

Art at the Service of Progress in *The Marble Faun*

El arte al servicio del progreso en *The Marble Faun*

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Recibido 17 junio 2018
Aceptado 9 enero 2019

Resumen

Al contrario de lo que ocurre en obras anteriores de Hawthorne, la dicotomía novela vs. romance apenas se trata en el prólogo de *The Marble Faun*. De hecho, el arte, que jugará un papel decisivo a lo largo del relato, resulta mucho más relevante en dicho prólogo. No obstante, el término romance aparece en el título de la obra, *The Romance of Monte Beni*, lo cual convierte la cuestión del género literario en elemento estructurador, siendo el arte una distracción para lectores y para críticos literarios. Hawthorne suele presentar como protagonistas a artistas con los que empatiza y en esta obra encontramos a tres y a Donatello, quien se parece enormemente al fauno de Praxíteles. Lo que este artículo pretende demostrar es que en *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne combina el arte con su personal manera de escribir para evidenciar la necesidad de progreso en la sociedad estadounidense del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: novela, romance, arte, artistas, progreso.

Abstract

Contrary to what we read in Hawthorne's previous books, little is discussed about the dichotomy novel vs. romance in the preface to *The Marble Faun*. Art, a key subtext in the story, is more powerfully introduced than the novel /romance issue. Nevertheless, the word romance appears directly in the title of the book, *The Romance of Monte Beni*, turning the genre issue into one of the structuring principles of the text while diverting the readers' /critics' attention to art itself. In general, Hawthorne's texts present an artist as the main character, an artist with whom the author himself empathizes. *The Marble Faun* narrates the lives in Rome of three artists and of Donatello, who is said to strongly

resemble Praxiteles' Faun. This article will contend that Hawthorne uses art and his own way of writing in *The Marble Faun* to show the need for progress in 19th-century North America.

Keywords: novel, romance, art, artists, progress.

Richard Brodhead states in *The School of Hawthorne* that this author is one of the few never to have been left out of the official American literary canon. He was capable of writing “directly and realistically about contemporary culture when this approach seems most useful, and he will transform these materials imaginatively when that strategy seems more immediately appropriate” (Dunne 2007: 130), which, as I will show throughout this article, does not mean his abiding by the established conventions. Hawthorne also created a distinction not set as such before the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, when “the term romance was (...) simply as a synonym for the term novel” (Baym 1984: 430). Still, he distanced his production from the novelistic tradition and claimed to write romances, which is noteworthy considering that romances “according to conventional opinion, derived from “sickly” imagination” (Bell 2001: 39). Regardless, Hawthorne favored the label romance when referring to his longer production. Consequently, his books—especially the prefaces— have been closely analyzed to discover those distinctive elements that define them as romances.

The preface to *The Marble Faun* hardly offers any comment on the dichotomy novel vs. romance, though. The narrator mentions that “Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct” (Hawthorne 1995: 4), which compared to the comments on the subject in “The Custom-House” and in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* provides no new information. *The Marble Faun*, however, “dramatizes the difference between novel and romance through the symbol of the visual arts” (Steiner, qtd. in Hawthorne 1995: 387), which, as this article aims to prove, also help to comprehend Hawthorne's ideas on writing and on society.

Henry James explains in “The Art of Fiction” that

“Art” [...] is supposed in certain circles to have some vague injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration, who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality, to amusement, to instruction [...] when it is introduced into literature it becomes more insidious—there is danger of its hurting you before you know it. (1994: 433-434)

Interestingly, Hawthorne's longer fiction tends to include an artist, with whom the author empathizes, as one of the main characters. In this book, we meet three artists whose relationship with art will show Hawthorne's way of understanding the genre of his own texts. The pieces of art mentioned throughout the text, along with the reference to two specific religious figures, represent Hawthorne's way of putting his art at the service of progress regarding the need for change in the traditional social and literary norms. Therefore, the goal of this article is to prove that *The Marble Faun* uses art to evidence the need for progress in 19th-century North America—especially in the women's issue through Miriam's character— and to present Hawthorne's ideas on literature, using the marble statue as a metaphor for his own hybrid genre.

