

## ABSTRACT

BEAUDOIN, MARIA ELAINE. Art and Sexual Repression: Miles Coverdale and *The Blithedale Romance*. (Under the direction of Allen F. Stein.)

Throughout Nathaniel Hawthorne's body of work, including his short stories and novels, there is a strong connection between artistic production and repressed sexual longing or genuine love for another person. Most of Hawthorne's artists repress their desires for another person because of social circumstances or the lack of courage to express them, and therefore, they channel those emotions through their artistic efforts. Not only do those artists who are sexually repressed use their art as an outlet, but Hawthorne shows that they are also those artists who produce the greatest and most long-lasting work. The artists who are able to find long-lasting love can create only minor or ephemeral art.

Hawthorne's third novel, *The Blithedale Romance*, most fully explores the relationship between the creation of art and the expression of sexuality by the artist. This novel, with Miles Coverdale as Hawthorne's only first-person narrator, provides the most extensive portrait of a self-isolated, sexually repressed artist, which is arguably a thinly veiled portrait of Hawthorne himself. Because Coverdale remains a bachelor without ever finding an outlet for his passions, he creates a genuinely significant work of art: a fictional account of his experiences at Blithedale, *The Blithedale Romance*.

ART AND SEXUAL REPRESSION: MILES COVERDALE AND *THE  
BLITHEDALE ROMANCE*

by

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## BIOGRAPHY

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## Preface

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful," when Annie visits Owen Warland in his shop and admires his creation in process, she touches it with a needle and destroys months of work. Owen tells her that her touch has "undone the toil of months, and the thought of a lifetime!" (918). Owen labors intensively over his artistic pursuits, the creation of a mechanical butterfly imbued with spirit, because he cannot be with Annie, the woman he has loved since childhood. Owen lacks the self-confidence or the encouragement from Annie to express his feelings for her, and so he represses his desires for her. When Owen chastises Annie for her mischievous conduct and destroying his creation-in-process, he makes a direct link between his artistic pursuits and his thoughts of love for her. Not only does she destroy his work, but she also destroys his hopes that she will sympathize with his efforts, which are motivated by his love for her. Months later, when Owen finds out that Annie is engaged to another man, he falls ill and returns to his artistic toils with even more zeal. Owen reflects that "he had persisted in connecting all his dreams of artistical success with Annie's image; she was the visible shape in which the spiritual power that he worshipped, and on whose altar he hoped to lay a not unworthy offering, was made manifest to him" (921). Owen works with Annie's image in his mind; he channels his desires for her through his artistic creation with the thought that she will sympathize with his efforts. Owen is here typical of many of Hawthorne's artists, and his artistic pursuits are motivated by his love for a woman and his inability to express it directly to her.

Throughout Hawthorne's body of work, including his short stories and novels, there is a strong connection between artistic production and repressed sexual longing or genuine love for another person. Though sexual longing does not always indicate love, a genuine love that goes unexpressed is always accompanied by sexual repression. Most of Hawthorne's artists repress their desires for another person because of social circumstances or a lack of courage to express them, and therefore, they channel those emotions through their artistic efforts. Because they cannot find an outlet for their sexual passions or their love, these artists retreat into their own art, which also often leads to isolation. Owen Warland could not express his love for Annie and so toiled endlessly over his pursuit of imbuing mechanics with spirituality, and thus isolated himself from his fellow townsmen. In the short story "Drowne's Wooden Image," the sculptor, Drowne, creates a statue of a woman that seems to be imbued with so much life that the townspeople speculate on the possibility of a burning, hidden love. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale cannot continue their love affair because of the scrutiny of the townspeople, and because of Dimmesdale's own conventionality and guilt, and so they both turn to their artistic pursuits—sewing and oration, respectively—to express their hidden love and desire for one another. In *The Marble Faun*, Kenyon works diligently on his sculpture because he cannot freely express his love for Hilda. Hilda also toils over her paintings since she cannot express her desires for Kenyon because she must protect her chastity as the guardian of the shrine of the virgin. Finally, in *The Blithedale Romance*, Miles Coverdale and Zenobia both pour their hidden sexual desires into their artistic endeavors. However, Hawthorne shows a connection not only between

artistic endeavor and artistic production, but also between sexual repression and artistic success.

Not only do those artists who are sexually repressed use their art as an outlet, but Hawthorne shows that they are also those artists who produce the greatest and most long-lasting work. The artists who are able to find long-lasting love create only minor or ephemeral art. Kenyon and Hilda in *The Marble Faun* marry each other and give up their artistic pursuits. Hilda abandons her painting completely, and there is no suggestion that Kenyon will continue his sculpture. Holgrave also abandons his artistic pursuits in *The House of the Seven Gables* once he falls in love with Phoebe and marries her. It is only those artists who continue to find no outlet for their love or desire who create truly great or lasting works of art when their medium allows it. Sexual repression, ironically, can lead to intense, compelling art; it can even lead to truly great, lasting art. Owen Warland creates the mechanical butterfly, which is only a symbol of his ability to create the beautiful that will remain with him forever. Drowne creates the sculpture of the mysterious woman, which inspires the entire town. Finally, and most notably, Miles Coverdale creates the tale of *The Blithedale Romance*. This novel, with Coverdale as narrator, provides the most extensive portrait of a self-isolated, sexually repressed artist, which is arguably a thinly veiled portrait of Hawthorne himself.

In his depiction of the artist, Hawthorne creates an interesting conflict between finding true love and the isolation and anxiety required to create truly great art. In order to express love freely, the artist must be left with the ability to create only minor or ephemeral

art. To create great and lasting art, the artist, it seems, must be isolated and sexually repressed. This depiction of the artist could be argued to represent Hawthorne's own fears about his isolation or his own sense of sexual repression before he married. Biographical studies could argue whether Hawthorne's views either reflected his fears about his isolation as caused by his art or justified his own sense of isolation and sexual repression. Whether conveying a portrait of himself, or a portrait of all artists, Hawthorne's tales represent a paradoxical relationship with the artist and the art created in which the artist has to choose whether to create truly great, lasting art or to live a full life with the ability to express love and to be a full member of society.

## Chapter 1

In each of his four major novels, and in several of his short stories, Nathaniel Hawthorne explores the character of the artist, the circumstances leading to artistic creation, and the consequences of artistic production. Overwhelmingly, for many of Hawthorne's artists, there is a strong link between artistic production and sexual desire. For some artists, their sexual nature is linked to their choice of artistic medium, as is the case with Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, which I will discuss in depth in Chapter Two. Also, for most of Hawthorne's artists, the repression of sexual desires, or the inability to express them, leads to the production of great and lasting art, as in the short story "The Artist of the Beautiful." Owen Warland immerses himself more deeply in the artistic process each time he is snubbed or ignored by his love, Annie. Typically, for Hawthorne, those artists who are able to find love or an outlet for their sexual desire are only able to create minor or ephemeral art. No matter what the artistic medium—whether traditional modes like painting, sculpting, and writing, or those not usually regarded as art, such as sewing (which Hawthorne often treated as "art")—there is a strong link between sexual desire and artistic creation.

In "The Artist of the Beautiful," Owen Warland is able to create truly great art because he falls in love with Annie and lacks the courage to express that to her before she marries another man. Owen toils over his artistic pursuits with thoughts of Annie in his mind. He thinks "what help would it be to him, in his lonely toil, if he could gain the sympathy of the only being whom he loved!" (917). Owen never tells Annie how he feels about her, though, as "outwardly, he had been no ardent or enterprising lover; the career of his passion

had confined its tumults and vicissitudes so entirely within the artist's imagination, that Annie herself had scarcely more than a woman's intuitive perception of it" (921). Because Owen is sexually repressed, he uses his art as an outlet for the expression of his desires. He creates a great work of art, a butterfly that is imbued with spirit. When Owen hears Annie with her father on the street outside his shop, he thinks, "It was Annie herself!...I should have known it, by this throbbing of my heart, before I heard her father's voice. Ah, how it throbs! I shall scarcely be able to work again on this exquisite mechanism to-night" (911). Owen will not be able to work on his creation because his passions have been reawakened by Annie's presence, and his passions must be repressed for him to work. He tells himself, "Oh, throbbing heart, be quiet! If my labor be thus thwarted, there will come vague and unsatisfied dreams, which will leave me spiritless tomorrow" (911). Owen is alluding to his passions for Annie, and indirectly admits that his feelings for her have to be repressed in order to work on his art. Each time that Owen encounters Annie, his work is set back because his passions are awakened. Either his work suffers physically, as when Annie touches it with her needle—a metaphor for the damage that Annie's presence causes for the artistic process—or his work falters because his state of mind suffers. Owen's artistic process is directly related to the repression of his sexual desires for Annie, which are a part of his love for her.

