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The Narrative “I” and Eye : Hawthorne’s Artist as Social Observer

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis considers the position of the artist in a polarized society experiencing radical extremist political tensions and which demands public allegiance and identification with the dominant ideology. Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose personal origins were grounded in the American past that formed his creative domain, was an astute social critic whose writings in the turbulent period of mid nineteenth-century America reflected an acute awareness of the fundamental crises in his time, such as slavery and the efforts towards its abolition, the perils of regional conflict that threatened national unity, the effects of increasing commercialization and urbanization of American culture and the various utopian movements that attempted to redefine and transform humankind and society.

At the same time, Hawthorne's profound "aversion to violence, social unrest, moral absolutism, and faulty perception," (64) in Larry J. Reynolds' description (2005), prevented him from assuming public positions, but yet allowed him to create works that consider multiple perspectives and which focus on the particular and individual.

Hawthorne's narrative voice is consistently complex and layered, functioning as a modern iteration of a Greek chorus, simultaneously employing irony and compassion, in exploring the depths of the human heart. In this thesis I consider three works: "Earth's Holocaust," a sketch created early in his career, The Blithedale Romance, a novel written during the height of his productive period, and "Chiefly About War Matters," an essay written during the Civil War, towards the end of Hawthorne's career and life. Though of varying genres and produced at different times, all three share a first-person narrator.

Reluctant as Hawthorne was to expose aspects of his personal life or to participate in public discourse, his use of the first-person narrator, positioned at the margin of the narrative, allows him to both observe and comment on events and characters. This allows Hawthorne to open a space for inquiry and to question the superficial appearances and certainties of received opinion. Hawthorne's extensive use of metaphor and historical references creates parallels between the past and the present and suggests the perils of self-delusion and rash, simplistic solutions to complex issues.

Hawthorne's politics of gradualism and internal change grounded in a deliberate transformation of the human heart challenge the ideology of groupthink and change that is imposed by force or destruction.



MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

The Narrative "I" and Eye: Hawthorne's Artist as Social Observer

By

Orah Dan Massarsky

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

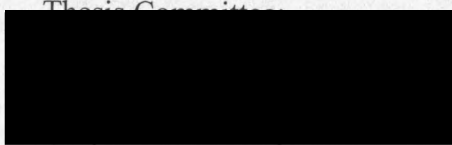
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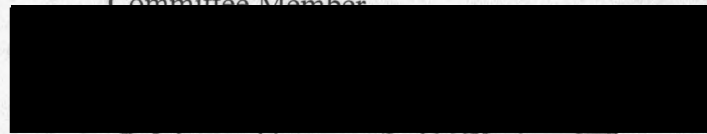
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/THE NARRATIVE "I" AND EYE/ HAWTHORNE'S ARTIST AS SOCIAL
OBSERVER

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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by

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Chapter One-INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne's creation of a distinctive narrative presence and extensive use of metaphor are integral aspects of a deliberate strategy utilized consistently throughout his writing career to direct the reader's attention towards the critical social and political issues dominating public discourse in mid-nineteenth-century America.

The issue of slavery, its abolition or continuation, and the threat to the identity and continued existence of the nation that had recently emerged from the struggle for independence from Britain, was the focus of increasingly polarized dissension between extreme positions on each side of the slavery debate. The transformation of agrarian colonies into an independent, increasingly urbanized, industrial nation sparked extensive public debate on the nature of this society and the role of the individual citizen.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose profound awareness of American history was informed by direct familial connections to the earliest figures and events of Puritan times, struggled throughout his career to maintain a tenuous balance between deeply held values and opinions and a conviction that extremism in the pursuit of any goal, however worthy, was doomed to failure and would ultimately bring pain and destruction. A descendent of John Hathorn, one of the presiding judges in the Salem witch trials, Hawthorne shared his family's guilt over the injustice done to innocent men and women in the name of morality and belief. Hawthorne's conviction of the primacy of the individual conscience as agent of change, and his belief in the essential importance of gradual change initiated within the individual, is a thematic and philosophical constant in his works and one that underlies the political positions he communicated in his writings.

An intensely private man, Hawthorne was, nevertheless, very much concerned with the moral dimensions of public affairs. Michael Colacurcio states that essential to understanding of Hawthorne's authorial identity is his role as a "moral historian" whose "imaginative literature is properly competent and perhaps ideally suited to assist us in just such a civilizing and humanizing procedure" of exploring the shadows of the past and their effects on the present (19). His reluctance to voice his opinions, founded in personal and historical experience, coupled with an intense apprehension concerning the increasingly vocal public positions of his contemporaries, resulted in a strategic approach to the creation of his narratives.

Michael T. Gilmore considers the divergent, yet overlapping, spheres of expression confronting the artist, intrinsic to the political circumstances of the 1850's. He describes the repressive climate which forbade free expression of abolitionist and anti-governmental opinion and which formed the background for much of Hawthorne's productive period. Hawthorne's expression of political disengagement is a "pose of linguistic/artistic innocence or impotence is just that, a pose, one founded on the mid-nineteenth-century reality that abolitionist agitation, and Southern efforts to crush it, were hurtling the nation toward internecine warfare" (29). Within this context, according to Gilmore, the writer is faced with "two domains, the verbal/aesthetic and the worldly/civic" (28). Confronted by this dilemma, Hawthorne must negotiate between the two extremes while attending to his dependence on governmental employment and patronage. The functions of language and silence become a means of struggle and avoidance. Gilmore points out that while Hawthorne disdains direct expression and refers

repeatedly to significant social change as the province of the divine “the not-so-hidden message of the novels...is that language rivals God as an engine of transformation” (38).

This thesis proposes that Hawthorne’s unique narrative presence is his personification of the role of the artist in society. A modern iteration of the Greek chorus, the oldest formal narrative presence, Hawthorne’s artist-narrator occupies a space outside public discourse. This narrator remains unaligned to characters and situations and yet functions to observe, question and provoke the reader’s attention to the tensions within the narrative, while gesturing towards the symbolism and metaphors that provide links from the fictional to the actual.

Michael Dunne asserts that Hawthorne’s narrators are not, despite their biographical similarities, representative of his thoughts and feelings, and posits instead that “they are narratological conveniences by which Hawthorne may introduce material he considers useful to the story he wishes to tell and which he cannot devise any other way of introducing”(96).

Close readings of three works produced at various periods of Hawthorne’s literary career will examine and demonstrate his consistent use of the first-person narrator presence whose clear engagement with plot elements allows Hawthorne to articulate his concerns about societal concerns while remaining personally unaligned. The dual aspects of the narrative presence, the vividly visual rendering of characters and settings alternating with the narrator’s direct comments and questions, allow for both visual and representational tropes.

The “I” narrator of “Earth’s Holocaust,” a largely metaphoric work, first published in 1844, is an ambiguous persona whose identity is unspecified except as a

present observer-interlocutor positioned on the periphery. This character functions to articulate the reader's questions and comments following a steadily escalating narrative arc. Miles Coverdale, the artist-narrator of The Blithedale Romance, published in 1852, is a fully realized character tantalizingly similar to his creator in a number of biographical points. Coverdale is integral to the plot and is actively engaged in the novel's narrative, and yet he remains both functionally, and by his own admission, a marginalized observer. "Chiefly About War Matters," an essay that was Hawthorne's last work, and which was published in 1862 under the by-line "A Peaceable Man," features a narrator-protagonist at the center of events. It is a record of the author's journey, in the midst of the Civil War, to inspect the sites and meet with the people engaged in the events of recent battles. A late reiteration of the narrator-observer of "Earth's Holocaust," this anonymous narrator is actively engaged as he moves through actual places and encounters historically real people. His vivid descriptions employ frequent metaphoric elements to articulate the author's views of the futility of war to solve political issues and to comment on the destructiveness of radical extremism solutions.

Chapter Two- "Earth's Holocaust"

One of the earliest pieces, published in 1844, during Hawthorne's first Concord period, the sketch, "Earth's Holocaust," is significant for a number of important thematic and structural reasons, and is indicative of his interest and awareness of political issues of the day. Anticipating the epochal events of 1848 which utterly transformed the European political, social and economic landscape, and which echoed widely in the American press and popular consciousness, it is a cautionary tale of the perils of ideological and revolutionary ardor taken to extremes. It contains many of the themes and tropes he is to use later in his longer works.

The sketch is unusually didactic for a Hawthorne work and represents a generic experiment of a moral fable for adults clearly modeled after the children's stories he had published earlier. James Mellow points out that "many of Hawthorne's stories from his Concord period suffer from an insistent working-out of the terms of his social criticism," and that "in these stories, [he] is never quite certain whether he has established his case; he is forever underlining his moral" (237).

The sketch's opening phrase "Once upon a time" clearly refers to the fable genre and gestures to the reader to acknowledge the understanding by author and reader of the fictional nature of the coming narrative. This is immediately followed by the destabilizing, "- but whether in time past or time to come, is a matter of little or no moment-." The disavowal of the temporal aspect of the sketch's setting foreshadows Hawthorne's concern with historical accuracy and parallels, and is immediately contradicted by the topicality of the themes which inform the plot elements and characters. Hawthorne's narrator specifies that "the site fixed upon, at the representation

of the Insurance Companies...was one of the broadest prairies of the West” underscores the increasing significance of expansionism and commercialism of the mid-nineteenth-century and contrasts the earlier mythical context (887).

The narrative “I” first emerges in a sentence laden with verbal irony: “having a taste for sights of this kind, and imagining, likewise, that the illumination of the bonfire might reveal some profundity of moral truth, heretofore hidden in mist or darkness, I made it convenient to journey thither and be present” (887). The historical allusions reaching back to the Florentine bonfires of vanities and the *auto de fe*’s of the Spanish Inquisition and their despotic repression of individual rights are significant, as is the narrator’s positioning of himself as a present observer.

In contrast to Hawthorne’s customary solitary observer-narrator, the narrator of “Earth’s Holocaust,” is accompanied throughout the narrative by “a grave man, fifty years old or thereabout, who had evidently come thither as a looker-on; he struck me immediately as having weighed for himself the true value of life and its circumstances, and therefore as feeling little personal interest in whatever judgment the world might form of them” (887). This guide and mentor personifies the essential characteristics of Hawthorne’s artist who searches for the profundities of moral truth while maintaining an objective detachment.

