Universidad de Deusto

Programa de Doctorado en Lengua y Literatura

Nathaniel Hawthorne's Gendered Others: Exposing Conventions through Gender.

Tesis doctoral presentada por: Raquel Blave Gómez

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Tesis doctoral dirigida por: Aitor Ibarrola Armendariz

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A mi abuelo Marcelino, donde quiera que esté.

A mis padres, por ayudarme a ser quien soy.

To my husband, for his unflinching support, always.

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1. Introduction

"Art is not a mirror held up to reality,
but a hammer with which to shape it."
Bertolt Brecht

Then, at such an hour, and with this scene before him, if a man,
sitting all alone, cannot dream strange things, and make them look like truth,
he need never try to write romances.
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Custom-House"

The title of my dissertation is *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Gendered Others: Exposing Conventions through Gender*. This is so because its main goal is to show that Hawthorne uses his female characters to incorporate aspects of both novels and romances depending on the needs of each narrative. I believe that he was neither writing a novel proper, nor a romance, but a hybrid genre, one of his own making. To prove that Hawthorne merges two genres into one of his own creation, I will focus my analysis on his female characters, paying special attention to what I have termed 'Hawthorne's subversive heroines.' His approach to these characters can be regarded as quite ground-breaking for a 19th-century male author. I intend to prove that Hawthorne used his heroines to subvert the literary—and social—conventions of his period. Hence his emphasis on the genre he was allegedly using; genre was, after all, one of those conventions. Furthermore, through his subversive heroines, Hawthorne can also be said to be exposing some of the social conventions of his times, for example, the excessive importance granted to appearances, the oppressive weight of family traditions and lineage upon individuals, and the role women played within society. This dissertation contains, therefore, two cornerstones, genre and gender, that come down to one, gender. Hawthorne's female characters dramatize both his social criticism and his undermining of genre as yet another socially established convention.

A novel has been traditionally defined as that genre which portrays reality as it is,

without adding or taking anything from it. Richard Chase in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* defines novel as that genre which

> renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive […]. Character is more important than action and plot, […]. The events that occur will usually be plausible […]. (12-3)

Readers tend to associate authors such as Jane Austen, or Balzac, for example, with the novelistic tradition. On the other hand, romances are perceived as more imaginative creations. Chase considers that a romance

> feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, […]. Character itself becomes, then, somewhat abstract, ideal, […]. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility. (12-3)

Readers place within this tradition: the Arthurian literature, names such as Sir Walter Scott, or mediaeval texts such as *Le Roman du Chrétien de Troy*. Nathaniel Hawthorne published his first longer text, *The Scarlet Letter*, in 1850, and the last one, *The Marble Faun*, in 1860. In the mean time, he published two other longer texts: *The House of the Seven Gables*, 1851, and *The Blithedale Romance*, 1852. However, as Nina Baym points out, there was no clear cut distinction between the terms 'novel' and 'romance' in those times. She argues that

> it is central to an understanding of the term "romance" in this period to understand that in an ambience in which a variety of now obsolete genre distinctions were employed, the term romance was deployed in the main, indeed massively so, simply as a synonym for the term novel. ("Concepts" 430)

Therefore, it is reasonable to consider whether such a distinction was real or, instead, something with which Hawthorne came up somehow artificially. It is also natural to inquire into the reasons why Hawthorne decided to claim that those two were genres apart.

Moreover, scholars such as Michael D. Bell, Alastair Fowler or Nicolaus Mills, for example, argue that Hawthorne's prefaces do not provide as much information as is generally believed. They maintain that those prefaces are part of the author's creative strategy to deceive some superficial readers while, at the same time, it allowed Hawthorne to subtly pass judgment on certain aspects of his society he can be said to disagree with. These scholars consider that Hawthorne's works, as the author himself suggests in his sketch "Main Street", were conceived for those readers willing to take an adequate stance when dealing with his books.

On the other hand, Hawthorne was the one who brought up the subject of distinguishing novels from romances in "The Custom-House", the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*. Consequently, there is substantial literature covering the aspects which characterize romances and which differentiate them from novels in Hawthorne's texts. Some of the best-known analyses, to mention just a few, are: Richard Brodhead's *Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel*; Richard Chase's *The American Novel and its Tradition*; and Charles Feidelson's *Symbolism and American Literature*. Most of these scholars have paid close attention to Hawthorne's prefaces because they are considered the documents where Hawthorne's definition of romance as opposed to that of the novel can be found. As Mary Rohrberger explains,

> Hawthorne never wrote an essay especially devoted to literary doctrine, but many of his prefaces, at least one sketch, and several of his well-known essays reveal his great preoccupation with literary principles and indicate that he was a highly

> conscious artist knowledgeable in the techniques that he used to create his fiction. (16)

Although not all of Hawthorne's contemporaries produced essays presenting their literary theory, unlike Hawthorne, no other writer started what could be called a campaign to separate romances from novels. Thus the importance granted to Hawthorne's prefaces. His style is analyzed trying to trace particular devices only present in his works. The main object of such studies seems to be to discover Hawthorne's specific formula to write romances.

Regarding the favorable treatment Hawthorne granted his female characters, if we examine some of the major texts in American literature (*The Last of the Mohicans, Moby Dick*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, etc.), we will find out that female characters, when they appear at all, are assigned secondary roles; they are quite marginal in the text. Mary Ferguson comments that "[…] female characters have been most often presented as stereotypes, serving as foils, motivators, barriers, rewards, and comforters to males […]" (6). Hawthorne was not free of blame in this anti-women sentiment. His supposedly misogynist views gave rise to many critical comments against him. He has often been attacked on the basis of his famous sentence about "the scarlet mob of scribbling women", which most modern and contemporary feminist criticism reads as a contemptuous attitude towards female writers of popular fiction in Hawthorne's time. However, not only did those critics fail to contemplate a feminist view other than that of Western white females in the late 80s and early 90s of the 20th century, they apparently did not bear in mind that Hawthorne wrote in the 19th century. As I intend to make evident in the following pages, such a fierce critique of Hawthorne was due to a decontextualized analysis of his works.

Notwithstanding, or perhaps due to all that criticism, other feminist critics began to reassess this author's works and they discovered that Hawthorne understood "at some level that women are primary beings, and that they are not ultimately defined according to patriarchal assumptions […]" (Pearson 12). These scholars brought to light the independence Hawthorne granted his female characters and how strong some of them are. Furthermore, they also noticed "Hawthorne's feminine empathy, his rivalrous 'identification' with women, evident in those sketches and lighter stories that so pleased his contemporaries, are also expressed in the censure of male dominion his sterner tales often exhibit" (Bell, New Essays 15). What is more, some of these gender-centered studies refer to one of the first feminist characters in literature, Hester Prynne, the main character in the 19th century work *The Scarlet Letter* and whose story takes place in the 17th century. But, of course, there is a need to contextualize the author's work within his time frame.

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish some cross-fertilization between the debate about the literary genres Hawthorne uses in his longer texts and the gender debates about the importance he concedes, or not, to his female characters. I intend to show that the New England writer, as he mentions in "Main Street", created his texts for those readers willing to, somehow, enter into a dialogue with his texts. As I will try to demonstrate throughout my dissertation, Hawthorne's stories intentionally leave some blanks, i.e. whether the letter A was seen in the sky in *The Scarlet Letter* or Miriam's origins in *The Marble Faun*, which readers have to fill in. By means of these gaps, on the one hand, Hawthorne makes his readers get involved in the creative process and, on the other, he questions the existence of a single truth; different readers will come up with multiple interpretations of the same text, which Hawthorne clearly exemplifies in *The Scarlet Letter*. This is precisely one of the characteristics which marks Hawthorne's texts as different from

what was previously written. Nevertheless, it also connects them with the romance tradition of *Le Roman du Chrétien de Troyes*, for example, where, as opposed to conventional novels, not all the information about the main characters was provided. As the Bertolt Brecht quote used at the beginning of this thesis suggests, Hawthorne used his art to shape the reality of literary genres into one where he could feel at ease. I believe that in his prefaces, Nathaniel Hawthorne centered his attention on his preference for creating romances over the art of the novel to divert the attention from his deeper social criticism, which was embedded in his main female characters and their life stories.

As I have mentioned above, and will explain more thoroughly in chapter 1, in Hawthorne's times the terms novel and romance were often used interchangeably. There were some occasions when romance was specifically used to refer to the literature written by women and intended for a female audience, which was believed to be less serious. It was simply another type of writing. However, there were other times when romances were considered dangerous:

> According to conventional opinion in the first half of the nineteenth century, imaginative fiction, as opposed to literature based on fact, was deeply dangerous, psychologically threatening, and even socially subversive. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, wrote of fiction in 1818 that "when this poison infects the mind, it destroys its tone and revolts it against wholesome reading. Reason and fact, plain and unadorned, are rejected… The result is a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust towards all the real businesses of life." […]. Romance, according to conventional opinion, derived from "sickly" imagination rather than from "wholesome" reason or judgment. To indulge in the delusions of romance was to undermine the basis of psychological and social order, to alienate oneself from "the

> real business of life." The term "romance," at least implicitly, was thus less a neutral generic label than a revolutionary, or at least antisocial, slogan. (Bell, Culture 39)

Therefore, the question that naturally comes to mind is: why did Hawthorne openly claim to be writing romances? Did he want to be considered a writer of literature for women or, rather, of "sickly" texts? Since Hawthorne was dealing with his own hybrid genre, the definitions others provided of what a romance was did not apply to his creation. He was placing himself both inside and outside of a long-established tradition, that of romance writing, which dates back to the Middle Ages. The hybridity of his genre allowed him to dwell in a "neutral territory" between novel and romance where he could more easily challenge the literary system. Hawthorne highly valued the use of imagination in his works. Thus, there is still a revolutionary germ in his body of work that led him to expose some of the conventions of his times.

By exposing those conventions, Hawthorne can be said to be well aware of the literary ones of his time. It can be considered that he was also familiar with the female situation and with the claims regarding the place allocated to women by/in society which friends of his, like Margaret Fuller, were making. Therefore, from my point of view, the way Hawthorne deals with his female characters in his four longer works reflects his uneasiness with the almost invisible role his society assigned women. As Nina Baym points out:

> Hawthorne was well acquainted with, even close to, many women who lived undomestic lives but who neither killed themselves nor kept silent. He knew women scholars, writers, artists, and activists: among others, Elizabeth Peabody; Mary Peabody Mann; Sarah Josepha Hale; Grace Greenwood; and, perhaps above all, Margaret Fuller. Thomas R. Mitchell (1998) has written compellingly about traces

> of Fuller in Hawthorne's writing; he sees her in Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam. He finds sentences in *The Scarlet Letter* appropriating "The Great Lawsuit" almost verbatim. It would seem to follow that if he created powerful women only to silence them, Hawthorne did so as a way of rejecting the signs of the times that he saw all around him. ("Revisiting" 115)

Hawthorne was writing in the 1850s and his works portray the situation of women as he perceived it. He was not depicting an ideal world, but the one he lived in as he understood it ─ this is why he also created a more conventional female character in all his longer works ─, which did not prevent him from exposing injustices through his writing. As I will try to illustrate in my dissertation, by undermining conventional genres and allocating a relevant role to his main female characters, Hawthorne can be said to intend to expose both the social and literary conventions of his time.

Literary genres rest upon a number of social conventions often dictated by the cultural establishment. In Hawthorne's time, texts which were deemed to incorporate imaginary elements, as his did, were not much appreciated. At the same time, if at all acknowledged, romances were considered a genre by and for women only. Therefore, Hawthorne's open statements in his prefaces about being a romancer are already defying the literary establishment. Besides, if romances were intended for women and he wanted to make a difference in the role of women in society, it is obvious that his readers should be women or, at least, there should be a certain amount of female readers among his public─actually, Hawthorne's first reader and editor was his own wife, Sophia, who even advised him on changes that should be made before publishing─. Hawthorne was clearly siding up with women and subtly denouncing unfairness in his society. Notwithstanding, he was not delineating the perfect society, but a real one. This is why all of Hawthorne's

longer works incorporate two dissimilar female characters: Hawthorne's subversive heroines, free thinking, autonomous women who are advanced for their time, and the more conventional ones, who follow the rules of society and feel satisfied with the roles they have been granted.

Each of the two female characters in Hawthorne's longer works can be understood as standing either for the values represented by novel or romance. I intend to prove that Hawthorne's subversive heroines present characteristics more closely related to the author's hybrid genre, while the more conventional females can be paralleled to more traditional novelistic characters. I will closely analyze Hawthorne's four longer works in order to illustrate my point. I have devoted a chapter of my dissertation to each of the books because I understand them as a continuum. This is so because Hawthorne opens a circle with *The Scarlet Letter* which he closes with *The Marble Faun*. This circle contains Hawthorne's ideas about literature and about literary genres. His development of a hybrid genre begins in *The Scarlet Letter* and comes to an end in *The Marble Faun*. This dissertation will prove that in order to fully comprehend Hawthorne's ideas about genres, and about the art of writing in general, his four longer works, along with his sketch "Main Street", should be studied as a whole. Analyzed as a continuum these works illustrate what I read as Hawthorne's dissatisfaction with the society he happened to live in.

The first chapter of my dissertation constitutes the state of the art regarding the criticism of Hawthorne's fiction. It offers, on the one hand, a sample of the main ideas regarding Hawthorne's genre. On the other, it presents an overview of the most important feminist approaches to Hawthorne's production. With regard to genre, the discussion revolves around Hawthorne's longer works being or not being romances, and what distinguishes them from novels. My intention, then, is to prove that he produced a genre of

his own which makes use of elements from both novels and romances. With respect to the feminist aspect, the first chapter presents opinions both for and against Hawthorne's main female characters achieving some sort of triumph in their respective stories. The first chapter will present alternate views on whether Hawthorne can be said to have adopted a more or less feminist approach when creating his female characters. I will try to show that Hawthorne's main female characters are actually quite advanced for their times ─ always bearing in mind the historical context in which each of the works was produced ─ while the secondary female characters were created as an example of the reality of Hawthorne's society.

The second chapter focuses on *The Scarlet Letter*. The main character of this book, Hester Prynne, lives alone with her daughter, Pearl. She is seen to work as a seamstress to earn her and her daughter's living. That is, she does not depend on a man to provide for her daughter and her. Interestingly enough, this character lived in the 17th century on the outskirts of a Puritan settlement. Using this idea as a starting point, I will analyze this book trying to prove how advanced the character of Hester Prynne is for her times. Besides, I also intend to demonstrate that Hawthorne identifies himself with Hester─she is an artist who has been excluded by her community just as Hawthorne, on the one hand, lost his job due to an administration change, and, on the other, was not successful among the reading public of his time. It is by means of this identification that I will attempt to illustrate how Hawthorne exposes and undermines some of the social conventions of his society, including literary genre. Furthermore, it is my intention to show that this book is the starting point of a pattern Hawthorne will continue in his three other longer works, i.e., establishing a certain aesthetic distance. As I will try to demonstrate, the author hides behind the mask of an editor as if intending to keep at a distance from his own narrative.

The House of the Seven Gables is the object of study in the second chapter. This time, as I will attempt to evince, the writer maintains the aesthetic distance by claiming that his story is based upon popular legends. These popular legends are used by the author to question particular ways of historicizing and of what those histories bring to the foreground; of official discourses in general. My intention is to prove that in this book Hawthorne favors the stories of those who generally lose their battles against society. The main female character in this book, Hepzibah Pyncheon, in spite of all her peculiarities, is the one who sets the story in motion and the first to defy the establishment by deciding to open a cent-shop in the front gable of the family house. She does so to make a living for her brother and herself. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester does not need a man to support her and, going a step futher, in *The House of the Seven Gables* it is precisely a woman, Hepzibah, the one who economically supports a man.

In chapter three, I analyze *The Blithedale Romance*. Insofar as they show a gradual development in Hawthorne's subversive ideas, the four books can be said to be part of a continuum. In *The Scarlet Letter* the narrator maintains the aesthetic distance by adopting the role of editor; *The House of the Seven Gables* is said to be based upon popular legends. These attitudes represent Hawthorne's way of undermining monologic discourses. I will illustrate how *The Blithedale Romance* revolves around, precisely, dismantling totalizing discourses. This book has been criticized as showing structural flaws. However, I will try to demonstrate that those seeming flaws are authorial maneuvers to achieve his goal, which I consider is to subvert oppressive discourses. I will attempt to prove that Zenobia, the main female character in this book, is presented as a more reliable source of information than the narrator himself, Miles Coverdale, who, curiously enough, is a first person narrator whose omniscience will be called into question by a gendered other.

Finally, I devote the last chapter to *The Marble Faun*, which, I will try to show, summarizes Hawthorne's literary notions. I will illustrate that the statue referred to in the title of the book, Praxiteles' Faun, is the perfect example of Hawthorne's understanding of literary genres, of his own hybrid genre; harmoniously and beautifully combining dissimilar natures. Besides, as was the case in the rest of the books, I intend to show that the main female character in this book, Miriam, succeeds in making some small changes in her world. I also wanted to mention at this point that it was quite hard to find information about some of the works studied in this dissertation. *The Marble Faun* has hardly been analyzed, compared to, for example, *The Scarlet Letter*. Therefore, the chapter devoted to this book is mainly based on my reading of the text. Something similar happened with *The House of the Seven Gables*, although I found more materials about this work of fiction.

In what concerns the methodology used in this dissertation, I have not turned to one critical school in particular. I have preferred to carry out a close reading of all the works instead of forcing any specific approach on the books under examination. I have relied, nevertheless, on analyses that favor a feminist technique, but always bearing in mind the spatial-temporal context where works were produced. Feminism has helped me to better understand Hawthorne's female characters and their roles within each of the stories. Besides, I have also resorted to New Historicism in order to comprehend how history is written and by whom. Finally, regarding the format of my dissertation, I want to point out that I will be following the MLA Style Book throughout.

1. Some Critical Approaches to Hawthorne's Production

1.1. Genre Issues

Three out of four of Hawthorne's longer works show an addition to their main title, the word romance. It appears either on their cover page or on the first one: *The Scarlet Letter. A Romance*, *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun* or *The Romance of Monte Beni*. For 20th- and 21st-century readers, this word is linked to passionate love stories with happy endings where good characters are exceptionally good, while villains are despicable people; i.e. easy reading. That is, romances have nothing to do with moralizing texts or stories where readers can learn, in a somewhat fictionalized style, about ways of living and traditions of earlier times. This tends to be associated with what was termed 'novel' in the seventeenth century, a genre started by Cervantes' *El Quijote*. However, in Hawthorne's texts, which he himself called romances, we find thoughtful stories in which the authore explores complex philosophical and moral issues. The above mentioned connection, although not in identical terms as today, was also made regarding fiction and romanticism (a Gothicized one) in Hawthorne's times, especially more so due to Sir Walter Scott's comments in his prefaces.

Hawthorne, knowing Sir Walter Scott's appreciations and the corresponding implications in his environment, i.e. romance being a morally detrimental genre, still chose to use the word romance when referring to his longer works. Modern and contemporary critics have studied, and still analyze, Hawthorne's longer works in an attempt to determine whether he wrote novels or romances, and what the differences between these two genres are. Those who are convinced of his invention of an utterly new form of writing dig into his texts in order to learn why he selected that genre, and argue for creative freedom as the fundamental reason. A few scholars, however, when comparing Hawthorne's works to that

of others', state that "[…] these works have a complexity that defies easy categorization and makes it necessary to see their uniqueness in far subtler ways than their division into genres allows" (Mills 4). This statement is problematized, though, by the fact that the author himself claimed to be writing romances, and to be a romancer, in the prefaces of his four longer texts. It is, therefore, evident that genre is at stake when studying this writer's longer creations. There is more to the question of how his works should be categorized than initially meets the eye.

Hawthorne seems to offer some clues as to the nature of a romance in the prefaces to these texts. For example, in "The Custom-House", the Preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, he vaguely suggests, as Hawthorne never clearly explains what a romance really is, that it is a "neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" (Scarlet 66). It so appears that this writer had the intention of working on materials coming from both some real sources and his own imagination. In fact, we are told in the same Preface that Hawthorne found a manuscript which, following *Don Quixote*'s tradition, will be used as the basis for his text: "There were several foolscap sheets, containing many particulars respecting the life and conversation of one Hester Prynne, […]" (Scarlet 62). That is, the author of this story is but a mere editor, not a full creator. Hawthorne's editorial pose was not an uncommon resource among writers in the early and mid-19th century. This strategy granted authors certain distance and freedom because they were just compiling evidence from somebody else's documentation. Therefore, whatever may appear in Hawthorne's stories could not be deemed as his entire responsibility. This attitude

> functions so as to persuade the reader that Hawthorne himself cannot be held accountable for any discrepancies of historical fact […]. A reader willing to accept

> Hawthorne's role as editor is more likely to blame any historical deficiencies on Pue and to respond more willingly to the suggestions of Hawthorne's retelling. By placing the source of his narrative in the public domain, Hawthorne reminds his reader that "real life" events are often ambiguous and unintelligible. (Bayer 255)

After all, life itself is complex and difficult to understand, and sometimes unbelievable events take place. Therefore, why shouldn't Hawthorne present such issues in his texts?

On the other hand, he also makes clear that the story we are going to read is not completely faithful to the original one:

> I must not be understood as affirming, that, in the dressing up of the tale, and imagining the motives and modes of passion that influenced the characters who figure in it, I have invariably confined myself within the limits of the Old Surveyor's half a dozen sheets of foolscap. On the contrary, I have allowed myself, as to such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention. (Scarlet 63)

So, a new question arises: to what extent is the story we are about to read a true one? How much of it was invented and how much taken from old documents? And, above all, what is a romance? Why is it important that readers know he had written this mode of fiction instead of something else?

The Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* offers a little bit more of information on what a romance is, but still vaguely illuminates the question about the nature of this genre:

> When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would have not felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The

> latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former ─while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart─ has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing. (House 1)

These words connect with the ones in "The Custom-House" regarding the author's freedom to dress up materials from real life and turn them into something different. He opposes the freedom a romancer enjoys with the more rigid constraints governing the art of novel writers. Still, Hawthorne does not openly define the romance. Instead of defining it, he simply distances his work from the long established genre of the novel.

In his Preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne goes one step further and refers to the text in the reader's hands as a "theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (4). He justifies his distancing from what would be deemed a regular story by commenting that "in the old countries, with which Fiction has long been conversant, a certain conventional privilege seems to be awarded to the romancer; his work is not put exactly side by side with nature; and he is allowed a license with regard to every-day Probability […]" (4). These words refer back to that "certain latitude" the narrator claimed in the Preface to *The House*. However, they still do not clarify what a romance is; these words emphasize that romancers like to take a distance from reality, but still present no definition of the genre.

The last Preface, that of *The Marble Faun*, does not shed more light on the nature of romances. On the contrary, the author regrets that "no author, without a trial, can conceive

of the difficulty of writing a Romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but common-place prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, […]" (4) because, in his opinion, "Romance and poetry, like ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need Ruin to make them grow" (4-5). However, he wrote his three previous romances in and about his own country. Therefore, instead of clarifying the nature of romances, Hawthorne veils it even further.

What is by now fairly clear is that the author who can be said to have coined the term, or at least to have brought it back to life, seemed quite reluctant to define it in precise terms. It is possible that Hawthorne had no intention at all of throwing light on what he decided to call romance. Perhaps, he was perfectly conscious of crossing a dangerous red line the very moment his first longer text appeared. It is also possible to suggest that he was not simply working with one or the other, which would follow the conventions of keeping novel and romance as opposites. There exists the possibility, which will be fully developed throughout my dissertation, that Hawthorne was using genre as another of his writing strategies. In any case, the indetermination surrounding the exact characteristics that make a romance a new, or maybe not so new, literary genre opened a long-lasting debate among critics.

Some scholars assert that what Hawthorne called romance is not really a genre apart, but just a device to get the public's attention by pointing at the creation of something original. Alastair Fowler, for example, states that the term romance, as Hawthorne used it, is simply a "nonnaturalistic novel" (141). This critic considers that what generally changes is the name, while the content remains basically the same. As I will try to prove through my analysis, this statement turns out to be too simplistic when all four of Hawthorne's longer works have been carefully studied. In the same line as Fowler, Nina Baym explains that:

> […] Hawthorne's distinction between romance and novel, a distinction which has carried so much weight for subsequent criticism, was idiosyncratic, his own. In fact, the term romance turns out to have been used so broadly and so inconsistently in the era that any given instance of trying to fix its meaning the critic or writer was evidently indulging in a creative rather than a descriptive activity. ("Concepts" 429-30)

According to this, he was simply attracting the reading public's attention. However, and although it is true that there was no real distinction between novel and romance in Hawthorne's times, I believe, and I consider that I will be able to demonstrate it, that there was something else behind Hawthorne's use of the term romance than selling more books.

Other scholars, like Emily Budick in her book *Engendering Romance*, argue that Hawthorne's way of writing does not imply a rebellion against the dominant literary tradition of his day, but a way of elbowing new space within its limits without having to give up his personal values and ideas. In fact, as Richard Brodhead points out in *The School of Hawthorne*, this 19th-century author is almost the only one that has "always" been included in the official American literary canon, no matter who established it. That is, Hawthorne managed to satisfy his varied reading public with his writing because he knew how to make use of the ingredients people liked. He was capable of writing "[…] directly and realistically about contemporary culture when this approach seems most useful, and he will transform these materials imaginatively when that strategy seems more immediately appropriate" (Dunne 130). Besides, as Brodhead also notes, although Hawthorne claimed to be writing romances, he was taken as a model by quite different, even very dissimilar, sorts of writers: realists, local-colorists, romance-writers, etc. The only field on which, according to Brodhead, Hawthorne exerted no influence at all was popular fiction. Nevertheless, and

in spite of his never leaving the literary canon, I will try to show in my analysis of his works that Hawthorne rebelled against the dominant literary traditions of his day. Not only was he capable of doing so without being marginalized, but he managed to influence other remarkable writers such as Melville, Stowe, James, etc. Hawthorne broke up with certain traditions and conventions of his day, but, as will be fully explained throughout my dissertation, he did so within the limits imposed by his own common sense.

There are other experts who have analyzed the romance and tried to determine its specific characteristics by comparing it to the novel, a genre that is considered fairly well defined and thoroughly established. This is the case with Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. Chase begins by defining novel as that genre which

> renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperament and motive […]. Character is more important than action and plot, […]. The events that occur will usually be plausible […]. (12-3)

On the other hand, this scholar considers that a romance

> feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, […]. Character itself becomes, then, somewhat abstract, ideal, […]. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility. (12-3)

Apparently, the main difference Chase finds between novel and romance is that while the former sticks to reality, the latter gets involved with the world of the imagination and allows it a free hand in the organization of the story and an allegorical treatment of some of the characters involved in his stories.

Chase points out some other differences between novel and romance by using

James's prefaces to some of his texts. Taking the Preface to *The Princess Casamassima*, where James comments that "experience, […], is our apprehension and our measure of what happens to us as social creatures," Chase remarks that romance heroes do not experience as members of a certain group, but as single–even lonely–beings. David Stouck and Janet Giltrow share Chase's comment. They believe that

> With Hawthorne's own commentary in mind, we shall account for romance as a literary mode concerned with the career and course of the individual, his or her advance towards ambition […] for the protagonist of ironic romance, the community itself is a wilderness of hazard and desire, society itself a mysterious region of uncertain statements uttered from positions of obscured interest. (561)

The main characters in Hawthorne's longer texts are either physically or psychologically isolated from the society that surrounds them. Thus, when James states that "development" is "of the very essence of the novelist's process," Chase argues that we cannot clearly perceive any development at all in a romance character. He adds that if we, at a certain point, think that a character in a romance is really developing, or has developed, what we are contemplating is the "simplified and conventionalized alteration of a character" (22). However, as my analysis will demonstrate, Hawthorne's character should not be considered flat. They behave, agreed, according to a more or less determined set of values. Nevertheless, Hawthorne's characters in his longer works─especially the main ones─ grow and evolve as individuals due to the varied situations they face throughout the story. As I have stated before, my main argument throughout this dissertation is that Hawthorne's literary genre is a balanced combination of both novel and romance. I consider that the way his main characters function can be used as a proof of this thesis.

Facing James's statement that to "treat" a subject is to "exhibit […] relations,"

Chase explains that a romancer works "in a universe that is less coherent than that of the novelist" (22), so we may even find disconnected episodes. James considered that no part of a novel could be got rid of without giving the reader, at least, some sort of account of what was intended to be there. Chase believed, on the contrary, that if we eliminate part of a romance, the gap will be easily assumed to be another mystery. In other words, nothing will be felt as being missing. In Chase's analysis, the romance is presented as a chaotic composition that seems to follow no clear rules, except for those imposed by the imagination of the author. From this perspective, the romance looks like a degeneration of a well-wrought form, the novel, due to the enormous influence of imagination all along the creative process. However, John C. Stubbs states that romances do have an order, they actually establish it. From his point of view,

> the primary goal of the romance is artistic distance. It differs from the novel in the extent of this distance. The romancer's aim is to order the raw stuff of human experience into the clearer mode of artifice so that the reader may comprehend the experience emotionally and intellectually. The romance, then, is an approach to human experience, but an approach much more ordered, much more arranged than the reader's chaotic meeting with it in his daily life. (1439)

According to this comment, both novelists and romancers manipulate similar materials. The difference is that while novelists tend to remain more faithful to their sources, romancers, due to that "artistic distance," are able to present those materials under a different light. That is, and as F. O. Matthiesen noticed,

> Essential truths of the human situation are exactly what Hawthorne's imagination could not shrink from─not even, as we have seen, when he wanted it to. Nor does his matured conception of art neglect the 'real' for the 'ideal'; it posits the relation

> that he believed should exist between them. In the opening paragraph of *The Marble Faun*, […] it reaffirms the truth that art, both in its intention and its lasting result, raises its material to the level of contemplation, feed from accidents and irrelevancies. (263-4)

Actually, Hawthorne himself claimed that a romance is based upon real facts, but that the final product shows those facts after they have passed through the romancer's creative mind. Following Matthiesen, I consider that what makes Hawthorne's genre one of its kind is his merging characteristics from what was traditionally considered a novel and from what was conventionally called 'romance.' In this, Hawthorne was already rebelling against the literary standards of his day. *The Marble Faun*, as I will explain in the last chapter of my dissertation, demonstrates that using real and imaginary facts in a balanced and attractive way was possible.

As I have already mentioned, critics consider that in "The Custom-House" and his other prefaces Hawthorne explained that romances should achieve an equilibrium between real and fantastic events, a "neutral territory" where both worlds could meet. However, a contemporary scholar, Magnus Ullén, believes that

> This is not to say that there is a balance between the Actual and the Imaginary in Hawthorne, as many critics have maintained. On the contrary, the crucial point is that these terms do not form a simple binary opposition. Instead, the relation between them is a dialectical one, in that the Actual is always represented as being on the verge of slipping into the Imaginary and vice versa. Almost without exception, Hawthorne's tales and romances portray the difficulties of retaining a notion of the ideal in the face of the real or, conversely, of affirming the ideal without violating the real. (6)

Therefore, according to this scholar, Hawthorne was promoting a fictional form that was not be appreciated in his time because it turned upside-down the conventional distinction, the neat separation, between what was real and what was fantastic, the product of a troubled mind. But other critics add still another element to Hawthorne's well-known dichotomy "Actual" vs. "Imaginary": history. These scholars point out that

> Behind Hawthorne's well-known distinction between the novel and the romance is one that is larger, older, and more morally loaded: the distinction between history and fiction. […], in his later romances and especially in *The Marble Faun* he undermines the simplistic epistemological and moral assumptions on which the practice of nineteenth-century history depends. In these narratives history and romance do not remain morally or epistemologically distinct. (Michael 150)

At the same time, "History provides Hawthorne with the clearest context to get outside himself by projecting his imagination into and onto the past experience of other young New Englanders" (Auerbach 71-2). History does not belong exclusively to those who write it, it is a common ground for those who lived it. That is, not only was he subverting the literary standards, he was also questioning the history of the young nation.

For Michael Davitt Bell, what really disturbed both 19th-century academics and readers was the "psychological motive and effect" (Development 10) of romances. They were not pleased with the idea of a book springing from, as Hawthorne himself put it, "the heated brain" of an author. Nevertheless,

> […] with the movement toward romanticism, men began to assert that there is more to the world than that which can be discovered through the senses, that there is what might be called an underworld, no less real. The attempts by authors such as Irving and Hawthorne in prefaces to their tales to assert the authenticity of the reported

> experiences attest to this feeling. Irving, Gogol, Poe, Hawthorne present the supernatural as though it is real, and in so doing they assert its reality. (Rohrberger 11)

Hawthorne's remarks on his editing, for example, documents written by Surveyor Pue, and his moonlighted room, where familiar objects seem different due to the moonlight, while still being real objects, testify to his intention of using his production to help this type of literature to earn its own place in a period where reason was the favorite. Conservative readers, critics, and rulers were not to be pleased with an author who was taking bits and pieces of their History and adjusting them to his own fancy and, even more dangerous, was "making them look like truth" (Scarlet 66).

Scottish Common Sense philosophy provided those who rejected romances with powerful arguments concerning the dangers of this type of writing. Hugh Blair, fervent follower of the doctrine and author of *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), remarked that fantasy was connected both with immature people and with underdeveloped societies. What is more, the American religious leader Samuel Miller considered that imagination would lead people to all possible vices: "[…] to frame an apology for suicide, adultery, prostitute, and the indulgence of every propensity for which a corrupt heart can lean an inclination" (Qtd. in Bell, Development 13). Therefore, any literature that had sprung from the author's imagination without a strong hold in reality could destroy and corrupt its readers' mind and soul. So, once again it becomes clear that Hawthorne chose a stigmatized genre for his literary vocation.

On the other hand, Bell comments that when the germ of nationalism began to grow in America, one of the first complaints to be made was that the country lacked good writers who could sing the beauties of the land. Therefore, reviewers insisted upon the necessity of

using native materials as the source of literary works. As Hazel Cohen notices

> Art must serve the cause of nationalism; the artist must address himself to the facts and materials of the American landscape and the American experience, from which he should derive a didactic lesson. Fiction, however, was considered dangerous, because it introduces an imaginative order thereby distorting 'reality' and 'truth'. And the romance, which insists on the primacy of the psychological over the physical, and which foregrounds dream and fantasy, is the most self consciously fictive of all fiction and consequently the most subversive. (20)

Out of this concern with the need for providing America with a good deal of quality writers emerged a more traditional conception of romance. If the romance was to become the young nation's literary genre, certain changes were called for concerning its reliance on fiction.

James K. Paulding, in an article entitled "National Literature", put forward his personal idea of what romances should comprise:

> The best and most perfect works of imagination appear to me to be those which are founded upon a combination of such characters as every generation of men exhibits, and such events as have often taken place in the world and will again. Such works are only fictions because the tissue of events which they record never perhaps happened in precisely the same train and to the same number of persons as are exhibited and associated in the relation.

According to Paulding's words, imagination and fantasy would be marginal elements in an almost a hundred per cent realistic production. Obviously, this definition responds to the traditional idea about the dangers of fantasy. American history was, for the spiritual leaders of the time, safer than the writers' imagination, which could induce people to think by

themselves and question the establishment. Hawthorne was also well aware of this, which explains why he often mentioned the alleged sources of his stories. His being simply editing historic materials

> is useful in still another way when Hawthorne wishes to create ambiguity about the exact nature of events in his tales. Since he has already placed his sources in the public domain, he can depend upon many people to be familiar with ambiguous events. And in order to appropriate these ready sources of information, not to say rumor, he composes his great scenes in public locations where crowds may witness them and be present to testify to what actually happened. Hawthorne can then edit existing opinions about events without himself having to suffer the pejorative accusation of being a "fiction monger." (West 216)

After all, anybody can recall an event differently than another witness of the same event. That does not mean the editor has made it up, it can be just another version of the same story.

It is precisely, as Bell notices, the type of imagination that writers like Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne and Melville used in their works that the orthodox thinkers of the epoch rejected as extremely dangerous. In fact, according to Professor Bell, Hawthorne deliberately avoided explaining what lies at the heart of his romances because, in the early 19th-century, imagination was looked upon as a real plague that prevented those who were influenced by it from leading normal lives, since it would make them dream and forget their earthly duties. Nevertheless, and mostly due to this rejection, Hawthorne and other creators persevered in its use with great determination. Besides, in this scholar's opinion, what Hawthorne was trying to hide in his evasive comments and devious definitions of romance is that the very heart of a good romance is "the projected imagination of the author"

(Culture 45). At this point, it is worth mentioning that

> Truth, for Hawthorne, is permanent and not grounded in an external world of fact. He would certainly agree with Wellek and Warren when they say that "The reality of a work of fiction ─ i.e. its illusion of reality, its effect on the reader as a convincing reading of life ─ is not necessarily or primarily a reality of circumstance or detail of commonplace routine… Verisimilitude in detail is a means of illusion… which has 'truth to reality' in some deeper than circumstantial sense." […]. The essential truth for Hawthorne is the perception of human values that lie deep within the heart of man. The values are related to the facts but are beyond them. Material facts are ephemeral, but man's true values are timeless. […] to show the timeless qualities of the universals, Hawthorne feels free to choose any concrete situation regardless of whether it conforms to laws of probability or possibility or whether it is true to commonplace detail, as long as the universals with which it has relation do not swerve aside from the "truth of the human heart." […]. Artistically, then, his purpose is to signify truth, rather than to profess it, to question the reality of appearances, and by questioning at once to cast doubt on that which is immediately apparent and to signify the timeless universal beyond the ordinary world of appearances. (Rohrberger 20-1)

Therefore, Hawthorne wanted to break with appearances and to expose what was broadly regarded as normal because it was real and true according to society. His only truth was "the sanctity of a human heart" (Scarlet 212), which did not take sides or go with the flow. Hawthorne chose to remain true to himself and to his ideals.

Taking all this into account, we can deduce that both Bell and Rohrberger, among others, are pointing at Hawthorne's awareness of his working in a genre not really

appreciated in his times, and his need to disguise his texts in a way that would let him express whatever he wanted to without being excessively vituperated by the public. This is why "Hawthorne's narrators say things that seem to be, rather than that they are so" (Stouck 563). In my opinion, it was that 19th-century literary censure which made Hawthorne resort to the term romance and use it as a mask for his true creative intentions. He talks about a combination of both real and imaginary elements, but the New England author never specifies how much is going to be truthful and how much fanciful.