Owen's creation, a mechanical butterfly imbued with spirit, represents his repressed sexuality, especially when contrasted with the ironwork of Robert Danforth, which has clear sexual overtones. Danforth's work displays his strength and virility. Hovenden and Annie see Danforth in his shop, and he "drew a white-hot bar of iron from the coals, laid it on the anvil, uplifted his arm of might, and was soon enveloped in the myriad of sparks, which the stroke

of his hammer scattered into the surrounding gloom” (908). Danforth’s motions could be compared to the sexual act with his strong blows and strokes suggesting sexual dominance. When Danforth visits Owen in his shop, he tells him, “I put more main strength into one blow of my sledge-hammer, than all that you have expended since you were a ‘prentice” (911). This exchange almost seems like a contest for sexual dominance, in which Danforth is claiming to be more powerful than Owen. Von Abele suggests that “Danforth...can join the feminine to himself and reproduce, the engine, condemned to celibacy, can only repeat itself—make copies with stamping dies and the like. The *creative* element is the female” (38). Therefore, although Owen does not consummate his passions, he does express them through his creation, which represents a thwarted sexuality. Because of his repressed sexuality, Owen creates a great work of art. In his work, “nature’s ideal butterfly was here realized in all its perfection; not in the pattern of such faded insects as flit among earthly flowers, but of those which hover across the meads of Paradise” (926). Owen’s butterfly does not last since it is crushed by Annie’s infant child, a creation that embodies fulfilled sexual desires. However, Owen still achieves an artistic triumph as the butterfly is only a symbol of what he has created. When Owen completed the butterfly, “the artist rose high enough to achieve the Beautiful, [and] the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of Reality” (931). As Fogle argues, the story is “a Romantic affirmation of the value of art and of the spiritual pre-eminence of the artist’s imagination, which intuitively penetrates to highest Goodness, Truth, and Beauty” (78). Owen’s achievement is hidden within himself. He has attained a higher state of mind whereby he can imagine the unimaginable. Because he

never found a romantic outlet for his passions, he was able to create great and lasting art, which was ultimately hidden within himself.

Like Owen Warland, the sculptor Drowne, in “Drowne’s Wooden Image,” creates art to express a repressed sexual passion for a woman that he loves. The force behind Drowne’s genius is a mystery to the townspeople, but there is some evidence of a hidden love that fuels his endeavor—a love that is thwarted because it is for the lover of Captain Hunnewell, for whom Drowne makes the statue. The townspeople catch Drowne “gazing with a lover’s passionate ardour into the face that his own hands created” (939). When Copley visits his shop, he catches Drowne “bending over the half-created shape, and stretching forth his arms as if he would have embraced and drawn it to his heart; while, had such a miracle been possible, his countenance expressed passion enough to communicate warmth and sensibility to the lifeless oak” (936). It is clear from Drowne’s intimacy with the sculpture that he represses love and passion for its subject. The narrator makes this explicit when he explains that to Drowne “there came a brief season of excitement, kindled by love. It rendered him a genius for that one occasion, but, quenched in disappointment, left him again the mechanical carver in the wood, without the power of even appreciating the work that his own hands had wrought” (943). According to Michael Wutz, “in an act of artistic transformation, he displaces his physical desires through the creation of an inspired *objet d’art*” (99). Drowne’s ability to imbue his form with life comes from his channeling of sexual desires through his art. He loses this ability once he has expunged those passions.

Because Drowne uses his artistic creation to express his thwarted love and sexual desires, and because he never finds an outlet for them, he is able to create truly great and lasting art. As Wutz notes, “in an act of sublimation, his pent-up sexual energies find a vicarious outlet in the supreme act of creation” (105). Drowne creates a wooden statue of the young woman that seems to come to life. The townspeople behold the statue for the first time and “felt impelled to remove their hats, and pay such reverence as was due to the richly dressed and beautiful young lady, who seemed to stand in the corner of the room” (938). Drowne’s statue seems so lifelike that “In the dark eyes, and around the voluptuous mouth, there played a look made up of pride, coquetry, and a gleam of mirthfulness” (939). Drowne’s image is so realistic that the townspeople began to see apparitions of the woman walking through town. When Copely sees the statue for the first time, he exclaims, “Here is the divine, the life-giving touch! What inspired hand is beckoning this wood to arise and live?” (936). Drowne produces a great work of art because he is driven by the need to express thwarted sexual passions. When he is finished with the statues, there was a rumor “that a young Portugese lady of rank, on some occasion of political or domestic disquietude, had fled from her home in Fayal, and put herself under the protection of Captain Hunnewell, on board of whose vessel, and at whose residence, she was sheltered until a change of affairs” (944). Hawthorne suggests that the impact of Drowne’s work will last long after the wood has fallen into decay.

In his first novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne continues to explore the relationship of art to repressed sexual desires. Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale have to hide their love for one another because of the restrictive Puritan society in which they live, and

therefore, must repress their sexual desires for one another. They each channel those desires through their individual artistic pursuits: embroidery for Hester and preaching for Dimmesdale. However, although they are sexually repressed artists who never find lasting love, they do not create great or lasting art. Instead, they only rise above the limitations of their art forms because the media they find available to them are not suitable for the creation of lasting art.

Hester Prynne uses embroidery to channel her repressed passions for Dimmesdale. She cannot express her love for Arthur Dimmesdale and so expresses her passion through her needlepoint. The scarlet letter, which Hester makes herself, is “fantastically embroidered with gold thread” (55). It is “a specimen of her delicate and imaginative skill of which the dames of court might have availed themselves, to add the richer and more spiritual adornment of human ingenuity to their fabrics of silk and gold” (76). The elaborate and beautiful quality of Hester’s embroidery is a testimony to the surging passions within her. It is also a testament to her artistic ability. Nina Baym argues that “her gift for needlework is the expression of an artist’s nature; the embroideries that she produces are genuine works of art” (66). Richard Brodhead agrees, and argues that “her personalized letter is presented as an act of creative self-expression, a product of her own imagination that has its meaning in terms of her own knowledge of herself” (45). The narrator comments on Hester’s embroidery, making a direct correlation between Hester’s art and the expression of her sexual desires: “Women derive a pleasure, incomprehensible to the other sex, from the delicate toil of the needle. To Hester Prynne, it might have been a mode of expressing, and therefore soothing, the passion of her life” (78). Hester does not engage in her artistic pursuits merely

for money or pleasure, but only to channel her repressed passions. However, because she chooses sewing as her artistic medium, she is not able to create lasting art, but rather can only transcend the limitations of her art and to excel within the medium. Though she never finds an outlet for her passions, she cannot create lasting art because of the medium that she has chosen, but does create temporarily great art.

Like Hester, Arthur Dimmesdale channels his repressed sexual desires into art: religious oratory. Even before his involvement with Hester, the unmarried young minister's "eloquence and religious fervor had already given the earnest of high eminence in his profession" (61). When Dimmesdale meets Hester in the woods after their affair, his dormant sexual passions are revitalized and his preaching becomes even more passionate. To the people at the Election Day Sermon, Dimmesdale's voice "breathed passion and pathos, and emotions high or tender, in a tongue native to the human heart, wherever educated" (235). As the townspeople listened to Dimmesdale's voice, they could hear "The complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind; beseeching its sympathy or forgiveness—at every moment—in each accent—and never in vain!" (235-236). However, only Hester, who shares the same passions, and who also uses her art as an outlet for expression of repressed passions, can fully understand the power behind his preaching. Hester "listened with such intentions, and sympathized so intimately, that the sermon had throughout a meaning for her entirely apart from its indistinguishable words" (235). Like Hester, Dimmesdale chooses an artistic medium that has no capacity for creating great or lasting art because he does not write down

his sermons or publish them. Therefore, he only temporarily transcends the limitations of his art form, giving exceptional sermons that inspire for a limited time.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne began to explore some of the issues he would expand on in all of his later works concerning the nature of artistic production and how it relates to sexual expression. Each of the main characters cannot express his or her sexual desires—because of social restrictions or because of the consequences of the affair between Hester and Dimmesdale— and chooses to focus on artistic pursuits to channel repressed energies through them.

In Hawthorne's second novel, *The House of the Seven Gables*, there is only one character who practices traditional artistic forms like writing, and, what was a relatively new artistic medium at the time, photography. Like Holgrave in this novel, those of Hawthorne's sexually repressed artists who eventually find love as an outlet for their passions are only able to make minor or ephemeral art. The irony for Hawthorne's artists is that they must remain isolated and sexually repressed if they are ever to create great or lasting art, and if they do find love, that they will never be capable of such greatness.