The conflagration is initiated by the incineration of newspapers and magazines as a comment on the incendiary power of the popular press on “the multitude of plebeian spectators,” who form the majority of the crowd in a scene reminiscent of the French Revolution. Hereditary titles and privileges are the first to be disposed of. The narrator names many European nations and historical periods, from medieval England and Spain

to contemporary Victorian England and the recent Napoleonic France, and pointedly refers to the American Society of the Cincinnati as a direct relation to these emphasizing the ubiquity of hierarchies in all human societies (888).

A Burkean appeal to the crowd citing the contributions “men of the privileged orders” have made to advance society by their chivalry and patronage of the arts is rejected by the crowd, who taunt the former aristocrat by saying that in the future only a man’s character and talents will matter. The appearance of membership in the upper classes has become a liability. The proclamation of hereditary privilege and rank as “nonsense” is echoed by the narrator’s ominous warning, “if no worse nonsense come in its place” (889). The repeated parallels to the French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror are rendered both visually by the bonfire scenes and verbally by the allusions to the termination of social hierarchies and subsequent events.

Hawthorne’s familiarity with, and awareness of European socialist and revolutionary ideological rhetoric, are clearly portrayed in a scene where “there came another multitude from beyond the sea” who bring with them the insignia and robes of hereditary royalty and which were now useless toys “fit only for the infancy of the world, or rods to govern and chastise it in its nonage; but with which universal manhood, at its full-grown stature, could no longer brook to be insulted” (890). This description of the developmental evolution of human societies, emerging class consciousness and the universal brotherhood of the working class indicates his awareness of the fundamental tenets of Marxist theory.

The threats to the royalist establishment by the nationalist movements then gathering strength across Europe are depicted by the incineration of the crown jewels of

many countries whose kings and emperors were most threatened. The narrator evokes the colonial British expansion in India, as well as the threats to the crumbling Austrian empire and the struggle of the Polish independence movement against the collapsing Russian empire.

The endless procession of objects consigned to the flames by “the zeal of the reformers” includes the alcohol consigned by “the votaries of temperance” led by politicians and religious leaders, as well as the tobacco of the planters of Virginia suggestive of parallels between intractable extremists of differing causes (892). Following “the general and systemic measures of reform,” the narrator next observes individuals who attempt to rid themselves of those aspects of life that have disappointed or failed them. Hawthorne’s narrator catalogues a variety of the symbols of contemporary social and economic reform as varied as unstable currency, religious sermons, useless academic diplomas, codes of manners, outdated fashions, and the gowns and petticoats of feminists, who “assume the garb, together with the manners, duties, offices, and responsibilities, of the opposite sex” (893).

The rumor of the destruction of all weapons brings about a discussion between “the hopeful philanthropist who esteemed it a token that the millennium was already come” and the pragmatists and warriors who recognize this as an opportunity for further profits. This debate is disrupted by the narrator’s reminder to the disputants, “that in this advanced stage of civilization, Reason and Philanthropy combined will constitute just such a tribunal as is requisite” (895).

Having disposed of the material symbols of the world’s imperfections, the reformers’ leader proclaims, “Let mankind always do the highest, kindest, noblest thing,

that, at any given period, it has attained to the perception of; and surely that thing cannot be wrong, nor wrongly timed" (897). The zeal which follows the utopian declaration consigns the moral and legal strictures of society to the flames and includes the institutions of marriage, banking, private property, laws and the legal system, and which ultimately results in an Edenic society.

The destruction of religious institutions follows that of philosophy and is commented on by Hawthorne's narrator in a mocking allusion to transcendentalism, "The wood-paths shall be the aisles of our cathedral-the firmament itself shall be its ceiling! What needs an earthly roof between the Deity and his worshipper?" (903). Hawthorne's lifelong views of organized religion and individual conscience are underscored by his companion's comment after the burning of the last bible, that, "not a truth is destroyed-nor buried so deep among the ashes, but it will be raked up at last" (904).

The narrator's attention is then directed to the devil, who stands at the side of the last of civilization's embers, and who points to the "one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all...the human heart itself!" (905). Hawthorne concludes the sketch with a reiteration of the symbolic and thematic trope that will become the essential element in his most important works: the sacred nature of the inviolate human heart and its power to perceive the truth and to transform society's ills:

The Heart-there was the little yet boundless sphere, wherein existed the original wrong, of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types. Purify that inner sphere; and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost our

only realities, will turn into shadowy phantoms, and vanish of their own accord. But, if we go no deeper than the Intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream (906).

The grandiose schemes and philosophies conceived to create an earthly Eden ultimately are artificial constraints incompatible with the vagaries of human nature. Only the genuine and profound acts of conscience of a benevolent, though flawed, human heart, Hawthorne seems to suggest, can affect meaningful societal reform.

Larry J. Reynolds (2005) points out that “witch hunting and abolitionism...formed a particularly strong bond in Hawthorne’s mind due to a number of parallels...including a Puritan religiosity intent on ridding the Devil from the land...,and perhaps most important, a failure of vision caused by fanaticism and madness” (55). The causes of evil, he suggests, lie in human frailties, especially in deception to one’s self and to others. Reynolds states that “as a student of history and lifelong observer of human nature, he considered almost all people and causes as irrevocably “variegated,” a mixture of moral qualities resistant to purification and cleansing.” Reynolds points to the early tales, including “Earth’s Holocaust” (1844), in which Hawthorne “made this point explicitly, it also informed his attitude towards the abolitionist movement” (41).

Chapter Three- The Blithedale Romance

The early 1840's were the period of Hawthorne's most intense intellectual and philosophical examination of contemporary events and ideals, as well as the first opportunity to escape from Salem and its bonds of family and familiarity. His employment at the Boston Custom House offered a means for financial independence. At the same time he gained access to the circle around Elizabeth Peabody, whose bookshop first introduced innovative British and European political, philosophical and literary publications to the American progressive reader and functioned as the preeminent salon for American progressive and Transcendentalist writers and thinkers, including Margaret Fuller's "conversations," and to whom he owed his government position.

Hawthorne's work as Weigher and Gauger in the Custom House at the Boston Harbor was the first time in his life he became a part of the mundane bureaucratic world, a novel experience for him at a time he seemed eager to explore new environments and ideas. The twelve years after his graduation from Bowdoin College had been spent in relative seclusion in his native Salem. During this period, immediately preceding his arrival in Boston, Hawthorne devoted most of his time in reading extensively historical and theological works from the Salem Athenaeum which formed the foundations of his literary works, but was geographically and socially removed from the contemporary intellectual and political scene.

As Michael Dunne points out, Hawthorne allows himself to "write directly and realistically about contemporary culture when this approach seems most useful, and he will transform these materials imaginatively when that strategy seems more immediately more appropriate" (130). By emphatically claiming the privilege to combine and merge

the realism and romance Hawthorne creates an increased awareness of the metaliterary nature of his work.

Michael Colacurcio points out that much of Hawthorne's "chamber period" from 1826 to 1838 was spent in extensive study of the history, politics and theology of New England, from the Puritan period to his time, as well as regular exploration and observation of the natural environment, social life and people of the Northeastern United States. Rather than the reclusive figure he is sometimes portrayed as, Hawthorne spent this time preparing for a literary career. His grasp of history was so astute that "references to this reading show up, again and again, as strategic allusions in the very best of his early work" (72). It is only his self-depreciation and characteristic ironic tone which led him to understate the breadth of his historical knowledge.

The dramatic change of environment he encountered in daily interaction with members of working class on the piers of Boston Harbor and in the streets, markets and taverns of the city offered Hawthorne an opportunity to observe the characters and living conditions of a cross-section of the American public. He became intimately acquainted with the economic and social problems brought about by poverty, immigration and urban overcrowding. These experiences and impressions, as well as his observations of the practical realities of the bureaucratic functioning of the political patronage system that controlled much of the economic life of Boston, informed his later experiences in the Salem Custom House and figured significantly in his personal experience and understanding of the contemporary issues and ideas of his time. Hawthorne's pragmatic, skeptical views of politicians and political idealism were based, in large part, on the people and events he had become familiar with in the Boston Harbor. His motivation to

join the utopian Brook Farm community which formed the basis for The Blithedale Romance, and which allowed him to form a personal perspective on idealism and utopianism, some of the central themes of his works, lay in the experiences, people, and events of this Boston period.

Peabody's introduction of Hawthorne to her intellectual and social circle presented him with the chance to meet and engage with the foremost and most influential American thinkers and writers of the time, including Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson, on ideas ranging from the nature of the soul, the existence of a higher power, to issues such as the abolition of slavery and the rights of women in society. The debates and writings of this group resulted in the texts that defined a uniquely American system of values and beliefs, and which created the paradigmatic assumptions about the spheres and rights of authority and the individual that have become intrinsic to the democratic project.

Elizabeth Peabody's bookshop offered him access to journals and texts of the latest revolutionary theories and thinking that were transforming the European intellectual, political and artistic climate and were the subject of much discussion in the United States. The period following the French Revolution, which was only in the recent past and within the lifetimes of many of Hawthorne's acquaintances, was followed by historical events that brought about fundamental shifts in social structures and realities.

An essential social difference at this time was the emerging role of artists as political thinkers and leaders. Eric Hobsbawm characterizes it as "the overwhelming victory of political art between 1830 and 1848. There has rarely been a period when even the least 'ideological' artists were more universally partisan, often regarding service to

politics as their primary duty” (269). In contrast to earlier times when artists were at the mercy of private patrons and could only comment on political events obliquely or metaphorically, the European Romantic artist had been freed and empowered to speak out directly. Throughout Europe, Romantic musicians, poets, artists and essayists chose to become politically active and were at the forefront of revolutionary political and nationalist movements. Chopin, Liszt, Verdi, Petofi, Manzoni, Daumier, Buchner, Heine, Carlyle, Tennyson and Wordsworth all spoke out in their works, and in the public forum, on controversial contemporary issues. Hobsbawm quotes the poet, Alfred de Musset’s, statement, which may identify the generic origin of Hawthorne’s topical prefaces in the longer works, that “Writers had a predilection to speak in their prefaces about the future, about social progress, humanity and civilization” (269). Although he only became personally acquainted with some of these figures at the end of his literary career, the greater public role and responsibilities of the political artist and the personal and artistic conflicts arising from his commitment to the advocacy of a radical cause concerned Hawthorne personally and informed much of his writing, especially his portrayal of Miles Coverdale, the author-narrator of The Blithedale Romance.