In the same line, Bell states that both Hawthorne and Melville "while writing romance they also write *about* romance" (Development 130). We will never find in any paragraph of Hawthorne's texts that so-long-desired definition of romance, but if we take the trouble of reading his works closely, we will be capable of connecting all the pieces that constitute a true romance for him. The definition is the text itself. For Bell "behind the allegorical *mode* of his [Hawthorne's] fiction lurks something like the *intention* of the romancer" (Development 140). Hawthorne made use of clear allegories in his tales and longer stories to cover deeper ideas which, in fact, were the ones that originated those allegories. This is clearly explained by the author himself in a paragraph of "The Birth-Mark" when he says that "Truth often finds its way to the mind close-muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practice an unconscious self-deception, during our waking moments." Hawthorne had a deep understanding of his contemporaries' opinion about imagination, but, nevertheless, he was able to conceal his real purposes under what seemed to be moralizing narrations. The allegory, his mode, gave shape to his dreams and "make them look like truth" (Scarlet 66), his final goal in order to expose appearances and fight them. Regarding this aspect, Rohrberger points out that in Hawthorne's texts

> The historical past and the allegorical framework are used further to extend the symbol as it expands to include the past or the framework of myth. The use of multiple perspectives is an attempt to show the illusory quality of reality and the many appearances in which reality can lodge. Symbolic identification functions within the device of multiple perspective and aids in expanding the symbol. (22)

His frequent use of legends and gossiping undermines the authenticity of society's history. His characters and narrators force many questions to come up: Who said it? Was it true? How can we know?

In any case, we should bear in mind Charles Feidelson's comment on Hawthorne's inner division. Feidelson insists a lot upon Hawthorne's inner division between his attachment to Trollope's realism and his inclination towards the imagination in his book *Symbolism and American Literature*. This duality can be perceived in the writer´s use of both symbols and allegories. For Hawthorne, symbols entailed imagination and could not be controlled by reason. On the other hand, an allegory would always remain deeply anchored within the limits of rational thought and would not mix up reality and fiction. A possible solution to this inner conflict could be his combining allegedly historical facts and characters with other products of his own imagination. This way, he would be moving in a neutral territory.

Nonetheless, there is something quite interesting in Hawthorne's allegories: his way of presenting his thoughts. Whenever we take one of Hawthorne's creations, be it a short-story or a longer text, we immediately begin to look for allegories and symbols because he is considered to be an allegorist, because we have internalized the idea that all his works contain a message. Regarding this topic, in a later book entitled *Culture, Genre, and Literary Vocation*, Bell makes a clarifying comment. He suggests that, although it is true

that Hawthorne tends to include allegories in his works, he is not the one who transforms things into symbols. That is, the writer does not endow every element in his stories with a deeper meaning; his characters/readers are the ones obsessed with discovering a meaning, an idea beyond everything. A good example of this obsession can be found in *The Scarlet Letter*, where the letter A ends up completely erasing the woman wearing it because her town folks/readers only see the letter and the meaning they/we have attached to it. Hawthorne can be said to be purposefully opening different perspectives to analyze his works. This could be understood as a strategy to expose traditional readings of historical events, which tend to favor the most powerful members of society, i.e. Hester as an adulteress vs. Hester as an angel. Or, as I will fully develop in chapter 3, Clifford vs. Judge Pyncheon. It could be noted that Hawthorne, through the narrative strategies he used in his longer works, was advocating for those who had not been taken into account before within the social sphere. This is an idea that will run through my whole dissertation and which will be supported via examples from the four works analyzed.

It so seems that Hawthorne found in the allegorical method the best way to combine reality and fiction. But, in his own words, what he really intended was "to open an intercourse with the world." This affirmation explains why instead of allegories the writer created symbols: a real element was required to be the apparent source of his writings (e.g. *The Scarlet Letter*). Hawthorne had in mind the extreme importance his contemporaries conferred to realism, or, at least, to those narratives in which the fantastic elements were not excessively conspicuous. Therefore, when he explains at the beginning of his work that his materials had been taken from the notes a Government official made a long time ago, he was fulfilling the most important duty of a good writer of the day. However, his literary ideals were more powerful than his rational faculties. The New England author could not

repress those remarks about trying to make fantasies look like authentic occurrences and about the power of dreams to bring upfront whatever we repress in the day light.

Hawthorne's "intercourse with the world" is what Kenneth Dauber holds onto when dealing with this author's texts. For this critic a romance "is a form generated by the mutual possession of writer and reader, the elaboration of a culture in which author and audience are integrated, in which intimacy is achieved from the start" (102). Dauber goes on and comments that in a romance "meanings are everywhere. Center is circumference." This could explain why Dauber states that in this sort of work "[…] form and content are indistinguishable, […]" (102). This circularity is, from my point of view, clear in, for example, *The Scarlet Letter*: a text that begins and ends in the same place, the scaffold, and with the same protagonists, Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale.

Dauber, with Hawthorne's idea about a bi-directional communication with readers in mind, defines romance as

> the attempt to open an intercourse completed, purpose fulfilled. It is freedom from the constraint of literary rules–its original meaning, as applied to mediaeval romances–or, more properly, since rules may never be escaped, a mutual possession of rules and ruled. (45-6)

This scholar considers that a true romance is that which achieves a perfect communion with the readers, that one which is truly built by the readers, which Hawthorne achieves, for example, via the different readings of the scarlet A he proposes to his readers. He does not determine the meaning of the letter. On the contrary, he prefers to open several venues for his readers to choose one. No meaning is set in stone, his readers are in charge of that, and there are, actually, multiple interpretations of the same letter. For Dauber, the best example of a perfect romance is *The House of the Seven Gables*, "a pure expression of a writer at

one with his readers" (45). In "Main Street," Hawthorne insists upon the importance of the public's participation in the success of the performance. As the showman of this story puts it "Human art has its limits, and we must now and then ask a little aid from the spectator's imagination." Above all,

> Hawthorne's fictions present interpretations concerning the act of interpretation, readers in the situation of reading, seeing backwards their own modes of looking; this backward glance frames the players' speaking subjectivity in such a way that the reader is compelled not only to interpret but to reflect on reading itself. (Bauer 18)

If the author is willing to "open an intercourse with the world," he definitely needs his audience to be on the same page, otherwise his enterprise would not work.

Hawthorne confessed his desire of having a dialogue with every person who read his works. Therefore, his texts could not be closed and leave no room for multiple interpretations. Moreover, Hawthorne wanted to deal in his pages with all those problems his contemporaries were disturbed by. However, he did not have the intention of agreeing with the hegemonic party in order to be successful and sell books, or to build a happy ending to make readers feel comfortable. He was to devise a strategy to satisfy both the public and his own aspirations, and the solution was the romance. Romances, for Hawthorne, were more than books, they were subversive tools. As Bell remarks, a romance is "[…] a means for scrutinizing the disrelations or dissociations beneath the aesthetic, epistemological, and metaphysical assumptions of American Romanticism" (Development 148). What is more, he considers romance as "[…] less a genre than a set of attitudes or problems whose recurrence in the works of some of our best fiction writers before the Civil War constitutes something like a tradition–a tradition at once formal and intellectual"

(Development 148). But what greatly contributes to this intercourse with people, and what makes a romance something different is its language, the use Hawthorne makes of words.

Romancers used their own language, their own code to write about a world of their own, a world that was not real, at least under the traditional conception of the orthodox critics, but that for romancers was much more authentic than the world outside any window. This way of creating is intimately related to the philosophical question of the time concerning the possibility of finding a spiritual truth upon this world, along with the Romantic idea according to which Nature is a book we have to read in order to perceive the Truth of the world. Authors like Hawthorne did not rely on the veracity of Nature's language and had their own opinions regarding the existence of such a Truth. In any case, "Hawthorne's idealization was never at the cost of distorting the 'usable truth' of his own surroundings; or of forgetting the superiority of nature over art" (Matthiesen 264). This challenging of something conceived as totally unquestionable played an important part in that masking of Hawthorne's intentions, as I have already pointed out.

As we have seen, scholars do not agree upon the exact characteristics a text needs to present to be considered a romance or, what is more, if we can really take for granted that there exists such a genre as a romance. Nevertheless, as soon as these experts chose to qualify Hawthorne's longer works as romances, each one of them uses the author's words about the intertwining of real and fantastic episodes as the chief evidence for a study in which the differences between novel and romance are to be clearly exposed, a study that intends to leave no doubt with respect to the gap between the two of them.

Hawthorne himself contributes to this type of approach in his body of work because, in all his prefaces or letters to friends or editors, he insists upon the same topic. For example, he states that "in writing a romance, a man is always, or always ought to be,

careering on the utmost verge of a precipitous absurdity, and the skill lies in coming as close as possible, without actually tumbling over" (Qtd. in Fields, 29). The idea he keeps on repeating in these and other lines is that he desired to achieve that perfect combination of the "Actual" and the "Imaginary", as he decided to label them, in which each would contribute to the other's development and enrichment. This tendency is evident in the famous moonlight passage of "The Custom House."

Bearing this in mind, Marjorie Elder explains in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Transcendental Symbolist* why Italy is the perfect location for *The Marble Faun* because although it is a real place, it is also far away from Hawthorne's readers to try to find similarities between what the book describes and a familiar place in America. At the same time, as Italy is a real nation, the text's fantastic elements have in that fact their counterbalance. Elder also finds a similar pattern in *The Scarlet Letter*: a mixture of real and historical facts with others coming from the author's imagination. This mixture is what Hawthorne understood as being on the verge of a precipice. Besides, as mentioned before, adding non-realistic touches to a thing he assures to be real (e.g. the scarlet letter itself) is the technique Hawthorne employs to create symbols, to mix the Truth and the Imaginary and lead the reader into believe in both as one.

While most scholars accept or deny the presence of a new and different genre, the romance, almost none of them discuss the possibility of Hawthorne playing with genres as well as with his readers. However, it is my belief that in Hawthorne's longer texts what we find is a combination of two literary genres, what allow him to expose the conventions of his times while hiding behind the mask of a different genre. Regarding this playful coexistence of genres within the same, Richard Brodhead in *Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel* and Michael Davitt Bell in *Culture, Genre, and Literary Vocation*, can give us some

light. Brodhead offers a conscientious study of the production of these two notorious 19th-century American writers and their relation to the main genre of their time. Bell, however, analyzes Hawthorne's dubious statements about his being a romancer and his writing romances.

From the very beginning, Brodhead states that both Hawthorne's and Melville's "work is characterized by a powerful tension between their visions and the nature of the genre [the novel] they choose to work in" (4). It is true that Brodhead assumes that both Hawthorne and Melville wrote novels, but he also recognizes that the relation between these two creators' principles and those of the novel was not simple. Besides, the use of the verb "choose" is quite significant for me, since it implies that both Hawthorne and Melville decided to make use of this particular genre, in spite of their ideas about literary creation, after having considered its pros and cons. That is, they would have discovered that using the novel was to be profitable for them. As I mentioned above, Hawthorne declared his intention of combining real and invented occurrences already in the preface to his first long text, *The Scarlet Letter*.

According to most of the classical definitions of the novel, in that type of composition real and believable elements prevail, while if we recall Sir Walter Scott's texts, especially *Waverly*, -widely considered as the model of romance Hawthorne followed-, we will realize that most of its episodes came out of Scott's imagination and most likely did not take place. The question here is whether it is really possible to join in one coherent genre two of the components which are the distinctive features of a pair of opposed compositions. Hawthorne always insists in his prefaces on his having achieved that synthesis and his having created a different form of romance, but we should not forget that this author is not a reliable one. He is going to be constantly trying to deceive his

readers and to make them believe whatever he pleases. His words in "The Custom House" about dreaming "strange things, and make them look like truth" (Scarlet 66), point in that direction. Actually, in Bell's opinion, a "[…] quality of playfully subversive deception is also characteristic of Hawthorne's *critical* writings: his comments on fiction in his prefaces […]. What we need to recognize is the extent to which these very pages, to use Melville's words, seem "directly calculated to deceive ─egregiously deceive─ the superficial skimmer of pages"" (Culture 33). As I have previously mentioned, and bearing Professor Bell's words in mind, it seems that Hawthorne's statements in his prefaces may not be as serious as they have been taken to be. He may be combining genres, but he is also distracting the reader's attention. Besides, this New England writer was extremely interested in the various roads each literary genre may open before his eyes. He wanted to explore every possible route of the creative process, so we should not assume that he attached himself to a single literary composition, be it romance, novel or short story.

For Brodhead, both Hawthorne and Melville combine in their works different elements of various literary genres in order to fulfill their creative impulses. This critic suggests that neither Hawthorne nor Melville had a definite composition in mind when they began writing. On the contrary, they just picked from here and there to satisfy the demands of their texts at each point. In these creators' works, generic blending is the corner stone. Besides, if there is something we know for sure, is that Hawthorne always moves between the real and the imaginary worlds. He is constantly going from one to the other and does not seem to be satisfied with any of them by itself. Hawthorne looked for something different that could fit into his personal idea of what a literary work should be. In all his prefaces this author tries to teach his readers to distinguish between novel and romance, but Hawthorne never says "I am writing a Romance." He uses vague sentences that do not limit

him. For example, in the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* he comments that "When *a writer* [emphasis mine] calls his work a Romance, […]" (House 1). In this same Preface, the New England creator uses the word "Author" (House 1) and chooses the 3rd person singular whenever he is referring to himself. Hawthorne seems to be seeking for an aesthetic distance between the man writing the texts, with all his ideas about what a novel is, why it is not the same as a romance, etc., and his private self. It is as if he did not want to be identified with that "Author" who is so frequently stating that he has conceived an avant-garde literary category. Bell regards "[…] the well known descriptions of "romance" in Hawthorne's prefaces, not just as statements but as performances." He analyzes the first paragraph of the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* and finds "a kind of slippery evasiveness." In his opinion, "The key terms here seem to have meaning, not in and of themselves, but only in the context of a process of negotiation and even pretense" (Culture 37). Hawthorne was constantly negotiating this, and his texts stand within his society. He used his work to expose what he did not approve of in his world, and permanent literary genres seem to be one of his targets.

It is well-known that Hawthorne was very familiar with the most successful British novels of the 1850s (Gaskell's, Dickens', the Brontë sisters', Thackeray's, etc.). He did not copy their style, but studied their work closely and made the most of whatever he considered fruitful, within his mental framework, in their novels. At the same time, Hawthorne was also a connoisseur of Sir Walter Scott's romances. That is, this 19th-century American author had a considerable knowledge of both novel and romance and, therefore, was in a good position to experiment with them and use those aspects he considered advantageous in his own body of work. Referring to this point, Brodhead says that Hawthorne's "works exemplify neither genre in a pure form" (Hawthorne 41). This critic

argues that Hawthorne was never fully satisfied with his own theory of the romance and that he was, in fact, trying to discover which of the two creative models –novel or romance– was better suited to convey his materials. The scholar comments that

> all of them [Hawthorne's texts] are experiments in which he allows each kind of vision to create its own fictional reality and explores, in the context of the specific experience that is the work's subject, the sort of truth that each of them [novel and romance] can articulate. (Hawthorne 42)

Brodhead concludes that the fault Hawthorne found in each genre, if used in isolation, was that while the novel did not serve to portray the characters' psychological side, the romance was not useful to render "the indeterminacy and freedom of nature and real life" (Hawthorne 90).

Apart from the shortcomings the two genres may reveal according to Hawthorne, from my point of view what really conditions the genre he is to employ in his works is his material, the history he is going to present to his readers. We have to bear in mind that Hawthorne usually retrieves historical happenings in his texts. He was interested in the past, in the history of New England, but his way of treating these occurrences –never siding with the party in power, but sticking to his convictions– forced him to find a way that could let him speak freely, overcoming the possible censure of those in power that may not approve Hawthorne's version of history. If in the opening pages of his texts, he explained that a considerable part of them, half at least, would not be truthful to reality, no one could accuse Hawthorne of charging against this or that party. The romance was the perfect instrument, as it was mainly based upon the imagination of the author.

But, at the same time, and as already noted, Hawthorne was interested in leaving a

written record both of what his own eyes saw and of what he learned about his native land. After all, he lived in a period when the beauties of America were being sung and enhanced, and when a distinctive American character was being restlessly searched for. Hawthorne was also quite aware of the fact that when History is told, it is modified. His

> narrator realizes that histories remark their relation to, as much as they relate remarks about, the events they represent. The narrator shares the historian's dilemma: he must recount events whose significance is lost in ambiguity and cannot be conveyed without transforming the past to relate it to the present. […], Hawthorne indicates that narration is the primary transformation history undergoes. (Michael 153)

A chronicler needs to be reliable and has to prove his sources to be so, too. However, different historians can, and will, produce different versions of the same event. This is why, as I have previously explained, Hawthorne resorts to the editor's role. It grants him artistic distance and editorial license. At the same time, as Bell notices,

> What the preface does not identify is the authority of the *romancer*. We learn nothing about the distinctive sorts of truth on which the romancer's fictions are based (both the novel and the romance, apparently, deal with "the truth of the human heart"), and this omission is crucial. The romancer presumably writes a different kind of fiction because he is concerned with a different kind of truth or order of truth. What Hawthorne doesn't tell us is what this truth is. […]. This silence allows him to conceal the nature of romance even as he seems to explain it. (38)

The hand that rocks the cradle is not shown. It remains unidentified. The doubts and questions about the genre used extend to the person creating it. He is safe behind his

fictional mask. As a matter of fact, when referring to the novel and some of its characteristics, Hawthorne explains that it "[…] is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (House 1). That is, when people read a novel, they are very likely to believe that its content is mostly true, following his "masked" device. While the novel is the perfect genre to deal with historical facts, that would not allow Hawthorne the same freedom as writing a romance could. He would be constrained to remain true to what really happened and, therefore, his imagination would have almost no room at all within such a framework.

In my opinion, his desire to expose his nation's History combined with his unbreakable need of freedom and independence made Hawthorne devise a way to write texts in which, as he always states, "the Actual and the Imaginary"(Scarlet 66) could be fruitfully blended. But I think that this combination does not appear in his particular understanding of romances as the mixture of real and fantastic materials, but, precisely, in his merging of characteristics from two apparently opposed genres within one single book. I consider that in Hawthorne's works one can find a perfectly balanced fusion of novel and romance. That is, Hawthorne chose to work with two distinct genres in one single book, and that it is precisely what he is referring to whenever he mentions the meeting of real and imaginative elements. I consider that Hawthorne's greatest achievement is not the amalgamation of believable and unbelievable elements in a single genre, but the coalescence of two quite different genres in the same text. This combination allowed him to subvert literary conventions while the content of his books exposed other social conventions as well.

1.2. Gender Issues

Several questions come up now: How can two genres so dissimilar as novel and romance inhabit the same text? Can part of the book be defined as being a novel and another as a romance? Can that be applied to the text itself? From my point of view, the main characters in Hawthorne's books, which are generally female, are endowed with characteristics of each of the two genres. This is how the two genres live harmoniously together. As previously mentioned, Hawthorne took the best of both novel and romance and used it to create his own genre. Maybe due to its traditionally subversive nature, or maybe due to its appointment as the national genre, Hawthorne decided to call his books romances. In any case, he fused elements from both genres in one.

What I have found out in this study of Hawthorne's longer works is that each book is mainly based upon the relation of two female characters, each displaying characteristics more frequently found either in novels or in romances, and each representing dissimilar models of womanhood. Following a chronological order of the books, we have: Hester and Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*; Hepzibah and Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables*; Zenobia and Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*; and, finally, Miriam and Hilda in *The Marble Faun*. It is interesting to notice that all but Miriam and Hilda are blood related: Hester is Pearl's mother; Hepzibah is Phoebe's cousin; and Zenobia is Priscilla's half-sister. There is, at least, one generation difference between the two characters. However, it is the older woman who holds the more advanced, or socially unaccepted, ideas or behaviors. Therefore, considering the subversive quality associated with Hawthorne's romances and his will to expose conventions, the first character of each pair stands, from my point of view, for the romance, while the second one represents the novel. This does not mean these female characters are confronted, or behave as mortal enemies in their stories.

On the contrary, at certain points they seem to be complementary, as if one needed the other to keep going. As I have previously mentioned, I consider this is Hawthorne's way of bringing together those which had been regarded as polar opposites, that is, novel and romance. This idea is the main thesis of my dissertation and will be fundamental for the analysis of the four works above mentioned. It is these female characters' attitude towards life and its norms which helps to distinguish genres.

Although, as I have pointed out, Hawthorne merged elements from both novels and romances in his texts, all the episodes these women go through seem to establish a distinction between the two of them. It could be argued that these differences depend on each character being either a conventional moral exemplar or a dark subversive woman. However, as my analysis of Hawthorne's longer works will show, his main female characters do not simply fit into such a categorization. They share elements from those models, true, but they escape them. Hawthorne's females present peculiar character traits which are determined by their past lives and their attitude towards the world in general. What is more, these women change and adjust themselves, as well as they can, to the adverse circumstances they have to live through. They grow as mature human beings, they cannot be regarded as mere stereotypes, not even the secondary female characters. I also believe that each of the texts presents two endings, as there are two women involved in them, women who have led quite dissimilar existences, and whose stories require, consequently, to be concluded in a way that is in accordance with the particular circumstances of their protagonists.

The relation between the two female characters in Hawthorne's longer texts is quite interesting. The author always grants one of the two a higher relevance as to the denouement of the story, that is, one is clearly the main character. As I have previously

commented, Hawthorne usually devised more than one possible interpretation of his texts. Depending on the interpretation chosen by each reader, the ending of each of his longer works will be a moralizing one or, quite the opposite, a breach within the traditional system. The main female character will be the one suffering the consequences of an improper behaviour or the one fighting for the rights of the others of society. On the other hand, the secondary female character will always end the story according to the norms and conventions of the times. The interpretation of the denouement determines how the whole story has been understood. Hawthorne's endings do not usually coincide with what some feminist critics consider a happy or positive ending for the main female character. Nevertheless, "if his plots do not—cannot—lead to happy outcomes in a conventional romantic sense, neither do they end in utter social futility. They offer limited, incremental change, although often at a great cost to the agent of such change" (Baym, "Revisiting" 116). All his female characters achieve something, no matter how insignificant it may seem under a 20th or 21st century light. As Bell explains,

> The passionate *women* in these romances, in significant contrast to the often tremulous and even prurient defensiveness of the *male* characters, embrace with sincerity and passion the most revolutionary ambitions of Romanticism. Nevertheless, these ambitions, in the romances of the 1850s, are always defeated by the force of circumstances and guilt and by the abiding pressure of the past. (Culture 30)

This is precisely what Hawthorne is exposing and trying to change. He realistically portrays how his society would treat women like the ones he creates. It is not he that is sacrificing or condemning his female characters, but rather society and its set of values.

Richard Brodhead notes with respect to the secondary characters in Hawthorne, and

Melville, that these two American authors use less secondary characters than Dickens or Elliot, but when they create one, it means that the character is really important to the story and always adds something to the growth of the whole. Something that should be kept in mind is the fact that the main character, and also the supporting one, in the four works by Hawthorne cited above is not, as was generally the case in literature, a male. He presents us with a female character with a neatly defined personality and with a set of values of her own, not excessively contaminated by the ideological standards of the community she happens to live in. Although Hawthorne has been regarded as a misogynist by some feminist critics, his using almost exclusively female characters for the main roles is quite telling. Besides, as Nina Baym remarks,

> Virtually alone among male authors of his generation, he made space for feminist analysis in his fiction. Hester is made to introduce feminist ideas at least twice in *The Scarlet Letter*: once in chapter 13, […], and again in chapter 24, […]. The subject runs constantly through *The Blithedale Romance*, especially in chapter 14, […]. Feminist ideas typical of Hawthorne's era also circulate through *The Marble Faun*, as in chapter 13, […]. Miriam's reference to distinguished professional women, which Kenyon does not contest, alludes to a situation that few male authors of Hawthorne's day recognized in print. Certainly, Hawthorne's novels point to errors that reform-minded women typically make─mainly through lack of self-understanding and unwittingly complicity in the conditions they deplore. But unless a feminist perspective requires asserting that women are perfect, his observations might be seen as attempts to intervene on the feminist side. That feminist ideas are uttered by flawed women, that activist women generalize from their own situations, does not invalidate the ideas. The imperfect women who utter feminist sentiments

> are treated sympathetically and admiringly. They have enormous courage and considerable intellect. Even when defeated, they make things happen. ("Revisiting" 117)

Nina Baym's analysis of Hawthorne's female characters fits neatly into the thesis of my dissertation. His women are psychologically stronger than their male counterparts. Besides, they are also more intelligent and talented. That is, they are intellectually gifted characters and cannot be considered just physically attractive characters, as was the case with other male writers of Hawthorne's era. They are not perfect, but nobody is, and sometimes they behave according to the establishment, true. Still, they dare to speak up against the hierarchy and try to do their best to improve the lives of other women.

Out of the four main characters I work with –Hester, Hepzibah, Zenobia, and Miriam–, only Hepzibah was born in the town where she lives, the other three are foreigners in the land where their stories take place. Their not belonging to the community in which their lives evolve strengthens and makes even bigger the gap between their way of thinking and of perceiving the world and that of their neighbors. Hepzibah, although a native of the place, remains willingly isolated from the rest of her town folks because she has her particular mode of understanding life which is anchored in the tradition of her family name and in something that happened a long time ago. A fact which is really important in the stories of these women is that they do not achieve a perfect integration within their communities. They do not even seem to need it, or to desire it. Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam remain true to themselves and to their freedom until the end. Even Hepzibah, in her own way, does so. This is a proof of their rebellious and untamable character, a typical characteristic of the heroines of Hawthorne's own genre.

With respect to the other four female characters that function as a counterpart to the

main ones, something different happens. The same as the heroines, three out of four –Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda– are not natives of the areas in which the main events of their lives take place. Nevertheless, this does not imply, as was the case with the main females, an unbridgeable gap in their values with respect to those of the people surrounding them. On the contrary, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda are eager to be accepted, and they are actually much loved by their neighbors and town folks. Somehow, they could also be considered heroines. They would be the heroines of a more conventional novel, or, they could even be regarded as the heroines in the more novelistic part of Hawthorne's peculiar genre. These characters do not share the turbulent spirit of their partners and do not want to be set apart by those who live by them. This need for acceptance can be appreciated in the ending of their stories, an end which is completely at odds with the manner in which the stories of the main characters are closed –which has to do with their willingness, or not, to be assimilated into the community, and with the way they perceive the need for social reforms–.

If we keep a chronological order when dealing with Hawthorne's longer texts, we can say that in the first and the third of them, the story of the secondary female character ends with the woman married, as is the case with Pearl and Priscilla. In the second and fourth they are not wives yet, but we are told that they are to become so very soon. We will find Phoebe and Hilda in this situation. In any case, all these ladies marry and by means of that sacrament they fulfill one the most important requirements a woman was to observe if she wanted to be respected and truly accepted as a righteous member of society. From the day of her marriage, she will be the wife of a Mr. X, and that will be her best calling card in that new life of hers. Hence, marriage became the most effective process of assimilation a woman looking for acceptance could undergo in those days. On this point, Joel Pfister comments in his text *The Production of Personal Life: Class, Gender, and the*

Psychological in Hawthorne's Fiction that in the emerging 19th-century middle class, the family, with the woman as mother and wife in the center, was the best refuge against the dangers of the outer world. Furthermore, Hawthorne himself acknowledges in one of his diaries that all the problems of life did not seem real to him on account of his new status as a married man.

Nevertheless, Hawthorne's main female characters have nothing to do with those we can find in most novels up to the 20th century. According to Pfister, as an artist Hawthorne was quite anxious about his ability to create real/authentic female characters. He did not want to produce mere stereotypes without anything in common with flesh-and-blood women. The New England writer was concerned with the possible negative influence of allegory upon his female characters. Hawthorne was quite aware of the consequences of loading these characters with too many meanings and implications. Using them as mere metaphors, examples of something that should or should not be done by women, could impact their future inner development and roundness. In my opinion, Hawthorne managed to create strong females with a firm will. They are characters who knew how to fight against the circumstances that, in general, were not easy at all for them (e.g. Hester, a young woman who has to feed her baby in an environment where she is despised and where no one considers the possibility of lending her a hand). In fact, as Jamie Barlowe points out in *The Scarlet Mob of Scribblers: Rereading Hester Prynne*, according to most critics "Hawthorne created the only significant female protagonist [Hester Prynne] of the nineteenth century" (28). In spite of the heated criticism he received precisely due to his utterance about "the scarlet mob of scribblers," Hawthorne was concerned about the situation of women in his epoch and used his work to expose it. What is more,

> […] much feminist writing today exists to show how women might get along

> without men (or, more strategically, to show what social reforms are necessary so that women can actually get along without men). In which case, since Hawthorne's work exactly fits this description, his feminism should be obvious. Smart, independent women like Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam are his heroines […]. But even the more conventional women […] are women used to living alone and fending for themselves. (Baym, "Revisiting" 115-6)

If we tried to apply some contemporary feminist criteria, Hawthorne's heroines could not be so considered because their stories do not end as some 20th- and 21st-century critics would have preferred: Zenobia, for example, not dead but setting up a political party instead. Nevertheless, as Baym explains, the development of Hawthorne's characters is more than outstanding for the times they lived in. Hawthorne's female characters are very special ones.

This special way of treating women in his texts was partly due to Hawthorne's particular family circle. He lost his father at the age of four, and from then on he lived surrounded by women –mother, sisters, grandmothers, and aunts– something which made Hawthorne respect women's hard life and influenced his anti-patriarchal views. Emily Budick, in *Engendering Romance: Women Writers and the Hawthorne Tradition, 1850-1990*, openly affirms that "*The Scarlet Letter* constitutes one of the most powerful literary critiques of the misogyny of patriarchal society" (14). Other scholars suggest that his mother's death influenced the character of Hester Prynne. Apart from his own family, Hawthorne's family-in-law was extremely influential in his understanding of women's world. Mary Peabody, one of his sisters-in-law, was very much interested in the abolition movement. John Idol and Melinda Ponder explain, in *Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition*, that once married, Hawthorne never sent a

manuscript to his editor without it having been read beforehand and commented by his wife, Sophia. Prior to sending his manuscript to this editor, Hawthorne made the changes his wife suggested. It was also through his wife's family that Hawthorne got to know Margaret Fuller, the 19th-century women's rights advocate. What is more, as I will comment on chapter 4, some scholars have even found a close connection between the character of Zenobia and some of her ideas and speeches, and Margaret Fuller herself. Therefore, it is not strange to claim that, in spite of appearances, Hawthorne's works present a claim for the improvement of women's condition in society. Even if for some feminist scholars his books are not as open as they should regarding the women issue, they expose an umpleasant reality in order to make it change. As I will comment throughout my dissertation, Hawthorne managed to expose those aspects of society he did not agree with while, at the same time, he still remains an influential author.

The biographical reference above serves to show that, in spite of his unfortunate and really well-known sentence about "the scarlet mob of scribbling women"– a remark that should not be dealt with out of the context in which it was uttered ─ , following Nina Baym, "Again and Again, the Scribbling Women", Hawthorne favored women's equality to men. In fact, Thomas R. Mitchell points out that "Rappaccini's Daughter" was first published in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, a magazine which openly fought for women's rights. On a more general level, Emily Budick comments that those authors inscribed within the romance tradition, as is the case with Hawthorne, do not view women as 'others' because if they did so, they would be treating them in the same way as male patriarchs do. It is, therefore, obvious that Hawthorne's independent female characters were not created by accident, but after a conscientious process of coexistence and study of the tough world in which those women around him had to keep on going.

Hawthorne's female characters occupy me now because it is exactly by means of them, as I have mentioned before, and of their role in the texts that I will prove my thesis about Hawthorne's use of both novel and romance, two apparently opposed genres, within one single book. I consider that in the same way as the stories of the eight women we read about in the New England writer's longer texts end in a different way. Their lives show characteristics associated either with novels or with romances, depending on which of the female characters we are studying. From my point of view, the subversive heroines, Hester, Hepzibah, Zenobia, and Miriam, are the representatives of the subversive qualities of romance; while Pearl, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda can be taken as the novel champions. I also believe that Hawthorne's own attitude towards the two genres is subtly expressed in his main characters' achievements. Hawthorne's ideas about literary genres are profoundly connected with his conceptions about gender and about male-female relations:

> His novels are replete with objections against social arrangements that tell so heavily and unjustly against women. […]. Hawthorne's point, one might say, is not that essentialism makes social change impossible, but that it makes social change impossible unless differences between women and men are taken into account. (Baym, "Revisiting" 118)

What his texts show is the reality of his times, not an ideal society. He was exposing a number of unjust attitudes towards women which, in his opinion, should be changed. However, he was not willing to portray a situation that was not real. There is hope in his body of work: hope for change.

2. *The Scarlet Letter*. Transcending Meaning

2.1. Character & Author: A Creative Link

In regards to being a heroine, Ann Shapiro gives us a general definition in *Unlikely Heroines* which can be applied to the character of Hester Prynne. In her words:

> […] a heroine emerges who is independent and fearless. She operates within a conventional context, […], she is willing to be different even if she must remain alone and face the disapproval of others. […] she has a strength and a purpose that are frequently denied in her sex. (137)

The leading character of *The Scarlet Letter* fits into Shapiro's definition. She will be the one setting the story into motion and also the one closing it, upon her death. The only character that may seem to put Hester in the shade is little Pearl, but the child's character is not strong enough to completely obscure her mother's figure, as hers was conceived as a complementary character by the author. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, although they may seem to be opposites, the female characters in Hawthorne's longer works complement each other. Furthermore, sometimes the ones I will be referring to as secondary illuminate the characters of Hawthorne's subversive heroines. They actually help readers to understand those heroines better by means of their interaction and their conversations.

When we face most 19th century books, we encounter male protagonists only. Therefore, Hester's playing the central part in this 19th-century text can be considered extremely noteworthy. With respect to this aspect George Dekker, in *The American Historical Romance*, declares that 19th-century historical romances tend to present males as their main characters. He adds that if there is a woman functioning as a hero, it is because

the male figures "are disabled or there is little scope for traditional masculine heroic adventures" (221). If we were to follow that definition with respect to *The Scarlet Letter*, a question would arise: Is there really no room for a man to display heroic actions in a book settled in Puritan America, where the power was firmly held by men?

In my opinion the answer to that question, bearing *The Scarlet Letter* in mind, is "no". It is not a matter of men being disabled or having no room for being the heroes. I will try to show that Hawthorne had a very distinct goal when he chose to give a woman the opportunity of being the main actor in one of his masterpieces. As previously mentioned, I intend to demonstrate that Hawthorne was capable of writing a book using two genres as distinct as novel and romance, taking from each whichever singularities he deemed more appropriate, and that involves giving female characters a more prominent role. He does not alter either genre, but uses both and profits from the two of them. Depending on what he needed to say, one of the genres would result more convenient. What is also obvious is that any genre requires a leading role, a protagonist, something that in this case is fulfilled by a female character. Moreover, I agree with those critics who believe that Hawthorne mirrors himself in Hester's character as she shares with him his connection with the imaginative nature and his attachment to free thinking. According to Sandra Tomc,

> The idea that Hawthorne initially developed Hester as an analog to his autobiographical persona in "The Custom-House" is suggested by the many markers that map their mutuality. Most obviously, both Hester and Hawthorne-narrator wear the scarlet setter, and for both of them it produces the same distinct sensations. […]. The Hawthorne of "The Custom-House" is an outcast, […]. Hawthorne's ancestors would have condemned him for the generative acts that he commits as an artist; those same ancestors condemn Hester for another sort of generative art. (473-4)

According to this analogy, we will have two parallel fights in *The Scarlet Letter*: Hawthorne's and Hester's. Hawthorne uses his character's hard life in the 17th century to expose the limitations of his own 19th-century society.

On the one hand, Hester tries to keep her secret, i.e. the identity of Pearl's father, and sticks to her way of thinking despite the pressure of the Puritan leaders. On the other hand, we discover Hawthorne fighting for his ideas about society and its conventions, which he represented in his subversion of literary genres. Character and author are linked and the former stands for the latter in the fictitious world of a book. Bell also considers that there is a deeper conflict in *The Scarlet Letter* that can stand for Hawthorne's own clash with the traditional literary cannon─as I consider his trying to merge novel and romance evinces─, namely Hester's free thinking facing her socially socially-imposed abidance to religion as represented by the Puritan fathers. Bell states that "Hester stands for the qualities of passion and imagination repressed by the Puritans and, in her case, literally imprisoned" (Development 176). Besides, as Bell notices in a later study of Hawthorne's work,

> If any character in *The Scarlet Letter* learns to control the interplay of "external" and "essential," to become the sort of romancer Hawthorne hints at in his prefaces, that character is Hester Prynne. […]. For all of Hester's outward social conformity, we are told, her needlework "appeared to have also a deeper meaning"; "it might have been a mode of expressing, and therefore soothing, the passion of her life." Here Hester seems very much a figure of the romancer, simultaneously expressing and concealing the content of her strange dreams. […], "Another View of Hester," describes a woman who wears one face to herself and another one to society, but who remains very much aware (unlike Dimmesdale) of the very different ways in

> which each of these faces is true. […]. She has convinced the public that her embroidered letter—through which she has long expressed and soothed "the passion of her life"—is "the token, not of that one sin, for which she had borne so long and dreary a penance, but of her many good deeds since." (Culture 49-51)

Hester ends up being turned into the Angel of the community by her own town folks, the same ones that condemned her at the beginning of the story. Unquestionably, Hawthorne endowed Hester with more advanced characteristics than was usual for a 17th-century woman within a Puritan settlement. Hawthorne was a believer in imagination, but he was aware of the antagonisms it aroused too. He had to let his feelings out, but he also needed to hide them, and Hester's story was the best option to make people see only that part with which they would be pleased. At the same time, Hawthorne was satisfying his own necessities, he was dreaming "[…] strange things, and mak[ing] them look like truth, […]" (Scarlet 66).

If we believe, as Hawthorne claims on the very first page, that *The Scarlet Letter* is only "A ROMANCE" (Scarlet 29), we will want to treat its characters according to the rules of that genre. Therefore, to begin the study of its characters I am going to make use of some broad definitions that George Dekker offers us regarding the two types of heroines that, in his opinion, appear in romances. For him,

> The 'light' heroine of flight-and-pursuit narratives is a virgin and heiress whose marriage to the hero reconciles warring factions of the past and builds securely for the future. The other, the 'dark' heroine of siege narratives, is a wife, mistress or betrothed whose sexual allure or infidelity unmans the hero and precipitates the fall of the kingdom. (222)

The obvious problem we have to face now is to try to identify Hester Prynne with one of

the two model heroines Dekker presents. Although she is closer to the second one, Hester's character is more complex than the stereotype generally represented by the 'dark woman'.

