HAWTHORNE'S DARK LADY

AND THE ADAMIC MYTH

A Thesis

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by

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INTRODUCTION

In the Preface to The Snow Image volume Nathaniel Hawthorne states that such things as "Prefaces and Introductions" and biographical facts "hide the man, instead of displaying him. You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits" (III, 386).[1] One "essential trait" of Hawthorne that critics generally agree upon is that he did not share in the optimism of his age. The purpose of this thesis is to show the extent to which Hawthorne turned away from the easy harmonies of Emerson, and to prove that Hawthorne's social criticism is closely involved with his implicit or explicit use of a single myth--the Fall of Adam--in which he places the emphasis on Eve, that woman who is usually called, in criticism of Hawthorne, the "dark lady." The method will be to follow Hawthorne's advice, to "look through" his fictitious characters in five of his tales and three of his romances.

Both the reasons for Hawthorne's use of the Adamic myth, which signified something different to nineteenth century Americans

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[1]The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, with Introductory Notes by George Parsons Lathrop (Riverside Edition, Boston and New York, 1883, 12 vols.). All references to Hawthorne's writings are to be found in the respective volumes of this edition.

than it had to their predecessors, and the way in which he employed it will be explored with an emphasis on the dark ladies as characters and symbols.[2] For Hawthorne, the totality of the individual centers in this myth; how the individual interprets it, whether he even accepts it, determines that individual's psychological growth, his relation to his fellow man, and his potential for redemption. Investigating Hawthorne from the focal point of the Adamic myth shows not only a greater unity in his work but also a far deeper concern for the future of the individual American and the collective America of his time than Hawthorne is usually acknowledged to have had.

This thesis is built upon the premise that there was a commonly understood referent when Hawthorne and his contemporaries discussed Adam, the new Adam, or the Fall--that there was an Adamic myth which they accepted or rejected in similar terms. The essential elements of the traditional, popular version of the myth are:

1. Adam and Eve lived in a paradisiacal Eden in perfect harmony with one another, with their fellow creatures, and with God.
2. The serpent, usually considered to be the devil or an agent of the devil, beguiled Eve into disobeying God's command and eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Eve persuaded Adam to eat the fruit as well.
3. Adam and Eve thus introduced evil and mortality into the world. Their punishment for disobedience was, symbolically,

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[2]Readers interested in this study will no doubt be familiar with R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam and Philip Rahv's essay, "The Dark Lady of Salem." Lewis's work has been a valuable source of information, but his discussion of Hawthorne centers on Hawthorne's concept of time and place, matters which are only of peripheral interest here. Rahv explores the similar characteristics of the dark ladies, but comes to what I think is an erroneous conclusion, a matter which I will treat in Chapter V.

> separation--from each other, from nature, and from God--and expulsion from Paradise.

Throughout the history of this myth, although there is no specific Biblical justification for it, runs the idea that the serpent's beguiling of Eve and Eve's temptation of Adam were sexual acts.[3] Woven into the myth is the belief that the proof of woman's fall lies in her sensuality, as the proof of man's fall lies in an over-developed intellect.

Most of Hawthorne's contemporaries do not complete the myth. Glorying in a new world and a new Eden, the stop, so to speak, at stage one, before the fall. They see Adam "as a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history."[4] The new Adam, a term used by Hawthorne and his contemporaries, means a modern prototype of Adam before the fall. Hawthorne used this term rarely, as he did in "The New Adam and Eve," for the bulk of his work indicates that the Adamic myth was most relevant to Hawthorne in its entirety. Man's Fall from a state of innocence, harmony, and grace into sin and error was a reality to Hawthorne.

Orthodox Christianity added the atonement to the fall, thus making a circle by restoring man's original state. This Christian circle gave rise to the "Paradox of the Fortunate Fall."[5] The paradox

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[3]See Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, trans. Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia, 1913), Vol. I.

[4]R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago, 1955), p. 5.

[5]See Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment, eds. M. Schorer, J. Miles, and G. McKenzie (New York, 1948), p. 137ff.

is that although the fall could never be sufficiently condemned, if Adam had not fallen, the Incarnation and Redemption could never have occurred, and, moreover, that the state of the redeemed far surpasses in happiness and moral excellence the pristine happiness of the first pair in Eden, the state in which, presumably, but for the Fall, man would have remained. There has been some attempt to fit Hawthorne's work into an Orthodox Christian pattern[6] and some concern because of his use of the slightly heretical paradox of the fortunate fall. But Hawthorne won't quite fit; his work defines his concept of redemption, and it is not strictly Christian.

In Hawthorne the state of innocence of the new Adam is possible only for children or the childlike and is an undesirable state for adults (as illustrated by Clifford Pyncheon). Man "falls" when he becomes conscious of evil through an immoral act (his own or others'), or when he places himself outside of the "magnetic chain of humanity." The two--sin (or consciousness of evil) and separation--are usually simultaneous. Man is redeemed when he recognizes his sin and then re-establishes himself within the chain of humanity through love and the acceptance of the confines of society. In Hawthorne the individual mast fall, he must encounter evil, to pass from childhood into maturity. His fate afterwards is determined by what he does with the knowledge of evil that he has experienced.

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[6]Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge, 1958). Also see Leonard J. Fick, The Theology of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1951) for a more thorough, and more accurate, discussion.

We shall see that Hawthorne's dark ladies are crucial to this cycle of innocence, sin, and redemption in two ways. In varying degrees and with varying emphasis, they symbolize first, the dual nature of woman: woman causes man to become tragically involved with sin, and she offers him the consequent possibility of redemption; and, second, they symbolize the romantic idealism of the transcendentals. Ironically, the dark ladies of the romances--Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam--yearn to escape the past, tradition, sin, and experience, the very qualities they embody.

CHAPTER I

THE NEW ADAM

> In Adam's fall
> We sinned all.
> In the new Adam's rise
> We shall all reach the skies.
> --Henry D. Thoreau
> Journal, 1850.

The period roughly encompassing Hawthorne's creative life, between the Jacksonian Era and the end of the Civil War, was a time of testing of the American nation and its development by ordeal. It was an age of great westward expansion, of the increasing gravity of the slavery question, of an intensification of the spirit of sectionalism in the South, and of a powerful impulse to reform in the North. But above all, until the Civil War, it was a period of enthusiasm and optimism, a time to await and to work for the flowering of the American dream. Like all new-won freedoms, America's was a heady intoxicant for the spirit of men who seemed to have broken all ties. It not only inflated the ego of the citizen with a sense of self-sufficiency, but it conspired to persuade man that he was what he was by virtue of himself, his own action, alone. The present was all-important. The past, because it symbolized authority and tradition, was an evil force. It weighed men down; it retarded progress, and progress was change, and

change was good. Therefore, tradition, which linked one generation to the next, was jettisoned or effectually ignored; and the idea of the cmmmunity shrank to an area proportionate to the narrowed dimensions of the individual and his immediate concerns. Alexis de Tocqueville noted the attitudes of these "new democrats" with some alarm:

> They owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands. Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants, and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever on himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.[1]

In a discourse delivered in Boston in 1820, "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," William Ellery Channing begins by saying, "We think it ungrateful to disparage the powers which our Creator has given us. Men may trust their faculties too little as well as too much," and he goes on to argue that "the ultimate reliance of a human being is and must be on his own mind."[2] In his essay on "Nature" (1836) Emerson queried, "Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe. . . a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation?" The furthest extreme of this doctrine of self-reliance is found in Walt Whitman, who in "Song of Myself" (1855) declares, "Nothing, not God, is greater to one

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[1]Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (London and New York, 1900), II, p. 106.

[2]Quoted from Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge, 1958), p. 36.

than one's self is / Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself. . ."

These claims that Channing, Emerson, and later, Whitman were making and which concerned Tocqueville--that man has the power to discover the universe, art, religion, everything, by himself and through himself--are only possible when one believes that we live in a universe in which good is the true reality and that man can know the truth intuitively. Both beliefs are predicated on the assumption that by nature man is good. "A good deal," Randall Stewart argues, "depends on whether man is regarded as good or bad by nature; a child of God though fallen, or the soulless product of mechanical forces; infinitely perfectible through education, or radically imperfect and therefore inescapably human; a rational being capable of saving himself through his own unaided reason, or a being whose reason, though useful and necessary, is insufficient in itself to his full and highest needs."[3] And the crux of the matter, Stewart later claims, "is that Channing and Emerson denied the Fall of Man."[4]

In "The Divinity School Address" (1838) Emerson defines evil as a negation:

> Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity. Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes. All things

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[3] Ibid., p. 15. [4] Ibid., p. 51.

> proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, of auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death.

Emerson sees the God-image as ever-present in man or, if a man "roves from good ends," as a mere nothingness, a lack. The number of abstract nouns, intransitive verbs, and calm metaphors in this passage emphasize the unreal quality of evil. When Hawthorne writes about evil, the language itself bristles with energy. Compare to Emerson, for example, Miriam's depiction of man's struggle with evil in her criticism of Guide's painting, "The Archangel":

> 'That Archangel, now; . . . how fair he looks, with his unruffled wings, with his unbacked sword, and clad in his bright armor, and that exquisitely fitting sky-blue tunic, cut in the latest Paradisiacal mode! What a dainty air of the first celestial society! With what half-scornful delicacy he sets his prettily sandalled foot on the head of his prostrate foe! But, is it thus that virtue looks the moment after its death-struggle with evil? No, no; I could have told Guido better. A full third of the Archangel's feathers should have been torn from his wings; the rest all ruffled, till they looked like Satan's own! His sword should be streaming with blood, and perhaps broken half-way to the hilt; his armor crushed, his robes rent, his breast gory; a bleeding gash on his brow, cutting right across the stern scowl of battle! He should press his foot hard down upon the old serpent, as if his very soul depended upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half over yet, and how the victory might turn! And, with all this fierceness, this grimness, this unutterable horror, there should still be something high, tender, and holy in Michael's eyes, and around his mouth. But the battle never was such child's play as Guide's dapper Archangel seems to have found it' (VI, 216-217).

Emerson might well be equated with "Guide's dapper Archangel," and Miriam's criticism of that angel could reflect Hawthorne's opinion of

Emerson's concept of evil.

