THE FUNCTION OF AMBIGUITY IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S THE MARBLE FAUN

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Marvin Clark Sather
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Candidate:  Marvin Clark Sather

We recommend acceptance of this thesis to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of this candidate's requirements for the degree Master of Science in Teaching.

Robert L. Brown
Thesis Committee Member  7-28-70

William E. Feeth
Thesis Committee Member  7-28-70

Thomas A. Mark
Thesis Committee Member  7-28-70

This thesis is approved for the Graduate College:

James R. Olson  July 29, 1970
Dean, Graduate College  Date
ABSTRACT

Since its publication in 1860, The Marble Faun has been the subject of much controversy. Most criticism of the romance attacks its many unsolved mysteries. Many early critics felt that Hawthorne did not come to any definite conclusions. In answer to them, he wrote a "Postscript" in which he restated that it was absolutely essential that The Marble Faun have an air of inconclusiveness about it. Modern critics have found the romance distasteful, too; they are particularly unhappy with Hawthorne's many detailed descriptions of Italian art, while his characters seem too insubstantial. Most of their criticism is directed toward Hilda; she is simply too pure for the reader. The problem, therefore, is to re-examine The Marble Faun to determine whether or not Hawthorne's deliberate attempt at ambiguity can be made meaningful to the reader.

To solve this problem, a certain procedure needed to be formulated. After reading the novel and surveying the critical analyses of the romance, I concluded that certain areas of study were of particular importance--Hawthorne's choice of genre, the Italian setting and its impact on characterization, the symbolism of art, and the theme of the Fortunate Fall. All these areas were often mentioned by critics as being both
important to an interpretation of the work and important in that there were divergent views held concerning Hawthorne's intent.

Having completed these studies, several conclusions become apparent. First, modern critics err when they analyze The Marble Faun as a novel; it must be read as a romance as Hawthorne intended. Secondly, since Hawthorne leaves so many questions unanswered, he must have had a specific purpose in mind. Finally, and most importantly, this ambiguity, when interpreted as being Hawthorne's purpose, makes the romance meaningful: Hawthorne uses ambiguity to reveal the complexity of humanity and the dilemma man faces in achieving a unified view of existence.
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INTRODUCTION

A study of a piece of fiction logically begins with some statements concerning the function of fiction and of the writer. Barbara Hardy gives an insight into the nature of this function in her study of the novel, *The Appropriate Form: An Essay on the Novel*: "The novelist, whoever he is and whenever he is writing, is giving form to a story, giving form to his moral and metaphysical views, and giving form to his particular experience of sensations, people, places, and society." In other words, the novelist is writing an imitation of life as seen through his own eyes, telling a story which has a moral representing his personal philosophy of existence.

Hawthorne, too, followed this formula for writing fiction, but he called his works romances rather than novels. As we shall see later, the genre of the romance allows Hawthorne a great deal of flexibility in following the formula. For example, the setting of Rome creates an extensive past, rich in symbols which enable Hawthorne to construct complex themes and characters. Against the deep texture of setting and symbols, the characters act out the themes in archetypal patterns, another characteristic common to the romance.

The combination of the expansive setting, rich symbolism, archetypal characters, and complex themes gives Hawthorne's works a comprehensive view of man and his condition.

Because of his comprehensive vision, some critics question the unity of Hawthorne's romances, particularly the unity of *The Marble Faun*. Consider, for example, the many themes of that work: "the ruthless influences of the past, the blight of wrong upon the completely innocent, the fellowship of sinners, and the regenerative power of sin" as well as the power of human confession and the fall of man. These themes all deal with man's relationship with his fellow man and man's relationship with God, thereby demanding extreme insight and objectivity by Hawthorne. Because of the deep nature of these themes and the simultaneous treatment of many themes, Hawthorne faced the dilemma of trying to answer unanswerable issues. In other words, Hawthorne's works, *The Marble Faun* in this particular case, risk ambiguity and a consequent lack of unity. Ambiguity, however, does


3 The element of ambiguity in *The Marble Faun* and other works has been a common subject of Hawthorne criticism. Henry James, *Hawthorne* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907), p. 160, says that Hawthorne's subjects are usually vague. Austin Warren,
not necessarily have to be a detriment to a work of fiction. If ambiguity is the source of multiple interpretation, then it can enrich fiction, for it makes the reader probe the many possibilities intended by the author. But the question still remains as to how Hawthorne is able to achieve unity with ambiguity functioning within his works.

A key to interpreting The Marble Faun, then, lies in understanding the function of ambiguity in relation to unity. The narrator of The Marble Faun, speaking for Hawthorne, suggests the proper relationship of ambiguity and unity in a piece of fiction:

any narrative of human action and adventure—whether we call it history or romance—is certain to be a fragile handiwork, more easily rent than mended. The actual experience of even the most ordinary life is full of events that never explain themselves, either as regards their origin or their tendency.⁴

In other words, The Marble Faun is a story in which

Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: American Bock Company, 1934), p. lxix, has further commented as to the reason for the vague nature of Hawthorne's work: "Aware of the essential mystery of life, he cannot but avail himself of any means to raise a mist of ambiguity about the circumference of his tales."

⁴Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni, ed. William Charvat et al., The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1968), IV, p. 455. Hereafter, all references to The Marble Faun will be included in the text, using only page numbers.
the central idea is the inexplicable nature of life. The ambiguity, paradoxically, functions as a unifying element in *The Marble Faun*. The very nature of the themes and their exposition is ambiguous, for Hawthorne realizes that such issues can never be explained. We must look to his deliberate ambiguities to find unity. Examination of Hawthorne's choice of genre, his use of setting and characterization, his use of art as symbol, and his treatment of the theme of the Fortunate Fall serves to reveal how the ambiguity of *The Marble Faun* brings unity by being central to Hawthorne's form and content.
Hawthorne termed his long works of fiction romances. In particular, he sought to differentiate between the novel and the romance. To be certain that his readers would understand his purpose in choosing the romantic genre, he prefaced his major works with explanations of his theory. In fact, Hawthorne specifically entitled all of his longer works of fiction romances, with the exception of Fanshawe. Therefore, analysis of The Marble Faun should be concerned with Hawthorne's conception of the genre of romance.

By choosing the genre of the romance, Hawthorne was attempting to use a medium long recognized as a form in itself. Most often we speak of the works of Hawthorne as novels, but he was attempting to make a distinction between the novel and the romance. Examination of the difference between the two genres as perceived by those who wrote before, during, and after Hawthorne gives a deeper insight into his concept of the romance.

In 1785, Clara Reeve made a definitive statement regarding the difference between a novel and a romance.

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.

—The Novel is a picture of real life.
and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. --The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it, is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses of the persons in the story, as if they were our own."

This early definition of the romance reveals that the genre is concerned with the past rather than the present, with the fabulous rather than the real, with elevated language rather than familiar language. Such characteristics are also common to the romances of Hawthorne.

Another writer who commented on the difference between the romance and the novel was Samuel Johnson, who concerned himself with the difference in the writing processes of the two genres. Johnson explained how the romantic artist carries out his process: "The chief advantage which these fictions have over real life is that their authors are at liberty, though not to invent, yet to select objects, and to cull from the

mass of mankind those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employed. . . ." The romance, therefore, has its basis in real incidents, but the romantic artist has so much freedom that he is able to create an imaginary world from these basic elements of reality. On the other hand, the novel is more strictly concerned with presenting a picture of total reality. In analyzing a romance such as *The Marble Faun*, the critic should realize that Hawthorne may cover a wide range in content based on a few details of actuality.

Several modern critics have also seen the novel and the romance as distinct genres. To Northrop Frye, "The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romance does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes." The novelist, on the other hand, "deals with personality, with characters wearing their personae or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society, and many of our best novelists have been conventional to the verge of fussiness." Therefore, 


when examining *The Marble Faun* or any romance by Hawthorne, a central concern should be how the characters are exaggerated beyond reality and tend to exhibit broad spectrums of experience.

The importance of characterization in a romance is central, also, to Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg. In their discussion of the difference of the novel and the romance, Scholes and Kellogg say that the novel "represents" the real world while the romance "illuminates." "Illustration differs from representation in narrative art in that it does not seek to reproduce actuality but to present selected aspects of the actual, essences referable for the meaning not to historical, psychological or sociological truth but to ethical and metaphysical truth." In other words, the romance, while based on selected, symbolic aspects of reality, attempts to reveal metaphysical truths by a highly imaginative world created by the author.

The preceding summary of critical analyses of the difference between the genres of the romance and the novel reveal that Hawthorne's distinction was not a solitary one. In fact, his explanations parallel and amplify those of the critics just cited. Just what Hawthorne's theory of the romance was can be

8Scholes and Kellogg, p. 88.
found by examining his "Prefaces," so it is to them that we now turn.

Although the introductory chapter of The Scarlet Letter, "The Custom-House," does not proclaim that book as a romance as such, many characteristics of Hawthorne's concept of the romance are set forth in it. First, Hawthorne says that he writes "The Custom-House" in order to offer "proofs of the authenticity of a narrative therein contained." This statement implies that the story is based on some factual data and is substantiated when he later says that the story is based on a manuscript found in a shadowy room in the attic of the Custom-House. Having found the material for a story, Hawthorne then says he was unable to write until he was inspired by a particular atmosphere which he describes as follows: "Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all the figures so distinctly; --making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility, --is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests." The moonlight


10Ibid., p. 35.
both illuminates and mystifies the details of the room until "all these details, so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the unusual light that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect." 11 And with the process of spiritualization and intellectualization, "the floor of our familiar room has become 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." 12 What do these descriptions tell us about the romance? It seeks the illusive; it is a part of the real world and yet apart from it; it is a part of the spiritual world and yet based on actuality. In other words, the romance is a mingling of reality ("Actual") and the intellect or spirit ("Imaginary") in order to arrive at a wholeness of experience, or the "Truth." Thus, Hawthorne's romances seek the truth from ambiguity, a mingling of reality and spirit.