Holgrave is referred to as "the artist" throughout the book, though it is obvious that this does not refer to his main occupation: daguerreotypy. He is described as a wanderer who has held many positions and traveled widely. His role as a daguerreotypist,

was of no more importance in his own view, nor likely to be more permanent, than any of the preceding ones. It had been taken up with the careless alacrity of an adventurer, who had his bread to earn. It would be thrown aside as carelessly,

whenever he should choose to earn his bread by some other equally digressive means.

(164-165)

Holgrave has no personal investment in his art, which he produces with seeming effortlessness. He seems to recognize this and tells Phoebe of daguerreotypy: “While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it. There is, at least, no flattery in my humble line of art” (84). Holgrave’s pictures seem to reveal more about their subjects’ characters than he seeks to capture. His work as a daguerreotypist, and the voyeuristic distance it allows him, reflects his personality since he remains emotionally uninvolved with the other characters. He studies the inhabitants of the house and “allowed no slightest circumstance of their individualities to escape him” (165). Von Abele notes that Holgrave “goes about his business of watching, like the lens of one of his own cameras” (62). Yet, Holgrave does not allow himself to grow closer to them, and in his interactions with them “seemed more in quest of mental food, not heart-sustenance” (165). Holgrave distances himself from forming emotional relationships until he meets Phoebe, and then his real art form, storytelling, blossoms.

Once he becomes more involved with Phoebe, Holgrave’s storytelling art becomes more significant, and it parallels his ancestor’s practice of witchcraft in its ability to control another person. Holgrave does not freely express his desires for Phoebe, and so he channels them through his art, which takes the form of writing and storytelling. When Holgrave finishes telling Phoebe the story of Maule and Alice, Phoebe’s eyelids drooped and “she

leaned slightly towards him, and seemed almost to regulate her breath by his” (197).

Phoebe’s state resembles that of Alice when Maule mesmerized her. Holgrave realizes that:

With but one wave of his hand and a corresponding effort of his will, he could complete his mastery over Phoebe’s yet free and virgin spirit: he could establish an influence over this good, pure, and simple child, as dangerous, and perhaps as disastrous, as that which the carpenter of his legend had acquired and exercised over the ill-fated Alice. (198)

Like Maule’s witchcraft, Holgrave’s storytelling has the ability to control another, which carries with it sexual overtones. Holgrave’s art expresses repressed sexual desires for Phoebe that manifest themselves when he tells her the story. As Hyatt Waggoner notes, “Power so great as this brings with it great danger. Hawthorne’s metaphor for art...is witchcraft” (26).

When Phoebe and Holgrave marry at the end of the novel, it breaks the spell and art no longer has any power. When they marry, Holgrave is released from his need for the artistic impulse because he has a natural outlet for the expression of his passions motivated by his love for Phoebe. Once they are married, Holgrave tells Phoebe, “I have a presentiment that, hereafter, it will be my lot to set out trees, to make fences...in a word, to conform myself to laws, and the peaceful practice of society” (286). Holgrave no longer has any need to channel his sexuality through his art since he can freely express it to his wife.

Like Holgrave, Kenyon, in Hawthorne’s final novel, *The Marble Faun*, creates great art when he cannot express his sexual passions, but abandons his art when he marries the object of his desires. Hawthorne continues to focus on the relationship between artistic creation and sexual repression in this novel. Each of the main characters—Miriam, Kenyon,

and Hilda—has a strong connection to art that is directly linked to the inability to express sexual desire. Kenyon cannot express his love for Hilda because she guards her virginal chastity and he feels that she is beyond his reach; Miriam represses her sexual desires as a result of a questionable relationship with an evil man; and Hilda does not express sexual desire because she protects the shrine of the virgin. Although the characters are considered exceptional artists at one time, they all lose their abilities to produce great art after they are touched by love and find an outlet for their passions.

Kenyon's artistic production is an expression of his sexual desires. Because Hilda is a virgin and does not allow herself the free expression of affection, Kenyon cannot express his love or his desires for her and so must repress them; his only outlet for expressing them is in his sculpture. However, Kenyon's sexuality and desire are only expressed through his art when he sculpts the feminine form, in particular Hilda's form. His feelings for Hilda emerge through a sculpted model of her hand. Kenyon devotes "such loving care and nicest art...that the palm really seemed to have a tenderness in its very substance. Touching those lovely fingers—had the jealous sculptor allowed you to touch—could hardly believe that a virgin warmth would not steal from them into your heart" (94). As Gene Barnett notes, "Illustrated here, of course, is not only his love for Hilda and his determination to possess her hand in marriage, but also his way of viewing every aspect of life about him in terms of his art" (238). As Kenyon looks at the hand, it is so endowed with Hilda's spirit that there, "rose tumultuously into his consciousness that strong love for Hilda, which it was his habit to confine in one of the heart's inner chambers, because he had found no encouragement to bring it forward" (205). Kenyon's thoughts in this passage also reveal his conscious

repression of his feelings for Hilda. Kenyon admits that he can never hope to win Hilda's real hand, and so he says that he stole it from her for his art: "After gazing at it so often—and even holding it once, for an instant, when Hilda was not thinking of me—I should be a burglar indeed, if I could not now reproduce it to something like the life" (95). Although Kenyon only ventures to sculpt her hand, he endows it with all the love and desire that he feels for her and cannot openly express, thus vivifying the otherwise frozen form and producing an exceptional piece of art. However, when he marries Hilda at the end of the novel, he loses this ability to create great art because he has found an outlet for his desires. At the end of the novel, there is no suggestion that Kenyon will continue with his art, and Hilda has already abandoned her work copying the great masters.

Although the sexually repressed artist can produce many kinds of art, sculpture, especially in marble, always embodies sexual desires in Hawthorne's fiction. Hawthorne's sculptors are always men, and a truly achieved sculpture can embody the objects of their sexual desires for eternity. As Roy Male argues, "Sculpture, as he views it in this book, is essentially a masculine art form. It freezes an image in space and has nothing temporal about it" (165). As the artist sublimates his sexual desire, his subject is shaped in the marble for eternity. Valenti describes Hawthorne's conception of sculpture:

Uncongenial as the "fossilizing process" and "frozen art" of sculpture were to Hawthorne's notions of the ephemeral and transient in the human condition, he had put the idea of petrification to use in his fiction as the physical corollary of a spiritual stagnation and hardness. When, however, an artifact was created with love and

confidence in an ideal, the opposite of petrification might occur, and the living, moving statue would be vivified with the spirit of its maker. (329)

Sculpture can also be an especially sensual form of art, especially when clay is used because it is “more interesting than even the final marble, as being the intimate production of the sculptor himself, moulded throughout with his loving hands, and nearest to his imagination and heart” (Hawthorne 90). In contrast, painters have the ability to create great works of art, but their medium is not as long-lasting or as intimate. The great masters “left inevitable hollowness in their works, because in the most renowned of them, they essayed to express to the world what they had not in their own souls” (Hawthorne 264). Those artists were emotionally empty in their work and “They substituted a keen intellectual perception, and a marvelous knack of external arrangement, instead of the live sympathy and sentiment which should have been their inspiration” (Hawthorne 264). Any art that is created without love or sexual desire fuelled by love will inevitably be considered empty and shallow.

In his final novel, *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne explores the relationship of great art to the expression of repressed sexuality. Only by expressing repressed or frustrated sexuality through their art, can the characters create great art that is imbued with the living spirit. Once they find love and an outlet for their passions, they lose their ability to create great art.

The ideas about the relationship between art and the expression of repressed desires that Hawthorne explores in each of these three novels and in his short stories are treated most extensively in his third novel, *The Blithedale Romance*. It is the only novel that has a first-person narrator and the only story that has a main character who is primarily a writer.

## Chapter 2

Nathaniel Hawthorne's third novel, *The Blithedale Romance*, depicts an experiment in utopian living based on a similar experiment at Brook Farm, in which Hawthorne participated. While the novel explores social issues, it also explores the relationship between the creation of art and the expression or recognition of sexuality in the artist. As with Hawthorne's other novels, all of the main characters are artists of some kind: Miles Coverdale is a poet and writer, Zenobia is a speaker and writer, Hollingsworth is a speaker, and Priscilla is a seamstress. As in many of Hawthorne's other works, the sexuality of each artist is directly related to either the type of art chosen or the success of its production. The artistic medium of the female characters—Zenobia and Priscilla—is symbolic of their sexuality. The male characters, Coverdale and Hollingsworth, are unable to express their sexual desires freely and channel them through their art. Hollingsworth, like Holgrave in *The House of the Seven Gables*, is ultimately released from his need for artistic production when he marries Priscilla. However, Coverdale remains a bachelor without an outlet for his passions, and so creates a fictional account of his experiences at Blithedale, a genuinely significant work of art: *The Blithedale Romance*.