The struggle for self-definition, within the context of the realities of the social and political issues of the time, led Hawthorne to test his commitment to the transcendentalist and utopian ideals he had engaged with by joining the radical socialist communitarian experiment at Brook Farm. The eight months he spent with George Ripley, William Henry Channing, George William Curtis and other members of the group, with frequent visits by Margaret Fuller, was the second time in the three-year period that Hawthorne deliberately made a drastic change in distancing himself from a previous physical

location and social environment. Hawthorne planned to make a home for himself and his fiancée, Elizabeth Peabody's sister, Sophia, at Brook Farm. This period appears to be critical to Hawthorne's search to define his identity and his relationship to society and his thinking about the larger social contract. Rather than the apolitical recluse he is often portrayed as, the Hawthorne of this time was actively positioned in the forefront of the intellectual and pragmatic debate of the very definition of American society and its values and ideals.

Hawthorne's attempt to assume the role of politically committed artist-activist by joining in a practical effort to solve the social ills he observed in Boston, resulted in his disillusioned departure from Brook Farm in 1841, due to the very human pettiness, egotism of the participants and impracticality of the utopian scheme. He married Sophia Peabody and moved to the Emersons' Old Manse property in Concord, continuing his closeness to the transcendentalists. Despite his acknowledgement of the futility of the communal model, his intellectual growth was guided both by his ambivalent acceptance and rejection of the ideological and political themes of Transcendentalist philosophy. Regular and close communication with Emerson, Fuller, Henry David Thoreau and Bronson Alcott allowed him the opportunity to engage in debate and define the beliefs that would guide him throughout his literary career. As Colacurcio notes, Hawthorne, at this time, was "a man who, having just managed to open *some* intercourse with what he hoped might be the Real World, abruptly discovered himself, instead, in that gratuitous, unpredictable, and often dizzy sphere of Intellectual Boston and Concord" (29). His intimate acquaintance with the vivid and unique personalities he encountered gave him

insights into the moral blindness and compromise of the radical characters he would later portray in his romances and short stories.

The Preface to The Blithedale Romance is remarkably similar in tone and purpose to that of "Earth's Holocaust." Throughout the piece, Hawthorne is tantalizingly ironic and ambiguous, yet deliberate, in placing his novel in its specific temporal and social moment. By clearly pointing to the intentional similarities between the fictional Blithedale and the historical Brook Farm and specifying the ten year interval from his membership in the community and the time of publication he creates the distancing effect he employs in his other works in order to gesture towards parallels in both persons and events. This opening allows him to both allude to well-known figures, and yet disclaim similarities to his fictional characters that will have already occurred to the reader.

The Preface functions to identify the author in the context of Brook Farm as distinguished from Miles Coverdale, the narrator and former resident of Blithedale. The opening that is created between the two compels the reader to question the spaces between them and to consider the differences that exist and their significance. The transition from the Preface to the frame story connects the historical to the Romantic and from the factual to the fictional, the literal to the metaphoric and the present to the future.

Hawthorne repeatedly identifies himself in the third person as "the author," as distinct from Miles Coverdale, the fictional protagonist-narrator. Hawthorne declares his authorial intent to demonstrate that his "present concern with the socialist community is merely to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics" (38). This statement delineates a division of the narrative space into two domains that align with the utopian

and dystopian spaces of the narrative. This and subsequent references to “Faery Land” and “the paint and pasteboard” of his fictional enterprise foreshadow the recurring elements of artifice and disguise and occurrences of the public performances in the “Veiled Lady” and “Silver Veil” inset stories, the masquerades the members of the community engage in, and the essentially performative personas each of the main characters presents to the others and to the world.

Hawthorne alludes to “the conventional privilege [that] seems to be awarded to the romancer,” in older cultures, which allows him greater scope for his imagination, rather than the demands of the American reader (38). As Lauren Berlant observes, “here Hawthorne discusses the way American authors are censored in their very mode of representation by America itself. The national myth, the preconscious pretext inscribed in the mind of every reader-citizen, is so powerful that certain things cannot be said in the face of its blinding light” (54). The writer’s struggle between direct comment and metaphoric allusion, in the face of negative popular opinion, is a pragmatic necessity, rather than an artistic or stylistic choice. Identifying himself once more as “the author,” he defines his experiences as, “certainly the most romantic episode of his own life,- essentially a day-dream, and yet a fact,-and thus offering an available foothold between fiction and reality,” rendering it as fact, romance, fantasy, fact, once more, and a mediating device between all. This sentence is followed by a paragraph introducing his main characters as fictional types or *dramatis personae* and at least six subsequent conditional phrases explaining what “would...be a most grievous wrong...were the author to allow it supposed that he had been sketching” his former associates, using this

syntactically destabilizing phrase to erase the boundary between fact and fiction and still maintain the parallel presence of both (38-9).

Framing the theatre of the edenic utopian narrative, and often intruding into it, is the dystopia of the world of contemporary urban reality. The novel opens with Coverdale's meeting with Old Moodie in a Boston street on the evening before the narrator's departure for Blithedale and ends with Coverdale, back in Boston, writing his memoirs. The characters who gather in Blithedale, clad in their rustic garb and who enact the frequent tableaux and costume parties, return to the city to resume their old identities and are visited by those they have left behind. Forces of coercion and manipulation tether them to past lives that they are powerless to render.

The observer-participant who journeys in a search for the fundamental truths of the heart and a "a righteous and heaven-blessed way of life," as Hawthorne described Brook Farm in the American Notebooks, figures again, personified by Miles Coverdale, the protagonist of The Blithedale Romance (232). Much has been made by critics of the similarities and overlaps of identity between Hawthorne and his only first-person narrator in his most immediately contemporary full length work. This view is most likely a deliberate trap Hawthorne set for his readers in exploring the conflict between appearance and substance and the questionable reliability of empirical evidence. Based on Hawthorne's experiences in a well-known utopian socialist community, the novel both alludes to many public figures active in progressive and revolutionary causes and features fictional characters modeled after them.

James Mellow perceives the significance of the participant narrator, as contrasted to Hawthorne's narrative voice, in similar fashion and characterizes Hawthorne's utilization

of Miles Coverdale as a “useful device... his inexperienced narrator-hero... -as distinct from his creator-was a somewhat obtuse and stumbling observer.” In contrast to the omniscient narrator of the earlier novels, the creation of the unreliable Coverdale is, according to Mellow, used by the author in “a distinctly modern fashion as a method of distancing himself from his fictional narrator and at the same time making full use of the self-reflecting ironies of his hero’s ineffectiveness” (393). In the absence of the temporal or proximal distance employed in the historical sketches, short stories and other novels, the doubled narrative presence in The Blithedale Romance allows Hawthorne to position the artist as an active participant in a highly topical contemporary context and thus examine his actions and reactions to the social and political issues of his time.

Thomas Mitchell states that “Brook Farm is the fiction” (181), but it is not entirely fictional because it serves as a historical context in which Hawthorne sets his subconscious dream-recollections of Margaret Fuller, as Mitchell proposes, but because, as Coverdale, the poet-observer, and only character in the novel who does not possess a fictitious other, gradually discovers, the entire enterprise is a context in which the characters act out their roles in the drama they animate. The space between the historical Brook Farm and the fictional Blithedale is defined by Coverdale’s attempt to make meaning of the characters and events he witnesses. The novel is his subjective, self-centered view of the events and represents his interpretation and reworking of his experiences into the fictional narrative he presents to the reader.

Michael T. Gilmore portrays Coverdale as “a barrier between his [Hawthorne’s] own voice-the voice of the apolitical artist-and those of the activists at Blithedale...[who]displaces Hawthorne himself as the narrator” (32). Despite these

contradictory perspectives, it is evident that central to the thematic, aesthetic and philosophical concerns of the novel is the position of the artist within the contemporary social and political contexts. Gilmore, like Berlant, views Miles Coverdale's narrative voice, as distinct from that of Hawthorne, the clearly identified author, as an essentially political strategy which makes it possible that "the various proposals for political change can be traced back, not to the name on the title page, but to the zealots who assemble at the would-be utopia" (32). This permits the author to withdraw to the margins of the action, disavow any position on the issues he brings to the audience's attention, and yet simultaneously provoke debate and thought.

Miles Coverdale is an alienated, isolated artist who chooses to remove himself from his accustomed urban environment and what he perceives as the evils of modern society, despite the apparent material comfort by which he is surrounded. Coverdale joins a group of others who had come together and "had left the rusty iron frame-work of society behind us; we had broken through many hindrances that are powerful enough to keep most people on the weary tread-mill of the established system, even while they feel its irksomeness almost as intolerable as we did" (50) and seemingly unbound by ties of intimacy or family, redefine themselves and society.

Despite his initial enthusiasm for the communal experiment, Coverdale finds himself, like Hawthorne had at Brook Farm, more an observer than participant and becomes increasingly detached from his comrades and their single-minded declarations of idealism. Speaking from the vantage point of his disillusioned idealism, Coverdale is described by Gilmore as "the erstwhile radical [who] has, in his disaffection from activism, become one with his creator" (33). Whether reading Coverdale's opinions as

those of Hawthorne, or simply as those of a disaffected, and more aware, former radical, his presence at Blithedale allows him to observe the very flawed human beings engaged in the work of building a utopia, as well as disclosing the inner workings of his own mind, and like them he gains very few insights about himself. As Michael Colacurcio points out “we get this tragic story of historic inevitability from two points of view at once: explicitly we get...Coverdale, the feckless minor poet who never sees enough to understand what is involved; but implicitly, and with firm and ironic control, we also get (in spite of Coverdale, as it were) Hawthorne’s” (33).