Another important statement of Hawthorne's theory of the romance is found in the "Preface" to The House of the Seven Gables:

The former [The Romance]--while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins

11 Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, p. 35.
12 Ibid., p. 36.
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 or creation. If he
think fit, also, he may so
manage his atmospheric medium
as to bring out or mellow the
lights and deepen and enrich
the shadows of the picture. He
will be wise, no doubt, to make
a very moderate use of the
privileges here stated, and,
especially, to mingle the
Marvellous rather as a slight,
delicate, and evanescent flavor,
than as any portion of the actual
substance of the dish offered
to the public. He can hardly
be said, however, to commit a
literary crime even if he dis-
regard this caution.13

We see, once again, that Hawthorne aims for truth,
but he emphasizes the freedom of the artist in
reaching that goal. The freedom involves the
creation of an "atmospherical medium" which enriches
the story. The result is the mingling of the "Marvellous"
in a moderate degree with the "actual substance," a
restatement of his romantic explanation of "The Custom-
House."

But Hawthorne adds to his conception of the romance
in the "Preface" to The House of the Seven Gables. Of
particular concern is his concept of time: "The point

13Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables,
ed. William Charvat et al., The Centenary Edition of
the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Columbus, Ohio:
of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very present that is flitting away from us."14 In this way Hawthorne is able to be objective, enabling him to see the totality of human experience.15 This truth is revealed by the writer in his moral:

"When romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one."16 Thus, it would seem that Hawthorne's moral or truth is shrouded in a cloud of ambiguity. As Roy Harvey Pearce says of this "Preface," "A romance is a moral work; it must be humanly true; it deals with experience in the largest, even exaggerated terms."17

While his remarks in The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables stress the expression of truth through a medium of mingled actuality and

14Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 2.

15Jesse Bier, "Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined," Modern Philology, LIII (August 1955), 22, says, "A clear eye for the subtle connection between past and present, along with his general employment of atmospheric 'remoteness,' was fundamental to the technique of Hawthorne, a man exploring aspects of the universal and perennial questions of good and evil, sin and tragedy."

16Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 2.

17Roy Harvey Pearce, "Hawthorne and the Twilight of Romance," Yale Review, XXVII (March 1948), 489.
imagination, Hawthorne turns to a greater emphasis on the medium in his last two romances. In the "Preface" to The Blithedale Romance, he said that he sought a "Faery Land" not normally found in America where he could express his views of life. Hawthorne turns to his experience at Brook Farm "as being, certainly, the romantic episode of his own life—essentially a day-dream, and yet a fact—and thus offering an available foothold between fiction and reality."[18] His search, therefore, was for an atmosphere in which fact was present, but the appearance was of a dream.[19] Ultimately the search for the proper atmosphere for the romance led Hawthorne to Italy, the site of The Marble Faun.[20] He explicitly states


19Bier, p. 18, says that "there is no realistic transcription of manners or character or place in Hawthorne's Romances. He looked to get one remove away from time-bound and geographic reality."

20While the thesis of this analysis is that Hawthorne's choice of the romance contributes to the function of ambiguity and unity in The Marble Faun, Roy Harvey Pearce charges that the novel fails as a romance because Hawthorne left his native land: "The meaning is that of a romancer who has fooled himself into believing that his romance is about people whom he knows when it is actually about a land which he doesn't know" (p. 492).

Pearce's article has spurred much controversy. Nathalia Wright, American Novelists in Italy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), p. 159, believes
his purpose in the "Preface" of that work: "The author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral, and did not propose attempting a portraiture of Italian manners and character" (pp. 2-3). The emphasis here seems to lie on the "fanciful" nature of the story, which, although it presents a moral, is not concerned primarily with the actuality of Italian setting and character. Hawthorne offers further insight into how the "fanciful" story is achieved when he later says in the "Preface:"

Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America. 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

that Italy suggested the themes, images, characterization, and symbolism to Hawthorne for The Marble Faun. Gary Scrimgeour, "The Marble Faun: Hawthorne's Faery Land," American Literature, XXXVI (1964), 271, agrees with Miss Wright and adds a refutation to Pearce: "Hawthorne's choice of locale for his story and the detail of his exploitation of that locale are absolutely essential to his romance. . . ."

In direct response to Pearce, James K. Folsom, Man's Accidents and God's Purposes: Multiplicity in Hawthorne's Fiction (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1963), p. 63, says that recent scholarship, since Pearce, has revealed a deeper symbolism in the setting of The Marble Faun which refutes Pearce's charge that Hawthorne's use of Italy as his setting fails.
Thus, Hawthorne's preference is for a lack of "actualities," creating a mysterious atmosphere in which the author is free to explore the truths of existence.

In these prefaces to his major novels, Hawthorne seemingly moves from a mingling of actuality and imagination in *The Scarlet Letter* to a greater stress on the imaginative atmosphere in *The Marble Faun*. As Jesse Bier has said, Hawthorne "sought to get away from realism or mere literal story, unusual or not, and to get back into the universal, timeless, real 'territory' to which the essentially poetic vehicle of imagination could transport him." If Bier is correct, and Hawthorne's prefaces indicate that he is, then Hawthorne's primary interest was the creation of an atmosphere in which ambiguity is essential.

With ambiguity as a necessity for the creation of moral truth in Hawthorne's romances, the validity of ambiguity's function as a unifying element in *The Marble Faun* becomes apparent. The form and content of the romance—the elevated language, the concern for the past, the archetypal characters, the moral truths, the mingling of actuality and imagination—

21Bier, p. 23.
depend not only on the wide vision of the author but also on the unity of vision. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg say, "A critic considering this aspect of Hawthorne might build a favorable value judgment into his criticism by referring this phenomenon to Hawthorne's 'unified sensibility,' or he might equally allow his terminology to masquerade as judgment by calling this a 'fuzziness' of focus." In my judgment, the genre of romance, as defined by Hawthorne and other critics, finds unity in its ambiguity, for the very nature of the genre depends on an ambiguous atmosphere to convey its truths. Since The Marble Faun is a romance, the ambiguity may be considered to function as a unifying element, thereby counteracting those critics who see no unity in the work.

22 Scholes and Kellogg, p. 90.
AMBIGUITY AND SETTING
AND ITS IMPACT ON CHARACTERIZATION

A major means to understanding how Hawthorne maintains unity while using an ambiguous atmosphere is to examine the setting of The Marble Faun. Such a study reveals not only what ambiguities are found in the setting, but also the impact the setting has on the characters. Hawthorne reveals how he uses the setting in the opening chapter:

We glance hastily at these things—at this bright sky, and those blue, distant mountains, and at the ruins, Etruscan, Roman, Christian, venerable with a threefold antiquity, and at the company of world-famous statues in the saloon—in the hope of putting the reader into that state of feeling which is experienced oftenest in Rome. It is a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a by-gone 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. 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 all our lives. Side by side with the massiveness of the Roman past, all matters, that we handle or dream of, now-a-days, look evanescent and visionary alike. (p. 6)

This description reveals several aspects of Hawthorne's concept of the romance. The importance of the past, weighing down the present, is particularly emphasized
here. The place itself is termed half real, a suggestion of mingled actuality and imagination. As a result of these devices, the narrator says that the setting is "evanescent and visionary," suggesting a sense of inconclusiveness. Against this mingled setting, Hawthorne sets his characters: a young New England female artist, Hilda; a fellow American sculptor, Kenyon; a mysterious European female artist, Miriam; and a carefree young Italian, Donatello—the Faun. All four characters respond to the setting, thereby offering answers as to how such an ambiguous setting, filled with "unsubstantial threads," can remain unified.

In considering setting, one is concerned with the element of time, and in The Marble Faun Miriam is one character who illustrates the ambiguity of time. Her origin is mysterious; she is rumored to be everything from a rich Jewish heiress to an English noblewoman: "Be these things—how they might, Miriam, fair as she looked, was plucked up out of a mystery, and had its roots still clinging to her" (p. 23). Whatever her past, Miriam suffers from it. In describing the life of the mythic Faun, she says, "Ah! Kenyon, if Hilda, and you, and I—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" (pp. 13-14). Apparently Miriam is guilty of some crime, which haunts her in the form of the "spectre of the catacomb."