We do not have a "flight-and-pursuit" narrative, and neither does *The Scarlet Letter* involve a "siege" story. Hester is an unfaithful wife, but her infidelity does not unman "the hero" or precipitate "the fall of the kingdom." Actually, Hester's infidilety serves to unmask her husband's true nature, which is shown to be much worse than Hester's action. Then, how can we manage to fit a character that, according to her creator, is part of a romance into a definition that does not contemplate her story as such? We could argue that Hester falls closer to the 'dark' type of heroine. However, is there actually a male hero in *The Scarlet Letter* whose existence could be taken as heroic before his path crossed Hester's? In *The Scarlet Letter* there appear two men whose lives vary enormously due to Hester's presence, but Hawthorne does not tell anywhere in the text that they have indeed led truly remarkable existences before getting to know this woman. Furthermore, the writer offers his readers few references to either Arthur Dimmesdale or Roger Chillingworth before meeting Hester. About the latter we are told that he was

> […] a man well stricken in years, a pale, thin, scholar-like visage, with eyes dim and bleared by the lamp-light that had served them to pore over many ponderous books. Yet, those same bleared optics had a strange, penetrating power, when it was their owner's purpose to read the human soul. […], was slightly deformed, with the left shoulder a trifle higher than the right. (Scarlet 85-6)

And we have to notice that this is something Hester recalls while she is on the scaffold being exposed to her neighbors as an example not to be followed. The narrator himself gives us some information about Dimmesdale's origins when he observes that the Reverend

> had come from one of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of the

> age into our wild forest-land. His eloquence and religious fervor had already given the earnest of high eminence in his profession. He was a person of very striking aspect, with a white, lofty, and impending brow, large, brown, melancholy eyes, and a mouth which, unless when he forcibly compressed it, was apt to be tremulous, expressing both nervous sensibility and a vast power of self-restraint. (Scarlet 92-3)

Hawthorne also adds that the Reverend, although young, enjoys being alone and devotes most of his time to books.

After these descriptions, the conclusion we reach is that Dimmesdale and Chillingworth do not apparently look like the stereotypically heroic men. On the contrary, about the religious man one could think that he is timid and with no visible tendency to get voluntarily involved in a grand heroic performance. Chillingworth's physical appearance is that of the devious bad guy who captures the beautiful and innocent damsel of the story and has his malice cut short by the noble and handsome hero. Nonetheless, the story we are dealing with leaves no room for this sort of character because the heroine needs no one to save her and, curiously enough, she is the one who cares about others' well-being. The scheme that Dekker provides to pigeonhole the heroines of a romance does not suit Hawthorne's text. Why does this happen?

As I have stated before, this writer was used to playing with genres and seemed to enjoy doing so. Therefore, we should not blindly take for granted that *The Scarlet Letter* is a romance just because his author says so. However, we should not suppose the opposite either. We could just as well follow the middle way and study the possibility, which I have posed as my thesis, of a combination of genres. Hester plays the main role in an unconventional romance, and Pearl does so in a peculiar novel. Therefore, the impossibility of applying Dekker's definitions of the typical heroines of a romance to Hawthorne's text is

understandable. From now on, I will try to demonstrate how each of the female characters illustrates the principles at work in two genres which I think appear in and shape *The Scarlet Letter* as Hawthorne's way of transcending both meaning and genre boundaries.

2.2. Pearl & Hester: "the Actual & the Imaginary"

Richard Brodhead considers *The Scarlet Letter* as Hawthorne's only long work in which "there exists no sense of a gap between what he calls the Actual and the Imaginary" (Hawthorne 49). This is so because the writer has managed to work subtly and intelligently within the two realms. Hawthorne made good use of the possibilities each genre offers an author to raise a literary building. As a result, he carefully studied the two main prose genres and used both at the same time without having to choose between them. This scholar also perceives that there exists a combination of genres in Hawthorne's story. For him, the romance can be appreciated in the way Chillingworth is treated, as if he were the embodiment of Satan himself. Romance can be sensed, from this critic's point of view, in the interpretation of the text as "a supernatural conflict between good and evil" (Hawthorne 64). For Brodhead,

> The more realistic–in Hawthorne's terms, novelistic–mode of the bulk of his narrative forces us to make sense of the novel's world in another way. There our understanding emerges gradually, from a careful observation of the twists of motive, thought, and emotion that make up the characters' lives. (Hawthorne 64)

Another proof of Hawthorne's use of romance is, according to Brodhead, the presence or not, of a scarlet A on Dimmesdale's chest. According to Brodhead's words, the combination is not established through the different behavior of the female characters, but by means of the close observation of other details that appear all along the text. The fact

that this critic sensed that something was happening with respect to the parallel use of two different genres in *The Scarlet Letter* is evidence that the main hypothesis of my dissertation is pointed in the right direction, as the analysis of the evolution of Hester and her daughter will show.

In "The Custom-House," we are introduced to the story of Hester's life. Apparently, Hawthorne used an old report from his predecessor in office as the basis for his text: "[…] to find, recorded by the old Surveyor's pen, a reasonably complete explanation of the whole affair" (Scarlet 62). The author even explains "[…] that the main facts of that story are authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue. The original papers, together with the scarlet letter itself,–a most curious relic,–are still in my possession, and shall be freely exhibited […]" (Scarlet 63). According to this, the reader is likely to believe that this is a true story. However, as we continue reading, Hawthorne begins to add certain remarks that seem to suggest that part of the story may not be as accurate as it seems: "[…] I have allowed myself, as to such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention" (Scarlet 63). What is more,

> While Hawthorne's prefaces often pretend to distinguish the land of dreams from the page of history, the narrator makes no such pretense. He equates the illegibility of history with the mysteries of romance. Though he denies any historical intentions, the disclaimer itself focuses attention on the historiographical implications of his remarks. (Michael 151)

At the beginning of this dissertation, I already commented on Hawthorne's use of imagination in his works and his strategies to disguise it. "The Custom-House" can be one of those maneuvers devised to dress up his dreams. At the same time, and since he

produced his story based upon official documents, he is discharged from the responsibility of the narrated events. Therefore, from the very beginning of the book, we are assailed by the doubt of whether we should trust the story we are about to read.

The person who caused the Surveyor's account to be written was "one Hester Prynne, who appeared to have been rather a noteworthy personage in the view of our ancestors" (Scarlet 62). The problem is that Hawthorne also explains that the papers he had just found were written by his predecessor, thus not grounding them in his own experience, but in the words of people who said to have known the woman: "Aged persons, alive in the time of Mr. Surveyor Pue, and from whose oral testimony he had *made up* [emphasis mine] his narrative, […]" (Scarlet 62). What we can deduce from this quotation is that not even the governor's official witnessed the facts he reported. Instead, he prepared an account putting together the different versions of those who claimed to have gotten to know Mrs. Prynne. Besides, the witnesses are said to be "Aged persons" whose narrations are usually fraught with made-up events, as they are unable to remember everything that happened around them many years before. Taking into account that not even the "official written document" may be completely reliable, it is easy to welcome some "licenses (and) invention". As a matter of fact, this is one of Hawthorne's favorite ploys. He insists on his being working as an editor, not as a creator. However, part of his editing job implies putting together what somebody said about someone else, that is, rumors. By

> functioning less as editor than as a rumormonger, Hawthorne's narrator tells his story by telling stories, stepping out of the crowd just long enough to deliver the inside scoop to an audience that, like Chillingworth in the recognition chapter, is all ears. In a culture denied such common transmitters of culture as minstrels and gleemen (*The Scarlet Letter* 231), rumor becomes the communicative lifeblood of

> the community. Prophetic and disastrous, necessary and ruinous, rumor, in *The Scarlet Letter*, enacts a double-edged dynamic symbolic of society itself. (Harshbarger 36)

He can criticize society's reliance on rumor to condemn Hester without doing it openly. He is simply collecting materials to make public a story the very surveyor had already been working on. Therefore, no one can blame him for bringing it forth, Hawthorne was only following the steps of one of his predecessors.

At the same time, all these shadows hanging over Hester's story add up to our feeling of distrust with respect to the veracity of the narration itself, since we are not sure if we can trust the sources. That is, Hawthorne makes his readers question the validity of the evidence presented against Hester and, at the same time, readers feel compelled to side up with her. Hawthorne portrays Hester Prynne as an independent and groundbreaking woman who lived "between the early days of Massachusetts and the close of the seventeenth century" (Scarlet 62). Anne Hutchinson, for example, was made to live under the same roof as an extremely strict old Puritan while she awaited her exile. Hester, however, is said to have lived on her own in a lonely cottage away from the rest of the community. Her home was "On the outskirts of the town, within the verge of the peninsula, but not in close vicinity to any other habitation." Furthermore, the author explains that she had "the license of the magistrates" (Scarlet 105) to establish her dwellings there. What is more,

> Hawthorne is also careful to show the benefits of Hester's estrangement from the establishment. Her separation from the community is a necessary component in her continued ability to think outside of the accepted boundaries which society had established, and is an essential aspect of her arriving at her ultimate purpose and means of serving both herself and society. […]. Her estrangement from society

> allows her a unique vantage point from which to view, and criticize, human institutions. (Maibor 72-3)

This is so because, as Wayne Booth explains,

> The novelist who chooses to tell *this* story cannot at the same time tell *that* story; in centering our interest, sympathy, or affection on one character, he inevitably excludes from our interest, sympathy or affection some other character. Art imitates life in this respect as in so many others; just as in real life I am inevitably unfair to anyone but myself or, at best, my immediate loved ones, so in literature complete impartiality is impossible. (78-9)

Hester is a woman with whom even contemporary readers may identify and respect. With Hawthorne's depiction of this character, readers tend to support her and condemn the society that ostracized her in the first place. By doing so, he is exposing some of the conventions of his period. Hawthorne, in *The Scarlet Letter*, exposed the validity of appearances and demonstrated that one should not trust them. Without knowing her, taking only into account the symbol she was made to wear on her bossom, Hester was considered a bad woman by her parishoners. However, since they did not know about his sin, and he appeared to be a holly man, all the villagers loved and respected Arthur Dimmesdale. Hawthorne can be said to be denouncing the excessive credit society gives to appearances.

Early in the book, we learn that the main character of the story and the heroine of the romance, Hester Prynne was granted the liberty of settling with her daughter far from the other lodgings in the town. The author is beginning to create an atmosphere of mystery and secrecy around this woman. She resembles a princess kept in a castle guarded by a fierce dragon, represented by little Pearl and her attachment to her mother's mark. In this case, the dragon could have also taken the shape of a group of pious Puritans "[…] who still

kept an inquisitorial watch over her" (Scarlet 106). To add up more romance touches, "[…] the soil about it was too sterile for cultivation, while its comparative remoteness put it out of the sphere of that social activity […]. It stood on the shore, looking across a basin of the sea at the forest-covered hills, towards the west" (Scarlet 105). Whenever Hester appears, the air is filled with characteristic notes of a classic romance.

Hester's daughter is introduced at the very beginning of the book. The child is described as beautiful and moody, displaying the emotions her mother concealed during her pregnancy: "She could recognize her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of her temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom and despondency that had brooded in her heart" (Scarlet 105). Little Pearl inherited her mother's character, something no one can deny if we recall the description of Dimmesdale's disposition and compare it with what we have just been told about the child. Hester herself wonders "[…] whether Pearl was a human child," for her behavior seems disturbing and undecipherable to her mother, who, I think, does not truly want to accept what she perceives in the little girl as her own, and really authentic, self: Pearl is unruly and wild, "As a character, Pearl is constructed to be socially and geographically liminal, […]. She is the personification of the wilderness […]" (Dove-Rumé 92). She also reminds her mother of the burning letter she must wear in her bosom and Pearl seems extremely pleased with that role. The little girl recognizes and loves her mother as long as she has upon herself the token of Puritan punishment. This fusion of opposites in her daughter's person dislocates Hester because in the child live together a really deep concern for the realm of feelings and an unconscious and very personal respect for the establishment (i.e. she does not let her mother get rid of the scarlet letter but she attacks the Puritan children who insult her mother and her). Dove-Rumé comments that

> As Joel Porte has rightly shown, the narrator describes Pearl (the incarnation of the scarlet letter) and romance writing in very much the same terms, making Pearl a metaphorical version of the very art of romance. This is in accordance with Bakhtin's postulate that artistic form is the form of the content made in and welded into the material. (92)

As pointed out in the opening pages of this chapter, Hawthorne created Hester mirroring himself as romancer and as a social outcast. Therefore, it makes sense to claim that if Hester is the romancer, Pearl needs to be the romance, her creation. Hester's not recognizing little Pearl as her own flesh and blood parallels the estrangement felt by authors towards their final product once it is completed and given out to the public. Pearl, Hester's creature, is an independent being who develops her character not only according to her mother's, but also in accordance with her own free will. Similarly, Hawthorne's fusion of elements from novel and romance may give way to a brand new product in a deeper level, completely different of what a 19th-century reader may have expected. However, that being said, Pearl's development as an idependent being can modify her childhood character and made her become something completely different from what she was as a child. That is, what initially can be perfectly well analyzed as a romance-to-be could turn into something more conventional, like a traditional novel, due to the environment in which she grew up.

The narrator comments that Hester grows quite restless whenever she senses in her offspring "[…] a shadowy reflection of the evil that had existed in herself" (Scarlet 118). It is easy to understand that Hester may be worried because she does not want her daughter to tread the same path as she has. The independence she has earned has had a very high price, a price she tries to prevent her daughter from having to pay because she is aware that the society they live in is not ready for free-thinking women. Hester does not mind her

daughter's independence itself, the problem is posed by its implications within society. This society plays a very important role in *The Scarlet Letter*, it

> has a restrictiveness that so distorts human relationships and human error that it paves the way for the tragedies that follow from Hester's […] actions. […] the narrative is punctuated by chapters explicitly devoted to social analysis: for example, "The Market Place," "The Governor's Hall," "New England Holiday" […]." (Mills 54)

Once again, the finger is pointed at the establishment, not at Hester, who is only guilty according to social standards. Emily Budick suggests that by not wanting to explain to Pearl the meaning of the letter, as we can perceive in her reaction when her daughter enquires about "What does the letter mean, mother?–and why dost thou wear it?–[…] There are many things in this world that a child must not ask about. […] the scarlet letter, I wear it for the sake of its gold thread!" (Scarlet 198), or by her refusing to look at little Pearl's image in the mirror–"Come along, Pearl!" said she, drawing her away" (Scarlet 129), Hester desires to keep Pearl from knowing the patriarchal world in which the two of them are caught and in which her mother is a fallen woman.

In my opinion, this has a lot to do with the connection I consider to exist between Hester's and Hawthorne's struggles. Hester's attitude mirrors that of Hawthorne because the woman faces the leaders of the community to keep her daughter in her custody and to preserve her own ideas, and Hawthorne challenges the literary canon of his time to write in his own way and according to his personal conception of literature. So, on the one hand, we find a socially stigmatized woman fighting for her freedom and her daughter's welfare within a male-dominated world and, on the other hand, a writer working with two literary genres to produce his own personal one, free from traditional constraints.

There is an important detail regarding the origins of the character of little Pearl which is worth mentioning. It is well-known that Hawthorne began to write *The Scarlet Letter* after having been dismissed from his job at the Salem Custom-House due to a change in Administration. Therefore, the text was most likely written in his house, with the writer surrounded by his whole family. Taking this into account, no one should be surprised by the fact that Hawthorne's daughter, Una, was his flesh-and-blood model for Pearl. This was pointed out by Richard Brodhead and was declared by Hawthorne himself in one of his notebooks. This fact makes Pearl's character begin to gain consistency as contrasted with that of her mother's, about whom we only know what a group of people explained a long time after the whole story took place to a government official, who may have modified the version given by the presumed witnesses according to the moral and social standards, and prejudices, of his time. We are reminded how women were expected to be in the Puritan period: obedient wives, loving mothers, and God fearing creatures, a model into which Hester does not easily fit.

There is a general tendency among critics to analyze Pearl as a mere prolongation of the letter her mother was forced to wear. The narrator contributes to this idea with certain remarks about the child, such as when he says that "[…] it [Pearl's appearance] irresistibly and inevitably reminded the beholder of the token which Hester Prynne was doomed to wear upon her bosom. It was the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!" (Scarlet 124-5). This symbolic existence of the little girl could make us believe that she is not a flesh-and-blood character, that what we really find in Pearl is another of Hawthorne's resources used, theoretically, to transmit a message. Therefore, Pearl could lose her entity as the protagonist of the so-called-novel within Hawthorne's own genre, since she is not really human, but a symbol─although she has been previously linked to the

romance, I consider that her evolution as a character brings her closer to the novelistic side─. In fact, among the secondary female characters of Hawthorne's long texts, Pearl's is the most difficult to consider as a true human being due to her intimate relation with her mother's mark throughout most of the text. Nevertheless, Pearl develops and by the end of the story she gets disentangled from the scarlet letter and begins to live an ordinary life away from the stigma that conditioned her childhood.

In spite of that, and even assuming that Pearl is the embodiment of her mother's mark, she does not necessarily have to be completely deprived of her human condition. Pearl can remind us of the stigma her mother wears and, at the same time, she can grow up and evolve as any other child. If we have a look, for example, at Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, a book to which no one will deny the category of novel, we will perceive from the very first pages that the elder Dashwood sisters–Elinor and Marianne–stand for the two opposed temperaments that the title of the text refers to. This does not imply, in any case, that the young women are not truly flesh-and-blood characters. They develop and prove their being ordinary people, in spite of their roles as representatives of either sense or sensibility.

Richard Fogle, when discussing the character of Pearl in *Hawthorne's Imagery. The "Proper Light and Shadow" in the Major Romances*, suggests that the child moves "between two worlds" (41) because she is partly human, partly an embodiment of the letter. Despite this, Fogle adds that all through the book, Pearl is accompanied by light, she is never kept in darkness–as her parents are–. The critic suggests that this is pointing towards her transformation into an 'ordinary' child at the end of the story. Pearl will no longer be an "elf-child", but a human being as any other. She will left behind the romantic traits and adopt the novelistic ones. Hawthorne's creation will achieve its independence from its

creator and will outlive him.

With respect to this aspect of the text, Marjorie Elder explains that Pearl remains a mere symbol of her mother's sin until she is publicly recognized by her father. At that point, Elder remarks, the little child turns into a real human being who can live among men. Nevertheless, this scholar also recognizes that there are many traits in Pearl which clearly show her being real even before Dimmesdale kisses her at the scaffold. Some of these are her naughtiness, her inquisitive questions, her sudden changes of mood, etc. These traits could have been determined by Hawthorne's daughter, Una, who was possibly used as a model for Pearl. We have to bear in mind that the girl is growing all alone, with no other child with whom she can play. Besides, Pearl only has her grievous mother to keep her company. In fact, if we put together all the circumstances that surround Pearl's infancy, the result will be similar to those defining the childhood of some of the children Dickens portrays in his novels, since we are confronted with a girl growing up without knowing who her father is. She is all by herself because all the other children in the town despise her. Her mother, Hester, is an outcast of the community because of a sin against the moral and religious code of the Puritan settlement they live in. Pearl can easily be said to be the scarlet letter inside a human body while retaining and developing all the qualities we associate to any child.

Parallel to Pearl's growth as a true human child, we view her mother struggling for them both and breeding her own ideas about the world and, what is more, about women's lives. We are told that Hester "[…] assumed a freedom of speculation […]" which would have been regarded as "[…] a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter." The narrator explains to us that the ideas occupying Hester's mind "[…] dared to enter no other dwelling in New England" (Scarlet 183). What we discover in these words is that

Hester has become a free thinker, that she no longer considers the Puritan creed as the only true one. I find it striking that although we have been told before that the magistrates kept an eye on Hester, they had not asked her to appear before them in order to give evidence regarding her new way of life and the education she is giving Pearl. There is only one occasion all through the book when Hester has to face a religious leader, and this happens at Governor Bellingham's when the magistrates intend to take Pearl away from her in order to educate the child under their own laws. This will be the first and the last time, and Hester wins the battle. She manages to tranform the very symbol the magistrates used to punish her as a weapon against them. Hester turns the A she has been made to wear into the token that helps her to keep her child. After all, if the magistrates intended to use her as a public example, how are they going to prevent Hester from showing her own child what not to do?

Hawthorne is offering us the picture of a brave romantic heroine who dares to defy the most powerful members of the community and ends up victorious, although at a cost. We have a woman so bold for her time that she wonders, referring to women in general, whether their existence is really "[…] worth accepting, even to the happiest among them?" (Scarlet 184). One could suggest that Hawthorne is depicting a progressive woman he may have encountered at a time when women were beginning to fight for their rights, but whose existence is difficult to associate with the 17th century. Joel Pfister notes that all the actions Hawthorne attributes to Hester, attending the sick, counseling suffering women, helping the poor, etc., are the same as the ones that the female reformers of his time carried out. Hawthorne appears to be transforming Hester into a reformer, something she herself confirms through one of her inner speeches that begins "As a first step, the whole system of society should be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, […]" (Scarlet 184).

However, Hester does not get her independence easily because she has to give up something in order to achieve it. The magnificent physical appearance Hester shows at the beginning of the text, a beauty that made the narrator link her to the "[…] Divine Maternity, […]" (83) has disappeared by this point. It is as if her mental activity had absorbed all the energy destined to the keeping of her radiant outer appearance. The narrator explains that "All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up […] leaving a bare and harsh outline, which might have been repulsive […]." According to Hawthorne, this change is due to the fact that Hester "[…] has encountered, and lived through, an experience of peculiar severity." The narrator adds that "If she be all tenderness, she will die. If she survive, the tenderness will either be crushed out of her, or–and the outer semblance is the same–crushed so deeply into her heart that it can never show itself more" (Scarlet 182). Hawthorne seems to be depriving Hester of her feminine side to let her grow as an intellectual. This was strongly criticized by some feminist scholars as a vulgar association of intellect and ugliness. Possibly aware of such a simplistic connection himself, Hawthorne portrayed Zenobia and Miriam, for example, as two gorgeous women who were also brilliant and more intelligent than their male counterparts. Besides, Hester is a beautiful woman from the first to the last page, but she chose to follow a stern dressing code. She may be sacrificing her outer appearance only to achieve a greater goal.

For Pfister, the most remarkable change we can appreciate in Hester lies in her hair. This critic considers that while Hawthorne is endowing her with an uncommon freedom of thought after being marked with the scarlet letter, he is also getting rid of her hair, which had been taken before as the most outstanding symbol of her womanhood: "[…] her rich and luxuriant hair had either been cut off, or was so completely hidden by a cap, that not a

shining lock of it ever once gushed into the sunshine" (Scarlet 182). May Hawthorne be suggesting that a beautiful woman cannot be a proper thinker? Or is he connecting his personal disputes with editors and with the reading public with Hester's and thus explaining his own personal situation as I pointed out before? He may also be exposing a repressive male-dominated system which regards women as mere decorative objects. Hester dared to face authority and conceived some sort of religion of her own, but, in turn, life appears to have taken from her the vigor and freshness Nature had granted her. However, as I have already stated, by playing with literature Hawthorne was exposing those aspects of his society he did not agree with, especially the unfair situation of women and the weight of appearances. Depriving Hester of any outer sign of feminine beauty would, most likely, have been expected and applauded by his conservative readers, those in favor of the establishment. Therefore, he was, apparently, fulfilling their expectations. In a way similar to Umberto Eco's definition of "double coding", Hawthorne is giving something to both his most conservative public and his most subversive one. Hawthorne's playfulness cannot be forgotten since

> both Dimmesdale and Hester do function in the book, in effect, as artists, manipulating appearances─much like the Hawthorne of the prefaces─in order to mediate between their own subversive impulses and the orthodox expectations of the society in which they live their public lives. (Bell, Culture 47)

Appearances can be, and actually are, deceitful. This is the case with Hester and her apparent loss of power and control over her life. Something similar happens with Hawthorne's role as editor. He uses it as a mask to shed ambiguity over the authorial persona behind *The Scarlet Letter*. He was most likely aware of going against the establishment when telling Hester's story. Nevertheless, his family environment, and his

own way of thinking, made him take that step. Therefore, he used the already available narrative strategies, i.e. the role of editor, and his own ones, i.e. fusing traditionally considered opposed genres, to send out his message without being openly beligerant.

2.3. "A" as in…: The Ambiguity of a Symbol

The chapter "Another View of Hester" marks a switch in the course of the story. In it we discover Hester's liberal thoughts and the drastic transformation her physical appearance had undergone. In the same chapter, we also learn that many people in town begin to read a totally different meaning into Hester's A, now it signifies "Able" (Scarlet 180). This is due to Hester's contribution to the well being of the community, since she has become "[…] a Sister of Mercy […]" (Scarlet 180) and helps everybody needing a friendly hand. Even more interesting is to learn that the religious authorities of the settlement are even considering whether Hester's "[…] scarlet letter might be taken off […]" (Scarlet 186) from her breast. Hester has stopped being despised and now a considerable number of her neighbors both pity and like her. However, Hester considers that "It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off this badge," […] because, in her opinion, if she "Were worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, […]" (Scarlet 187). Judging from her own words, it may appear that Hester has accepted her past deed as a true sin and finds no need to be forgiven. It can also be interpreted as an ironic remark on her part, as if she were saying she no longer cares for any judgment from society. At the same time, we observe how the meaning of the letter A has by that point in the book nothing to do with its original meaning and purpose. That is, not even this letter, which originally had its roots set in stone by the very laws of the Puritan community, retains its value in Hawthorne's text. As with

any written text, the scarlet letter is also a mutable element. As Hazel Cohen notices,

> the most powerful impression conveyed by *The Scarlet Letter* is one of disengagement or *dissociation*. The disjunction between signifier and signified, between sign and referent, is made explicit in the exploitation of the romance's central symbol which prohibits interpretation, insisting on the 'undecidability' of meaning. […], Hawthorne sets up a signifying system in order to overthrow it: far from mingling fact and fiction, history and romance, he *severs* their relation, preferring a signifying practice which foregrounds intertextuality and plurality. *The Scarlet Letter* is a dialogical discourse which is not only a romance but a discourse *about* romance. Hawthorne insists on the fictive nature of *all* signifying systems, whether they be history or literature, the structures of 'reality' or of imagination. (21)

The impossibility of discerning the true meaning of the letter is more than apparent. It all depends on what every witness of the events chooses to interpret and understand out of what his or her recollections are. Hawthorne is thus breaking up the traditionally fixed context of history. In fact,

> History as experienced by individuals in time has none of the ordered, categorized causality that it is afforded by the scientific recording of facts and figures in the annals of a nation. Instead it reveals a realm of unpredictable contingencies, of confusion, of ambiguity and uncertainty, of temporal and spatial disorientation. (Cohen 23)

Therefore, no meaning can be claimed to be true, but neither can it be deemed false. The letter means different things for different people. It transcends meaning.

Going even deeper into its transcending meaning, the narrator states that "The

scarlet letter had not done its office" (184) close to the end of chapter 13. This sentence is presented on its own in between two long paragraphs in a clear attempt to highlight it. The ten chapters left until the end of the book describe some sort of revolution within Hester's life. The story races towards its denouement. Hester decides to confront Roger Chillingworth and to speak openly with Arthur Dimmesdale about her legal husband, a Mr. Prynne that has become Mr. Chillingworth. In her encounter with the Reverend Dimmesdale in the forest, Hester's words give him strength to even consider the possibility of leaving the settlement along with his daughter and her mother. The reverend returns to the society transformed into a new man after their meeting. This is so because her living isolated has left her "caught between the Puritanism of the New England village and the romanticism of the forest. Out of this conflict, she discovers another way of seeing the world, which includes both, but is not limited to either" (Pearson 143-4). She learns to think for herself outside the mental framework imposed within the community. In doing so, Hester once again looks very similar to her creator.

Hester's last rebellious action is presented in chapter 17, "The Pastor and his Parishioner". She purposefully meets Reverend Dimmesdale in the forest and feels extremely sorry for him. It is in order to help him, and, perhaps, due to the passion of the moment, that Hester displays her free thinking and independent will and states that their past act "[…] had a consecration of its own" (Scarlet 212). With these words, Hester has defied her judges and has let her true character free. She is, once again, the romantic heroine that does not mind fighting for a lost cause as long as she considers it worth the effort. Hester feels so brave that she resolves to go away from the place where she was stigmatized and to move somewhere else along with her daughter and her beloved Dimmesdale. "Up, and away!" (Scarlet 215) are her encouraging words to the frail man. At

the beginning of the following chapter Hester "[…] undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and, taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves" (Scarlet 219). What is more, she tells the reverend that they do not have to "[…] look back," […] for "The past is gone!" (Scarlet 219). Hester's boiling happiness leads her as far as to get rid of "[…] the formal cap that confined her hair; and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features" (Scarlet 220). However, this passionate outburst of Hester's takes place in the forest, a place where no one from the community can bear witness to it. That is, Hawthorne seems to be suggesting that Hester's courage remains confined to places outside the limits of society. The moment she returns to the civilized world, Hester resumes her role as the repentant sinner; she knows how to keep appearances. In the end, she has just adopted a new strategy: she performs the role society expects of her, while her mind is completely free. Hester's behavior is clearly denouncing Hawthorne's contemporaries' obsession with keeping up appearances instead of favoring, as they claimed to do, the naked truth.

Hawthorne restores Hester's natural beauty because she has been capable of behaving as she used to before being burdened with the scarlet A. He shares her untamable nature and her urge to fight and he again shows it after this. All of a sudden, Hester is described by the narrator using the same terms as he used the moment readers saw her for the first time on the scaffold:

> There played around her mouth, and beamed out of her eyes, a radiant and tender smile, that seemed to be gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheek, […]. Her sex, her *youth* [emphasis mine], and the

> whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the *irrevocable* [emphasis mine] past, and clustered themselves, with her *maiden* [emphasis mine] hope, […]. (Scarlet 220)

In spite of all the richness and happiness displayed by the narrator in this scene, he also includes, in my opinion, certain key words that may be foretelling the end of this hopeful rebellion. I think that "youth, maiden" and "irrevocable" are trying to make readers understand that the decision Hester has just taken is conditioned by her youthful, but now gone, passionate character and that the past is not behind her, as she would want to believe, since that is something no one can modify. Hawthorne is implying that Hester's plan to escape will have no future at all. He is well aware of society's power to control open rebelliousness. Once again, the blame falls on society, not on Hester.

Hester's only link with what is socially accepted storms in to bring her back to reality. Pearl takes charge of the situation and will not lose it anew. The minute Pearl realizes her mother has taken the letter off from her clothes, she "[…] burst into a fit of passion, […]" (Scarlet 226) and does not calm down until Hester replaces it. The child has such a power over her mother that she does not obey her when Hester asks her to bring the letter to her, but makes her mother get up and fetch it herself, as if wanting to punish Hester: "'Bring it hither!' said Hester. 'Come thou and take it up!' answered Pearl" (Scarlet 227). It is only when Hester has resumed her usual aspect, that is, when she relocates the scarlet A on her chest and covers her hair, that Pearl acknowledges her as her mother. Hester notices it, and asks the girl "Dost thou know thy mother now, child?" (Scarlet 228). Hester tries to make her daughter feel guilty by having forced her to wear the letter afresh, and she adds to her previous question "[…] now that she has shame upon her,–now that she

is sad?" (Scarlet 228). But Pearl ignores her mother's reproachful remarks and simply says "Yes; now I will" […] "Now thou art my mother indeed! And I am thy little Pearl!" (Scarlet 228). Pearl goes further and in a rare burst of love towards her mother she "[…] kissed her brow and both her cheeks" (Scarlet 228). However, this love token is accompanied by a gesture which leaves no doubt with respect to Pearl's position in the book. After kissing Hester, Pearl "[…] kissed the scarlet letter too!" (Scarlet 228). Pearl is Hester's only reminder of what is socially appropriate; having a daughter

> curbs Hester's rage against the community and its laws enough for her to resist the temptations that witchcraft and other means of subverting the Puritan society hold. Moreover, Pearl's existence forces Hester to think no only in terms of what she can do for herself, but also in terms of the future for other women, including her daughter. Having a daughter, […], ultimately forces Hester to be invested not in undermining the community, but in altering it as much as possible to ensure future opportunities for women. (Maibor 72)

Pearl does not let her mother leave her past behind because that will also imply erasing the child's origins. Besides, there is no room for a romantic hero in their world, so Hester has to find subtler ways to improve the society for women's sake, for Pearl's sake. I consider this chapter an implicit statement of purpose by Hawthorne concerning his particular dispute with society's restrictive ways concerning women.

I commented before that, in my opinion, Hester was representing the romancer, and Pearl stood for the romance itself. I also mentioned that Hawthorne was using these two female characters to play with two genres, novel and romance, and that Pearl displayed characteristics typical of some of the children in, for example, Dickens' works. This may seem to be utterly contradictory, but it is not. From the very beginning of this dissertation, I

insisted on Hawthorne's exposing of conventions and subverting literary genres, which are also a social norm. Therefore, what looks like a contradiction in terms is but another example of Hawthorne's strategies to play the game while sabotaging it from the inside. *The Scarlet Letter* is one of the means Hawthorne chose to undermine, or at least to question, some traditional values of his contemporaries. Like, for example, the clear-cut distinction between good and evil─called into question by Dimmesdale and Chillingworth─, the importance of appearances─subverted by Hester herself─, or, moving to the literary world, the neat categorization of genres. Hawthorne wrote according to his own principles and following his personal ideas about literature, but the reading public did not quite like his style. Hawthorne's allegories, the almost impossibility to get easy simple messages from his books, and the fact that some of his stories look like riddles (e.g. the Postcript he had to add to *The Marble Faun* in order to clarify the book a little bit more), did not help him to be among the top ten selling authors in his times. Therefore, Hawthorne, like Hester, was fighting against the odds, but still remaining true to himself until the end. The character of Pearl is just another example of the ambiguity he uses in all his works. She looks like the embodiment of the letter itself. But she can also be read as a romance. However, as I have mentioned before, as the child becomes an adult, she can be interpreted as the typical heroine of a traditional drama: the offspring of an impious action who grows up in a wild environment and is finally rescued by Providence. Hawthorne was perfectly aware of it, as we will find out once we reach the end of the book, which is open to diverging interpretations.

In chapter 11, Pearl had made another gesture which exposes her ties with social standards. The playful girl "[…] took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best as she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother's. A

letter,–the letter A–, but freshly green, instead of scarlet!" (Scarlet 195). We could read this episode under two different lights. On the one hand, it could be understood that as she is just a little girl who has grown up contemplating, every single day of her young life, that very object on her mother's breast, Pearl has copied the letter for the fun of it, to try to look like her mom; the child repeating what her mother does. On the other hand, however, there is another possible interpretation of Pearl's behavior, since she is showing her mother the intimate tie that exists between the letter and her little person. This child is the product of an action which resulted in that letter, so Pearl does not want to part with it. The color of the letter is a very remarkable detail. The letter A is now green and appears on a little girl's bosom, meaning, for example, a fresh start for womanhood and changing, once more, the meaning of the letter. The meaning of the letter is never openly stated by the narrator. It remains a mystery even at the end of the book. Therefore, it is possible to consider Pearl's green A as a symbol of better times to come for women.

Since the Market-Place is one of the most important locations in the book, where readers first learn about the main characters, as well as about the official meaning of the letter, it is appropriate to be the last location. It is the most public place in the community and, ironically, the place holding all the secrets: the name of Pearl's father in the first scene, the midnight meeting of the illicit Dimmesdale family and the supernatural apparition of what some interpreted as an scarlet A in the sky in chapter 12, and Reverend Dimmesdale's confession in the last chapter. The family was the principal institution during the 19th century and before. The public reunion/presentation of this family happens on the scaffold, the same place where Hester's sinful behavior was condemned and where she was marked as an adulteress. Following Joel Pfister, this is Hawthorne's way of maintaining the ambivalence of his text till the end. On the one hand, Hawthorne appears to be condemning

Hester by letting her stand by her beloved on a shameful platform alone. On the other hand, he can be criticizing the traditional Puritan world as well. Hawthorne keeps playing his ambivalent game.

Chapters 21 and 22 depict a very special day in the Puritan settlement, the day when "[…] the new Governor was to receive his office at the hands of the people," (Scarlet 241) and everybody was appropriately prepared for such an important occasion. Hester is also unusually excited, not due to the official celebration, but because she has her own dreams feeding her hope. This woman believes that within a brief lapse of time "[…] she will be beyond your reach! A few hours longer, and the deep, mysterious ocean will quench and hide for ever the symbol which ye have caused to burn upon her bosom!" (Scarlet 242). But instead of Hester's voice, what we hear in this sentence is the narrator's, who seems to be addressing the Puritans himself. This attitude of the narrator

> enables Hawthorne to provide a "heightened *aesthetic* frame" that becomes a "mode of objectifying subjectivity." Like Schlegel and Bakhtin, Hawthorne privileges the "double-voiced genre of fictional narrative," which "generates a 'higher' subjectivity," which he in turn objectifies, in an open-ended sequence. (Bailey 94)

This technique helps him to maintain and reinforce the ambivalence present throughout the book. Hawthorne organized a give and take game where he feels free to use subversive elements because he previously dresses them up.

Arthur Dimmesdale, Pearl's father and the man with whom Hester intends to run away, proves to be excessively socialized and is the one who makes Hester's illusions collapse. He has not been able either to confess his partnership with Hester, or to live peacefully without giving much thought to what they both did. The reverend has purged his sin in his way, by destroying his nature and reducing his person to a shadow of what he

used to be. Nevertheless, he seems to have gained some kind of strength and Mr. Dimmesdale will surprise the whole community by publicly acknowledging his relation with Hester and Pearl. It will be this confession which will add the final drop to Pearl's process of socialization. After delivering the speech his neighbors expected reverend Arthur Dimmesdale to "[…] stretch(ed) forth his arms. 'Hester,' said he, 'come hither! Come, my little Pearl!'" (Scarlet 265). From this point onwards, little Pearl's attitude towards her father changes. She senses that something extremely relevant for her future is about to happen and does not want to ruin it. When some time before he had kissed her, "[…]Pearl broke away from her mother, and, running to the brook, stooped over it, and bathed her forehead, until the unwelcome kiss was quite washed off" (Scarlet 229), but things are going to be different now. This time they were not in the forest, but in a public place where lots of people can see them and notice that they are a family. The child battles against hypocrisy using all her resources. While on the scaffold: there are lots of eyes fixed upon them, she is part of a public act with the whole town as witnesses. The moment Dimmesdale summons them by his side, Pearl "[…] flew to him, and clasped her arms about her knees" (Scarlet 265). If he publicly acknowledged her as his daughter, she freely obeys him as her father. But this reaction on Pearl's part can only take place once Dimmesdale has abandoned his hypocrisy, not before. Pearl loves her mother as long as she wears the scarlet letter, and she only accepts her father's kisses if he admits his transgression. She cannot stand appearances and hypocrisy.

Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale confesses being Pearl's father and, consequently, Hester's lover. He admits his sin and uses all his remaining strength to do so, for this scene is also the man's dying moment. Before expiring, Dimmesdale addresses Pearl and begs her for a kiss, and the little girl "[…] kissed his lips" (Scarlet 268). With this kiss Pearl,

becomes a rightful member of society and leaves behind all those traits that brought to mind her mother's passionate character. She will no longer be considered the human sister of Hester's scarlet letter, but simply a girl who is to become a woman. The narrator explains to us that "[…] as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it" (Scarlet 268).

Pearl has received her rightful place in the world as the result of her father's confession. No one will ever despise her as the daughter of an adulteress. However, this recognition is only half of the reward awaiting Pearl. She becomes a rich woman for "At old Roger Chillingworth's decease […], he bequeathed a very considerable amount of property, both here and in England, to little Pearl" (Scarlet 272-3). So the protagonist of our novel has seen, as oftentimes happens in this genre, all her childhood sufferings compensated. She has money, a high social position, which can be deduced from the "[…] armorial seals […]" (Scarlet 274) in the letters she sends to her mother, and a marriage. The narrator explains that investigations carried away by some government officials who were in the same post as he is now proved that "[…] Pearl was not only alive, but married and happy, […]" (Scarlet 274), the essential requirement a woman needed to fulfill to be well considered by society.