The first chapter presents the main characters in the Roman Capitol. While describing the location, the narrator wishes to put

The reader into that state of feeling [...] a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a bygone life, [...], that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out, and our individual affairs and interests are but half as real, here, as elsewhere. (Hawthorne 1995: 8)

This need for his readers to adopt a particular mind set is key because "Reading, for Hawthorne, is a special kind of witnessing which must be an act of faith. This faith, moreover, depends upon a paradoxical relationship between author and reader, who must submit to the artist's authority in order to participate imaginatively and actively in his fiction" (Auerbach 1980: 112). In order to do so, readers have to use their imagination, which in Hawthorne's times "was deeply dangerous, psychologically threatening, and even socially subversive" (Bell 2001: 39), and, therefore, posed a challenge to the established conventions, just as Henry James mentioned regarding art itself.

Emphasis on imagination is also made when discussing Praxiteles' Faun. The narrator describes the statue in detail and when wondering about its creator's art, he states that "Only a sculptor of the finest imagination, the most delicate taste, the sweetest feeling, and the rarest artistic skill — in a word, a sculptor and a poet too — could have first dreamed of a Faun in this guise [...]"(Hawthorne 1995: 11). This recalls Hawthorne's view on romances, a hybrid genre which transcends the traditional boundaries separating novel and romance and becomes more advanced. It "parodies other genres (precisely in their

role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and reaccentuating them” (Bakhtin 2005: 45). What is more, when the narrator refers to the nature of the Faun, he remarks that he is “Neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground!” (Hawthorne 1995: 11). The Faun is the neutral territory between the Actual and the Imaginary first mentioned in “The Custom-House”.

Miriam, a painter and Donatello’s love, is shrouded in mystery. The narrator mentions that “There was an ambiguity about this young lady, which, [...], would have operated unfavorably as regarded her reception in society, anywhere but in Rome. [...] nobody knew anything about Miriam” (Hawthorne 1995: 18). According to Foucault in *Power /Knowledge*, the latter implies power. Therefore, when society knows nothing about one of its prospective members, it can exert no power over them. As a result, that individual becomes a threat to society and is not fully accepted. This would have been Miriam’s case “anywhere but in Rome” (Hawthorne 1995: 18) since, as Gary Scrimgeour points out, their being in Rome

Is one of the few situations that will work on the level of everyday reality to explain not just the intimacy but the presence of characters so diverse as these, especially if one of the major themes of the novel is (as I believe) the conflict of Old and New Worlds. (1964: 276-7)

A clash that will serve to bring forward the need for progress in the author’s own New World.

Although his writing shows “a sympathetic understanding of the problems that women faced” (Warren 1989: 192), Hawthorne was also aware of the difficulties the woman question posed in his own society. For Louise DeSalvo, “Hawthorne’s novels can be read as an uneasy masculine exploration of, and reaction to, the radical, revolutionary claims that the feminists of his time were making about the nature of women” (1987: 22). So by placing Miriam in Rome, the writer establishes an aesthetic distance between the events narrated in his text and the society he lived in. bell hooks states that “Patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their sense of self and identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others. To change this, males must critique and challenge male domination of the planet, of less powerful men, of women and children”

(2000: 70), and this is precisely what Hawthorne manages to do through Miriam; she represents that type of woman capable of defying the establishment to fight for what she considers fair.

Regarding Miriam's past, "there were many stories" (Hawthorne 1995: 20). The narrator mentions a few, "leaving the reader to designate them either under the probable or the romantic head" (Hawthorne 1995: 20). Among the stories offered, two of them suggest that Miriam ran away from her family to avoid an unwanted marriage. Another presents her as the daughter of a wealthy Southern American planter who had left upon discovering she had African blood in her veins. The last one claimed that Miriam had given up her wealthy English family for art. Even though the narrator does not choose any of them, the only chapel the guide shows to the four friends during their visit to the Catacomb of Saint Calixtus is that of Saint Cecilia, who, legend has it, died a virgin although her father had forced her to marry because she convinced her newly-wed husband of her unbreakable vows to Christ. Saint Cecilia's story portrays a woman who fought for herself in a man's world. This connection suggests that Miriam may have acted against the patriarchal system oppressing women.

