the water in the ocean could not have washed clean!" "It had no stain," Miriam replies with bitterness, "until you grasped it in your own!" (p. 97). Later, Miriam is seen dipping her fingers in the fountain in a pathetic gesture that suggests that she herself is attempting to wash away the hidden stain (p. 108). Hilda's hand, by contrast, is pure and white, a thing of such delicate beauty that Kenyon cannot resist immortalizing it in marble (pp. 120-22).

Hawthorne also uses eye imagery to dramatize Hilda's unusual perception with respect to great art. Her own early sketches had been so "delicately imagined" that when one viewed them one "seemed to be looking at humanity with angel's eyes" (p. 55). Her even more remarkable ability as a copyist of the works of the Masters involves the use of a "guiding light of sympathy" that enables her almost to see with the artist's own eyes, giving her a "perfect" insight into his work (p. 57). The crime she witnesses, however, interferes with her ability to see into the works of others, a gift that has derived from her special relationship with God. "I groped for Him in the darkness," she says, ". . . and found . . . nothing but a dreadful solitude" (p. 359). With the loss of divine guidance come a dimming of insight and an impairment of that "simplicity of vision" that had been the source of her "sensitivity and imagination" (p. 335) and her great interpretative gifts.

"Let the canvas glow as it may," interjects the narrator, "you must look with the eye of faith, or its highest excellence escapes you" (p. 335).

The frequent authorial intrusions that mark Hawthorne's portrayal of Hilda are undoubtedly related to his own recognition of the fact that his attempts to delineate her as both a "real" character and an allegorical figure were foundering. Having adorned her so elaborately with light imagery and spiritual symbols, he evidently realized, now and then, that she was ascending too far heavenward and felt called upon, by bringing attention to "her slender, girlish figure" (p. 58), her blushes (p. 69), and her "little straw hat" (p. 103), to return her in the reader's consciousness to her earthly home.

The other characters do not seem to present the same difficulty. Although she does become a more shade-like figure toward the end, Miriam is generally appealing as a character with intermingled light and dark qualities that are recognizably human. Kenyon's lack of color is a characteristic appropriate to his primary role as neutral observer. Donatello the symbol and Donatello the man are essentially two different characters (as the original English title Transformation implies), with the innocent Faun-like creature dominating the early chapters and the more human character emerging later. With respect to the Model, the one totally dark figure in the romance, Hawthorne wisely refrains from attempting to superimpose human qualities upon what is in effect little more than a furtive shadow.

Although it is often said that Hawthorne portrays evil more

convincingly than good, it is not Hilda's "goodness" that ultimately betrays her creator. After all, the goodness of Dorothy Pearson is most effective and adds much to the tale "The Gentle Boy." Rather, it is simply that Hilda is too overloaded with her cargo of celestial symbols to take on the added burden of being human as well.

As we have seen, Hawthorne does not always use the traditional light=good/ black=bad symbolism. While it is true that in "The Gentle Boy" and "The Maypole of Merry Mount" darkness represents the twin evils of immoderation and persecution, light in the former tale also denotes one pole of extremism. Moreover, while the light associated with Ilbrahim stands for spiritualism, in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" it is a metaphor for the "vanities" of the carefree pagan life; and whereas the darkness linked to Father Hooper seems to represent isolation from humanity, in the character of Donatello it underscores his turning away from the simplicity of existence as a Faun to the complexity of life as a man.

V

In analyzing Donatello's fall, it is customary for critics to point to the narrator's statement that "in the black depths, the Faun had found a soul, and was struggling with it towards the light of Heaven." Few have gone on to note the crucial sentence in the paragraph that follows: "The illumination, it is true, soon faded out of Donatello's face" (p. 268). Both statements must be placed in the context of Donatello's fleeting consideration of the idea of becoming

a monk, an idea which he dismisses quickly after Kenyon has pointed out that monks "serve neither God nor man, and themselves least of all, though their motives be utterly selfish" (p. 267). It seems possible that Hawthorne used this method to point up Donatello's difficulty in coming to grips with his humanity, his reluctance to move into the world of men. In any case, careful reading indicates that while Donatello is portrayed in the latter part of the book as a figure surrounded by symbols of his faith, his religious convictions, unlike those of Hilda, do not run deep. Moreover, his fall must be seen as more psychological than spiritual.

Two critics who have dealt with this paradox are Terence Martin and Melvin W. Askew. "The original notion of felix culpa (or happy sin)," Martin emphasizes, "takes its meaning from the coming of Christ. . . . Miriam, however, concerns herself with the loss of innocence and the advent of knowledge. . . . To make knowledge (and not Christ) the means by which man rises to a higher life and a greater happiness is to define the idea of the fortunate fall in strictly temporal terms."⁴⁹ Askew agrees. For Hawthorne, he writes, "the fall is intimate and personal, and its ramifications are worked out in the personal life-experience and existence of the fallen." In Hawthorne's vision, Askew continues, the fall of man "is psychological and human rather than theological and spiritual." It is also possible to interpret the fall in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" as an earthly or secular one, beginning when Edgar and Edith "truly"

⁴⁹Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p. 173.

love. It is, in Askew's words, a "fall . . . into humanity."⁵⁰ It is an initiation into that kind of shadowed happiness, or "troubled joy" (p. 202), that comes with maturity and the understanding that life involves "mutual support and . . . pure affection, seeking aid and giving it . . ." (p. 208).

So it is with Donatello. His fall seems no more than Edgar's and Edith's to be a fall from grace in the theological sense. Rather, it is a fall from what R. W. B. Lewis calls "the blankness of the original sunshine"⁵¹ into an infinitely deepened sense of what it means to be human and to love. The bond between Donatello and Miriam is, to use Kenyon's words, "twined with such black threads" that they can look forward to "a severe and painful life" in which they must rely upon each other for mutual support (p. 322). It is a future filled with a troubled joy that is strikingly similar to that faced by Edgar and Edith as they forsake Merry Mount, "supporting each other along the difficult path which it [is] their lot to tread" (p. 210).

⁵⁰"Hawthorne, the Fall, and the Psychology of Maturity," American Literature, 34 (1962), 336-37.

⁵¹The American Adam (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 126.

Dreams

"To write a dream, which shall resemble the real course of a dream, with all its inconsistency, its strange transformations, which are all taken as a matter of course, its eccentricities and aimlessness--with nevertheless a leading idea running through the whole."⁵²

This germ of a story, jotted down years before Hawthorne wrote his last romance, not only reflects the underlying view of life as an ambiguous mingling of the visionary and the actual that characterizes his work in general; it comes close to being the perfect gloss on that technique he was eventually to use in The Marble Faun which involved the manipulation of the two states in such a way as to suggest that man exists in a world more dreamlike than real. Small wonder, then, that, as his Postscript to The Marble Faun indicates, Hawthorne was clearly impatient with readers who missed the point and insisted that all the work's ambiguities be thoroughly elucidated. Clarification in terms of empirical experience is impossible, he explained, since in the realm of the Faun all things are "artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere." "The idea of the modern Faun . . . ," he

⁵²The American Notebooks by Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. Randall Stewart (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1932), p. 99. Subsequent references to the American Notebooks are to this edition.

continued, somewhat testily, "loses all the poetry and beauty which the Author fancied in it, and becomes nothing better than a grotesque absurdity, if we bring it into the actual light of day" (p. 463).

Assuming that Hawthorne's responses in the Postscript represent an index to the questions that piqued the curiosity of his contemporaries, it appears that predominant reader concerns centered around such problems as Miriam's mysterious packet, Hilda's mysterious disappearance, and, of course, Donatello's mysterious ears.

"'Only one question more,' said I, with intense earnestness. 'Did Donatello's ears resemble those of the Faun of Praxiteles?'

"'I know, but may not tell,' replied Kenyon, smiling mysteriously. 'On that point, at all events, there shall be not one word of explanation'" (p. 467).

The implication that other points have been satisfactorily explained is surely to be taken ironically, since, as Baym points out, the Postscript "clarifies almost nothing" and must be read as "a subtle joke on his readers' obtuseness."⁵³ Such lack of perception must have been especially frustrating to an author who had taken pains, in his Preface, to describe the setting of the romance as "a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be . . . insisted upon . . ." (p. 3).

Long before he wrote The Marble Faun, however, Hawthorne had been experimenting with a variety of techniques calculated to confound

⁵³Baym, p. 249.

the reader who tended to insist upon actualities; the use of a remote or ancient setting was but one of them. The dreamlike mist that so blurs the line between the real and the imaginary in The Marble Faun also pervades most of the tales and a number of the sketches.

I

In his sketch "The Hall of Fantasy" Hawthorne takes the reader, as he was to do on a much more elaborate scale in The Marble Faun, to "that mystic region, which lies above, below, or beyond the actual" (p. 462). His narrator in "Fancy's Show Box" seems to be anticipating the "plot" of The Marble Faun when he speaks of the "prospective sinner" and the "dreaminess diffused about his thoughts; in a dream, as it were," says the narrator, "he strikes the death-blow into his victim's heart, and starts to find an indelible blood-stain on his hand. . . . It is not until the crime is accomplished that guilt clinches its gripe upon the guilty heart, and claims it for its own" (p. 427). But it is in "The Haunted Mind," in which he conducts his most probing study of the real and the unreal as perceived by the dream-clouded mind, that Hawthorne captures the dreamlike mood that is The Marble Faun's very essence.

In this sketch Hawthorne describes the sensations that pass through the slowly awakening mind after a night of terrifying dreams-- the feelings of shame and guilt, the "heavy, heavy sinking of the spirits," the "wintry gloom about the heart." You search wildly, he says, for anything that will remove this "nightmare of the soul" and "remind you of the living world" (p. 413). Then, later:

With an involuntary start you seize hold on consciousness, and prove yourself but half awake, by running a doubtful parallel between human life and the hour which has now elapsed. In both you emerge from mystery, pass through a vicissitude that you can but imperfectly control, and are borne onward to another mystery (p. 414).

Hawthorne's intermingling of the actual with the imaginary in the tales is both more varied and more elusive than in the sketches. The sense impressions are often subliminal and, unlike the "you" of "The Haunted Mind," the reader floats between the two spheres, sometimes not even wondering which world he is in until the narrator or a character raises the question for him:

"Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?" ("Young Goodman Brown," p. 162).

"'Am I here, or there?' cried Robin, starting; for all at once . . . his thoughts had become visible and audible in a dream. . . ."
"'Well, Robin, are you dreaming?' inquired the gentleman, laying his hand on the youth's shoulder" ("My Kinsman, Major Molineux," pp. 38, 45).

" . . . Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled. 'Am I awake? Have I my senses,' said he to himself" ("Rappaccini's Daughter," p. 338).