Hester, on her part, behaves as a romantic heroine to the end. On the scaffold, Pearl finally kisses her father and is transformed into a true social creature. Hester sticks to her romantic dreams and asks Dimmesdale whether they will "[…] not spend our immortal life together?" She even reassures, not so much the man, but herself, since she considers that "Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another, with all this woe!" (Scarlet 269). Hester

Prynne is the idealist in Hawthorne's text and does not want to assume, as Dimmesdale explains to her, that it is "[…] vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting pure reunion" (Scarlet 269). She refuses to accept as sinful their act of love and the origin of her daughter. Dimmesdale yields to the social establishment, but Hester trusts God's benevolence and does not conform to the laws of men. Actually, as Nicolaus Mills remarks, "The Puritans adopt an attitude toward Hester exactly opposite the one Jesus followed when the woman taken in adultery was brought before him and he challenged those who were without sin to cast the first stone" (56). Therefore, Hester keeps her faith in the divine justice even though she does not agree with her human judges.

Hester and Pearl leave the New England settlement, but "[…] Hester Prynne had returned, and taken up her long-forsaken shame" (Scarlet 273). She went back to the place where her life was forever changed and "[…] comforted and counselled" (Scarlet 275) those women who suffered and went to her asking for help. However, she "[…] recognized the impossibility […]" of being "[…] the destined prophetess" (Scarlet 275) that would change women's destinies because she was socially stigmatized. Pearl is a new woman who does not hide her past, but tries to adapt herself to the rules of the new world she is living in now. This girl suffered as a child, but as I have already remarked, there are many novels with children who go through tough experiences in their childhood and are, by the end of their stories, pleasantly surprised by life. In these terms, Pearl's part of the story can be considered novelistic and, therefore, follows society's conventions. Hester, on the other hand, wanted to fight and leave her past behind, as she entreated Dimmesdale to do in their forest meeting, but as she was prevented from doing so, she chose to return to the New England town where her whole life changed.

Some feminist scholars argue that this denouement clearly exemplifies Hawthorne's misogynist attitude. They claim that he turns one of the female characters into a traditionally perfect rich wife, and that he makes the other one go back to the Puritan community to wear the letter again. They claim that he punishes Hester with this act. However, there are some problems with this claim. To begin with, the meaning of the letter is no longer what it previously was; it depends on who looks at the letter, on what the looker knows about Hester and on when in the story that action takes place. As shown before, Hawthorne managed to transcend meaning. On the other hand, Hester is the one choosing to go back to her old residence. No one imposes it upon her. As Bell explains,

> it is by *forsaking* open rebellion, by reassuming her part in society, that Hester is at last able to realize her individuality and freedom. And this paradox lies at the heart, not only of Hester's story, but of Hawthorne's conception of the art of fiction. […]. To be sure, Hester, in view of her own sinfulness, renounces all pretension to being herself the "destined prophetess" of this new order, but we should attend to the irony here. It is her outwardly humble renunciation of this role that allows her, in fact, to play it; for in what sense is a woman who announces a "firm belief" in a new order *not* a prophetess? […]. Hawthorne, like Hester, rebels rather through indirection, through ironic subversion, through showing not the worst but something whereby the worst might be inferred […]. (Bell, Culture 52-3)

The end of *The Scarlet Letter* is Hawthorne's best deceiving maneuver. He seems to be taking away from Hester those dangerous thoughts mentioned in chapter 13. At the same time, she does wear the scarlet letter again but, is she acknowledging her sinful past making the Puritans believe they have saved another soul or is she subversively mocking at then? With her return, Hester is opening a new path for women. She is showing young women

from the community, most likely the daughters of the stern Puritan matrons who used to ask for a stricter punishment for her at the beginning, that they can live an independent life. According to Baym,

> What Hester achieves through Dimmesdale's death, however, is unique in that it is a loving─that is, womanly─life without a man. It prefigures and registers the eruption of women into the public sphere through various forms of culturally acceptable womanly activity, what historians have come to call "domestic feminism." ("Revisiting" 122)

In the 19th century, Hawthorne created a 17th-century female character, who dared to live as an independent woman without any male support within a Puritan settlement. The end of *The Scarlet Letter* does not show Hawthorne's anti-feminism, but rather his discontent with his times and his efforts to change, for example, the women situation and their role in society. As a man used to living surrounded by women, he not only broke up the social convention of the literary canon by playing with genres but also tried to expose some dangerous conventions against women in *The Scarlet Letter*.

3. *The House of the Seven Gables*. The Fall of Traditions

3.1. Achieving "a certain latitude"

The previous chapter shows how the actions of a woman can transcend the meaning of a letter which was conceived as a punishment. It presents a 17th-century woman who peacefully and subtly changed the attitude of a Puritan community towards her. At the same time, to the eyes of a 20th- and 21st-century audiende, it opened a door to hope for women in Hawthorne's own society. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne exposes the rigid morality of his Puritan ancestors in an ambivalent way: not by openly questioning their customs, but by presenting a number of facts in an apparently unbiased style. Again, Hawthorne is merely the editor.

This current chapter analyzes *The House of the Seven Gables*, a text which gives us a portrait of the weight of inherited family traditions upon the individual. *The House* portrays the lives of four people, two men and two women, within the boundaries of the Pyncheons' family house, the oldest one in the city, full of family traditions. These four characters need to find their own way out not only of the house itself, but also of the corrupting family history enclosed within its walls. They need to come to terms with their past and look towards their future as individuals, not as members of one or another of the families involved in the plot.

In the Preface to the story, the narrator refers to the author in the third person singular, as if author and narrator were two distinct individuals. According to Bell,

> This stance of what we might call self-dissociation—this radical separation of the voice that speaks to us from the subjects about which it speaks, this separation of the sociable *speaker* from the antisocial *person*—lies at the heart of the narrative strategy of much of Hawthorne's best fiction. (Culture 18)

He stresses individuality from the very first pages of the text, but he also creates ambiguity regarding who said what. In a way that reminds us about the veracity of the written accounts regarding Hester in *The Scarlet Letter,* there is again somebody else mediating between the author and his readers. The author's message is filtered through the narrator. The narrator is the one who, in the preface as well, explains the author's message to his readers. According to the narrator, the author's moral in this particular story is

> the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief;–and he would feel a singular gratification, if this Romance might effectually convince mankind (or, indeed, any one man) of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms. (House 2)

These words clearly show the author's disagreement with pressing upon individuals a whole set of family traditions, with making a person live according to what is expected of him/her due to his/her belonging to a given family. He distinctively affirms the need to break free from those old-fashioned traditions which, instead of providing the inheritor with good, provides quite the opposite.

Apart from presenting the moral behind his story, the narrator also comments on the genre used by the author to create the text. The narrator explains that the author chose to call "his work a Romance" (House 1) because he wanted "to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us" (House 2). At the same time, the narrator remarks that the text

> is a Legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into

> our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the Reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events, for the sake of a picturesque effect. (House 2)

As it was pointed out in the previous chapter, when distinguishing between novel and romance, Hawthorne could also be dealing with History vs. Fiction, with a very thin line separating them. According to the narrator, this is precisely why the author decided to call this book a romance. He was actually playing with both fictitious and allegedly historical events. Therefore, since he was not writing a historical account of events, he could "claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel" (House 1). With the author detaching himself from the facts narrated in the story, he took his customary aesthetic distance. Simultaneously, the narrator mentions that the author would like to count with his readers' involvement as to the final effect of the text, but that, in any case, readers are free to leave out the legendary touches of the story if they so please. This call to his readers may also be trying to make them more receptive to his message, or, at least, to pay more attention to what they are about to read.

The preface is setting the tone of the whole book. On the one hand, it shows the writer's discontent with hereditary traditions and rigid social customs, i.e. social classes, unmovable social roles, blood lines, etc. On the other hand, it follows the path already opened in "The Custom-House" and in *The Scarlet Letter* of Hawthorne playing around with literary genres, as well as with alleged fact and fiction, to subvert them. He chose topics which contained elements from the Puritan chronicles and presented them under an unconventional light letting the reader decide what to make of them. Nonetheless, he, as an

author, used all the literary strategies available to shed more light on one of the options. As Bell comments,

> the *Seven Gables* preface is a truly remarkable performance. Hawthorne was fascinated with the antisocial and abnormal, but he never openly identified himself with them. Thus, in the preface, Hawthorne, or the persona he adopts, openly announces that his book is a romance; yet this persona manages to seem wholly ignorant, as Hawthorne himself surely was not, of the subversive implications of such an announcement. He makes it sound perfectly safe, straightforward, morally neutral; […] although Hawthorne ignores the conventional sense of the subversive authority of romance, he does not specifically reject it, and he puts nothing else in its place. (Culture 39-40)

While the writer in *The Scarlet Letter* claimed to be only the editor, in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* he does acknowledge to be the author, but then he introduces the figure of the narrator and clearly states that the text is "a Legend". Even though he used two different techniques, the outcome is similar: Readers cannot be certain of who said what to whom and if that is what really happened. Although he does not state his editing role, he can be said to imply it. Somehow, he does not seem to accept full responsibility for creating *The House*. Hawthorne remains faithful to the style he used in *The Scarlet Letter*. He appears to have been aware of exposing some of the social conventions of his times, but, as Hester within her story, Hawthorne did not do so boisterously.

The end of the preface closes the circle opened at the beginning. In the last paragraph, the narrator goes back to discussing the genre of the text. He explains that the author "trusts not to be considered as unpardonably offending, by laying out a street that infringes upon nobody's private rights, and appropriating a lot of land which had no visible

owner, and building a house, of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air" (House 3). The narrator insists that the author wrote a romance which had nothing to do "with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex" (House 3). It seems that the writer wanted to construct his own edifice and make a brand new start away from inherited traditions.

The reader is led through the story in a way similar to the way one was led through *The Scarlet Letter*. Facts are presented by a narrator, probably the same one who detached himself from the author in the preface, who explains that "No written record of this dispute is known to be in existence. Our acquaintance with the whole subject is derived chiefly from tradition" (House 7). That is, the author compiled testimonies about the story from different people. He did not create the book out of the blue. Besides, by claiming that there is "No written record" (House 7) about his narration, he avoids having his version of the story confronted with the official one. These statements pose a double maneuver. On the one hand, since no written record exists, the story can be deemed to be equally true or false. It will all depend on the listener's / reader's point of view. On the other hand, the author chose the unofficial history as the source of his story, and edited the oral tradition of the common folk. By doing so, Hawthorne may be said to reject

> the popular monological discourse of mimetic fiction in favour of a dialogical discourse "in which writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of deconstructive genesis." Kristeva, explicating Bahktin, claims that "dialogue and ambivalence are borne out as the only approach that permits the writer to enter history by espousing an ambivalent ethics: negation and affirmation. (Cohen 22)

It appears that Hawthorne used several people's versions instead of a single official one to

force his readers to question what they read. Although there is a narrator conducting the story, Hawthorne leaves space for other voices to people his text. *The House* is told by plain people who are allowed to express their views. The author rearranges all the versions, but, still, they are not obliterated. In consequence, since the narration is a compilation of stories, a number of different meanings can be extracted from it. Whatever the case, i.e. regardless what meaning or meanings the public can get from it, it is clear that any intention or purpose of one official discourse is completely out of question.

The narrator comments in the preface that the author objects to imposing family legacies on generations to come, and that the text is based upon legends and popular folklore. In the opening pages of the book, the author himself explains that his story is "derived chiefly from tradition" (House 7), as opposed to written official documents. Later on, the author remarks that "Tradition–which sometimes brings down truth that history has let slip, but is oftener the wild babble if the time, such as was formerly spoken at the fireside, and now congeals in newspapers–tradition is responsible for all contrary averments" (House 17). Therefore, it can be argued that the author wishes to challenge the imposition of a monological discourse, especially the one set by inherited family traditions or official versions of events, over a less powerful one. What is more, *The House* can be interpreted to question the structure of the Hawthorne's society.

3.2. Inside a Seven-Gabled House

Interestingly enough, the building from which its inhabitants want to get way, has a total of seven gables, a number that possesses a strong connection with some fundamental pillars of the Western civilization. Number seven is highly meaningful in the foundation of Western civilization. It relates to the Roman Empire, to Judaism, and to Christianity. The names of

the seven days of the week have their roots in the Roman world. Number seven stands for the seven tribes of Israel, represented in the seven-armed candelabra. It also accounts for the seven Christian Capital Sins and the corresponding seven Fundamental Virtues. It seems safe to say that Hawthorne's seven gables and its fictional house can be read as the foundations of the Western world itself, with all its traditions and social structure depicted, as well as with the Puritan Fathers' views on sins and virtues. What is more, according to Bellis *The House of the Seven Gables* displays "[…] potential for critical engagement with ─ and even direct attack upon ─ the forms of legal and economic power" (32). Therefore, by challenging the way of life within his seven-gabled house, the text can also be read as exposing the way of life led in Hawthorne's own society, and, taking into account the different meanings of number seven, in the Western society in more general terms.

The first chapter of the book, "The Old Pyncheon Family", introduces not the main characters, but the families they belong to and the unsettled, centuries-long dispute between them. The only names given are the two family ones: the Pyncheons and the Maules. Nevertheless, there is one character who is referred to by his Christian name: Matthew Maule, one of the two men who set the family feud running. This man was the owner of the first house built in the now called Pyncheon Street. Actually, his home was demolished after his death to construct the Pyncheon one. Conveniently enough, old Maule was accused, condemned, and executed for alleged witchcraft. The narrator refers to Mr. Maule's execution in very interesting terms. He explains to his readers that Matthew Maule

> was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion which should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be the leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob. Clergymen, judges, statesmen–the wisest, calmest,

> holiest persons of their day–stood in the inner circle roundabout the gallows, loudest to applaud the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived. (House 7-8)

It seems clear that the narrator is expressing his complaint at Matthew Maule's execution in particular, and on the witchcraft trials in general, therein his selection of the word "martyrs". Besides, the terms employed to refer to the local authorities expose their sometimes unfair behavior and their fallibility as part of the human condition. These words call into question the true motives lying behind old Matthew Maule's accusation and later execution. Therefore, they can also be read as exposing Colonel Pyncheon's attitude towards Mr. Maule and his family. As I pointed out when analyzing *The Scarlet Letter*, the author seems to be siding up with the less favored ones and the ones who were unfairly judged by his/her peers and dispossessed of their honor or of their home and land. He opens a space for the voices of "the others".

"The Old Pyncheon Family" chapter portrays the two families involved in the story of the book and can be understood as challenging the traditionally unquestionable judgment of powerful wealthy families─they deserve all the rights simply because they have the power─, like the Pyncheons. The narrator takes every chance to add a subtle comment on the socially unhealthy status of long established lineages. From his point of view, for example,

> There is something so massive, stable, and almost irresistibly imposing, in the exterior presentment of established rank and great possessions, that their very existence seems to give them a right to exist; at least, so excellent a counterfeit of right, that few poor and humble men have moral force enough to question it, even in their secret minds. (House 25)

Since the poor did not dare to speak up against the wealthy, the narrator appears to be doing so himself. This comment connects with "the truth" (House 2) that the author wanted his readers to extract from the whole story. The author seems to be exposing the unfairness of inherited ranks within a contemporary society. His words can be read as showing the inequality that is created by certain traditions, and the crimes which are sometimes committed to preserve them. He looks to be challenging the structure of Western society.

On the other hand, if we bear in mind that in the 18th and 19th centuries the novel was associated with the bourgeoisie, since only the clergy and the wealthy knew how to read and write, the subtle attack upon traditions can also be understood as challenging the novel itself. In the preface to the text, the narrator explains that the author had written a romance, which can be considered an attempt to break up with the novelistic tradition. Nevertheless, as I have already suggested, it seems that the author was actually blending novel and romance to create his own genre, a new genre apart from conventions and traditions, and one which could not be stigmatized as serving this or that social class, but truth only. In the preface, the narrator explains that for the author

> A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skillfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first. (House 2-3)

This is the reason why the moral of the whole book is openly presented at the beginning of the preface. Readers do no have to wait until the end of the text to understand its message. Rather, it is introduced in the opening pages and developed and reinstated throughout the story.

The second chapter, "The Little Shop-Window", bears witness to this. The moral of

the text is the wrong which family traditions can bring about to individuals, and this chapter portrays a Pyncheon whose family name has provided Miss Pyncheon only with misfortune. Readers are introduced to Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon, "A lady–who had fed herself from childhood with the shadowy food of aristocratic reminiscences, and whose religion it was, that a lady's hand soils itself irremediably by doing aught for bread–" (House 37). However, the economic situation of Miss Hepzibah is quite unstable so "this born lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank. Poverty, treading closely at her heels for a lifetime, has come up with her at last" (House 37-8). There is only one way out for Miss Hepzibah, "She must earn her food, or starve!" (House 38). The narrator portrays an aristocratic lady, member of the most prominent family in the city, who needs to work to be able to pay for her sustenance. The fact that a Pyncheon lady is about to start working is already shocking enough. But the fact that she is opening a cent-shop in "the gable fronting on the street" (House 34) turns out to be even more shocking, considering her family name. The shop was established by "an unworthy ancestor, nearly a century ago" (House 34), but was closed down the very day that ancestor died. However, Miss Hepzibah needs to resort to the shop again, which strikes another blow to the pride of the Pyncheon name. Although in some aspects she may be considered a traditional woman, Hepzibah shows enough courage to take the step of setting up her little shop within the Pyncheon house. She is the first woman in the family who dares to go against the Pyncheon traditions by following the steps of her "unworthy ancestor" (House 34) to support herself on her own terms. We can see something similar in the author's comments in "The Custom-House" about his ancestors scorning him for choosing literature as his career. He mentions his being unworthy of the deeds of his deceased relatives affecting his family name. In *The House*, the Pyncheon who first opened

the shop was also deemed unworthy, and, consequently, Hepzibah can be called so as well. Therefore, a link between the writer of "The Custom-House" and Hepzibah can be established. Bearing in mind the moral presented in the preface, it reasonably follows to connect Hepzibah with the author of *The House* as well. As was the case with the author favoring Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, it also seems that he takes sides with Hepzibah in *The House*.

The narrator's preference for Hepzibah as opposed to the society she lives in can be appreciated in the terms employed to refer to her and to society. He portrays Hepzibah as a person "whose heart never frowned. It was naturally tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations; […]. Nor had Hepzibah ever any hardihood, except what came from the very warmest nook in her affections" (House 34). It is true that at certain points the narrator appears to be laughing at Hepzibah. For example, when she is getting ready to open her shop for the very first time, he remarks that

> It was overpoweringly ridiculous–we must honestly confess it–the deportment of the maiden lady, while setting her shop in order for the public eye. She stole on tiptoe to the window, as cautiously as if she conceived some bloody-minded villain to be watching behind the elm-tree, with intent to take her life. (House 39)

This irony serves its purpose. It is not just a question of making fun of Hepzibah. It is important to bear in mind that

> The omniscient narrator, knowing his characters and everything about them, is able to enter at will into their different consciousness so that an even more expansive world view is possible. […]. It allows the necessary distance so that satire can function and makes the novel what Fielding described as a comic epic in prose, giving it, in effect, another angle by which the real world can be seen. (Rohrberger

127)

Although he seems to feel sympathy for Hepzibah, the narrator also criticizes her while showing her anxiousness. In doing so, he gains his readers trust, who may see him as not fully biased and can trust his version of the story. Besides, his ironic humor contributes to the writers' necessary aesthetic distance and to the readers' more easily acceptance of the moral of the book. In any case, the narrator generally tries to portray Hepzibah as kindly as possible. He acknowledges that "we have been unfortunate enough to introduce our heroine at so inauspicious a juncture" (House 38) and, therefore, asks his readers to "entreat for a mood of due solemnity in the spectators of her fate" and to "behold, in poor Hepzibah, the immemorial lady" (House 38). This sympathetic attitude towards Hepzibah contrasts with a sharper one towards society and its representatives in the story.

Instead of speaking directly of the society Hepzibah chose to isolate herself from, the narrator uses objects to refer to it. For example, while describing one of the rooms in the Pyncheon house, he notices that there were six chairs which "so ingeniously contrived for the discomfort of the human person, that they were irksome even to sight, and conveyed the ugliest possible idea of the state of society to which they could have been adapted" (House 33). This statement emphasizes the moral of the text and makes clear that no matter how unnatural a situation is for the individual, he must abide by the rules of society. At the same time, the narrator exposes how senseless this attitude is. In a similar tone as the one used in "The Custom-House", the narrator of *The House* explains that in the portrait of Old Colonel Pyncheon, the gentleman was "holding a Bible with one hand, and in the other uplifting an iron sword-hilt. The latter object, being more successfully depicted by the artist, stood out in far greater prominence than the sacred volume" (House 33). This society, as the one depicted in "The Custom-House", puts the war-like values first and then

the religious ones, which does not project a kind image of it, as he tries to do with Hepzibah's. What is more, the closing down of this second chapter can be read as mocking the traditional high narratives, the moralizing novels. The narrator, using Hepzibah's peculiar aspect as an excuse, reflects on the writer's duty. He points out that

> It is a heavy annoyance to a writer, who endeavors to represent nature, its various attitudes and circumstances, in a reasonably correct outline and true coloring, that so much of the mean and ludicrous should be hopelessly mixed up with the purest pathos which life anywhere supplies to him. (House 41)

This comment contrasts with the narrator's words in the preface where he explained that the writer had intended to build "a house, of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air" (House 3), which has nothing to do with portraying the world in a realistic way. Besides, the narrator wonders

> How can we elevate our history of retribution for the sin of long ago, when, as one of our most prominent figures, we are compelled to introduce–not a young and lovely woman, nor even the stately remains of beauty, storm-shattered by affliction–but a gaunt, sallow, rusty-joined maiden, in a long-waisted silk-gown, and with the strange horror of a turban on her head! (House 41)

This seems to be a highly ironic statement where the author exposes the traditional structure of novels and their standardized female characters. He chose to create an unconventional female character as one of the cornerstones of his narratives and he seems to be aware of how far his option is from the literary conventions of his time. He closes the chapter reinforcing his stand. The narrator points out that

> Life is made up of marble and mud. And, without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of a

> sneer, as well as an immitigable frown, in the iron countenance of fate. What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid. (House 41)

This comment seems to suggest that, in the narrator's opinion, any book that wishes to portray nature as it truly is should not depict beautiful young women and handsome brave men only. It should also show characters like Hepzibah, who are not physically appealing, but who are good honest people who do not harbor any "single bitter thought against the world at large, or one individual man or woman. She wished them all well" (House 43). Ending the second chapter with that statement can also be understood as breaking away with literary conventions by exposing their flaws and getting away from archetypal heroes and villains. Novels claim to be realistically portraying daily life, but usually choose the most attractive ones as leading characters. On the other hand, the author of *The House* states to be writing a romance by using some marvelous elements. Nevertheless, he is the one who, according to his own argument, depicts life more closely to what it really is.

Nonetheless, in "A Day Behind the Counter", chapter IV, the narrator introduces a female character who fits into the description of that "young and lovely woman" he previously mentioned. This character is Phoebe Pyncheon, Hepzibah's young cousin who lives in the countryside. The first details we learn about her is that she is "so fresh, so unconventional, and yet so orderly and obedient to common rules, as you at once recognized her to be, was widely in contrast, at that moment, with everything about her" (House 68). From the moment of her arrival, the narrator is setting her apart from Hepzibah and from the house itself. Phoebe is young and beautiful, while Hepzibah is older and near-sighted, which endows her with a stern look that does not do her character any

justice—again, pointing out how misleading appearances can be. Besides, the house is older and gloomier, which makes the contrast with Phoebe's presence greater. The title of the next chapter openly states the distance separating the two cousins: "May and November". Everything about Phoebe is transformed by her presence, which is an archetypal use, and which links this character to the conventional novel. She is referred to as "one of God's angels" (House 82) and, according to the narrator, Phoebe has "the gift of practical arrangement" (House 71), which strikingly contrasts with the "native inapplicability, so to speak, of the Pyncheons to any useful purpose" (House 77). What is more, she is linked to the most beautiful elements in nature:

> Finding the new guest there–with a bloom on her cheeks, like the morning's own, and a gentle stir of departing slumber in her limbs, as when an early breeze moves the foliage–the Dawn kissed her brow. It was the caress which a dewy maiden–such as the Dawn is, immortally–gives to her sleeping sister, […]. (House 70)

The writer seems to have created in Phoebe the perfect young lady to serve as counterpoint to Hepzibah. However, it should not be forgotten that the narrator also described her as "so orderly and obedient to common rules" (House 68), rules from which Hepzibah moved away long ago in her life. The narrator explains that Hepzibah studied "for the office of instructress. But the love of children had never been quickened in Hepzibah's heart, and was now torpid, if not extinct" (House 39). Phoebe, on the other hand, "was a schoolmistress for the little children, in our district, last summer, and might have been so still" (House 77). Besides, Phoebe herself claims to be "as nice a little saleswoman, as I am a housewife!" (House 78). On top of that, she possesses a "pleasant voice", while Hepzibah's tones are "croaking and hollow" (House 79). Before Phoebe's arrival, the house was "a melancholy place for a young person to be in. It lets in the wind and rain–and the

snow, too, in the garret and upper chambers, in winter-time–but never lets in the sunshine!" (House 74). After the young girl's arrival, "she had fully succeeded in throwing a kindly and hospitable smile over the apartment" (House 72). The text portrays the two opposed female characters common in Hawthorne's longer production. Phoebe fulfills the archetypal characteristics of the conventional heroine of a novel, while Hepzibah fits in the role of Hawthorne's subversive heroines.

Young Phoebe is the perfect, law abiding, young woman, ready to perform any task in a cheerful mood that brightens whatever room she may happen to enter or be in. Her challenge in the story is that she moves to a dark place where "there was neither sunshine nor household fire in one nor the other, and, save for ghosts, and ghostly reminiscences, not a guest" (House 72). It seems to be her mission to bring light into such a dismal lodging and to make her relatives happier. The other female character, Hepzibah, is an old lady who, reflecting on her relationship with her town folks, "wished, too, that she herself were done with them, and in her quiet grave" (House 43). Besides, while Phoebe refers to another character in the story as "a lawless person!" (House 85), Hepzibah clarifies that "he has a law of his own!" (House 85). As the narrator points out, Hepzibah, "formal as she was, still, in her life's experience, she had gnashed her teeth against human law" (House 85). Hepzibah chose to live isolated from society because, apparently, she did not agree with some of its laws. This female character is an unlikely heroine who, as Foucault puts it when discussing the figure of the hero, needs to "face the task of producing himself" (qtd. in Stouck 562) against the world she lives in. These two characters represent what I consider to be the ambivalent relationship Hawthorne maintained with novel and romance, and what I read as his attempts to create a genre of his own out of the combination of the two. As stated above, following the narrator's comments in the preface, the author intends

to expose the flaws of some of the traditions of his period.

Hepzibah and Phoebe are accompanied in the text by four more characters: Holgrave, Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, Uncle Venner, and Clifford Pyncheon, secondary, but important, characters which contribute to the development of the story. Holgrave is introduced in chapter II as "a certain respectable and orderly young man, an artist in the daguerreotype line, who, for about three months back, had been a lodger in a remote gable" (House 30). We learn more about him in the following chapter, where Holgrave is described as "a slender young man, not more than one or two and twenty years old, with rather a grave and thoughtful expression, for his years, but likewise a springy alacrity and vigor" (House 43). The narrator does not give his name, he refers to the young man as "the Daguerreotypist" (House 43), as if his career were more relevant to the story than the family he belongs to. It is Hepzibah the one who, for the first time in the story, addresses him as "Mr. Holgrave" (House 44). But, paradoxically enough, his given name is not known, only his family name. It is a family name that will be discovered at the end of the story to be not quite real, which could explain why the narrator seems to prefer not to use it. Holgrave, following the moral of the text presented in the preface, encourages Hepzibah to continue with her shop. When she complains about her past status as a lady, Holgrave replies that her new position "ends an epoch, and begins one" (House 44). Upon Hepzibah's continued protests regarding family names and the social rank associated to them, Holgrave replies that "In the present–and still more in the future condition of society–they imply, not privilege, but restriction" (House 45). What is more, Holgrave asks Hepzibah to wonder "whether it is not better to be a true woman, than a lady" (House 45), and he poses a very interesting question, which reinforces Hepzibah's unconventional attitude. He asks her if she thinks "that any lady of your family has ever done a more heroic

thing, since this house was built, than you are performing in it to-day?" (House 45). Holgrave's words recall the author's ones in the preface and also Hester's thoughts at the end of *The Scarlet Letter*. From this attitude, we can deduce that the author created the character of Holgrave to support Hepzibah's enterprise. It could also be interpreted as a counterpart to that past unworthiness associated with running a business in the family house. Holgrave is also an artist who "had the strangest companions imaginable" (House 84). They were all "reformers, temperance-lecturers, and all manner of cross-looking philanthropists" (House 84). On top of that, Hepzibah "had read a paragraph in a penny-paper, the other day, accusing him of making a speech, full of wild and disorganizing matter" (House 84). That is, he does not abide to the traditional rules of society. He looks forward to a different society with a completely different set of values. This behavior sets him apart from society making him an outcast, just like Hepzibah. They live under the same old roof and, in their own personal way, they are both transforming the world the house they live in stands for. In spite of being considered "a lawless person!" (House 85) by Phoebe, who complies with the socially established norms and possesses the virtues of the perfect woman of her time, the author devotes a full chapter to him, number XII, "The Daguerreotypist", and another one, chapter XIII, "Alice Pyncheon", to a story / legend, he tells to Phoebe. Under the light of these two facts, it could be inferred that the author of *The House* considers Holgrave a very relevant piece in his board, no matter how society may label him. Holgrave and Hepzibah are the two characters closer to the moral of the text and, as such, they may be read as the author's representatives. Actually, Holgrave can also be interpreted as both Hepzibah's and Phoebe's complement. He serves, on the one hand, to support Hepzibah's unsual attitude, and, on the other, along with Hepzibah, he introduces a discordant grain in Phoebe's idilic universe.

There is another character, however, that can be seen as the representative of tradition and social convention. This is Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, "an elderly gentleman, large and portly, and of remarkably dignified demeanor" (House 56). According to the narrator, Judge Pyncheon "was as well worth looking at as the house" (House 56), a statement which leaves this gentleman in a peculiar position: Is he to be read as the representative of a decaying family? Or as a stately figure on the outside, but all rotten in the inside? There is something dubious in him. Whenever the narrator refers to Judge Pyncheon, he uses ambiguity regarding his true feelings. It is not uncommon that "both the frown and the smile passed successively over his countenance" (House 57), and that the very same thing "seemed not to please him–nay, to cause him exceeding displeasure–and yet, the very next moment, he smiled" (House 57). The narrator remarks that a painter "would have found it desirable to study his face, and prove its capacity for varied expression; to darken it with a frown–to kindle it up with a smile" (House 57). This way of describing Judge Pyncheon makes readers mistrust him and, therefore, side with Hepzibah whenever she happens to face him. Hepzibah feels entitled to having her little shop opened despite her relative's opinion. Talking to herself after realizing her cousin had been observing her shop, Hepzibah says "Take it as you like! You have seen my little shop-window! Well!–what have you to say?–is not the Pyncheon-house my own, while I'm alive?" (House 58). She is ready to defend her right to the family house and to use it as she needs to. Hepzibah is capable of facing her cousin, a respectable wealthy judge, even if she feels threatened by him. As Holgrave pointed out to her, Hepzibah is carrying out an enterprise none of her female ancestors—and maybe not even some of the male ones—would have dared to. In her own way, and within the context of her society, she is a heroic character. Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, on the other hand, remains loyal to traditions as they

are. What is more, according to Hepzibah, who has spent all her life seeing the family portrait, her cousin is the very image of Old Colonel Pyncheon. As she comments to herself, "Put on him a scull-cap, and a band, and a black cloak, and a Bible in one hand and a sword in the other–then let Jaffrey smile as he might–nodoby would doubt that it was the old Pyncheon come again!" (House 59). Hepzibah can be read as an open book. However, Judge Pyncheon appears to be a hypocritical man, extremely concerned with keeping up appearances.

Uncle Venner is presented right after Judge Pyncheon's departure, and he is a very interesting character. No one in town knows how old he is or why they call him uncle, but everybody is familiar with him. According to town folks, "Uncle Venner was commonly regarded as rather deficient, than otherwise, in his wits" (House 61). But, interestingly enough, "he had virtually pleaded guilty to the charge, by scarcely aiming at such success as other men seek, and by taking only that humble and modest part in the intercourse of life, which belongs to the alleged deficiency" (House 61). In other words, the only reason why he is deemed to be a deficient man is his not wishing to socialize in the traditional way. He gets along with people on his own terms and not according to the standard norms. Uncle Venner, like Hepzibah and Holgrave, is also an outcast, each with their own peculiarities. However, according the narrator's words, his being deficient is not an objective fact, but rather the label society has put upon him. Uncle Venner was "a kind of familiar of the house" (House 60) for Hepzibah and he stops by her shop to show her his support. He tells Hepzibah that he is "glad to see" (House 62) her new business opened and encourages her, just as Holgrave did before, when she starts feeling down. For Uncle Venner, Hepzibah's choosing to run a shop is just natural because he considers that "Young people should never live idle in the world, nor old ones neither" (House 62), which goes

against the old families' traditions, the ones Hepzibah recalled when she was about to open her cent-shop. This personage may be Hepzibah's only friend, apart from Holgrave, and he is also a social outcast who follows his own rules.

The last member of the community of the house of the seven gables is Hepzibah's brother, Clifford. The first glimpse of Clifford is offered right after Hepzibah compared Judge Pyncheon with the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon. She looks at another painting of somebody "Soft, mildly and cheerfully contemplative, with full, red lips, just on the verge of a smile, which the eyes seemed to herald by a gentle kindling-up of their orbs! Feminine traits, moulded inseparably with those of the other sex!" (House 59-60). The stern portrait of the first Pyncheon, and the description of Jaffrey Pyncheon himself, pose a sharp contrast with this man's countenance, who appears to be a sweet man. Readers are not told who he is, and Hepzibah cannot help but uttering that "they persecuted his mother in him! He never was a Pyncheon!" (House 60). Later on, reflecting upon Phoebe's qualities, Hepzibah makes a similar comment. She considers that "Phoebe is no Pyncheon. She takes everything from her mother!" (House 79). Interestingly enough, this involuntary connection made by Hepzibah will become real once Phoebe and Clifford meet, since Clifford will choose to spend all his time with the young girl. Clifford is fully portrayed in chapter VII, "The Guest", where the narrator explains that this man "faded away out of his place; or, in other words, his mind and consciousness took their departure, leaving his wasted, gray, and melancholy figure–a substantial emptiness, a material ghosts–to occupy his seat at table" (House 105). He is described as the shadow of the man he once was, deeply troubled by a burden that is not revealed until the end of the story. Nevertheless, the narrator tends to refer to him in a kind way, as if wanting to protect him or to bring back bits and pieces of Clifford's former self. He is portrayed in similar terms as those artists for whom "Beauty

would be his life; his aspirations would all tend towards it; and, allowing his frame and physical organs to be in consonance, his own developments would likewise be beautiful" (House 108). In Clifford, the narrator depicts a character who seems to live in another world, in another time, not in the present of the house of the seven gables. He enjoys the little pleasures his sister provides for him, but he is not aware of the hardship Hepzibah, and he himself, is going through. When he finds out about the cent-shop, he asks her sister "Are we so very poor, Hepzibah?" (House 113). He does not seem to be concerned about shame or disgrace, however. When his sisters brings up those words, he merely replies "What shame can befall me now?" (House 113). There is a heavy burden on Clifford's heart, something that has made him leave behind those social concepts, generally linked to rank, and to dwell within his own sphere. At some point in his life, Clifford had "the heart, and will, and conscience, to fight a battle with the world" (House 108), but, apparently, the outcome of such a battle was not positive for him. In any case, he is also outside the social world and free from its norms. Clifford Pyncheon is just another outcast.

3.3. A Community of Their Own

Hepzibah, Holgrave, Phoebe, and Clifford live in the house of the seven gables. All but Phoebe can be considered outcasts for different reasons. The three of them seem to disregard socially-sanctioned norms and customs. Hepzibah chose to shut herself away from the world and opened up a shop within the precincts of the family house; Holgrave is thought of as a revolutionary in terms of political and scientific ideas; and Clifford "is not quite in his sound senses" (House 125) according to Phoebe and even to her own sister. In the preface, the narrator presented the writer's moral regarding the weight of traditions upon individuals. This peculiar community of the house can be read as three different ways

of dealing with the established social structure. It can be understood that through every character within this community, a different way of dealing with those traditions is presented. In the light of all this, the main clash between society and its outcasts may be represented not in the Pyncheons–Maules dispute, but in the family feud between Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon. Judge Pyncheon insists on supporting Hepzibah and Clifford economically, even on taking them into his own house. However, Hepzibah refuses his offer because, on the one hand, she is convinced that the Judge is moved by appearances, not by his heart. On the other, because the pain Judge Pyncheon inflicted upon her brother, and herself, cannot be healed by money. Hepzibah is aware that good appearances─closing down her cent-shop and living on her cousin's charity─will only worsen her brother's condition. Furthermore, it would help the Judge to feel more powerful.

Regarding the unsettled Pyncheon–Maule dispute, Holgrave, who, as will be disclosed at the end of the book, is a Maule, explains to Hepzibah that "if the Pyncheons had always acted so nobly, I doubt whether the old wizard Maule's anathema, of which you told me once, would have had much weight with Providence against them" (House 45). Holgrave was complimenting Hepzibah on her opening the cent-shop, an action which, as the narrator explained with respect to Hepzibah's ancestor, goes against the Pyncheon traditions. Therefore, according to the last of the Maules, Hepzibah's behavior could contribute to finally bringing to an end the old family problem. That is, it can be deduced from Holgrave's statement that it is by defying her family's norms that Hepzibah can put an end to a long-running dispute. It seems safe to say that the character of Hepzibah portrays a truly advanced woman for her times. As was mentioned regarding Hester, Hepzibah has been living on her own for most of her life. She did not depend on a man to support her, and in her sixties she is bold enough to start up a little business in the family house.

Although she may not be considered so by some feminist critics, Hepzibah, no doubt, fits into Nina Baym's parameters for a feminist character.