But Emerson's was the majority view, and for most of Hawthorne's contemporaries denial of the Fall restored man to his original state. "Our national birth," declaimed the Democratic Review in 1839, "was the beginning of a new history . . . which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only."[5] A new history required the image of a "radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure; an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources. It was not surprising, in a Bible-reading generation, that the new hero . . . was most easily identified with Adam before the Fall. Adam was the first, the archetypal, man. His moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him."[6] The mood of the time was contained in Emerson's toast: "Here's for the plain old Adam, the simple genuine self against the whole world."[7]

Melville noted in his essay on "Hawthorne and His Mosses" that "great geniuses are parts of the time, they themselves are the times,

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[5]R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago, 1955), p. 16.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Emerson, Journals. Quoted from Lewis.

and possess a corresponding coloring."[8] Hawthorne lived in a romantic age, numbering among his friends and acquaintances the major transcendentalists. His work shows an awareness of the temper of that age, the optimism of transcendental idealism which had at its center the denial of the Fall. If Hawthorne's awareness is shown negatively and critically, it is because, unlike his contemporaries, Hawthorne still believed in Original Sin. Like his transcendental friends, Hawthorne saw in Adam his generation's major ideal, but unlike them, Hawthorne never forgot Eve. He would tend to agree with the elder Henry James who said that "the first and highest service which Eve renders Adam is to throw him out of Paradise."[9]

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[8]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York, 1943), p. 195.

[9]Quoted from Lewis, p. 58.

CHAPTER II

"THE BLACK CONCEIT"

As we have seen, in Hawthorne's time the great theme was the struggle of the individual to free himself from the burden of his original nature. Because both "The New Adam and Eve" (1843) and "The Maypole of Merry Mount" (1836) are explorations of this theme, a comparison of the two provides insight into Hawthorne's connection with the optimistic transcendental view of the new Adam.

Hawthorne's method in "The Mew Adam and Eve" is to interweave fantasy and reality. "We will suppose," he says, "a new Adam and Eve to have been created, in the full development of mind and heart, but with no knowledge of their predecessors nor of the diseased circumstances that had become encrusted around them" (II, 280). He imagines a sinless couple, two pure people, who awaken to find themselves not in Eden, but in the midst of a modern city. By placing the creations of fantasy into the reality of modern Boston devoid of people, Hawthorne examines the conflict between what man imaginatively thinks he should be--the new Adam and Eve--and what the institutions he has created show him to be--a fallen Adam and Eve. Hawthorne thus creates tension and meaning by working through the imagination, withdrawing from reality into fantasy, so to better

understand and criticize that reality. This method is necessary because

> we who are born into the world's artificial system can never adequately know how little in our present state and circumstances is natural, and how much is merely the interpolation of the perverted mind and heart of man. Art has become a second and stronger nature; she is a stepmother, whose crafty tenderness has taught us to despise the bountiful and wholesome ministrations of our true parent. It is only through the medium of the imagination that we can lessen those iron fetters, which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible what prisoners we are (II, 279).

The point is that we are prisoners. The new Adam and Eve are "content with an inner sphere which they inhabit together" (II, 280), their lives are "a continual prayer" (II, 285), they are in perfect harmony with Nature: they embody transcendental idealism. But the new Adam and Eve are creatures of fantasy; real men and women created the very institutions which the unperverted judgments of Adam and Eve find to be valueless and even revolting. Real man is fallen and his institutions, Hawthorne claims, prove, symbolically, his nature: "O Judgment Seat [the Court of Justice], not by the pure in heart wast thou established, nor in the simplicity of nature; but by hard and wrinkled men, and upon the accumulated heap of earthly wrong. Thou are the very symbol of man's perverted state" (II, 286). The perverted state is, to Hawthorne, the fallen state. It is shared by all; it is fantasy to think that we are not in the prison of sin. The prison inmates "bore the outward marks of that leprosy with which all were more or less infected. They were sick--and so were the purest of their brethren--with the plague of sin. A deadly sickness, indeed!

Feeling its symptems within the breast, men concealed it with fear and shame, and were only the more cruel to those unfortunates whose pestiferous sores were flagrant to the common eye" (II, 287).[1]

The "accumulated heap of earthly wrong" (II, 283) and the sin-sickness of mankind are realities to Hawthorne, however distasteful they may be. The new Adam and Eve exist only in fantasy; only there in the imagination can we "enjoy a new world in our wornout one" (II, 300).

New-born, innocent, and ignorant, the new Adam and Eve appeal as children do, but they totally lack depth and vitality as characters. Even their protestations of love sound rather infantile and banal, like something out of "My True Romances." They become interesting only when they give evidence of traits which might lead them to a new Fall--when Adam shows intellectual curiosity ("And now, . . . we must try again to discover what sort of a world this is and why we have been sent hither" [11, 294]) or when Eve displays a touch of vanity, flinging a silver robe over her shoulders and thereby becoming lovelier to Adam. Their childishness is, I believe, intentional; they do not interest us as characters because they did not interest Hawthorne. What the new Adam and Eve personify are ideals appropriate to youth. For man to grow, to mature, something must befall him.

In "The Maypole of Merry Mount" Hawthorne turns from fantasy

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[1]This is the most explicit statement equating sin with sichness made by Hawthorne, who frequently implies an equation between physical and moral debilitation.

to history to show another kind of Eden. At Merry Mount, May "dwelt all the year round. . . . Through a world of toil and care she flitted with a dreamlike smile, and came hither to find a home among the lightsome hearts of Merry Mount" (I, 70). This appears to be the world before the Fall, the world of light and color; but "the fresh woods of the West" (I, 71) contain gaiety that is at once childish, artificial, and foolish.

A flower-decked priest marries the Lord and Lady of the May, Edgar and Edith, and calls for a chorus, "rich with the old mirth of Merry England, and the wilder glee of this fresh forest; and then a dance, to show the youthful pair what life is made of, and how airily they should go through it!" (I, 73). Edith is the first to recognize that life is not airy, that light cannot exist without shadow.

> But the May Lord, he of the gilded staff, chancing to look into his Lady's eyes, was wonder struck at the almost pensive glance that met his own.
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> "Edith, sweet Lady of the May," whispered he reproachfully, "is yon wreath of roses a garland to hang about our graves, that you look so sad? O, Edith, this is our golden time! Tarnish it not by any pensive shadow of the mind; for it may be that nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere remembrance of what is now passing" (I, 74).

Edith has suddenly seen Merry Mount for what it is; she fancies "that these shapes of our jovial friends are visionary, and their mirth unreal, and that we are no true Lord and Lady of the May" (I, 74). With this realization they have a place in Eden, unreal and perverted as it may have been, no more. "From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and

troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount"[2] (I, 75). Once they had a vision of reality, had intuited the human condition, they could no longer create even the pretense of Eden.

Edith and Edgar's perceptions prepare for the entrance of Endicott and his Puritans. In the contrast between the light and color of Merry Mount and the gloomy denial of color surrounding Endicott and his company, the scene becomes "a picture of the moment, when waking thoughts start up amid the scattered fantasies of a dream" (I, 75). The new world of this Adam and Eve was but another fantasy, a childish dream; maturity required the awakening of the mind to "moral gloom" (I, 84). But the law of love which guided the idealistic "new Adam and Eve" can also guide Edith and Edgar, and the quality of their love seems deeper for having been touched with pain and experience. "There they stood, pale, downcast, and apprehensive. Yet there was an air of mutual support, and of pure affection, seeking aid and giving it, that showed them to be man and wife. . . . There they stood, in the first hour of wedlock, while the idle pleasures . . . had given place

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[2] Roy R. Male in Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, Texas, 1957), pp. 8-9, interprets this passage as explicit evidence that Hawthorne's concept of Original Sin was that it is the mutual love of man and woman. He argues that the union of man and woman depends upon a rending of their original relation to the parent and upon a partial inversion of their natural roles. The woman must become curious about man's province of knowledge; the man must become passionately attracted to the woman and through this attraction become involved with time, sin, and suffering. I think that it is more accurate to say that Hawthorne saw sensual love as the occasion rather than the cause of Original Sin and that this sensual love was clearly distinguished from the "mutual love" which leads toward redemption.

to the sternest cares of life, personified by the dark Puritans. But never had their youthful beauty seemed so pure and high as when its glow was chastened by adversity" (I, 82).

It is in this combination of light and dark that Hawthorne offers his heroes and heroines hope. Although neither man nor woman can break back into Eden, except in childish fantasy, together they can find happiness:

> And Endicott, the severest Puritan of all who laid the rock foundation of New England, lifted the wreath of roses from the ruin of the Maypole, and threw it, with his own gauntleted hand, over the heads of the Lord and Lady of the May. It was a deed of prophecy. As the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic gayety, even so was their home of wild mirth made desolate amid the sad forest. They returned to it no more. But as their flowery garland was wreathed of the brightest roses that had grown there, so, in the tie that united them, were intertwined all the purest and best of their early joys. They went heavenward, supporting each other along the difficult path which it was their lot to tread, and never wasted one regretful thought on the vanities of Merry Mount (I, 84).

Edith and Edgar accept the limitations of the human condition; they awaken to the world's moral gloom, and through love they live within it and try to grow beyond it. In Hawthorne, this is the ideal pattern for men and women to follow together. Without the recognition of evil and the acceptance of its existence as the human condition, they cannot develop beyond childlike innocence; without "the tie that united them" and the acceptance of society's restrictions, they cannot grow beyond moral gloom. Edith and Edgar exemplify Hawthorne's concept of redemption

Endicott remarked in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" that woman

is the sex "which requireth the stricter discipline" (I, 82). This remark cannot be interpreted as Hawthorne's total attitude, but it is significant that both his first published tale, "The Hollow of the Three Hills" (1830), and his first romance (excepting his collegiate effort, Fanshawe), The Scarlet Letter (1850), are portrayals of woman as sinner. In "The Maypole" Hawthorne defines a successful pattern of life for man and woman to follow. But this pattern is also defined in the nature of the failures of those who are not redeemed. A woman who fails to be redeemed is the central figure in each of the three tales next discussed. These women prefigure the more highly developed Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam of the romances and show an increasing complexity in the symbolic value of the dark lady.

The story of "The Hollow of the Three Hills" is simple. A young woman meets with a witch to learn what has happened to her parents, her husband, and her child from whom she has fled because of her guilt for committing adultery. The witch calls up to her hearing three "visions" which show the woman's parents grief-stricken and forlorn, her husband insane, and her child dead. At the end of the third vision, the woman is dead. Brief as it is, the story is rich with symbol and anticipates much that is in later Hawthorne.