The experiment at Blithedale is doomed from the beginning because of the failings inherent in human nature, as portrayed through each of the main characters. Each of the characters hides behind a guise of some kind that veils his or her true nature. Zenobia is associated with her flower and hides behind the veil of her name. Priscilla is associated with the veiled lady, and her identity as Zenobia's sister is hidden until nearly the end of the

novel. Hollingsworth sacrifices human relationships to his vision for social reform. Moodie wears an eye patch, which hides his face as his true identity and past are also hidden. Most importantly, Coverdale is unable to form intimate relationships with anyone because he represses his passions. As Roy Male notes, “the gap between art and experience proved to be one reason for the failure of the Blithedale experiment” (35). Coverdale channels his passions through his art, rather than expressing them. Each of the characters represses his or her true character, and therefore, the utopian experiment fails.

For the main female characters in the work, their art is indicative of the type of sexuality that they embrace. Throughout Hawthorne’s fiction, women turn to sewing as a form of art—one of the only ones afforded them. Like many of Hawthorne’s other female characters, Priscilla is an artist in the craft of sewing. Priscilla’s art is a symbol of her character and her sexual nature. Priscilla represents the type of traditional femininity that is delicate, submissive, sexually pure, and devoted to the man she chooses—who ultimately turns out to be Hollingsworth. She makes silk purses that require “great delicacy and beauty of the manufacture” (35), purses that Coverdale sees as “a symbol of Priscilla’s own mystery” (35). When Priscilla presents Coverdale with a nightcap that she has made for him, it is so artistically crafted that Coverdale tells her, “How admirably you have done it! No, no; I never can think of wearing such an exquisitely wrought night-cap as this, unless it be in the day-time, when I sit up to receive company!” (49). Priscilla assures him that it is not as exquisitely wrought as he might believe, and tells him, “I could have embroidered it and made it much prettier, if I pleased” (49). Priscilla could make a more finely embroidered cap had she devoted more of her energies to it, as she would for a cap that was meant for a

husband. Though Priscilla may not be conscious of the blossoming sexuality in her, she channels it through her art, which is evident in the beauty and detail of it. Coverdale reflects that Priscilla “except with her needle, and those little wooden instruments for purse-making—was as unserviceable a member of society as any young lady in the land” (69-70). Priscilla, as a traditionally submissive woman, reflects the desires of the man in her life. She does not exert her own will or desire. As Miriam benefited from sewing in *The Marble Faun*, “only women, the narrator implies, benefit from such ‘secondary’ activities, and they benefit because continual contact with these ‘gentle interests of life’ lessens their ‘morbid sensibility’” (Brooke 84). The art of sewing, which she masters so well, reflects the traditional sphere of women, enforcing the idea that Priscilla embodies the role of traditional womanhood.

In contrast, Zenobia is a sensual woman who exudes sexual confidence and who threatens the idea of female submission. She is an artist of many forms, including oration, storytelling, and writing, all of which are traditionally practiced by men. Zenobia is the only artist who seems to use her art consciously as an outlet for her sexual desires, as all the other artists seem to be unaware or unable to express their own sexuality. Zenobia’s questionable past with Westervelt has at once awakened her sexuality and hindered her expression of it because she has no outlet for it since society condemns her actions, causing sexual frustration that is channeled through her art. Zenobia has so much sexual energy within her that “nature never intended [her] for a cook” (46), but rather intended her for artistic pursuits. Zenobia is not the type of submissive and traditional woman that Priscilla represents. Instead, she is an independent and sexual woman. Her sexual nature is reflected in her art, which is passionate

and traditionally practiced by male artists, who were independent and not as scrutinized for their sexual conduct. She can read from Shakespeare “with a depth of tragic power, or breadth of comic effect, that made one feel it an intolerable wrong to the world, that she did not at once go upon the stage” (98). In addition to her many artistic gifts, “Zenobia had the gift of telling a fanciful little story, off hand, in a way that made it greatly more effective, than it was usually found to be, when she afterwards elaborated the same production with her pen” (99). Zenobia recognizes the power of her own art, but tells Coverdale, “It is with the living voice, alone, that [women] can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart” (11). Zenobia understands that only through succeeding at art forms that were mastered by men, like oratory and writing, can women attain equality and independence.

The legend of the veiled lady is symbolic of both Priscilla and Zenobia and their sexuality. In Zenobia’s legend, the veiled lady asks Theodore to kiss her before he lifts the veil so that she will be his wife. Theodore instead chooses to unveil her, to discover her hidden sexual character, before he seals himself to her with a kiss of love. Zenobia claims that the veiled lady then appeared to a community of transcendentalists and was to be Zenobia’s enemy “in love, in worldly fortune, in all [her] pursuit of happiness” (106). Priscilla does indeed become Zenobia’s enemy in the competition for Hollingsworth’s affections and the possession of her wealth. However, for both women, the veil represents their sexual mystery. Zenobia becomes “unveiled” when she becomes involved with Westervelt, whereas Priscilla remains veiled until she is married to Hollingsworth. The veil “insulate [d] her from the material world, from time and space” (8), as well as from moral

impurities and sexual improprieties. Unlike what Westervelt does to Zenobia, Hollingsworth does not unveil the secret of Priscilla's sexuality until he has pledged his love to her. Zenobia's early unveiling forces her to turn to less diffident, more traditionally masculine forms of artistic expression that require the use of her body and appearing in public as an outlet for her released sexual energies, while Priscilla is able to content herself with more traditionally feminine art forms, like sewing, since she retains her sexual purity. Therefore, when Hollingsworth finds Priscilla at the village hall under the physical veil, "the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto envisioned her" (185). Priscilla is only ruled by the power of her true love to whom she has pledged herself.

Unlike the female characters whose type of art is primarily representative of their sexuality, the male characters, Coverdale and Hollingsworth, create art that is used to express their sexual desires. The ability to express the passions they feel directly influences the success of their art. Hollingsworth, like Dimmesdale, is an orator and channels his repressed sexuality through his art. Like Dimmesdale, Hollingsworth is only capable of creating ephemeral art because of the medium that he has chosen. Both Zenobia and Priscilla fall in love with Hollingsworth, but he does not love either of them. Though of the two women, Hollingsworth has "a still more exquisite enjoyment of Priscilla's silent sympathy with his purposes, so unalloyed with criticism, and therefore more grateful than any other intellectual approbation, which always involves a possible reserve of latent censure" (73). Hollingsworth chooses to be with Priscilla, but he makes this choice more for her obedience to him and for her conforming to the traditional idea of submissive womanhood that he desires than for her

own personality and sexual being. Hollingsworth tells Zenobia that woman's "place is at man's side. Her office, that of the Sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning Believer" (113). Hollingsworth describes the ideal woman much as Zenobia describes Priscilla. Zenobia tells Coverdale that Priscilla "is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (112). Hollingsworth chooses to be with Priscilla, who represents this idea of womanhood, because he sacrifices intimacy for his vision of reform. Coverdale reflects, "there was something else in Hollingsworth, besides flesh and blood, and sympathies and affections, and celestial spirit" (66). Hollingsworth has devoted all of his being to one purpose: his philanthropical pursuits. He is so fixed on his one purpose that Coverdale compares him to "the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate, holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft" (195). Because he cannot free himself from his visions of reform, Hollingsworth is unable to love freely and must channel his passions through his art. By the end of the novel, Coverdale finds Hollingsworth living a reclusive life with Priscilla, stripped of his plans for reform and lacking any motivation to speak to the public again. As James Wohlpart suggests in his reading of Hawthorne's short story "Egotism," "the love of a wife might cure the artist not only of his diseased mind but also of his idealist frame of mind" (458). While Hollingsworth is cured of his idealism through the love of Priscilla, his art also fails, as it must, once he releases his passions.

As Hollingsworth is an artist, he also channels all of his natural affections for man into his oratory, not just his love or sexual desire for women. He plans to convert the farm at Blithedale, the location of an experiment in human companionship and brotherhood, into a place to reform criminals. Though Hollingsworth's plan seems to be one that would benefit

humanity and would seem to be motivated by love and sympathy for his fellow man, the single-mindedness of purpose that he invests in it destroys any natural affections or sympathies that lie within him. Hollingsworth and Coverdale both seem to recognize this and, in fact, they comment on it several times throughout the novel. Coverdale reflects that philanthropists like Hollingsworth “have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no purpose. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second” (66). Outside of his philanthropic pursuits, Hollingsworth seems to be more in touch with the human sympathies through his oration.

Coverdale reflects:

No other speech of man has ever moved me like some of those discourses. It seemed most pitiful—a positive calamity to the world—that a treasury of golden thoughts should thus be scattered, by the liberal handful, down among us three, when a thousand hearers might have been the richer for them; and Hollingsworth the richer, likewise, by the sympathy of multitudes. (110)

But, in the end, Hollingsworth cannot divorce himself from his single-mindedness of purpose and become a part of the natural flow of human sympathies. Therefore, he channels his passions through his art until he can release them in his marriage to Priscilla, at which time he also abandons his visions of reform.