Dreams in the tales can be as terror-filled as those of "The Haunted Mind," in which every lovely image--"glass . . . ornamented with fanciful devices in frostwork" or a "glorious star . . . with a radiance of deeper hue than moonlight" has its hideous counterpart--

"the dead . . . lying in their cold shrouds and narrow coffins" or a corpse in blood-stained shroud standing at the foot of the bed (pp. 411-13). And dawn, when it comes, often brings a wakeful state that is but an extension of the dreadful dream just ended:

"The mind is in a sad state when Sleep . . . cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one . . ." ("The Birthmark," pp. 267-68). Where an entire tale or sketch is intended to be read as a dream, Hawthorne is at his best when he lets the reader discover the fact for himself. When he opens with a sentence like "Not a great while ago, passing through the gate of dreams . . ." ("The Celestial Railroad," p. 474), much of the effect is lost. How much more intriguing, for example, is his tale "Roger Malvin's Burial," in which the word "dream" occurs only incidentally, but which, as Waggoner states, is "likely to suggest to most readers a dream, with more than the usual depths visible beneath the limpid surface."⁵⁴ This subtle tale, to be discussed in more detail later, can thus be reread often, always with the possibility of coming to new interpretations. A similar example, also to be discussed later, is "The Wives of the Dead," a story of surface simplicity that takes on richness of meaning when read as a dream. In his perceptive analysis Lang calls the tale "pointless" if it is read literally as a story of the "simultaneous resurrections" of the

⁵⁴Waggoner, p. 90.

two sisters' husbands. Lang insists that "the husbands are dead"; and life is "as terrible as it is." Nevertheless, he adds, somewhat paradoxically, perhaps "Hawthorne would not have minded people reading the story as reality."⁵⁵

II

If Lang guesses correctly, Hawthorne must have grown less permissive over the years, for he did, as we have seen, mind very much having The Marble Faun read as reality, and he offers many hints designed to lure the reader away from such an erroneous interpretation. In the first chapter, enlarging upon his prefatory remarks, he dwells at some length upon the special feeling associated with Rome that makes it so appropriate as a setting for his romance. There is about it, he says, "a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a by-gone life . . . that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out, and our individual affairs and interests are but half as real, here, as elsewhere." In such a setting, says Hawthorne, "all matters, that we handle or dream of, now-a-days, look evanescent and visionary alike." His introduction of the four main characters includes the suggestion that their awareness of this "dreamy character of the present," this sense of "fading into shadows and unrealities," may explain their mood of "fanciful merriment" (pp. 6-7). Not all of the dream language is quite so easily perceived, however. Often the "airy and unsubstantial threads" (p. 6) of Hawthorne's dream imagery are so subtly woven into the romance's fabric

⁵⁵Lang, pp. 88-89.

that they escape conscious notice, although their effect is strongly felt.

Dream imagery in The Marble Faun is centered around Miriam, and is associated with the other characters almost entirely in terms of their responses to the powerful influence of Miriam's dream world. Such images tend to occur in clusters. Kenyon's early recognition of the dreamlike quality that sets Miriam apart ("She has been in some sad dream or other" [p. 112]), for example, is followed almost immediately by the narrator's image of the "dark chasm" separating Miriam from her friends. If she were to try to call to them for help, we are told, her voice, ". . . as with dreamers when they shout . . . would perish inaudibly in the remoteness . . ." (p. 113).

Donatello, following the death of the Model, begins to be drawn inexorably into the orbit of Miriam's dream world. When, "with a deep sigh--as when, sometimes, a slumberer turns over in a troubled dream--Donatello change[s] his position, and clasp[s] both his hands over his forehead," Miriam reflects that "he has done himself a greater wrong than I dreamed of." She begs him to leave her and return to Monte Beni. "Then, all that has past will be recognized as but an ugly dream," she says. "For, in dreams, the conscience sleeps . . ." (p. 199). "The deed you seemed to do, last night," Miriam assures him, "was no more than such a dream . . ." (pp. 199-200). When Donatello, wavering, asks if the Model's "terrible face" could indeed have been unreal, Miriam restates her argument even more emphatically: "Yes; for you beheld it with dreaming eyes" (p. 200). The image cluster ends with Donatello reclining in a

"stupour," hat over his eyes, "as the idle and light-hearted youths of dreamy Italy are accustomed to do" (p. 201). Acting out one of The Marble Faun's many paradoxes, Donatello, when he finally arises and departs, leaves behind in the real world the "innocent past life" which has heretofore identified him in the eyes of his friends with the Faun of Praxiteles. At the same time he takes up, in the world of the dream, the unfamiliar burdens of sin and grief that are henceforth to be his (p. 201).

Kenyon, although he does at first remain aloof from the dream world, finally comes surprisingly close to being drawn into it. In the scene in the Church of the Capuchins, he quickly stifles the "wild" idea that the dead monk is the same person as Miriam's Model, and sensibly concludes that the resemblance is probably "one of those unaccountable changes and interminglings of identity, which so often occur among the personages of a dream" (pp. 188-89). Following his visit at Monte Beni, however, he begins to move in the direction of becoming a dream personage, himself. Traveling with Donatello through Tuscany, a land of "remote, dreamlike Arcadian charm" (p. 291), Kenyon becomes aware of a mysterious presence constantly hovering nearby. To Kenyon, this invisible companion--presumably Miriam, although the narrator never actually says so--resembles a dream that has "strayed out of their slumber and [is] haunting them in the daytime" (p. 299). Later, upon encountering a seemingly changed Miriam in Rome, he feels "a dreamy uncertainty" as to whether it is indeed she (p. 396). Finally, however, in the midst of the frolic of the Carnival, when Kenyon stands on the threshold of the "feverish dream" (p. 446), the

masqueraders, finding his demeanor too passive for their taste, vanish from his sight, "as dreams and spectres do, leaving him at liberty to pursue his quest . . ." (p. 447), which is to find Hilda.

III

In contrast to that which surrounds the other characters, the dream language associated with Hilda, although colloquial, is almost always negative, suggesting an intention on Hawthorne's part to keep her outside the dream-state. "I never dreamed . . .," she says to Miriam, "of betraying you to justice" (p. 212). In another context, we are told that she "sought nothing either from the world's delicacy or its pity, and never dreamed of its misinterpretations" (p. 331). When she suddenly appears on the palace balcony above the Corso, Hilda seems to the other occupants to be an intruder, but, says the narrator, "our shy and gentle Hilda had dreamed of no intrusion" (p. 452). Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. is probably right when he says that "selective quotation, in a book as long as The Marble Faun, can prove almost anything,"⁵⁶ and it is impossible to state with certainty that these admittedly idiomatic phrases are repeatedly chosen over other ways of conveying the same thought in order to keep Hilda always on the side of reality.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it is a possibility that is

⁵⁶"Art Allegory in The Marble Faun," PMLA, 77 (1962), 265.

⁵⁷That it was Hawthorne's habit of mind to use idiomatic expressions literally is vividly documented, however, by these ideas from his notebooks: "To make literal pictures of figurative expressions;--for instance, he burst into tears--a man suddenly turned into a shower of briny drops. An explosion of laughter--a man

reinforced by the fact that where the dream association is positive it is treated as an aberration and almost apologetically dismissed. The "kind of dreamy languor" that afflicts Hilda as a consequence of Rome's summer atmosphere, for example, is described as having been "dissipated by the first cool breezes that came with Autumn" (p. 326). Even more significantly, in one of the chapters describing Hilda's visit to St. Peter's, the one sequence involving action by Hilda about which Hawthorne seems to have truly ambivalent thoughts, she is said to kneel before the shrine of Guido's Archangel as if "in a dream" (p. 352). As Hilda, in a state of "hope, born of hysteric trouble," senses a "presentiment," the narrator observes that "the unhappy are continually tantalized by similar delusions of succour near at hand . . ." (p. 353).

Since Hilda is so clearly The Marble Faun's symbol of virtuousness, one must agree with Peter Zivkovic when he says that Hawthorne "makes Hilda's morality the measure of reality." However, his contention that Hawthorne shows that he has "lost sight of what he intended to do" when he places responsibility for Hilda's dejection on "the unreality of the world" (The Marble Faun, p. 206)--"it is not the unreality but rather the reality of the world which causes Hilda's shock, her despondency," says Zivkovic⁵⁸ --seems to nullify

⁵⁸"The Evil of the Isolated Intellect: Hilda, in The Marble Faun," Personalist, 43 (1962), 206. Critic's emphasis.

blowing up, and his fragments flying about on all sides. He cast his eyes upon the ground--a man standing eyeless, with his eyes on the ground, staring up at him in wonderment & & &" (American Notebooks, p. 107).

the point of all the dream imagery associated with Miriam from which Hilda repeatedly recoils. Moreover, since Hawthorne, as both Fairbanks and Spencer Hall have noted, believed reality to be spiritual,⁵⁹ it seems inconsistent with his portrayal of Hilda to place her on the side of unreality. Perhaps it would be best to say that Hilda's own spirituality and morality are very real (both to her and to Hawthorne), but that the moral standards she sets for others are not realistic.

It is significant that in the closing chapter when Hilda and Kenyon observe Miriam leaving the Pantheon, hands outstretched as if in benediction, they let her pass without speaking, "for those extended hands, even while they blessed, seemed to repel, as if Miriam stood on the other side of a fathomless abyss, and warned them from its verge" (p. 461). Intensifying the image of the chasm by his use of the word "warned," Hawthorne makes it seem even more ominous than before. Hilda is to the very last repelled by Miriam's dream world, and it is surely no accident that immediately after this episode Hilda agrees to marry Kenyon and the two make plans to return to "their own land," deferring no longer "the reality of life" (p. 461).

By depicting it as a dark realm of ugly specters and sleeping consciences, Hawthorne suggests a value judgment with respect to Miriam's dream world. He does not, however, extend such judgment to Miriam herself, since the metaphor of the unbridgeable chasm implies that she is involuntarily isolated in a world from which there is no

⁵⁹Fairbanks, p. 85. Hall, "Beatrice Cenci: Symbol and Vision in The Marble Faun," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 25 (1970), 85.

escape. Indeed, at one point (in an early example of the interior monologue) he has her say so in almost so many words: "My reality! What is it? Is the past so indestructible?--the future so inimitable? Is the dark dream, in which I walk, of such solid, stony substance, that there can be no escape out of its dungeon? Be it so!" (p. 82). It is interesting that in this introspective passage Hawthorne brings together the three metaphors darkness, the dream, and the dungeon, to underscore Miriam's desperation. Significantly, even Miriam herself senses that she is at the center of a paradox in which the dream is composed of more substantial stuff than the "reality."

IV

Miriam's plight is not unique in Hawthorne's fiction. As Darrel Abel has noted, "Hawthorne's tales and sketches . . . show that isolation from reality, mundane, or spiritual, is the worst evil that can befall man."⁶⁰ Among the tales that deal with this theme, "Young Goodman Brown" is probably the most familiar example. "Assumed in the tale," writes Martin, "is a radical distinction between dream life and real life; the question proposed to Goodman Brown is into which of these categories good and evil naturally belong."⁶¹ Brown, willingly "undeceived" (p. 161) by the devil, accepts the latter's inverted point of view that evil is reality; virtue but a dream. He overreacts to the revelation that evil lurks in all men's hearts, forgetting that there is good there, too. In the words of Jac Tharpe, "his insight is an

⁶⁰"The Theme of Isolation in Hawthorne," Personalist, 32 (1951), 47.

⁶¹Martin, p. 91.

exaggeration of the truth. . . . instead of leading him to place in society, [his] secret knowledge isolates him from society, making him too strongly aware."⁶² The fact that Brown is so easily led to this "insight" raises an important question: How strong was his faith to begin with? There is evidence that it was shaky, at best. When Brown leaves his "aptly named" (p. 149) wife Faith for his "errand" in the woods, he vows: ". . . after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven" (p. 150). But the Faith whose skirts he plans to cling to is as light and fluttery as the pink ribbon that seems to float from the heavens as he makes his way through the "haunted forest" of his own distorted mind. Brown's "little" Faith (p. 150) is apparently something (or someone) to be cast off or clung to according to the whim of the moment.