Employing a technique similar to that used in the beginning of "The New Adam and Eve," Hawthorne opens by setting the mood for the tale's shifts between fantasy and reality: "In those strange old times, when fantastic dreams and madmen's reveries were realized among the actual circumstances of life, two persons met together at an

appointed time and place" (I, 228). Fantasy includes, as in "The New Adam and Eve," what should be as measured against what is, but it also includes what might be, the vivid imaginings of a guilty mind. The young woman is "in what should have been the fullest bloom of her years" (I, 228); but she is "smitten with an untimely blight" (I, 228). The contrast between all that is implied in the "fullest bloom" of womanhood and the scene to which this woman has been driven intensify the sense of her guilt and suffering. She has come to a hollow, a place where a once "majestic oak" is now a mass of "decaying wood" (I, 228). The grass is brown; a pool of water is "putrid," "green and sluggish" (I, 228), suitable only for baptism by the Devil. "A tree trunk" lays "mouldering with no green successor from its roots" (I, 228). Such a place was "once the resort of the Power of Evil" (I, 228); it reeks of sterility, decay, and death. Total separation from society has led this woman to this spot in nature, an ironic contrast to the "Nature" (1836) Emerson would describe. "In the woods," he would say, "we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life--no disgrace, no calamity . . . which nature cannot repair."

But nature cannot repair this woman's calamity, for her separation from humanity is total. She has "left those behind . . . with whom [her] . . . fate was intimately bound, and from whom [she is] . . . cut off forever," and only through the machinations of a witch can she view the consequences of her action and measure the distance of her fall.

The death bell that she hears knelling at her child's funeral--the final vision--bears "tidings of mortality and woe to the cottage, to the hall, and to the solitary wayfarer, that all might weep for the doom appointed in turn to them" (I, 233). Through the tolling of that bell, the woman's sin extends symbolically to all mankind. It was "as if sombre night were rising thence to over-spread the world" (I, 233). The tale thus broadens from an exploration of the psychological consequences of sin and guilt to a symbolic statement that the wages of sin and separation are death, for all, and that the sin of one has an effect on all. This is one of Hawthorne's gloomiest tales, for the woman in "The Hollow of the Three Hills" is Eve after the Fall without hope of redemption.

In "Lady Eleanor's Mantle" (1838), Hawthorne is again concerned with the effect of a woman's sin upon herself and upon society. Lady Eleanore's sin is pride which, says Randall Stewart, "in Hawthorne's analysis is the root evil, for pride is a voluntary separation."[3] Although contemptible, aristocratic family pride like the Pyncheons' in The House of the Seven Gables is not as evil as spiritual pride. Lady Eleanore combines both types of pride.

An Englishwoman, Lady Eleanore comes to the Massachusetts Bay Colony to claim the protection of her guardian, the governor. She is noted for her beauty which "strangely" combined "an almost queenly stateliness with the grace and beauty of a maiden in her teens" (I, 310) and her "harsh unyielding pride" (I, 310). Some of the colonists think

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[3]Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1948), p. 255.

that her beauty is in part indebted to "an embroidered mantle--which had been wrought by the most skillful artist in London, and possessed even magical properties of adornment" (I, 311). Wrapped in this mantle, Lady Eleanore is feted at a ball. An outbreak of the plague--smallpox--follows, which is eventually traced back to Lady Eleanore's mantle. She, too, becomes a victim of this plebeian disease which attacks "cottage and hall" alike. Lady Eleanore has thus carried sin from the past (Europe) to infect the new world, and, like the woman in "The Hollow of the Three Hills," her sin affects all.

The structure of the story depends upon three encounters between Lady Eleanore and Jervase Helwyse. The first encounter is simultaneous with Lady Eleanore's arrival in the new world. Jervase offers "his person as a footstool for Lady Eleanore Rochcliffe to tread upon" (I, 312); she "placed her foot upon the cowering form," and "never, surely, was there an apter emblem of aristocracy and hereditary pride trampling on human sympathies and the kindred of nature than those figures presented at that moment" (I, 312).

The second encounter takes place at the ball. Jervase, carrying a silver communion goblet "filled to the brim with wine," begs Lady Eleanore: "for your own earthly and heavenly welfare, I pray you to take one sip of this holy wine, and then to pass the goblet round among the guests. And this shall be a symbol that you have not sought to withdraw yourself from the chain of human sympathies--which whoso would shake off must keep company with fallen angels" (I, 316). As he begs her to drink, Lady Eleanore draws her mantle more closely

around her.

Bursting into her bedroom where she is lying afflicted with the plague, Jervase Helwyse meets Lady Eleanore for the last time. She confesses to him: "The curse of Heaven hath stricken me, because I would not call man my brother, nor woman sister. I wrapped myself in PRIDE as in a MANTLE, and scorned the sympathies of nature; and therefore has nature made this wretched body the medium of a dreadful sympathy" (I, 325). The "dreadful sympathy" here is clearly Lady Eleanore's recognition of her sin and of her separation from humanity. Shortly afterwards, Jervase leads a procession, a mob who burn, in effigy, Lady Eleanore clothed in her mantle. "It was said that from that very hour the pestilence abated . . ." (I, 326).

These three encounters symbolize: 1) an act of pride which breaks "the magnetic chain of humanity," 2) the rejection of a redemptive act to restore human sympathies, and 3) the recognition of her sin and confession, followed by the symbolic death of the body (the burning of the effigy) and of pride (the burning of the mantle). Lady Eleanore moves toward redemption, but she does not fully achieve it because she is still isolated from humanity at the close of the tale. She, like the woman in "The Hollow," is left at the point of painful recognition of her sin and separation.

Jervase Helwyse (Hell-wise?) is not a clear allegorical figure because in an attempt to maintain distance and to reflect the attitude of the townspeople, the narrator becomes quite convincing at times that Jervase is as crazy as he is reputed by the townspeople to be.

Nevertheless, plot, structure, and symbolism force the interpretation that he represents something akin to "natural human sympathies." The pestilence (sin) abates when Jervase leads a procession to burn the mantle (pride) in a symbolic, communal act.

"Lady Eleanore's Mantle" is, then, the story of the attempted redemption of Pride by human sympathy. But it contains more. The chorus-like physician, Dr. Clarke, directs another moral when he says that "never came such a curse to our shores as this lovely Lady Eleanore . . . her breath has filled the air with poison . . . she has shaken pestilence and death upon the land, from the folds of her accursed mantle" (I, 323). From England, an emblem of the past, comes to the not-so-Edenic colonial shores the first and most fatal of Hawthorne's fatal women. As an "emblem of aristocracy and hereditary pride," Lady Eleanore symbolizes the past and tradition as well as the separation by spiritual pride from human sympathies. This woman, then, who exemplifies pride and separation, the past and tradition (and the sin thereby transmitted), is welcomed by the new world because her evil is unrecognized. The plague visits not only the aristocratic, prideful dark lady, but all alike in the fresh, past-less country. "They were sick--and so were the purest of their brethren--with the plague of sin" (II, 287).

The equation of sin with sickness or poison appears again in "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844). Usually, critical emphasis is placed upon Rappaccini, the "scientific gardener" who "cares infinitely more for science than for mankind" (II, 116), but we must not forget that Hawthorne entitled his story "Rappaccini's Daughter," or that in the

introduction he wrote crediting the tale to M. de L'Aubépine, he said that "the ensuing tale is a translation of his 'Beatrice; ou la Belle Empoisonneuse'" (II, 109).

More complex than any of the stories so far discussed, "Rappaccini's Daughter" involves four major characters: Beatrice; her would-be lover, Giovanni; her father, Rappaccini; and Baglioni, Rappaccini's fellow-scientist and a friend of Giovanni's father. The young, handsome student takes a room which overlooks a fantastic garden, one which from its appearance "he judged . . . to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy or in the world" (II, 111). Giovanni watches Rappaccini working in the garden: "it was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfalien parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow,--was he the Adam?" (II, 112). The answer to both questions is "yes": the fallen Adam, symbolized by Rappaccini's excesses of intellect, works in a perverted Eden which exudes death.

But dominating this garden and the tale is Beatrice's symbol, her "sister," the fatal purple shrub. The first flower that Giovanni notices is this shrub "set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so

resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine" (II, 111). Like Beatrice, this symbol combines dark, exotic beauty with purity. The fountain symbolizes Beatrice's potential for redemption; the flower itself her sinful state as fallen Eve. "Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape" (II, 114). The illuminating "richness," "the whole together" is, however, the intermixture between the two--sin and redemption--the paradoxical state of man since the Fall, infected with mortal corruption, yet with the potential of spiritual perfection. In this duality, Beatrice, like Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam who follow her, is a prototype of womanhood.

Giovanni sees the dual nature of Beatrice, but he cannot accept her as a paradox. At one time, he feels "she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system" (II, 123); at another, he believes that "her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped" (II, 132). Finally, Giovanni does discover the truth, but only in his imagination, and he does not then have the faith to believe what he finds. "With her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence to be an once shaken off: recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye;

recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic" (II, 141-142).

Giovanni has listened to the ministrations of Baglioni, as devilish in his way as Rappaccini is in his, and gives Beatrice Baglioni's antidote. His attempt to change her nature artificially instead of through love kills her. Giovanni cannot accept Beatrice both as sinful and as offering eventual redemption. He fails because he does not understand the relationship between the blossom and the fountain. He allows Baglioni's materialistic skepticism to lessen his love.

Giovanni's vanity in looking at himself in the mirror marks him as another victim of pride; his failure to interpret correctly what he saw there destroys both him and Beatrice. That "his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of super-abundant life" which he read as signs of lack of poison could also be a sign of a new life, a new maturity, which could lead to redemption. On one level, Giovanni vacillated between accepting damnation and seeking salvation; he did not have faith enough to choose the latter. "That Giovanni's love might have risen to religious faith is made plain in his bitterly sarcastic renunciation of it: 'Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to

church and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal!'"[4] He rejects faith in Beatrice, kills her, and, one presumes, is left with a poisoned nature.

The woman in "The Hollow of the Three Hills" has been driven beyond the point at which it is still possible for her to return to society. Lady Eleanore is offered redemption and rejects it. Beatrice offers redemption to Giovanni and is herself rejected. All three women embody sin and all are isolated by it. The "woman" commits a sin of passion, but her greater sin, it is implied, is her willful separation from those she sinned against. Lady Eleanore's sin is spiritual; her separation is willful, but she does not recognize her sin until the end of the tale. Beatrice is more sinned against than sinning; her nature has been "poisoned." She recognizes this poison in her nature, but understands as well her potential for redemption and what is necessary for her to achieve it.