While the foursome tours a Roman catacomb, Miriam suddenly becomes lost in the underground maze. After much shouting by her friends, Miriam returns, accompanied by the spectre, who follows them from the catacomb and, thereafter, trails Miriam, reminding her of her evil past and causing a change in her normally happy exterior: "Her spirits were often depressed into deep melancholy. If ever she was gay, it was seldom with a healthy cheerfulness. She grew moody, moreover, and subject to fits of passionate ill-temper, which usually wreaked itself on the heads of those who loved her best" (p. 35). Thus, the catacombs, holding the secrets of the past of Rome, reflect the depressed spirit of Miriam, exemplified

23Just what Miriam's crime is has been the subject of controversy. Marius Bewley, The Complex Fate (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1967), p. 49, makes the following point: "The nature of her crime is carefully concealed, but it is clearly part of the texture and institutionalized and crumbling un-American past that Hawthorne could not help being troubled by." Roy Harvey Pearce, "Hawthorne and the Twilight of Romance," p. 495, says that we never know what Miriam's sin is, that Hawthorne presents "only the wholeness of such emotion as mystery and melodrama might suggest." In short, what we must be concerned with is not the fact of the crime, but rather the sense of guilt of the past which causes Miriam to be isolated from others, unable to love, and to suffer from a lack of freedom.
by the presence of the spectre, or Model as he comes to be called.

While Hawthorne uses the catacombs to expose a true picture of Miriam, he also uses the concept of time to further explicate her character as R. W. B. Lewis suggests: "The tension of the novel is provided by the vigor of Miriam's effort to escape the consequences of her private past and the solidity of the 'fact' of the past in general."24 For Miriam, time has become personified in the form of the Model. As well as becoming a symbol of her private past, he also is a part of the whole world of Rome—the city of the past. After he is killed, we discover that he is a Capuchin monk, a famous Roman order with a long history. The Capuchin is to be buried in his order's cemetery, of which the narrator gives the following description: "But the cemetery of the Capuchins is no place to nourish celestial hopes; the soul sinks, forlorn and wretched, under all this burthen of dusty death..." (p. 194). In other words, the Capuchin Model symbolized both Miriam's crime and the fact of death, an eternal problem, which she is attempting to escape. Time becomes, therefore, a burden of guilt and death.

Seeking relief, Miriam agrees to walk with

Donatello in the gardens of Rome, but she still cannot free herself, for she realizes that her happiness cannot last (p. 81). Donatello, professing his love for her, finally persuades her to abandon herself in a frolic. However, even before she starts, Miriam realizes that the burden of time cannot be overthrown: "Tomorrow will be time enough to come back to my reality. My reality! What is it? Is the past so indestructible?--the future so immittigable? Is the dark dream, in which I walk, of such solid, stony substance, that there can be no escape out of the dungeon? Be it so! There is, at least, that ethereal quality of my spirit, that it can make me as gay as Donatello himself—for this one hour" (p. 82)! Here is the ambiguity of Miriam's time, for it is a time without a future. Hawthorne seems to have closed Miriam in a prison, making her bear the guilt of her own past and an awareness of death. With such a burden she sees no hope for the future, despite her movement toward it. Furthermore, the present is only a constant reminder of the past, for even the one hour of dancing with Donatello does not free her: "In the midst of its [the dance's] madness and riot, Miriam found herself suddenly confronted by a strange figure that shook its fantastic garments in the air, and pranced before her on its tiptoes, almost vying
with the agility of Donatello himself. It was the Model" (p. 89). For Miriam, the past, as symbolized by the Model, infects the present. She has no escape, it seems, just as Rome has no escape from the past.

Like Miriam, Donatello is a person living with an awareness of the past; however, his past is not a burden. In the first chapter, the two Americans and Miriam notice the remarkable resemblance between Donatello and a statue called "the Faun of Praxiteles" (p. 7). Hilda says that the original Faun dwelt in the forests and fields of Europe. Applying the concept of the original Faun to Donatello, Miriam replies, "He [Donatello] has hardly a man's share of wit, small as that may be." (p. 7). The simplicity of Donatello is further explored by 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. (p. 14)

Thus, Donatello, at the beginning of the novel, is a character outside of time, outside of the rules and
conventions of society.

But because of his attraction for Miriam, Donatello becomes drawn into time and the world of men. Leaving the museum where they viewed the statue of the Faun, the group sees Miriam's Model. Kenyon notices Donatello's reaction to the Model's presence: "'You have bewitched the poor lad,' said the sculptor laughing. 'You have a faculty of bewitching people, and it is providing you with a singular train of followers. I see another of them behind yonder pillar; and it is his presence that has aroused Donatello's wrath!" (pp. 18-19). This reaction is not that of a simpleton. Rather than joy, Donatello is experiencing anger and jealousy. He is able to forget his wrath during his dance in the Borghese gardens of Rome.

But after professing his love for Miriam, having her dance with him in innocent joy, and then having her stop because of the presence of the Model, his wrath overflows again in his speech to Miriam: "'Shall I clutch him by the throat?' whispered Donatello, with a savage scowl. 'Bid me do so; and we are rid of him forever!'" (p. 91)! Thus, Donatello, although he begins outside of time, becomes involved with the burden of time through his love for Miriam. Like her, he wishes to be rid of the Model who arouses their passions of anger and fear and makes life seem joyless.
Donatello's involvement with time is climaxed by his murder of the Model. Seeing his beloved Miriam tortured by his presence, Donatello throws him over a cliff, killing him. Hilda witnesses the scene, observing the following:

She /Hilda/ clasped her hands, and looked wildly at the young man, whose form seemed to have dilated, and whose eyes blazed with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him. It had kindled him into a man; 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.

"What have you done!" said Miriam, in a horror-stricken whisper.

The glow of rage was still buried in Donatello's face, and now flashed out again from his eyes.

"I did what ought to be done to a traitor!" he replied. "I did what your eyes bade me do, when I asked them with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice!" (p. 172)

Time has ensnared both Miriam and Donatello. Miriam has tried to escape the consequences of time by killing the symbol of her guilty past and death itself. But, as Nathalia Wright says, "Miriam's attempt to build a new world is unsuccessful. The past overtakes her, and out of her innocence in the first crime paradoxically
issues her guilt in the second." Miriam cannot escape the past, for death cannot be killed, as she discovers when viewing the dead Model: "Miriam now quailed and shook, not for the vulgar horror of the spectacle, but for the severe, reproachful glance that seemed to come from between those half-closed lids. True; there had been nothing, in her lifetime, viler than this man. She knew it; there was no other fact within her consciousness that she felt to be so certain; and yet, because her persecutor found himself safe and irrefutable in death, he frowned upon his victim, and threw back the blame on her" (p. 191)! Therefore, her attempt to escape time is a failure. Donatello, seemingly free of time, has been brought into the path of the past, for he sins, betraying his innocence. These two reveal a part of Hawthorne's view of time—that time brings all men to an inescapable death and to an encounter with sin and guilt.

25Nathalia Wright, "Hawthorne and the Praslin Murder," New England Quarterly, XV (March. 1942), 10. Miss Wright believes that Hawthorne took his idea for Miriam from the Praslin murder case. The case involved a Mlle. Deluzy who was accused of a crime she didn't commit. She, in the eyes of the public, urged Mr. Praslin to kill his wife; the public held her responsible. In a like manner, although she didn't commit the crime in actuality, Hawthorne holds Miriam responsible for both the death of the Model and the transformation of Donatello from innocence to knowledge of sin.
While the burden of the past rests on the two Europeans, the Americans, Hilda and Kenyon, have a different relationship with time, as Marius Bewley suggests: "Now the action and tragedy is centered on these two Europeans, but on the outskirts of the action we have the two Americans, Kenyon the sculptor and Hilda the copyist, keenly aware of the good vibrations from the past, especially as those are transmissible through art objects, but immune to any of those malign influences that have corrupted Miriam and Donatello." 26 Although Bewley sees art as a "good vibration" from the past, David Howard says that "Its importance is as a temptation and European involvement for Kenyon and Hilda. . . ." 27 How is it that time tempts both the Americans to become involved and yet it does not seem to corrupt them? By examining both Americans in relation to the setting, the answer to this question can be found.

Hilda's relationship to the setting is most clearly seen by her living quarters in Rome: "She dwelt in her tower, as free to descend into the corrupted atmosphere


of the city beneath, as one of her companion-doves
to fly downward into the street;—all alone, perfectly
independent, under her own sole guardianship, unless
watched over by the Virgin, whose shrine she tended;
--doing what she liked, without a suspicion or a
shadow upon the snowy whiteness of her fame" (p. 54).
Hawthorne, thus, paints Hilda as a picture of purity,
bearing no shadows of the past. Furthermore, she is
completely independent, seemingly moving outside of
time altogether, for the corrupted city has no impact
on her.

Moreover, Hilda's work as an artist in Rome
reveals her purity and her safety from the corrupting
influence of the Roman past. At first she sought to
do original paintings, but this desire soon changed
for "Hilda became a copyist" (p. 57). Copying the
works of the old masters in the art museums of Rome,
Hilda seems to transcend time, to get at the heart
of the original master's intent, and even to improve
the original: "In some instances ... she had been
enabled to execute what the great Master had conceived
in his imagination, but had not so perfectly succeeded
in putting upon canvas. ... In such cases, the girl
was but a finer instrument, a more exquisitely effective
piece of mechanism, by the help of which the spirit of
some great departed Painter now first achieved his ideal
centuries after his own earthly hand, that other tool, had turned to dust" (p. 59). Hilda, attuned to the spirits of the past without being corrupted, seemingly lives in a pure world.

But Hilda does not survive in a world of purity, for she is surrounded by people who are not pure, such as Miriam and Donatello. When Hilda witnesses their crime, she is destined to change, as Henry James explains: "She has done no wrong, and yet wrong-doing has become a part of her experience, and she carries the weight of her detested knowledge upon her breast."  