Coverdale as narrator is unreliable, because of the temporal distance between the events he reports in his narrative, the questionable reliability and the subjectivity of his memory and the assumptions, biases and habits of mind he brings with him. Coverdale introduces himself as a poet at the very beginning of the novel and regularly identifies himself as a writer of fiction. He is observant but not perceptive.

A casual allusion to the “wonderful exhibition of the Veiled Lady,” follows the appearance of the shabby, disreputable Old Moodie, who appeals for Coverdale’s help, and is quickly dismissed from the narrative to allow for Coverdale’s comments about the “now forgotten celebrity” and the popular interest in mesmerism of the previous decade (40). The “Old Moodie” chapter, in fact, functions as a necessary prelude to the entire work and allows Hawthorne to introduce both the major thematic figures and events and to obliquely indicate his views about them.

Blithedale and Boston, in the novel, appear as complementary opposites, as utopia and dystopia, the ideal and the real, the mythical and the non-fictional. As Lauren Berlant describes The Blithedale Romance, “the narrative poses the double articulation of

individual and collective identity as a problem in *history* and for the narratives and persons that operate within its sphere” (30).

Characters shift identities by changing their costumes and names and by moving from one domain to another. Coverdale, the artist-narrator is the only one in the novel whose identity is stable and who observes with fascination and curiosity the transformations of the other characters. On first meeting Zenobia, whose other name Coverdale acknowledges, but never mentions, he notices “the action [of throwing away her characteristic flower] seemed proper to her character...the presence of Zenobia caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia, in which we grown-up men and women were making a play-day of the years that were given us to live. I tried to analyze this impression, but not with much success” (52).

The Blithedale Romance is set in two contiguous, adjacent, but opposed, spaces, each with its own characteristic climate and environment. Despite their proximity, Boston and Blithedale seem separated by a gulf that defines them as opposites. The novel begins in an oppressive urban space Miles Coverdale recalls many years later. “The buildings on either side seemed to press too closely upon us ... The snowfall, too, looked inexpressibly dreary (I had almost called it dingy), coming down through an atmosphere of city smoke,” which changes to “better air to breath. Air that had not been breathed, once and again! Air, that had not been spoken into words of falsehood, formality, and error, like all the air of the dusky city!”, as Coverdale approaches Blithedale (45).

The element of the double extends much beyond individual and collective identities in the novel to all aspects of the narrative. In an iteration of the Gothic double,

Hawthorne creates a narrative in which every theme, character, setting and event is mirrored and duplicated. The contrasts between the pastoral idyll and sharply observed urban milieu are sharply contrasted with little nuance. The rustic bucolic agrarian utopia of Blithedale, inhabited by idealistic intellectuals is mirrored by the grimy, realistically rendered urban Boston with its varied population of the marginalized, the poor and the criminal. The idealistic goals of individual and communal freedom of definition of the sunlit utopian project of Blithedale are contrasted by the dark dystopia of Boston where individuals function as faceless entities with no recourse to power.

The line of demarcation between the individual and collective, the fictional and the historic and the apparent and the concealed is sharply delineated and yet constantly shifting. Berlant describes "the common fantasy of a perfected future," which overlooks the deeply flawed past and present of the American scene and its commonly stated ideals of freedom and the unacknowledged reality of oppression (31). The utopian project functions as both a representation of a historical moment and a metaphor for the American project.

Coverdale creates a theatrical context for his narrative by recollecting the "remarkable performance of the lady in question," as he describes the "case of The Veiled Lady [when]... the interest of the spectator was ...wrought up by the enigma of her identity," clearly unaware of the real identity of the performer, his future relationships with her and her mesmerist and the fact that her father is the man he is ignoring as he ponders the spectacle (40).

The Fauntleroy family tragedy enacted on the stage of the Blithedale community presents an invasion of the specters that have pursued them from the dystopic spaces they

formerly occupied. The idyllic space of the “national utopian fantasy” as Berlant characterizes it, cannot stand against the secrets, crimes and unacknowledged sins that haunt the American past and present (31).

The conflicts of appearance and reality, science and spirit, openness and manipulation, clarity and ambiguity are introduced by the retrospective artist-narrator, who contrasts the apparent “simplicity and openness of a scientific experiment,” characterized by the mesmerist of the 1850’s, who may “tread a step or two across the boundaries of the spiritual world, yet carries with him the laws of our actual life,” as distinct from those of the Blithedale period, in which “all the arts of mysterious arrangement, or picturesque disposition, and artistically contrasted light and shade, were made available, in order to set the apparent miracle in the strongest attitude of opposition to ordinary facts” (40)

This description of the mesmerist of the 1850’s as that of the political figure who manipulates public opinion by appeals to logic and rationality, as well as by invocation of morality and of the authority of divine blessing for his cause, as was the case with most political figures on both sides of the North-South divide in the 1850’s. This figure does not resort to the stratagems of “apparent miracle[s]...in opposition to ordinary facts,” typified by the mesmeric figures of radical social movements and those of the Great Awakening in the earlier period depicted in the novel, but clearly has evolved from them to assume the political and governmental authority and who now “carries with him the laws of our actual life” (40).

Coverdale’s Romantic lens endows each of the characters with a generic role in what will emerge as the family drama to be enacted in Blithedale, but whose roots reach,

literally and figuratively, far beyond the specific context of the novel, and into the genesis of the American paradox. The leading man, Hollingsworth, a former blacksmith, who is now "a much more solid character, and a philanthropist to boot," the leading lady, Zenobia, known "merely [by] her public name; a sort of mask in which she comes before the world" (42). Not yet seen, though already present in the wings, are Priscilla, the ingénue, who has already appeared as the Veiled Lady, and the villain of the piece, Westervelt, her evil mesmerist. All these characters possess dual identities and secrets they bring to the performances of daily life and the frequent tableaux vivants and masquerades in the ideal world they attempt to create. The characters they present are, in fact, stock roles in generic melodrama, and it is their significance to the theme.

Although each of the characters in the novel is in some fashion connected to Old Moodie by ties of guilt, obligation or blood, it is only Coverdale, the artist, who in his attempts to take the measure of, and to understand others, begins to perceive their hidden identities and the complex relationships that bind them and ultimately cause their doom. Beyond Coverdale's imperfect comprehension of the facades and interior identities each of the characters present to his or her self and to the world, and their connections to each other, it is Hawthorne, Coverdale's creator, who allows his narrator to discover aspects of the underlying truth. By withholding certain essential elements of the narrative, he provokes the reader's curiosity and gestures towards the significance of these gaps.

Coverdale's naiveté in the face of Zenobia's dazzling imperiousness is emphasized when, in response to Coverdale's facetious suggestion that they each commit a crime to occupy Hollingsworth, "Zenobia turned, sidelong, a strange kind of glance upon me; but,

before I could make out what it meant, we had entered the kitchen, where, in accordance with the rustic simplicity of our new life, the supper table was spread" (53).

The centrality of the figure of the corrupted and corrupting father is suggested by Monika M. Elbert's comment that "The Blithedale Romance is a novel which deals with self-preoccupation, self-limitations, and ultimately with the disavowal of fatherhood" (186). The missing or remote father, noticeable by his absence throughout Hawthorne's fiction, is in this novel replaced by a guilty, deceptive, manipulative and clearly malevolent one who first strikes Coverdale by his "queer appearance of hiding himself behind the patch on his left eye" (98), which at their later meeting, Coverdale observes on his right eye (169). His feral appearance and character, which Coverdale repeatedly notices, but dismisses, is confirmed by the events of his narrative. By examining this family's story within the larger political context of Hawthorne's time, a more global significance emerges, one that is grounded in the American myth of origin and which was one of his prime thematic and moral concerns.

Viewed as a myth of origin prefiguring Hawthorne's more explicitly stated "historical circumstance," inset within the narrative in "Chiefly About War Matters," his last American work, the Fauntleroy family story bears some important similarities. The account in "Chiefly About War Matters", which will be discussed more fully later, presents a familial relationship between "the children of the Puritans with these Africans of Virginia in a very singular way, as being lineal descendants from the Mayflower, the fated womb of which, in her first voyage, sent forth a brood of Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, and, in a subsequent one, spawned slaves upon the Southern soil,--a monstrous birth" (10). Viewing the American nation, in the present day, as connected by ties of

common ancestry and linked by common physicality, Hawthorne depicts the Mayflower as common mother to “her white progeny” and “her dark one” (10). Missing from this account is the father figure shared by both. The personification of the Mayflower as the womb underscores Hawthorne’s view of the metaphoric significance of the birth experience as representative of a specific historical meaning. Informed by this, a reading of the relationship between Fauntleroy and his daughters is possible, which demonstrates a larger political significance. Larry J. Reynolds (2005) points to Hawthorne’s Burkean association of “revolution with images of a breakdown in the familial order” (48). In The Blithedale Romance, it is the secrets, sins, and fratricidal conflict of the Fauntleroy family that figures as the critical metaphor for the impending struggle for domination between North and South.

Seemingly irrelevant to the utopian project, Old Moodie, the elusive and unsavory inebriate, is, in fact, the link between the other characters and holds their secrets and the power over their destinies in his grasp. As the father of both Zenobia and Priscilla, Old Moodie is the one who possesses the answers to the mysteries that will come to haunt Coverdale and which will precipitate the conflicts that rend the proposed community apart. Old Moodie and his daughters function as extended metaphors for the fragmentation of the divided house of the American nation as it moved inexorably to the brink of internecine war. The Moodie/Fauntleroy family narrative functions in ways evocative of Hawthorne’s earlier strategies in “Earth’s Holocaust.” As Berlant points out, “In Blithedale...the tragedy of the personal is also, explicitly, a political tragedy” (53). Related by blood through their common father, though born of different mothers, the two women grow without knowledge of each other or feelings of kinship.

On a larger scale, the Old Moodie character bears greater thematic and political-historical significance. Coverdale has seen him often on the streets and in the taverns of Boston and, as he tells Hollingsworth, during the early idyllic period of their time in Blithedale, Moodie “haunts restaurants and such places, and has an odd way of lurking in corners or getting behind a door, whenever practical, and holding out his hand, with some little article in it he wishes you to buy” (98). When Hollingsworth questions Moodie’s history, Coverdale admits that he knows nothing of it, but states that he takes Moodie to be “a harmless sort of person, and a tolerably honest one, but his manners, being so furtive, remind me of those of a rat- a rat without the mischief, the fierce eye, the teeth to bite with, or the desire to bite” (98). Coverdale again demonstrates his powers of observation, as well as his lack of inclination, or the Romantic bias of his imagination, to trust his perceptions, to examine and follow them beyond the expected to the very conclusion he rejects.