The first two women, then, are simply Eves whose sin pervades the world, whose lives culminate in death and woe for themselves and for others. But in Beatrice we find the complexity which all three of the dark ladies in the Romances will have--the duality of woman who is not only Eve, but also Mary, the woman who not only "threw Adam out of Paradise" but who can lead him, through their mutual love, to accept both the dark and the light in which are "intertwined all the purest and best of their early joys" (I, 84), to come back to the "original self, with an inestimable treasure won from an experience of pain" (VI, 491).

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[4]Male, p. 67.

CHAPTER III

HESTER AND MIRIAM AND THE "FORTUNATE FALL"

The Scarlet Letter and The Marble Faun are Hawthorne's two most important re-creations of the story of the fall of man. In The Scarlet Letter the myth is presented suggestively rather than allegorically. The suggestion is first offered at the end of Chapter I when Hawthorne describes his tale as one "of human frailty and sorrow" (V, 68). The central symbol of the novel, the scarlet "A" which Hester wears on her bosom and which Dimmesdale eventually reveals emblazoned on his flesh, may suggest as well as the obvious "adultery" the verse for "A" from the New England Primer, "In Adam's Fall / We sinned all."[1] Like Eve, Hester bears "the taint of deepest sin . . . working such effect, that the world was only the darker for this woman's beauty" (V, 77), while Dimmesdale is "angelic" (V, 88), simple and child-like" (V, 88). The contrast between sin and innocence in the descriptive terms which introduce Hester and Dimmesdale makes the implication strong that he is no seducer. Because in the scenes between them (both at Governor Bellingham's and in the forest), Hester is active (and urging Dimmesdale to act) and Dimmesdale is passive, it is my belief that Hester was the temptress, the initiator, of their act of adultery.

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[1]It has been noted that the usual Puritan mark for an adultress was "AD," not simply "A."

But the "fact" of the adultery exists in the novel's pre-history, and although it is inextricably bound to the fall, it is not the crucial action. The decisive scene occurs between Hester and Chillingworth in the prison. Emerging from the past and the wilderness, Chillingworth swears revenge on Hester's unidentified lover, and extracts a promise from her that she will not betray him. As she agrees to keep Chillingworth's presence a secret, she senses that she has entered into a compact with the devil: "Art thou like the Black Man that haunts the forest round about us?" (V, 100) Through her bargain with her devil-husband, Hester precipitates the action of the novel which, following Hester's second temptation in the forest, ends in Dimmesdale's utter collapse: "The Minister in a Maze" (V, 286 ff.).[2] Her sin, therefore, both in terms of plot and her own cognizance of it, is not so much the act of adultery, as her acceptance of the apple of deceit which Chillingworth offers her.

Hester spends the seven years of the novel more in space than in time, in her cottage "on the outskirts of the town" (V, 104), "out of the sphere of social activity" (V, 104). Making her living creatively by her needle and doing "good works," she pays her society's price for committing society's sin. She remains in Boston tortured by "daily shame" because, with "half a self-delusion" (V, 104), she proudly thinks that there she can "work out another purity than that

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[2]This chapter reflects Dimmesdale's recognition of his fall: "Am I mad? or am I given over utterly to the fiend? Did I make a contract with him in the forest, and sign it with my blood?" (V, 263)

which she had lost, more saint-like, because of martyrdom" (V, 104). Her undeluded reason is almost impossible for her to recognize: she remains in Boston because of Dimmesdale. "There dwelt, there trode the feet of one with whom she deemed herself connected in a union that, unrecognized on earth, would bring them together before the bar of final judgment, and make that their marriage-altar, for a joint futurity of endless retribution" (V, 103).

As the years pass, Hester comes more and more to realize that "the links that united her to the rest of human kind . . . had all been broken" (V, 193-194). Left only is her tie to Dimmesdale, "the iron link of mutual crime" (V, 194). She has changed; she has become less beautiful, less womanly, because "her life had turned, in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought.

> Standing alone in the world,--alone, as to any dependence on society, and with little Pearl to be guided and protected,--alone . . . she cast away the fragments of a broken chain. The world's law was no law for her mind (V, 199).

She "wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind" (V, 201): Eve tasted knowledge and suffered isolation for it.

For all her outward acts of charity and penance, Hester Prynne learned little in her seven years; "the scarlet letter had not done its office" (V, 201). The only realization that has come to her is of what Chillingworth is doing to Dimmesdale. She confronts Chillingworth to break her vow to him, admitting that she has "surely acted a false part by the only man to whom the power was left . . . [her] to be true" (V, 206). Chillingworth releases her, and as he

does so, he reminds her of the innate quality of all their sin:

> My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me and explains all that we do, and all we suffer. By thy first step awry thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate (V, 210).[3]

Hester cannot understand the implications of Chillingworth's explanation. Filled with hate for her husband, she admits no sin. And, "what," the narrator asks, "did it betoken? Had seven long years, under the torture of the scarlet letter, inflicted so much of misery, and wrought out no repentance?" (V, 213) The answer is, of course, "yes," and when Hester is for the first time "false to the symbol on her bosom" (V, 218), the author anticipates Hester's second temptation of Arthur Dimmesdale. When she lies to Pearl about the scarlet letter, Hester sinks deeper into sin.

> It may be that it was the talisman of a stern and severe, but yet a guardian spirit, who now forsook her; as recognizing that, in spite of his strict watch over her heart, some new evil had crept into it, or some old one had never been expelled (V, 218).

When Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the forest, Hester becomes fully sensible to "the ruin to which she had brought the man . . . so passionately loved" (V, 232). She tells him about her pact with Chillingworth, and Dimmesdale's immediate reaction is horror. Hester

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[3]This speech recalls "The Hollow of the Three Hills" and the death knell that bears "tidings of mortality and woe . . . . that all might weep for the doom appointed in turn to them" (I, 233), but Hester does not "hear" Chillingworth as the woman heard the witch.

holds him close so that he cannot frown at her, for

> all the world had frowned on her,--for seven long years had it frowned upon this lonely woman, and still she bore it all . . . Heaven, likewise, had frowned upon her, and she had not died. But the frown of this pale, weak, sinful, and sorrow-stricken man was what Hester could not bear and live (V, 233).

Because Dimmesdale is the only tie that Hester has with man or God, her only remaining article of faith is that "what we did had a consecration of its own" (V, 234). Dimmesdale's "Hush, Hester" (V, 234), indicates that he does not agree, but she, ignoring him, plunges onward with her attempt to reverse the course of events through escape for them both "deeper into the wilderness" (V, 236) or across "the broad pathway of the sea" (V, 236). They shall, she says, leave the past and society behind; they shall "begin all anew" (V, 237).

Dimmesdale agrees. "O, Hester, thou art my better angel! I seem to have flung myself--sick, sin-stained and sorrow-blackened--down upon these forest leaves, and to have risen up all made anew . . ." (V, 242). With this feeling of rebirth, Hester agrees; "the past is gone!" (V, 242)

The scarlet letter is flung aside and the forest reflects the couple's joy:

> Such was the sympathy of Nature--that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth--with the bliss of these two spirits! Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a death-like slumber, must always create a sunshine, filling the heart so full of radiance, that it overflows upon

the outward world (V, 243).[4]

The natural order may sympathize, but the social order has not yet been confronted. Once Dimmesdale leaves Hester's sphere of influence, the natural wilderness--the wild, free atmosphere, an "unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region" (V, 242)--he finds that because of his dream of happiness with Hester, he succumbed to her temptation and "yielded himself with deliberate choice, as he had never done before, to what he knew was deadly sin" (V, 265).

Election Day, which was to have been Hester's day of release, the fulfillment of a seven-year dream, brings instead the end of her dream and a recognition of her confinement. She learns that Chillingworth cannot be escaped; he is to ship on their voyage. And when amidst the procession she sees her lover, she feels "a dreary influence come over her, but wherefore or whence she knew not; unless that he seemed so remote from her own sphere and utterly beyond her reach" (V, 285).

Metaphorically, Dimmesdale <u>is</u> beyond her reach, for he rises on this day to a spiritual strength which he has never had before. After his utter fall following the scene in the forest, he has climbed back up to come to terms with his society and with his God. His sermon, which elevates him in the eyes of the community to the "very proudest eminence of superiority" (V, 296), is appropriately

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[4]Nature is here reflecting, I think, the "natural" potential of love; here it is false because unlike the new Adam and Eve, Hester and Dimmesdale are "subjugated by human law" and "illumined by higher truth." The scene thus is appropriate to Merry Mount, not a new Eden.

on "the relation between the Deity and the communities of mankind" (V, 295). From the church, the center of his spiritual world, he moves to the scaffold, the center of his social world, and there publicly confesses his sin. "Is this not better," he asks Hester, "than what we dreamed of in the forest?" (V, 300) Pearl tells him it is by kissing him, but Hester can only reply, "I know not! I know not" (V, 300). Still uppermost in her mind is her constant hope: "Shall we not spend our immortal life together?" (V, 303). But Dimmesdale can give her no assurance.

If Dimmesdale perished because of the ordeal Hester's actions plunged him into, because he yielded to her temptation, he nevertheless died redeemed. His fall was thus "fortunate"--necessary for the very possibility of his growth up to the redemptive act. From the "being who felt himself quite astray and at a loss in the pathway of human existence . . . who could only be at ease in some seclusion of his own" (V, 88), keeping himself "simple and childlike" (V, 88), Dimmesdale came out of the forest "another man . . . a wiser one; with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former never could have reached" (V, 266), a man who confessed and "with a flush of triumph on his face . . . had won a victory" (V, 303).

Hester's rise, her redemption, is yet to come. She must re-don her scarlet letter: in Boston is "yet to be her penitence" (V, 310). Her tragedy is that after losing all--her youth, beauty, hope of love, her ties with society and with her God--still "she

knew not whether she had done right or wrong."[5]

In Hester Prynne, then, Hawthorne has created a woman beautiful and sensuous, of a "rich, voluptuous, Oriental nature," who loves intensely, sacrificially. She causes the downfall of her lover, however unwittingly, both by her direct temptations and by the working upon him of her "evil genius." Hester initiates Dimmesdale to experience, and thus eventually forces him to a higher spiritual level than he would otherwise have known. She gives him her physical and emotional strength, and he leans on her, but ultimately Dimmesdale proves to be the morally stronger of the two because Hester does not understand the nature of sin. Her recognition of wrong in her pact with Chillingworth is only to admit that she has "surely acted a false part"; she is not conscious of sin. Her hope to the end is that all will still turn out all right. In her lack of consciousness of sin and her belief that she can work out her destiny outside of the confines of society, Hester, of all the dark ladies, most fully symbolizes the spirit of romantic idealism.