Hawthorne depicts Hilda as sitting "listlessly" in her room with tears streaming, "which the innocent heart pours forth, at its first actual discovery that sin is in the world. . . . In due time, some mortal, whom they reverence too highly, is commissioned by Providence to teach them this direful lesson; he perpetuates a sin; and Adam falls anew, and Paradise, heretofore in unfaded bloom, is lost again, and closed forever, with the fiery swords gleaming at its gates" (p. 204). Like all others, Hilda is drawn into the corruption of time, becoming aware of sin as did the innocent Donatello.

That Hilda becomes a part of the sinful world of time becomes apparent upon Miriam's visit to her after

28James, p. 162.
the murder. As Miriam enters Hilda's shrine, Hilda repulses her and says, ""The pure, white atmosphere, in which I try to discern what things are good and true, would be discoloured. And, therefore, Miriam, before it is too late, I mean to put faith in this awful heart-quake, which warns me henceforth to avoid you!"" (p. 208)! By this act, Hilda isolates herself, attempting to escape the consequences of her knowledge of sin. Randall Stewart calls this act a sin of pride in purity, and ""Pride of whatever sort is evil, . . . because it draws one into aloofness."" Hilda becomes lonely and as a result of her isolation finally loses her ability as a copyist: ""She had lost— and she trembled lest it should have departed forever— the faculty of appreciating those great works of art, which heretofore had made so large a portion of her happiness"" (p. 335). Like Miriam and Donatello, Hilda cannot escape from time, and thereby the consequences of action; rather her behavior comes to reveal her humanness. Consequently, it seems that Hilda, too, has taken her place in the world of men, the time and place of sin which cannot be escaped.

Like Hilda, Kenyon, the American sculptor, is a remote spirit, practicing his art away from the ordinary

stream of Rome and the evil influences of the European past. Early in the novel, Miriam goes to Kenyon's studios to view some of his work. During this visit, she expresses her need to talk to another person, to rid herself of her inner frustrations. Kenyon agrees to listen, but Miriam refuses to talk. The narrator explains why: "Kenyon's response had been perfectly frank and kind; and yet the subtlety of Miriam's emotion detected a certain reserve and alarm in his warmly expressed readiness to hear her story. In his secret soul, to say the truth, the sculptor doubted whether it were well for this poor suffering girl to speak what she yearned to say, or for him to listen" (p. 128). Like Hilda, Kenyon seems to hold others away when he is threatened by an involvement which may lead him into contact with the evil nature of life. Another example of the withdrawn nature of Kenyon is the art of sculpture which he practices. Miriam notices the difference between her painting and Kenyon's sculpting as she says, "I have come to try whether there is any calm and coolness among your marbles. My own art is too nervous, too passionate, too full of agitation, for me to work at it whole days together, without intervals of repose" (pp. 116-117). And Kenyon's marble is cool, matching his apparent coolness of character. But this is only a surface
trait, for his art subjects deal with deeper ideas. His statue of a pearl diver who drowned greatly impressed Miriam because of its comment about death (p. 117). Furthermore, Kenyon's bust of Milton was based on the "poet's genius" (p. 118) in his works concerning the nature of man. Therefore, it is more logical to conclude that Kenyon's apparent distance is part of the artistic process, an objectivity which makes him appear cool in nature. In actuality, he is fully involved in time and its concomitant concepts of sin and death, but his involvement is more artistic than it is human.

Like the other characters, Kenyon undergoes a transformation which brings him in direct contact with time. Visiting Donatello, who has fled from Rome to his estate in the mountains, Kenyon discusses the history of the Monte Beni family with his friend and tries to cheer up the despondent Donatello. In contrast to his meeting with Miriam, Kenyon humanly strives to help his friend regain his hope and confidence in life; gone is the cool objectivity, replaced by a warm, personal concern. In the process of comforting Donatello, Kenyon comes to a full awareness of hope and time as he looks out across the valley from a window in Donatello's tower:
What made the valley look still wider, was the two or three varieties of weather that were visible on its surface, all at the same instant of time. Here lay the quiet sunshine; there, fell the great black patches of ominous shadow from the clouds; and behind them, like a giant of league-long strides, came hurrying the thunder-storm, which had already swept midway across the plain. In the rear of the approaching tempest, brightened forth again the sunny splendour, which its progress had darkened with so terrible a frown. (pp. 257-258)

Kenyon sees the multiplicity of time, the tempests it brings, the ominous shadows, and the clarity of the sunshine. Through his involvement with Donatello, Kenyon has grown to see the fullness of time and its complexity.

Furthermore, Kenyon attributes his insight to God: "How it strengthens the poor human spirit in its reliance on His Providence, to ascend but this little way above the common level, and so attain a somewhat wider glimpse of His dealings with mankind! He doeth all things right! His will be done" (p. 258)! Through his artistic mind, Kenyon perceives that God reveals the truth of existence to man. But Donatello says that he cannot see any revelation in the flowing clouds and sunshine. Kenyon's answer reveals the difficulty of insight: "'Nay; I cannot preach,' said Kenyon, 'with a page of heaven and a page of earth spread wide
open before us! Only begin to read it, and you will find it interpreting itself without the aid of words. It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language. When we ascend into the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment, they are only expressible by such grand hieroglyphics as these around us" (p. 258). Thus, while Kenyon is able to have a direct perception of the flux of time, he is unable to express it verbally because of man's limitations. To him there exists a certain ambiguity which cannot be explained, but only perceived.

All four characters, therefore, come to be involved with time. The two Europeans, Miriam and Donatello, bear the burden of guilt from the past, making them act out their sin in the present, leaving them with little hope for the future. The two Americans are less bleak. Hilda gradually becomes involved in time by trying to reject it. Thus, she commits a sin of pride, involving herself despite herself. Kenyon also tries to maintain an objective relationship with time, but he is drawn in, recognizing the complexity of time, how it brings both good and evil. This world of time in which the characters find themselves is, indeed, ambiguous. There seems to be no escape, no hope for the future, for most of them. Miriam and Donatello look forward to a life of
suffering and Hilda is faced with a life of loneliness. Only Kenyon sees any hope, the sunshine after the storm. But the sunshine is found only among the clouds and the tempest, revealing its complexity, a complexity that cannot be explained but only intuited.

Because of their guilt and bleak futures, the two Europeans and Hilda isolate themselves. In isolation, each becomes immobilized; Hilda cannot paint, Donatello broods in his tower on his estate, and Miriam, as a shadow, follows Donatello, but does not join him. Because Kenyon sees hope in the fullness of time, he is able to act. After Kenyon convinces Donatello that a journey through the Italian countryside may be beneficial, the two leave the Faun's estate. Kenyon has agreed to bring Donatello face to face with Miriam on an appointed day in the square at Perugia.

When the two meet in the square, they feel both an attraction and a repulsion for one another, as the narrator describes: "In this momentous interview, therefore, two souls were groping for each other in the darkness of guilt and sorrow, and hardly were bold enough to grasp the cold hands that they found" (pp. 320-321). Kenyon, because of his insight, is able to help the pair to see their bond which, he says, is caused by Miriam's "responsibility" to Donatello and his connection
with her "destiny" (p. 321). Kenyon then pronounces in a wedding proclamation, "The bond betwixt you, therefore, is a true one, and never--except by Heaven's own act--should be rent asunder" (p. 321). Realizing the importance of the moment, Miriam and Donatello join hands "and there they stood, the beautiful man, the beautiful woman, united forever, as they felt, in the presence of those thousand eye-witnesses [In the square] who gazed so curiously at the unintelligible scene" (p. 323). For these two then, time takes on new meaning, a hope for salvation.30 Hopeful, they return to Rome, symbolic of doubt and uncertainty, ready to face their responsibility for the crime of murder, willing to accept the ambiguity and complexity of time and life as found there.

While Kenyon is leading the two Europeans to a new relationship with time, Hilda, remaining in Rome, has become deeply depressed because of her knowledge of sin. Seeing others doing penance in a cathedral, Hilda, despite being a New England Protestant, confesses to an English-speaking priest. The narrator describes Hilda's reaction after her confession:

"And, oh, what a relief! When the hysterical gasp, the strife between words and sobs, had subsided, what a torture had passed away from her soul! It was all

30 Scrimgeour, p. 283.
gone; her bosom was as pure now as in her childhood. She was a girl again; she was Hilda, of the dove-cote; not that doubtful creature whom her own doves had hardly recognized as their mistress and playmate, by reason of the death-scent that clung to her garments" (pp. 357-358). By having Hilda confess, it is obvious that Hawthorne has intended to show Hilda somehow guilty of some sin. Certainly she has knowledge of sin, and she has been guilty of the sin of pride. Therefore, through the act of confession Hilda gains a brotherhood with all sinners. She, too, is mortal, aware of death, aware of sin, and like others she must accept her place in time, for she is powerless to deal with the "Providence" that led her to the confessional to begin with (p. 360).

While all of the characters are drawn into time, Kenyon, because of his artistic insight, seems to be optimistic of man's destiny. But even his confidence is shattered when, after returning to Rome and spending some time with Hilda, he discovers that she is missing from her safe tower. Searching the city in vain, he encounters Miriam: "Have you anything to tell me?" cried he, impatiently; for nothing causes a more disagreeable vibration of the nerves than this.

perception of ambiguousness in familiar persons or affairs" (p. 397). Despite his insight into human nature, Kenyon, too, must face ambiguity, must face unanswerable questions.