By contrast, the strength of Hilda's faith, as symbolized by her white robe, is as inviolable as Faith's pink ribbons are insubstantial. Kenyon, unlike Brown, recognizes his need for guidance by a faith stronger than his own. He needs Hilda as his "pole-star above" as well as his "light of cottage-windows here below" (p. 460). "Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend," he tells her, "with that white wisdom which clothes you as with a celestial garment, all would go well. Oh, Hilda, guide me home!" (pp. 460-61).

With characteristic reticence, Hawthorne refuses to call Brown's experience a dream, but there is evidence that his night in the

⁶²Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1967), p. 75.

forest is a fantasy willed by a mind receptive from the outset to the devil's wiles. Unlike Kenyon, he is so blinded by pride that he does not know when to ask for help. Thus Brown loses his faith, and with it his ability to love and his capacity to forgive an erring humanity. He becomes "a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man" (p. 163). Although he physically resumes his place among the "people of prayer . . . and good works" (p. 152), psychologically Brown remains within the depths of the nightmarish forest of unmitigated evil, alienated from the outside world by the unshakable conviction that "there is no good on earth" (p. 157).

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux," like "Young Goodman Brown," is an initiation story in which the appearance and actions of the townsfolk serve as a mirror reflecting the protagonist's inner conflict. The tale itself, like the story of Goodman Brown, is narrated realistically but is filled with the phantasmagorical images and frightful noises which in Hawthorne are typically associated with the dream. Bizarre characters relate to Robin in bizarre ways, causing his mind, like that of the narrator of "The Haunted Mind," to keep "vibrating between fancy and reality" (p. 38). The climax occurs as the parade moves into Robin's consciousness, heralded by blazing torches and a cacophonous symphony of "fearful wind-instruments," "vomit[ing]" trumpets, rattling wheels, and the "shrill voices of mirth or terror" (pp. 42-43).

Dreams and crowds are often closely associated in Hawthorne, as D. K. Anderson, Jr., points out:

He plants the seed of this device in "The Haunted Mind" when he describes the feeling of waking suddenly from midnight slumber: "By unclosing your eyes so suddenly, you seem to have surprised the personages of your dream . . . and behold its ghostly inhabitants and wondrous scenery, with a perception of their strangeness such as you never attain while the dream is undisturbed."

Anderson goes on to say that "the seed bears fruit in 'The Maypole of Merry Mount,'" in which "Hawthorne, by using such epithets as 'ring of monsters,' 'crew of Comus,' and 'devils and ruined souls' . . . gives the group a dreamlike character."⁶³ He might have added that the dream-crowd motif comes to full fruition in "My Kinsman," in which Robin's "mental inebriety" (p. 44), brought on by the uproar of the multitude, causes him, in Herndon's words, to "[laugh] bitterly at the evils by which man makes his life a nightmare rather than a joyous reality."⁶⁴ The march has "a visionary air, as if a dream had broken forth from some feverish brain, and were sweeping visibly through the midnight streets" (p. 42).

The single horseman, clad in a military dress, and bearing a drawn sword . . . wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes without a model . . . a woman twitched his arm, a saucy eye met his, and he saw the lady of the scarlet petticoat (pp. 42, 44).

The fantastic figures, the saucy woman, and the shrill laughter give "My Kinsman's" climactic crowd scene a "feverish dream" quality

⁶³"Hawthorne's Crowds," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 7 (1952), 47. The quoted material from Hawthorne appears on pages 410 ("The Haunted Mind") and 200 ("The Maypole of Merry Mount").

⁶⁴Herndon, 545.

that brings it remarkably close to the Carnival scene near the end of The Marble Faun, in which the revelers try to "initiate" Kenyon:

Fantastic figures . . . grinned enormously in his face. Harlequins struck him with their wooden swords. . . . A biped, with an ass's snout, brayed close to his ear, ending his discordant uproar with a peal of human laughter. . . . There came along a gigantic female figure . . . taking up a third of the street's breadth with the preposterously swelling sphere of her crinoline skirts. Singling out the sculptor she began to make a ponderous assault upon his heart, throwing amorous glances at him out of her great, goggle-eyes . . ." (pp. 445-46).

V

Although similar in many ways, however, The Marble Faun's Carnival scene is far less effective than that which brings "My Kinsman" to such a stunning climax, and the reason is not hard to find. A character who has for more than forty chapters been portrayed as the steady voice of reason is simply out of place as the tormented protagonist in such a scene. Despite varying critical interpretations, the scene remains one of the romance's more interesting puzzles.

Baym and Stubbs both believe that the Carnival suggests Kenyon's inner conflict in the face of temptation. "[Kenyon's] psyche in a state of anarchic turbulence," Baym writes, "throws up into the light of consciousness a host of horrible fears and fantasies symbolized by a succession of grotesque, partly sexual, dream figures. If Kenyon sinks into this swamp, he is lost forever."⁶⁵ What "swamp" Kenyon is in danger of sinking into is unclear, although it is evident, as will

⁶⁵Baym, p. 246.

be noted in more detail later, that he is on the outer verge of some kind of psychological crisis symbolized by his purgatorial wanderings leading to the Carnival scene.

Stubbs, noting that "the book is framed by two festivals," takes them to represent "the hurly-burly of life among men," which, of course, they do. However, if it is true, as Stubbs believes, that the first festival, which is terminated by the appearance of the Model (p. 89), "is a microcosm of a fall from innocence" and the second festival represents an extension of the first,⁶⁶ the implication would seem to be that someone in the latter scene is about to fall from innocence. Since the other characters can be ruled out, for obvious reasons, that person would presumably be Kenyon. However, although we are told that the scene affects him "like a thin dream" (p. 442) and that he looks upon it with "dreamy eyes" (p. 443), certainly everything we know about Kenyon, even allowing for the effects upon his psyche of his separation from Hilda, precludes his capitulation to the enticements of the evils, whatever they are, represented by the Carnival crowd.

And that is in fact how it turns out. While Robin, seized by the "contagion" (p. 44) spreading through the multitude, joins in the mindless laughter, the rational Kenyon remains aloof, ignoring the taunting gestures of the mob. "Earnest people who try to get a reality out of human existence, are necessarily absurd in the view of the revelers and masqueraders," observes the narrator, with a touch of hauteur (p. 450). Just for a moment, though, Kenyon does stand with Miriam and Donatello, in "a linked circle of three," amid the unreal world of

⁶⁶Stubbs, pp. 147-48.

the merry-makers. But then they are parted, "and the uproar of the Carnival [sweeps] like a tempestuous sea over the spot, which they had included within their small circle of isolated feeling" (p. 448). For Kenyon, it is back to the real world, the Hilda-world; while for Robin, who tries in vain to find his way to the ferry that will presumably carry him back to reality, the future, like the past, remains obscure.

Kenyon has been saved--"Hilda-ized" is the way one critic puts it⁶⁷--from whatever fate threatened him, whether it was loss of innocence, abandonment of his art,⁶⁸ or simply the risk of remaining too long away from his "dear native land," in which "there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong" (Preface, p. 3). Unlike Goodman Brown who, as Askew points out, rejects the actual and clings to the illusory because he is unable to "reconstruct a new integrity out of shattered fragments of dreams and the circumstances of reality,"⁶⁹ Kenyon rejects both the dream and the illusion that the reality of life is evil. Hilda is reality, and Hilda is good.

⁶⁷Sheldon W. Liebman, "The Design of The Marble Faun," New England Quarterly, 40 (1967), 69.

⁶⁸See comments of McPherson, p. 167; Crews, pp. 238-39; and Baym, pp. 246-47.

⁶⁹Askew, 341. Critic's emphasis.

VI

Since "Rappaccini's Daughter" may well be, as Roy R. Male has suggested, "Hawthorne's most complex story,"⁷⁰ it is not surprising to discover that it has been compared to everything from Genesis to The Turn of the Screw.⁷¹ Not much has been written about dream imagery in the work, however, despite the fact that it is too evident to be ignored. Essentially, "Rappaccini's Daughter" is, like "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman," a story of a young man's initiation into an awareness of evil. From the moment that we see Giovanni standing at the window rubbing his eyes in disbelief at the strange goings-on in Rappaccini's garden (p. 333), there are strong indications that he is observing, and slowly being absorbed into, a dream.

In this story, as in The Marble Faun, the reader is frequently aware of the narrator's voice, in this case interjecting comments designed to undercut the reliability of Giovanni's observational powers. Thus, when Giovanni retires to his couch and sees Beatrice

⁷⁰"The Dual Aspects of Evil in 'Rappaccini's Daughter,'" PMLA, 69 (1954), 99.

⁷¹Although most critics have noted the analogy to the Bible story, with respect to particulars they often disagree. Oliver Evans, for instance ("Allegory and Incest in 'Rappaccini's Daughter,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, 19 [1964], 187-88), sees Rappaccini playing Adam to Beatrice's Eve (with strong overtones of incest), while Liebman ("Hawthorne and Milton: The Second Fall in 'Rappaccini's Daughter,'" New England Quarterly, 41 [1968], 529-30) places Beatrice in the role of Adam, with Baglioni as Satan and Giovanni as Eve. Male (*Ibid.*) cites the governess' description of the two children in The Turn of the Screw as "blameless and foredoomed," and asserts that "the same terms apply to Beatrice" (101). He also notes links to Dante, Bunyan, Spenser, and Milton (102 ff.).

and her beautiful "sister" shrub in his dreams, the narrator enters to put everything in perspective: "But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine" (p. 334). Later, when Giovanni sees, or thinks he sees, the violent death of a lizard whose head has been sprinkled with moisture from Beatrice's flower, the narrator again moves in (p. 338) to remind us of the "flask or two of Tuscan wine" that Giovanni has recently consumed (p. 334).

Since plant imagery, as Thomas F. Walsh, Jr. points out, typically has erotic significance for Hawthorne,⁷² it is not surprising that Miriam, like Beatrice, is identified with the shrub, although admittedly in a more oblique and peripheral way. As Kenyon and Donatello stand at the top of the latter's tower, they notice a shrub growing, inexplicably, out of the stone pavement. As Donatello stoops over the plant he notices "a worm that would have killed it; an ugly creature, which I will fling over the battlements" (p. 259). At a level below Donatello's consciousness, perhaps, the shrub is associated with Miriam, and in a reenactment of the precipice scene, he moves instinctively to protect it.

Drawn to Beatrice as Donatello has been drawn to Miriam, until he is "irrevocably within her sphere . . . ," Giovanni nevertheless

⁷²"Rappaccini's Literary Gardens," Emerson Society Quarterly, 19 (1960), 10 ff.

continues to wonder whether his attachment is "not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain . . ." (p. 343). It is not surprising that Giovanni's mind continues to vacillate in confusion, for, as the narrator himself admits, "impossibilities have come to pass and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities . . ." (p. 344). After a night that reminds us of "The Haunted Mind," filled as it is with "shapeless half ideas which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness" (p. 348), Giovanni finally learns from Professor Baglioni the truth about his own impending fate. "It is a dream," he tries to reassure himself, "surely it is a dream" (p. 352). Yet dreams can be more real than reality, cautions the narrator: "There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger" (p. 353).