Hester is both an instinctual woman and a "new woman" who believes that "at some brighter period . . . a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (V, 311); she has the courage to wander in the maze of her own thoughts unguided by any tradition. Hers, too, was the courage to believe that the past could be cast off, the world created anew. As noble, even queenly, as

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[5]Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, 1959), p. 89.

Hawthorne depicts her, however much he sympathizes with her, he sides not with the idealistic and romantic spirit that she represents nor with the natural order she would escape to, but rather with the moral and social order that supported and confined both Hester and Dimmesdale, and which they both finally accept. It is not the order of Puritan New England that Hawthorne respects, but an order that is at once religiously moral and social, a framework for mankind.

Hester's penitence does not begin until Dimmesdale's death forces her to cast off her romantic ideal, until by his penitence, he has instructed her. The climactic scaffold scene follows a procession of all the community's religious and political leaders. The moral is clear: without social and spiritual guidance the world is a labyrinth of sin and error, and neither love, nor good deeds, nor individualism can throw off the past, eliminate the necessity for the "magnetic chain of humanity," or bring man and woman to redemption.

Although The Scarlet Letter is termed an American classic and is the work for which Hawthorne is primarily remembered, a biographer quotes him as saying that it was The Marble Faun which he considered to be "much the best thing" he had ever done, that he had "never thought or felt more deeply, or taken more pains"[6] with any other work. Published almost ten years after The Scarlet Letter, The Marble Faun, Hawthorne's last completed novel, shows

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[6]Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New Haven, 1948), p. 210.

some striking parallels to its predecessor.[7]

The action of the novel is centered around two characters, Miriam and Donatello, who resemble and in some ways exaggerate characteristics of Hester and Dimmesdale. When introduced, Hester carried "the taint of deepest sin," but Miriam simply has "an ambiguity" (VI, 35) about her. No one knows anything about her past, "either for good or evil" (VI, 35); mystery shrouds her. Like Hester, she is dark and lovely with a "certain rich Oriental character in her face" (VI, 38). Miriam's artistry as a painter, like Hester's with her needle, indicates a passionate nature. Her paintings displayed for the public and her friends are of warm and pure domestic scenes, but other, hidden paintings show "over and over again . . . the idea of woman, acting the part of a revengeful mischief towards man. . . . The artist's imagination seemed to run on these stories of bloodshed, in which woman's hand was crimsoned by the stain; . . . she failed not to bring out the moral, that woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive" (VI, 61). The contrast in Miriam's art reflects her dual nature and the dual nature of woman.

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[7]The relative aesthetic value of the two works is irrelevant to my purposes here, but although I concur with the usual critical opinion that The Scarlet Letter is a superior work of art because of its more coherent structure, its adherence to principles of selectivity, and its richness of imagery and symbolism, I find The Marble Faun to be a more fruitful source for Hawthorne's philosophy, artistic theory, and social values. It is, I think, more ambitious, and hence its shortcomings are more obvious than are those in The Scarlet Letter.

Childlike innocence described Dimmesdale. Donatello is even more a creature from the "golden age," a leftover from "mankind in its innocent childhood; before sin, sorrow, or morality itself had ever been thought of" (VI, 27). He is innocent, but also incomplete, for as Miriam tells him, "You cannot suffer deeply; therefore, you can but half enjoy" (VI, 64).

Perhaps Donatello's "character needed the dark element, which it found in her Miriam " (VI, 100); he loved her in spite of all her warnings that he must not. "'If you were wiser, Donatello, you would think me a dangerous person,' said she. 'If you follow my footsteps, they will lead you to no good. You ought to be afraid of me!'" (VI, 101). As The Marble Faun is much more self-consciously an allegory on the Fall of Man than is The Scarlet Letter, so Miriam is highly conscious of her role as Eve and of Donatello's as Adam.

The triangle is completed by Miriam's model, the sometime Capuchin monk, her "evil genius" who appears from her past out of the labyrinthian catacombs to plague and haunt her, as Chillingworth does Dimmesdale. The model's acting upon Miriam makes her conscious of sin and of the source of her separation in a way in which Hester never was. But Miriam mistakenly believes that the model of evil can be destroyed, and so following his death, she has as much to learn as Hester did. There is a strong suggestion that this model was Miriam's intended husband. She rejected him because his character "betrayed traits so evil, so treacherous, so vile, and yet so

strangely subtle, as could only be accounted for by . . . insanity" (VI, 487). There is also a hint of a Faustian bargain between the two. But Hawthorne only specifically states that somehow the model is connected with Miriam in a past sin or error, a sin in which Miriam seems to be involved, though she was not directly guilty of it.

Miriam hates him, and as the mutual understanding of the evil of Chillingworth precipitated the first bond seen between Hester and Dimmesdale, the first real bond of sympathy between Miriam and Donatello occurs when their hatred for her model is shared: "Two drops of water or of blood do not more naturally flow into each other than did her hatred into his" (VI, 112).

From this hatred ensues the Fall. Donatello, doing what Miriam's "eyes bade [him] . . . do," flings the model over a precipice and through this act becomes a man:

> It had kindled him into a man; it had developed within him an intelligence which was no native characteristic of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known. But that simple and joyous creature was gone forever (VI, 203).

Before the murder, Miriam had known only solitude, even in "the flood of human life" (VI, 121), "an infinite, shivering solitude, amid which we cannot come close enough to human shapes to be warmed by them" (VI, 138). Now, like Hester, she turns "to her fellow-criminal, the youth, so lately innocent" (VI, 205) and finds a link with humanity.

> Their deed--the crime which Donatello wrought, and Miriam accepted on the instant--had wreathed itself, as she said, like a serpent, in inextricable links about both their souls, and drew them into one, by

> its terrible contractile power. It was closer than a marriage bond. So intimate, in those first moments, was the union, that it seemed as if their new sympathy annihilated all other ties, and that they were released from the chain of humanity; a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe! (VI, 205)

Miriam's promise of a new future intoxicates Donatello beyond reason as Hester's similar promise did Dimmesdale. "Forget it! Cast it all behind you! . . . The deed has done its office, and has no existence any more" (VI, 207). Crisis strengthens these dark ladies: "it was wonderful to see how the crisis developed in Miriam its own proper strength" (VI, 223). Like Hester, too, she must be strong for her lover, and so she admonishes Donatello to "lean on me, dearest friend! My heart is very strong for both of us. Be brave; and all is well" (VI, 218).

With Hester's optimism, Miriam believes that any deed done in love can have a "consecration of its own." Morally blind, she can view Donatello's subsequent turning away from her only as proof of his insufficiency of love.

> He might have had a kind of bliss in the consequences of this deed, had he been impelled to it by a love vital enough to survive the frenzy of that terrible moment,--mighty enough to make its own law, and justify itself against the natural remorse. But to have perpetrated a dreadful murder (and such was his crime, unless love, annihilating moral distinctions, made it otherwise) on no better warrant than a boy's idle fantasy! (VI, 232)

Miriam and Donatello part, but not permanently, for unlike Dimmesdale for whom the temptation in the forest was the culmination of a long soul struggle, Donatello's inward growth has just begun.

Like Hester, Miriam is both passionate and active. Donatello becomes her objet fixe, as Dimmesdale does Hester's, and without him, without "the object, which I am bound to consider my only one on earth.. . . nothing is left . . . but to brood, brood, brood . . ." (VI, 323). Miriam sees her mission as Hester saw hers: to be the strength and guide for her lover. But Hester wants to lead Dimmesdale toward "happiness to be enjoyed," while Miriam's motive--for a time--is to guide Donatello morally. "She, most wretched, who beguiled him into evil, might guide him to a higher innocence than that from which he fell" (VI, 326).

After a period of separation, Miriam and Donatello come together to try what Hester and Dimmesdale never tried. They do not unite, however, "for earthly bliss . . . but for mutual elevation and encouragement towards a severe and painful life" (VI, 370). They remain for a while in the country, but eventually they, too, must return to the city and society to make their peace. They have tasted the "sweet irresponsible life" (VI, 484), but "stern and black reality" (VI, 484) must intrude. Miriam, not the moral guide she intended to be, does not really understand the necessity for their return to Rome any more than Hester understood why Dimmesdale's confession was better than her dream of freedom. But while Hester's lack of understanding stemmed in part from a confusion created by years of lonely existence, Miriam's is clearly prideful:

> Here is Donatello haunted with strange remorse, and an immitigable resolve to obtain what he deems justice upon himself. He fancies, with a kind of direct simplicity, which I have vainly tried to combat, that, when a wrong has been done, the doer is bound to

> submit himself to whatsoever tribunal takes cognizance of such things, and abide its judgment. I have assured him that there is no such thing as earthly judgment. . . (VI, 490).

Although Miriam does not yet "know" the reason for Donatello's moral choice, she does understand what has happened to him in a way that Hester seems never to have understood Dimmesdale. What Dimmesdale understood about himself, that sin and error drove him to complete the circle of birth, sin, and re-birth, Miriam understands about Donatello.

> He has travelled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do, and now comes back to his original self, with an inestimable treasure won from an experience of pain.[8] . . . Was the crime . . . a blessing, in that strange disguise? Was it a means of education, bringing a simple and imperfect nature to a point of feeling and intelligence which it could have reached under no other discipline? . . . And may we follow the analogy yet further? Was that very sin,--into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race,--was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave? (VI, 491)

Donatello has been elevated and educated by his sin and so leaves "the mad, merry stream of human life" (VI, 496) of Carnival Rome to make his peace with society. The symbolic procession of officials again marks the reconciliation of hero and, ultimately, heroine with society. Miriam, like Hester, becomes penitent when separated from her lover, after his example has educated her.

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[8]This is reminiscent of "The Maypole of Merry Mount": "There they stood, in the first hour of wedlock, while the idle pleasures . . .had given place to the sternest cares of life. . . . But never had their youthful beauty seemed so pure and high as when its glow was chastened by adversity" (I, 82).

Hawthorne's position looks simpler here than it actually is in The Marble Faun, for Miriam and Donatello's story is not the only one in the novel. There are roles for man and woman to play other than those of Adam and Eve; not all are driven by a "dark necessity." But there are few dove-like Hildas whose innocence can "make a paradise around itself, and keep it still unfalien" (VI, 441), who can be the "guide, counsellor, and inmost friend" (VI, 520) for a man like Kenyon. The world, the novel implies, produces far more Eves than Virgin Marys, and even innocence like Hilda's needs to be enlightened, her harsh black-and-white morality softened, before she can fully become a part of humanity through love. "Sin--which man chose instead of good--has been so beneficently handled by omniscience and omnipotence, that, whereas our dark enemy sought to destroy us by it, it has really become an instrument most effective in the education of intellect and soul" (VI, 492).