While all four characters come to recognize the inadequacies of man--his sin, his failure to escape death, his inability to control his own destiny--within time, they take, in the end, different positions as to how man should accept his role in life. Miriam has become a penitent pilgrim who visits the shrines of Italy, and Donatello is in prison. Both are facing the responsibility of sin with the hope that "Sin ... is ... merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained" (p. 460). Hilda, however, rejects this statement as horrible. She believes that man should follow a "creed," obeying his "religious sentiment" and following the "moral law" (p. 460). Kenyon, in the end, agrees with Hilda, although he had earlier accepted the former position. But even Hilda and Kenyon do not condemn Miriam and Donatello's credo, for the narrator says, "For, what was Miriam's life to be? And where was Donatello? But Hilda had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountain-tops" (p. 462). Hawthorne, therefore, seems not to be advocating any single
philosophy, but rather he says that in life man never knows for sure. All man can do is hope that what he does is right. In other words, time is ambiguous, and man can never hope to fully understand life.
AMBIGUITY AND ART

Just as the setting and characterization of The Marble Faun reveal the important function of ambiguity in that work, the references to art also show that ambiguity functions to unify the novel. That art is a central issue in The Marble Faun is apparent in the first chapter, for Hawthorne begins the work with a description of a sculpture-gallery. In the opening paragraph he reveals his concept of art: "Around the walls stand the Antinous, the Amazon, the Lycian Apollo, the Juno; all famous productions of antique sculpture, and still shining in the undiminished majesty and beauty of their ideal life, although the marble, that embodies them, is yellow with time, and perhaps corroded by the damp earth in which they lay buried for centuries" (p. 5). Hawthorne seems to be saying that art expresses an ideal which cannot be destroyed by earth and time. Art, when found in such a mysterious and suggestive setting as Italy, is the actuality of Hawthorne's romantic genre. These works of art must be considered

32F. O. Mattiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 263-264, says of this passage: "That phrases the function of idealization in art in a way that marks it off sharply from romantic escapism; it reaffirms the truth that art, both in its intention and its lasting result, raises its material to the level of contemplation, freed from accidents and irrelevancies."
as symbols of the ideal. However, these works are "yellow with time" and "corroded by the damp earth." Therefore, the individual art works must be seen as revealing both the ideal (moral truth) and complexity (ambiguity) of life. At the same time, the role of the artist must be analyzed, too, for it is he who creates the art. 33

33 Much research has been done regarding Hawthorne and the artist, and a brief survey reveals some vital points applicable to The Marble Faun. First, Millicent Bell, Hawthorne's View of the Artist (New York: State University of New York, 1962), p. 39, says, "His own comments on art reveal that he was interested chiefly in the character of the artist's inspiration rather than in the technical qualities of the art-work." This quality of Hawthorne's art theory reveals his concern for unity in the ideal; it is the idea behind the work which is most important, not the work itself. Millicent Bell's thesis is substantiated by Richard Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and The Dark (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 207: "There is in The Marble Faun an 'organic' theory of art which extends in its application into all other problems of the book. In every discussion of painting and sculpture the individual work is judged according to the degree in which it possesses a unifying life and light. The meritless work, or the falsely fine . . . is empty technique, mere copy, dead mass." Once again, Hawthorne is seen as stressing unity. But the achievement of unity is the concern here, and Maurice Charney, "Hawthorne and the Gothic Style," New England Quarterly, XXXIV (1961), 39, offers a clue as to Hawthorne's technique in this matter: "He was most powerfully impressed by the multitudinousness of the gothic style--this is one of his key words--its ability to fashion a wealth of detail into a rich and full organic whole. Here Hawthorne shares a typically romantic interest in unity in multiplicity, the union of the many in the one, the growth of a complex form by analogy with a natural process." It is, of course, the "unity in multiplicity" which is the concern in this analysis.
Miriam is a good starting point, for in some respects, her art is somewhat like Hawthorne's, in that it is richly symbolic and dreamlike. In fact, Miriam tells Donatello, when he visits her studio, that she uses ambiguity to achieve her purpose:

"'We artists purposely exclude sunshine, and all but a partial light,' said Miriam, 'because we think it necessary to put ourselves at odds with Nature, before trying to imitate her. That strikes you very strangely, does it not? But we make very pretty pictures, sometimes, with our artfully arranged lights and shadows'" (p. 40). The pictures which Miriam paints are representative of this attempt to make "prettiness" out of being "at odds with Nature."

Donatello discovers several of her works scattered on a table. These sketches include a picture of Joel pounding a nail through Sisera's head, another of Judith cutting off the head of Holofernes, and of Herodias receiving the head of John the Baptist (pp. 43-44). The narrator comments on these works:

Over and over again, there was the idea of a woman, acting the part of a revengeful mischief toward 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; and how, too—in one
form or another, grotesque, or
sternly sad—she failed not to
bring out the moral, that woman
must strike through her own
heart to reach a human life,
whatever were the motive that
impelled her. (p. 44)

In these paintings, Miriam seems to reveal her darker
nature, her mysterious origins, which seek revenge
for her fate.

But Miriam also reveals another side of her
artistic nature to Donatello. She gave him a port-
folio containing pictures of the following scenes:
a lover receiving a look of affection from his
beloved and a picture of a baby's shoe (p. 45).
The narrator again comments on these pictures: "But
it is more delightful to believe, that . . . they
were the productions of a beautiful imagination,
dealing with the warm and pure suggestions of a woman's
heart, and thus idealizing a truer and lovelier pic-
ture of the life that belongs to woman, than an actual
acquaintance with some of its hard and dusty facts
could have inspired" (p. 46). These comments reveal
a side of Miriam's character heretofore unseen—a warm,
idealized nature striving for happiness. Millicent
Bell suggests that Miriam attaches herself to Donatello
as a symbol of innocence in order to escape the suffering
which she undergoes in most of her life.35 Perhaps

35Bell, p. 172.
he represents the ideal life toward which she secretly aspires. Thus, it would seem that Miriam's life as an artist reveals the diversity of means she uses to achieve unity as an artist. In her dark paintings she reveals her suffering, striving to rid herself of the anger in order to reach happiness. Although the means are various, her purpose remains singular.

As Miriam's artistic technique offers insight into Hawthorne's treatment of art, so, too, do her reactions to famous art pieces of Rome. One such work was Guido's "Archangel," which pictured the Angel Michael with his head turned away and his foot upon the head of a struggling Demon. Miriam sees the struggle as a victory that was too easy for the Angel; she says,

"He should press his foot hard down upon the old Serpent, as if his very soul depended on 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!" (p. 184)

Miriam, therefore, sees the struggle of goodness against evil as a difficult one. The picture reflects her

36Stewart, p. 245, says that Miriam speaks for Hawthorne here, for he, too, saw the movement toward goodness and happiness as a fierce struggle.
inner nature, for she, too, struggles against the
evil of her nature, trying to find happiness and
peace.

Another art work which reflects Miriam's character
is Guido's "Beatrice Cenci." Hilda has made a copy
of this work, which she shows to Miriam when she
comes to visit her. The copy depicts a girlish face
which has a strange effect on those who view it:

The whole face was quiet; there was
no distortion or disturbance of any
single feature; nor was it easy to
see why the expression was not cheer-
ful, or why a single touch of the
artist's pencil should not brighten
it into joyousness. But, in fact,
it was the very saddest picture
ever painted or conceived; it in-
volved an unfathomable depth of
sorrow, the sense of which came
to the observer by a sort of in-
tuition. It was a sorrow that
removed this beautiful girl out
of the sphere of humanity, and set
her in a far-off region, the
remote ness of which--while yet
her face is so close before us--
makes us shiver as at a spectre. (p. 64)

The painting seems to fully embody Hawthorne's theory
of art; it reveals a sort of intuitive, comprehensive
truth which is arrived at by contrary modes of art:
there is cheerfulness and yet sadness; it is a real
girl and yet she seems removed from humanity. The
portrait, therefore, is another example of Hawthorne's
romantic conception.

Both Hilda and Miriam have varied responses to
the portrait. Hilda responds to the "Beatrice" as if the portrait were of a sinless woman burdened by sorrow. Miriam, however, sees something different in the portrait: "'You deem her sinless?' asked Miriam. 'That is not so plain to me. If I can pretend to see at all into that dim region, whence she gazes so strangely and sadly at us, Beatrice's own conscience does not acquit her of something evil, and never to be forgiven:" (p. 66). Hilda changes her mind and agrees with Miriam's reaction, claiming that the elusive nature of the portrait is due to Beatrice's great sin and her consequent desire to vanish away from human eyes. Miriam responds to Hilda's judgment: "'Your judgments are often terribly severe, though you seem all made up of gentleness and mercy. Beatrice's sin may not have been so great; perhaps it was no sin at all, but the best virtue possible in the circumstances. If she viewed it as a sin, it may have been because her nature was too feeble for the fate imposed upon her:" (p. 66). After saying this, Hilda notices that Miriam's face becomes that of Beatrice, revealing her accuracy in judging the portrait. Like Beatrice, Miriam sees sin as a virtue, enabling her to endure life, living with her evil nature with both a sad and cheerful demeanor, just
as the portrait reveals both traits. 37

When speaking of Miriam and art in The Marble Faun, one must also consider Hilda, for the two women nearly always seem to have contrasting views. 38 For instance, while Miriam worked with original art, Hilda was a copyist. Joel Porte has commented on this difference: "Original art, as in Miriam's case, demands an exposure of the secret self that Hilda is not prepared to make. And it is also predicted on an openness of experience that is alien to Hilda's virginal nature." 39 Hilda's artistic expression, therefore, is like her character—aloof and apart from experience. But like Miriam, Hilda strives to achieve an ideal; only her process is different. Instead of setting herself at odds with nature, which Miriam must do, Hilda gets a direct insight into the ideal she wishes to portray by copying the work of an "Old Master:" "In some instances . . . she had been enabled to execute what the great Master had conceived in his imagination, but had not so perfectly succeeded in putting upon canvas. . . . In such

37Porte, pp. 143-146, explains that Miriam's identity with Beatrice reveals her awareness of evil nature and the knowledge that it gives man. Matthiessen, p. 354, says that the parallelism of Miriam and the portrait reveal the suffering which seems certain for Miriam.