Is Beatrice real, or is she part of a dream? Giovanni decides she is real (pp. 347, 355), but Beatrice, Miriam-like, sees a "gulf of blackness between them that neither he nor she [can] pass" (p. 355). The gulf has in fact been bridged, however, for as we have seen, through Rappaccini's poison Giovanni has already entered Beatrice's sphere. Thus the two stand "in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life" (p. 358). Beatrice's "earthly part," which, in one of the tale's many inversions, is the world of the dream, has been so overpowered by the unearthly influence of her father that she longs to go, as she tells him, "where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream . . ." (p. 360). The earthly world of the dream has been

so poisoned that it is better for Beatrice--and eventually for Giovanni, one assumes--to escape to what has for them become the only reality, through the final antidote of death.

VI

In Hawthorne's fiction death and the dream are often closely related. As we have seen, the participants in The Marble Faun's death scene are so enveloped in dream imagery that the killing seems hardly a killing at all. The event takes place on a moonlit night, a setting of "ambiguity and half-knowledge" (p. 168) which in Hawthorne so often suggests the dream. As the young sight-seers lean forward for a better view of the drop from the cliff, which in ancient times had been the tossing-off point for political criminals,⁷³ Kenyon remarks that "it symbolizes how sudden was the fall, in those days, from the utmost height of ambition to its profoundest ruin." "Come, come, it is midnight," one of the others protests, "too late to be moralizing here! We are literally dreaming on the edge of a precipice" (pp. 168-69). As Miriam relives the Model's death she recalls it "dreamily" (p. 171), and before she and Donatello leave the scene they take a final look at the dark mass lying on the pavement below, to be sure the murder really happened, "so like a dream was the whole

⁷³It is interesting to note that among the Spectre's many pre-Model identities as suggested by the author is that of "political offender" (p. 35). It seems likely that Hawthorne included this as a possibility not only because of the historical implications, but also to present the murder as at least a partially justifiable act. In addition to his roles as political offender and Capuchin monk, the Spectre is variously described as satyr, spy, shadow, phantom, Man-Demon, lunatic, beggar, and assassin.

thing" (p. 174). Later, as Miriam speculates on the question of universal sin, she muses: "It is a terrible thought, that an individual wrong-doing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us--who dreamed only of our own little separate sin--makes us guilty of the whole" (p. 177).

There is something rather contrived about the death-dream imagery here; it is not Hawthorne at his best. His imagery, of whatever kind, is far more effective when it seems to emerge inevitably from the material of which it is a part, and then blend imperceptibly back into it. One short work in which this subtle merging of the real and the visionary is accomplished with unusual deftness is the relatively little-known tale "The Wives of the Dead." In this story two young women, quiet Mary and lively Margaret, are grieving over the recent deaths of their husbands, brothers who have lost their lives in separate accidents. Having retired for the night, both women receive word, each while the other sleeps, that her husband is in fact still alive and will soon be home. Each, however, feeling that to reveal her happy news would only increase the other's pain, goes back to sleep believing she is the only one whose husband will in the morning be restored to her.

Lang, who, as previously noted, argues persuasively that the story makes little sense unless read as a dream, believes that each of the women dreams that a messenger brings news that her husband is still alive. It is possible, however, to read it as a tale in which one of the women dreams the entire thing, including the dream of the

other. Lang rightly lays stress on the final paragraph of the story, which reads:

Before retiring, [Mary] set down the lamp, and endeavored to arrange the bedclothes so that the chill air might not do harm to the feverish slumberer. But her hand trembled against Margaret's neck, a tear also fell upon her cheek, and she suddenly awoke (p. 24).

Whose tear falls upon whose cheek, Lang asks, and who suddenly awakens?⁷⁴ It seems likely that it is Mary, not Margaret, who wakes up as the story ends, and at least possible that Mary has dreamed not only her own happy news, but Margaret's as well. Still another possible interpretation lends special poignancy to the tale. What if Margaret actually receives her message, while Mary only dreams hers? This reading is not far-fetched, since it is supported by the crucial fact that, while Mary falls asleep immediately, Margaret is never actually said to have fallen asleep until after the first messenger arrives (pp. 20-22). It is an intricate tale, in short, which every reader must interpret for himself, without the "help" of authorial reminders that it may be all (or partly) a dream.

Of all the character portrayals in The Marble Faun, that of the Model is in some ways the most intriguing and--if one may use the term--the most tale-like. True to the principles set forth in his Postscript, Hawthorne keeps his Spectre-Model out of "the actual light of day" (p. 463), leaving the reader in the dark as to who or what he was and is, how his life is linked to Miriam's, and what his

⁷⁴Lang, pp. 87-88.

death therefore really signifies. As suggested earlier, he obviously represents something dark in Miriam's past, and the frequent references to Beatrice Cenci certainly hint at incest, but such references are never more than elusive suggestions, and other possibilities are raised. Enshrouded in darkness from the moment of his first stealthy appearance in the catacomb, the Model remains a thing of mystery to the time of his death, and the influence of his evil spirit continues to haunt the other characters--not always in evil ways--to the final page. Although he is not often specifically surrounded by dream imagery--perhaps, in part, because he is not--he is a figure more dreamlike than real. He belongs totally to the world of the fantastic, that shadowy realm that Hawthorne had so often created with such success in the tales.

Dungeons

"In the depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide" ("The Haunted Mind," p. 412).

A third motif that may be said to be almost ubiquitous in Hawthorne is that of the heart as cavern, tomb, or dungeon. Indeed, it would be difficult to point to a single work in which some evidence of the author's preoccupation with the frailty of that "foul cavern" is not to be found. Everything he has to say, finally, is related to it, since for Hawthorne the heart is the receptacle of all the forces that vie for dominance in man's nature. "Purify that inward sphere," admonishes the dark stranger of "Earth's Holocaust," "and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord . . ." (p. 522).

I

The dark "dungeon" of the heart takes many forms. In his very early tale "The Hollow of the Three Hills" Hawthorne uses the image of the hollow surrounded by decaying vegetation to symbolize the sterility of the guilty heart. This tale has special significance because, as Waggoner states, it "introduces at the very beginning of [Hawthorne's] career the themes of guilt, isolation, compulsion, and death that would never be dropped. The 'hollow basin' between the hills is the first of the heart images that would be constant thereafter."⁷⁵ Into this somber setting Hawthorne brings two persons--a "lady" with "a weight in [her] bosom," and a "woman" who has all the characteristics of a witch (pp. 3-4). Through the sorcerous powers of the aged crone, the lady is able to look back upon her past and see how her sin has affected those whom she has wronged. In three separate visions she observes with horror what has happened to the parents she has shamed; the husband she has betrayed; and the child she has deserted. The tale is especially interesting in that in it Hawthorne employs several variations of the heart motif, all of which were to appear again and again in subsequent works.

⁷⁵Waggoner, pp. 47-48. Burhans (293) argues persuasively that the symbolism in the tale is purely sexual. This interpretation does not, however, diminish the validity of the "heart" reading; it may, in fact, strengthen it. In any case, Waggoner and Burhans are in agreement as to the importance of the tale as an early example of Hawthorne's use of the themes of sin and guilt. ". . . it marks the beginning," writes Burhans, "of that long and constantly deepening and broadening exploration of the problem of sin and evil, and . . . reveals his characteristic manner of dealing with this central concern."

The lady's parents are seated "by a melancholy hearth," talking of the daughter whose shame would "bring their gray heads to the grave." The husband, confined to a madhouse, speaks sadly of "holiest vows" that have been broken, and "a home and heart made desolate." The child, still and silent, is borne in its coffin to a waiting funeral train, "the sweeping sound" of which quickly fades into the distance and is lost in the wind (pp. 3-7). The melancholy hearth of the parents, the grave, the madhouse, and the coffin are all versions of the protean heart imagery that was to take these and other forms in later tales and in the romances,⁷⁶ and the isolation that always accompanies the guilty heart is starkly evident here. Alienated from society by her sins against the innocent hearts of those who loved her, the lady has nowhere to turn except to the ancient crone, whose evil, Hawthorne implies, is matched by her own. "For this," in Martin's words, "is where the lady's sins against the heart and against natural affection (heinous offences [sic] always in Hawthorne's fiction) have led her. . . . She must make use of powers antithetical to love, trust, and domesticity if she is to measure the distance of her fall--the extent of her isolation."⁷⁷

"The Man of Adamant," another allegory of the heart, is a somewhat different kind of tale, dealing as it does with a sin that is not

⁷⁶Shroeder writes that in Hawthorne the human heart may be represented as "a furnace, a sealed package, a temple, and even, in one rather curious instance, a bathtub" (107). He confines his discussion primarily, however, to the more typical images, including the heart as dwelling-place, burial place, and prison, all of which are suggested in the "lady's" visions of her family.

⁷⁷Martin, p. 50.

recognized as such by the sinner but is thought, on the contrary, to be a great virtue. Richard Digby, "the gloomiest and most intolerant of a stern brotherhood," believes that he alone has discovered "the treasure of a true faith" (p. 227) and that because of this he is above communion with those not so chosen. In the heart of the forest he takes refuge in a cave that is to become, first, his tabernacle; soon, his prison; and finally, his tomb.

Digby, forgetting, as Waggoner remarks, "that the entrance to heaven is through a gate,"⁷⁸ looks into the cave and exclaims, "Of a truth, the only way to heaven leadeth through the narrow entrance of this cave,--and I alone have found it!" (p. 229). For Digby, the cave is a haven of "hallowed seclusion" (p. 228), a place of spiritual exclusivity which no one--not even the heavenly messenger, Mary Goffe, who comes offering true love and grace--can enter. "I am sanctified," he tells her, "and thou art sinful." Unable to see the Bible clearly in the dungeon dimness (" . . . when no light reaches the door of the cave, then is my prayer-time"), he misreads its teachings, offering up prayers that are acceptable in his sight, and denying all Scriptural interpretations except his own (p. 231). Digby's cave is truly the cavern of his own heart's isolation. It is a heart gradually hardening into stone, in the same way that the interior of the cave and all its vegetation have been turned to stone by the drip, drip, drip of the "wondrous" stalactytic moisture. More than a century after his death, Digby's petrified body is found in the cave, where, says the narrator,

⁷⁸Waggoner, p. 110.

he "shall sit forever . . . in the attitude of repelling the whole race of mortals--not from heaven--but from the horrible loneliness of his dark, cold sepulchre!" (p. 234). Richard Digby thus becomes an eternal reminder of the isolating effects of bigotry, pride, and lovelessness upon the human heart.

Another variation on this theme--indeed, perhaps the most resounding statement in all Hawthorne of the theme itself--is to be found in his tale of the search for the Unpardonable Sin, "Ethan Brand."⁷⁹ In this story Brand's kiln serves not only as a symbol of his occupation as lime-burner, but also as one of the tale's many images of the heart. As his dark thoughts are thrown into this "hollow prison-house" (p. 367), they melt "into the one thought that [takes] possession of his life" (p. 362)--the "Idea" that somewhere in the world there is a sin too great for even God to forgive, and that he must be the one to find it. When he returns to his kiln after eighteen years of searching, however, he has learned the terrible truth that the Unpardonable Sin, which Hawthorne himself had earlier defined as "a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul,"⁸⁰ lies within his own cold heart.

As Brand reminisces about his quest, he recalls the tenderness and sympathy for mankind he had felt when the Idea had first begun to form, "with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of

⁷⁹Although, as Martin writes, the Unpardonable Sin is often said to have been committed by a number of Hawthorne's characters, including Rappaccini, Chillingworth, and others, "in Hawthorne's fiction . . . the term occurs only once--in 'Ethan Brand'" (p. 99).