At the conclusion of one of his tales, "Wakefield," Hawthorne says:

> Amid the seeming confusion of our mystericus world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever (I, 164).

By stepping aside for a moment, he may place himself outside the "magnetic chain of humanity." Although Hawthorne honors the individual and considers the violation of the "sanctity of the human heart" to be an unpardonable sin, he does not approve of the individualism which is really pride. When the individual places himself

beyond social or moral values, he risks "losing his place forever"; when the individual sins, his punishment is solitariness. The evil that causes sin is pride of self; the retribution for that sin is removal from the chain of humanity. In Hawthorne, evil and its retribution are the same.

When Hester put herself above the Puritan society in which she lived, believing that her act of adultery with Dimmesdale "had a consecration of its own," her punishment was to be placed physically "out of the sphere of social activity," with the result that she ultimately realized that "the links that united her to the rest of human-kind--links of flowers, or silk, or gold, or whatever the material--had all been broken" (V, 193-194). The only link left was "the iron link of mutual crime" (V, 194) which she shared with Dimmesdale, "one which neither he nor she could break" (V, 194).

Miriam, too, lost her place. . . ."Through this flood of human life . . . [she] neither mingled with it nor was turned aside" (VI, 121). Her connection with evil had not removed her physically from mankind, but her solitude is no less acute for that.

> This perception of an infinite, shivering solitude, amid which we cannot come close enough to human beings to be warmed by them, and where they turn to cold, chilly shapes of mist, is one of the most forlorn results of any accident, misfortune, crime, or peculiarity of character, that puts an individual ajar with the world (VI, 138).

And no love can be "mighty enough to make its own law," to conflict with society, for the resultant evil deed knots man and woman together "like the coil of a serpent" (VI, 205). What at first appears to be the annihilation of "all other ties," and "release from the

chain of humanity" (VI, 205), rapidly becomes "moral seclusion" (VI, 206), and ultimately the separation of each from the other.

Hawthorne's sinners are guilty of pride in that they dream of being free, uncommitted, and unbound by history or moral responsibility. In pursuit of knowledge, experience, love, or just happiness, they place themselves outside the sanctions and protection of society. Their loneliness and alienation are at once their crime and their punishment. Hawthorne sees romantic idealism as a dream and a delusion; as he teaches us through the painful experiences of Miriam and Hester, man is not free.

Nor can man slip out from under the weight of tradition and the past. As much as he may think that "it will be a fresher and better world, when it flings off this great burden of stony memories" (VI, 145), we cannot escape the past, not even in America. "'You should go with me to my native country,'" says the American Kenyon to Donatello. "'In that fortunate land, each generation has only its own sins and sorrows to bear!'" (VI, 347). That, too, is a myth, for as Donatello reminds Kenyon, "The sky itself is an old roof, now, . . . and, no doubt the sins of mankind have made it gloomier than it used to be" (VI, 347).

Hester and Miriam are both deceived into thinking that they can fling the past behind them, that they can wander happily anew through countryside, or wilderness, or across the boundless sea, outside of time and society. Only mankind in its innocent childhood could live so with "no conscience, no remorse, no burden on the heart, no

troublesome recollections of any sort; no dark future either" (VI, 27-28). The desire for "a small share of earthly happiness" which Miriam and Hester cry out for is, Hawthorne says, one shared by "all men from the date of the earliest obelisk,--and of the whole world, moreover, since that far epoch, and before--[all] have made a similar demand and seldom had their wish" (VI, 466-67). Man cannot escape either the boundaries of time or tradition, and what Hester and Miriam must learn, what their lovers learn before them, is that freedom is the recognition of this necessity.

In The Scarlet Letter, at the heart of the American past, Hawthorne has discovered not an original innocence, but a "primal guilt."[9] In his last complete romance, The Marble Faun, he relegates the ideal of a new Eden to the limbo of Hilda's innocent dream. Whether he is placed in the new land of Puritan New England or in Rome, "the city of all time, and of all the world" (VI, 135), Adam must fall and Eden will continue to lie "beyond the scope of man's actual possessions" (VI, 93).

Like Beatrice, Hester and Miriam symbolize the dual nature of woman. They tempt their innocent men, cause them to fall, and then attempt to lead them toward redemption. The fail, however, in their role as redeemers because they also embody romantic idealism. So, in the end, it is their lovers who teach them what is necessary, what is "better," to redeem the Fall. Romantic idealism thus prevents these dark ladies from acting as the "moral guides" which Hawthorne implies is

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[9]The term is Leslie Fiedler's.

their highest purpose as women.

CHAPTER IV

ZENOBIA, "THE SORCERESS HERSELF"

> For contemplation he and valour form'd
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only, she for God in him.
> --Milton
> Paradise Lost, Book IV.

The Blithedale Romance (1852) stands chronologically between The Scarlet Letter and The Marble Faun, and unlike those romances which are distant from his own society either in time or space, Blithedale deals directly with a social theme of Hawthorne's own day. It is the work to which critics primarily turn when they wish to examine Hawthorne's social views because it is in part based on his associations with the Brook Farm experiment.

Brook Farm was the major transcendental effort to create a utopia, a new Eden. Blithedale, likewise, is a "scheme for beginning the life of Paradise anew" (V, 330). The apparent originator of the scheme is Zenobia, an Eve who is trying to create her own Eden. The force of her nature is such that when one is in Zenobia's presence, "one felt an influence breathing out of her such as [one] might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying, 'Behold! here is a woman!'" (V, 340) Zenobia is Eve, not with the new Eve's innocence, but with the rich-

nexus and fullness of life, with the "bloom, health, and vigor" (V, 338), and with a "certain warm and rich characteristic" (V, 340) of mythic womanhood.

If Zenobia is a woman on a grand scale (even her hands are large), she is also a sinner on a grand scale. Coverdale, the narrator, early remarks that "oar Zenobia, however humble looked her new philosophy, had as much native pride as any queen would have known what to do with" (V, 335). Her pride is symbolized, like Lady Eleanore's by her mantle, by the exotic flower she always wears in her hair: "it was more indicative of the pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair" (V, 337). Her prideful, magnificent presence, claims Coverdale, "caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia, in which we grown-up men and women were making a play-day of the years that were given us to live in" (V, 344).

At Blithedale there is the air of illusion, for each of the characters wears a veil, his own mark of separation from humanity which prevents him from entering into the kind of relationship which could redeem him and turn "the counterfeit Arcadia" into a reality. The supreme counterfeit is Westervelt. Coverdale feels "as if the whole man were a moral and physical humbug; his wonderful beauty of face, for aught I knew, might be removable like a mask; and, tall and comely as his figure looked, he was perhaps but a wizened little elf, gray and decrepit, with nothing genuine about him, save the wicked expression of his grin" (V, 427).

Westervelt's evil is not an illusion. As Hester is linked to Chillingworth and Miriam to her model, Zenobia is inextricably bound to Westervelt, hinted to be her former husband. With the kind of horror and dismay Miriam and Hester feel for their evil geniuses, Zenobia cries

> 'With what kind of a being am I linked? . . . If my creator cares ought for my soul, let him release me from this miserable bond!' (V, 438)

Yet, there is more than "a certain ambiguity" about this dark lady, for when her companion reminds her that he "did not think it [the bond] weighed so heavily" (V, 438), she replies, "Nevertheless, . . . it will strangle me, at last!" (V, 438). The nevertheless in Zenobia's reply indicates that although she totally comprehends the effect that her link with Westervelt will ultimately have upon her, she cannot break it. Zenobia is supremely conscious of her sin, as she makes clear when she tells the story of "The Silvery Veil."

In this Romance in which reality becomes illusion and illusion the reality, the seemingly "fanciful little story" (V, 441) told to amuse the company and pass the time is Zenobia's confession of her deepest sin. "The Silvery Veil" proves Zenobia to be Westervelt's accessory in the subjugation of Priscilla: both, therefore, are guilty of violating the "sanctity of a human heart." In the story which parallels the events of the Romance, the magician is Westervelt; the maiden, Priscilla; and Zenobia, the lady. As the tale is drawing to a close, the magician tells the lady that

> there is a certain maiden . . . who has come out of the realm of mystery, and made herself your most intimate

> companion. Now, the fates have so ordained it, that, whether by her own will or no, this stranger is your deadliest enemy. In love, in worldly fortune, in all your pursuit of happiness, she is doomed to fling a blight over your prospects. There is but one possibility of thwarting her disastrous influence . . . (V, 450).

The possibility of thwarting Priscilla's "diastrous influence," Zenobia's tale reveals, is for Zenobia to turn Priscilla over to Westervelt who will then make her "his bond-slave for evermore" (V, 451). If Zenobia tells her tale as a warning so that she will be prevented somehow from doing what she feels she is fated to do, the company at Blithedale do not heed her warning. Zenobia knows that she will attempt to destroy Priscilla, that she will not only reject Priscilla's self-sacrificing love, but that she will as well turn her over to Westervelt in an act of what she knows to be deadly sin.

Zenobia's actions throughout the novel seem to be motivated by desperation. She had linked herself with Westervelt, and

> when a woman wrecks herself on such a being, she ultimately finds that the real womanhood within her had no corresponding part in him. Her deepest voice lacks a response; the deeper her cry, the more dead his silence. The fault may be none of his; he cannot give her what never lived within his soul. But the wretchedness on her side, and the moral deterioration attendant on a false and shallow life, without strength to keep itself sweet, are among the most pitiable wrongs that mortals suffer (V, 426-27).

Like the women in Miriam's darker pictures (and Miriam herself), Zenobia "must strike through her own heart to reach a human life" (VI, 61). The end that she is desperately reaching for is redemption; she is fighting for her soul. Without a social or moral order to guide her, Zenobia looks to Hollingsworth for redemption. Like Milton's Eve, she is "for God in him." "Let man be but manly and godlike, and woman is

only too ready to become what you say," Zenobia tells Hollingsworth. Because she is certain that Hollingsworth is the man who could redeem her, and the man whom she could redeem--to whom she could give "intellectual sympathy . . . the sympathy that would flash light along his course and guide as well as cheer him" (V, 574)--she is willing to sacrifice her rival (and sister) Priscilla to the bondage of Westervelt. But Hollingsworth is not "for God alone"; his monomania prevents him from seeing the moral crisis until it is too late.