"The past is a reality" (Warren 1989: 218) in Hawthorne's production and the burden of their past chases his main characters. Right after introducing the legends about her origins and mentioning Saint Cecilia, Miriam gets lost inside the catacomb and reappears accompanied by a mysterious man who tries to pull her back towards her past. He has no identity and is referred to as Miriam's "Model" (Hawthorne 1995: 17). He is linked to the ghost of a Roman pagan said to have been drifting around the catacomb for 1,500 years because he got lost inside after attempting to betray the Christian martyrs, who remained true to their beliefs until the end.

Miriam's art reflects her personal situation and her attitude towards life. When Donatello visits her studio, he is unpleasantly surprised by its darkness. Miriam explains to him that "We artists purposefully exclude sunshine, and all but a partial light, [...] But we make very pretty pictures, sometimes, with our artfully arranged lights and shadows" (Hawthorne 1995: 33-4). Miriam's words recall Hawthorne's remarks in his prefaces, particularly in "The Custom-House," which does not come as a surprise since he had a "tendency to split up his opinions among his characters" (Warren 1989: 210). Miriam's paintings are also quite gloomy, portraying Biblical heroines in somber moments. The first sketches

Donatello notices represent Biblical scenes where women had killed men who had threatened them. Miriam had depicted the stories of Jael, Judith and Salome.

Jael killed Sisera because he had been oppressing the people of Israel. Judith used her beauty to lure the tyrant Holofernes and killed him to free her people. Salome, following her mother's wishes, asked King Herod, who was infatuated with her, for John the Baptist's head as a sign of the king's true feelings for her. John the Baptist, although not a tyrant like Sisera or Holofernes, was perceived by Salome's mother as a threat. Salome was, therefore, protecting her family. Despite the fact that each of these women had killed a man, none of them was condemned because "What seems to disturb Hawthorne most of all in his observations on the position of women is the misuse that men have made of their dominance" (Warren 1989: 193) and these women rebelled against such control. The parallelism established between Miriam and her paintings may be suggesting that whatever crime she might have committed, she is not guilty of because she was pushed into it by the circumstances.

Her sketches can also be understood as reinforcing those legends about Miriam's past which suggest that a man wronged her, forcing her to act against him. What is more, upon describing Miriam's self portrait, the narrator claims that "Gazing at this portrait, you saw what Rachael might have been" (Hawthorne 1995: 39-40). Rachael was in love with Jacob, but her father tricked Jacob into marrying Rachael's older sister. Jacob and Rachael had to wait 14 years before they could get married. This connection between Miriam and Rachael revolves around a father who betrays his daughter, which once again points at the law of the father/ patriarchal society pressing down on women.

Donatello sees other sketches portraying lighter scenes of everyday life. However, all of them share some dark nuance. There is always a figure that does not partake in the represented scene, but observes from the distance. The narrator notices that the figure was "always depicted with an expression of deep sadness; [...], the face and form had the traits of Miriam's own" (Hawthorne 1995: 38). Both her darker and lighter sketches show Miriam's sense of utter alienation and pathos. Judging from her Biblical pictures, as a woman, she feels terribly wronged by men. Considering the lonely figure in the lighter paintings, as a human being, she is alone and distanced from any sympathy. Even when referring to the female puppet she uses as one of her models, Miriam explains that it can be

Now a heroine of romance, and now a rustic maid; yet all for show, being created, indeed, on purpose, to wear rich shawls and other garments in a becoming fashion. This is the true end of her being, although she pretends to assume the most varied duties and perform many parts in life, while really the poor puppet has nothing on earth to do. (Hawthorne 1995:34)