Like Hollingsworth, Miles Coverdale not only suppresses his sexuality, but does not even recognize any of his own sexual desires and so channels them subconsciously through his art: the tale itself of Blithedale. Coverdale remains oblivious to his own sexuality to the

point that he seems impotent or asexual. Through an analysis of the novel's formal aspects as a subtly conceived work of art, his repressed sexuality can be discovered. The use of Miles Coverdale as a first-person narrator, and the artist responsible for *The Blithedale Romance*, portrays some of Hawthorne's own fears about art and the nature of the artist. As Hyatt Waggoner noted, "[Hawthorne] worried often about whether being an artist might not have the effect of increasing his alienation" (12). Artistic creation often leads to isolation and "puts one outside the 'magic circle' or the 'magnetic chain' of humanity, where there is neither love nor reality" (Waggoner 15). As Richard Brodhead adds, "All of this suggests another reason for Hawthorne's adoption of a dramatized narrator: in the figure of Coverdale he presents his own process of imaginative creation as a dramatic action" (105). Though Hawthorne explores the consequences of isolation, often, as in Coverdale's case, isolation is what leads to artistic production. Coverdale's inability to express love or sexual attraction is what leads to the creation of the novel and his manner of representing the characters. His imagery and symbolism all suggest a motif of illusion versus reality, or a hidden truth beneath a façade, as in his hidden sexuality. His allegorization of the other characters represents traits that he either shares or lacks—chiefly the ability to express sexuality and love. Hawthorne used allegory as "a model for mental operations, [and] a way to dramatize the deepest emotions" (Greenwald 41). The formal aspects of the novel all lead to a portrait of Coverdale as a sexually repressed and isolated artist.

Coverdale's relationships with the other characters in the novel are stunted by his inability to express passion or emotion, or to admit to a sexual attraction where appropriate. His relationships with the female characters are especially revealing in that regard. Coverdale

is obviously attracted to Zenobia sexually, and he comments on her beauty and sexuality at several times throughout the novel, but he claims not to feel any attraction for her, and instead analyzes her personality in an attempt to categorize her. Coverdale claims that Zenobia has vitality and energy, “which she expressed in such overflow that a man might well have fallen in love with her for their sake only” (17). However, Coverdale realizes that “I should not, under any circumstances, have fallen in love with Zenobia” (46). Coverdale recognizes the energy in Zenobia’s being and the force that draws people to her, but does not understand the sexual energy that propels it. Zenobia exudes sexuality and Coverdale cannot comprehend her power. As Jane Crosswaithe notes:

Behind the ideology that woman was to civilize and domesticate the male brute was the fear of undomesticated woman herself. While the Puritans were more vocal in describing the dangers of the unleashed woman, later generations found increasingly decorous and fictive techniques to inhibit her freedom and her speech, creating, as it were, an attic in which to confine the madwoman and parlor in which to display her civilized counterpart. (98)

Zenobia represents this undomesticated woman that Coverdale fears because of his social and religious training. When Coverdale first arrives at Blithedale, Zenobia says in jest that she will wait until May-day to adopt the garb of Eden (18). Zenobia’s comment causes Coverdale to conjure up an image of her in “Eve’s earliest garment,” and he reflects, “Her free, careless, generous modes of expression often had this effect of creating images which, though pure, are hardly felt to be quite decorous, when born of a thought that passes between man and

woman” (19). Despite Coverdale’s continued fantasies about Zenobia’s sexual nature, and her nude figure, he continues to deny that he feels any sexual attraction for her, thus denying his own sexual impulses.

Not only does Coverdale not understand or admit to his growing attraction for Zenobia, but he also attempts to categorize her through symbolism. Coverdale is like a naïve child in attributing magical properties to the flower that she wears in her hair, a sign of her sexuality, which Zenobia calls “an idea worthy of a feverish poet” (43). Coverdale says that Zenobia always had a single flower in her hair; “it was an exotic, of rare beauty, and as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just clipped it from the stem” (17). The flower has all the attributes that Zenobia herself has. As Brodhead argues “Like Hester’s gorgeously embroidered emblem, Zenobia’s personal emblem—her tropical flower—expresses a luxuriance of passionate vitality” (99). Coverdale noticed and wondered at “how Zenobia contrived it—that she had always a new flower in her hair” (43). The flower is an emblem of the sexual energy that Zenobia exudes. Coverdale concludes, “She is a sister of the Veiled Lady! That flower in her hair is a talisman” (43). Only later does Coverdale find out that Zenobia really is a sister of Priscilla, the veiled lady; the veil is also a symbol of her mystery. Coverdale’s portrayal of Zenobia is of a woman who is conscious of playing a part in a drama, and has taken on a disguise. Her name is a kind of disguise, as it is not her real name. Her actions are melodramatic and she makes continued reference to events being “dramatic” or “tragic.” As Brodhead argues, “even in her most intense anguish there is always a quality of self-consciousness and theatricality; she seems to be watching herself play the part of Zenobia” (99). Coverdale is unable to release himself from his isolated position of

observation and study, and so can only represent Zenobia as a figure with symbolic traits in a play.

Although his inability to admit his attraction for Zenobia or to realize her as a complex human character inhibits him as a man, Coverdale's true failure lies in his inability to acknowledge his love or attraction for Priscilla, if they indeed exist. When Coverdale first meets Priscilla, he is suspicious of her origins and her intentions at Blithedale. As Lentz and Stein argue, "this initial hesitancy towards Priscilla is the first instance in a whole pattern of failures to commit himself to others which characterizes Coverdale's relationships" (88). Once Coverdale comes to know Priscilla, he detects some of the same sexual energy in her that Zenobia possesses, though he is unable to recognize it consciously. Coverdale compares Priscilla to a plant that grows "where there is scanty soil, and never any sunshine. At present, though with no approach to bloom, there were indications that the girl had human blood in her veins" (48). Coverdale calls Priscilla "the very picture of the New England spring, subdued in tint, and rather cool, but with a capacity of sunshine, and bringing us a few alpine blossoms" (56). His comparison of Priscilla to the spring and the blossoming of flowers suggests that he recognizes her awakening sexuality, or her growing ability to elicit sexual desire. As time passes, and Coverdale comes to know Priscilla more intimately, he tells Zenobia, "Ever since she came among us, I have been dimly sensible of just this charm which you have brought out. But it was never absolutely visible till now. She is as lovely as a flower!" (155). Zenobia scoffs at Coverdale's sentiments, as do many of the other characters throughout the novel, and tells him "You are a poet—at least, as poets go now-a-days—and must be allowed to make an opera-glass of your imagination" (155). Yet, despite Coverdale's

leanings towards the recognition and expression of his sexual desires, he is not able to admit his love for Priscilla until long after he has left Blithedale. As James Justus explains:

“Miles Coverdale’s Confession” covertly acknowledges an inability to love, a radically disabling flaw, which cripples him both as a man and artist. His unimpressive substitutes for love, on which he expends considerable energy, are a peevish antipathy for masculine power and an exaggerated emphasis on feminine passion. (26)

Lentz and Stein agree, and assert that Coverdale’s confession, “although apparently an indication of Coverdale’s heretofore well-hidden capacity to sustain a deep emotional involvement, is actually more fully expressive of his life-long inability to make his feelings known to others” (93). Coverdale may not actually be in love with Priscilla, but he does feel attraction for her, and his confession is actually an indication of his propensity to analyze the people around him and fit them into categories for description, rather than the admission that he has finally allowed himself to feel real emotion or form intimate relationships with others.

Though Coverdale is a successful artist in his production of the novel, his inability to express his passions makes him an inadequate poet, possibly because of the immediacy of the situations that he writes about. His inadequacy as a poet is recognized by the other characters in the novel and Coverdale himself. Zenobia recognizes that the true artistic spirit should express repressed desires and, after she makes over Priscilla, asks Coverdale, “Is she not worth a verse or two?” (56). But Coverdale recognizes that he lacks the ability to express these desires, and though Priscilla deserves some verses, she does so “from a better poet than

myself” (56). Throughout the novel, the characters criticize Coverdale’s amateur attempts at poetry. As Roy Male argues, “Coverdale recognizes that his poetry is thin and bodiless, but he is so exhausted by his raw experience that he is unable to convert it into art” (154). When Coverdale has his encounter with Zenobia after Hollingsworth has passed judgment on her, she tells him “by all means, write this ballad, and put your soul’s ache into it, and turn your sympathy to good account, as other poets do, and as poets must, unless they choose to give us glittering icicles instead of lines of fire” (203-204). At this last meeting, Coverdale is granted some insights into this aspect of Zenobia’s character, but is unable to fully grasp it and express it in his poetry. As Justus argues, “his failure as an artist is confirmed by his last meeting with Zenobia, a scene marked by his inability to redeem his superficial and derivative art with insight and charm” (27-28). Coverdale cannot respond to the force in Zenobia that everyone else recognizes, nor can he recognize his own passions, both of which contribute to his poetic mediocrity.