It is only after the Blithedale community begins its collapse with the reappearance of Westervelt, the return of both Priscilla and Zenobia to Boston and their assumption of their previous roles in the performance of the Veiled Lady, that Coverdale “excluded from everybody’s confidence, and attaining...an uncertain sense of something hidden” decides to seek out Old Moodie (164). Moodie responds to Coverdale’s offer of a generous lunch, excellent wine and request for his youthful reminiscences, by stating that, “they might interest you more than you suppose...but...I could never look you in the face again,” to which Coverdale responds, “You never did look me in the face, Mr. Moodie...until this very moment.” Noticing the transformative effects of memory on Moodie’s appearance, Coverdale observes that “instead of the mean, slouching, furtive,

painfully depressed air of a city vagabond, more like a gray kennel-rat than any other living being, he began to take the aspect of a decayed gentleman" (170).

James Mellow characterizes The Blithedale Romance as "a novel of disclosures" (393). It is the house of Fauntleroy's narrative, which gradually and incompletely emerges to Coverdale and that stands for the repressed secrets, guilt, and uncertain status of the American house divided. Each of the characters conceals aspects of her or his identity or past or attempts to deceive, and it is the gradual revelation of that which lies behind these facades that brings about the destruction of the Fauntleroy family and of the Blithedale community.

Moodie's story is recounted by Coverdale as "Fauntleroy," the inset story which forms Chapter 22 of the novel, and which he introduces by stating that Moodie's account:

referred exclusively to a long past...with only few allusions to the circumstances that had reduced him to his present state. But, having once got the clue, my subsequent researches acquainted me with the main facts of the following narrative; although, in writing it out, my pen has perhaps allowed itself a trifle of romantic and legendary license, worthier of a small poet than a grave biographer (170).

Coverdale has, at this point in the narrative, recognized the impossibility of separating the real from the apparent and disavours any claim to objectivity.

Hawthorne suggests Fauntleroy's past as a slave-owning planter-oligarch in his description early in the story of him as a character whose home "might almost be styled a palace; his habits, in the ordinary sense, princely," alluding to the magnificence of the fabled riches of plantation owners, as well as their absolute legal and physical domination

over their human and material properties (171). Moodie is the inversion of Fauntleroy. His disfigured and repulsive appearance displays the interiority of his formerly glamorous exterior. His former outward surface gleam and lustre transformed into a concealed, disguised and evasive gutter rat. Every exterior aspect of his identity has transformed itself in order to adapt to his new environment, but his essential core and soul have remained. The spirits of avarice and exploitation and unnatural acts that have offended humanity have survived to flourish in another guise. His exploitation and manipulation of others have changed but not diminished. He now works in concert with Westervelt to exploit through psychological and emotional manipulation and coercion.

One of the critical gaps in the narrative is the nature of the crime Fauntleroy commits and which Coverdale avoids specifying, referring to it euphemistically and dramatically as “the sort of crime, growing out of its artificial state, which society (unless it should change its entire constitution for this man’s unworthy sake) should neither could nor ought to pardon. More safely might it pardon murder” (171). Fauntleroy’s crime is not one of a violent or financial nature, and yet is so heinous that it cannot be named. The historical implication of Fauntleroy’s crime is that of its violation of the essential premise of the Constitution, namely the assumption of freedom and equality. The artificial state of slavery is the crime that threatens this foundation of society.

Reynolds points to the significance of Hawthorne’s fears of racial mixing as similar to those of revolutionary violence and witchcraft. He quotes Hawthorne’s comment that “The mixture of race a crime against nature, therefore pernicious” as indicative of his life-long concern about “the problem of variegated racial identities within the house divided” (43). The widely known, yet taboo, subject of the practice of slave owners’

sexual exploitation of their female slaves and the fate of the biracial offspring they fathered may be another aspect of Fauntleroy's crime. It may also point to Zenobia's mysterious origin, her exotic appearance and dark coloring. As Berlant describes The Blithedale Romance, "the narrative poses the double articulation of individual and collective identity as a problem in *history* and for the narratives and persons that operate within its sphere" (30).

Hawthorne's strategy in having Coverdale state his contradictory perceptions of Moodie, compounded of his empathic desire to "identify my mind with the old fellow's, and take his view of the world, as if looking at it through a smoke-blackened glass" (99), as he and Hollingsworth observe the old man's arrival at Blithedale, and his repeated observations of Moodie's feral character, highlights the role of the artist as observer of the complexity of human nature. Coverdale's admission of Moodie's incomplete and unreliable recounting of his narrative, and frank assertion of his own literary reworking of Moodie's story, underscore both the meta-literary aspects of the novel and Hawthorne's view of the essential privilege and obligation of the novelist to use historical persons and events to evoke profound truths through his art, as distinguished from the impossibility of attempting to achieve objectivity.

Hawthorne's use of historical context is specific, accurate and deliberate, so it is worthwhile to consider the setting of the "Fauntleroy" story. Coverdale sets the events that initiate it twenty-five years before the time of Coverdale's recounting, or approximately 1826. The geographical setting, unlike Hawthorne's usually exacting practice is vaguely alluded to as "one of the middle states" (171). Placing the story's main character in the time period shortly after the Missouri Compromise of 1820, that

formalized the system by which slavery would be institutionalized in the westward expansion of the American nation, and which set the course of the union towards the inevitable divide faced in the 1850's, Hawthorne creates a temporal perspective and draws parallels to the well-known historical events. The third and only unspecified geographical location of the "middle state" situates Fauntleroy's home on the social and political divide of the Mason-Dixon Line separating slave and free states, and underscores the tension that emerged as the issue of slavery came to dominate and polarize public discourse into Northern and Southern positions. Like the origins and history of the Fauntleroy family, this unnamed space, a third dimension of narrative space destabilizes the progressive conceptual utopia and dystopia.

The conceptual boundaries of divided geographical space in the novel may be graphically defined by "The Moral Map of U.S." issued by the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1843. This map represents the United States in terms of the dark space of the Southern, slave-owning states and the white space of the Northern states. In a 2005 essay, Larry J. Reynolds cites Hawthorne's acknowledgement of the map in a letter to Horatio Bridge as a metaphor for race, violence and bloodshed (41).

William E. Cain suggests, in his notes to the Bedford/St. Martin edition of The Blithedale Romance, that the name Fauntleroy may be derived from an English banker convicted and executed for forgery in 1824 (171). However, much more likely historical models are the two members of the prominent Fauntleroy family of Naylor's Hall Plantation in Virginia. Joseph Fauntleroy, a scion of the family who, in 1827, freed his slaves and left Virginia, accompanied by two of his freed slaves and several family members, to join Robert Owen at the New Harmony community in Indiana. Clark

Kimberling documents, in the records of the achievements of the New Harmony settlers, his nephew Robert Henry Fauntleroy, who had left Virginia as a young man with his uncle, became a prominent member of the community, and well-known nationally through his achievements as a creative and successful civil engineer, and by his marriage to Jane Dale Owen, the innovative educator and daughter of Robert Owen. Despite the rapid failure and collapse of the Owen project, Fauntleroy remained in Indiana and became a founding member of a pragmatic progressive egalitarian community.

Fauntleroy's actions and life demonstrated an enduring commitment to a utopian goal that resulted in the creation of a permanent self-supporting settlement. Fauntleroy's New Harmony gave rise to economic and cultural institutions that attracted other like-minded settlers who established the beginnings of the infrastructure of the state of Indiana. The success of the members of the later New Harmony community, led by Fauntleroy, among others, who dedicated their lives and chose to take action on an individual scale, is very different from the fleeting commitment and unrealistic goals of the dilettantes of Brook Farm. More significantly, his actions demonstrate the possibility of clear moral choice made by a man of conscience, despite the very contradictory values of the environment in which he was raised.

It is not difficult to imagine the way in which the other members of the Fauntleroy family viewed their idealistic relation, and to grant that Hawthorne may well have created his Fauntleroy as a foil to the historical abolitionist whose opinions were demonstrated by actions rather than words. Since the rest of Fauntleroy's family remained in Virginia, eventually fighting on the Confederate side in the Civil War, the fictional Fauntleroy may well have been one of them. The historical Fauntleroy family is an actual parallel to the

metaphorical Fauntleroy of The Blithedale Romance. Their divided allegiances, loyalties and very differing ideologies underscore Berlant's point about the doubled articulation of the individual and collective historical dimensions of the novel.

Old Moodie and Westervelt can be viewed as generic foils to Hollingsworth, who represents the optimism of the American progressive idealist, and thus as personifications of dystopia. Both are much more potent and ultimately effective than Hollingsworth as forces which bring about the downfall and destruction of positive aspects of the American utopian project. Old Moodie appears to Coverdale as an innocuous, unfortunate old man whose past has brought him to the margins of modern urban Northern society. Coverdale's suspicions of the man's malevolence are not shared by any of the other members of the community, including Hollingsworth, whose mission is the rehabilitation of criminals. Old Moodie's double identity encompasses the evil aspects of the character of Fauntleroy, his original character, whose unspeakable, yet commonly known, crime is the legal and physical enslavement of Africans for financial gain. Viewed as an outcast by the civilized society of democratic nations, he then assumes a new guise in concealment of the Northern city as Old Moodie.

Moodie's fatally flawed offspring is the dark, materialistic, self-centered and arrogant Zenobia, whose advocacy of equal rights for women does not prevent her from treating her sister as a slave. Abandoned as a child, she grows up in the South "in affluence, with native graces clustering luxuriantly about her". Her character is described as "having good in it, and evil. Passionate, self-willed, and imperious, she had a warm and generous nature; showing the richness of the soil, however, chiefly by the weeds that flourished in it, and choked up the herbs of grace." The lushly sensuous depiction of

Zenobia is followed immediately by the report of "obscure passages" in her life (176). Her later identity is comprised of a pseudonym and her preternaturally vivid and increasingly artificial appearance, symbolized by the flower she wears in her hair. Representative of her position as the outsider, the flower, which is her constant token, is first an expensive hot house one, symbolic of her wealth and privilege and later on, an artificial one. Zenobia's character represents her father's evil heredity.