Hepzibah is also the one who faces Judge Pyncheon, the representative of human law in town, to protect her brother and her own rights as a person. The Judge wanted to visit Clifford at all costs and see if he could help his cousins, but Hepzibah was not willing to let that happen. She does not yield to his kind entreaties and, therefore, the Judge lets his true colors show by resorting to the traditional policy of subjugating the female. He bluntly tells Hepzibah "why do I talk with you, woman as you are! Make way! I must see Clifford!" (House 129). But Hepzibah does not comply and remains firm in her decision. At this point, the narrator makes a very enlightening comment regarding the Judge, which supports the analysis of the character I previously offered. He explains that "To know Judge Pyncheon, was to see him at that moment. After such a revelation, let him smile with what sultriness he would, he could much sooner turn grapes purple, or pumpkins yellow, than melt the iron-branded impression out of the beholder's memory" (House 129). Interestingly enough, one of the witnesses is Phoebe, who a little while before was considering "running up to Judge Pyncheon, and giving him, of her own accord, the kiss from which she had so recently shrunk away" (House 128). However, Hepzibah, the peculiar heroine of this story, has unmasked the villain and made him show his true nature. Nevertheless, the Judge still tries to mend his mistake. As the narrator explains,

> He is apparently conscious of having erred, […]. As he draws back from the door, an all-comprehensive benignity blazes from his visage, indicating that he gathers Hepzibah, little Phoebe, and the invisible Clifford, all three, together with the whole world besides, into his immense heart, and gives them a warm bath into its flood of affection. (House 129-30)

But, in any case, the harm is already done and after witnessing such a scene, Phoebe cannot help but wonder "whether judges, clergymen, and other characters of that eminent stamp and respectability, could really, in any single instance, be otherwise than just and upright men. A doubt of this nature has a most disturbing influence" (House 131). By means of the Judge's behavior with Hepzibah—now that he has taken away his mask of appearances—the narrator makes Phoebe question the pillars of the establishment. Similarly, readers could also wonder exactly the same as Phoebe does. This scene can be read as the writer's way of exposing some of the most prominent figures of society, i.e. the judge, and, as the editor of *The Scarlet Letter* did as well, of subtly siding up with the female character who is not favored by society.

Holgrave once used his art with the Judge. When they meet, the daguerreotypist shows Phoebe a miniature of Judge Pyncheon, but she mistakes him for somebody else. The young woman replies that the man is her "Puritan ancestor, who hangs yonder in the parlor" (House 92). She believed that Judge Pyncheon was actually old Colonel Pyncheon because "its stern eye has been following me about, all day" (House 92). Instead of telling Phoebe that she has made a mistake, Holgrave explains to her that "the original wears, to the world's eye—and, for aught I know, to his most intimate friends—an exceedingly pleasant countenance, indicative of benevolence, openness of heart, sunny good humor, and other praiseworthy qualities of that cast" (House 92). However, Holgrave continues, "The sun, as you see, tells quite another story, and will not be coaxed out of it, after half-a-dozen patient attempts on my part. Here we have the man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and, withal, cold as ice" (House 92). Holgrave's daguerreotype, as if it were magical, captured the Judge's true nature even before he uncovered himself during his discussion with Hepzibah. First, Holgrave's daguerreotype, his art, and then Hepzibah's tenacity force this

social man to display his real self and show who he really is. It is disturbing to find out that the man in charge of administering justice is a hypocrite whose soul, judging from Holgrave's daguerreotype, is quite corrupt. Along with Hepzibah, Holgrave plays a key role in exposing the flawed conventions of his times. As I previously pointed out, the narrator never refers to this character using his family name. He does not even have a given name. The narrator uses his profession as this character's only name, i.e. the daguerreotypist, perhaps stressing the fact that his profession is really important about him. He shows people as they really are. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the editor / narrator portrays Hester as a needle artist. She is capable of creating the most beautiful embroideries and pieces of clothing for her daughter and to earn her bread. She fulfills two roles, that of providing for her daughter and for herself and that of creating something artistic. Regarding *The House of the Seven Gables*, Holgrave seems to be standing up for the artist within the work of fiction. Holgrave's art precedes our contemporary photography and the photograph Holgrave takes of the Judge exposes the man's true nature. Holgrave's political views are considered dangerous and his art is too modern for his times. Besides, he is said to possess some sort of psychic power as well. After all, he is a Maule, related by blood to the alleged wizard who cursed the Pyncheons. Above all, his artwork

> is […] at once rooted in the daylight of actuality and linked to Holgrave's political and economic radicalism. As a potentially democratic form, it promised to alter the relation between the visual artist and his audience; and, beyond this, its claims for "truth" were based on a notion of mechanical objectivity that eliminated the photographer/artist as an active participant in the creative process. In turning to the daguerreotype, Hawthorne reformulates issues of representation in terms of art as an economic and technological process, in which the artist "works" by tending a

machine. (Bellis 48)

It seems that in his quest for the truth, Hawthorne had chosen an art which does not depend on the artist's ideas, but one which simply captures what Nature created. It can be deduced that since he was playing with literary genres to achieve one which was closer to the truth than the already existing ones, Hawthorne could have decided to show how deceiving appearances could be by means of Holgrave's art; therein his insistence upon using both real and fictional elements and upon using a new art form: Hawthorne´s and the Daguerreotypist. Besides, as Hepzibah did when facing his cousin, Holgrave's daguerreotype unmasks the Judge. These actions reinforce my reading of the story as exposing the established social structures by means of the others in society.

These others in society meet every Sunday morning at the house of the seven gables. It seems as if they were celebrating their own Sunday service, since Phoebe is the only lodger of the house who goes to church. As the narrator comments, she "had a church-going conscience, and would hardly have been at ease, had she missed either prayer, singing, sermon, or benediction" (House 154). Hepzibah has not set foot in church for "many, many years" (House 168) because, as she explains to her brother, "We belong nowhere. We have not a foot of space, in any church, to kneel upon" (House 168). The day the two of them decide to go back to church, they change their minds since, according to Clifford, "it is too late, […]. We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings─no right anywhere, but in this old house" (House 169). They have been isolated for so long, that they are unable to recognize the world as a familiar place. They are ghosts because society does no longer see them as one of their kind. They live according to their own values. This explains why the Sundays "sober little festival in the garden" (House 154) is made up of Hepzibah, Clifford, Phoebe, Uncle Venner, and Holgrave, "who, in spite of his

consociation with reformers, and his other queer and questionable traits, continued to hold an elevated place in Hepzibah's regard" (House 154). That is the party of four whom society ostricizes for one reason or another, plus Phoebe, who may be understood as society's second chance. As we will see later, this Sunday community at the house is foreshadowing the community Hawthorne will portray in *The Blithedale Romance*. It is as if the author had created an alternative community within society, possibly an alternative society on its own, an option which will be fully developed in his next book.

After this Sunday gathering is described, events in the book rush to the denouement. Phoebe has to return to her village for some time, so the lodgers of the house are left alone without her mediating presence. Before her departure, she spends some time with Holgrave in the garden of the house. As the narrator explains,

> Inevitably, by the pressure of seclusion about them, they had been brought into habits of some familiarity. Had they met under different circumstances, neither of these young persons would have been likely to bestow much thought upon the other; unless, indeed, their extreme dissimilarity should have proved a principle of mutual attraction. (House 175)

They are poles apart, but the writer has decided to bring them together for some reason. A relationship is developing between them. When recalling the moral of the text, we see the author does not support oppressive family traditions. Therefore, their union can be interpreted as another blow to, for example, the immemorial family pride of the Pyncheons. Besides, acting as a narrator himself, Holgrave tells Phoebe a story about one of her own ancestors, Alice Pyncheon, who died as a result of the long-running dispute between the Maules and the Pyncheons. Holgrave is the artist in this book and by having him to tell Phoebe a story within the framework of the story that the writer's public is reading,

> Hawthorne, too, presents Holgrave's fiction as an *oral* performance, thus placing it somewhere between convention and lawlessness. He links Holgrave's art to subversive elements from both the seventeenth century ─ witchcraft ─ and the nineteenth ─ political and social radicalism. […]. Holgrave's […] performance is both representation and action; the power it describes is also the power it creates for him as artist. Hawthorne here gives us a representation of the act of representation, a literary description of a theatrical performance. The power he ascribes to Holgrave as romancer is one he claims for himself. (Bellis 35 – 6)

Holgrave could have fully controlled Phoebe with his story telling, using his Maule psychic powers. Nevertheless, he chooses not to do so because he possesses "the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality" (House 212). Holgrave could have followed his relative's path by taking over Phoebe Pyncheon's mind. But, as Hepzibah did by opening up her little shop, he goes against his family's tradition and decides to act on his own accord. Therefore, Hepzibah as a Pyncheon and Holgrave as a Maule have already broken the curse and put an end to the feud. They have subverted their families' constraining traditions.

The final fall of traditions is depicted in chapters XV and, especially, XVIII. Chapter XV portrays the second and last argument between Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon. The Judge's intentions are the same as in their previous encounter, and the outcome is quite similar as well. This time, the narrator passes more judgment on Jaffrey Pyncheon and on the establishment in general than was done in chapter VIII. Talking about men of an elevated social circle, the narrator compares them with a magnificent palace. However, he adds that there is something beyond the palace that meets the eye. He explains that

> beneath the show of a marble palace, that pool of stagnant water, foul with many

> impurities, and perhaps tinged with blood—that secret abomination, above which, possibly, he may say his prayers, without remembering it—is this man's miserable soul! (House 230)

This statement is a companion to the ones made in chapter VIII about Judge Pyncheon. In this one, however, the narrator does not limit his criticism to the Judge, he seems to intend to strip the public figures of society of their masks of absolute goodness. The narrator then moves back to the Judge and adds more elements of criticism. He lists, in a very ironic tone, all the social contributions the Judge has made throughout his life (House 230-1). However, the narrator's final reflection is disturbing. He points out that

> A hard, cold man, thus unfortunately situated, seldom or never looking inward, and resolutely taking his idea of himself from what purports to be his image, as reflected in the mirror of public opinion, can scarcely arrive at true self-knowledge, except through loss of property and reputation. (House 232)

There is no hope for the Judge, his soul is already lost. He lives on appearances and is incapable of seeing beyond them. He is doomed to die because there is no place for such a man in the new society the writer appears to be constructing.

After arguing with Hepzibah, Judge Pyncheon manages to take a seat in the parlor of the house determined to speak with his cousin Clifford. He takes his watch from his vest-pocket, and waits. However, he will never fulfill this enterprise. In Chapter XVIII death gets to him to take him with all his departed relatives, his son included, which means the end of the Pyncheon family line. The whole chapter is devoted to the Judge's dead figure without even once openly stating that he is actually dead. Actually, the narrator will never state it explicitly throughout the text. Instead, he addresses the Judge and reminds him about all the errands he should be running that day. He does so in a highly ironic tone,

almost mocking the sitting figure. This way of narrating can be read as an open attack on everything the Judge stands for, as if his way of abiding by the rules were a death-in-life form of existence. Chapter XVIII also contains a highly important scene, similar to one he uses in his sketch "Old Esther Dudley". It describes a succession of Pyncheon ghosts summoned upon the parlor clock striking 12 a.m. All the dead Pyncheons show up and the Old Colonel looks quite dissatisfied with the current situation of the family. After fully describing the scene, the narrator asks for his readers' forgiveness because, as he puts it, "The fantastic scene, just hinted at, must by no means be considered as forming actual part of our story" (House 281). He justifies the inclusion of such a marvelous episode by claiming that "We were betrayed into this brief extravagance by the quiver of the moonbeams; they dance hand-in-hand with shadows, and are reflected in the looking-glass, which, you are aware, is always a kind of window or door-way into the spiritual world" (House 281). Following the same strategy he used in *The Scarlet Letter*, the author presents himself as suffering the effects of the materials he happens to be working with. As Michael Bell notices,

> The imaginative quality of this scene comes from the scene itself, from the real combination of familiar objects and ethereal moonlight, and not from Hawthorne's own creative imagination; […]. Hawthorne can claim to reconcile fact and fantasy because he can claim that his facts are already fantastic. If what results seems like romance, it is thus not his fault but the fault of his materials. (Culture 41)

Therefore, since he claims not to have any intention of creating such an unreal scene, he cannot be accused of purposefully creating a mind-disturbing book, as fiction books were deemed in Hawthorne's times. So, regarding the literary genre of his book, Hawthorne can be said to be keeping within his tracks, just as he did under the editorial pose in *The Scarlet*

Letter. With respect to the socially subversive nature of the text, this mirror scene is also fundamental. Peter Bellis explains that

> This second moonlight scene gains its critical or subversive force not simply by invoking oral tradition and popular belief, but by doing so in the wider context of nineteenth-century economic and political change. One of Hawthorne's primary sources, Brook Thomas suggests, is the Joseph White murder trial of 1830, a scandalous and highly politicized case involving families from Salem's economic and social elite. More specifically, according to F.O. Matthiessen, Hawthorne draws from the language of Daniel Webster's prosecutorial summation […] Hawthorne performs a striking reversal as he does so, adopting what Webster imagines as the *murderer's* perspective. At this key moment, then ─ one whose interplay of actual and imaginary epitomizes the romance ─ Hawthorne's narrator moves to align himself *against* legal and political authority, choosing not just an adversarial but a criminal role in relation to Salem's merchant classes. (42)

Therefore, it follows, as I have been trying to demonstrate, that this book contains a subversive grain and that it can be read as exposing the flaws of the long established Western social and political structures. Since the author apparently did not fully agree with the way society was organized, he tried to create a new community with those people whom society had marginalized and labeled as insane, retarded, or "queer" (House 154). As I have previously mentioned, the inception of establishing a new community in this book will be fully explored in detail in *The Blithedale Romance*.

The readers learn about Judge Pyncheon's death thanks to Phoebe who, upon her return, is shown a daguerreotype by Holgrave. As if closing a circle, the author uses the same characters to show the true nature of the Judge and to announce his death. Moreover,

he follows exactly the same procedure: Holgrave makes a daguerreotype which he shows to Phoebe. When she contemplates the second daguerreotype of the Judge, Phoebe cries out that "This is death!" (House 302), and adds that "Judge Pyncheon is dead!" (House 302). At this point, Clifford and Hepzibah are not in the house. They run away when Clifford discovered his cousin's dead body. He was afraid of being charged with his murder, as he had been with his uncle's. It is interesting to notice that the first time in many years when Hepzibah leaves the house takes place once the Judge is already dead. His death can be understood, therefore, as fully liberating the remaining Pyncheons of the family weight, the Maule curse. What is more, it will be Holgrave himself, the heir to the Maule name, who will put a definite end to the curse by offering a medical, scientific, explanation to the Judge's death and, consequently, to all the male Pyncheons' deaths. This explanation will also exonerate Clifford from his uncle's murder and, therefore, prove society's judgment wrong while showing Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon's true colors even after his death.

The denouement of *The House of the Seven Gables* has given rise to conflicting interpretations. For some scholars, Holgrave's marrying Phoebe and moving to Judge's Pyncheon mansion implies a reinforcement of traditions and a victory of the social values and norms represented by Phoebe. These scholars consider that Holgrave has given up his revolutionary ideas in favor of long established conventionalism. However, there is another perspective to be considered. The end of the story follows the path established in the preface by the moral of the book, i.e. the unfairness of imposing family traditions upon independent individuals, and their moving into the house has some connotations we must bear in mind. It is true that Holgrave marries Phoebe and that they move to the Judge's mansion. But it is also true that they do not move there on their own. They are accompanied by the other members of the Sunday gatherings. That is, the outcasts of society are granted

the opportunity of starting a new life not at the past-loaded house of the seven gables, but at the more recently built country mansion of the Judge. Besides, through Holgraves' and Phoebe's marriage, the Pyncheon family name is lost, thus giving back to the Maules their stolen honor. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter,

> A primary thrust of the entire romance, however, has been to demystify the notions of "family" and "inheritance" as "natural" grounds for the defense of property rights and class position. Phoebe and Holgrave inherit the house of the seven gables as well, of course, but they abandon that family mansion in favor of one only recently constructed. For what Holgrave seeks in a house is not permanence, but the "*impression of* permanence" around a changeable interior. If the former is an illusion meant to escape both history and the market economy, the latter is no more than a matter of appearance, a marketable value or attribute. Hawthorne thus resists a fully conservative, repetitive closure. (Bellis 49-50)

Therefore, it can be concluded that *The House of the Seven Gables* portrays the fall of traditions and redeems those characters whom society had marginalized. The narrator can be said to be speaking for and giving voice to those who were deprived of it by social conventions. Besides, the female character of Hepzibah proves to be determined to crash down the traditions of her family. She shows her strength and courage and does not hesitate in facing her powerful male cousin to defend her rights. Hepzibah is a peculiar heroine, but a heroine after all.

With respect to our discussion of literary genre, this book is a perfect example of hybridization. It not only combines more or less real events with marvelous ones, but it also crosses the boundaries among several disciplines. As Peter Bellis explains,

> By the end of the book, in fact, the balance between oral, written, and visual

> authority has been dramatically unsettled ─ Holgrave's revelation of the old Indian deed behind the Colonel's portrait is also a revelation of its worthlessness, of the impotence of both texts and legends against the force of historical change. The romance has, however, succeeded in bringing into contact different modes of knowledge and representation ─ the "actual" force of technology and the law, for instance, and the "imaginary" power of oral tradition. Magic and mesmerism are no longer clearly opposed to legal and historical truth […]. Modes that earlier seemed incompatible ─ Maule magic and Pyncheon legalism, popular belief and written history ─ coexist within the narrative voice at the close of *The House of the Seven Gables*. The interpenetration of these realms has a powerful destabilizing impact, […]. (48)

The book seems to suggest that there are no truly opposing genres and that the line separating them is too thin to be set in stone. It is just another socially-constructed convention. Therefore, his claiming to be writing a romance in the preface, but his apologizing for having used a ghost scene, and the fact that most of the characters in the book, except Hepzibah and Holgrave, could be ascribed to any typical novel, can be interpreted as trying to subvert the literary conventions which make a clear-cut distinction between novel and romance. *The House* represents the fall of literary and social traditions. Like a Trojan horse, Hawthorne's combined use of social and literary conventions, along with new elements, result in a subversive critique of the restrictive values which condemn the "others" of his facts/ fictions to suffer inequity.

4. *The Blithedale Romance*. Death as Artistic Subversion

4.1. Preface or Theatrical Performance?

The Blithedale Romance has been strongly criticized for various reasons. Some feminist scholars consider that the treatment female characters receive in this book is openly misogynist. As I mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, these scholars argue that Hawthorne created Zenobia's character merely to get rid of her at the end of the story. They view her demise as yet another instance of Hawthorne's anti-feminist attitude. On the other hand, the structure of the book has also received some negative criticism. It is argued that the author leaves too many loose ends throughout the text. Some scholars point out that the writer includes tales within the text's story line which show no apparent connection to the main plot. Besides, they argue that Coverdale's role as narrator is a failure. They point out that he is not a good narrator because he never truly knows what goes on around him. What is more, they consider him to be an unreliable narrator because his statements are biased by his own personal experience, and since he was also a participant in the events described, readers cannot decipher whether it all happened as narrated or not. These scholars read all these facts as evidence of the book's lack of a coherent structure. Even though all those arguments may have a point, in light of what I already demonstrated in the previous chapters, there is room for another interpretation.

"The Custom-House" and the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* already seemed to be establishing what Hawthorne believed a romance was. However, following scholars such as Bell and Bellis, I consider those prefaces deceiving. They are performances of what is expected from a romance, and a romancer, but not actual definitions of the genre under Hawthorne's terms. They are quite relevant, nonetheless, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the text. In Bell's words,

> these prefaces are not essays in critical definition but, […], dramatic, ironic, and often comic social performances, in which the author adopts a series of masks and poses in order to obscure—and yet still hint at—the true authority behind his fiction. (Culture 45)

This authority is the writer's imagination, which, as I explained in chapter 1, was thought of as exerting an extremely negative influence on people's minds. In the same line, while analyzing "The Custom-House," Peter Bellis points out that

> When Hawthorne speaks directly of the romance as a genre in "The Custom House," he does not offer a true definition — he describes a scene. He *stages* the romance itself, as a performance, rather than grounding it in abstract or theoretical terms. And the quintessentially "romantic" moments in his texts are almost always visual displays or tableaux, scenes of revelation and spectatorship. (24)

At the same time that we read a preface, we become the audience of a theatrical representation. Therefore, the public of these books should take a more active part in understanding them. They are not only reading a story. They are also getting involved in a theatrical show. Although the tone of each preface is unique because they are integral parts of different texts, Hawthorne's prefaces are all especially addressed to the readers. From the very first page of each preface, the author is counting on, and asking for, his readers' active involvement. The audience's participation is fundamental for the success of the story. Furthermore, since following Bell and Bellis I consider that Hawthorne's prefaces are performances, part of the task of the readers is to realize the strategies used by the author. This is precisely what the preface to *The Blithedale Romance* suggests.

The author opens the preface by directly addressing his readers and stating that some of them may find connections between the book and the Brook Farm enterprise. He

acknowledges that he was inspired by the real life occurrence, in which he himself took part, but that his intention was "to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (Blithedale 3-4). This is the first preface where Hawthorne uses the word 'theatre' to refer to his text. Interestingly enough, this word will appear, directly or indirectly, throughout the story to mention the community, as if reminding readers of where they stand with respect to what they are observing, or at a different level, as if describing in the single word 'theatre', the relationship between the book and the real world. On the other hand, the narrator's statement openly mentions both the author's imagination and the marvelous situations that may happen in the story. He does so because "a certain conventional privilege seems to be awarded to the romancer; his work is not put exactly side by side with nature; and he is allowed a license with regard to every-day Probability" (Blithedale 4). A similar statement is made in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* where the narrator refers to "a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel" (House 1). These comments can be understood as the author addressing his public and asking them not to judge the story under a "novelistic" light. Also, they can be read as asking his audience to get involved in the story in order to be able to achieve a complete understanding of it. This idea was fully developed in a sketch entitled "Main Street," written before his four longer works. This sketch can be said to summarize the author's wish to incorporate the public's imagination to his production in order to secure its full development. However, the showman in the sketch does not succeed because he meets with the opposition of a critic. This critic constantly cries out that the whole show is a farce, no matter how many times the showman

explains to him that "Human art has its limits, and we must now and then ask a little aid from the spectator's imagination" (17-8). He is unable to imagine what the showman is presenting because, in his opinion, it does not fit into the limits of the probable. The figure of the critic in "Main Street" can be interpreted as representing those readers who cannot go beyond the apparent and, therefore, cannot enjoy the author's works. At the same time, this figure can also be seen as depicting those who criticize the author due to his use of the imaginary. Moreover, both in "Main Street" and in *The Blithedale Romance*, the writer uses real and historical events as his source. Still, both stories were criticized for showing a lack of coherence, precisely what the author seems to be complaining about in "Main Street." In this sketch,

> the showman manipulates the facts, the particulars, in order to arrive at the meanings which the facts represent, the universals. The showman's technique is similar to Hawthorne's whose method of writing is to present facts filtered, so to speak, through a medium that will take them out of the immediate context of life and into a realm where the imagination can have full sway. He is concerned, therefore, with devices that aid the reader to maintain an illusion. By half obscuring the facts, they allow penetration through the mundane world to a higher truth; they help to reveal the realm of universals. (Rohrberger 20)

It can be said that the author was not interested in pointing out independent truths out of each of his creations, but that he was more concerned about showing a common path throughout all his texts. Therefore, his writing "Main Street", where he openly states that the readers' imagination should complement the author's, can be understood as a complement, even as a preface, to the prefaces of his longer works.

4.2. Behind the Curtains of a Questionable Narrator

The preface to *The Blithedale Romance* chooses the word theatre to refer to the story that is about to be told. One of the main characteristics of a play is the presence of many voices that may happen to speak simultaneously during certain scenes of the show. When analyzing *The House of the Seven Gables*, I mentioned the fact that it remained unclear who was speaking: the narrator or the author. The preface is told by a narrative voice that refers to the author in the 3rd person singular. It can be said that this voice belongs to the author, who appears to be detaching himself from the opinions presented in the preface. This creates, however, a problem of identity because the readers do not know who they are listening to. Therefore, the narrating point of view is also called into question. The same situation is found in the preface to *The Blithedale Romance*. The preface is also commented by a narrative voice that refers to the author in the 3rd person singular. Curiously enough, he addresses some of the author's acquaintances and friends as if he were the author himself using the 3rd person singular to maintain an aesthetic distance only. This type of distance is achieved by the author of *The Scarlet Letter* by means of his editorial pose. The story itself, however, is told in the 1st person singular by Miles Coverdale, who, according to the narrator of the preface, is a "Minor Poet, beginning his life with strenuous aspirations, which die out with his youthful fervor" (Blithedale 4). Coverdale is telling the story after having already lived it. The story is based upon his memories of his experience, which is precisely the same thing the author did when he created the story. As explained in the preface,

> The Author does not wish to deny, that he had this Community in his mind, and that (having had the good fortune, for a time, to be personally connected with it) he has occasionally availed himself of his actual reminiscences, in the hope of giving a

more lifelike tint to the fancy-sketch. (Blithedale 3)

Taking those facts into account, it is only reasonable to establish a link between the author of the text and Miles Coverdale. It could even be understood that Coverdale stands for the writer within the story. Recalling both *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, the writer can be said to be generally represented by the artist of the text, as were Hester Prynne and Holgrave in each of the above mentioned texts. What is more, Coverdale considers himself "only a poet, and, so the critics tell me, no great affair at that!" (Blithedale 9). He does not think very highly of himself as an artist, and neither did Hawthorne of himself, nor critics of Hawthorne's production, as Julian Hawthorne comments in his preface to the 1901 edition of "Main Street". They are linked by the social disapproval of their creations.

It is worth mentioning that the original Miles Coverdale was the first to translate the Bible into English in 1535. This fact adds interesting overtones to Coverdale's role as the narrator of the story. The nature of the role of translators gave rise to a long-running debate. According to some scholars, translators are traitors because they modify the original text and adapt it to the culture of the target language. For other scholars, though, translators are creators or artists; they are capable of producing new pieces of art in different languages. Coverdale the narrator can be analyzed bearing these two arguments in mind. On the one hand, it can be said that after living the Blithedale experience, Coverdale tells it colored by his current point of view. He has reflected upon what he went through and narrates it according to a more mature perspective. That is, he can be accused of reconstructing the actual sequence of events to fit his own interests. On the other hand, Coverdale can be understood to be translating his experiences to his readers. He is not editing the Blithedale experience on his own behalf, but to help his readers to understand the experimental

community. Coverdale would be allowing his readers to see the flaws of the Blithedale community and why it did not succeed. He is aware of not having the necessary information to fill in all the blanks. Despite that, he tries to tell the story after having thought it over. Coverdale can be seen as both traitor and creator, but, as I will try to demonstrate in this chapter, he is actually creating spaces for those who, so far, had been deprived of them.

The point of view issue is inseparably linked to Coverdale's role as narrator. Above all, *The Blithedale Romance* is a first person narration. Therefore, all the chapters are told from that first person's point of view. Readers have to come to terms with what they have read and then decide on the veracity of the story. Hawthorne started dealing with the issue of the point of view in *The House of the Seven Gables* and develops it in this book, the only one told by a first person narrator. At the same time that the text questions the point of view, it also analyzes the concept of identity. Throughout the narration, readers meet a Coverdale who sometimes seems to disappear within the story itself. He appears to loose control of his narration and to be displaced by it. But, following Auerbach,

> However dehumanized or disposed the individual becomes during the course of narration […], the first person is continually trying to define a self *in* language but also over and *against* language. […] first person fiction becomes a particularly fruitful territory to explore the various ways that subjectivity and discourse mutually constitute one another at the same time that they also remain at odds with one another. […] Poe, Hawthorne, and James are themselves calling the centrality and autonomy of the self into question in their first-person fictions. By its very marginality the narrating "I" of each of these authors does not negate or abandon the subject but rather attests to its stubborn endurance. […]. The first-person narrators

> of all three writers are self-estranged, in fact, precisely to the degree that their authors remain deeply implicated in their plotting. And to that degree first-person fiction offers these authors a way to define the nature of their craft. (9-10)

That is, the presence of an allegedly "failed" narrator can be interpreted as one of the writer's devices to call traditional first-person narratives into question. As I have above mentioned, Hawthorne used elements from both novels and romances in his books. He may have chosen some because he truly liked those resources, while it can also be said that he selected others to prove why he did not consider them appropriate from his authorial point of view. In the previous chapters, I showed several maneuvers used by the author to challenge monological discourses in order to give voice to the others of society, especially to women. The peculiar first person narration of *The Blithedale Romance* can be read as yet another strategy to that same end. Coverdale, aware of his lack of complete knowledge about the Blithedale events, tries to reaffirm himself by creating his own narrative. He is the one telling the story, so he can consider himself as somewhat powerful compared to the other characters in spite of his not knowing it all. However, following Foucault, knowledge implies power and control over those who do not know. Therefore, by depriving Coverdale of a full knowledge of a series of events in which Coverdale himself was involved, it can be deduced that his discourse is not a monological one and that, consequently, there is room for other voices apart from his. His narration is directing us to the impossibility of a totally comprehensive account of events, at least if told by one single person. Once again, Hawthorne's text becomes an open forum where different characters can speak up their ideas. In this respect, *The Blithedale Romance*

> is not a historical representation of Brook Farm, but a scene of the dialogue of multifarious social languages, a struggle essentially of interpretation and

> dominance. […]. The novel, thus, becomes a heteroglossic polylogue of ideological discourses on social structure and community in the Blithedale "theatre." (Bauer 18)

The author conceived a democratic scenario, a theater where a varied range of characters could put forward their ideas without being censored by an almighty first person narrator. Instead, this first person narrator is the one who receives censored information. *The Blithedale Romance* portrays an experimental society and, simultaneously, experiments with the art of narrating and story telling. Social and literary conventions are, once again, exposed and challenged.

4.3. The Blithedale Theater

The main characters involved in the Blithedale theater, apart from Miles Coverdale, are Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla. They are supported by two other characters who set the Veiled Lady side story running, namely, old Moodie and Westervelt. Among all of them, Zenobia is the most important one. She has been said to be based on Margaret Fuller, a personal friend of Hawthorne's, and a reformist regarding the situation of women. However, Miles Coverdale receives a letter from Margaret Fuller while he is at the Blithedale farm, which looks as if the author were trying to separate the character of Zenobia from the flesh and blood Margaret Fuller—although not necessarily from what she stands for. What is more, as Nina Baym points out, it is also true that some of Zenobia's speeches can be traced back to some of Fuller's works. It can be said, therefore, that Margaret Fuller was, at least, one of the sources of inspiration for the character of Zenobia. She is introduced in the first pages of the first chapter in connection with literature and "the advocacy of women's rights" (Blithedale 9). So, besides Coverdale himself, Zenobia appears to be the artist within the Blithedale community. In connection with the other two

books analyzed, both Coverdale and Zenobia could be representing the author inside the text. The resemblance seems to be stronger in Coverdale, as he is the one putting the story together and the one introduced as the poet of the community. Nevertheless, taking into account what has been shown with respect to the writer's maneuvers to expose the conventions of his society, his link with Zenobia should be highly considered. Hollingsworth and Priscilla can be said to be the complimentary couple to Coverdale and Zenobia. In the light of the contrast between novel and romance, the former couple is closer to the novelistic conventions, while the latter remain within the sphere of the romance. Hollingsworth and Priscilla make their entrance in chapter IV, interrupting dinner and, in Hollingsworth's case, imposing himself on everybody else. As Zenobia puts it, "He knocks as if he had a right to come in" (Blithedale 26). The first time this man is mentioned, reference is made to the moving power of his speech and to the strength of his voice. Zenobia's words are "What a voice he has!" (Blithedale 22). Whenever Coverdale talks about him, he always makes some reference to the tone of Hollingsworth's voice. Hollingsworth, from the moment of his arrival, turns himself into the leader of the community by his mere presence. Priscilla, on the other hand, remains silent, as if possessing no voice at all under Hollingsworth's wing or as if dependant upon Zenobia's protection. Priscilla's first words are addressed to Zenobia upon Hollingsworth's request. She desires "Only that she will shelter me," […]. "Only that she will let me be always near her!" (Blithedale 29). This scene sets the tone of the rest of the story. As Coverdale realizes upon observing Hollingsworth the night of his arrival, "he now looked stern and reproachful; and it was with that inauspicious meaning in his glance, that Hollingsworth first met Zenobia's eyes, and began his influence upon her life" (Blithedale 29). He will affect Zenobia, but he will completely control Priscilla. The influence he exerts upon

Zenobia will not alter her political and social ideas. Like other female characters in Hawthorne's works, she will remain true to her ideals until the end. Hollingsworth is the one who takes a preconceived set of ideas to the allegedly new community of the Blithedale farm and will try to subtly impose them upon the rest of the Blithedalers. Coverdale and Zenobia, on the other hand, although with certain ideas of their own, moved into Blithedale looking forward to an actual social and political revolution that will create a different society. Hollingsworth wishes to create his own personal project using the Blithedale utopia. Moreover, Hollingsworth does not want a change. For example, in the situation of women, he finds it acceptable and considers that it should remain the same. The same is true of Priscilla, who possesses no socio-political ideas of her own. She can be said to represent the conventional leader's protégée. She does not think by herself. She just does her best to make her male companion's life as easy as possible. In this sense, Priscilla is the perfect novelistic woman of those times, a role Zenobia fights to change. Old Moodie, as readers will find out by the end of the book, is both Zenobia's and Priscilla's father. He knows more than Coverdale about the two women, and even though he exerts no power over Coverdale, he does so over his daughters, especially Priscilla. Westervelt, a character very similar to the devilish figure Hawthorne created in "Young Goodman Brown", is some sort of scientist and a participant in the Veiled Lady show, in which, at different levels, old Moodie and the two ladies are also involved. That is to say, Westervelt is also aware of more information about Zenobia and Priscilla than Coverdale is. The only one left out of the circuit of information is, precisely, the one who puts the story together, Coverdale.

Coverdale can be said to be the author of the Blithedale story. The text reflects his own personal interpretation of the events that took place at the Blithedale farm during his stay there. *The Blithedale Romance* is, therefore, the written proof of his experience. At the

same time, it serves readers to learn about Coverdale as a character through his interactions with the other blithedalers, which is highly useful when analyzing what he tells. These interactions are, actually, a crack in Coverdale's narrative masks. Coverdale's main narrative, nevertheless, is accompanied by a popular legend, a subtext which offers important interpretative keys for the main plot. This is the story of the Veiled Lady, which is deeply linked to Zenobia and Priscilla. Curiously enough, Coverdale opens his narrative by mentioning that he had just attended the Veiled Lady show and explaining to his readers a little about it, the identity of the Veiled Lady being the key of the legend. He ends his explanation, however, by stating that the story has "little to do with the present narrative" (Blithedale 8). This statement can be interpreted in two opposite ways: On the one hand, it can be read as yet another proof of Coverdale's lack of information. On the other hand, since Coverdale is narrating the text after having already gone through all the experiences, in retrospect, it can be understood as an attempt to minimize the importance of the legend with respect to his own narration. Coverdale seems to be aware of the relevance of the story of the Veiled Lady. Actually, the character introduced immediately after referring to that story is precisely old Moodie, both Zenobia's and Priscilla's father. Coverdale appears to be subtly suggesting a connection between the Veiled Lady and the old man. This story / show is orally told and performed by Zenobia to her Blithedale brothers in chapter XIII. *The House of the Seven Gables* contains a similar episode, when Holgrave tells Phoebe the legend about her ancestor Alice Pyncheon. The legend of the Veiled Lady is also charged with similar elements to that other one. Just like the Maules in *The House*, Westervelt is said to have mesmeric powers and said to have turned the Veiled Lady into his prisoner. As Alice Pyncheon did, the Veiled Lady must obey Westervelt. But, above all, both stories, the one about Alice Pyncheon and the one about the Veiled Lady, are legends, popular folklore

orally delivered within the context of a written narration. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, I showed how all the oral stories and legends were more relevant to the final making of the text than any written official document. Actually, as the narrator explains in the preface, there was no written proof documenting the narration. It was all based upon people's rumors. This was a way of undermining the monological official discourses which tend to impose themselves over the other(s') voices. The legend of the Veiled Lady serves the same purpose within *The Blithedale Romance*. It reinforces Coverdale's lack of authority as a narrator by introducing a very relevant oral discourse. Moreover, the one who tells the story to all the Blithedalers is Zenobia, the one said to have "taken up the advocacy of women's rights" (Blithedale 9).

Zenobia is the most memorable character in the story. Apart from Coverdale, she is the only one given voice to tell a story. Besides, her story shows her knowing much more than Coverdale himself, even more than Hollingsworth, the self declared community leader. She is a woman and knows more than the men in the story. Therefore, following Foucault, she is more powerful than they are. However, Zenobia ends up committing suicide, which, as I remarked at the beginning of this chapter, has been interpreted by some feminist scholars as yet another proof of Hawthorne's misogyny. Nevertheless, the role she plays throughout the whole text, along with the amount and quality of dialogue she is granted, may be said to prove the opposite. Compared to the other female characters analyzed so far, Zenobia is the one who speaks more, and with more weight contentwise, in any of the books, even more than Hester, who is considered Hawthorne's most feminist character. Her death at the end of the story should be interpreted bearing in mind Umberto Eco's double coding. Readers hear about Zenobia for the first time in chapter I, when old Moodie asks Coverdale whether he knows her. Apart from mentioning her role in the women's rights

arena, Coverdale explains to Moodie that Zenobia is not her real name, but "a sort of mask in which she comes before the world, retaining all the privileges of privacy—a contrivance, in short, like the white drapery of the Veiled Lady" (Blithedale 9-10). As I pointed out earlier, the main mystery of the story of the Veiled Lady is finding out who she is. Her identity will be disclosed at the end of the story, and so will be Zenobia's. Although Coverdale remarked that there was no relation between his narration and this legend, he himself seems to be connecting the two of them via Moodie and Zenobia. By the end of the second chapter, referring to Zenobia, Coverdale underlines how "important (…) was her place in our enterprise" (Blithedale 15), but adds nothing else regarding why she was so important. In the following chapter, he moves on to offer his readers the first physical description of Zenobia. According to Coverdale,

> she was, indeed, an admirable figure of a woman, just on the hither verge of her richest maturity, with a combination of features which it is safe to call remarkably beautiful, even if some fastidious persons might pronounce them a little deficient in softness and delicacy. (Blithedale 17)

Therefore, in spite of her association with women's rights, Coverdale describes a beautiful woman, regardless of others' criticisms for not being soft and delicate enough. Some feminist scholars have argued that although it is true that Hawthorne had granted Hester Prynne some advanced feminist features, he had also deprived her of her womanhood and beauty, as if feminism and beauty could not go hand in hand. We should not forget, however, that when Hester was standing upon the scaffold holding baby Pearl, she was compared to the Virgin Mary holding her Son. Regarding Zenobia's physical appearance, not only does Coverdale describe her as really beautiful in that paragraph, but later on in the same chapter, he does also compare her to Eve, the original woman, raising her status.