38Folsom, p. 36.

39Porte, p. 142.
cases, the girl was but a finer instrument, a more exquisitely effective piece of mechanism, by the help of which the spirit of some great departed Painter now first achieved his ideal, centuries after his own earthly hand, that other tool, had turned to dust" (p. 59). In this way, Hilda tries to avoid the ambiguity which Miriam seeks in her art by making use of spiritual insight.

Further evidence of Hilda's effort to avoid ambiguity is seen in her reaction to Guido's "Archangel." As previously demonstrated, Miriam disliked the painting because the Angel defeated Satan too easily. Hilda's concept of the picture is different, as she explains when she sees a sketch which resembles the original: "The composition and general arrangement of the sketch are the same with those of the picture; the only difference being, that the Demon has a mad upturned face, and scowls vindictively at the Archangel, who turns away his eyes in painful disgust" (p. 139). When the original is seen, Hilda is not present, but Kenyon has a reaction similar to that which we would expect from Hilda: "What an expression of heavenly severity in the Archangel's face. There is a degree of pain, trouble, and disgust at being brought in contact with sin, even for the purpose of quelling and punishing it; and yet a celestial tranquillity pervades
his whole being" (p. 183). Hilda's behavior is like that of the Angel Michael in that she, too, does not want to come in contact with evil. Here, Hilda rejects any form of ambiguity, for she could not bear to accept Miriam's concept of sin in Guido's "Archangel." She strives to maintain purity, even in her appreciation of art work.

Hilda, too, was an admirer of the "Beatrice," as previously seen in the discussion of Miriam. She rejects the figure of Beatrice for the same reason that she rejects the "Archangel;" it is too complex. But Hilda's concept of the "Beatrice" changes after she witnesses the murder. Sitting in her room, Hilda sees her own face and Beatrice's reflected in a mirror: "She fancied--nor was it without horror--that Beatrice's expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face, likewise, and flitted from it timorously" (p. 205). Despite her rationalizing after this moment of truth, Hilda does realize that she has attained knowledge of sin through her mere association with it. Despite her efforts to remain pure and withdrawn, Hilda has been drawn into evil and ambiguity. Her power to comprehend her own changed nature as well

140 Porte, pp. 142-143, explains, "For Hilda's fear of any suggestion of moral complexity in human affairs is, as Hawthorne certainly was aware, a major obstacle, not only to sympathy among men, but also to the production or comprehension of serious art."
as the ambiguous nature of Beatrice is proof of that change.

The portrait of Beatrice offers another clue of the change in Hilda. As she wanders through the art galleries after the murder, no longer able to copy (another evidence of her change), a young Italian artist paints her picture, calling it "Innocence, dying of a Blood-stain!":

It represented Hilda as gazing, with sad and earnest horror, at a blood-spot which she seemed just then to have discovered on her white robe. The picture attracted considerable notice. . . . By many connoisseurs, the idea of the face was supposed to have been suggested by the portrait of Beatrice Cenci; and, in fact, there was a look somewhat similar to poor Beatrice's forlorn gaze out of dreary isolation and remoteness, in which a terrible doom had involved a tender soul. (p. 330)

Just as Beatrice, Hilda has learned the meaning of sin and guilt, and the knowledge reveals itself on her face.

The third important artist in The Marble Faun is Kenyon, the American sculptor. As an artist, Kenyon seems to have a promising career. During a visit to his studio, Miriam praises his model of Hilda's hand and his latest creation, a statue of Cleopatra. Sensing his insight into human nature which has allowed him to create Cleopatra, Miriam says to Kenyon: "What I most marvel at . . . is the womanhood that you have so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly
discordant elements. Where did you get that secret? You never found it in your gentle Hilda. Yet I recognize its truth!" (p. 127). Miriam realizes that Kenyon has been able to achieve a truth through using "discordant elements." Thus, Kenyon, too, exemplifies Hawthorne's organic theory of art--unity in multiplicity.

But Kenyon's artistry also creates problems for him personally. As already shown, Kenyon tends to withdraw from others when they approach with personal problems. But there is another side to Kenyon's nature. Just as Miriam noticed his artistic gift to see the truth in art as exemplified in his creation of "Cleopatra," two other incidents offer proof of his artistic discernment. The first instance occurs when Kenyon sees Donatello and Miriam near the body of the dead monk, Miriam's Model:

He cast a horror-stricken and bewildered glance at Miriam, but withdrew it immediately. Not that he had any definite suspicion, or, it may be, even a remote idea, that she could be held responsible, in the least degree, for this man's sudden death. In truth, it seemed too wild a thought, to connect, in reality, Miriam's persecutor of many past months, and the vagabond of the preceding night, with the dead Capuchin of today. It resembled one of those unaccountable changes and interminglings of

Bell, p. 165, has pointed out that this cold and unsympathetic nature is typical of Hawthorne's artists.
identity, which so often occur among the personages of a dream. But Kenyon, as beffited the professor of an imaginative art, was endowed with an exceedingly quick sensibility, which was apt to give him intimations of the true state of matters that lay beyond his actual vision. (pp. 188-189)

Kenyon's ability to perceive the truth, despite the ambiguities of reality, is part of his artistic talent.

The other example of Kenyon's artistic insight is his work on the bust of Donatello during his visit to the young Italian's home. Frustrated in his attempt to picture Donatello accurately, Kenyon recklessly attacks the clay: "By some accidental handling of the clay, entirely independent of his own will, Kenyon had given the countenance a distorted and violent look, combining animal fierceness with intelligent hatred" (p. 272). Donatello accepts this picture of himself, but Kenyon rejects it as ugly and again he attacks the clay. After his passionate outburst, the two leave the studio without looking at the clay bust. The narrator comments on the result: "The sculptor . . . would have done well to glance again at his work; for here were still the features of the antique Faun, but now illuminated with a higher meaning, such as the old marble never bore" (pp. 273-274). Strangely enough, but consistent with Hawthorne's artistic theme, Kenyon's truth grows out of random
artistic thrusts without apparent pattern.

Kenyon, Hilda, and Miriam are the true artists of The Marble Faun; Donatello, on the other hand, is more a subject of art than being an artist himself. Donatello is, of course, the marble faun, the art work which is the object of the first two chapters. The statue has pointed ears, and the others wonder if Donatello has the same feature. However, from beginning to end, this secret is never revealed. Thus, the very nature of Donatello, a subject of art, is ambiguous. As already seen, Donatello is also the subject of art for Kenyon. It is in this art work that the entire history of Donatello is made clear. Not only is his Edenic, innocent nature found in the bust, but also his satanic and reformed nature. Donatello represents Hawthorne's subject of art—a whole man who has many natures which blend together.

The study of the artists and the works of art of The Marble Faun reveal the organic theory of Hawthorne's art; he reveals that both artists themselves and their works arrive at truth through multiple, ambiguous means. But what does this mean in the context of the work as a whole? Paul Brodtkorb, Jr. has interpreted The Marble Faun as an art allegory in order to explain the role of art in the book. 42 His

thesis proclaims a conflict between the Americans and the Europeans, with the Americans, representing the ideal, defeating the Europeans, representing corruption. He admits, however, that the last one-third of the book has fewer references to art, making interpretation difficult, and that the ending of the romance is confusing. Sheldon Liebman, on the other hand, has said that interpreting Hawthorne in such absolute terms is dangerous, but rather he should be seen as suggestive: "the reader derives meaning from the work of art by treating Hawthorne as an artist not as a moralist or a prophet." Liebman's suggestion is that one central art figure which appears often in the book, the sarcophagus, ties together the art images.

The sarcophagus first appears as the four major characters wander in the museum where they viewed the statue of the Faun of Praxiteles. Enchanted with the Faun, they see new liveliness in all works of art. The narrator comments on a sarcophagus: "And here, on this sarcophagus, the exquisitely carved figures might assume life, and chase one another round its verge with that wild merriment which is so strangely represented on those old burial coffers; though still

with some subtile allusion to Death, carefully veiled, but forever peeping forth amid emblems of mirth and riot" (p. 18). The sarcophagus, a strange mingling of life and death, gives symbolic presence to the art. The sarcophagus as a reflection of the characters is revealed when the narrator compares the dance of Donatello and Miriam to the figures on a burial coffin:

it was like the sculptured scene on the front and sides of a sarcophagus, where, as often as any other device, a festive procession mocks the ashes and white bones that are treasured up, within. You might take it for a marriage-pageant; but, after a while, if you look attentively at these merry-makers, following them from end to end of the marble coffin, you doubt whether their gay movement is leading them to a happy close. (p. 88)

Again, the vagueness and ambiguity of the sarcophagus is stressed, demonstrating that the characters, too, are involved in a confusing life which ends in an even more mysterious death. Several other sarcophagus images are found in The Marble Faun, but the Carnival seems to be a living sarcophagus, symbolizing man's attempt to rationalize the ambiguity of his existence: "To own the truth, the Carnival is alive, this present year, only because it has existed through centuries gone by. It is traditional, not actual. If decrepit and melancholy Rome smiles, and laughs broadly, indeed,
at Carnival-time, it is not in the old simplicity of real mirth, but with a half-conscious effort, like our self-deceptive pretense of jollity at a threadbare joke" (pp. 436-437). The sarcophagus, then, represents man's insecurity and lack of knowledge in the face of life and death. For like life, the Carnival is only temporary: "For a few afternoons of early Spring, this mouldy gaiety strays into the sunshine; all the remainder of the year, it seems to be shut up in the catacombs, or some other sepulchral storehouse of the past" (p. 436).