In the climactic scene at Eliot's pulpit, set apart from the "reality" of the masqueraders, Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla seem to Coverdale to be a picture, an illusion. "I saw in Hollingsworth," Coverdale says, "all that an artist could desire for the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate holding the inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft; in Zenobia, the sorceress herself, not aged, wrinkled, and decrepit, but fair enough to tempt Satan with a force reciprocal to his own; and, in Priscilla, the pale victim, whose soul and body had been wasted by her spells" (V, 562). The masquerade is the "play-day"; the illusion, truth.

Zenobia recognizes the source of her failure to redeem or to be redeemed as clearly as she recognizes her sin. She was, as she says, "false . . . to the whole circle of good, in my reckless truth to the little good I saw before me,--but still a woman! A creature whom only a little change of earthly fortune, a little kinder smile of Him who sent me hither, and one true heart to encourage and direct me, might have made all that a woman can be!" (V, 566)

Zenobia fails, but not as Hester and Miriam do from a lack of understanding, for she recognizes what "the whole circle of good" involves. But every attempt that Zenobia makes to gain redemption meets with no response or understanding, for she recognizes what "the whole circle of good" involves. But every attempt that Zenobia makes to gain redemption meets with no response or understanding from the veiled company at Blithedale. Her "confession" in the telling of the story of "The Silvery Veil" is unrecognized as such and brings her no closer to human sympathy. She loves a man who is so intent on redeeming even the most hardened criminals that he cannot see the need of the one person whom he does have the power to redeem. In no one at Blithedale can she find the sympathy of "one true heart to encourage and direct [her]" (V, 566).

Zenobia's tragedy is that her life was spent on the outskirts of society. "She lacked a mother's care. With no adequate control, on any hand . . . her character was left to shape itself. There was good in it and evil. Passionate, self-willed, and imperious, she had a warm and generous nature; showing the richness of the soil, however, chiefly by the weeds that flourished in it, and choked up the herbs of grace" (V, 535). Zenobia sees both the weeds and the herbs in herself, but when Hollingsworth forsakes her, all hope for the cultivation of "the herbs of grace" vanishes. Zenobia drowns herself. Her mode of death is significant, for the water that could signify a baptism into a new life is the agent of her death.

Zenobia may well have died damned. Coverdale reports his horror and terror at the "marble image of a death agony" (V, 586) in her

drowned body.

> One hope I had, and that too was mingled half with fear. She knelt as if in prayer. With the last, choking consciousness, her soul, bubbling out through her lips, it may be, had given itself up to the Father, reconciled and penitent. But her arms! They were bent before her, as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility. Her hands! They were clenched in immitigable defiance (V, 586).

Even in death, Zenobia suggests the duality of womanhood.

If Zenobia dies damned, her fellow members of the Blithedale community live out their lives in sterility. The Romance has been informed by the confusions between delusions, illusions, and reality, and the concluding "confession" by Miles Coverdale, for whom "life, it must be owned, has come to rather an idle pass" (V, 599), is the most ridiculous delusion of all.

Each character except Zenobia fails because he does not recognize his own reality or the true condition of mankind. Zenobia fails in part because of their failures, because all at Blithedale had a "sort of mask in which [they] come before the world, retaining all the privileges of privacy" (V, 328). All at Blithedale, like the Merry Mounters, participate in a masquerade, and this, of course, is why Paradise never becomes a reality. All that has come to be symbolized in veils, masquerades, and illusions, adds impact to Coverdale's comment on the performance of the Veiled Lady, a comment which is usually taken to indicate Hawthorne's disapproval of mesmerism but which might better be interpreted as a direct comment on the masquerades of his time:

> Alas, my countrymen, methinks we have fallen on an evil age! If these phenomena have not humbug at the bottom, so much the

> worse for us. What can they indicate, in a spiritual way, except that the soul of man is descending to a lower point than it has ever before reached while incarnate? We are pursuing a downward course in the eternal march, and thus bring ourselves into the same range with beings whom death, in requital of their gross and evil lives, has degraded below humanity! (V, 545)

The real warning is that like Zenobia and the members of the Blithedale community in pursuing "foolish and unattainable ends" (V, 566), we may be "false . . . to the whole circle of good" (V, 566).

In her tragic death, Zenobia recalls the woman in "The Hollow of the Three Hills"; in her pride, Lady Eleanore; in her recognition of her dual nature, Beatrice; and in her solitude, her speculative nature, and her desire for a new order, she recalls Hester and Miriam. Fully conscious of her role as Eve and fully conscious of what is necessary to complete "the circle of good," Zenobia is the most richly conceived of Hawthorne's dark ladies despite her failure and the failure of the novel.

CHAPTER V

HAWTHORNE'S DARK LADY

> If woman . . . has one role more important than her others, it is the one symbolized by Mary as the source of love. Only as women guard the art and guide the quest of love can mankind know all the kinds and heights of love of which they are capable. The art and the quest begin in the family and end at God's feet.
>
> --"Women, Love, and God"
> Life, December 24, 1956[1]

Although they are placed in different milieux and are treated with varying degrees of depth of characterization, Hawthorne's dark ladies from the woman in "The Hollow of the Three Hills" to Miriam in The Marble Faun show a straight line of descent. We come to know this dark lady as a fully-developed character under four different names: Beatrice in "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hester in The Scarlet Letter, Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance, and Miriam in The Marble Faun. We have touched upon the mental and physical qualities that these women have in common, but these qualities and the roles that they play need to be examined further. First, however, it is useful to see

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[1]Quoted from William Wasserstrom, Heiress of All the Ages (Minneapolis, 1959), p. 130.

in what ways Hawthorne's women compare with the nineteenth century type, the Fatal Woman, prevalent in European and especially Gothic fiction. According to Mario Praz, these women are often Oriental, or in some way suggest the East; they are prideful; they are related to the devil or are themselves the devil; and they move in an aura of Oriental lust. The Fatal Woman has a lover who is usually a passive youth; "he is obscure, and inferior either in condition or physical exuberance to the woman who stands in the same relation to him as do the female spider, the praying mantis, etc., to their respective mates: sexual cannibalism is her monopoly."[2] This woman appears in the work of Poe, Keats, Coleridge, Swinburne, Rossetti, Sade, Stendhal, and Rimbaud, among others, as well as in the work of the lesser-known Gothic novelists. Praz attributes her celebrity to a persistent perverse joy in the identity of beauty and death.[3] Philip Rahv implies that Hawthorne, too, shares this perverse joy, that he "feels a compulsion to destroy her [his dark lady]. He thus converts the principle of life, of experience, into a principle of death" [italics his] . . . and so "his story of the dark lady renews, in all essentials,

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[2]Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, trans. Angus Davidson (New York, 1956), pp. 205-206. See also Chapter IV, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Interestingly, Praz claims that the Fatal Woman did not replace the Fatal Man until the latter half of the century. If true, Hawthorne, who employed both types (Aylmer as a Fatal Man, for example) would have to be counted among the originators of the Fatal Woman type rather than a follower, for she appears, as we have noted, as early as 1830 in his "The Hollow of Three Hills."

[3]Ibid. See also Wasserstrom, p. 26 ff.

the persecution of the Salem witches."[4] Because Rahv misunderstands Hawthorne's treatment of the dark lady, linking her by implication too closely to the Fatal Woman, recognizing her similarities without acknowledging her differences, he also mistakenly attributes to Hawthorne "no genuine moral passion nor a revival of dogma but a fear of life induced by narrow circumstances and morbid memories of the past."[5]

Historically, the Fatal Woman is but one half of a duality. Side by side in Western literature are Penelope and Circe, Caesar's wife and Cleopatra, Cordelia and Goneril, Mary and Eve. William Wasserstrom sees the antithesis as being between "the lily maid and the beautiful, merciless woman of passion. This antithesis identifies one of the marks of western civilization--the clash between sexual denial and assertion, fear and joy, good and evil."[6] The antithesis reaches back to mythic roots; "in a profound way life and birth are always bound up with death and destruction."[7] In the mythology of many cultures this duality of the feminine is intimately bound up with the plant world; in Christianity "the two mother figures together, Eve and the Church, the earthly and the transcendent, form the unity of the

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[4]Philip Rahv, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Image and Idea (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1949), p. 30.

[5]Ibid., p. 41.

[6]Wasserstrom, p. 26.

[7]Eric Neumann, The Great Mother, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1955), p. 153.

feminine tree, of womanhood, yielding both sin and redemption."[8] Therefore, although fate, sin, and experience are traditionally personified as women, with equal frequency woman is depicted as the "generating and nourishing, protective and transformative . . . wisdom . . . that, as a source of vision and symbol, of ritual and law, poetry and vision [sic.], intervenes, summoned or unsummoned, to save man and give direction to his life."[9]

The figure of the Lady at once as human companion and divine guide dominated the American ideal of Hawthorne's day. "A man's wife assured his salvation. She was supposed to be in communion with God, praying that her sexual martyrdom would achieve for her husband eternal grace. Renewed in heaven, he would come to her disembodied but grateful."[10] This ideal, Wasserstrom notes, was reflected in the heroines of Hawthorne's predecessor, Cooper. His fiction assigns to women this role: "to lead men, corroded by the French or the flesh, back to the true God. . . . Man may be seduced by his own intellect, Cooper says, but Woman instinctively knows the Truth."[11] By the mid-nineteenth century this pure and innocent maiden (though she might well be a wife) had come to be identified with golden-

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[8] Ibid., p. 255.

[9] Ibid., p. 330.

[10] Wasserstrom, p. 11.

[11] Ibid., p. 23.

haired blondes; "while dark hair suggested the woman of passion and experience."[12]

Frederic I. Carpenter in his essay "Puritans Preferred Blondes" examines these two types of women in Hawthorne's and Melville's fiction and concludes that both refused "to accept their dark ladies of experience, and to renouce their inherited preference for blondes."[13] His argument deserves quoting at some length, both because of its relevance to this thesis, and because he comes to essentially the same conclusions that Philip Rahv does, although by a different route.