⁸⁰American Notebooks, p. 106.

man, viewing it as a temple. . . ." Now he is "no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy . . . he [is] now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment. . . ." The Idea has educated him, but at what cost! "So much for the intellect!" cries the narrator. "But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,--had contracted,--had hardened,--had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb" (p. 375). The story of Brand's quest, in Martin's words, thus "becomes a parable of how to succeed at spiritual self-destruction."⁸¹ There is only one course left. Bidding farewell to "Mother Earth," in whose bosom he will never lie; to mankind, whose "great heart" he has trampled beneath his feet; and to the "stars of heaven" that have tried in vain to light his way, he leaps into the fiery lime-kiln's waiting jaws, and embraces his "familiar friend" (p. 376).

II

One of the apparent paradoxes of The Marble Faun lies in Hilda's use of the confessional as a means of unburdening her heart of its terrible secret.⁸² It seems odd to many that Hawthorne should have Hilda, of whose Puritan background he had made so much, turn in her hour of need to a representative of a priesthood whose members he had

⁸¹Martin, p. 103.

⁸²Baym comments that in using the confessional for the purpose of exposing her friends in order to absolve herself, Hilda "patently perverts the intentions of that ritual, which require the penitent to confess one's own sins" (p. 244).

elsewhere described as "pampered, sensual, with red and bloated cheeks, and carnal eyes" (p. 411). It is true that Hawthorne gives Hilda's confessor a New England birthplace and makes it clear that Hilda does not believe that absolution can be bestowed by "mortal man" (p. 359). Nevertheless, such concessions hardly offset other references in the romance to the "iniquity" (p. 368) within the Church, with its carnal-eyed priests, its "sluggish, swinish" monks (p. 267), and its "scarlet superstitions" (p. 416).

In analyzing Hawthorne's attitude toward Catholicism, however, one must remember, as a host of critics have noted, that he did make a distinction between the "Papal system," as he called it (p. 298), and the imperfect human beings who exercise or adhere to the authority of that system.⁸³ "Catholicism," said Hawthorne, "is such a miracle of fitness for its own ends, (many of which might seem to be admirable ones,) that it is difficult to imagine it a contrivance of mere man. . . . If there were but angels to work [its mighty machinery] . . . the system would soon vindicate the dignity and holiness of its origin" (p. 345). Although the statement is not exactly

⁸³See, especially, Martin (pp. 163-67), Fairbanks (pp. 185-202), Hoeltje, Inward Sky (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 456-61, and Edward Wagenknecht, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Man and Writer (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 179. Fairbanks in particular covers the subject exhaustively, devoting a full chapter to the "Pro" and the "Con" of Hawthorne's attitude toward Catholicism. Relying heavily on the French and Italian Notebooks (while not neglecting evidence in The Marble Faun), Fairbanks concludes that "on the whole, Hawthorne's attraction to the Church seems to have been more soundly motivated than were his criticisms" (p. 198). A similar study based on The Marble Faun alone might afford an interesting comparison.

pro-Catholic, it would hardly be fair to call it anti-Catholic, either. "What really distressed [Hawthorne]," as Edward Wagenknecht emphasizes, "was that the lives of Italian priests and laymen failed to measure up to the glory of the faith they professed. . . ."84 Wagenknecht might well have added that man has been known to pervert other faiths, including Puritanism, as Hawthorne demonstrated so clearly in his portrayal of such characters as Father Hooper, Richard Digby, and, with special bitterness, the Puritan community in the story of "The Gentle Boy."

Despite the fact, then, that he was at various times disappointed, amused, and irritated with respect to certain aspects of Catholicism, there was without doubt much about it that Hawthorne admired and found congenial. "Above all," writes Wagenknecht, "he appreciated the spiritual and therapeutic values of the confessional."⁸⁵ Hoeltje's recounting of one of Hawthorne's experiences dramatizes and lends credence to that statement: One day, as Hawthorne sat in church observing the penitents entering and leaving the confessional, a woman, having completed her confession, chanced to sit next to him in the pew. Hoeltje continues:

[She was] a country woman, with simple, matronly face, which, he observed, seemed solemnized and softened with the comfort that she had obtained by disburdening herself of the soil of worldly frailties, and by receiving

⁸⁴Wagenknecht, p. 179.

⁸⁵Ibid.

absolution. He could say nothing against the sincerity of such devotion. It was a scene which he was to remember and to incorporate, by and by, together with later qualified reflections, in the substance of The Marble Faun.⁸⁶

Hawthorne's preoccupation with the heart's need to cleanse itself did not, however, find its first expression in The Marble Faun, or even in the previously mentioned "Earth's Holocaust," written years earlier. On the contrary, it was a theme that had engaged his interest from the very beginning, and by the time he came to write of Hilda's situation his understanding of the problem had been, in Fairbanks' words, "perfected in meditation and practiced in handling."⁸⁷

III

One of Hawthorne's earlier stories deals with the theme of hidden guilt in an especially poignant way. "Roger Malvin's Burial" is different from "The Hollow of the Three Hills" and "The Man of Adamant" in that the guilt in the protagonist's heart stems from an act that does not, on its face, seem sinful. In the story, written against an historical background, Malvin and his young companion Reuben Bourne, frontiersmen who have survived a battle "in the heart of the enemy's [Indian] country" (p. 46), are making their way back to the settlement. Both have been wounded, the older man mortally so. Malvin urges Bourne to continue without him: "Your wounds

⁸⁶Hoeltje, Inward Sky, p. 458. Much of the material in the chapter from which this vignette is excerpted, according to Hoeltje's "Notes," comes from Mrs. Hawthorne's Notes of Travel.

⁸⁷Fairbanks, p. 53.

are deep and your strength is failing fast; yet, if you hasten onward alone, you may be preserved. For me there is no hope, and I will await death here" (p. 48).

Reuben at first appears horrified at Roger's suggestion, insisting that he would rather face death himself than abandon his dying companion. Gradually, however, as the older man meets his objections one by one with well-reasoned arguments, Reuben decides to leave. How the reader is to take this decision, however reluctantly arrived at, is far from clear, for the narrator clouds the issue with ambiguity. "Nor can it be affirmed that no selfish feeling strove to enter Reuben's heart," he concedes at one point (p. 49). "No merely selfish motive . . . could have induced him to desert his companion," he insists at another (p. 50). Yet again, there is something in the tone of his references to Reuben's "justifiable" act (pp. 53, 57) that give them the ring of irony. On balance, it seems that Elder assumes too much when she asserts that "neither Hawthorne nor the reader blames the young man for leaving Roger."⁸⁸

Some time after his departure, Reuben is rescued by a search party and is then nursed back to health by Malvin's daughter Dorcas, whom he eventually marries. He cannot, however, bring himself to reveal to Dorcas that he has left her dying father alone in the wilderness, but instead allows her to believe that he stayed with the old man until he died and gave him a decent burial. As time passes

⁸⁸Elder, p. 118.

Reuben's "one secret thought [becomes] like a chain binding down his spirit and like a serpent gnawing into his heart . . ." (pp. 57-58). Finally, the burden of his guilt leads to alienation of his neighbors and neglect of his responsibilities, and he becomes "a ruined man." Setting out with his wife and young son for what he hopes will be a new life in "the virgin bosom of the wilderness" (p. 58), Reuben is drawn instead to the very spot where he had left Malvin eighteen years earlier. "Unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul" that hides his motives, he believes that he has been led to the spot by supernatural forces, and hopes that when he has covered Roger's bones peace will be restored to "the sepulchre of his heart" (p. 63). Suddenly, his thoughts are interrupted by a rustle in the undergrowth. Reuben fires his musket, and Cyrus, his son, falls dead.

Despite the strongly Biblical overtones in Hawthorne's conclusion to the tale ("His sin was expiated,--the curse was gone from him; and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne" [p. 67]), critics remain divided on the question of the true significance of Cyrus' death.⁸⁹ Surely the purging of Reuben's heart

⁸⁹Crews calls the killing "a sacrificial murder," by means of which Reuben cancels his "imaginary blood-debt" (p. 88). Baym also refers to the killing as murder: "Reuben Bourne felt guilty for failing to stay with Roger Malvin," she writes, ". . . he felt no guilt at all when he murdered his son" (pp. 68-69). Levin and Arlin Turner (Nathaniel Hawthorne [New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961], p. 31), on the other hand, both refer to the incident as an accident, an interpretation that seems to miss much of the intended irony in the tale. Doubleday believes that the intention to achieve irony is there, but that it ends in "a failure in technique" (p. 197).

in so tragic a way could never bring him the same happiness and tranquility that Hilda's outpourings in the confessional bring to her-- although it is interesting to note that Hawthorne uses similar imagery in the two instances to dramatize the moment of the heart's release: "Then Reuben's heart was stricken, and the tears gushed out like water from a rock" (p. 67); "Her heart seemed so full, that it spilt its new gush of happiness . . . like rich and sunny wine out of an overbrimming goblet" (p. 365). Just as surely, Reuben could never say of the burial place in the forest, as Hilda says of the Cathedral where she unburdens her heart, "I shall hold it in loving remembrance, while I live, as the spot where I found infinite peace after infinite trouble!" (p. 365).

Shroeder writes that "Hawthorne typically views the heart, the guilty and guilt-incurring center which must be purified, in terms of images which are ultimately all burial images."⁹⁰ However one reads the initial act that gives rise to Reuben's sense of guilt, the burial imagery that is so much a part of the purification ritual at the end provides an overlay of tragedy that Hawthorne's message of spiritual uplift cannot overcome. The leaves from the withered oak that bury Malvin's bones and cover the "dreamless" head of his grandson (p. 66) fall on the "insensible" Dorcas and the "expiated" Reuben as well (p. 67).

IV

The heart-cavern-burial imagery that serves the shorter works so well is repeated almost to the point of oppressiveness in The

⁹⁰Shroeder, 117.

Marble Faun, where the underground world of the catacomb, the tomb, and the dungeon often threatens to overshadow the celestial sphere of the tower, the lamp, and the dove. The romance is filled with images of Rome as a fetid repository for corruption and decay, and much of the art that functions as a backdrop for the action is associated in one way or another with death. Indeed, in the introductory scene, which finds the four characters in the sculpture gallery of the Capitol, the blithe conversation about Donatello's resemblance to Praxiteles' eternally youthful Faun is repeatedly undercut by references to another statue nearby, that of the Dying Gladiator, "sinking into his death-swoon" (p. 5). Moreover, even the statue of the Faun upon second look appears to Hilda as mere "corroded and discoloured stone," while the other sculptured figures in the rooms are described as "marble ghosts" excavated from "the deep grave in which Rome lies buried" (p. 17).