Sheldon Liebman has summarized the symbolic implications of the sarcophagus well: "This paradox of life and death pervades The Marble Faun from beginning to end, and Hawthorne's final comment is that life is both absurd and pathetic, both meaningful and meaningless. Hawthorne's is a universe in equipoise with mankind journeying through, unsure of its intentions, uncertain about its destiny." With this symbol as central, the ambiguity is the technique which unifies the artists and the art works, which brings them together in a common effort to try to explain the mysteries of man's life and death.

^44^ Liebman, p. 78.
AMBIGUITY AND THE THEME OF THE FORTUNATE FALL

One more important area should be discussed before any conclusions are drawn in this study, a discussion of the theme of the Fortunate Fall. However, even though this theme is recognized as central to the romance, there is much controversy as to Hawthorne's intent. Therefore, it seems possible that Hawthorne has deliberately made this major theme ambiguous, adding further proof to the thesis. In this chapter, we shall trace the theme be examining each character's relationship to it, searching for Hawthorne's use of ambiguity.

Before beginning this search, however, the phrase, Fortunate Fall, needs to be defined and explained. The concept is that man's fall from divine grace was fortunate, for it allowed him to become eligible for a better life. Miriam first openly expresses the idea to Kenyon:

"The story of the Fall of Man! Is it not repeated in our Romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy yet farther? Was that very

45 Bell, p. 19, says that Hawthorne does not resolve the question of the fall of man as fortunate or unfortunate. Sidney Moss, "The Problem of Theme in The Marble Faun," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVIII (1963-1964), 393, says that, in his study of the fall of man, Hawthorne comes to no definite conclusion because he "was venturing upon a speculation that admits no certitude."
sin—into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race—was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter and profounder happiness, than our birthright gave? Will not this idea account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can?" (pp. 434–435).

It is this theory of the educative effects of sin which is the subject of controversy.

The theme of the Fortunate Fall is developed through each character's relationship to it. Of the four characters, it is Donatello, of course, who is central. The innocent Donatello changes into a suffering, despairing individual after his murder of the Model and his isolation at Monte Beni. But, due to the urging of Kenyon, he agrees to journey through the Italian countryside, visiting various shrines, churches, and works of art. Donatello sees the journey as a pilgrimage, and the narrator observes that the trip may be having an influence on Donatello:

"The stubborn criminal, whose heart has long been like a stone, feels it throb anew with dread and hope; and

46 Merle Brown, "The Structure of The Marble Faun," American Literature, XXVIII (November 1956), 303, says that "the design of The Marble Faun is rather curious; it is a single idea, the transformation from innocence to experience, repeated, with no major deviations, four times." Liebman, p. 69, believes that Brown is in error because Hilda and Miriam do not "transform." However, it is my contention that all four major characters change. Furthermore, Brown's approach offers a sound organizational approach to The Marble Faun.
our poor Donatello, as he went kneeling from shrine to Cross, and from Cross to shrine, doubtless found an efficacy in these symbols that helped him towards a higher penitence" (pp. 298-299). Moved by these symbols, by the suffering of his fellow countrymen who beg coins from him throughout the pilgrimage, and by the understanding of Kenyon, Donatello is ready to accept Miriam when he sees her in the square at Perugia. Through his "marriage" to Miriam, Donatello takes his place as a man, willing to accept the responsibilities of his actions. At the end of the story, Donatello does fulfill his responsibility by turning himself into the police and being sent to prison for the murder of the Model. Donatello has grown. From his early naive innocence, he moved to an overwhelming awareness of sin, but his love for Miriam moved him into humanity, willing to face justice. In summary "his innocence has been destroyed but he has been humanized by his act." Miriam is also concerned with the concept of the Fortunate Fall, because it is she who first openly expresses the concept and who leads Donatello into

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47Brown, p. 307, suggests the importance of this action: "He [Donatello] has accepted a place within the community of sinful mortals, and, though he does not confirm his wisdom by performing a sublime sacrifice, he is prepared to and will before the end of the story."

48Leon Howard, p. 248.
the Fall. But Miriam is transformed herself, although the transformation is much different than Donatello's. Unlike Donatello, Miriam is not innocent. She carries an awareness of evil so large that the Model comes to represent the overt manifestation of that evil. She tries to rid herself of the burden of guilt she carries in several ways—through her pictures of violence, by her dance in the gardens of Rome with Donatello, and by her attempts at confession with Kenyon and Hilda. Frustrated by these unsuccessful attempts at catharsis, cynical of attempts to help her, Miriam's eyes bid Donatello to commit murder. Although she, like Donatello, is filled with fear because of their act, Miriam seems to grow in stature after the crime. Perhaps now that she can point to an actual crime, she can more fully understand her position in humanity. Merle Brown says, "Suddenly her vision penetrates the facade of ordinary life and she recognizes the bond between herself and ... all other sinners in the world. Because of her newly acquired wisdom ... she displays virtues never before released in her."49

Several incidents reveal Miriam's new virtues after the murder of the Model. Of particular importance is her awareness of her feelings for Donatello and her consequent sacrifice for his benefit. Realizing that

49 Brown, p. 305.
he is deeply depressed, Miriam seeks to free him from pain:

"Rest your heart on me, dearest one!" she resumed. "Let me bear all its weight. I am well able to bear it; for I am a woman, and I love you! I love you, Donatello! Is there no comfort for you in this avowal? Look at me! Heretofore, you have found me pleasant to your sight. Gaze into my eyes! Gaze into my soul! Search as deeply as you may, you can never see half the tenderness and devotion that I henceforth cherish for you. All that I ask, is your acceptance of the utter self-sacrifice, (but it shall be no sacrifice, to my great love,) with which I seek to remedy the evil you have incurred for my sake!" (p. 198)

For the first time, Miriam overtly expresses love for another, but Donatello is unable to respond. Moved by his gloom, Miriam commits herself to a greater sacrifice; she asks Donatello to return to Monte Beni, leaving her behind. Thus, Miriam is willing to sacrifice the presence of the man she loves for his health and sanity.

Another example of Miriam's virtuous nature following the crime is her action toward Hilda. Hilda, having witnessed the crime, fears the presence of Miriam and moves to reject her when Miriam visits her studio. Miriam tries to allay Hilda's fears, but Hilda becomes more and more unwilling to engage in close conversation with Miriam. Seeing the hopelessness of
the situation, Miriam speaks to Hilda, "I, whose heart
it sin^ has smitten upon, forgive you" (p. 209).
This incident reveals Miriam's understanding of human
nature in contrast to Hilda's fear and inhumanity;
Miriam is able to accept and forgive.50

Miriam's transformation, then, is a movement from
frustration, fear, and cynicism to love, warmth, and
understanding. As Donatello's change gave him new
knowledge, Miriam gained the power to draw others
together. At the end, she unites Kenyon and Hilda
and is able to bring Donatello back into the fold
of humanity from his depressing isolation. Dorothy
Waples says that "Her wisdom lay in . . . complete
embracing of experience, and in this also lay her
power to assist Donatello, to draw him from unthinking
animal existence, into thoughtful human life."51 The
transformations of both Miriam and Donatello portray
Hawthorne's belief in man's need for fellowship.
Like other sinners, they learn to accept their fate

50 Virginia Birdsall, "Hawthorne's Fair-Haired Maidens: The Fading Light," PMLA, LXXV (1960), 251, says that "Miriam displays a depth of human warmth and complexity beside which Hilda's white purity seems a spiritual dead end."

and to face up to the consequences of their actions.  

While Donatello and Miriam are directly involved in the Fortunate Fall, Kenyon and Hilda are more removed. This distance is especially true of Kenyon, for Hilda sees the crime; at least, while Kenyon has no awareness of it. Despite his lack of direct awareness, Kenyon, because of his artistic insight into human nature, is able to perceive the guilt of Miriam and the change in Donatello's nature. He also comes to recognize the ambiguity of time. But all of these recognitions fail to bring about an immediate, true transformation in Kenyon. He is finally transformed by a shock such as that which changed Miriam and Donatello. The event which changes Kenyon is the disappearance of Hilda. Bewildered, seeing no sunshine beyond the shadow, Kenyon loses hope: "The days wore away, and still there were no tidings of the lost one; no lamp rekindled before the Virgin's [Hilda's] shrine; no light shining into the lover's heart; no star of Hope—he was ready to say, as he turned his eyes almost reproachfully upward—"

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52 William Stein, Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype (n. p.: Archon Books, 1960), p. 131, says, "Hawthorne presents the experience of Donatello and Miriam as the typical evolution of the human soul which foreshadows the destiny of all mankind. In short, ethical truth comes to the individual, not in passive meditation secluded from life's indiscriminate assaults on the soul, but in mortal struggle with infernal desires that ever tempt the imperfect human being."
Heaven itself" (p. 408).