In Coverdale's words,

> We seldom meet with women, now-a-days, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all; their sex fades away and goes for nothing, in ordinary intercourse. Not so with Zenobia. One felt an influence breathing out of her, such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying—"Behold, here is a woman!" (Blithedale 19)

Apart from being beautiful, Zenobia embodies the qualities of true womanhood. That is, the woman who is trying to achieve a better society for her fellow women is also a woman who still retains the original essence of womanhood according to the narrator. Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam, from *The Marble Faun*, three out of four of Hawthorne's subversive heroines, are, at some point of their stories, connected to remarkable female biblical characters. It is as if Hawthorne were using the Sacred Book to demonstrate that back then women already played key roles within their societies. Zenobia is portrayed as a very practical person, as well. When someone asks whether they have their "various parts assigned" (Blithedale 18), once again as if the whole community were a theater play, Zenobia replies laughing that

> we women (there are four of us here, already) will take the domestic and indoor part of the business, as a matter of course. To bake, to boil, to roast, to fry, to stew—to wash, and iron, and scrub, and sweep, and, at our idler intervals, to repose ourselves on knitting and sewing—these, I suppose, must be feminine occupations for the present. (Blithedale 18)

If it were not for her last remark, this discourse would sound contradictory in the mouth of an advocate of women's rights. However, her assigning such labors to the women in the community, the same labors women had been carrying out for all their lives, is quite an ironic comment on how "little" women have advanced so far "for the present", or at least

that is what she is dismayed about. It may seem shocking taking into account that the Blithedale community is an experimental one that intends to reform society, but we must also bear in mind that they have just arrived at the farm. Zenobia's behavior clearly shows her practical mind. Not only does she need to get to know how much that society can advance but also, they all come from the city and are not used to physical labor. Therefore, considering everyone's physical characteristics, it seems more fitting to have men working the fields and women dealing with those labors they are more accustomed to, at least for the time being. As a matter of fact, as Zenobia adds, "By-and-by, perhaps, when our individual adaptations begin to develop themselves, it may be that some of us, who wear the petticoat, will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!" (Blithedale 18). That is, she has not assigned permanent roles. The duties of the Blithedalers do not depend on their gender. It all depends on how each individual adjusts to an utterly different way of life. Zenobia never stops thinking about making changes, but changes work better if made gradually.

The appearance of both Hollingsworth and Priscilla fully determines Zenobia's life. These two characters embody everything Zenobia fights against, and her fate is tied to both of them for different reasons. Priscilla arrives surrounded by mystery. The only thing Hollingsworth knows about her is that "An old man brought her to my lodgings, and begged me to convey her to Blithedale, where—so I understood him—she had friends" (Blithedale 30). He does not seem interested in learning more about the girl's previous life, and pleads the other members of the community "Let us not pry farther into her secrets" (Blithedale 30) to settle the issue. Priscilla herself does not want to disclose her background because she tells Zenobia her name, but adds "Pray do not ask me my other name—at least, not yet—if you will be so kind to a forlorn creature" (Blithedale 29), as if her origins were a

secret not to be revealed until the right time arrived. Priscilla's entrance into the community, surrounded by mystery and brought about by "an old man" (Blithedale 30), parallels that of Zenobia, about whom readers do not know her family name either and who was mentioned to Coverdale by old Moodie when the former was reflecting upon the Veiled Lady show he had just seen. These episodes can be read as bringing the two women together in the light of the same mystery, that of the Veiled Lady. They also serve as a link between the story of the Veiled Lady and Coverdale's narration, thus interweaving both texts in a meaningful way. Moreover, for Coverdale "the presence of Zenobia caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia" (Blithedale 22), as if she truly were the queen whose name she had adopted as pseudonym, as if she were not a flesh and blood woman. This minor poet has a similar thought with respect to Priscilla. He explains that "The fantasy occurred to me, that she was some desolate kind of a creature, doomed to wander about in snow-storms" (Blithedale 28). Coverdale is turning Priscilla into a typical romantic heroine. She is so ethereal that no man appears to be able to deserve her. What is more, both Hollinsgworth and Coverdale are in love with her. They will "fight" to win her love. That is, with respect to Hawthorne's combination of genres, Priscilla's character could be paralleled to that of Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables*. These two female characters embody archetypal characteristics which Hawthorne can be said to be challenging because, from his creative perspective, they are flawed. Zenobia, however, represents Hawthorne's own type of heroine, one which displays characteristics from both novels and romances in a balanced way. It will be precisely Zenobia─acting as Hawthorne's own voice─ the one dismantling Coverdale's fantasy about Priscilla. Zenobia and Priscilla are bonded together by a mystery which Coverdale cannot solve because he does not know enough about them for the story to make

sense. Actually, when Coverdale reveals his ideas about Priscilla to Zenobia, she cannot help but tell him to "turn the affair into a ballad" since, from her point of view, "It is a grand subject, and worthy of supernatural machinery" (Blithedale 33). She is openly mocking Coverdale's fantastic conclusions about the newcomer, but her practical mind tells her otherwise. Zenobia explains to Coverdale that "She is neither more nor less than a seamstress from the city", which she has deducted from "the needle marks on the tip of her forefinger" (Blithedale 33). Zenobia's conclusions about Priscilla are right. She already knows more about the girl than Coverdale. That is, she is correcting the narrator's version about another character, and she is the one who is right. The voice of a gendered other turns out to be more credible than the voice of the male narrator. Her knowledge is truthful, and his only serves to create "a ballad" (Blithedale 33). And that is precisely what Coverdale does: He composes a story with his version of the facts when he writes *The Blithedale Romance*. His authority, as I have been suggesting, remains questioned both by his lack of information and by Zenobia's voice. As if to keep Coverdale even more in the dark, he falls very sick and has to stay in bed for quite some time. During his sickness, Coverdale is looked after by Hollingsworth, who "established himself as my nurse" (Blithedale 40). Zenobia chose to cook for and feed Coverdale. Interestingly enough, during a fever crisis, Coverdale uncovers one of the mysteries of both his narration and of the story of the Veiled Lady. He whispers to Hollingsworth that Zenobia "is a sister of the Veiled Lady!" (Blithedale 43), which meets with both Hollingsworth's and Zenobia's laugh. However, this is actually true, as will be disclosed by the end of the text. In the meantime, this comment is regarded by all, Coverdale himself included, as the product of his feverish mind and imagination, and, therefore, dismissed. The only secret which Coverdale manages to discover happens when he is not in his senses, but undergoing a fever crisis. It is ironic to

have a narrator who knows more when his mind is troubled by sickness than when he is perfectly healthy. This fact contributes, as I have been pointing out, to the undermining of monological discourses, exemplified in this story by the first person narrator.

Coverdale grows obsessed with one idea during his sickness. He desperately wants to find out "whether Zenobia had ever been married" (Blithedale 44). In his opinion, Zenobia's manners were proof enough that "wedlock had thrown wide open the gates of mystery" (Blithedale 45) for her. Paradoxically enough, Coverdale himself is a bachelor, so his own knowledge about married women's ways cannot be thorough. What is more, since he is not married, wedding has not opened for him any locked door. How can he be so sure, then, of what Zenobia knows or does not know? As expected, Coverdale never reaches a definite answer to this problem of his, but Zenobia does not mind at all letting him look into her eyes, "as if challenging me to drop a plummer-line down into the depths of her consciousness" (Blithedale 46). Either she has nothing to hide, or she knows that Coverdale is unable to find out any secret at all. In any case, Coverdale's authority as a narrator is once more compromised by Zenobia. Besides, the image of Coverdale throwing some sort of stick into the depths trying to reach out for something advances the denouement of Zenobia's personal story. It could be said that the book is written following a circular structure. The mysteries and stories presented during the first chapters will find their parallels in the closing ones, where the mysteries will be solved and the circles completed. Therefore, if Coverdale was wondering about Priscilla's origins before falling sick, the first person he meets once he is almost fully recovered is Priscilla herself. It is interesting to notice that Coverdale openly compares Priscilla's physical appearance with that of "a friend of mine, one of the most gifted women of the age" (Blithedale 49), namely, Margaret Fuller. Although unaware of Miss Fuller's ideas, Priscilla immediately rejects the

comparison and reasonably asks Coverdale "How could I possibly make myself resemble this lady, merely by holding her letter in my hand?" (Blithedale 50), to which Coverdale can offer no answer. This narrator is always unable to respond to any question posed by either Zenobia or Priscilla. They are both so unfathomable for him that even their questions end up being riddles for Coverdale. He seems to feel overpowered by the two women, something that transpires in his narrative. At the same time, the author seems to be trying to put a distance between Margaret Fuller and the character of Zenobia. By turning his narrator's attention to the physical resemblance between Priscilla and Fuller, it can be understood that he would not like readers to easily associate the real woman with a fictitious character. On the other hand, it could also be deduced that he was trying to avoid any easy connection between Fuller's advocacy for women's rights and Zenobia's ideas in his own time. Supporting my own reading of the previous books, Hawthorne did not seem to favor the open disclosure of personal ideas here, either.

Coverdale realizes that during his sickness, Priscilla has become quite close to Hollingsworth. He even notices that she "talked more largely and freely with him than with Zenobia" (Blithedale 48), towards whom, from Coverdale's point of view, Priscilla's "feelings seemed not so much to be confidence, as involuntary affection" (Blithedale 48). He has been clearly left out of this triangle of confidence and affection, which makes his access to some knowledge about his three companions' lives even more complicated than before. Coverdale feels that Priscilla "appeared to like me tolerably well", but he is also aware that he "could never flatter myself with being distinguished by her, as Hollingsworth and Zenobia were" (Blithedale 48). At this point, Coverdale also starts considering that "Hollingsworth was going fast mad" (Blithedale 53) because "his spirit haunted an edifice which, instead of being time-worn, and full of storied love, and joy, and sorrow, had never

yet come into existence" (Blithedale 53). Interestingly enough, this comment of Coverdale is made right before his friendship with Hollingsworth begins to break up. This is so because Coverdale does not share Hollingsworth's ideal, and Hollingsworth considers that his true friends need to share his dream with him as well. Coverdale even thinks that Hollingsworth looked after him during his sickness "only for the ulterior purpose of making me a proselyte to his views!" (Blithedale 54). So, curiously enough, it is only when Coverdale realizes that Priscilla loves Hollingsworth more than him that he openly dismisses Hollingsworth's project, and thus, their friendship vanishes. Taking into account Coverdale's particular narration, it could be said that instead of a friend, he now has a rival, but not a true one, only a rival regarding the two women's affections.

Chapter VIII, "A Modern Arcadia", anticipates chapter XXIV, "The Masqueraders", and leaves Hollingsworth out, as Coverdale seems to have just lost him as his friend. It focuses on the two women, who are celebrating May Day with the rest of the community. This chapter reintroduces the link between the two women and the story of the Veiled Lady by Coverdale, suggesting the possibility of Zenobia having "bewitched" Priscilla (Blithedale 57) and of Priscilla having "the gift of hearing those 'airy tongues that syllable men's names'" (Blithedale 57), a special quality the Veiled Lady actually possesses, as will be explained later on. It also narrates the first day Coverdale leaves his sick chamber. He finds out that Zenobia has covered Priscilla in spring flowers and that the girl "is the very picture of the New England spring, subdued in tint, and rather cool, but with a capacity of sunshine, and bringing us a few alpine blossoms, as earnest of something richer, though hardly more beautiful, hereafter" (Blithedale 56). However, her merry aspect leads Zenobia to reflect upon the girl's character and her happiness, which especially surprises Zenobia. For her, Priscilla's considering "a Paradise here, and all of us, particularly Mr.

Hollingsworth and myself, such angels!" is "quite ridiculous, and provokes one's malice, almost, to see a creature so happy─especially a feminine creature" (Blithedale 56). Zenobia is concerned about the situation of women in her times, and, most likely, most of the women she is fighting for cannot share Priscilla's naïve happiness. Coverdale, however, considers that women "are always happier creatures than male creatures" (Blithedale 56), to which Zenobia replies by asking him "Did you ever see a happy woman in your life? […] How can she be happy, after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the substance of her whole life? A man has his choice of innumerable events" (Blithedale 56-7). Once again, Coverdale cannot provide a satisfactory answer to this enquiry. His voice has been silenced by hers. During their conversation, Priscilla remains silent, as if she were not there, and only moves when she cautches sight of Hollingsworth. She immediately rushes towards him. However, she stops in mid-way, not knowing whether to keep moving towards Hollingsworth or to go back to Zenobia. Upon Hollingsworth's arrival, Priscilla loses all her previous enchantment and "rather resembled my original image of the wan and spiritless Priscilla" (Blithedale 57). It is as if the presence of this man completely erased the girl's true nature, which can only be set free if Priscilla is accompanied by Zenobia and if Hollingsworth is not nearby. This episode somehow anticipates what will happen in chapter XIV, "Eliot's Pulpit", regarding the place of women in the world. As I mentioned before, the book shows a circular structure that connects early and late chapters with each other in pairs, thus linking all the events that take place in the story. For example, in "A Modern Arcadia" Coverdale mentions Milton's "airy tongues that syllable men's names" (Blithedale 57) and in "The Masqueraders" he speaks about "Comus and his crew" (Blithedale 190). Even the smallest detail has been carefully considered. At a different level, and following Peter Bellis, Coverdale's comments about Milton may have

to do with the Puritans' absolute disregard for "the masquerade of the seventeenth century English court, a form detested by the Puritans both because of its depravity as theater and because of its association with and service to political conservatism" (59). Curiously enough, *The Blithedale Romance* is closely associated with drama, starting with the preface and following with many other references throughout the text. Moreover, one of the last chapters of the text is called "The Masqueraders", and it offers illuminating information about the Blithedale community. Therefore, the double reference to Milton and his work can also be understood as another subversive maneuver by the author.

Now recovered from his sickness, Coverdale needs to find out what is going on in the lives of his three closest companions. He opens chapter IX, "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla" by acknowledging that

> if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again. What wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all─though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage─may be said to have been created mainly by ourselves. (Blithedale 65)

Coverdale himself is admitting that his descriptions of the other characters have been modified by his own imagination. He himself is undermining his authority as a narrator. But, nevertheless, he does it in an overt way, as if asking for his readers' understanding. He appears to be implying that he had no other chance, given his own personal circumstances, with his obsession regarding those three characters who, in his own words, "stood forth as the indices of a problem which it was my business to solve" (Blithedale 65-6). Coverdale's confession could be read as Hawthorne's own way of suggesting, without clearly stating it,

that every narrative, no matter how truthful it is claimed to be, has been filtered by the author's mind, and, therefore, it is biased. As Michel de Certeau proposes in *The Writing of History*, History is a mere artifact of the historian's ideology and background. It depends, not on the events narrated, but rather on who writes it and when, thus disregarding any claim to authorial objectivity. This is why, as was the case in the previous chapter, this one also portrays a little disagreement between Hollingsworth and Coverdale. But, as before, it takes place after Coverdale has narrated how close Hollingsworth and Priscilla are becoming and also that "the gossip of the Community set them [Hollingsworth and Zenobia] down as a pair of lovers" (Blithedale 74). That is, Coverdale starts estranging himself from Hollingsworth when he realizes that the latter has more chances than he does regarding the two women's affections. His narration is biased by his emotions. It is also remarkable that this chapter portrays a honeymoon phase among Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, while its parallel one, chapter XXV, "The Three Together", will depict just the opposite situation.

Interestingly enough, right after Coverdale makes the former confession, the story starts moving faster. In the following two chapters, two other characters appear. The first one, old Moodie, reenters the story, while the second one is a new figure. Both of them are closely linked to the story of the Veiled Lady and have information about the lives of both Zenobia and Priscilla. They know more about them than Coverdale does. When old Moodie appears in Blithedale, Coverdale is working in the fields with Hollingsworth and readily explains to him that "I know this old gentleman" (Blithedale 77), but quickly adds that "I have met him a hundred times, in town, and have often amused my fancy with wondering what he was" (Blithedale 77). That is, Coverdale only possesses a very superficial knowledge of the old man because he does not truly know him. Hollingsworth, however,

claims to know "Not a circumstance" about the man, but then addresses "the stranger as an acquaintance" (Blithedale 78). He may be hiding something from Coverdale. The narrator tries to engage Moodie in conversation by mentioning the purses he sells and by enquiring who makes them. The old man's answer is somewhat enigmatic, he replies by saying: "Mr. Coverdale, that you can tell me more about the maker of those little purses, than I can tell you" (Blithedale 79). Coverdale is unable to make the necessary connections and Hollingsworth, a little bothered, spits out "Why do you trouble him with needless questions?" because, in Hollingsworth's opinion, "You must have known, long ago, that it was Priscilla" (Blithedale 79). Coverdale never realized, during all that time, the relation between the little purse he once bought in the city and the ones Priscilla had been making on the farm. Hollingsworth, on the other hand, knows about it and also imagines that Moodie would like to see Priscilla, a fact that altogether escapes Coverdale's intuitions. A connection, however, that neither Coverdale nor Hollingsworth make is why he also enquires about Zenobia and her relationship with Priscilla. Nevertheless, he gives an important clue on this point. When Hollingsworth explains to him that the two women get along "Like an elder and younger sister" (Blithedale 81), the old man happily answers that "it would gladden my old heart to witness that. If one thing would make me happier than another, Mr. Hollingsworth, it would be, to see that beautiful lady holding my little girl by the hand" (Blithedale 81). All along this conversation, Coverdale has been acting as a mere spectator, unable to satisfy any of Moodie's enquiries. He acts as if he were outside the narration, but he cannot act as one of those all-knowing 3rd person narrators because he does not have a clue of what is going on around him. Coverdale finds himself displaced by his own lack of knowledge. He cannot exert any power over the rest of the characters. The only thing left for him is to stay "under the tuft of maples, doing my utmost to draw an

inference from the scene that had just passed" (Blithedale 81). His language is that of somebody who has just seen a theater play and is about to start decoding it. Coverdale's lack of knowledge has turned him into part of the audience. The fact that the 1st person narrator of the story is the one who feels more isolated within this new community can also be understood as a subversion of traditional narrative roles. The one who is supposed to know all because he is telling his own story, is the one proved to know less, and the one who falls off the community formed by the two women. Possibly aware of his recently acquired condition as an outcast, Coverdale "took a holiday" (Blithedale 83) to be alone. Coverdale's plans, however, are ruined and, once again, he is left in the dark.

His quiet forest ramble is abruptly interrupted by someone calling him "sharply and impertinently" (Blithedale 84). The first time Zenobia referred to Hollingsworth, she alluded to the power of his voice. This new character is also introduced by alluding to his voice. In this case, however, the new character does not possess a strong and pleasant voice, but a "most unseasonable" one (Blithedale 84). Coverdale meets this man unexpectedly and in an abrupt manner because he has interrupted his projected lonely excursion and has dared to call him "friend" (Blithedale 84) although this was their first encounter. This scene will mark the relationship between Coverdale and Westervelt until the end of the book. The description Coverdale gives of this man can be traced to the one of the devil given in "Young Goodman Brown." According to Coverdale,

> His hair, as well as his beard and moustache, was coal-black; his eyes, too, were black and sparkling, and his teeth remarkably brilliant. He was rather carelessly, but well and fashionably dressed, in a summer-morning costume. There was a gold chain, exquisitely wrought, across his vest. I never saw a smoother or whiter gloss than that upon his shirt-bosom, which had a pin in it, set with a gem that glimmered,

> in the leafy shadow where he stood, like a living rip of fire. He carried a stick with a wooden head, carved in vivid imitation of that of a serpent. (Blithedale 86)

He is described as a perfect gentleman, but with a touch of dark mystery. Coverdale does not like him, but, still, he describes this stranger as a powerful man. As will be disclosed later on in the book, this is the man who controls the Veiled Lady and the one who also knows about the relationship among old Moodie, Zenobia, and Priscilla. He is also familiar with Hollingsworth's story. Therefore, his association with the devil, by means of the serpent-like head of his stick and the fire of his gem, may have to do with his almost unlimited knowledge, and with his alleged psychic powers. Some scholars have seen in this character Hollingsworth's alter ego. However, taking into account that he knows everything Coverdale would like to, and that he can also exert his power upon the two women who simply get along with Coverdale, I rather read this character as a projection of Coverdale's subconscious. Coverdale gets upset upon his meeting him because he does not like his true self to show and would prefer to remain hidden and undisclosed. After having apologized to each other for their respective rudeness, the stranger asks Coverdale about Zenobia's whereabouts in order to speak with her in private. To show him that he also knows about her, Coverdale, in an uncalled-for comment, tells the stranger Zenobia's real name, which, obviously, the stranger also knew. Reluctantly though, Coverdale feels compelled to answer all the stranger's questions. This is the first time in the book when Coverdale has all the information which another character needs, which may be another symptom of the close relationship between the two. The only question Coverdale asks the stranger is his name, to which he replies by giving Coverdale "a card, with Professor Westervelt engraved on it" (Blithedale 89). Curiously enough, as if aware of Westervelt's possibly illicit business, Coverdale puts an end to their conversation by stating that he "must decline any further

connection with your affairs" (Blithedale 89). For once, Coverdale seems to truly know about a character whom, apparently, he has just met. However, immediately after Westervelt's departure, Coverdale recovers his usual lack of knowledge. He starts wondering about

> the fact, that, ever since the appearance of Priscilla, it had been the tendency of events to suggest and establish a connection between Zenobia and her. She had come, in the first instance, as if with the sole purpose of claiming Zenobia's protection. Old Moodie's visit, it appeared, was chiefly to ascertain whether this object had been accomplished. And here, to-day, was the questionable Professor, linking one with the other in his inquiries, and seeking communication with both. (Blithedale 89)

However, he has made no connection between the two yet except for his feverish discovery. This paragraph appears to be a summary of all the instances which link the two women together, as if refreshing the readers' memories and preparing them for what is to come. It also emphasizes Coverdale's inability to connect a sequence of events in a logical way so that they can lead him to a fruitful conclusion. What is more, he closes the chapter by acknowledging, again, that his "part, in these transactions, was singularly subordinate. It resembled that of the Chorus in a classic play" (Blithedale 90). He has already taken for granted that he is just "one calm observer" of the "drama" which "Destiny, it may be—the most skilful of stage managers—" has chosen to "arrange" (Blithedale 90). Coverdale picks up the theatrical subtext to refer to his own role within the story. It is important to realize that this time he mentions "a classic play" (Blithedale 90) where actors wore masks which hid their faces and only showed the predetermined expressions the public needed to see. Therefore, it can be inferred that Coverdale is also wearing a mask throughout the whole

story. Or, at a different level, perhaps Coverdale is the mask that Hawthorne himself wears to expose those conventions of his time.

Coverdale takes his leave of Westervelt and hides in his "little hermitage" (Blithedale 91) to be by himself and to spy on Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla. He describes his tree hideout as

> an admirable place to make verses, tuning the rhythm to the breezy symphony that so often stirred among the vine-leaves; or to meditate an essay for the Dial, in which the many tongues of Nature whispered mysteries, and seemed to ask only a little stronger puff of wind, to speak out the solution of its riddle. (Blithedale 92)

This is a place full of creative energy, the perfect territory where the actual and the imaginary meet and merge together. Therefore, it is not surprising that the conversation between Zenobia and Westervelt which Coverdale overheard while inside his hideout did not happen as he transcribed it. Actually, Coverdale himself acknowledges that "Zenobia's utterance was so hasty and broken, and Westervelt's so cool and low, that I hardly could make out an intelligible sentence, on either side. What I seem to remember, I yet suspect may have been patched together by my fancy" (Blithedale 96). He thinks he heard Westervelt urging Zenobia to get rid of Priscilla and, also Zenobia's complaint about Westervelt's tight grip on her. The only idea he makes out from this conversation is that Zenobia and Westervelt are somewhat related and that Priscilla seems to be in between the two of them. This only contributes to add another mystery to Zenobia´s true identity. Interestingly enough, right after all the characters involved in the story of the Veiled Lady had already being introduced, Zenobia tells her fellow Blithedalers her version of the tale. Chapter XIII, "Zenobia's Legend", is fully devoted to Zenobia's tale telling. This legend, as I mentioned before, is a very rich subtext within Coverdale's narrative because it displays

> many of the ingredients for a feminist critique of patriarchal theater and display. It depicts the Veiled Lady as the object of male observation and discourse, as a group of young men seeks to establish her identity in conventional patriarchal terms ─ through a father's name or a brother's protection. The Lady calls herself a "prisoner" behind her veil, either a virgin or wife, at the whim of her male pursuer. (Bellis 54)

The whole book revolves around the mysteries hidden, particularly, by Zenobia and Priscilla; mysteries which are closely linked to the story of the Veiled Lady. Actually, at the end of her narration / performance, Zenobia covers Priscilla with a veil, turning her into the Veiled Lady, thus anticipating the key to the other Veiled Lady's story. As Peter Bellis points out, Zenobia's legend can be interpreted as an attack against the patriarchal system, which makes perfect sense bearing in mind that Zenobia actually fights for women's rights. Therefore, it could also be understood that within the whole book remains latent a deeper critique of the traditional role assigned to women by the establishment. It could be said that Hawthorne is using Zenobia, a gendered other, to expose the unfairness of the treatment traditionally given to women; and that happens despite Coversdale's clumsy discourse. He is the one who was supposed to have the power, since he had the voice to tell, but Zenobia's voice is heard throughout the text despite, or perhaps thanks to, his frail authorial discourse.

4.4. The Curtain Falls

Chapter 14 portrays Zenobia, supported by Coverdale, facing Hollingsworth on the woman question. The chapter opens with Coverdale admitting that "Our Sundays, at Blithedale, were not ordinarily kept with such rigid observance as might have befitted the descendants

of the Pilgrims" (Blithedale 108) because they did not attend mass. Instead, Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla, and himself gathered at what "was known to us under the name of Eliot's pulpit" (Blithedale 109), named after the man who tried to convert the Indians. At Blithedale, it is Hollingsworth who talks to his three-people audience. That is, the opening of the chapter already breaks one of the strongest Puritan traditions. After all, the Blithedalers are trying to set up a new society. On this particular occasion, Zenobia feels the urge to "lift up my own voice, in behalf of woman's wider liberty" (Blithedale 110). She continues to express her

> belief─yes, and my prophecy, should I die before it happens─that, when my sex shall achieve its rights, there will be ten eloquent women, where there is now one eloquent man. […]. It is with the living voice, alone, that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart! (Blithedale 111)

Her statement meets with Coverdale's support, who explains to her that he "would give her all she asks, and add a great deal more, which she will not be the party to demand, but which men, if they were generous and wise, would grant of their own free motion" (Blithedale 111). He comments on all the gender-based role changes he would make. Priscilla, however, cannot believe her ears and tells him so. Upon the girl's words, Zenobia claims that "She is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (Blithedale 112). Priscilla's skepticism is encouraged by Hollingsworth, who comforts the girl by assuring her that Zenobia and Coverdale "have neither of them spoken one true word yet" (Blithedale 112). He regards woman as

> the most admirable handiwork of God, in her true place and character. Her place is at man's side. Her office, that of the Sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning Believer; […]. Man is a wretch without woman; but woman is a monster─and,

> thank Heaven, an almost impossible and hitherto imaginary monster—without man, as her acknowledged principal! (Blithedale 112-3)

Hollingsworth has voiced the traditional conception of the women's role, the role Zenobia wants to break from for good. However, she is not strong enough to face what Hollingsworth and Priscilla represent. This does not mean, as some feminist scholars insist on remarking, that Hawthorne despised Zenobia and what she stands for. Actually, Coverdale confesses that Hollingsworth speech was an "outrageous affirmation of what struck me as the intensity of masculine egotism. It centered everything in itself, and deprived woman of her very soul, her inexpressible and unfathomable all, to make it a mere incident in the great sum of man" (Blithedale 113). Coverdale's ideas are more advanced than some women's, as Priscilla has proved, which openly refutes the accusations against Hawthorne. It simply implies that society was not ready for such a change as Zenobia, and also Coverdale, proposed. If we apply this situation to the genre section of this dissertation, it proves what I have previously suggested. That is, Hawthorne was not completely erasing the already existing genres, novels and romances, with his creation. As Zenobia's words regarding the woman question, Hawthorne's longer texts can be read as challenging the literary establishment, not utterly dismantling it. As I am trying to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, Hawthorne's longer production combines novels and romances to create a better product. Zenobia's fight tries to improve the lives of as many women as possible. Hawthorne's books can be perceived as contributing to the advancement of literary genres. This scene also anticipates the final break up between Hollingsworth and Zenobia in chapter XXV and also the one between Coverdale and Hollingsworth, which takes place in the following chapter entitled "A Crisis". Having unmasked Hollingsworth, Coverdale refuses to follow him in his philanthropic enterprise and the latter considers that Coverdale

should “Be with me, or be against me!” and that “There is no third choice for you” (Blithedale 124). Coverdale still rejects Hollingsworth’s project and they wind up apart. This episode encourages Coverdale to leave the farm and to go back to town for a while. At the same time, the book is moving towards the disclosure of its mysteries.

Coverdale stays at a boarding-house where he makes a discovery. In one of the windows of the building across the street, he sees “no other than Zenobia!” (Blithedale 142). Obviously, “At the same instant, my thoughts made sure of the identity of the figure in the boudoir. It could only be Priscilla” (Blithedale 142). He left the farm to rest from the Blithedale environment and ends up meeting the object of his obsession across the street. Coverdale’s perspective of Zenobia is that of an actress in a mute play. She is framed by the window and he can only see her moving. Coverdale soon realizes that the two women are not alone. They are accompanied by Westervelt. As Coverdale himself puts it, “There now needed only Hollingsworth and old Moodie to complete the knot of characters, whom a real intricacy of events, greatly assisted by my method of insulating them from other relations, had kept so long upon my mental stage, actors in a drama” (Blithedale 143). He is surrounded by theatrical mystery again, but this time he will uncover the intricacies at play. Coverdale keeps watching them until Zenobia, warned by Westervelt of his presence, lets “down a white linen curtain between the festoons of the damask ones”, which, for Coverdale felt “like the drop-curtain of a theatre, in the interval between the acts” (Blithedale 145). It is actually an interval because Coverdale decides to pay a visit to Zenobia to try to find out what is going on among them. Ironically enough, when Coverdale meets Zenobia at her dwellings, he tells her that “It is really impossible to hide anything, in this world” (Blithedale 148). So far, however, she has been quite successful in hiding her affairs from him. They talk about their experiences at Blithedale and, after a while,

Coverdale inquires about Priscilla. She is with Zenobia and, upon the latter's request, she appears to greet Coverdale. Zenobia has dressed Priscilla according to the fashion of the city and her appearance startles Coverdale. When he asks Priscilla whether she came to the city "of your own free-will", she replies that "I am blown about like a leaf. I never have any free-will" (Blithedale 157), like most, if not all, women of the time. Again, this is leading the story towards the denouement of the Veiled Lady's mystery. When Coverdale finds out that Hollingsworth is not only aware of where Priscilla is, but that "He bade me come" (Blithedale 157), he repeats what he did upon meeting Westervelt. He states: "I wash my hands of it all" (Blithedale 157). He seems not to want to be held responsible for the consequences of what is about to happen. He emphasizes his role as a mere spectator of a theatrical play, not as an actor within it. Before he can add anything else, Zenobia informs him that they need to leave immediately and she refuses to tell him where they are going. The only fact Coverdale discovers is that Westervelt is going with Zenobia and Priscilla. He also finds out, because Westervelt himself tells him so, that Priscilla knows him from before, knowing either Hollingsworth or Coverdale himself. He is then left alone in the street. Coverdale decides to turn to old Moodie to get more information about the whole affair. He buys the old man dinner and makes him relate his complete life story. During their meal, Coverdale finally finds out that Zenobia and Priscilla are half sisters and that old Moodie is their father. He now needs to find out the identity of the Veiled Lady. A few weeks later, the Veiled Lady show comes to town, and he attends it. Hollingsworth is also there, and acts as if Coverdale were just a distant acquaintance. During the show Coverdale discovers that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady, as Zenobia's performance anticipated, and Hollingsworth is the one who, in the middle of the show, breaks Westervelt's enchantment over Priscilla and rescues her.

With all his troublesome mysteries solved, Coverdale decides to go back to Blithedale, where he hopes to find Hollingswoth, Zenobia, and Priscilla as if nothing relevant had happened among them. He wishes to close an ideal circle as if all the events narrated by him were part of a *romance*. However, what he finds is quite different. Coverdale discovers his fellow Blithedalers in a custom celebration of some sort of carnival. He meets "an Indian chief, […], the goddess Diana, […] a Bavarian broom-girl, a negro of the Jim Crow order, one or two foresters of the middle-ages, a Kentucky woodsman […], and a Shaker elder" (Blithedale 191), among others. Goddess Diana spots Coverdale and informs "Queen Zenobia! Here is one of your vassals lurking in the wood. Command him to approach, and pay his duty" (Blithedale 192). Coverdale tries to run away from the masqueraders only to find himself "nigh Eliot's pulpit, at the base of which sat Hollingsworth, with Priscilla at his feet, and Zenobia standing before them" (Blithedale 193). Zenobia is their queen and, apparently, the one who has organized the whole party. Following Bauer, this carnival scene shows "Hawthorne's own ambivalence about sexuality, authorial power, and convention," that he "draws on the carnival tradition to suggest the possibility of Zenobia's freedom and self-definition," and that "[a]t the very least, the masquerade is a call to rebellion" (42). She is given the chance, for one night, of putting society upside down and, according to the Bakhtinean carnivalesque model, of freeing herself of all the social constraints that keep women tied and dependent on men. However, what Coverdale actually finds is that Zenobia has "been on trial for my [Zenobia's] life" (Blithedale 195) by Hollingsworth. Zenobia reproaches men that they tend

> to bring a woman before your secret tribunals, and judge and condemn her, unheard, and then tell her to go free without a sentence. The misfortune is, that this same secret tribunal chances to be the only judgment-seat that a true woman stands in awe

> of, and that any verdict short of acquittal is equivalent to a death-sentence. (Blithedale 196)

This reproach actually anticipates Zenobia's own end. Hollingsworth pays no attention to her claims and goes away taking Priscilla with him. Zenobia feels betrayed and broken-hearted, with Coverdale as her only friend. Nevertheless, she has exposed Hollingsworth's selfish character by explaining, with Coverdale and Priscilla as witnesses, that Hollingsworth's affections towards her changed only when he found out that she had lost her fortune. Therefore, she was no longer useful to him in his attempt to turn his dream into reality. Her words expose the ease with which a man's statement can ruin a woman's reputation without giving her the chance to defend herself and, perhaps, to prove him wrong. Zenobia is thus trying to undermine the power of traditional male justice, another of the monological discourses of the establishment. After this episode, Zenobia speaks with Coverdale and asks him to make a ballad out of her story before going away. The next that is known about her is that Hollingsworth and Coverdale find her corpse in the river. She had drown herself. Zenobia's body is recovered from the bottom of the river by Hollingsworth, who strikes his pole into the breast of the dead corpse. This image could be read as reenacting Hollingsworth's previous behavior towards Zenobia. Somehow, it seems to be fully blaming him for her death.

Zenobia's death marks the closing of the story. A week after her burial, Coverdale leaves the community and recalls Hollingsworth's unsteady figure supported by Priscilla. He emphasizes the fact that they did not look happy at all, but chastened with remorse. Hollingsworth did not succeed in his enterprise, which can be read as his punishment for his unfairness towards Zenobia. His philanthropic edifice will remain a dream forever. Although Zenobia is dead, Coverdale fulfilled his promise and turned the story into a ballad

so that readers can still learn about her and her advanced ideas. However, Hollingsworth is perceived as the egotistic man who brought about Zenobia's disgrace. That is, the representative of traditionalism is the only one who actually fails in his projected enterprise. Coverdale, in spite of his lack of knowledge, and reticence to get fully involved, manages to convey his story in his own way, and supports Zenobia's attitude. Under the light of what I have been explaining, Zenobia's suicide is not a denial of her position. On the contrary, it can be interpreted as a subversive act. As Dale Bauer notices,

> Zenobia does not kill herself over Love, as Coverdale suggests; rather, she commits suicide because her efforts to attain a powerful voice in the community fail. Suicide is a chosen or willed act of finalizing oneself rather than being finalized in essentializing, monolithic discourse. As Michael Holquist and Katherina Clark have it, the suicide is a "heuristic device" or "structural metaphor" (in Dostoevsky's novels and, I will argue, in Hawthorne's, Wharton's, and Chopin's) as a bulwark against the others' attempts to reduce consciousness to an object of control. (27)

Zenobia also considered the option of becoming a nun, and that would have been an acceptable solution in accordance with social norms. Therefore, her choosing to commit suicide is a subversive act. She is not willing to give up her ideas for a man who only wants her money to fulfill his own dream. When she realizes she has been used and, even worse, when she considers that the world is not ready for a real change, Zenobia prefers to die instead of living under a hopelessly oppressive society. What is more, the echoes of Zenobia's voice last longer than Coverdale's, although he is the one closing his narration by unfolding his grand secret. A secret which is not so, since he had overtly expressed his love for Priscilla in chapter XII, when he claimed that "if any mortal really cares for her, it is myself" (Blithedale 93). It is important to recall at this point Bakhtin's notion of the

author's refracted speech, which

> suggests how Hawthorne's novel might remain heteroglossic, despite the narrator's claims for closure and for the hierarchy of sexual difference. In Coverdale's narrative resides another story, the author's, "who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story…. If one fails to sense this second level, the intentions of the accents of the author himself, then one has failed to understand the work." (Bauer 32)

As I have been showing throughout these pages, Coverdale's peculiar narration, shaped by his lack of knowledge, which is quite paradoxical taking into account that he tells his own story, was devised as one of Hawthorne's strategies to subvert and criticize the society he was living in. The subtle critique of Coverdale's narration can be read as a maneuver to dismantle monological discourses in general. Zenobia's voice makes more sense than Coverdale's, regardless of her death at the end of the story. This fact can be understood as Hawthorne's way of siding with Zenobia's feminism and with his gendered others.

5. *The Marble Faun*. The Art of Imagination

5.1. Looking for a Sympathetic Reader

The Marble Faun, or *The Romance of Monte Beni*, can be said to be different from the other three texts analyzed so far in my dissertation. Still, it remains loyal to the path established by Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*, and continued in the other books. Among other peculiarities, it is the only one of Hawthorne's four longer texts which does not take place in North America. Published in 1860, 4 years before the author's death, it is his last fictional work to see the light during his lifetime. It is also the only one of Hawthorne's books that includes a postscript, added to a new edition of the text upon his editor's request. Apparently, as the author himself explains, readers could not fully comprehend the mysteries of the story and sent letters demanding clarification. Interestingly enough, it is also the only one of Hawthorne's books whose preface begins by addressing the sympathetic reader all writers are supposed to have. *The Marble Faun* is also the lengthiest of Hawthorne's four longer texts and the one where the narrator's voice is heard more often. There is less dialogue and more commentary than in the previous texts. After his foray into 1st person narration in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne resorts to his more habitual 3rd person narrator in his last book.