Besides his relationships with women, even Coverdale’s relationships with men, particularly Hollingsworth, are stunted by his inability to recognize love in himself for another person. Coverdale professes his love for Hollingsworth at several points in the novel, while he also expresses his repulsion from and horror at Hollingsworth’s behavior and ideas. Coverdale admits, “I loved Hollingsworth, as has already been enough expressed” (66). However, Coverdale recognizes a duality in Hollingsworth’s nature. He claims that Hollingsworth had:

divine power of sympathy, [which made] him seem, while their influence lasted, the tenderest man and the truest friend on earth. But, by-and-by, you missed the tenderness of yesterday, and grew drearily conscious that Hollingsworth had a closer friend than ever you could be. And this friend was the cold, spectral monster, which he had himself conjured up, and on which he was wasting all the warmth of his heart, and of which, at last—as these men of a mighty purpose so inevitably do—he had grown to be the bond-slave. It was his philanthropic theory! (52)

Much of Coverdale's repulsion from Hollingsworth is motivated by his jealousy of him. Because he is not able to admit his love for Priscilla, he is also not able to admit his jealousy of Hollingsworth, which is a motivation for much of his behavior in the novel. It causes him to attempt to provoke Priscilla's jealousy and it clouds his perceptions of Hollingsworth. His inability to admit his love for Priscilla indirectly limits his ability to love, or maintain a friendship with, Hollingsworth. In addition, Coverdale reacts against those qualities in Hollingsworth that represent some of his own qualities. Coverdale manipulates the narrative to reveal only certain aspects of each character, which reveal something about his hidden nature. In Hollingsworth, he portrays his own inability to freely express his love because of a single-mindedness of purpose. For Hollingsworth, this purpose is reform; for Coverdale, it is the analysis of human behavior.

The open nature of Blithedale farm and the freedom of the interpersonal relations there emphasize the emotionally guarded nature and isolation of Coverdale. Coverdale recognizes the freedom of the farm and concludes, "it seemed to authorize any individual, of either sex, to fall in love with any other, regardless of what would elsewhere be judged

sensible and prudent” (68). This ability for either of the sexes to fall in love with each other is evident in the relationship between Zenobia and Priscilla (before Coverdale discovers that they are sisters), Zenobia and Hollingsworth, Priscilla and Hollingsworth, Coverdale and Zenobia, Coverdale and Priscilla, and Coverdale and Hollingsworth. However, Coverdale isolates himself from this atmosphere of love. When he leaves for a visit to the city, “I had serious thoughts of kissing them all round, but forbore to do so, because, in all such general salutations, the penance is fully equal to the pleasure. So I kissed none of them, and nobody, to say the truth, seemed to expect it” (129). Coverdale cannot concede the possibility of his having feelings for Zenobia, though he is clearly attracted to her. As Brian Way notes, in Hawthorne’s fiction, “he idealized [women’s] beauty and the delicacy of their minds, but he hated and feared women of strong intellect and overbearing sexuality. In his fiction, these and similar contradictions are never suppressed nor harmonized, but intensified so as to produce an art which subtly mocks its own deepest aspirations” (12). Coverdale cannot admit his affections for Priscilla, whether it is love as he professes or a repressed sexual attraction, until after he has left Blithedale. Hollingsworth equally isolates himself from the influences of affection at Blithedale. Hollingsworth scoffs at Coverdale’s notions that he is tender and tells him, “the most marked trait in my character is an inflexible severity of purpose. Mortal man has no right to be so inflexible, as it is my nature and necessity to be!” (42). Only Priscilla and Zenobia are able to participate freely in the open atmosphere at Blithedale, though with different outcomes based on the interpretation of their behaviors by other inhabitants of Blithedale and society at large.

The structure of the novel, Coverdale's artistic production, reveals much about his character and the way that he relates, or does not, to the other characters in the novel. Each of the characters in the novel is allegorized to represent a specific aspect of Coverdale's own character. The major characters are also all portrayed by an association with a symbol: Zenobia and her flower, Priscilla and her purses and the veil, and Hollingsworth and his pulpit. The symbols by which the characters are known also function as disguises, reinforcing the inability to know the extent of their true characters because of Coverdale's inability to emotionally connect with them. Throughout the novel, these characters are known by their constant associations with these symbols. By limiting these characters to these symbolic associations, Coverdale is never able to fully understand their complexity. Scott Grossberg points out that:

Such moments of narrative manipulation remind us that we are being told a story by someone only posing ignorance of events to come. His writing is like our rereading: heavily self-conscious, aware of the process of constructing a narrative from fragmented events. The result is that we become sensitive to the narrative as a surface distinct from events, an interpretation. And this sense of dissonance forces us to distinguish Coverdale's vision of Blithedale from the community itself, his ambition for the thing as opposed to what it actually seems to be. (6)

Likewise, many of the minor characters are portrayed as fitting a certain character type, including Westervelt and Moodie. Westervelt is portrayed as the typical villain who despoils innocence and maiden purity, and is characterized by his gold teeth, an indication of his consuming greed and his deception. In Coverdale's imaginings, Westervelt has already

robbed Zenobia of her innocence and purity by taking her as a lover or a wife in the past, though he has no proof of it. In turn, he despoils Priscilla's innocence by making her the veiled lady and holding her as a kind of prisoner. Westervelt represents the overt sexuality that Coverdale fears, and the consuming nature that comes from using others for personal purposes, as Coverdale does to write the novel. Finally, Moodie is characterized as a pathetic, impoverished old man who is lonely and a social outcast. His eye patch functions as his symbolic disguise. He is continually referred to as "Old Moodie" and Coverdale never takes him seriously. It is only when Coverdale learns of Moodie's past that the reader ever sees another side of his personality. Moodie represents Coverdale's projections of his own future as a lonely bachelor who is a social outcast. For the other characters, the reader never sees another side of their personalities, only what is shown, which is not necessarily the truth of their characters since Coverdale compiles much of the story through his suppositions and imaginings. Through his representation of each of these characters, Coverdale reveals some trait of his own personality: his single-mindedness of purpose in his portrayal of Hollingsworth, his deception and hidden identity through Westervelt and Moodie, and his sexual repression through the lone flower in Zenobia's hair, a symbol of the hidden sexuality flowering within himself.

As the characters in the novel represent different facets of human behavior, and more specifically, of Coverdale's character, so too are certain objects in the novel used to symbolize the events of the novel and the novel itself. When Coverdale accompanies Moodie to a tavern in town, he reflects on the artwork that he sees there. While Coverdale waits for Moodie to arrive, he sees "an oil-painting of a beef-steak, with such an admirable show of

juicy tenderness, that the beholder sighed to think it merely visionary, and incapable of ever being put on a gridiron” (160). Coverdale is amused at the art and reflects that some hungry painter must have produced it. Another painting of cheese and one of sardines “were so perfectly imitated, that you seemed to have the genuine article before you, and yet with an indescribable, ideal charm; it took away the grossness from what was fleshiest and fattest, and thus helped the life of man, even in its earthiest relations, to appear rich and noble, as well as warm, cheerful, and substantial” (161). All of the foods in the paintings are well imitated and appear like the real thing, though with more richness and quality. Coverdale is forced to admit that they are all creations and only imitate reality. However, there was another painting of a drunkard, “stretched out on a bench, in the heavy, apoplectic sleep of drunkenness. The death-in-life was too well portrayed...your only comfort lay in the forced reflection that, real as he looked, the poor caitiff was but imaginary, a bit of painted canvas, whom no delirium tremens, nor so much as a retributive headache, awaited, on the morrow” (161). The two types of paintings represent the two possibilities of art: idealism or realism. The question for the reader is determining which possibility Coverdale chose for the novel. Regardless of his purpose, the reader is reminded that, like these paintings, the novel is a work of art and is only a representation of reality, no matter how accurate it seems. The painting also reminds the reader that any artistic representation portrays an incomplete picture of a person’s real character. Like the novel, Coverdale attempts to penetrate the complexity of human behavior, but can only glimpse the surface of it.