Overcome with his grief, Kenyon suddenly realizes that he is somewhat to blame for Hilda's disappearance: "Man of marble though he was, the sculptor grieved for the Irrevocable. Looking back upon Hilda's way of life, he marvelled at his own blind stupidity, which had kept him from remonstrating—as a friend, if with no stronger right—against the risks that she continually encountered" (p. 411). When Kenyon realizes that his cold nature is to blame, he also becomes aware of his love for Hilda. Like Miriam and Donatello, the power of love draws Kenyon out of his marble isolation into the human world of warmth.53

The most controversial of the transformations is that of Hilda. Hilda attempts to love apart from mankind, retaining a dove-like purity in that way. But Hilda's presence at the murder scene sends her into a psychological crisis with Miriam and the rest of the world. Hilda loses her ability to copy, isolates herself, and eventually becomes imprisoned in Rome. When she is reunited with Kenyon and agrees to marry him, she has learned the power of love and humanity.54

53 Brown, p. 309.

54 Moss, p. 397, says, "Hilda is sufficiently 'de-spiritualized' by her tormenting secret that she assumes human status also, even to the point of involving herself in the human condition by consenting to marry Kenyon."
This humanization process is then complete for all four characters.

Hilda, however, creates a problem for the reader, for although she changes (is transformed to a higher degree of humanity), she also rejects the concept of the Fortunate Fall. Kenyon asks her, "Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a loftier Paradise than his" (p. 460)? But Hilda responds, "'Oh hush!' . . . shrinking from him with an expression of horror which wounded the poor, speculative sculptor to the soul. 'This is terrible; and I could weep for you, if you indeed believe it. Do not you perceive what a mockery your creed makes, not only of all religious sentiment, but of moral law, and how it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us? You have shocked me beyond words'" (p. 460)! With this rejection, the whole concept of the Fortunate Fall is brought into question.

Why does Hilda reject this doctrine? First of all, we know that she is prone to simplistic approaches; a doctrine which advocates that man moves to a greater goodness out of evil is obviously too complex for her. Second, Hilda's religion is Protestant, and the theory of the Fortunate Fall is advanced by Catholicism, Miriam being the spokesman. To a Protestant mind such as Hilda's, the theory is too easy and too
false.\textsuperscript{55} This conflict of religions is a part of a larger conflict in Hawthorne--America versus Europe. Marius Bewley sees the conflict in this way: On the one hand Hawthorne liked the solitude, aristocracy, and past of Europe, but on the other hand he sought the democratic rejection of solitude and aristocracy and the assertion of the present over the past.\textsuperscript{56} As an American, Hilda represents Hawthorne's new world position. Therefore, it is not surprising to see her rejecting the doctrine of the Fortunate Fall.

Donatello is the central example of the Fortunate Fall, Miriam expresses the idea, Kenyon accepts the concept, but later rejects it when Hilda strongly denies it, and yet all four characters undergo changes which improve them as persons. Hawthorne has apparently put forth two opposing points of view toward the Fortunate Fall, acceptance and rejection.\textsuperscript{57} Therefore,

\textsuperscript{55}Brodtkorb, p. 257, says, "Hilda, the little arch-Puritan, is guided solely by her aesthetic sense away from the errors of Catholicism because she can instinctively see the falsity of the Church's Madonnas."

\textsuperscript{56}Bewley, \textit{The Complex Fate}, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{57}Richard Fogle, p. 191, says of these opposing forces that "Hawthorne neither accepts or rejects; it is not his habit to come to ultimate conclusions. In the body of his works there are too many references to 'the fortunate fall' to dismiss the idea with safety, while there are none which, read in context, would enable us to accept it as a doctrine. He leaves the question in suspension, which in \textit{The Marble Faun} becomes the central mystery of man." Sidney Moss, p. 399, agrees with Fogle, but adds to his explanation, when
the theme of the Fortunate Fall seems to be another proof of Hawthorne's use of ambiguity to explain the paradox of man's condition. Much of the evidence of the book supports the concept of the Fortunate Fall—the title centers on Donatello who is the subject of the theme and each character undergoes a transformation—and yet Hilda rejects the theme at the end and Kenyon agrees with her. But to reject the bulk of the book on the basis of a rejection at the end seems ridiculous. Donald Ringe has seen a further explanation for this dilemma: "Warren believes (Hawthorne, p. xxxi) that it is Hawthorne who turns his back on this speculation of Fortunate Fall, implying that Hawthorne is speaking through the characters of Hilda and Kenyon. I rather believe that he is speaking through all four characters, and that it is a mistake to look for a single reconciliation in the book. Warren does not consider that there may be more than one possibility for reconciliation; that there may be

he says, "The doctrine of the fortunate fall is deliberately left unresolved, not only because it is the central mystery of man . . . but because it cannot be resolved by the kind of allegory Hawthorne chose to write." Moss explains that Hawthorne's main concern is man, not the soul (as is Dante's in The Divine Comedy); therefore, says Moss, Hawthorne need not, and, indeed, cannot, be concerned with final answers. Rather, he can only "raise the question . . . play with it . . . and . . . suggest that here in life we see through a glass, darkly."
more than one path for Man to follow in this life. 58 This multiplicity of paths seems to be Hawthorne's explanation of the Fortunate Fall—it is acceptable for some, not for others. Each character is different in The Marble Faun, and Hawthorne says that there is no one way to certainty in life, but rather each man must find his own way. In short, the end (death) is clear, the means (life) ambiguous. When man comes to accept the ambiguity, he will be able to live with meaning and understanding of existence.

CONCLUSION

By themes, characters, symbols, setting, and genre, Hawthorne aims to explain his conception of moral truth. But, in each of these areas in *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne shrouds his truth by a mysterious mingling of facts and ideals. This act leads to the conclusion that Hawthorne may have deliberately intended ambiguity to occupy a central position. From what we have examined, how does this ambiguity function to unify and clarify Hawthorne's position?

To answer this question, we first examined Hawthorne's genre of the romance. He saw the romance as operating on several basic principles—the mingling of actuality and imagination, a concern with remoteness, a basis in the present, an interest in a wide range of time, and an aim for moral truth. An examination of these principles reveals an obvious ambiguity, for the purpose of the romance is achieved by using that technique. Furthermore, Hawthorne expands his use of ambiguity by having his setting, symbolism, and characterization follow the ambiguous principles of his romances. He places his characters in the remote setting of Rome, which, because of its nature, makes them aware of man's history of sin, saintliness, mortality, and artistic expression. Art as symbol fulfills the romantic principles of a mingling of actuality and
imagination and the purpose of moral truth, and also is a subject of varied responses, a further use of ambiguity. After establishing these situations, Hawthorne then develops his characters into taking various attitudes toward such issues as sin, art, and man's salvation. In seemingly every way, therefore, Hawthorne's conclusions seem to be vague.

A summary examination of characterization offers particular insight into Hawthorne's use of ambiguity. Hilda, for instance, is an archetypal character representing man's ultimate attempt at purity. She makes every effort to avoid contact with sin. Similarly, by her reaction to art, we see that Hilda is concerned with ideals and rejects complexities. Furthermore, Hilda sees salvation as coming through religious devotion. Miriam is created as a direct contrast to Hilda. In Miriam, Hawthorne characterizes the archetypal woman of the world (not in the sense of sex, but as a deep involvement in earthly affairs in contrast to the spiritual affairs of heaven). Therefore, she directly confronts sin, battling it as her art reveals. And finally she understands salvation as coming through the educative effects of sin. Donatello begins as a pure archetype such as Hilda; however, his purity exists as a result of his primitive nature rather than the religious purity of Hilda. While Donatello's
primitive nature is an object of interest to the other characters, it is not strong enough to withstand the powers of sin, for Donatello commits the most dramatic sin in *The Marble Faun*--murder. Kenyon is the archetypal artist, perceptive and creative in both his art and human relations. Because of this trait, he sees the truth of all the positions taken by the characters. However, when the choice is between his love for Hilda and the philosophy of the Fortunate Fall, Kenyon chooses Hilda. Thus, all four characters take different positions toward the essential themes of *The Marble Faun*. But the characters are not always consistent. Hilda, despite her reversion to a position of purity, understands Miriam and Donatello and hopes the best for them. These two Europeans also come to an understanding of Hilda's position, as shown when they reunite the two Americans during the Carnival; they are willing to let the Americans make their own choices. Although an air of understanding grows among the characters, there is still no unanimity on the critical issues; the characters begin and end with differing attitudes.

In major critical concerns of *The Marble Faun*--the theme of the Fortunate Fall, setting and characterization, symbolic art works--Hawthorne deliberately
left questions unanswered. Because of this ambiguity, Hawthorne wrote a "Postscript" in response to "a demand for further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story" (p. 463). As the narrator attempts to question Hilda and Kenyon about these mysteries, he finds their answers as "clear as a London fog" (p. 465). Since Hawthorne deliberately refuses to answer the questions raised in the romance, he apparently expects the reader to accept ambiguity as his central truth. By reading The Marble Faun in this way, seeing the acceptance of ambiguity as Hawthorne's conclusion, the romance is more meaningful; the ambiguity becomes the meaning.
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