> In the nineteenth century all the inheritors of the Puritan tradition found themselves faced with the choice between the ideal of personal freedom, which had constituted the progressive aspect of Puritanism, and the religious sense of sin, which had contributed to the conservative aspect of it. All Americans, indeed, were faced with this choice. Emerson, Whitman, and the transcendentalists chose personal freedom and sought to root up the sense of sin. The Hawthorne of The Scarlet Letter seemed about to make the same choice, but the later novels denied the progressive ideal of self-reliant experience and returned to the old morality of purity. Melville had returned before him. In proclaiming the white ideal of purity and emphasizing the sense of sin both men were doing more than choosing the reactionary aspect of Puritanism. They were returning to one of the sacred shrines of Catholic and medieval Europe.[14]

Carpenter concludes by neatly pigeon-holing Hawthorne and Melville as "chivalrous Christian gentlemen [who] have always been 'Puritans'--

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[12]Frederic I. Carpenter, "Puritans Preferred Blondes," The New England Quarterly, June, 1936, p. 253.

[13]Ibid., p. 271.

[14]Ibid.

that is, worshippers of the adolescent ideal of purity."[15]

Pigeon-holing is convenient, but rarely accurate. These critics who have made the dark lady their major concern err by over-simplifying. They overlook or do not carefully examine Hawthorne's concept of innocence,[16] and they slide over the sometimes harsh fates he reserves for his fair maidens.[17] In labeling Hawthorne's dark lady as a "fatal woman" and as a symbol of "the progressive ideal of self-reliant experience," they are accurate. She reflects both of these concepts and more. As Hawthorne's most complex symbol, the dark lady must be examined in toto before we can arrive accurately at her significance.

In their physical and sexual richness, the dark ladies are

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[15] Ibid., p. 272.

[16] See Mary MacMillan, "Hawthorne's Concept of Innocence," M. A. Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1943. The main ideas outlined in the thesis are that innocence is a quality of childhood, that it cannot be retained by an adult, that it is not a desirable trait because its presence implies lack of experience, and that once innocence is lost it cannot be regained.

[17] Hawthorne's fair maidens are never given total approval. When Zenobia gives Priscilla her jeweled flower, the intention is clear: Priscilla, too, must be educated through sin and experience. She wins Hollingsworth, but only as a companion in suffering. Hilda as well must be exposed to evil before she becomes human enough to love; she must be touched by sin and suffer from it. It is no coincidence that Zenobia and Priscilla are half-sisters or that Miriam and Hilda are "like sisters": each needs the other to complete the duality of womanhood. When one fails to accept the other, as when Zenobia rejects Priscilla's selfless love or when Hilda turns away from Miriam, she suffers. Hote, too, that Hilda's redemption is symbolically threatehed when the Virgin's lamp goes out.

are closely related to the Fatal Woman. Beatrice prefigures the type: "redundant with life, health and energy" (II, 113), her beauty creates "an Oriental sunshine." Hester, too, has a "rich, voluptuous, Oriental" nature (V, 107); she is "tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale" (V, 73) and has "dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam" (V, 73). Zenobia, who has adopted the name of an Oriental queen, is "on the hither verge of her richest maturity" (V, 338). She possesses "bloom, health, and vigor . . . in such an overflow that a man might well have fallen in love with her for their sake only" (V, 338). Like Hester's, her hair is "dark, glossy, and of singular abundance" (V, 337). Miriam, too, has "a certain rich Oriental character in her face" (VI, 38); she, also, is dark-eyed and beautiful. In their beauty, abundance of life, and dark mysteriousness, these women are each "the eternal woman," woman as Eve.

Each is characterized by a symbol which at once reflects her beauty and her isolation. Beatrice wears on her bosom a purple blossom that "had the lustre and richness of a gem"; it is deadly poison. And "on the breast of . . . [Hester's] gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold-thread, appeared the letter A. . . .artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy" (V, 73). But it had "the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself" (V, 74). Zenobia's symbol is, like Beatrice's, a flower "exotic,

of rare beauty" (V, 337), indicative of the "pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character" (V, 337). Near the end of The Marble Faun Miriam acquires a similar ornament. She is wearing on her bosom "a gem; not a diamond, but something that glimmered with a clear, red lustre. . . .Somehow or other, this colored light seemed an emanation of herself, as if all that was passionate and glowing, in her native disposition, had crystallized upon her breast, and were just now scintillating more brilliantly than ever, in sympathy with some emotion of her heart" (VI, 451). These symbols, then, reflect the color of their wearers. While they symbolize their resplendent beauty, vitality, abundance, and emotional depth, they also indicate the pride which is the source of their isolation.

Although their natures contain much that is brillinatly colorful, they contain darkness as well. Beatrice tries to explain this to Giovanni when she tells him, "though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food" (II, 145). All the dark ladies have been isolated by the poison of their sin. For all, the sin is suggestively a sexual one which has created a bond with a man who is morally depraved, a Chillingworth, or a Westervelt, or a Capuchin monk, who comes out of the maze of the wilderness, or out of a labyrinthian catacomb from the past, to torment and to bargain for souls. By their "first step awry" these women are linked with the power of darkness and only through love can they break the "iron chain of thraldom" in which they are held. This necessitates their introducing their lovers to sin, not simply to accomplish the

"sexual cannibalism" of their Europeao cousins, but as a means of education into moral awareness, as the first step of both man and woman toward redemption.

Hawthorne does not desert his Eve, beautiful but damned, for as Beatrice told Giovanni, all have the potential for a rise to a higher state after the fall. Although she is infected with mortal corruption, Eve has the potential for spiritual perfection. But this can be found only through Hawthorne's concept of redemption, and this redemption involves the mutual love af man and woman. It is the tragedy of Beatrice and Zenobia that the men who were the objects of their love could not accept their ambivalence and so could not help them toward a "surer ground of mutual happiness" for both.

The most profound irony of the dark ladies in the Romances is that while they are symbols of experience--of the sin and error and moral gloom from the past that pervades the present--, they symbolize romantic idealism as well. Isolated by her sins, as a "free thinker," the dark lady "made no scruple of over-setting all human institutions and scattering them as with a breeze from her fan" (V, 369). Her mental speculation makes her believe that she can fling off the past and tradition, flee to Nature, and there find a new and better world. But these are dreams only, for as Zenobia perceptively ovserves about woman, "with that one hair's bredth [out of the beaten track] she goes all astray and never sees the world in its true aspect afterwards" (V, 573). This is what happens

to Hester--and Miriam. Without guidance, intellectual speculation can lead only into a moral wilderness. "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers,--stern and wild ones,--and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (V, 239-240).

Hawthorne could be characterizing his own time when in The Scarlet Letter he says, "It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated, had taken a more active and a wider range than for many centuries before. Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings. Men bolder than these had overthrown and rearranged--not actually, but within the sphere of theory, which was their most real abode--the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle" (V, 199). Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam all "imbibed this spirit" (V, 199). When these women move away from feeling to thought, when the heart has "lost its regular and healthy throb" (V, 201), they wander "without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind" toward the Unpardonable Sin of Ethan Brand:

> Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his heart and mind. . . . But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,--had contracted,--had hardened,--had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity (III, 494-495).

The eternal woman--the basis of the joy and sorrows of humanity, the cause of the Fall and a way toward redemption--through her adherence to romantic idealism, a "theory" learned in solitude, has lost her "hold of the magnetic chain of humanity." Zenobia never regains it. Because the men they love guide them back into society, Hester and Miriam regain their places.

Just as Hawthorne has been said to be both a lover and a hater of the Past, so has he been said to be biased for or against all of the social and religious institutions within which his characters move. Critics have called him a Puritan and an anti-puritan; they have said that he was pro-Catholic and that he was irreligiously anti-; that he admired Brook Farm, and that he detested it. The "true aspect" for Hawthorne is not a choice between liking the Past or hating it, but rather between accepting its influence as fact or dreamily attempting to ignore it; the choice Hawthorne offers is not between accepting or rejecting a particular social or religious institution, but whether to accept social order at all. The alternatives are between the confines of society and its institutions, and Nature, the natural order, the "unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless regions" (V, 242). And while Hawthorne's transcendental contemporaries were finding their souls in Nature, Hawthorne's characters were losing theirs in Her. Most of Hawthorne's heroes and heroines breathe and revel in the supposedly free air of Nature--in the forest, at Blithedale, in the Italian countryside, in all the places "never subjugated by human law" (V, 243)--, but they find that the natural world is, in reality, "a moral wilderness," the place of temptation and sin. Without "regulation of human law" (V, 278), the sea imparts to the sailors "a kind of animal ferocity" (V, 277). Life on the "wild Campagna" is "sweet irresponsible life" (VI, 484). Over and over again Hawthorne describes the places which his dark heroines would cling to as "wild" and "free." The social order, symbolically,

and in terms of plot, always wins its conflict with nature in Hawthorne. That social order might be overly harsh, as is Puritan New England, or decadent, as is Rome and the Catholic Church, or in need of reform, as is nineteenth century Boston, but it is the ethical reality with which man must come to terms. One may hope, as Hester does, and Zenobia after her, for a new society based on "a surer ground of mutual happiness," but until that time, what the dark lady must learn is not "forever [to] do battle with the world, but be a woman in it" (V, 303). Reform must begin with the heart, for "woman cannot take advantage of . . . preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change" (V, 200-201).

With his insistence that man forego his pride and super-abundant individualism and take his place within the confines of the "chain of humanity," time, and tradition, Hawthorne was speaking directly to his society. He was calling for restraint and order amidst the enthusiasm of the romantics and the transcendentalists; he was pricking his pessimistic pin into their optimistic bubbles. It is through his use of the Adamic myth that he confronts most directly his generation's major ideal.

As Bonatello and Dimmesdale redeem their Eve's, so, too, might America ultimately save her past, her instrument of initiation to experience: Europe and all humanity. But she can do so only if she awakens to the truth of "moral gloom," only if she dissipates her dreams of childish bliss and innocence--only, in short, if she rejects her dream of herself as a new Eden peopled with sinless Adams and Eves.

In his use of the Adamic myth and through the example of the dark lady, Hawthorne displays a deep concern for his culture in its psychological, social, and religious aspects. He offers not a gloomy fatefulness, but sober hopefulness for the future of life provided that we recognize the facts and comprehend man's "true" position.

What Hawthorne offered was an alternative to transcendentalism, an alternative that would work in practice as well as in theory, for it is based on a more realistic view of man. In his characterization of the dark lady, Hawthorne records "the tragic implications for humane living of a whole phase of American development."[18] The potential for redemption is within the dark lady; it is within all. There is wisdom to be won from the "fine-hammered steel of woe"; a flower to be plucked from the rosebush at the prison door "to relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (V, 68). To relieve, but not to reverse; to redeem, but not to deny.

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[18]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (New York, 1941), p. 143.

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