This comment leads Miriam to realize that she could “be describing nine women out of ten” (Hawthorne 1995: 34), which is fundamental because “Before women could change patriarchy we had to change ourselves; we had to raise our consciousness” (hooks 2000: 7). Miriam would like things to be different for women, but she knew that her society, and maybe Hawthorne’s, was not ready to make relevant changes regarding the women issue. Miriam and Donatello find their counterparts in Hilda, a painter, and Kenyon, a sculptor. Miriam’s art is led by her imagination and brings to her canvas images of violence and isolation. Hilda, on the other hand, is always surrounded by light and purity. These two female characters represent the traditional dark and white ladies of romances. At this point, it is necessary to mention that

The gentle, good, passive, angelic, and virginal Priscilla or Hilda appears as the embodiment of what Hawthorne believed the conventional heroine should be. But in his “inmost heart” Hawthorne knew that this was not a true picture of womanhood. And so the “turbulent rebel” also appears— the independent, rebellious, strong-willed Hester, Zenobia or Miriam. (Warren 1989: 204)

Each of them plays their corresponding role in the author’s attempt at going beyond the established genres. Miriam would represent the heroine of Hawthorne’s romance, while Hilda would stand for a more traditional and conservative novelistic character, a moral exemplar.

Starting with the location of her studio, Hilda is presented as pure and innocent. She resides “above all the evil scents of Rome [...] above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels” (Hawthorne 1995: 44). These words appear to be connecting Hilda with the Virgin Mary. Although not a Catholic herself, she keeps lighted the flame of the Virgin’s shrine by her tower. Hilda dutifully maintains it because she feels that any woman, no matter her religion, “may surely pay honor to the idea of Divine Womanhood” (Hawthorne 1995: 44). Her self-imposed duty links Hilda with purity

and whiteness, while Miriam lives in the shadows.

Curiously, when detailing Hilda's way of life, the narrator makes some interesting comments regarding the women's place in society. He explains that Hilda lived "doing what she liked, without a suspicion or a shadow upon the snowy whiteness of her fame" (Hawthorne 1995: 44). What is more, Hilda's life makes the narrator reflect upon other women's lives and he states that

The customs of artist-life bestow such liberty upon the sex, which is elsewhere restricted within so much narrower limits; and it is perhaps an indication that, whenever we admit woman to a wider scope of pursuits and professions, we must also remove the shackles of our present conventional rules, which would then become an insufferable restraint on either maid or wife. The system seems to work unexceptionally in Rome; and in many other cases, as in Hilda's, purity of heart and life are allowed to assert themselves, and to be their own proof and security, to a degree unknown in the society of other cities. (Hawthorne 1995: 44-5)

The narrator's statement transpires his favoring the women's cause and his advocating for a change in "our present conventional rules" (Hawthorne 1995: 44). He portrayed more traditional women because society cannot be fully changed overnight and because there is a need for a traditional counterpart to fully understand the more advanced woman represented by Miriam. Louise de Salvo, following Judith Fryer's *The Faces of Eve*, affirms that Hilda would be "the American Princess, who 'represents the traditional espoused values of the community'" (1987: 27), a role which some women at the time were not willing to renounce. After all, as Emily Budick argues, Hawthorne's way of writing does not imply a rebellion against the dominant literary tradition of his day, but a way of elbowing new space within its limits without having to give up his personal values and ideas.

Hilda is a New England orphan who moved to Rome to become a better painter. She has been named by other artists in Rome as "The Dove" and her studio is called "The Dovecote" (Hawthorne 1995: 45). Regarding her art, the display of imagination and creativity that Hilda showed in her native land disappeared upon arriving in Rome. Nevertheless, she ended up being "pronounced by good judges as the best copyist in Rome" (Hawthorne 1995: 48). The narrator does not criticize Hilda for failing to use her imagination, but praises her for having sacrificed her talent. He explains to his readers that

Hilda's faculty of genuine admiration is one of the rarest to be found in human

nature; and let us try to recompense her in kind by adducing her generous self-surrender, and her brave, humble magnanimity in choosing to be the handmaid of those old magicians, instead of a minor enchantress within a circle of her own. (Hawthorne 1995: 49)

These words can be interpreted as a subtext regarding Hawthorne's attitude towards those literary creations of his time which kept repeating the same traditional patterns. He himself, as I have mentioned earlier, seemed to prefer merging two seemingly opposite genres in one single book; hence his admiration for the faun's nature, both human and animal beautifully balanced.