Shroeder believes that "Hawthorne apparently intended, in this novel, to represent the pure heart in terms of Hilda's high tower, and the guilty heart in terms both of the catacombs, from which the spectre of Miriam's guilt emerges, and of the dungeon in which Donatello is incarcerated."⁹¹ While the first two parts of this statement seem indisputable, it is not so evident that Hawthorne meant to make of Donatello's incarceration a major symbolic event. In fact, as Baym has suggested, it seems possible that Hawthorne originally intended to conclude his romance with Chapter XXXV, in which Miriam and Donatello are reunited under the benign eye of the bronze Pontiff in Perugia. "With Miriam and Donatello brought together, and Kenyon hastening

⁹¹Ibid., 108.

off to Rome and Hilda," says Baym, "the reader might anticipate a second happy union and close the book contented."⁹² With no real evidence to support such a hypothesis, one can only speculate as to why Hawthorne might have changed his mind and decided to add another fifteen chapters. Perhaps he had come to realize that even in a romance, his earlier definition of which forbade the relentless impaling of the story with its moral "as by sticking a pin through a butterfly,"⁹³ an author had to make some concessions to the real world's demands for retribution. As McPherson puts it, "the longer Hawthorne lived, it would seem, the more difficult it became for him to visualize a convincingly happy ending to his American myth."⁹⁴ Although Miriam and Donatello had been blessed, and symbolically forgiven, by the outstretched hand of Pope Julius, there was still the debt to society to be paid. Hawthorne's dark finale may be, as Baym believes, a gesture toward the reality of life, representing "his clear-sighted estimate of their chances for survival."⁹⁵ In any case, since Donatello's arrest at the Carnival is handled with such obscurity as to be barely visible and the verification of his imprisonment is limited to two words from Kenyon in the Postscript (p. 467), it seems doubtful that Hawthorne intended to attach to the dungeon in which Donatello is incarcerated the same symbolic significance that

⁹²Baym, p. 233.

⁹³Preface, The House of the Seven Gables, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. William Charvat et al (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1965), II, p. 2.

⁹⁴McPherson, p. 169.

⁹⁵Baym, p. 247.

surrounds Hilda's tower and the Spectre's catacomb. A far more plausible emblem of Donatello's guilty heart, it would seem, is his ancestral home at Monte Beni, which serves as the setting for eight chapters of discussion and symbolic action related to the crucial middle stage of his development, the period of repentance.

The reader sees the dismal villa to which Donatello has withdrawn through the eyes of Kenyon, who, as we have seen, is frequently assigned the role of observer and commentator. It is a tall, castle-like structure, visible from a distance, but hidden, as Kenyon draws nearer, "among the inequalities of the hill-side." Images of the dungeon abound. There is an iron gate, a "substantial barrier fastened with lock and bolt" (p. 214), inside which there rises a massive tower, its windows shielded with iron bars, and its blanket of ivy, lichen, and moss testifying to its great age (p. 215). The house that adjoins the tower, although more modern, reminds Kenyon of "an Etruscan tomb, being paved and walled with heavy blocks of stone, and vaulted almost as massively overhead" (p. 219). The Arcadian frescoes, once bright and festive, are now faded and somber, "like the ghosts of dead and buried joys." In a strange way they reflect the painful metamorphosis that is occurring within Donatello's heart and, indeed, something of the nature of life itself: the fading of hope into disappointment, joy into grief, "festal splendour into funereal duskiness" (p. 226).

Within the tower itself, Donatello leads Kenyon up the gloomy staircase, pausing at a prisoner's cell whose former occupant's

ghostly form is said still to tread the dusky stairs. The bed-chamber is filled with death-symbols, including an ancient carved likeness of a human skull which is so strongly connected with Donatello's remorse that he feels it "a kind of penance to touch it." Even as he dips his finger in the holy water and crosses himself, Donatello is haunted by guilt. "I have no right to make the sacred symbol on a sinful breast!" says he. "On what mortal breast can it be made, then?" Kenyon asks, echoing the Hawthorne of "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil," "Is there one that hides no sin?" (p. 256).

Throughout these chapters Donatello's depression is held in constant contrast to Kenyon's uplifted point of view. "Come, then," says Donatello, as they start to climb the tower, "it has a weary staircase and dismal chambers, and it is very lonesome at the summit!" "With its difficult steps, and the dark prison-cells you speak of," Kenyon replies, "your tower resembles the spiritual experience of many a sinful soul, which, nevertheless, may struggle upward into the pure air and light of Heaven, at last" (p. 253). "Thank God for letting me again behold this scene!" Kenyon exclaims as he and Donatello stand at the summit looking at the majestic landscape below. "How it strengthens the poor human spirit in its reliance on His Providence, to ascend but this little way above the common level, and so attain a somewhat wider glimpse of His dealings with mankind!" "You discern something that is hidden from me," Donatello answers gloomily. "I see sunshine on one spot, and cloud in another, and no reason for it in either case . . ." (p. 258).

Hilda's virtue, like Donatello's gloom, is consistently represented in terms of her heart as well as her tower. It is her "purity of heart," for example, that protects her when she descends to the "corrupted atmosphere of the city . . ." (pp. 54-55). Following the death of the Model, which she has witnessed, Hilda undergoes her own special kind of purgatory, but her situation is vastly different from that of Donatello--and is probably unique in Hawthorne--in that the guilt which wracks her heart and constantly strives for release is not her own.

V

When Miriam and Hilda meet for the first time after the Model's death, the emotional state of both characters is described in terms of heart imagery. Miriam, uncertain as to whether Hilda knows of her role in the Model's death, approaches the dove-tower "with a quaking heart" (p. 202), fearing rejection by her friend in her hour of greatest need. She vacillates, torn between yearning for solace and repugnance at the idea of tainting the saintly Hilda with the stain of her own guilt. "I will never permit her sweet touch again," she says, "if I can find the strength of heart to forbid it. But, Oh, it would be so soothing in this wintry fever-fit of my heart! . . ." (pp. 203-04). Hilda, meanwhile, is undergoing her own struggle, bedewing her pillow with tears such as "the innocent heart pours forth, at its first actual discovery that sin is in the world" (p. 204). Her reaction to that discovery, specifically her rejection of Miriam, is probably the principal reason for the schizophrenia associated

with the character of Hilda--Hilda-as-conceived-by-Hawthorne versus Hilda-as-perceived-by-the-reader. Miriam, "her dearest friend, whose heart seemed the most solid and richest of Hilda's possessions," we are told, "had no existence for her any more . . ." (p. 206).

As Miriam stands in the doorway facing Hilda, "her heart [leaps] convulsively towards the only refuge that it had, or hoped" (p. 206). When Hilda protests that because she is not an angel "incapable of stain" and must therefore obey her heart's warning to avoid her former friend's "powerful magnetism," Miriam utters the stinging rebuke which many readers have felt to be so richly deserved: "As an angel," she says to Hilda, "you are not amiss; but, as a human creature . . . you need a sin to soften you!" (pp. 208-09).⁹⁶

One wonders what the effect upon Miriam's character (and upon the outcome of the romance) might have been had Hilda not so irrevocably denied her. It is strange that Miriam herself relates the release of her sexual feelings toward Donatello--her "betrayal of woman's cause," her "lack of feminine modesty," her "reckless, passionate, most indecorous avowal" that she lives only in him--almost totally to her rejection by Hilda, whose modesty and chastity she has obviously admired. "Well, my dear friend," she tells Kenyon, "when you go back to Rome, tell Hilda what her severity has done! She was all Womanhood to me; and when she cast me off, I had no longer

⁹⁶It would be unfair to Hilda not to note that her attitude toward Miriam does soften slightly. After Kenyon has uncharacteristically called Hilda "a terribly severe judge . . . with the remorselessness of a steel blade" (p. 384), she asks herself whether she was wrong in turning Miriam away. However, she never divulges this twinge of regret to Miriam herself, and no reconciliation ever takes place.

any terms to keep with the reserves and decorums of my sex. Hilda has set me free! Pray tell her so, from Miriam, and thank her!" It is a passage that one would almost certainly read ironically had Hawthorne not taken care to state that Miriam's words are spoken "with no resentment." With apparently complete sincerity, she concludes her conversation with Kenyon by saying that she forgives Hilda, "were there anything to forgive," and by wishing him luck in his efforts to win Hilda's "virgin heart" (pp. 286-87).

Hilda's inner conflict is described in terms surprisingly similar to the language associated with that of Donatello. Her mind, like his, is in a state of gloom and despair, knowledge of the reality of sin having come to her like a cloud that has "suddenly gathered over the morning light; so dark a cloud, that there seems to be no longer any sunshine behind it or above it" (p. 328). Her loneliness is "a chill dungeon . . . fit only for a criminal to breathe and pine in!" (p. 329), and her daily descent from her tower to the streets of Rome parallels Donatello's aimless treading of the dreary tower stairs at Monte Beni.

Hilda, however, acts out her struggle not in her tower but against the background of the art galleries, where she wanders seeking comfort in familiar and beautiful things. It is a futile effort, for she finds the pictures empty and the halls "drearier than the white-washed walls of a prison corridor" (p. 341). In the extremity of her despair, she kneels at the shrine before Guido's Archangel, and it is here that she begins to feel a sense of hope that emotions

"struggling to force their way out of her heart" (p. 352) may at last find release.

Although Hawthorne is in general very kind to Hilda, he does not exempt her heart from the terrible consequences of harboring guilt--even if that guilt is someone else's. "My sweet friend," says Kenyon, "have you had this secret hidden in your delicate, maidenly heart, through all these many months! No wonder that your life was withering out of you" (p. 383). When her heart is finally emptied in the confessional of its burden of vicarious guilt, Hilda is "softened out of the chillness of her virgin pride" (p. 370).

Although Hawthorne could not bring himself to allow the pristine Hilda to relent too much in her rejection of Miriam, he evidently felt too much sympathy for Miriam to allow her to be punished by the permanent loss of Donatello's love as well. Careful never to allow her his unqualified approval, however, Hawthorne seems to have decided that he should justify the restoration of some measure of happiness to her life by closely relating her reconciliation with Donatello to his rehabilitation. In any case, it is significant that Kenyon, whose role as an agent in Donatello's regeneration is quite clear, is also seen as a pivotal character in bringing about a reunion between Miriam and Donatello.

Kenyon's effort to bring Miriam and Donatello together begins in the beautiful marble saloon behind the private chapel at Monte Beni, which, unlike the tower and the villa's other apartments, has been untouched by the passage of time. In contrast to the other rooms, which

seem like dark and dingy prisons, it is a place that is "glowing" and "brilliant," a place, Kenyon thinks, where only the sun is "magically imprisoned, and must always shine" (p. 279). When Miriam enters she is not, however, as Kenyon feels would be appropriate, dressed in queenly robes and beaming. Rather, she is attired in deep mourning and looking very ill. It is not guilt in her heart that has taken such a heavy toll, but rather her rejection by Donatello. "The sacrifice, which I yearn to make, of myself, my hopes, my everything, is coldly put aside," she tells Kenyon. "It is not remorse! Do not think it! . . . what robs me of all power . . . is the certainty that I am, and must ever be, an object of horror in Donatello's sight!" Kenyon, for his own part "cherishing a love which insulate[s] him from the wild experiences which some men gather," is quite naturally startled at such a passionate outburst from a woman (p. 280). Nevertheless, he assures Miriam that Donatello's rejection of her is but a part of his penance experience, a self-imposed solitude which Kenyon admits should now be ended. "The time is come," says he, "when it may be desirable to remove Donatello from the complete seclusion in which he buries himself" (p. 284).

Kenyon suggests that Miriam ascend the tower and meet Donatello there "under the Eye of God," but Miriam demurs, not because she fears divine scrutiny, for, she says, "as far as I can see into that cloudy and inscrutable thing, my heart, it has none but pure motives," but because she dreads a second rejection by Donatello. "Once, he shuddered at my touch," she recalls. "If he shudder once again, or frown,

I die!" (p. 283).