It is remarkable to notice that the first part of the preface, the one addressed to the implied reader, is written in the 1st person singular, while the rest of the preface, where genre issues are dealt with, moves to the 3rd person singular as if the writer had resumed his literary mask of aesthetic distance once he has captured the reader's attention. The preface to *The Marble Faun* is, therefore, clearly divided into two distinct sections. The one written in the 1st person appears to be more personal and sincere. The author seems to have finally opened up to his readers. However, the closing lines of what can be considered the first part

add a touch of doubt to its seemingly sincere tone. Hawthorne comments that "I stand upon ceremony, now, and, after stating a few particulars about the work which is here offered to the Public, must make my most reverential bow, and retire behind the curtain" (Marble 4). He thus returns to the theatrical images so frequently used in *The Blithedale Romance* to introduce the second part of the preface. At the same time, however, he is casting a shadow over what he has mentioned so far. This preface, as I have already pointed out with respect to his other ones, sounds like a performance, a pose of the author which allows him to make certain claims without taking full responsibility. With that in mind, questions arise: Did he truly care about having or not the sympathy of a gentle reader? Or was he mocking the necessity of being applauded by the public? His explaining that "the existence of that friend of friends, that unseen brother of the soul, whose apprehensive sympathy has so often encouraged me to be egotistical in my Prefaces, careless though unkindly eyes should skim over what was never meant for them" (Marble 4) can be read as favoring the second option. As he remarks in "Main Street", his audience has to choose an appropriate seat to fully understand his art. Besides, as he makes clear in his postscript,

> He designed the story and the characters to bear, of course, a certain relation to human nature and human life, but still to be so artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere, that some laws and properties of their own should be implicitly and insensibly acknowledged. (Marble 366)

It can be deduced, therefore, that he was fully aware of the complexities posed by a text created only for those capable of reading it under the appropriate light, away from traditional literary conventions. What is more, as Steiner states in "Virgins, Copyists, and the Gentle Reader: Hawthorne", *The Marble Faun* is quite a modern piece of literature. It requires the readers' involvement in the development of the story. If read under a

traditional novelistic light expecting to receive all the information needed to have all the dots neatly connected by the end of the text, the story would end up being a waste and would make no sense at all. The full extent of Hawthorne's art escapes, as Melville put it, "the superficial skimmer of pages."

The general tone of the preface can be said to reveal a disenchanted author, someone who seems to have devoted his whole life to a project and finds out it has never been fully understood. The author, for example, shows his pessimism regarding his gentle reader. Hawthorne takes for granted that "If I find him at all, it will probably be under some mossy grave-stone, inscribed with a half obliterated name, which I shall never recognize" (Marble 4). He harbors no hope not only of finally finding him or her, but of ever having come across one. As Hawthorne himself depicted in "Main Street", and as his son Julian confirmed in the preface to that sketch, the writer's relation with criticism and with the reading public in general, was not a satisfactory one. At this point in his career, he held no hope of pleasing an audience. Moreover, regarding the gentle reader in a broader sense, Hawthorne explains that he "is apt to be extremely short-lived; he seldom outlasts a literary fashion, and, except in very rare instances, closes his weary eyes before the writer has half done with him" (Marble 4). He seemed to be aware of how mutable and fashion-conditioned the taste of the reading public was, and yet, he remained true to his writing philosophy through the end of his literary career. Hawthorne did not truly adjust it to better suit the taste of each period. Judging from those words in the preface, he deemed it useless because fashions change much too rapidly. Far from altering his style, now in the 3rd person, the narrator explains that the author composed *The Marble Faun* in Rome because, on the one hand, in Italy "actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon" (Marble 4), and, on the other, "Romance and poetry, like ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need Ruin to

make them" (Marble 4-5), something lacking in his native country, "where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common-place prosperity, in broad and simple daylight" (Marble 4). In the light of this and also taking into account that *The Marble Faun* is the only one of his so-called romances which takes place outside North American soil, we can better understand his following comment: "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a Romance about" America (Marble 4). These statements can be understood as one of the author's maneuvers to get rid of the responsibility for any politically incorrect idea which could be found in his other books, and sketches, whose stories take place in his native land, and which are based upon the popular history of his native land. The irony in his words seems to be evident and it matches the tone of his previous prefaces.

In this particular preface, however, genre appears to be taken for granted because little is said about it. The narrator mentions that "Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct" (Marble 4), which emphasizes what he had already mentioned in his previous prefaces, but adds no new information on his conception of romances. Art, which functions as a subtext in the story, is more forcefully introduced than the genre discussion. The narrator lists the artists to whom he feels indebted to and thanks them for their inspiration. Nevertheless, this emphasis on art can be understood as introducing a different emphasis on genre. *The Marble Faun* "warns against its reception as a novel and dramatizes the difference between novel and romance through the symbol of the visual arts. It is the reader, the text constantly insists, who invests the romance with its magic, as the viewer does a statue or painting" (Steiner, qtd. in Marble 387). In this sense, *The Marble Faun* can be said to close the circle opened with *The Scarlet Letter*. In his previous books, the discussion about genre was mainly carried out in the

prefaces while within the stories, emphasis was placed somewhere else. *The Marble Faun*, however, turns the genre issue into one of the structuring principles of the text. Hawthorne's longer fictions always include an artist as a main character, an artist with whom the author himself tends to sympathize. This artist is also generally closer─due to their attitude towards socially established norms and conventions─to what Hawthorne refers to as romance than the other characters involved in each story. So far in this dissertation, I have mentioned Hester, Holgrave, and Zenobia as the artists of the three texts analyzed. Although art was not the cornerstone in the other stories, it gained more and more importance as Hawthorne's career evolved, becoming central in *The Marble Faun*. The story relates the lives of four characters in Rome. Three of them are artists, one sculptor and two painters, and the fourth one, although not an artist himself, is closely associated with art due to his resemblance to Praxiteles' Faun. The relationship that each of the three artists establishes with art, and with the so-called Faun, can be construed to show Hawthorne's way of understanding art and, therefore, the genre of his creations.

4.2. The Circle of Art

The four characters are first mentioned in the very first chapter, which is in fact entitled after them: "Miriam, Hilda, Kenyon, and Donatello." Curiously enough, although the chapter is named after them, they are not properly introduced in this first chapter. Only Rome, the setting of the story, and Donatello, the faun man, are dealt with in any detail. The other three characters are barely mentioned as being artists, with just a little comment on the physical appearance of the two young women. This party of four happens to be in the Roman Capitol, a site full of history and legends. While describing the location, the narrator wishes to put

> the reader into that state of feeling which is experienced oftenest at Rome. It is a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a bygone life, of which this spot was the centre, that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out, and our individual affairs and interests are but half as real, here, as elsewhere. (Marble 8)

Even before properly describing the main characters of his story, the narrator is again requesting his readers' active involvement in the story. They should not read it under a conventional light. Quite the contrary, they should leave behind their baggage of literary conventions and adopt an open attitude. Following Rohrberger, Hawthorne's readers are asked to believe in the existence of a world different from the one their senses perceive. In order to achieve it, they have to use their imagination, which, in Hawthorne's times, was regarded as highly dangerous. After his warning regarding the most convenient mood to read his story, he goes on to explain that "Viewed through this medium, our narrative ─ into which are woven some airy and unsubstantial threads, intermixed with others, twisted out of the commonest stuff of human existence ─ may seem not widely different from the texture of our lives" (Marble 8). After all, as the narrator of *The House of the Seven Gables* explained, "Life is made up of marble and mud" (House 41), it combines elements from different spheres to create its final product. However, if we insist on perpetually severing half of its components, the final product will obviously be an incomplete one, which is why imagination and open mindness should be a part of the writing and reading processes.

Emphasis on imagination is also made when dealing with Praxiteles' Faun, which Donatello is said to strongly resemble. The narrator describes the statue in detail and when wondering about its creator's art, he states that

> Only a sculptor of the finest imagination, the most delicate taste, the sweetest

> feeling, and the rarest artistic skill ─ in a word, a sculptor and a poet too ─ could have first dreamed of a Faun in this guise, and then have succeeded in imprisoning the sportive and frisky thing, in marble. (Marble 11)

First and foremost comes the word imagination and then, the combination of two artistic disciplines, namely sculpting and writing. According to the narrator, only such a mixture could have produced the Faun, with imagination being the first requirement. Somehow, but for the sculpting skills, the narrator could be said to be referring to a romance writer, to Hawthorne himself. That is, it can be inferred that Hawthorne is thus explaining his own creative process when writing his own romances, that peculiar genre I consider in between novel and romance. His emphasis on imagination is due to the total lack of respect and consideration it suffered in his time, as I explained in the first chapter. Hawthorne can be read as being subtly defending his art. What is more, when the narrator refers to the nature of the Faun, as that of an author, he notices that he is "Neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground!" (Marble 11). These words can be used to support my theory regarding a balanced combination of novelistic and romance elements in Hawthorne's longer texts. The Faun represents that neutral territory between the Actual and the Imaginary first mentioned in "The Custom-House." As he explains regarding the statue, it is possible to achieve an equilibrium between apparently disparate elements.

Donatello possesses another characteristic that also sets him apart from the rest of the group. His physical resemblance to the Faun is accompanied by a moral resemblance to the mythical creature. According to the narrator,

> It was difficult to make out the character of this young man. So full of animal life as he was, so joyous in his deportment, so handsome, so physically well-developed, he

> made no impression of incompleteness, of maimed or stinted nature. And yet, in social intercourse, these familiar friends of his habitually and instinctively allowed for him, as for a child or some other lawless thing, exacting no strict obedience to conventional rules, and hardly noticing his eccentricities enough to pardon them. There was an indefinable characteristic about Donatello, that set him outside of rules. (Marble 13)

This description of Donatello recalls some other comments made about Pearl and her peculiar nature in *The Scarlet Letter*. The narrator is openly placing Donatello outside the reach of society and its rules. He is a natural creature, linked to Nature in a special way. Donatello is accepted by his three friends, but he keeps nobody else's company. He is not a social creature. He lives under his own personal rules, not the ones established by society. This is the same situation presented in *The House of the Seven Gables* with respect to its inhabitants, except Phoebe. It is also similar to Hester's attitude in *The Scarlet Letter*. Donatello can be said to embody all the peculiarities mentioned about the outcasts of society in the previous chapters of my dissertation. Besides, Nature also plays a fundamental role as opposed to the restrictive society ─ only in the forest, for example, could Hester be free. Actually, her lodgings were set outside the limits of the town, she lived closer to Nature ─. Linking Donatello with Praxiteles' statue places him outside the scope of the establishment. He dwells in a world apart, a world readers need to be ready to accept in order to understand it. However, Donatello is not utterly alone outside society and its rules. He has chosen one companion among his three friends. He feels attracted to Miriam, one of the painters in the group, who explains to her friends that she would like to be a faun because they live

> as our four-footed kindred do ─ as mankind did in its innocent childhood, before

> sin, sorrow, or morality itself, had ever been thought of! […] ─ if I, at least ─ had pointed ears! For I suppose the Faun had no conscience, no remorse, no burthen on the heart, no troublesome recollections of any sort; no dark future neither! (Marble 13)

She appreciates and longs for the freedom Nature grants to its creatures. She resents society and its morality, and her statement seems to be implying that mankind lost its innocence precisely due to society and its rules. Like the other female characters analyzed above, Miriam's comment also suggests that there is something in her past which can mark both her present and her future. There is a stain in Miriam's past which will condition the rest of her life. Miriam's discontent with social norms and Donatello's natural disregard for them brings these two characters together.

Miriam is surrounded by mystery throughout the whole story. Apart form her own enigmatic remark about her past and future, the narrator also mentions that

> There was an ambiguity about this young lady, which, though it did not unnecessarily imply anything wrong, would have operated unfavorably as regarded her reception in society, anywhere but in Rome. The truth was, that nobody knew anything about Miriam, either for good or evil. (Marble 18)

She is like a shadow with regards to her personal life. However, such a lack of information is not socially accepted. Society must know about its members before allowing them in. As I explained regarding *The Blithedale Romance*, knowledge implies power. Therefore, if society knows nothing about one of its prospective members, it can exert no power over it. As a result, that individual becomes a threat to society and will not be fully accepted. This would have been Miriam's case, as the narrator puts it, "anywhere but in Rome" (Marble 18), the cradle of Western civilization and a place where "actualities would not be so

terribly insisted upon" (Marble 4). Furthermore, as Gary Scrimgeour points out in "The Marble Faun: Hawthorne's Faery Land,"

> It is essential that the characters in *The Marble Faun* have complete freedom of movement, and this is given to them by residence in the artists' colony of Rome. It is one of the few situations that will work on the level of everyday reality to explain not just the intimacy but the presence of characters so diverse as these, especially if one of the major themes of the novel is (as I believe) the conflict of Old and New Worlds. (276-7)

Characters such as Miriam, Hawthorne's subversive heroine in *The Marble Faun*, would not have been socially accepted in the 19th-century United States. Her troublesome past would have marked her as an outcast. Miriam represents a new type of woman, one capable of defying the establishment to fight for what she considers fair. That is to say, as I have explained in the previous chapters, Hawthorne seemed to be aware of the difficulties the woman question posed in his own society. Therefore, placing a character such as Miriam in Rome makes the writer's work easier to accomplish. Once again, he establishes an aesthetic distance—geographical as well in this case—between the events narrated in his text and the real society he lived in.

It is also worth mentioning that "Miriam's pictures met with good acceptance among the patrons of modern art" (Marble 18), which could be interpreted as a connection between Miriam's reality and Hawthorne's longed for dream. As I have pointed out before, Hawthorne tended to side with the artists he created and in the case of *The Marble Faun*, Miriam appears to be the chosen one. Hawthorne's creations were not successful during his lifetime. Neither the reading public in general, nor the experts, fully appreciated his style. The fact that Miriam's admirers were those involved with modern art can be interpreted as

Hawthorne's own hopes of being accepted by more modern critics at some point. What is more, the narrator goes on to explain that "Whatever technical merit they lacked, its absence was more than supplied by a warmth and passionateness, which she had the faculty of putting into her productions, and which all the world could feel" (Marble 18). Curiously enough, in his time, Hawthorne was criticized for his lack of technical skills upon creating a novel. Through the narrator's description of Miriam's work, we can see a subtle allusion to Hawthorne's own art. Besides, Miriam uses her imagination to create her pictures, and imbues them with her own emotions. As Bellis explains, "For Hawthorne, finally, the most basic authority of romance is neither "reason and fact, plain and unadorned," nor some romantic quality in certain kinds of settings, but the projected imagination of the author" (Culture 45). Miriam is the only one of the three artists in the book who lets her imagination go free while creating, strengthening the parallelism between her and Hawthorne himself regarding the creative process.

Regarding Miriam's past, as the narrator explains, "there were many stories […], some of which had a very probable air, while others were evidently wild and romantic fables" (Marble 20). Nonetheless, the narrator mentions a few "leaving the reader to designate them either under the probable or the romantic head" (Marble 20). He does not pass any judgment favoring one or another of the options. He just presents them. Among the four stories offered, two of them suggest that Miriam ran away from her family ─ either a rich Jewish banker or a German sovereign ─ to avoid an unwanted marriage. Another one proposes that she was the daughter of a wealthy Southern American planter, who had enjoyed an excellent education, but had chosen to leave her home upon discovering she had African blood in her veins. The last story claimed that Miriam had left her wealthy English family due to her passion for art. Even though the narrator does not openly favor any of the

above mentioned versions, the only chapel the guide shows to the four friends during their visit to the Catacomb of Saint Calixtus is that of Saint Cecilia, a Christian martyr and the patron saint of musicians, yet another branch of art reinforcing a probable metaphorical connection with her past. Saint Cecilia was born to a wealthy Roman family, and, legend has it that although her father had forced her to marry, she died a virgin. Saint Cecilia is said to have convinced her newly-wed husband of her unbreakable wows to Christ and of His being the only God during their honeymoon. It is significant that the only saint mentioned is one who managed to escape an imposed marriage. As in the other texts analyzed, the narrator's remarks tend to be indirect and subtle. He does not offer open propositions. Moreover, two out of four of the legends point at Miriam's having broken her father's law. Besides, Saint Cecila's story also portrays a woman who fought for her own personal will in a man's world. Therefore, like Hester, Hepzibah, and Zenobia, Miriam also seems to have dared to go against the patriarchal system that was oppressing women.

As is typical in Hawthorne's works, the burden of the past always chases his main characters. Right after introducing the legends about Miriam's previous years and mentioning Saint Cecilia, she gets lost inside the catacomb and reappears accompanied by a mysterious man who makes her grow gloomy and dark. As will be disclosed later on in the book, this man reminds Miriam of her past and tries to pull her back towards it. He has no real name in the story and is referred to as Miriam's "Model" (Marble 17). He is described as a man who "looked as if he might just have stepped out of a picture, and, in truth, was likely enough to find his way into a dozen pictures; being no other than one of those living models, dark, bushy bearded, wild of aspect and attire, whom artists convert into Saints or assassins" (Marble 17). Actually, as Donatello's resemblance to Praxiteles' Faun shocked the group, the discovery of the resemblance between Miriam's model and a face in a

classical painting will unsettle her even more. Besides, the narrator explains that "Miriam's Model has so important a connection with our story, that it is essential to describe the singular mode of his first appearance, and how he subsequently became a self-appointed follower of the young female artist" (Marble 18). As the model himself explains to Kenyon, "I am nothing but a shadow behind her footsteps. She came to me when I sought her not. She has called me forth, and must abide the consequences of my re-appearance in the world" (Marble 26). If Miriam's origins are blurred and confusing, so are the model's. He is linked to the ghost of a Roman pagan said to have been drifting around the catacomb for 1,500 years. Legend has it that he got lost inside after having tried to betray the Christian martyrs, like Saint Cecilia, for instance. As with Hawthorne's other main female characters, the weight of Miriam's past, of tradition, falls upon her shoulders again, this time through the presence of a model.

Miriam's art reflects her personal situation and her attitude towards life. When Donatello visits her at her studio, he is unpleasantly surprised by how dark it is. Miriam explains to him that "We artists purposefully exclude sunshine, and all but a partial light, […] But we make very pretty pictures, sometimes, with our artfully arranged lights and shadows" (Marble 33-4). Miriam's comment recalls Hawthorne's own comments in his prefaces, especially in "The Custom-House", reminding us once again about their connection. But not only is Miriam's studio kept in semi-darkness, her paintings are also full of darkness, portraying Biblical heroines caught in dark moments. The first set of sketches Donatello contemplates portrays, without exception, Biblical scenes where women, for one reason or another, ended up killing men who threatened them somehow. Miriam had depicted the stories of Jael, Judith, and Salome. The narrator highlights this point and comments that "Over and over again, there was the idea of woman, acting the

part of revengeful mischief towards man. It was, indeed, very singular to see how the artist's imagination seemed to run on these stories of bloodshed, in which woman's hand was crimsoned by the stain" (Marble 36). Nevertheless, these three Biblical women played key roles defending either their families or their people. Jael, for example, killed Sisera because he had been oppressing the people of Israel, her people. In a similar line, Judith lures the tyrant Holofernes with her beauty and manages to kill him in order to rid her people of his oppression. Finally, Salome, following her mother's wishes, asked King Herod, who was infatuated with her, for John the Baptist's head as a sign of the King's true feelings for her. John the Baptist, although not a tyrant like Sisera and Holofernes, was perceived by Salome's mother as a threat. Salome was, after all, protecting her family's interests. These three women are described in the Bible as immensely beautiful and key for their people. They each got a man killed, but they were not condemned for that because the three of them were fighting for a just cause. The parallelism established between Miriam and her paintings may be suggesting that whatever crime she might have committed in the past, she was pushed into it by the circumnstances.

Not only do her sketches represent her posture towards life, but they can also be understood as reinforcing the legends about Miriam's past which suggest that a man did some wrong to her, forcing her to take some sort of action against him. What is more, upon describing Miriam's self portrait, the narrator claims that "Gazing at this portrait, you saw what Rachael might have been" (Marble 39-40). Interestingly enough, Rachael was betrayed by her father. Rachael and Jacob were in love with each other, but her father tricked Jacob into marrying Rachael's older sister. Jacob and Rachael were forced to wait 14 years before they could finally get married. The clearest connection established by the narrator, the one between Miriam and Rachael, revolves around a father who cunningly

betrays his daughter. Once again, as in the previous stories about Miriam's origins, and in the previous books as well, emphasis is placed on the law of the father/patriarchal society pressing down on the female character.

Apart from the Biblical series, Donatello sees another series of sketches, ones portraying lighter scenes of everyday life. However, all of them share some dark nuance. There is always a figure who does not partake in the represented scene. It is a figure which merely observes from the distance, as if unable to enjoy whatever the scene shows. The narrator notices that the figure was "always depicted with an expression of deep sadness; and in every instance, slightly as they were brought out, the face and form had the traits of Miriam's own" (Marble 38). Both her darker sketches and the lighter ones, where she paints herself detached from the world around her, show Miriam's sense of utter alienation and pathos. As a woman, judging from her Biblical pictures, she seems terribly wronged by men and longing for vengeance. As a human being, considering the lonely figure in the lighter paintings, she feels alone and distanced from any sympathy. Even when referring to the female puppet she uses as one of her models, Miriam explains to Donatello that the puppet figure can be

> now a heroine of romance, and now a rustic maid; yet all for show, being created, indeed, on purpose, to wear rich shawls and other garments in a becoming fashion. This is the true end of her being, although she pretends to assume the most varied duties and perform many parts in life, while really the poor puppet has nothing on earth to do. (Marble 34)

However, Miriam makes a sudden realization regarding the explanation she has just given to Donatello and adds that "Upon my word, I am satirical unawares, and seem to be describing nine women out of ten in the person of my lay-figure! For most purposes, she

has the advantage of the sisterhood. Would I were like her!" (Marble 34). Clearly, Miriam's remarks about the situation of women in her times are not positive at all. Her words sound similar to Zenobia's in *The Blithedale Romance*. They both would like things to be different for women, although they both seem to realize that it is not the right time yet. They seem to notice that their society, and maybe Hawthorne's as well, is not ready to make important changes regarding the woman question. In any case, just like Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, both Zenobia and Miriam are quite aware of the unfairness with which society treats its women, and yet they both succeed in attracting some attention to it, although not in a radical feminist way.

Donatello and the Model are not the only characters interacting with Miriam in *The Marble Faun*. Following a pattern very similar to that used in *The Blithedale Romance*, the couple formed by Miriam and Donatello finds its counterpart in that formed by Hilda and Kenyon, the other artists in the group. Hilda, like Miriam, is a painter and Kenyon is a sculptor. Miriam is surrounded by mystery and a sense of impending doom. Her art is led by her imagination and brings to her canvas images of violence and isolation. Hilda, on the other hand, is always surrounded by light and purity. These two female characters represent the traditional dark and white ladies of romances. On the other hand, it could also be said that each of them plays their corresponding roles in the author's attempt at producing his own genre. Miriam would represent the heroine of Hawthorne's romance, while Hilda would stand for a more novelistic character; she is clearly a moral exemplar. Starting with the location of her studio, Hilda is represented as a creature too innocent to live among common human beings. She lives in the medieval tower of a Roman palace, "above all the evil scents of Rome; and even so, in your maiden elevation, you dwell above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for your nearest

neighbors" (Marble 44). These words appear to be connecting Hilda with the Virgin. Although not actually a Catholic herself, she always keeps lighted, the flame of the Virgin's shrine which is by her tower. Legend has it that if the light of the shrine were to go out, the whole building would immediately become the Church's possession, fulfilling an ancient vow. Hilda dutifully keeps the flame alive because she feels that any woman, no matter her religion, "may surely pay honor to the idea of Divine Womanhood" (Marble 44). She also enjoys feeding the white doves which keep her company. Her self-imposed duties link Hilda with purity and whiteness, while Miriam is always surrounded by shadows. Contemplating the scene from the ground level, Miriam cannot help exclaiming "how like a dove she is herself, the fair, pure creature! The other doves know her for a sister, I am sure" (Marble 43). Miriam herself acknowledges Hilda's stainless nature and seeks her company as if to soothe her troubled mind. Curiously enough, when explaining Hilda's way of life, the narrator makes some interesting comments regarding the women's place in society. He explains that Hilda "was an example of the freedom of life which it is possible for a female artist to enjoy at Rome" (Marble 44). He goes on to notice that Hilda lived "doing what she liked, without a suspicion or a shadow upon the snowy whiteness of her fame" (Marble 44). What is more, Hilda's life makes the narrator reflect upon other women's lives and he states that

> The customs of artist-life bestow such liberty upon the sex, which is elsewhere restricted within so much narrower limits; and it is perhaps an indication that, whenever we admit woman to a wider scope of pursuits and professions, we must also remove the shackles of our present conventional rules, which would then become an insufferable restraint on either maid or wife. The system seems to work unexceptionally in Rome; and in many other cases, as in Hilda's, purity of heart and

> life are allowed to assert themselves, and to be their own proof and security, to a degree unknown in the society of other cities. (Marble 44-5)

The narrator's comment clearly indicates his favoring the women's cause and his advocating for a change in, as he puts it, "our present conventional rules" (Marble 44). This change is also proposed in his other books which have been analyzed in this dissertation. This statement also explains why Hawthorne always endowed his main female characters with some sort of creative skill. At the same time, he portrayed more traditional women as well because society cannot be fully changed overnight and because there is a need for a traditional counterpart to fully understand the heroine. Besides, as was the case with Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, some women were not at all willing to change their conventional roles. They were familiar with no better occupation and therefore, felt satisfied with whatever they had. Hawthorne, judging from the paragraph above, can be said to support the women's cause. Nevertheless, he was also aware that time would be needed to make the required changes. This does not seem to be a strong enough argument to consider him a misogynist as some critics had.

Hilda's art, like Miriam's, is determined by her nature. However, she is not troubled by a dark past. Quite the contrary, she is a New England orphan who moved to Rome to become a better painter. She has been named by other artists in Rome as "The Dove" and her studio is called "The Dove-cote" (Marble 45). Her acquaintances know about her past and they all think highly of her. Regarding her art, the display of imagination and creativity that Hilda showed in her native land disappeared upon arriving in Rome. After having closely studied the works of the Old Masters, "Hilda had ceased to consider herself as an original artist" (Marble 46). Nevertheless, she did not abandon hope. She ended up being "pronounced by good judges as the best copyist in Rome" (Marble 48). The narrator does

not criticize Hilda for failing to use her imagination, but praises her for having sacrificed her talent. He explains to his readers that

> Hilda's faculty of genuine admiration is one of the rarest to be found in human nature; and let us try to recompense her in kind by adducing her generous self-surrender, and her brave, humble magnanimity in choosing to be the handmaid of those old magicians, instead of a minor enchantress within a circle of her own. (Marble 49)

This statement can be interpreted as a subtext regarding Hawthorne's attitude towards those literary creations of his time which seemed to repeat the same traditional patterns. As I mentioned regarding the image of the faun and the narrator's comment about its nature, Hawthorne can be said to strongly believe in the possibility of merging two seemingly opposite genres in one single book; hence his admiration for the faun's nature, both human and animal beautifully balanced. But in any case, he cannot be accussed of dismissing the novel as a lesser genre. He can be said to support the use of imagination, and how necessary it is in literature.

As his appraisal of Hilda's career shows, he respects those who choose not to use imagination, those who stick to the probable and follow the trodden paths. As it could not be otherwise, her labor as a copyist is especially appreciated in the story for not having successfully copied one of Leonardo's masterpieces, but for having succeeded in reproducing Guido Reni's Beatrice Cenci. Referring to her friend's work, Miriam comments that "here is Guido's very Beatrice; she that slept in the dungeon, and awoke betimes, to ascend the scaffold" (Marble 52). According to the narrator, Beatrice Cenci's "was the very saddest picture ever painted or conceived" because "it involved an unfathomable depth of sorrow" (Marble 51). The Cenci's is indeed quite a tragic story. It is

said that Beatrice's father, Francesco Cenci, was an abusive man who had been on trial several times for various offenses. His position always got him discharged without much ado. When incapable of tolerating such a situation any longer, Beatrice reported that her father had abused her mother and two brothers, and that he had even committed incest with her. However, the Roman authorities turned a deaf ear to her. Being a noble and influential man in Rome, Francesco Cenci found out about his daughter's confession and imprisoned her in his country castle along with her mother and brothers. The four prisoners plotted the father's murder with the help of Beatrice's lover and another servant. They did kill the man, but the crime was discovered and all the family, except for the youngest brother, were executed. The Roman people supported Beatrice, but could not prevent the execution. From then on, the figure of Beatrice was considered by the Roman people as a symbol of their fight against the authorities' unfair oppression. Once again, we find a revealing story of a young woman who defies her father's law because it is unfair and abusive. This time, it is Hilda herself who makes the connection between this woman's tragedy and her friend Miriam because she wanted Miriam's "opinion of it" (Marble 51). Moreover, when the two friends start discussing Beatrice's innocence or guilt, Miriam cries out: "if I could only get within her consciousness! If I could but clasp Beatrice Cenci's ghost, and draw it to myself! I would give my life to know whether she thought herself innocent, or the one great criminal since time began!" (Marble 53). On top of that, when Hilda looks at Miriam, she discovers that "her friend's expression had become almost exactly that of the portrait; as if her passionate wish and struggle to penetrate poor Beatrice's mystery had been successful" (Marble 53).

Using his habitual subtle ways, the narrator guides his readers through the darkest passages in Miriam's life. This technique, however, requires the reader to get involved in

the story and to be active in filling the gaps which the narrator purposefully leaves open. As Wendy Steiner remarks, if *The Marble Faun* is read as a conventional novel, none of the author's devices would succeed. This explains some readers' requests for a postscript. Miriam's mood after contemplating Hilda's copy of Beatrice Cenci changes completely thanks to Donatello. They meet in one of Rome's gardens and the natural scenario, along with Donatello's cheerful and carefree attitude, provide Miriam with some comfort. It is in this same scenario, surrounded by nature, where Donatello reveals to Miriam of his love for her. Miriam reacts by half-warning Donatello about the dangers which haunt her. She tells him that "If you were wiser, Donatello, you would think me a dangerous person. If you follow my footsteps, they will lead you to no good" (Marble 63). Miriam's words are actually foretelling Donatello's fate. He will suffer the consequences of his unconditional love for her. Donatello, however, simply replies that "I would as soon think of fearing the air we breathe!" (Marble 63). He is deeply in love with Miriam and will not leave her. Taking into account all of the stories with which Miriam has been associated, his love will not have a happy ending.

Not all is sorrow and darkness. We also find two joyful carnival episodes: a device also used in *The Blithedale Romance* to reinforce Zenobia's stance and to dismantle the traditional arrangement of society. Following Bakhtin, the carnival serves to undermine the pillars of society, to turn them upside down so as to expose their flaws. During the carnival, there are no social rules. There is no higher authority controlling the behavior of its citizens and therefore, there is no punishment for not following the rules. This is precisely what happens in *The Marble Faun* at different stages. Chapters 9, "The Faun and the Nymph", 10, "The Sylvan Dance", 48, "A Scene in the Corso", and 49, "A Frolic of Carnival", are paired (9 to 48, 10 to 49) depict Miriam and Donatello enjoying themselves without

thinking about anything else. However, both in chapters 10 and 49, they are interrupted by a male figure which reestablishes order. The figure is not the same in both chapters, though. In chapter 10, the Model shows up chasing Miriam; Donatello is still free of guilt. In chapter 49, it is Kenyon, the sculptor, who seeks to speak with Miriam. This time, however, Donatello is already deeply involved in Miriam's life story. Miriam's and Donatello's "Sylvan Dance" is cut short by the Model's presence. The very moment Miriam noticed that the Model was there, she lost all the happiness which she had just been enjoying with Donatello. He realized that "a strange distance and unapproachableness had all at once enveloped her; and though he saw her within reach of his arm, yet the light of her eyes seemed as far off as that of a star" (Marble 70). Miriam makes Donatello leave her alone, but before doing so, Donatello asks Miriam "Shall I clutch him by the throat? Bid me do so; and we are rid of him forever!" (Marble 71). Miriam immediately rejects Donatello's offer, but this scene foreshadows what will happen later on in chapter 18.

The Model and Kenyon can be read as playing the role of the father with respect to Miriam. Kenyon's case, as the narrator explains, is different from the Model's: "Next to Hilda, the person for whom Miriam felt most affection and confidence was Kenyon; and in all the difficulties that beset her life, it was her impulse to draw to Hilda for feminine sympathy, and the sculptor for brotherly counsel" (Marble 90). It seems, as in Beatrice's story, that Miriam can trust her so-called brother, Kenyon, but hates her literary father, the Model. However, once the Model leaves the story, Kenyon can be said to have taken over his place, although in a more protective way. In doing so, Kenyon's figure could be interpreted as that of the representative of a new society. I mentioned earlier that in *The House of the Seven Gables* Phoebe could stand for that new society where family traditions will not crush individuals, in *The Marble Faun* it is Kenyon that fulfills that role.

There is an interview between Miriam and the Model which is fully transcribed in chapter 11. However, the narrator acknowledges that he does not have all the information regarding their conversation. The title of the chapter is quite significant to this respect, "Fragmentary Sentences", and the narrator openly states that

> Many words of deep significance ─ many entire sentences, and those possibly the most important ones ─ have flown too far, on the winged breeze, to be recovered. If we insert our own conjectural amendments, we perhaps give a purport utterly at variance with the true one. Yet, unless we attempt something this way, there must remain an unsightly gap, and a lack of continuousness and dependence in our narrative; so that it would arrive at certain inevitable catastrophes without due warning their imminence. (Marble 73)

The narrator is admitting that he does not know the exact discussion between Miriam and the Model, but he does try to transcribe it according to his understanding of it so that his readers can at least deduce from their talk that something tragic is about to happen in the story. This lack of knowledge on the part of the narrator recalls the same situation in *The Blithedale Romance*. In that case, I maintained it was a literary strategy to undermine the traditional monologic discourses which silence the stories of the others. In *The Marble Faun*, it also serves to enhance the aura of mystery which surrounds Miriam. The narrator refuses to provide his readers with definitiveness about this young woman and expects his readers to fill in the gaps, reminding us of the very nature of discourse. Just as Coverdale was unable to control Zenobia because he did not know enough about her, the narrator of *The Marble Faun* seems not to want to exert power upon Miriam, by pretending not to know everything about her life.

During this conversation, there are two moments when the narrator transcribed

Miriam's words on death, which are significantly linked to her gloomy sketches. She does so whenever the Model asks her "to compel your acquiescence in my bidding" (Marble 74). According to the Model, Miriam and he "are bound together, and can never part again" (Marble 76), but Miriam refuses to accept what he presents as their unavoidable fate. She struggles against his ominous will and when Miriam mentions death again, the Model enquires "Your own death, Miriam ─ or mine?" (Marble 77). Although she claims to be free of criminal intentions, the Model mentions that "men have said, that this white hand had once a crimson stain" (Marble 77). The Model's statement goes back to Miriam's drawings, the ones where Biblical women had become murderesses to save their people and themselves. The reported conversation is short because it just emphasizes the fact that whatever had happened in Miriam's past was beyond her capacity and will. As already mentioned, the narrator himself sympathizes with Miriam and comments:

> let us trust, there may have been no crime in Miriam, but only one of those fatalities which are among the most insoluble riddles propounded to mortal comprehension; the fatal decree, by which every crime is made to be the agony of many innocent persons, as well as of the single guilty one. (Marble 74)

By connecting Miriam with Beatrice Cenci, plus this thought regarding her innocence, the narrator seems to be pointing towards those Biblical women with whom she is associated, as well as Beatrice herself, all of whom were much admired and never considered a criminal by their people. The four women Miriam has been linked with committed a murder because it was their only way out. They did what they had to do at the time. Somehow, this can be an attempt to exonerate Miriam either for whatever she might have done before or for what her conversation with the Model has already anticipated. In any case, as I have pointed out regarding the other three books herein studied, those who are

considered the outcasts of society find a place in Hawthorne's texts. Besides, not only are they never judged, but they tend to be favored by the narrator and the ending of the story, no matter their seeming failure. As Umberto Eco explains, writers generally use a double coding in their texts in order to attain a certain aesthetic distance, which is certainly the case of this book. This double coding, as I mentioned in each of the corresponding chapters, can also be applied to the denouement of the previously analyzed books.

From their high terrace, Kenyon and Hilda watched the end of the interview between Miriam and the Model. They heard nothing, only witnessing Miriam's and the Model's behavior. Something in Miriam's attitude attracted Kenyon's attention and made him feel uneasy. The narrator notices that Miriam's kneeling down by the fountain and dipping her fingers there could be interpreted by most people as an innocent gesture. However, he explains that it meant something else for Kenyon. He comments that "as she clasped her hands together, after thus bathing them, and glanced upward at the Model, an idea took possession of Kenyon's mind, that Miriam was kneeling to this dark follower, there, in the world's face!" (Marble 85-6). Kenyon even asks Hilda "who and what is Miriam?" (Marble 86) because nothing is clear about her past. He explains to Hilda that his doubts arose because Miriam

> is such a mystery! We do not even know whether she is a countrywoman of ours, or an Englishwoman, or a German. There is Anglo-Saxon blood in her veins, one would say, and a right English accent on her tongue, but much that is not English breeding, nor American. Nowhere else but in Rome, and as an artist, could she hold a place in society, without giving some clue to her past life. (Marble 86)

Kenyon's words regarding Miriam's past summarize the legends about her origins and the narrator's respect for her. As he himself confesses to Hilda, "My heart trusts her, at least ─

whatever my head may do" (Marble 86). He does not favor sense over sensibility. Therefore, no matter what his reason tells him, Kenyon, as Hilda also does, keeps Miriam as his friend. What is more, Kenyon subtly criticizes the social ways of his native country. He exposes the social oppression individuals suffer back in the New England society as opposed to life in Rome:

> Rome is not like one of our New England villages, where we need permission of each individual neighbor for every act that we do, every word that we utter, and every friend that we make or keep. In these particulars, the Papal despotism allows us freer breath than our native air; and if we like to take generous views of our associates, we can do so, to a reasonable extent, without ruining ourselves. (Marble 86-7)

His statement proves that although still concerned with social conventions, Kenyon is ready for a change and seems to actually enjoy the Roman way. He is fully aware of how unfair it is to depend on the approval of society to lead your personal life. Moreover, as I proposed in the analysis of *The House of the Seven Gables*, the weight of family traditions upon individuals is also called into question via Kenyon's words. Depending on the family each individual belongs to, their reputation can be positively or negatively affected solely because of their family name─something which *The House of the Seven Gables* tryies to expose and undermine─. Kenyon can be read as the hope for a change in society, as was Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables*. He can be interpreted as the open-minded man who is ready to accept the needed social changes. Interestingly enough, after her encounter with the Model, Miriam walks to Kenyon's studio to talk to him. Miriam explains to Kenyon that she decided to pay him a visit "to try whether there is any calm and coolness among your marbles" because her "art is too nervous, too passionate, too full of agitation"

(Marble 92-3), which is her way of disclosing to him that her mind is not at ease. Neither is her heart. Miriam, the character who moves outside the conventional limits of society, the young woman who appears to have broken the father's law, seeks refuge in this man's place, a man who does not follow the traditional dictates of the New England society.