Coverdale's vivid first impression of Zenobia observes her dressed "in an American print...but with a silken kerchief" (47). This attire emphasizes her exoticism and it becomes increasingly clear to both Coverdale and the reader that this is a facet of the theatricality and artifice of her appearance. Coverdale also notices the deliberate contrast between her hair "put up rather soberly and primly, without curls, or other ornament" and the striking flower she habitually wears in it (47). It is this flower "so brilliant, so rare, so costly as it must have been, and yet enduring only for a day, it was more indicative of the pride and pomp, which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character, than if a great diamond had sparkled in her hair" that becomes her token and the symbol of her identity (48). This "pride and pomp" are the qualities that define her character and represent the fatal legacy she has inherited from her father. The crime of enslavement he has committed and which has caused him to be ostracized by the family of nations has afflicted her also. Coverdale rationalizes his suspicions and rumors he has heard about her by attributing the character of her geographic origins stating, "But, then, as I failed not to consider, her original home was at a distance of many hundreds of miles" (70).

Fauntleroy's younger daughter, Priscilla, is clearly a child of the north. In a direct criticism of the transformation of the colonial utopia into the contemporary Boston, she is

born in a haunted and formerly stately mansion of a colonial governor now run down and occupied by “poverty-stricken wretches, sinners, and forlorn, good people, Irish, and whomever else were neediest” (172). In contrast to Zenobia’s beautiful mother, Fauntleroy’s second wife is “a forlorn, meek-spirited, feeble young woman...a poor phantom” (173). This depiction is similar to Hawthorne’s description, in The Scarlet Letter, of Yankee women of his time as “morally, as well as materially...a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity” than their female ancestors of the colonial era (38).

In contrast to the pseudonymous Zenobia who personifies artifice and deception, her younger sister Priscilla embodies prototypical New England. She personifies the oppressed girls of the overworked laboring class whose exploitation helped to fuel the emerging economic strength of the New England textile factories.

Priscilla’s arrival at Blithedale is marked by her appearance, “a very young woman, dressed in a poor, but decent gown, made high in the neck, and without any regard to fashion or smartness...her face was of a wan, almost sickly hue, betokening a habitual seclusion from the sun and free atmosphere” (56). Meeting no welcome from any of the community, she is finally taken in hand and supported only by Hollingsworth. Her first look at her sister is remarked on by Coverdale who observes that “it was the strangest look I ever witnessed; long a mystery to me, and forever a memory” (57). Meeting no response, Priscilla drops to her knees before Zenobia, who responds, “What does the girl mean?...Is she crazy? Has she no tongue?”. Her lack of compassion and kindness is noticed by Coverdale who even later says, “I never thoroughly forgave Zenobia for her

conduct on this occasion" (57). It is again Hollingsworth who speaks up for her and reproves Zenobia.

The two sisters: Zenobia, lushly sensual and inherently morally flawed and Priscilla: pale, enervated, with "a lack of human substance in her; it seemed as if, were she to stand up in a sunbeam, it would pass right through her...but...the poor child had a heart; and from her mother's gentle character, she had inherited a profound and still capacity of affection," (173) made of emotion and feeling, but is disembodied and uneroticized, function as polar opposites, each flawed in her own fashion, but sharing the same heredity. Their shared legacy is their father's sin of the greed in which both North and South were complicit in the profits each derived from the plantation system made possible by slavery and the cotton that drove the economy of the factory system of the North.

An extended metaphor for the fragmentation of the divided house of the American nation, as it moved increasingly to the brink of internecine warfare, the Fauntleroy family narrative functions in ways strongly evocative of Hawthorne's earlier strategies in "Earth's Holocaust." As Berlant points out, "In Blithedale...the tragedy of the personal is also, explicitly, a political tragedy" (53). The metaphor of the divided house directly alludes to Abraham Lincoln's 1850 depiction of the looming threat to the nation posed by the continued coexistence of free and slave states and by the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision, which allowed slaveholding in nominally free states, as a "house divided against itself."

Fauntleroy, his daughters, Westervelt and Hollingsworth, embody characters in a domestic family drama which functions as a metaphor for the larger conflict that

threatened to tear apart the national house unfolding at the time. The father whose guilty secret brings about a curse that threatens his family's future and imperils his daughters is a popular Gothic generic trope familiar to Hawthorne's audience. The contrasting dark and fair female characters, the evil wizard, and the heroic protagonist who must choose between the two females and witness the sacrifice of the other, complete the fictional cast of characters.

The dystopian aspects of the north are personified by Old Moodie's parasitic exploitation of Priscilla, which begin with his peddling of her needlework. William E. Cain cites Catherine Clinton's description of the city seamstress as "among the most exploited members of the American working class," often driven to prostitution by their poverty. The highest degree of betterment these women could aspire to was employment in the textile mills, proclaimed the "Industrial Utopia" by their owners (497). The textile mills' eleven hour workdays and dehumanizing regimentation of their employees was infinitely more benign than the lot of the city seamstress.

Coverdale's conjecture that Priscilla's purpose in joining the Blithedale community is to be Zenobia's slave is laughed off by Zenobia's realistic, but scornfully dispassionate appraisal of her sister as "neither more nor less than a seamstress from the city, and she has probably no more transcendental purpose than to do my miscellaneous sewing; for I suppose she will hardly expect to make my dresses" (61).

The economic exploitation of the working class constitutes the dystopia of the North in which young women like Priscilla are routinely subjected to conditions like those described by Zenobia, who is clearly aware, yet hardly sympathetic. Upon first meeting Priscilla, she dismisses Coverdale's Romantic view of the pale and sickly young

woman: "She has been stifled with the heat of a salamander-stove, in a small, close room, and has drunk coffee, and fed upon dough-nuts, raisins, candy, and all such trash, till she is scarcely half-alive; and so as she has hardly any physique, a poet, like Mr. Miles Coverdale, may be allowed to think her spiritual!" (61). Zenobia dismisses Priscilla's humanity, spirituality and the concern for her feelings much in the same way that African slaves were viewed.

The conflict between the sisters breaks into the open and invades Blithedale, rendering utopia into a site of contention and rancour and shattering forever the possibility of a just and perfected society. Hollingsworth's action in declaring his allegiance to Priscilla has caused Zenobia to abandon the last vestiges of the specious feminist pose she has vociferously espoused, and by which she has defined herself, but never actively demonstrated. The empty surface rhetoric of her public stance and the cruelty of her treatment of her sister stand in stark contrast, in the same fashion as the genteel image of plantation culture projected by the South and the reality of the cruelty of the treatment of the slaves whose exploitation formed the basis of its every aspect.

Zenobia's depiction of herself as victimized by Hollingsworth and demand that he demonstrate his continued loyalty to her by abandoning Priscilla is similar to the southern depiction of increasing Northern demands for abolition as threats to its continued existence and to its rights. Her description of herself as "weak, vain, unprincipled, (like most of my sex; for our virtues, when we have any, are merely impulsive and intuitive,) passionate, too, and pursuing my foolish and unattainable ends, by indirect and cunning, through absurdly chosen means, as an hereditary bond-slave must," is a complete abandonment of all she has she has championed before and demonstrates her readiness to

betray principle in pursuit of expediency (197). Michael Gilmore cites Hawthorne's repeated use of the phrase "bond-slave" in the novel and questions whether "is it nothing more than coincidence, a topical reference with no subtext? Or does the analogy amount to an equivocal confession on Hawthorne's part that the prophetic voice he most feared, heralding the Civil War within a decade, was that raised on behalf of the enslaved?" (38). It is difficult to believe that, in what is arguably the most topical of his novels, Hawthorne would have unintentionally chosen to use a phrase so emotionally charged for his audience.

By demanding of Hollingsworth that he choose between Priscilla and her and declare his allegiance to one of them only, Zenobia explicitly creates a conflict that can only result in an irrevocable rupture of the utopian project, as well as of their family. Hollingsworth has not yet begun to put his noble project of moral reform into effect, but he has made a commitment to liberate Priscilla from the psychological and economic enslavement she has been subjected to by Westervelt and Zenobia. This initial step will not result in the success of the grandiose scheme he had planned, but it does serve to demonstrate the greater efficacy of a pragmatic principled individual act.

Hollingsworth disregards Zenobia's denunciations of his choice of her sister, and much as he had freed Priscilla from Westervelt by calling to her "Come! You are safe", he now simply bids her, "Priscilla, come." Once again, the philanthropist's voice empowers Priscilla to act for her liberation. Coverdale notices the repetition of the action she took on her arrival at Blithedale in kneeling before her sister, who now recognizes her as the victor of their battle. Priscilla is astounded at Zenobia's words and actions and reminds her that they are sisters. Coverdale observes Zenobia kiss her sister "not

lovingly; for a sense of fatal harm, received through her, seemed to be lurking in Zenobia's heart" (198).

Zenobia concedes that they have the same father, but declares to Priscilla, "You stood between me and an end which I desired. I wanted a clear path" (199). The family past haunted by secrets, lies, manipulation and avarice has brought about the destruction of love and of the possibility of reconciliation.

Facing a choice between the malevolent and fatally flawed Zenobia and the weak, but uncorrupted Priscilla, Hollingsworth, the reformer, recognizes the futility of attempting to reconstitute a culture constituted of superficialities with no heart at its core. Flawed himself by guilt for his inaction and his betrayal of Zenobia, Hollingsworth realizes that he can only align himself with Priscilla, whose heart is pure. Although she has been physically enslaved and psychologically manipulated, she has remained spiritually pure. At the scene of her final rupture with Hollingsworth, Zenobia recognizes the destructive effects of the single-minded arrogance that have caused the failure of his project, "The utmost that can be said in your behalf...is, that a great and rich heart has been ruined in your breast" (198).