Miriam makes the counter-suggestion that Kenyon escort Donatello to Perugia to meet her beneath the statue of the Pope, whose outstretched hand she believes will bless their meeting (p. 285). Kenyon agrees. He leaves her, "health and bloom" restored, standing "in the magnificent hall, which seemed only a fit setting for her beauty" (p. 286).

VI

Although Kenyon's own heart trouble seems to stem, like Miriam's, from love rather than guilt, he is unable to express his emotions in the same open way Miriam does, and there is something in the imagery surrounding his love for Hilda that suggests that his heart may not be a total stranger to feelings of guilt. As Kenyon stands at the summit of Donatello's tower looking out on the Umbrian valley, he thinks of Hilda, and his "strong love" for her rises "tumultuously into his consciousness." It is a feeling that he has heretofore kept hidden "in one of [his] heart's inner chambers," because Hilda has not offered any "encouragement to bring it forward" (p. 263). Indeed, his love has to this point appeared to be largely unrequited, although Hilda has once absent-mindedly allowed him to hold her hand. "She is abundantly capable of sympathy," Kenyon tells Miriam, ". . . but she has no need of love!" (p. 121). Now, however, he senses a delicate hand shyly tugging at his heart-strings. Is it Hilda? Kenyon hopes so, but lest the reader mistakenly assume that her "maidenly reserve" would permit such boldness, the narrator quickly suggests that the

whole thing might be a mere trick of Kenyon's love-benighted imagination. As Kenyon continues to look out across the beautiful valley with Hilda on his mind, it is clear that the white villas, the church-spires, and the blue eyes of the lakes "reflecting Heaven" (p. 257) serve as symbols of her spiritual side. Other images, however, suggest that his thoughts are sexual as well. The lush and fertile fields, the fig-trees,⁹⁷ the sky's "tumbling vapours" (p. 264), the tempest bringing forth the "sunny splendour," and the flower of Beauty springing from the soil (p. 258), among other images, have distinctly erotic overtones.

Kenyon's awakening to a full realization of the nature of his love brings about a psychological conflict complicated by his fears for Hilda's welfare following her unexplained disappearance. Kenyon's dark journey is dramatized by his wanderings through Rome, up and down the stairs of Hilda's tower, past inns and wine shops, each with its "sepulchral interior" (p. 418), past homes built on the ruins of ancient tombs, "undisturbed by the ghost of the stern Roman whose ashes [are] so preposterously burthened" (p. 419). At the nadir of his struggle, he descends into a grave-like hole that has been excavated in the earth. There he finds fragments of marble which when lifted from the dust and reassembled by his practiced hand form the

⁹⁷Elsewhere Hawthorne describes the fig-tree with graphic sexual imagery: "There grew the fig-tree that had run wild, and taken to wife the vine, which likewise had gone rampant out of all human controul [sic]; so that the two wild things had tangled and knotted themselves into a wild marriage-bond, and hung their various progeny--the luscious figs, the grapes, oozy with the southern juice, and both endowed with a wild flavour that added the final charm--on the same bough together" (p. 242).

statue of a beautiful Venus. Since the fragments have previously been discovered by the now-reunited Donatello and Miriam and left as a kind of message for Kenyon, the scene marks the end of Kenyon's role as mentor in affairs of the heart. From this point, it is the conflict within his own heart that is the romance's major concern.

Kenyon at first admires the statue, but then as he thinks of Hilda it seems "to fall asunder again, and become only a heap of worthless fragments" (p. 424). The question of Kenyon's need to choose between Hilda and his art is one that has caused some critical concern. McPherson writes that the image of woman that the statue represents-- "earthy, pagan, and desirable, yet still divine--is the opposite of Kenyon's earlier view of Hilda as cold, spiritual, and unattainable. The outcome of this discovery . . . is that Kenyon is prepared to accept the living charms of Hilda."⁹⁸ Crews, on the other hand, noting that Hawthorne "seems to be saying that Kenyon's human love is supplanting his cold aesthetic taste," goes on to observe, "Yet when we reflect that vapid Hilda is here dethroning a supple and lovely Venus, the surface meaning becomes exactly reversed."⁹⁹ Baym agrees, noting that Kenyon "rationalizes his disaffection by explaining that the statue is cold marble, while his lost Hilda is life. But all the rhetoric of the romance contradicts him. . . . Victim of his age's malaise, he chooses the virgin over Venus."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸McPherson, p. 167. Critic's emphasis.

⁹⁹Crews, p. 239.

¹⁰⁰Baym, p. 245.

It seems likely that Hawthorne was attempting in this enigmatic sequence to "humanize" Kenyon, as he had attempted to humanize Hilda by bringing her down from her ivory tower. The attempt is only partially successful, however, because Kenyon has too long represented the Head to become, suddenly, a convincing symbol of the Heart. Indeed, while much has been made of Hilda's cruel rejection of Miriam after the Model's death, it is often forgotten that Kenyon fails Miriam at an even more crucial moment, when the unburdening of her heart to a friend might conceivably have prevented the murder from happening:

"Oh, my friend," cried she, with sudden passion, "will you be my friend indeed? I am lonely, lonely, lonely! There is a secret in my heart that burns me! --that tortures me! Sometimes, I fear to go mad of it! Sometimes, I hope to die of it! . . . Ah, if I could but whisper it to only one human soul! . . . Perhaps--perhaps--but Heaven only knows--you might understand me! Oh, let me speak!" (p. 128).

Although Kenyon bids her speak, "in his secret soul," the narrator confides, ". . . the sculptor doubted whether it were well for this poor, suffering girl to speak what she so yearned to say, or for him to listen. . . . his reluctance . . . resulted from a suspicion that had crept into his heart, and lay there in a dark corner." Miriam senses this at once. "Ah, I shall hate you!" she cries. "You are as cold and pitiless as your own marble" (pp. 128-29).

Kenyon's "suspicion" had been well established earlier, in the scene in which Miriam, with the Model standing over her, symbolically

washes her hands in the fountain. Kenyon wonders whether it is "conceivable that she could have been thus enthralled, unless some great error--how great, Kenyon dared not think--or some fatal weakness had given this dark adversary a vantage-ground?" "Hilda," he says abruptly, "who and what is Miriam? . . . are you sure of her?" Although Hilda stoutly defends her friend, Kenyon, with a curiosity that borders on the pathological, persists: "And your delicate instincts say all this in her favour?--nothing against her?" Finally, having noted that she appears to have Anglo-Saxon blood in her veins and therefore cannot, one infers, be all bad, Kenyon relents slightly: "My heart trusts her, at least," he concedes, "--whatever my head may do" (pp. 108-09).

Given his constant preoccupation with the deleterious results of bottled-up guilt, it seems odd that Hawthorne should allow Kenyon, whom he obviously meant to portray as an admirable figure, to respond with such coldness of heart to Miriam's anguished appeal. While it is hard to believe that Hawthorne intended to blame Kenyon, in even the most indirect way, for the Model's death, it is nevertheless true, as F. O. Matthiessen notes, that "the very evening after her visit [to Kenyon] the terrible event takes place."¹⁰¹ Although to be fair it must be remembered that Kenyon does eventually listen to Miriam's story (see page 18 of this paper), by that time it is too late. Moreover, when Kenyon tells Miriam, rather inexplicably, that she should have revealed her "sad story" sooner, Miriam replies: "On one occasion . . . it seemed to leap out of my heart, and got as far as my

¹⁰¹American Renaissance (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p. 357.

very lips. But, finding you cold to accept my confidence, I thrust it back again. Had I obeyed my first impulse, all would have turned out differently" (pp. 432-33).

VII

Hawthorne did not always allegorize the heart as a dungeon filled with despair or a foul receptacle harboring guilt. In an often-quoted notebook entry he describes the human heart as a cavern with sunshine and flowers at the entrance. As one enters, it is true, one is surrounded by a "terrible gloom," and there are monsters that make it a Hell-like place in which one can only wander bewildered and hopeless. At last, however, light gleams from a region where the "flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance" seem to be duplicated, except that they are "all perfect." "These are the depths of the heart," the sketch concludes, "or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is the eternal beauty."¹⁰²

In a provocative article that discusses ways in which Hawthorne uses this idea, Clark Griffith suggests three different character-types related to the three stages of the cavern-journey. Not unexpectedly, he places the prelapsarian Donatello in the first group, which consists of those innocents who hover at the entrance to the cave, able neither to "feel with depth nor be absorbed fully into the life that goes on around them."¹⁰³ The second group is composed

¹⁰²American Notebooks, p. 98.

¹⁰³"Caves and Cave Dwellers: The Study of a Romantic Image," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 62 (1963), 565.

of those who enter the cave but, being unwilling fully to explore its inner recesses, never see the true light. They are blinded, according to Griffith's interpretation, "to every human quality except the corruptions of the human heart."¹⁰⁴ In this category he includes Goodman Brown, Ethan Brand, and the "lady" of "The Hollow of the Three Hills." Three characters whom he does not mention, but who certainly deserve a place in this company of unregenerate souls, are Richard Digby, Father Hooper, and Catharine of "The Gentle Boy." The third classification is made up of those whose hearts have known evil, but who have been redeemed by suffering, repentance, and love. In this group Griffith places Donatello after his humanizing experience, and Edgar and Edith following their abandonment of Merry Mount and their initiation into the reality of a fallen world.¹⁰⁵ Other characters who come to mind, although their credentials may be somewhat inexact, are Beatrice Rappaccini and the expiated Reuben Bourne.

Nothing could be more natural than to relate the idea of the journey through the cavern of the heart to Donatello's experience, since his "transformation," as described by the narrator, parallels Hawthorne's notebook entry almost precisely:

It was perceptible that he had already had glimpses of strange and subtle matters in those dark caverns, into which all men must descend, if they would know anything beneath the surface and illusive pleasures of existence. And when they emerge, though dazzled and blinded by the first glare of daylight, they take truer and sadder views of life, forever afterwards (p. 262).

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 566.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 566-67.

Of The Marble Faun's other principal characters (none of whom Griffith mentions in his study), neither Miriam nor Kenyon fits any of the three categories very satisfactorily. Miriam's guilt has in a sense been expiated through suffering and love, but without having experienced remorse she cannot be said to have achieved true redemption. Thus the "eternal beauty" that lies at the far end of the cavern is veiled from her sight. Although Kenyon has undergone a kind of humanizing experience, he has not, as far as one can tell, known what Griffith calls "a clear insight into evil."¹⁰⁶ He has merely viewed evil from a distance, alternately judging and counseling its victims.

Finally, what of Hilda? Certainly Hawthorne means to present her as a character who has moved through the dark cavern of suffering into the redemptive light. Her encounter with evil, we are told, has given her "a deeper look into the heart of things; such as those necessarily acquire, who have passed from picture-galleries into dungeon-gloom, and thence come back to the picture-gallery again" (p. 375). Hawthorne's use of picture-galleries here as the "before" and "after" stages of Hilda's sojourn in the dungeon is somewhat difficult to understand, since he had earlier described the galleries themselves as resembling a prison. What is quite clear, however, is that Hawthorne sees Hilda as one whose innate goodness has allowed her to emerge from her dark experience uplifted and brimming with renewed optimism. In the romance's closing words, we are told that "Hilda had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountain-tops" (p. 462).

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 566.