It is also worth mentioning that Kenyon had reproduced Milton's head "not copied from any one bust or picture, yet more authentic than any of them" (Marble 93). Moreover, he adds that "by long perusal and deep love of the *Paradise Lost*, the *Comus*, the *Lycidas*, and *L'Allegro*, the sculptor had succeeded, even better than he knew, in spiritualizing his marble with the poet's mighty genius" (Marble 93-4). Milton and his *Comus* were also mentioned, twice, in *The Blithedale Romance*. Coverdale used the poet to refer to Priscilla's particular qualities and to Zenobia's carnival. Milton, as explained in my previous chapter, was not appreciated by the Puritans. Therefore, by bringing him into his two last books, the author can be said to be using it as a subversive presence within the framework of the story. Besides, in both *The Blithedale Romance* and in *The Marble Faun*, Milton is mentioned by or in connection with the male character. According to my analysis, this can be read as supportive of the strong female character. Coverdale and Kenyon both enjoyed Milton's work and both moved on the margins of society. Apart from Milton's head, Miriam is also impressed by Kenyon's masterpiece, a statue in progress of no other than Cleopatra herself. Upon visiting Hilda's place, Miriam was asked to judge the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, a young woman with a tragic story. Now, when visiting Kenyon's place, Miriam finds herself facing one of the most famous Egyptian female pharaohs. The narrator highly praises the statue. For him, "all Cleopatra ─ fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment ─ was kneaded into what, only a week or two before, had been a lump of wet clay from the Tiber" (Marble 101). Miriam is equally

impressed by her friend's work. She cannot help asking him "Tell me, did she never try ─ even while you were creating her ─ to overcome you with her fury, or her love? Were you not afraid to touch her, as she grew more and more towards hot life, beneath your hand?" (Marble 101). Kenyon has brilliantly succeeded in almost bringing to life one of the most powerful and beautiful woman in history, according to legend. Once again, Miriam is the one who lifts the veil which covered Cleopatra. Hilda's Beatrice Cenci was also covered with some sort of cloth which Miriam lifted. Miriam is constantly linked to women who fought for what they deemed right and, by drawing them or by unveiling them: a basic but revealing metaphor.

The recurrent theme of women and womanhood also appears when their conversation about Kenyon's sculpture leads the two friends to discuss the latter. Miriam tells Kenyon that "What I most marvel at is the womanhood that you have so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements" (Marble 101). Miriam points out that he could not have been inspired by Hilda, to which Kenyon agrees by commenting that Hilda's "womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil" (Marble 101), which clearly contrasts with all the stories about Miriam. Nevertheless, Miriam remarks that "Of sorrow, slender as she seems, Hilda might bear a great burthen; ─ of sin, not a feather's weight. Methinks, now, were it my doom, I could bear either, or both at once. But my conscience is still as white as Hilda's" (Marble 101), which comes to reinforce the narrator's statements about the differences between the two women. At this point of their conversation, Miriam almost confesses to Kenyon that which so terribly tortures her. However, "Miriam's emotion detected a certain reserve and alarm in his warmly expressed readiness to hear her story. In his secret soul, the sculptor doubted whether it were well for this poor, suffering girl to speak what she so yearned to say, or for

him to listen" (Marble 102). Unlike any of the traditional characters, who would have loved to know her secrets in order to gain power over her, Kenyon shows a higher moral stature. The fact that Miriam originally chose to open her heart to Kenyon and the fact that he preferred not to listen suggests that something is actually changing in society or, at least, that a change is possible. After this scene, Miriam leaves Kenyon's studio asking him to forget what had just happened and to act as if it had never taken place. However, she realizes that she has "lost ─ by staggering a little way beyond the mark, in the blindness of my distress ─ I have lost, as we shall hereafter find, the genuine friendship of this clear-minded, honorable, true-hearted young man" (Marble 103). Miriam is aware that even with such a man as Kenyon, a line existed she should never cross. This episode between Miriam and Kenyon marks a turning point in the story.

The next time Miriam and Kenyon meet, they are accompanied not only by Hilda and Donatello, but by a group of Anglo-Saxon artists. At the gathering Hilda makes a shocking discovery among some random sketches. She is positive about having found Guido Reni's original sketch of his picture of the Archangel Michael stepping on Satan's head. But the most striking revelation is the fact that the demon's face corresponds to "Miriam's model!" (Marble 112). Miriam, however, does "not acknowledge the resemblance at all" and insists that as she has "drawn the face twenty times, I think you will own that I am the best judge" (Marble 112). Since they cannot reach an agreement, the four friends decide to visit the Church of the Cappuccini, where the original painting is, in order to settle the dispute. While touring Rome, Miriam stops at the Fountain of Trevi to drink some water. There she realizes that the Model is standing by her "as if he were trying to wash off the timestains and earthly soil of a thousand years!" (Marble 118). At this point, Miriam "took up some of the water in the hollow of her hand, and practiced and old form of

exorcism by flinging it in her persecutor's face" (Marble 118). While doing so, Miriam says "In the name of all Saints, vanish, Demon, and let me be free of you, now and forever" (Marble 118). The Model, however, does not go away and, once again, Donatello shows up and asks Miriam "Bid me drown him! You shall hear his death-gurgle in another instant!" (Marble 118). For the second time, Miriam convinces Donatello not to commit a crime. Somehow she tries to disengage herself from the murderous acts of her sketches, but Donatello, however, is no longer the naive young man he was at the beginning of the story. As he himself puts it, "The joy is gone out of my life; all gone! ─ all gone! Feel my hand! Is it not very hot? Ah; and my heart burns hotter still!" (Marble 119). He is changing into a darker man. He is getting closer and closer to her drawings.

By twice volunteering to kill a man, Donatello has turned into a completely different person. The party of artists continues their tour and they find the Model wherever they happen to go. One of the artists even tells Miriam that the Model "lived and sinned before Trojan's death" but is "still wandering about Rome" (Marble 121). This contributes to the darkness surrounding this figure and Miriam's past, and at the same time, points to a tragic end. The group walks to the Coliseum, an historical site marked by many deaths, and Miriam sees the Model again. This time, he is, ironically, a "pilgrim, who is going round the whole circles of shrines, on his knees, and praying with such fervency at every one!" (Marble 125-6). The moment Miriam sees him, she departs, followed by Donatello. The scene between Donatello and Miriam in this chapter parallels the one between the two of them in chapter 9, when Miriam advised Donatello to flee from her for his own sake. This time, Miriam also presses Donatello to leave her because "there is a great evil hanging over me! I know it; I see it in the sky; I feel it in the air! It will overwhelm me as utterly as if this arch should crumble down upon our heads! It will crush you, too, if you stand at my side!"

(Marble 127). As in Chapter 9, Donatello refuses to abandon Miriam. A few moments later, Miriam and Donatello find themselves at the Tarpeian Rock, which is said to be the precipice from which the traitors to the city and laws of Rome were thrown. When Donatello asks Miriam for her opinion about throwing people over the precipice, she replies that "It was well done. Innocent persons were saved by the destruction of a guilty one, who deserved his doom" (Marble 136). Right after her utterance, Donatello notices the Model's presence and in the blink of an eye, grabbs him and throws him down the precipice. Hilda, who had left the group to be with Miriam, witnesses the whole scene. Donatello becomes a new person after getting rid of the Model in that he is now closer to the Biblical heroines of Miriam's sketches. The narrator explains that his

> form seemed to have dilated, and whose eyes blazed with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him. It had kindled him into a man; 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. (Marble 138)

As Miriam had warned him, Donatello is now linked to her misfortune forever. Interestingly enough, the narrator refers to Donatello as a man now, as if killing the Model had been a rite of passage from adolescence into manhood. He does not appear to be condemning the action. On the contrary, he connects the action with the ancient Roman custom of punishing traitors and, in a more subtle way, to the Biblical heroines who committed crimes to defend either their family or their tribe. It is Miriam, however, who does not know what to make of the situation. When she questions Donatello's action, he merely replies "I did what your eyes bade me do, when I asked them with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice!" (Marble 138). It was on the third time Donatello asked

Miriam for permission to kill the Model that she granted it. This time they did not even need to utter a word. Their eyes spoke plainly enough. Although initially she does not want to believe what Donatello has just said, Miriam finally acknowledges that "Yes, Donatello, you speak the truth! My heart consented to what you did. We two slew yonder wretch. The deed knots us together for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent!" (Marble 139). Whatever her past actions might have been, Miriam is now definitely connected with all those historical women who broke the father's law. She has aided in the killing of the man who was constantly reminding her of her past, a past Miriam wished to forget about. Just like when Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, told Dimmesdale that their relation "had a consecration of its own" (Scarlet 212), so does Miriam tell Donatello that "it is no crime that we have committed" because "One wretched and worthless life has been sacrificed, to cement two other lives forevermore" (Marble 140). Miriam's words seem to be supported by history via the use ancient Romans gave to the Tarpeian Rock itself.

5.3. Life Outside the Tower

The only witness to what Miriam and Donatello did was Hilda, the one person who was described as incapable of coping with sin. This idea was reinforced by the perfect whiteness of Hilda's dresses. Throughout the story, Hilda has been always referred to as angel-like, full of heavenly qualities. Her place is literally above the ground level and Hilda's only company is a flock of white doves and the Virgin's shrine, which are respectively considered symbols of peace and purity. She lives in a tower, which brings to mind the term 'Ivory Tower' and all its literary implications. This term appeared for the first time in the Biblical Song of Solomon and in the 12th century it was already in use as a metaphor for the Virgin Mary (Turris Eburnea). Her connection with this "purity" of heart goes hand in

hand with an ignorance of the world. She lives completely removed from the realities of everyday life just like the socially-disengaged poetry of Alfred de Vigny, which was coined as an "Ivory Tower" in 1837 by the French writer and scholar, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. Like an artist who dwells in his/her remote ivory tower, concerned only about art and unaware of everything else, Hilda is incapable of dealing with what she has just seen. Later that night, Miriam and Donatello passed by Hilda's tower and Miriam felt the urge of shouting "Pray for us, Hilda! We need it!" (Marble 142). However, "Whether Hilda heard and recognized the voice, we cannot tell. The window was immediately closed, and her form disappeared from behind the snowy curtain" (Marble 142). Although she clearly loved and defended Miriam, Hilda has already shut her out of her life. Hilda thinks in terms of black or white, and cannot conceive any gray area.

The following day, Hilda did not meet the four friends' appointment at the Church of the Cappuccini. None of them knows why Hilda is not there, but they decide to proceed with their research on Guido Reni's painting. By the time they reach the painting, Miriam sees it under a completely different light than she had previously done. She explains Hilda's admiration of the picture to to Kenyon: "If it cost her more trouble to be good ─ if her soul were less white and pure ─ she would be a more competent critic of this picture, and would estimate it not half so high. I see its defects to-day more clearly than ever before" (Marble 147). Bearing in mind that all the friends insist on finding a parallel between the Model and that particular Demon, viewing the Archangel Michael defeating the Demon surely makes Miriam think about the Model's death. She is capable, then, of putting herself in the Archangel's shoes and finds the scene too neat. From Miriam's perspective,

> 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 armour 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 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 Guido's dapper Archangel seems to have found it! (Marble 148)

This description can be understood as Miriam's verbalization of her own inner struggle with the horror in her life as well as with how crude reality is. Kenyon suggests to Miriam that she should "paint the picture of man's struggle against sin, according to your own idea! I think it will be a master-piece" (Marble 148). She replies that "The picture would have its share of truth, I assure you, but I am sadly afraid the victory would fall on the wrong side" (Marble 148). Miriam's statement about the inaccuracy of Guido Reni's painting recalls that of the narrator of *The House of the Seven Gables* where he subtly exposed the perfect beauty which some conventional novels tended to portray in their main characters, while he was dealing with an imperfect one such as Hepzibah (House 40-1). Nevertheless, as I have tried to prove in my analysis, characters similar to Hepzibah, and even to Miriam herself, are more realistic, closer to flesh-and-blood people, than those so lofty and perfect as Phoebe and Hilda, for example. Moreover, taking into account the author's conception of the art of writing, as can be deduced from his books, from some hints in his prefaces, and from the sketch "Main Street", Miriam's comment regarding Guido Reni's picture can be read as a parallel to the author's ideas with respect to the conventional novels of his time; excessively beautiful, perfect, and unstained; just like Hilda, disconnected from reality.

Therefore, once again, the writer uses subtle maneuvers to expose some of the social and literary conventions of his times by means of his gendered characters.

While Kenyon and Miriam were discussing art, Donatello's attention had been caught by a dead capuchin, Father Antonio, whose coffin had been placed at the altar of the church. Due to his interest in human anatomy in order to improve his sculptures, Kenyon suggested having a look at the corpse. Miriam and Donatello accept. Once they got closer, they found out that the dead capuchin was no other than Miriam's Model. What is more, upon their arrival by his coffin, a stream of blood started running from the corpse's nose. Paradoxically enough, as Miriam herself explains to Kenyon, legend has it that when something like that happens, it means that the murderer of the deceased person is nearby. Kenyon, then, urges them to leave and so they do, but Miriam feels the need to go back. She faces the dead Model and thinks that he is frowning upon her, even from beyond. As remarked previously in this chapter and in the others with regard to the other main female characters, the Narrator sympathizes with Miriam and states that "True; there had been nothing, in his lifetime, viler than this man. She knew it; there was no other fact within her consciousness that she felt to be so certain" (Marble 153). The Model is dead. Although he was killed by Miriam and Donatello, the narrator does not blame them. Rather, he places the blame on the Model's behavior. Miriam suddenly feels reassured and tells the dead man "No; thou shalt not scowl me down! Neither now, nor when we stand together at the Judgment Seat. I fear not to meet thee there" (Marble 153). What is more, the narrator passionately describes the transformation which Miriam underwent before addressing the dead man. He notices that

> It was wonderful to see how the crisis developed in Miriam its own proper strength, and the faculty of sustaining the demands which it made upon her fortitude. She

> ceased to tremble; the beautiful woman gazed sternly at her dead enemy, endeavouring to meet and quell the look of accusation that he threw from between his half-closed eyelids. (Marble 153)

As Miriam had previously told Kenyon, her conscience is as white as Hilda's. However, her life has been, and still is, tarnished by sadness and darkness. Like Beatrice Cenci and the Biblical women, Miriam did what had to be done. The narrator depicts her as a brave woman who chose to take charge of her destiny, no matter what. Miriam even "put money into the sacristan's hand, to an amount that made his eyes open wide and glisten, and requested that it might be expended in masses for the repose of Father Antonio's soul" (Marble 156), as if she were more concerned about the Model's soul than her own.

However, Donatello's conscience is not as clean as Miriam's. Actually, their roles in the book have been reversed since the Model's demise. Up to that moment, Donatello was the one walking behind Miriam, always willing and ready to attend her. However, from then on, it is Miriam who follows Donatello in order to try to regain his love. He has been highly affected by his contemplation of the dead capuchin's face and cannot forget it. Donatello explains to Miriam that whenever he sees her, he also sees the dead man's face. Therefore, she decides that they must part and Donatello concurs, this being the third time that Miriam has made such a suggestion. He returns to his Tuscan villa and Miriam seeks Hilda's protection.

Even though the outcome of the interview between Miriam and Hilda is not what the former expected, somehow Miriam can anticipate it. Before she arrives at Hilda's place, the narrator describes what the pure young woman was doing: she saw her reflection in a mirror and "fancied ─ nor was it without horror ─ that Beatrice's expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face" (Marble 164). This scene is

seized by the narrator's plea for Beatrice Cenci's innocence. He remarks that

> Who, indeed, can look at that mouth ─ with its lips half-apart, as innocent as a baby's that has been crying ─ and not pronounce Beatrice sinless! It was the intimate consciousness of her father's sin that threw its shadow over her, and frightened her into a remote and inaccessible region, where no sympathy could come. (Marble 164)

Although the narrator uses this statement to assert Hilda's innocence, it can also be read as his way of affirming the innocence of Miriam, who had previously been linked to Beatrice. The blame is thus placed in the law of the father, which both Beatrice and Miriam broke. Therefore, it can be inferred that the narrator sides with those characters that society rejects, especially the female ones. That being said, Hilda follows her natural insticts and when Miriam enters and tries to hug her, Hilda "put forth her hands with an involuntary repellent gesture, so expressive, that Miriam at once felt a great chasm opening itself between them two" (Marble 165). Miriam immediately realizes that she has lost Hilda's friendship, just as she previously lost Kenyon's. Miriam pleads for her cause and tries to make Hilda understand by telling her that

> I am a woman, as I was yesterday; ─ endowed with the same truth of nature, the same warmth of heart, the same genuine and earnest love, which you have always known in me. In any regard that concerns yourself, I am not changed. And believe me, Hilda, when a human being has chosen a friend out of all the world, it is only some faithlessness between themselves, rendering true intercourse impossible, that can justify either friend in severing the bond. Have I deceived you? Then cast me off! Have I wrong you personally? Then forgive me, if you can! But, have I sinned against God and man, and deeply sinned? Then be more my friend than ever, for I

need you more! (Marble 166)

Hilda, however, does not understand Miriam's reasoning. Hilda simply knows that killing a man is a crime against man and a sin against God. Nothing justifies that within the precincts of Hilda's ivory tower. Aware of Hilda's limitations, Miriam points out to Hilda that "As an angel, you are not amiss; but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you!" (Marble 167). This remark emphasizes how much out of place Hilda actually is. She is way too perfect for an imperfect world, as is illustrated by the narrator when he quotes Hilda's remarks that Kenyon "cannot be my friend because ─ because ─ I have fancied that he sought to be something more!" (Marble 169). Not only is Hilda incapable of comprehending the reasons behind Miriam's deed, but she is also incapable of keeping the friendship of a man who happens to also love her. Within her robes of white purity, Hilda is quite a radical character who believes that "the sins of generations past have created an atmosphere of sin for those that follow! While there is a single guilty person in the universe, each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt" (Marble 169), basically forgetting the purpose of Christ's death according to the Bible. Hilda's attitude recalls that of the traditional characters who are eager to judge others, those who walk the earth without ever getting stained with the mud of the world. Hilda's character can be interpreted as one of the author's strategies to expose what he considered the flaws of the traditional literary genres of his time as well as those of the social establishment.

As in a theatrical play after the climax, the location of the story changes and the plot focuses on the two male characters. Donatello left Rome and sought refuge in his ancestors' villa in the middle of the Italian countryside. Kenyon meets his friend there, expecting to find Miriam as well. She is not there, though, and Donatello does not feel like speaking

about her. Kenyon senses that something is amiss, but respects his friend's privacy. Interestingly enough, although his family's villa is almost empty ─ only the cook and two servants still remain at the villa ─ Donatello has chosen to stay in a tower room which had "served as an oratory" (Marble 204) and was filled with paintings representing martyrdoms and other Catholic ornaments. Donatello's tower is at odds with Hilda's. Instead of a dove-cote, it is called an "owl's nest" (Marble 204). He is not in the tower to avoid contact with the sin in the world, but to reflect on his having killed the Model. Donatello is the only one of his family left. While talking to Kenyon, he remembers his childhood and recalls the happiness he lost the day he committed the crime. Unlike Miriam, Donatello feels guilty and thinks of himself as a criminal. While Kenyon is at Donatello's villa, he finds that, according to popular legends, Donatello's first ancestor "was a being not altogether human, yet partaking so largely of the gentlest human qualities, as to be neither awful nor shocking to the imagination" (Marble 186), a fact which seems to reinforce the connection the three artists made in the first chapter of the book between Donatello and Praxiteles' Faun. However, Donatello has lost the innocence which made him a friend among the animals, the creatures of nature. Only "a brown lizard (it was of the tarantula species)", that is, a "venomous reptile" (Marble 199) showed up when Donatello called his forest friends as he used to do before his stay in Rome. Nature seems to have declared Donatello guilty. What is more, Donatello himself tells Kenyon a myth about one of his ancestors and a fountain nymph. According to that story, a fountain nymph and a young knight fell in love. The nymph taught the knight how to call her so that they could meet. They spent many happy hours together until one day when the knight used the fountain water to try to clean blood on him. That very instant, the fountain dried out and the knight only saw the nymph once more in his lifetime. That day, the nymph had blood on her forehead. Due to his guilty

conscience, Donatello can relate to this story.

Curiously enough, after telling this legend to Kenyon, Miriam reappears in the story. But before Miriam re-enters Donatello's life, he almost confesses his crime to Kenyon just as Miriam was also about to do, but like her, Donatello does not open his heart to Kenyon. Both Miriam and Donatello seem to regard Kenyon as a trustworthy man, but none of them finds him receptive to their secrets. When Miriam shows up in Donatello's villa thanks to Kenyon's help, the latter asks Miriam whether she is afraid of meeting Donatello under God's Eye and she replies "No; for, as far as I can see into that cloudy and inscrutable thing, my heart, it has none but pure motives" (Marble 227). Once again, Miriam insists on having a clear conscience. Moreover, when talking about Hilda's rejection of Miriam, Kenyon acknowledges to her that he feels Hilda was right. Nevertheless, he adds that "You have a thousand admirable qualities. Whatever mass of evil may have befallen into your life, (pardon me, but your own words suggest it,) you are still as capable as ever of many high and heroic virtues" (Marble 230). That is, Kenyon's opinion can be taken as a counterbalance to Hilda's more categorical attitude. He does listen to Miriam and does his best to help her and Donatello. However, he does not send her away as Hilda did. As I have been proposing, Kenyon can be read as the hope for a new society.

Thanks to Kenyon, Miriam and Donatello are temporarily reunited. Interestingly enough, although Kenyon explains to them that their "bond is twined with such black threads, that you must never look upon it as identical with the ties that unite other loving souls" and that "There would be no holy sanction on your wedded life" (Marble 256), he also acknowledges that "The bond betwixt you, therefore, is a true one, and never ― except by Heaven's own act ― should be rent asunder" (Marble 256). What is more, when Kenyon

is leaving Miriam and Donatello, they all look upward and "there was the majestic figure [of Pope Julius] stretching out the hand of benediction over them, and bending down upon this guilty and repentant pair its visage of grand benignity" (Marble 258). As in *The Scarlet Letter*, Miriam's and Donatello's union "had a consecration of its own" (Scarlet 212), no matter how the social establishment may take it.

At the carnival, again, showing their true selves, Kenyon meets Miriam and Donatello once more. She decides to tell Kenyon the story of her life in order to "unveil" herself. Miriam had "English parentage, on the mother's side, but with a vein, likewise, of Jewish blood, yet connected, through her father, with one of those few princely families of southern Italy, which still retain a great wealth and influence" (Marble 341). Miriam also explains to Kenyon that while still a child, she had been engaged to "a certain marchese, a representative of another branch of her paternal house; a family arrangement between two persons of disproportioned ages" (Marble 341). Breaking away from the establishment, Miriam disregarded the marriage contract and fled to Rome after devising a ruse to make others believe that she had committed suicide. When Miriam is finished with her story, she asks Kenyon if he deems her to be guilty. He tells her twice "you were innocent. I shudder at the fatality that seems to haunt your footsteps, and throws a shadow of crime about your path, you being guiltless" (Marble 341). He even adds that "Hilda, and Donatello, and myself ─ we three would have acquitted you, let the world say what it might" (Marble 343). Kenyon deems Miriam to be innocent, as did the narrator before, and would have been ready to defend her against the opinion of society.

After this episode, and with the help of Miriam's family connections, Kenyon reunites with Hilda and they end up getting married. Donatello feels he deserves to be punished and goes to jail for having killed the Model. Interestingly enough, the union

between Kenyon and Hilda is blessed by Miriam at the Coliseum, where Kenyon proposed to Hilda. The couple noticed a "kneeling figure, beneath the open Eye of the Pantheon" and when it "arose, she looked towards the pair, and extended her hands with a gesture of benediction. Then they knew it was Miriam" (Marble 364). Moreover, Hilda receives a wedding gift from her. It was Miriam's bracelet, made up of "seven ancient Etruscan gems" which "became a connecting bond of a series of seven wondrous tales, all of which, as they were dug out of seven sepulchers, were characterized by a sevenfold sepulchral gloom" (Marble 365). As I explained when analyzing *The House of the Seven Gables*, in the Christian world, number seven corresponds to both the seven capital sins and to the seven virtues. Evil and goodness are represented by the same number, but still they remain separated. This gift can be interpreted as Miriam's way of reminding Hilda that there is both sin and virtue in the world, no matter how much one tries to avoid sin. At the same time, it will also remind Hilda of Miriam's own innocence, and how unfair Hilda was to her suffering friend.

The Marble Faun is the lengthiest of Hawthorne's books because it can be considered a compilation of all his literary, and even part of his social, ideas. In his book *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt […] states that "The novel is surely distinguished from previous forms of fiction by the amount of attention it habitually accords both to the individualization of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment." (qtd. in Rohrberger 125). Hilda is minutely described in *The Marble Faun*. Readers know about her past, about her present during the story, and even about her future by means of the postscript. Her lodgings are carefully described, as well as her work, her character, her physical appearance, and even her clothing. However, the other female character, Miriam, is always kept in the dark. Her origins are never fully revealed, her future is utterly

unknown, and her present life in the story is left equally unclear. Going back to the medieval romances ─ which could be considered, along with Sir Walter Scot's works, the inspiration for Hawthorne's own term ─such as, for example, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, their main characters were presented *in media res*. Nothing was learned about them except for what happened in the story. Therefore, those characters could be described as being quite flat. Miriam, the main character in *The Marble Faun*, shares from both sources. She does not clearly belong to one genre or the other. On the one hand, no conclusive information about her life is provided as she just appears at the beginning of the story. On the other hand, Miriam cannot be considered a flat character because she evolves throughout the story and her thinking is quite deep. Therefore, as the narrator explained referring to the nature of Praxiteles' Faun at the beginning of the book, Miriam, as a character, fuses in her nature characteristics from both novels and romances. Donatello, Praxiteles' Faun, is the character who suffers the greatest transformation. Hilda, although leaning more towards the novelistic type, is not a pure breed character, and neither are Kenyon or Donatello. That is, as I proposed at the beginning of this dissertation, Hawthorne merges in all his characters elements from both novels and romances. His subversive heroines, though, contain certain peculiarities which set them apart from conventional heroines, be it a stereotypical romantic heroine, or a traditional novelistic one.

Similarly, as I have shown in my analysis of the other three books, the social conventions of the author's times have been exposed and called into question. The woman's role in society has been contested via the reflections of a male character, Kenyon, apart from some of the narrator's own comments. Besides, the denouement of the story can be read as emphasizing Miriam's triumph. Although Hilda rejected her, Miriam was not declared guilty and she will always be present in the newlyweds' lives as a result of her

mysterious wedding gift. That is, the art of the author's imagination, so important for Hawthorne while so dangerous for his contemporaries, has been able to produce in *The Marble Faun* a new creature. New, not only as an original piece of art, but also as a well-rounded proof of what can be considered a new genre: Hawthorne's Romance.

Conclusion

'The ideal' that Hawthorne wanted to project in art was 'the real':
not actuality transformed into an impossible perfection,
but actuality disengaged from appearance.
F. O. Matthiesen, *American Renaissance:*
Art & Expression in the Age of Emerson & Whitman.

The term romance in the North American literary tradition is generally associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne. He did not coin the term himself, but he established a distinction that had not been set before the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*. Therefore, the differentiation between novel and romance as two separate genres can be said to have been fathered by Hawthorne. As I have mentioned before, the terms novel and romance were frequently used as synonyms in Hawthorne's times. In any case, whenever romances were mentioned as a genre apart, they were so to refer to, for example, Sir Walter Scott's works. In Hawthorne's time, this type of literature was found excessively imaginative, and did not enjoy a positive reputation during that period. Imagination was considered to have undesirable effects on people's minds. Despite this negative assessment of imaginative fiction, Hawthorne started using the word romance when referring to his longer works. This gave way to his books usually being closely analyzed to find out those distinctive elements which cause them to be depicted as romances. These analyses usually take the existence of a clear-cut difference between novels and romances for granted, and use Hawthorne's books to illustrate it. Interestingly enough, Hawthorne never developed a full-fledged theory regarding literary genres. Of course, he offers some comments about his romances in the prefaces to his four longer works. Those statements, however, do not provide readers with a definition of romance. They seem to suggest what it is not, but don't clearly say what it is. They certainly offer valuable information to understand the author's style, but Hawthorne's complete literary theory lies inside his four longer books, prefaces, and in his sketch "Main

Street." If read separately, the information obtained is incomplete and totally insufficient to determine the existence of those distinctive markers.

Throughout my dissertation, I have shown that Hawthorne was not merely distinguishing his work from traditional novels. He was creating a new genre by combining elements from novels and from the original romances ─ a tradition which dates back to the Middle Ages with works such as *Le Roman du Chrétien de Troyes*, and Sir Walter Scott's fictional works, which deeply influenced Hawthorne. By calling attention to the genre of his books, Hawthorne can be said to be trying to make readers aware of the need for a change within the literary world. The topics he chose to address in his texts, as well as his emphasis on their genre, can be understood as an attempt to challenge some of the conventions of his time, i.e. appeareances, the weight of traditions upon individuals, etc., whether they be social or literary. As I have shown, both novels and romances coexist in Hawthorne's longer works. He combined two apparently opposed genres in one single book, and that it is precisely what Hawthorne was refering to when he spoke of the encounter of the imaginary with the probable in his prefaces. Hawthorne's masterful accomplishment is the coalescence of two genres in the same text, which allowed him to subvert literary conventions while the content of his stories, as I have explained throughout my dissertation, exposed other social conventions.

The strategy Hawthorne often used to work on two genres at the same time is his female characters. My analysis of his four longer works pays special attention to the relationships between the pair of female characters always present in Hawthorne's longer fiction, one of them being the leading character in the story. Each of these female characters displays certain features more commonly associated with either novels or romances. The attitude each of these women show towards society and its conventions

determines the genre she is more closely related to. The more conventional woman embodies some characteristics of the novel, while the more subversive one can be said to represent those of Hawthorne's romance. I have also pointed out that each of the texts can be said to offer two possible endings depending on the two women involved. These endings indicate the genre corresponding to each woman. Hawthorne's use of females as main characters of his books already sets him apart from most of his contemporaries. In this sense, he proved to be more socially progressive than his contemporary male writers, and even some female writers. However, the endings Hawthorne devised for his subversive heroines are at odds with what some feminist scholars would regard as a positive denouement for a female character. Nevertheless, I have demonstrated that Hawthorne's heroines are successful in their particular stories in a way that fits the *decorum* in each work. Hester, for example, counsels the daughters of those who condemned her; Hepzibah faces her cousin, the Judge, and the previously marginalized characters end up living at the Judge's house; Zenobia manages to have her story told; and Miriam both gets rid of the man who kept haunting her and shakes the foundations of her best friend's world. In the four books analyzed above, as long as the four main female characters changed something in their environment, they did succeed. The method with which their stories were told—with female characters leading each story— already indicates that they were given the voice to tell them. However, the changes these women achieved have to be contextualized and never looked upon from a 20th- or 21st-century mindset. Hawthorne's stories show how the society of his times functioned. Far from portraying an ideal society, he focused on the tensions within it. I have explained that he was exposing certain attitudes towards women, which he can be understood not to agree with, by use of the narrator's comments and his development of the story. That is why he devised a genre to expose them and the reason

why he wrote his romances. Following Baym, I consider Hawthorne a feminist, but a feminist of the 19th century, not of today. His feminism, along with his literary conception, can be fully appreciated in the findings I have made in each of the four books herein analyzed.

Hester Prynne, the main character in *The Scarlet Letter*, is a woman who has to live on her own and needs to work to support her daughter and herself. This description could easily correspond to any contemporary woman, but Hester is a 17th-century character created by a 19th-century author. From a gender point of view, *The Scarlet Letter* is already groundbreaking. On a different level, I agree with those scholars who believe that Hawthorne mirrors himself in the character of Hester. She is an artist who follows her imagination when she is at work. Besides, Hester is said to be some sort of free thinker. Even in "The Custom-House" Hawthorne offers certain clues as to his connection with Hester. Following this analogy, I have demonstrated that Hawthorne uses Hester's 17th-century story to expose some flaws of his own 19th-century society regarding the role assigned to women and the importance paid to appearances. Hester's highly imaginative needlework parallels Hawthorne's use of the imagination in his work. Besides, her free thinking and her clash with the rules established by the Puritan community can be read as Hawthorne's disagreement with the literary conventions of his time and therein, his need to create a different genre. Pearl, Hester's daughter, reminds her mother of the law she broke. She is a more conventional character, more novelistic, problematic at some point, though, but eventually assimilated by the system.

However, the ending to *The Scarlet Letter* has been interpreted by some feminist criticism as a proof of Hawthorne's misogyny. I can't agree with this interpretation. Quite the contrary, my analysis in this dissertation shows how the actions of a woman can

transcend the meaning of a letter which was initially conceived as a punishment. Hester changed the attitude of a whole Puritan community towards her precisely by returning to the said community. *The Scarlet Letter* opens a door to hope for women in Hawthorne's own society. Its double coding exposes the rigid morality of the Puritans without the risk of this work being shunned. Hawthorne hides behind the mask of an editor in *The Scarlet Letter* and manages to redeem a woman who had been condemned by the Puritans.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, he plays with popular legends to undermine the importance of inherited family traditions and of the written documents of History. Hawthorne shows how the corrupting family history enclosed within the walls of a mansion destroys an individual and determines the life of his whole family. I have pointed out that when discussing the terms novel and romance, Hawthorne could actually be referring to History vs. Fiction, and showing that the line dividing them is as a socially constructed artifact. In the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, the narrator explains that the author decided to call his work a romance because he did not intend to offer a historical account of events. In addition, he invites his readers to take part in the creative process. As I have demonstrated, this attitude can be interpreted as Hawthorne's way of minimizing the importance of the established literary conventions regarding writing. Not only is his narrative based upon popular legends, but he also relies on his readers' ability to fill in the blanks left by him in the story. On the other hand, as I show in my analysis of *The House of the Seven Gables* and its main female character, the one who proves more different in the four books, the combining of gender and genre is used by Hawthorne to expose the flatness of the female characters generally used in conventional novels.

Regarding the denouement of the story, it has also given rise to conflicting interpretations. Some scholars contend that the marriage and move to the late Judge

Pyncheon's country house reinforces traditions and social norms. However, I have shown that it actually challenges the establishment. Although Holgrave marries Phoebe and they move to the Judge's house, they move there accompanied by the outcasts of society. In so doing, they start a breakthrough from within. Moreover, their marriage implies the loss of the Pyncheon name, which reinstates the Maules' stolen honor. Throughout my analysis I demonstrate that *The House of the Seven Gables* can be seen to reward the *others* of society.

Returning to the literary genre of the book, I have shown that there are no real opposing genres suggested in this text and that the line separating them is just a socially established convention. Therefore, Hawthorne's allegedly theoretical disquisitions in the preface concerning why this book is a romance can be interpreted precisely as a maneuver to subvert literary conventions. I show that Hawthorne's particular use of social and literary convention results in a subversive critique of the restrictive values which condemn the others.

It is precisely the story of an *other* which is told in *The Blithedale Romance*. As this dissertation has made evident, the four books analyzed here form a cohesive unit. They follow the lead of each other. If in *The Scarlet Letter* the narrator insisted on being just an editor of a document he happened to have found, and if in *The House of the Seven Gables* he is just compiling the stories people told about the families involved. I have read this as Hawthorne's way of undermining the importance of any monologic discourse, be it in the form of a social tradition or of a historical account. This is precisely the main point in *The Blithedale Romance*. Gender and genre are especially intertwined in this book. What has usually been interpreted as a structural flaw, I would interpret as an ingenious authorial strategy. Readers are faced with an apparently unreliable narrator in this book.

Nevertheless, this device is used by the author to serve two related purposes. On the one hand, it subverts the traditional figure of the omniscient narrator: the narrator of *The Blithedale Romance* has very little information about what goes on around him. On the other hand, it opens up a space for the main female character to express her ideas. Zenobia's partisan feminist opinions reach the reader precisely because of Coverdale's incompetence as an omniscient narrator. Along with *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance* is the book which more openly advocates a change in the situation of women, and that explains why it is different from the rest, structurally speaking. I have shown how Hawthorne's peculiar use of a first person narrator in *The Blithedale Romance* becomes his way of involving his art in a social cause. Actually, his first person narrator calls into question the role of omniscient narrators, just as the character of Hepzibah exposes the perfection of novelistic female characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*. I prove that *The Blithedale Romance* follows on the tracks of the previous books in demonstrating how unreliable any man-created discourse is. This calls History into question, being generally written by the winners, not by the others, and much less by women. The leading voice in this text is, however, that of a woman.

Finally, I consider *The Marble Faun* to be a compilation of Hawthorne's literary ideas. On this occasion, the preface of this book does not offer much information about why the author decided to write a romance. Instead, he tries to close the circle that he had opened in "Main Street" and continued in *The House of the Seven Gables*. This time, Hawthorne addresses his readers to ask for their active participation in understanding the story. However, according to traditional literary standards, he did not succeed and was forced to add a postscript. The important thing is that Hawthorne's creative ideals can be found within the story itself. I understand the image of Praxiteles' Faun as summarizing

Hawthorne's vision of genre, and, more specifically, of his romance. At the same time, I consider that it proves what I have defended throughout my dissertation: it is not that Hawthorne wrote romances instead of novels. Rather, he created his own genre merging what were considered to be opposites, just as the human and animal natures living within the faun. Besides, in the character of Hilda, as he previously did with Hepzibah, Hawthorne exposes the lofty perfection with which the conventional heroines of traditional novels are endowed. Miriam, the main female character, closes the circle that Hawthorne opened with the character of Hester. Miriam, like Hester, is an artist who manages to prove her innocence by the end of the story. Still closing more circles, *The Marble Faun* alludes to different artistic disciplines to help Miriam succeed, as was the case in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Also, as in *The House*, a marriage is used to undermine social conventions and prejudices in *The Marble Faun*.

In summary, the main characters of the four books analyzed in my dissertation find their best ally in art. In art, they find a weapon to defend their ideas and it also becomes their means of expression. Hawthorne's main female characters, just as their creator, are capable of undermining some social conventions of their times simply by remaining loyal to their creativity and to their ideals. The power of imagination becomes fundamental in their lives, as well as their listening to their hearts more than to their reason. In a period when imagination was close to being proscribed, Nathaniel Hawthorne chose it as his main inspiration and was capable of creating a genre which, in the opinion of some scholars, such as Mary Rohrberger and Wendy Steiner, is quite modern. Hawthorne's books are romances, but not the conventional type that would think of novels as their enemies. Hawthorne's romances are like Praxiteles' Faun. They prove that nothing is impossible for an open mind, even though it may take time. Hawthorne's romances dwell in that familiar

room which the moonlight can turn into an unfamiliar location without warning. After all, as Viktor Borisovich Shklovsky explained, “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known”, and I have shown that Hawthorne perceived some fresh air was needed to ease the suffocation within the rigid walls surrounding him. They may look like minor changes in the eyes of today’s feminists, but they are cracks within the system, nonetheless. They were breakthroughs that permitted him to subvert the social and literary traditions from within.

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