Coverdale is left to observe the final scene between the two sisters and Priscilla's departure with Hollingsworth to build a new life for the two of them away from both Blithedale and Boston. Years later, Coverdale seeks to learn about their lives together and finds them living in seclusion. He observes Priscilla and Hollingsworth both sadder and dependent on the other for support. They have not come through their ordeal unscorched, but are clearly bearing the signs of the trials they have survived. The novel concludes with Hollingsworth and Priscilla, battered by the emotional and psychological maelstrom

that has engulfed the now abandoned utopia. Away from both utopia and dystopia they have carved out their own sphere in which they function in mutual dependence and support.

Berlant views Hollingsworth as the “reformer in history, an embodiment not only of the contemporaneous project of American utopianism, but also of the utopianism that since the Puritans has constituted the mythos and the politics of American national identity” (42). In view of this, Hawthorne’s depiction of Hollingsworth’s misguided self-absorption, which leads him to overlook the very real evil that surrounds him, is an indictment of the aims and advocates of utopianism and, more significantly, the institutions that constitute the American political system. Whether Hollingsworth is merely an ineffective, manipulative idealist matters less than that his goals are well-intentioned and meant for the betterment of society, and that, nevertheless, he is ultimately a failure.

Blithedale has, like the Western plane in “Earth’s Holocaust,” been emptied of the idealists and extremists. It exists, on a much more mundane basis, as a refuge for “the town-paupers, aged, nerveless, and disconsolate,” the exiles of dystopia (216). The anticlimactic ending of the Blithedale experiment parallels the conclusion of the Brook Farm community. The blind idealism and uncompromising impracticality of both founders ended in financial loss and mutual recriminations. Hawthorne’s resignation was followed by a lawsuit demanding the repayment of the \$1,000 he had invested in the project. The trial to settle the matter took place in March, 1846, a few days after the main building of Brook Farm was destroyed by fire (Cain 17). The efforts to build an economically and socially egalitarian community failed due to the forces within resulting

from the pressures of the greater society without. Hawthorne wrote, in a letter to his fiancée, Sophia Peabody, on September 3, 1841, that “my life there was an unnatural and unsuitable, and therefore an unreal one. It already looks like a dream behind me. The real Me was never an associate of the community” (566). The unreal aspects of the utopian experiment at Brook Farm, due to the failure to come to terms with the intrinsic conflicts of greater society and the imperfections of human nature, parallel Hawthorne’s metaphoric portrayal of the unlikely prospects for the success of the American national utopian project and the dire consequences for its continued existence without an honest appraisal of the deep flaws of slavery and extremism. The Blithedale struggle has no winners, a conclusion anticipating Hawthorne’s later depiction of the effects of the Civil War, where there is only destruction and loss.



Chapter Four- "Chiefly About War Matters"

Prior to his return to the United States in 1860, at the conclusion of five years as United States Consul in Liverpool, and two years spent traveling throughout Britain and Europe, Hawthorne wrote to his publisher, William Ticknor, articulating his ambivalence and concerns about the charged partisan political atmosphere. Hawthorne expressed apprehension about the consequences of the increasing national radicalism and of the violence which appeared to be increasingly imminent. Despite the prominence of his official position as diplomatic representative of the United States government in one of the most important commercial centers in the British empire, Hawthorne wrote Ticknor, in a letter cited by James Mellow, that "the sweetest thing connected with foreign residence is that you have no rights and no duties...I shall never again be so free as I have been in England and Italy" (534).

His lengthy absence from the northeastern United States, which had been the only environment he had known before his European sojourn, enabled Hawthorne to experience a real life journey reversing the fictional one of the narrator of "Earth's Holocaust." Moving east towards the older civilizations of Europe, instead of the "broadest prairies of the West, where no human habitation would be endangered by the flames," (887) he was able to observe, at first hand, the devastating effects of revolutionary fervor on actual people and places he had only read about. The enormous geographical and cultural distances from events in the United States broadened even further the detached perspective from which he had viewed the issues and ideas of his time.

Hawthorne's recent tenure as United States Consul in Liverpool, which ended two years earlier, had placed him once more in the "custom house" he both needed for financial reasons and dreaded for its suffocating effects on his literary work. This last governmental office, in contrast to the previous positions in Salem and Boston, afforded him the opportunity to take meaningful action and demonstrate by deeds where his convictions lay in the matters of race and class.

Larry J. Reynolds (2003) describes Hawthorne's actions on behalf of black and white American sailors who had appealed to him for relief of their abusive treatment by shipmasters. Facing governmental indifference, but lacking official powers to act on their behalf, Hawthorne nevertheless acted for individuals, regardless of race, by giving whatever practical assistance he was capable of. He wrote continuously to the Secretary of State and Attorney General urging more humane treatment for sailors and for comprehensive legislative reform of maritime laws. When, in 1859, the issue of endemic maritime abuses throughout the British and American fleets was brought before the House of Commons, a letter from Hawthorne was presented as essential testimony supporting legislation which ultimately resulted in legislative reform (139-40).

James Mellow quotes a letter Hawthorne wrote to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner in May, 1855, on behalf of abused sailors. Describing the systematic brutality that constituted the lives of both sailors and officers he wrote, "It is certainly not the fault, so much as it is the fate, of our ship masters to do these abominable deeds. They are involved in a wrong system, which renders it impossible for them to do right; and they themselves become morally deteriorated...I should like to know what is to become of us at sea, in case of a war-but *that* you don't care about" (435) (Italics in the original). The

Senator, a leading abolitionist, told by Hawthorne that “no slave drivers are so wicked as they, and there is nothing in slavery so bad as the system with which they are connected,” chose not to respond to his appeals (435). The cause of maritime reform on behalf of both black and white sailors continued to be ignored by leading abolitionists whose efforts were focused solely on the oppression of Southern slavery. Hawthorne’s impassioned words and actions demonstrate his compassion and commitment to affect meaningful change. Far from the indifference and inhumanity he was accused of, his efforts in the cause of maritime reform demonstrate the pragmatic approach of individual action reminiscent of positive characteristics he endows Hollingsworth’s with in his goal to change an evil aspect of society, rather than the utopian goal of complete social transformation.

The critical differences in Hawthorne’s actions in this matter are his analysis of the insidious moral effects of an unjust system, the consistent advocacy of change within established power structures and the rejection of extremism. Hawthorne’s allusion, five years before the fact, to the likelihood of future shortcomings of governmental naval forces, in the war many did not believe would occur, demonstrates both his awareness and understanding of the inevitability of war, given the existing conditions, despite the distance from which he observed them.

From “Earth’s Holocaust,” the fictional early didactic cautionary tale describing the gradual destruction of material and tangible symbols of the institutions and ideals of American civilization, through the metaphoric account of an optimistic and idealistic effort to fully realize the American project in The Blithedale Romance, “Chiefly About War Matters” is a non-fictional, contemporaneous elegiac observation of the

conflagration that has consumed so much of the ideals, idealism and achievements of the United States and which closes the narrative arc of Hawthorne's career. Without the fictional distance of "Earth's Holocaust," or the temporal distance of *The Blithedale Romance*, "Chiefly About War Matters" records Hawthorne's impressions of "this dismal time, when our country might seem to have arrived at such a deadly stand-still" (4). It is his perception of the total cessation of optimistic progress which has hitherto characterized the American project that causes Hawthorne to leave his corner of New England for the first time and venture to the south he had characterized as the dark and foreboding chamber of the house divided.

Charles Adams (1993) considers Hawthorne's *Peaceable Man's* tone of "dispassion is a pose, an assumed carelessness...there is a great deal of bitter self-mockery," in his pose of emotional detachment (354). Adams points to Hawthorne's unusual strategic choices in this essay. He published the piece anonymously because of "his awareness of the essay's provocative tone, since it reflects...Hawthorne's dissent from the social idealism of the Northern public," as well as the presence of a secondary narrative voice, that of, "a censorious editor...expressing opinions about the essay and its author that reflect an attitude toward the War more orthodox than any expressed in the text." (352).

Brenda Wineapple characterizes the innovative manner in which "Hawthorne contrives a narrative form that joins the personal essay with the ironic narrator, the sketch with the tale, history with fiction, the real world and faery-land in ways not easy to separate" (195). This is particularly true of "Chiefly About War Matters," in which Miles Coverdale, *Blithedale's* fictional first person participant narrator, no longer suffices as

Hawthorne's voice. The realities of the horrors of war have led him to assume once again the anonymous disembodied narrative voice of "Earth's Holocaust."

Hawthorne begins his account of his trip with Ticknor to visit Washington and scenes of recent battles in typically ironic self-deprecatory fashion. Declaring his reluctance to leave his home and literary efforts and "to suspend the contemplation of certain fantasies", he reinforces his public persona as the reclusive and detached artist with "no pretensions to state-craft or soldiership" (1).

His declaration of the objectivity James Mellow characterizes as "Hawthorne's ruthlessly unsentimental, cool, and considered views," is as ambiguously suggestive as any of his earlier works (552). The narrator states that "there is a kind of treason in insulating one's self from the universal fear and sorrow, and thinking one's idle thoughts in the dread time of civil war." Equating independence of thought and rejection of the doctrinaire conformity that characterized the fervor of his neighbors and popular opinion with treason, he underscores the perils of the man who stands for objectivity and who is "determined to look a little more closely at matters with my own eyes," rather than join one party or be swept up in the emotional tide of popular opinion (1).

Hawthorne's description of "the mysterious and terrible Manassas...of all haunted places...thronged with ugly phantoms, ominous of mischief through ages before," and of the events of the battle as similar to "instances of a similar character in old romances, where great armies are long kept at bay by the arts of necromancers," (5) are viewed by Charles Adams as "a literary device that allows Hawthorne to talk not so much about the War, but about himself...about the limitations of the romancer's imagination in its effort to come to grips with history". Adams points out that the "literary imagination ...depends

on aesthetic distance from its subject," as requisite to allow Hawthorne to gain the perspective needed to engage with the events of the day (353).