In two of his shorter works Hawthorne uses the idea of the diorama, or "show-box," to make two separate points that are strangely related to his portrayal of Hilda. In the story of Ethan Brand, he inserts a fanciful scene in which a traveling showman entertains a group of spectators by allowing them to peer into his show-box and watch its magnifying lens distort images, with sometimes comical, sometimes frightening results (pp. 371-72). One must be wary of the phenomenon of optical illusion in looking at life, the author seems to be saying, for things are not always what they seem, and it is easy for the innocent eye to be deceived. Perhaps he may even be suggesting that it is human nature to want to be deceived, rather than face reality. Something of this kind seems to have happened to Hawthorne himself in his creation of Hilda.

In his earlier sketch "Fancy's Show Box," "Fancy," dressed as an itinerant showman, appears to the venerable Mr. Smith and with the aid of her picture box causes him to look into the depths of his soul at the "guilty thoughts--of which guilty deeds are no more than shadows--" that have secretly tarnished his ostensibly "unstained" life (pp. 422-23). Although it is certain that Hilda never has what Hawthorne would have identified as a guilty thought, her icy aloofness with respect to the guilt of others indicates a magnified view of her own moral superiority that can be seen by all but Hilda and her creator as the sin of pride. As far as Hilda is concerned, Hawthorne's perception is as distorted as that of the traveling showman's spectators: He views his heroine through a diorama lens.

At the conclusion of "Fancy's Show Box" Hawthorne cautions that "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity" (p. 428). It is a truth that Hawthorne had made central to his tales "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Man of Adamant," among others and, as Zivkovic comments, "it is an admirable one." Zivkovic is right when he adds that it is, however, what Hawthorne "forgot when he created Hilda."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Hilda comes close to representing the archetype of Griffith's "self-styled innocents" who stand at the entrance to the cavern, so obsessed with the idea of purity that

they would banish from experience every unlovely blemish--every moral taint--they see. . . . Linger in the artificial sunlight, they carefully avert their eyes from the ugly shapes within. But thereby they blind themselves as well to the capacity for life and love which the heart-shaped cave clearly symbolizes. They have achieved purity of a sort, but achieved it at the price of being cut off from experience. It is their tragedy that, by refusing to look in the cave, the "innocents" are deprived of the full, rich stature of humanhood.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Zivkovic, 207.

¹⁰⁸Griffith, 565.

Conclusion

Positive reviews of his earlier work by two of Hawthorne's contemporaries presage in an almost eerily accurate way the negative criticism of The Marble Faun that was to begin years later.

In his previously mentioned review of Twice-Told Tales Poe (whose evaluation was generally favorable despite his distaste for Hawthorne's "mysticism") singled out "The Hollow of the Three Hills" for special praise, since it exemplified all that he admired in the tale. "Not only is all done that should be done," he wrote, "but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word tells, and there is not a word that does not tell."¹⁰⁹

Henry T. Tuckerman, in a general review of Hawthorne's work which the latter understandably found gratifying,¹¹⁰ wrote:

¹⁰⁹Rev. of Twice-Told Tales, Graham's, 20 (1842), 299. Poe did, however, in a later review which included both Twice-Told Tales and Mosses from an Old Manse, chastise Hawthorne for being "infinitely too fond of allegory" ("Tale Writing--Nathaniel Hawthorne," Godey's Lady's Book, 35 [November 1847], 252-56, rpt. in Cohen, p. 26).

¹¹⁰Hawthorne was pleased with the article, he said in a letter to Tuckerman, "not so much for the praise as because I felt that you saw into my books and understood what I meant" (Hoeltje, "Hawthorne, Melville, and 'Blackness,'" p. 48).

Brevity is as truly the soul of romance as of wit; the light that warms is always concentrated, and expression and finish, in literature as in painting, are not dependent upon space. Accordingly the choicest gems of writing are the most terse; and as a perfect lyric or sonnet outweighs in value a mediocre epic or tragedy, so a carefully worked and richly conceived sketch, tale or essay is worth scores of diffuse novels and ponderous treatises. . . . [Hawthorne] makes each picture complete and does not waste an inch of canvass [sic].¹¹¹

In these two reviews lies, in a reverse kind of way, the essence of most criticism of The Marble Faun. Unlike the tales, it is a work that is diffuse and ponderous, in which things are done that should not be done and in which a great deal of canvas is wasted on words that do not "tell." Most of the romance's faults can be linked, as has been amply noted, to the inability of its slight plot to sustain interest under the weight of the long, sketch-like passages. Perhaps Leon Howard is right when he suggests that Hawthorne may have been aware from the outset of his inability to deal with the problem of evil on so broad a scale and that he "therefore cultivated a secondary artistic intent to make his book something of a travelogue. . . ." ¹¹² Whether or not this is so, it seems evident that Hawthorne was not totally at home in the milieu of the long romance and that his altering of techniques that had worked so well in his shorter fiction was a mistake. He fails in The Marble Faun to achieve that "bright trans-

¹¹¹ Southern Literary Messenger, 17 (June 1851), 347.

¹¹² "Hawthorne's Fiction," rev. of Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark, by Richard Harter Fogle, in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 7 (1953), 247.

parency" that he had talked about in "The Custom-House" because the "opaque substance" of the Roman present is too closely linked to the denseness of its past to allow his thought and imagination to penetrate.

Terence Martin, in a relevant analysis of some of the problems Hawthorne faced when he wrote The Marble Faun, points out that whereas in the tales "he consistently moves his most characteristic fiction back toward the beginnings of the colonial experience in America and lets the imagination take advantage of what he finds--and does not find--there," in The Marble Faun "he tries to give a sense of beginning-ness by reenacting more explicitly than is his wont the story of man's fall from innocence, but the past of Rome stands between him and the fulfilled meaning of his subject."¹¹³

An even more basic problem may have had to do simply with Hawthorne's attempt to combine in one work elements of the delicate tale and the rambling sketch, both of which had separately served him so well. Perhaps the disjunction of the imaginative and the factual so often noted with respect to The Marble Faun is related less to the author's diminished skill or the romance's sheer length than to the innate incompatibility of what are essentially two different art forms. It is also possible, as has been suggested earlier, that Hawthorne gains density at the expense of focus when he attempts to add a human dimension to characters who would in his shorter fiction have been

¹¹³"Hawthorne's Public Decade and the Values of Home," American Literature, 46 (1974), 145, 149.

depicted as little more than states of mind. That he had some difficulty deciding how "human" his characters should be seems evidenced by a tendency to temper their tenuous sense of mutual awareness with a fear of closeness and involvement. Although this ambivalence undoubtedly reflects nineteenth-century standards of restraint to some extent, it may also have within it, as Tharpe has suggested, something of Hawthorne's personal "doctrine of non-violation" with respect to the mysteries hidden in the hearts and souls of others, a doctrine that he had proclaimed so brilliantly in "Ethan Brand." It may be, for example, as Tharpe believes, that Kenyon discourages Miriam from unburdening her heart to him and she in turn hesitates to do so because "they fear each other's secrets and their beings."¹¹⁴

Although it is certain that that intensity, or concentrated light, which Tuckerman so admired in the tales is largely lacking in The Marble Faun, there is nevertheless much in the romance that is thoroughly reminiscent of the earlier fiction. There are, for instance, the same ambiguous dreamlike atmosphere, the same richness of symbol and image, the same conceptualization of man's moral dilemmas and psychological suffering. In tales like "My Kinsman," "Young Goodman Brown," and "Rappaccini's Daughter" Hawthorne had dealt in various ways with the themes of loss of innocence and initiation into a world which is either all evil or an ambiguous blend of evil and good. In "The Minister's Black Veil" and "Roger Malvin's Burial" he had depicted the horror of a guilt of such obscure beginnings as to seem almost

¹¹⁴Tharpe, p. 134.

related to Original Sin. In "The Gentle Boy," "The Man of Adamant," and "Ethan Brand" he had shown the deadly effects of excessive pride upon the human heart. In "The Hollow of the Three Hills" and "The Wives of the Dead" he had created a vaporous atmosphere, a strange realm in which the imaginary was indistinguishable from the real, and in "The Hall of Fantasy" and "The Haunted Mind" he had provided a vividly explicit picture of that surrealistic world of the half-waking, half-dreaming state. In his complex network of symbols and images, motifs had overlapped and merged. The light-dark imagery of "The Maypole of Merry Mount," for example, had mingled with the mists of the dream, while the dream mood of "The Wives of the Dead" and the dungeon aspect of "The Man of Adamant" had both been accentuated by images of darkness and light.

The themes of loss of innocence and of guilt arising from an ambiguous sin; the intricate blending of the real and the imaginary; the absorption of symbols and images into each other--all are interwoven in The Marble Faun and all add to the richness of its texture. Also present, although with far less certain intent, is the theme of the isolating consequences of exaggerated pride. It seems likely that Hawthorne did mean to represent Miriam as a somewhat prideful person, especially in the scene with Kenyon in which she denies any feeling of remorse for her implication in the Model's death and, perhaps even more significantly, defiantly asserts her sexuality in what must have seemed to nineteenth-century readers to be a most unseemly way. For modern readers, as has been suggested, Hilda is by far the more pride-

ful character, but if Hawthorne saw this also, he concealed his insight well.

The technique of indirect and inconclusive narration that had characterized the tales and sketches probably finds its most striking expression in the story of the fall of the mythical Donatello, his subsequent struggle for identity, and his ultimate transformation into some kind of altered existence. Following the pattern established in the tales, Hawthorne suggests possible reasons for what has happened, examines those suggestions, advances other possibilities, explores those, and then concludes, inconclusively, that the mystery is unfathomable. Finally, as James K. Folsom states, "Hawthorne will not attempt to justify the ways of God to man."¹¹⁵

"In youth," Hawthorne wrote, "men are apt to write more wisely than they really know or feel; and the remainder of life may be not idly spent in realizing and convincing themselves of the wisdom which they uttered long ago."¹¹⁶ Although Hawthorne wisely retained in The Marble Faun much that had worked well in his earlier fiction, his mind was too lively, even as he approached the age of sixty, to allow him to cease experimenting. With his strong inclination toward self-criticism, Hawthorne would probably have been the first to deny that

¹¹⁵Man's Accidents and God's Purposes (New Haven: College and Univ. Press, 1963), p. 131.

¹¹⁶Preface to The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales, in Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches, p. 592.

the result of his experimentation was an unqualified success. If something of the earlier spontaneity and freshness is missing from The Marble Faun, perhaps that is only natural in a work of the author's mature years. If his characters sometimes articulate a confusing philosophy, perhaps that is because Hawthorne himself was still searching, with an urgency unfelt in his youth, for answers that continued to elude him.

For the Hawthorne of The Marble Faun, life was still, as it had been for the Hawthorne of "Young Goodman Brown," an experience in which one wanders in the darkness, in "a sort of dream," through a long labyrinth filled with guilt. Since the last words of the romance are bright with Hilda's sunny philosophy, however, it seems clear that Hawthorne did not perceive life as a journey through a totally dark and dangerous world which offered no hope. On what Melville had called "the hither side of Hawthorne's soul," there was, after all, that sunlight on the mountain-tops.

Although it draws the reader into that familiar yet strange Hawthornean realm in which man, "dreaming on the edge of a precipice," hovers precariously over "that pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere," The Marble Faun ends on a note of affirmation. Having explored the "dark caverns" of experience, man is well on his way to the true and perfect light.

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