Hilda's labor as a copyist is highly commended for having successfully reproduced Guido Reni's *Beatrice Cenci*. It is said that Beatrice's father, Francesco Cenci, was an abusive man who had been on trial several times for various offenses, but his position always got him discharged. Incapable of tolerating such a situation any longer, Beatrice reported that her father had abused her mother and two brothers and had committed incest with her. However, the Roman authorities turned a deaf ear to her. Being an influential man, Francesco Cenci found out about his daughter's confession and imprisoned her, along with her mother and brothers, in his country castle. The four prisoners plotted the father's murder with the help of Beatrice's lover and a servant. They killed him, but the crime was discovered and all the family, except for the youngest brother, were executed. The Roman people supported Beatrice, but could not prevent the execution. From then on, the figure of Beatrice was considered by the Roman people a symbol of their fight against the authorities' unfair oppression. When Hilda and Miriam started discussing Beatrice's innocence or guilt, Hilda discovered that "her friend's expression had become almost exactly that of the portrait; as if her passionate wish and struggle to penetrate poor Beatrice's mystery had been successful" (Hawthorne 1995: 53), thus linking Beatrice and Miriam.

The Model and Kenyon can be read as playing the father's role with respect to Miriam. Once the Model leaves the story, Kenyon takes over, although in a more protective way. In doing so, Kenyon's figure could be interpreted as that of the representative of a new society, a society where traditions will not crush individuals. Chapter 11, significantly entitled "Fragmentary Sentences," presents an interview between Miriam and the Model in which the narrator openly acknowledges that

Many words of deep significance — many entire sentences, and those possibly the most important ones — have flown too far, on the winged breeze, to be recovered. If we insert our own conjectural amendments, we perhaps give a purport utterly at variance with the true one. Yet, unless we attempt something this way, there must remain an unsightly gap, and a lack of continuousness and dependence in our narrative. (Hawthorne 1995: 73)

Going back to Foucault's ideas about knowledge and power, the narrator does not provide his readers with definitive answers about Miriam not to exert power upon her. During that conversation, there are two moments when the narrator transcribed Miriam's words on death which are significantly linked to her gloomy sketches. According to the Model, they "are bound together, and can never part again" (Hawthorne 1995: 76), but Miriam refuses to accept it and when she mentions death, the Model enquires "Your own death, Miriam — or mine?" (Hawthorne 1995: 77). Although she claims to be free of criminal intentions, the Model replies that "men have said, that this white hand had once a crimson stain" (Hawthorne 1995: 77). This statement takes the reader back to Miriam's drawings where Biblical women had become murderesses to save their people. The narrator empathizes with Miriam and comments, "let us trust, there may have been no crime in Miriam, but only one of those fatalities which are among the most insoluble riddles propounded to mortal comprehension" (Hawthorne 1995:74). Miriam's connection with Beatrice Cenci, added to this thought regarding her innocence, reinforce the significance in her life of the Biblical women previously mentioned. The four females Miriam has been linked to committed murder because it was their only way out. This can be an attempt to exonerate Miriam either for whatever she might have done before or for what her conversation with the Model may anticipate.