Hawthorne's use of metaphor to create secondary political subtexts for his narrative has now evolved to the point of the real evoking the metaphoric. He describes his visit to the Capitol where "the freestone walls of the central edifice are pervaded with great cracks, and threaten to come thundering down, under the immense weight of the iron dome,--an appropriate catastrophe enough, if it should occur on the day when we drop the Southern stars out of our flag" (4). His forthright portrayal of the burden of institutionalized slavery as the overwhelming force which threatens the structure of all that has been built as the home of united national aspirations assumes universal symbolism to real events.

Another metaphoric structure in the dystopia of the nightmarish reality of the aftermath of battle is a tavern in Alexandria which was the site of a fatal encounter. Hawthorne describes the work of "memorial-hunters" who have removed every part of the original wood work and wallpaper and which now have been replaced, "and thus it becomes something like a metaphysical question whether the place of murder actually exists" (8). The accusations of flippancy and callousness which were leveled at both the essay and its author most likely stem from statements like this which, in contrast to the predominating sentiment to enshrine every location and mystify events connected with the massive slaughter of the war, question the practice of wartime propaganda and hagiography.

"The dismal ruins of the United States arsenal," at Harper's Ferry, "consisting of piles of broken bricks and a shape of shapeless demolition, amid which we saw gun-

barrels in heaps of hundreds together. They were the relics of the conflagration, bent with the heat of the fire and rusted with the wintry rain,"(13) evoke the metaphoric destruction of weapons of war in "Earth's Holocaust." By implication this aftermath of destruction is as futile as the earlier one.

Observing the latest in "the tendency of modern improvement," the Peaceable Man ironically points to the Monitor as the newest mechanical innovation of warfare. He declares that "the Millennium is certainly approaching, because human strife is to be transferred from the heart and personality of man into cunning contrivances of machinery, strewing the field with broken engines, but damaging nobody's little finger except by accident" (19). The dehumanizing force of the technology of bloodshed and the human heart as the site of essential power for good or evil are brought into dramatic and contradictory relief highlighting the futility of material change which cannot affect the root cause of hostility.

In contrast to the geographic locations and material objects, it is the remnants of life that have been destroyed that evoke a "far profounder emotion." The wrecks of the frigates Congress and Cumberland lying abandoned offshore, the Peaceable Man observes that "a remnant of the dead crew still man the sunken ship, and sometimes a drowned body floats up to the surface" (18). No irony or flippancy is evident here, or in the concluding sentence in the earlier passage facetiously considering the "aesthetic point of view," of the effects of the war's destruction, which states with terrible simplicity, "the carcasses of horses were scattered along the wayside" (9).

Hawthorne's past characterization of the human aspects of the forces leading to the war is recalled by his repeated use of the phrase "foul scurf" he had earlier employed to

describe slavery, and now uses ambiguously to describe the “state of disease and decrepitude,” which maintains the moral debasement of the rectitude of Southern faith in the justice of warfare in the cause of maintaining slavery (15).

The metaphoric personification of the struggle for dominance of North against South by Priscilla and Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance is evoked in Hawthorne’s comment in “Chiefly About War Matters,” which recalls Zenobia’s hostility towards her sister, her insistence on depicting her as a threat and enemy, as well as her demands for Hollingsworth’s allegiance to her only. Zenobia’s positioning herself as victim of treachery by Priscilla and Hollingsworth is the personal dimension of the political in this passage:

The many dynasties in which the southern character has been predominant, and contrast the genial courtesy, the warm and graceful freedom of that region, with what they call (though I utterly disagree with them) the frigidity of our Northern manners, and the Western plainness of the President. They have a conscientious, though mistaken belief, that the South was driven out of the Union by intolerable wrong on our part, and that we are responsible for having compelled true patriots to love only half their country instead of the whole, and brave soldiers to draw their swords against the Constitution which they would have once died for,--to draw them, too, with a bitterness of animosity which is the only symptom of brotherhood (since brothers hate each other best) that no longer exists. (21)

Hawthorne returns to the theme with which he concluded "Earth's Holocaust" as he considers the true burden and costs of the war on the human beings who find themselves in the center of the maelstrom that has changed the landscape they inhabit. He observes a recently emancipated "party of contrabands," wandering aimlessly. Since no provision has been made by the government or the armed forces for their basic needs, they are adrift and unprepared for an unknown future. As he warns, "whoever may be benefited by the results of this war, it will not be the present generation of negroes, the childhood of whose race is now gone forever, and who must henceforth fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms". Whether this text can be characterized as racist by nineteenth-century terms is not the intent of this essay. The essential point here and, in the passage which follows it describing the "historical circumstance" and the second voyage of the Mayflower which brought slaves to Virginia, quoted earlier, Hawthorne clearly advocates for the assumption of moral and material responsibility by whites to ease the passage to freedom of "our brethren" (10). It can be clearly argued from the perspective of the intervening years that the failure of government and many abolitionists in the war's aftermath to heed this pragmatic observation resulted in untold suffering and is at the root of many of the crises facing the nation in the twenty-first century and which continue to divide the national house.

The human dimension is ultimately the last and central to Hawthorne's concern in this essay. He states that "The greatest errors of both men and women often spring from their sweetest and most generous qualities; and so, undoubtedly, thousands of warm-hearted, sympathetic, and impulsive persons have joined the Rebels, not from any real zeal for the cause, but because, between two conflicting loyalties, they chose that which

necessarily lay near the heart" (8). The compassion expressed in these statements may account for Henry James' comments, reported by Reynolds (2003), of the essay as "an example of the way an imaginative man judges current events-trying to see the other side as well as his own, to feel what his adversary feels, and to present his view of the case" (143).

In a reiteration of his lifelong rejection of extremism and the moral blindness of theoretical radicalism, Hawthorne writes, "No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for" (15).

Reynolds (2005) describes Hawthorne's views in this essay as a "politics of imagination", which allowed him to resist the kind of groupthink leading to violence and death. His habitual assumption of the perspectives of different persons...and his exposure to the viewpoints of those in foreign culture...enabled him to appreciate multiple points of view in the midst of partisan propaganda and radical violence," and espouse a politics of compromise and accommodation (64).

The Peaceable Man seeks for a positive sign in the horrific scenes of destruction he witnesses and observes the power of language and history to recall "an epoch of terror and suffering: they will make our country dearer and more interesting to us, and afford fit soil for poetry to root itself in...so that our children will be less prodigal than their fathers in sacrificing good institutions to passionate impulses and impracticable theories" (9).

Under the Capitol Dome, in peril of imminent collapse, the Peaceable Man finds "one man...who was satisfactorily adequate to the business which brought him thither,"

the artist Emanuel Leutze, engaged in creating his great fresco. In the midst of death and destruction “the artist keeps right on, firm of heart and hand, drawing his outlines with an unwavering pencil, beautifying and idealizing our rude, material life, and thus manifesting that we have an indefensible claim to a more enduring national existence.” The author observes that “it was an absolute comfort, indeed, to find Leutze, so quietly busy at this great national work...the work will be emphatically original and American, embracing characteristics that neither art nor literature have yet dealt with, and producing new forms of artistic beauty” (4).

The figure of the solitary artist, removed from the confusion and chaos of warfare, intent on questioning, transforming and beautifying the mundane reality of his world, engaged in the purposeful act of creation, amidst the scenes of dissension and carnage and forces of destruction that threaten the devastation of every institution of civilization, is ultimately the only one Hawthorne truly identifies with and describes with unambiguous optimistic affection. The power of art, as depicted in this scene, lies not in the possibility of the creation of new reality by the destruction of the flawed existing social structures, but in its ability to focus on the particular, essential and profound.

Sacvan Bercovitch identifies the human effort to achieve what should appropriately be decided by God in a single minded pursuit of individually defined good as the defining similarity between the witchcraft trials of Puritan Massachusetts and political and theological radicalism of the anti-slavery movement of Hawthorne's time. It is only through self-knowledge, penitence and compromise that human beings could aspire to individual and communal reconciliation. In Bercovitch's analysis, this posits a belief that a pursuit of a “single view, *either justice or mercy*, was entering into a devil's

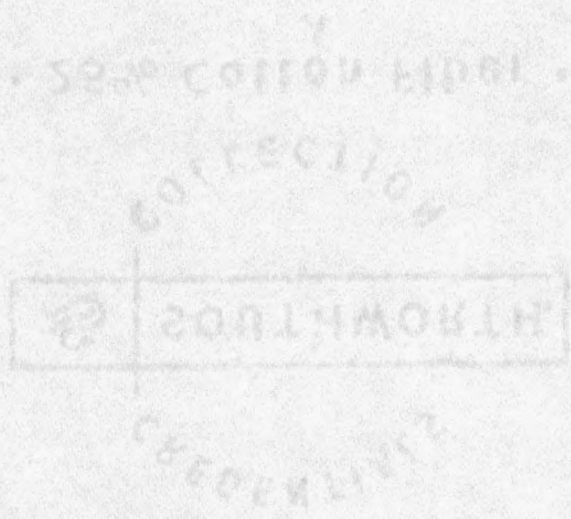
pact”, since it was based on a dishonest denial of one aspect of one’s nature, and thus was fundamentally immoral (637). (Italics in the original)

This moral grounding in the centrality of compromise and “the morality of both/and” requires a significant commitment to self-restraint and yet allows for an honest acknowledgement of the existence of multiple views, needs, and experiences. Hawthorne “urges gradualism and consensus in the expectation that...consensus will yield proximate justice” (Bercovitch 638). Seen in this context, Hawthorne’s view in Franklin Pierce’s biography that:

looks at slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time. By some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream”, may initially be seen as naïve and disingenuous, but it is consistent with the moral choices assumed in a belief in the need for a continual pursuit of human redemption to be found through “the double sense of self-containment, as retaining and restraining the self (638).

Hawthorne’s thematic concerns in the later works showed a consistent similarity in the intentions and themes from the early tales to the major romances. From 1842 on, the intellectual and moral dilemmas of mid-nineteenth-century America would occupy the thematic center of Hawthorne’s works. At the center of The Blithedale Romance and “Chiefly About War Matters” are those same concerns articulated by the narrator of “Earth’s Holocaust”: the search for human perfectibility within the ideal society of the

American utopian project and the very contradictory realities that underlay it. The seductive perils of moral certainty implicit in the pursuit of perfection are the obstacle and ultimate downfall of reformer and his work.



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