Coverdale’s inability to express or recognize his own sexual longings is evident in his voyeurism, which pervades the novel, and contributes to his propensity to allegorize the

characters. Coverdale does not ever seem to truly interact with the characters, but rather, he observes them from a distance in an attempt to categorize them by the type of person he feels they are. He does not seem to account for the complex nature of human behavior, which defies categorization and easy definition. From his introduction to Blithedale, Coverdale chooses mostly to observe events rather than to be a part of them. At most, he only offers passing comments on them or attempts to influence events indirectly through his comments to other characters, as when he says something to Priscilla about Zenobia and Hollingsworth in an attempt to provoke her jealousy. The most obvious example of Coverdale's voyeurism is his selection of a bower in the woods from which he can observe events as they pass him. Although Coverdale admits no attempt at deception, he does call his hiding place "a perfect nest for Robinson Crusoe or King Charles" (91), thereby creating a link to covert behavior and watchfulness. Coverdale likens his observations from the place to peeping. It is from this spot that Coverdale witnesses the encounter between Zenobia and Westervelt. He assures the reader that had the couple sat down at the base of his tree "I should have deemed myself honorably bound to warn them of a listener's presence" (96). But, since they do not sit down beneath his tree, he feels free to attempt to "make out an intelligible sentence, on either side" (96) and to piece together their conversation through what he does hear and through his imagination. He imagines that they used to be lovers or that they had a romantic relationship of some kind though he has no evidence of it. As Sigmund Freud wrote of the artist, "We may lay it down that a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (439), and "they are either ambitious wishes, which

serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones" (439). Therefore, Coverdale fantasizes about Zenobia's sexual indiscretions because he is secretly attracted to her, but also fears her sexuality. His analytical behavior, as practiced in this spot, is what fuels his art. He calls the spot "an admirable place to make verses, turning the rhythm to the breezy symphony that so often stirred among the vine-leaves" (92), and claims, "it symbolized my individuality" (92). In Von Abele's account of Hawthorne's artists, Coverdale is the type that "tends to be deeply engrossed by his work; but deep involvement of itself leads toward loneliness and detachment from 'the magnetic chain of humanity' that so fascinated Hawthorne; as does also the aesthetic distance which the artist of Hawthorne's type tries to cultivate" (5). His analysis and observation grow from his stunted passions and capacity for human sympathies, which leads to his failure as a member of the human community, but fuels his artistic production and the success of the novel.

Coverdale's voyeuristic tendencies are evident throughout the novel, even when he leaves Blithedale for a brief hiatus in the city. Coverdale stays at a hotel in the city that is across from the hotel where Zenobia and Priscilla stay. Coverdale spends his hours staring out the window as a more interesting pastime than reading, which he finds dull and boring. Coverdale admits that he "felt a hesitation about plunging into this muddy tide of human activity and pastime. It suited me better, for the present, to linger on the brink, or hover in the air above it" (135). He makes so many visits to the window that he got "pretty well acquainted with that little portion of the backside of the universe which it presented to my view" (135). Though Coverdale has left Blithedale with the intention of returning to social life, he retreats to his hotel room. Rather than embracing life and his role in it, he retreats

from it and watches it from a distance. Coverdale's watch is meant to uncover something about life without actually living it. He reflects that "there is far more of a picturesque, more truth to native and characteristic tendencies, and vastly greater suggestiveness, in the back of a residence, whether in town or country, than in the front. The latter is always artificial; it is meant for the world's eye, and is therefore a veil and a concealment" (136). Coverdale's behavior and his reflections at the window indicate some important truths about his character. He represses his desires to engage in life by relegating himself to a role as passive observer, just as he represses his passions and relegates them to art: a recording, or observation, of life.

Coverdale spends hours at his window watching nature first, and then studying human interaction. Though he returned to the city supposedly for more social interaction, he continues as a passive observer of human behavior, rather than a participant in it. Coverdale even pledges to pay more attention to them because he is so pleased at the display he has witnessed. When he thinks about his relationships with the people at Blithedale, "to resume the irksomeness of these meditations, I resumed my post at the window" (141). When he returns to the window, he sees Priscilla, Zenobia, and Westervelt. Coverdale studies them for some time, "as it was my part to do, understanding, if my intellect could fathom the meaning and the moral, and, at all events, reverently and sadly" (144). Coverdale seems to recognize his own voyeuristic tendencies and asks, "was mine a mere vulgar curiosity?" (147). He claims that Zenobia should have

been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in other lives, and to endeavor—by generous sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things

too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned me—to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves. (146)

When Zenobia is finally in Coverdale's presence, she mocks his voyeuristic tendencies, telling him, "I have long recognized you as a sort of transcendental Yankee, with all the native propensity of your countrymen to investigate matters that come within their range, but rendered almost poetical, in your case, by the refined methods which you adopt for its gratification" (148). Coverdale's inability to share human affections is evident even to those around him. Coverdale is, as Richard Fogle argues, "a study in the spiritual dangers of psychological analysis. As spectator to a tragic drama he is a psychological detective who runs the risk of becoming dehumanized by subjecting other human beings to a coldly scientific curiosity" (183). However, it is Coverdale's voyeurism that illustrates his sexually repressed nature and leads to the creation of his greatest work of art. As Male argues, "truly creative art...requires both penetrative insight and sympathetic investment" (166). Coverdale possesses the penetrative insight in his voyeuristic tendencies and the sympathetic investment in his sexual repression. The combination of both qualities is what leads to the creation of the novel: his greatest and most long-lasting work of art.

In much the same way that Coverdale attempts to turn the incidents that happened at Blithedale into poetry, he turns all of the events, or those that he has chosen to represent, into a novel. Coverdale is Hawthorne's only first person narrator and the only main character who is a writer. Coverdale's self-mocking tone reflects his recognition of the consequences of his repressed passion: that he has portrayed the characters of the novel as allegorical types, rather

than trying to understand their personalities and their motivations for behavior. Coverdale comments on this study of his fellow man, saying “if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again”(65). This dissection and scrutiny of character is exactly what Coverdale does throughout the novel. As Dale Bauer notes, Coverdale “has elevated the individual to a sacred form and simultaneously an object of exploitation” (33). Coverdale seems to recognize this himself. He says, “It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively to the study of individual men and women. If the person under examination be one’s self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance” (65). It is as if Coverdale were warning the reader and simultaneously providing a glimpse into the future and explaining the consequences of his actions. Coverdale is consciously reconstructing events from a place of looking back. At times, he interjects a reflection on past events revealing what he has learned over time. Coverdale reflects on his objective detachment and claims, “what wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all—though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage—may be said to have been created mainly by ourselves!” (65). It is Coverdale’s objective analysis that divests some of the characters, in this case Hollingsworth, of their varied and complex characteristics, thus turning them into monsters or one-dimensional characters within the structure of the novel.

Coverdale seems to recognize the error of his behavior, if it is only in the hindsight of writing the novel. When he thinks of the way that he has characterized Hollingsworth, he

concludes, “as my conscience has often whispered me, I did Hollingsworth a great wrong by prying into his character, and am perhaps doing him as great a one, at this moment, by putting faith in the discoveries, which I seemed to make” (65). These moments of insight are only temporary and occur at few instances in the novel. Coverdale judges himself, saying “That cold tendency, between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people’s passions and impulses, appeared to have gone far towards unhumanizing my heart” (141). Sigmund Freud writes, “The postponement of loving until full knowledge is acquired ends in a substitution of the latter for the former. A man who has won his way to a state of knowledge cannot properly be said to love and hate; he remains beyond love and hatred” (450). Coverdale recognizes that his analytic tendencies have cut him off from the bonds of human sympathies and have contributed to his failure. It is not clear whether Coverdale makes these realizations at the time or only in retrospect. It is possible that these conclusions are made to extend to the ongoing process of writing the novel in which he is criticizing his own analytical tendencies.

The structure of the novel resembles that of a drama, with the chapters functioning like the acts. Each of the chapters is titled and represents self-contained episodes within the drama. The characterization of the novel as a drama reinforces the idea that the characters are all functioning as actors or types and are not portrayed as the complex human beings that they really are. Coverdale claims that Zenobia, Priscilla, and Hollingsworth “figured so largely on my private theatre” (66). Equally, the naming of the chapters as self-contained episodes also categorizes the action in the novel as mere incidents in the fictional tale. There exists a kind of unreality in the actions of the story as a series of related, but detached

incidents. The story of the characters is pulled apart and presented as a series of related events, but not as a complete story. The chapter titled “The Masqueraders” is indicative of the nature of the book as a drama and reinforces the theme of appearance versus reality. Coverdale discovers the inhabitants of Blithedale dressed in costumes and engaged in a spring festival of some sort. Coverdale reflects, “the wood, in this portion of it, seemed as full of jollity as Comus and his crew were holding their revels, in one of its usually lonesome glades” (190). That he compares the revelries to those of Comus and his companions reinforces the theme of illusion versus reality and the idea that a seemingly attractive and happy crowd disguises something much more sinister. As the masquerade that Comus produces was originally created to fool the virginal Alice, it is reasonable to draw the parallel that the masquerade at Blithedale is meant to fool Coverdale. If that parallel can be made, it is also reasonable to conclude that Coverdale shares the same virginal qualities and repressed sexuality as Alice. The scene also reinforces Coverdale’s voyeurism as he watches the scene at a distance where he cannot fear discovery. Coverdale moves forward as far as he could “without hazard of discovery” (190) and an arrow hit the tree “behind which I happened to be lurking” (191). The only characters not present at the masquerade are Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla. They are at Eliot’s pulpit, where Zenobia claims that she has been on trial for her life. The presentation of the masquerade at the same time as this supposed trial indicates that these three characters are also participants in another kind of drama, and that the scene is symbolic, and not real. Zenobia is on trial because she is being judged by Hollingsworth and by society for her independence and her open sexuality.

Coverdale's confession is an important chapter in the novel as it solidifies the explanation for all of Coverdale's earlier behavior and because it is the final chapter of the novel. Coverdale admits to having loved Priscilla and that "the confession, brief as it shall be, will throw a gleam of light over my behavior throughout the foregoing events, and is, indeed, essential to the full understanding of my story" (224). Coverdale admits that he has repressed his love and desire for Priscilla, which was the cause of his previous actions—his voyeurism, his jealousy of Hollingsworth, his attempts to provoke Priscilla's jealousy. Even as he makes the confession, he asks the reader "As I write it, he will charitably suppose me to blush, and turn away my face" (224). Even at the point where he can admit his love for her, even if it is only symbolic of his admission of his inability to love at all, he still fights the urge to repress it as he is embarrassed by its exposure. As Richard Rust argues, Coverdale's confession and his embarrassment are "final manifestations of his Prufrockian detachment and unwillingness to commit himself until the time for doing so has passed" (101). Rust adds that "Coverdale's tragedy is that he had not loved enough, nor had he loved fully and openly; consequently he is doomed to waste away his remaining years in a kind of death-in-life" (108). Coverdale's confession is not so much an expression of love, but a revelation of character. Coverdale alludes to the purpose of the confession by claiming that his inability to express the love he felt "may have had something to do with these inactive years of Meridian manhood, with my bachelorship, with the unsatisfied retrospect that I fling back on life, and my listless glance towards the future" (224). As he has realized his failure as a man, and his inability to express his love then, or ever, he has resigned himself to be "a bachelor, with no very decided purpose of ever being otherwise" (223). With the same realization, he no longer even

attempts art and “as for poetry, I have given it up” (223). He gives it up at the end because he realizes he does not ever have the chance to express his love as other men do. He had this ability at one point, as evidenced by his artistic success and “the strength of my pretty little volume, published ten years ago” (223). The limited success of his poetry while he still maintained some ability to even feel love reinforces the link between his sexuality and the success of his artistic production.

Finally, the imagery in the novel reveals much about Coverdale’s repressed sexual passions and his inability to fully embrace life. Coverdale follows a pattern of withdrawal in the story, which indicates his repressed passions. The fire imagery, pitted against the cold winter setting, reveals the passions that Coverdale hides beneath his own frosty exterior. Coverdale’s introduction to Blithedale occurs in the middle of spring, but it is snowing outside. His first remembrances of Blithedale are “a wood-fire, in the parlor of an old farmhouse, on an April afternoon, but with the fitful gusts of a wintry snowstorm roaring in the chimney” (11). Coverdale remembers this while he is an aged bachelor, and he refers to himself as a “frosty bachelor.” The fire that rages in the chimney represents Coverdale’s repressed passions beneath his cold exterior. But, after the Blithedale experiment fails and Coverdale misses his opportunity for love, only ashes from the fire are left and the only heat exists in Coverdale’s memory. As Waggoner suggests, “fire images suggest that warmth of the heart, the mutuality of hope that, if it could have been maintained (if indeed it was ever as real as it once seemed), *might* have made the venture succeed” (40). And although the opening scene at Blithedale is dominated by this fire, “as it proceeds, it is the snow-storm which comes to stand for the ‘better life’” (Howard 73). Fire images occur specifically when

Coverdale is feeling attraction for Zenobia. After he fantasizes about her naked, the women all bring in wood without help from the men and heap “more than a sufficient quantity” (19) to create a blazing fire, which everyone draws closer to. Again, it is snowing outside, but everyone makes a “semi-circle round the blazing fire” (20). The fire images pervade the novel, typically in contrast to the cold winter, and reveal much about Coverdale’s character. The fire images represent the desires that he represses within his seemingly passionless exterior.

Images of decay also pervade the work and illustrate Coverdale’s sense of his own failure, and the corruption of natural affections because of detached observation. Coverdale’s hermitage in the tree “had been formed by the decay of some of the pine-branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled with its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulcher of its own leaves” (91). The place is marked by associations with decay, suggesting the failure of the Blithedale experiment and Coverdale’s failures to embrace his passions. The imagery suggests Coverdale’s subtle acknowledgement of his own failings. The location of Eliot’s pulpit was in an old pine forest, which “has fallen, an immemorial time ago” (109). The soil “had apparently never been brought under tillage; other growths, maple, and beech, and birch, had succeeded to the primeval trees” (109). The pulpit itself is composed of “a shattered granite boulder, or heap of boulders, with an irregular outline and many fissures, out of which sprang shrubs, bushes, and even trees” (109). Like Coverdale’s hermitage, the pulpit is marked by decay, suggesting again the failure of the Blithedale experiment. All of the places marked by decay are significant because of their role in the plot or what they reveal about Coverdale’s character. The hermitage is the spot where Coverdale achieves a

voyeuristic distance from life, a result of his inability to express his repressed passions. The pulpit is the scene of Zenobia's judgment, which ultimately leads to her suicide. Here, it is Hollingsworth's inability to express his passions, like Coverdale, that propels Zenobia to action. Throughout the novel, images of decay suggest both the failings of the Blithedale experiment and the failings of the characters themselves.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, the creation of art is linked to overt ability to express sexual desires, which determines the success of artistic production. The success or failure of Coverdale and Hollingsworth's art is directly related to their inability to recognize their own sexual passions. Coverdale is only a moderately successful poet, and his poetry never reveals the depths of his passions. It is only through the novel that he is able to create a long-lasting and great work of art. However, Hollingsworth's great plan fails because he is not able to identify his passions and channel them through his art. For the women in the novel, the type of art they pursue represents the type of sexuality they exude. Zenobia is independent and freely expresses her sexuality, and so her art is of a traditional masculine form. Priscilla is more submissive and represents traditional woman and so she does not have a sexuality of her own. She merely reflects the desires of the men in her life. Therefore, her art is that of traditional woman. The type and the success of the production of the art in the novel are linked to the sexuality of each artist.

## Conclusion

Just as Hawthorne struggled with his Puritan history to come to terms with past injustices meted out by his ancestors in his fiction, it can be argued that he also struggled with his own notions of the artist as they related to his own artistic process. Hawthorne explored the nature of art in many of his short stories and in all of his major novels, whether in the form of traditional practices like sculpture and painting, or as a metaphor for art, like magic. The key struggle for Hawthorne was how to reconcile the isolation of the artist and the need for human sympathy, which fuelled great art.

Hawthorne suggests through his work that the greatest works of art are produced by those artists who are sexually repressed and never find an outlet for love, and thereby remain isolated figures. The repression of love, and associated sexual desires, is often channeled through artistic creation, as in the short stories, “The Artist of the Beautiful,” and “Drowne’s Wooden Image,” as well as all of the major novels. Though the reasons for this repression differ, and range from social pressure to personal inadequacies, the repression of sexual desires almost always leads to artistic creation in Hawthorne’s work. It is only those artists who never find an outlet for that passion—through marriage or some other romantic relationship—who are able to create truly significant works of art, among them Miles Coverdale, Owen Warland, and Drowne. Those artists who marry are only able to create minor or ephemeral works of art, including Kenyon in *The Marble Faun* and Holgrave in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

However, those artists who choose an ephemeral medium for their art are only ever able to briefly transcend the limitations of their art. Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale in

*The Scarlet Letter* are only able to create significant art that is ephemeral because the mediums they choose—sewing and oration—do not have the capacity for permanence. It is only when all three elements are present—sexual repression, no outlet for passion, and a suitable artistic medium—that truly significant work is possible.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, the only of Hawthorne's novels with a first-person narrator, Hawthorne presents the most extensive portrait of a sexually repressed and isolated artist who creates a truly significant work of art: the novel itself. All of the elements of the novel combine to create the portrait of Coverdale as a sexually repressed artist: the allegorization of the characters, the structure of the novel, and the imagery. Through the work, Hawthorne creates a portrait of a sexually repressed artist who was never able to find true love because of his personal failings, but who, ironically, was able to create great art because of them.

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