Kenyon and Hilda watched the end of the interview between Miriam and the Model. Although they heard nothing, Miriam's kneeling down by the fountain and dipping her fingers had a deeper significance for Kenyon. He even asks Hilda "who and what is Miriam?" (Hawthorne 1995: 86). Kenyon explains to Hilda that his doubts arose because Miriam

Is such a mystery! We do not even know whether she is a countrywoman of ours, or an Englishwoman, or a German. There is Anglo-Saxon blood in her veins, one would say, and a right English accent on her tongue, but much that is not English

breeding, nor American. Nowhere else but in Rome, and as an artist, could she hold a place in society, without giving some clue to her past life. (Hawthorne 1995: 86)

His words regarding Miriam's past summarize the legends about her origins and the narrator's respect for her. As he himself confesses to Hilda, "My heart trusts her, at least – whatever my head may do" (Hawthorne 1995: 86). What is more, Kenyon exposes the social oppression individuals suffer back in the United States:

Rome is not like one of our New England villages, where we need permission of each individual neighbor for every act that we do, every word that we utter, and every friend that we make or keep. In these particulars, the Papal despotism allows us freer breath than our native air; and if we like to take generous views of our associates, we can do so, to a reasonable extent, without ruining ourselves. (Hawthorne 1995: 86-87)

Kenyon's statement proves that although still concerned with social conventions, he is ready for a change. Interestingly, after her encounter with the Model, Miriam walks to Kenyon's studio.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Kenyon had reproduced Milton's head, a subversive act within the framework of the story. As Peter Bellis clarifies, the Puritans showed an absolute disregard for "the masquerade of the seventeenth century English court, a form detested by the Puritans both because of its depravity as theater and because of its association with and service to political conservatism" (2003: 59), which can be interpreted as Hawthorne's way of putting his art at Miriam's service by praising an artist despised by his forefathers, those who wrongfully condemned several women during the Salem Witch Trials, something which sharply contrasts with the stories of the female Biblical figures Miriam portrays.

Apart from Milton's head, Miriam is also impressed by Kenyon's statue in progress of Cleopatra. Kenyon had succeeded in carving one of the most beautiful and powerful woman in History, but it is Miriam the one lifting the veil from Cleopatra's sculpture. Hilda's *Beatrice Cenci* was also covered with some sort of cloth which Miriam lifted. She is constantly linked to women who fought for what they deemed right either by drawing them or by unveiling them. The recurrent theme of women and womanhood also appears when their conversation about Kenyon's sculpture leads the two friends to discuss the latter.

Miriam tells Kenyon that “What I most marvel at is the womanhood that you have so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements” (Hawthorne 1995: 101) and adds that he could not have been inspired by Hilda, to which Kenyon agrees by commenting that Hilda’s “womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil” (Hawthorne 1995: 101). Nevertheless, Miriam remarks that “Of sorrow, slender as she seems, Hilda might bear a great burthen; — of sin, not a feather’s weight. Methinks, now, were it my doom, I could bear either, or both at once. But my conscience is still as white as Hilda’s” (Hawthorne 1995: 101), which comes to reinforce the narrator’s statements concerning the differences between the two women. At that point of their conversation, Miriam was about to confess something to Kenyon. However, she “detected a certain reserve and alarm in his warmly expressed readiness to hear her story. In his secret soul, the sculptor doubted whether it were well for this poor, suffering girl to speak what she so yearned to say, or for him to listen” (Hawthorne 1995: 102). Unlike a traditional male character who would have loved to know her secrets in order to gain power over her, Kenyon shows a higher moral stature, which reinforces his readiness for change.

This episode marks a turning point in the story. The next time Miriam and Kenyon meet, Hilda makes a shocking discovery among some random sketches. She is positive about having found Guido Reni’s original sketch of his picture of the Archangel Michael stepping on Satan’s head. But the most striking revelation is the fact that the demon’s face corresponds to “Miriam’s model!” (Hawthorne 1995: 112). Miriam, however, does not agree, so the four friends decide to visit the Church of the Cappuccini, where the original painting is, to settle the dispute. En route, Miriam stops at the Fountain of Trevi and finds the Model standing by her. Miriam urged him to leave her alone, but he refused, so Donatello asked Miriam “Bid me drown him! You shall hear his death-gurgle in another instant!” (Hawthorne 1995: 118). For the second time, Miriam convinces Donatello not to commit a crime, struggling to disengage herself from the murderous acts of her sketches. The group walks to the Coliseum, where Miriam sees the Model again. The moment Miriam notices him, she departs, followed by Donatello. The scene between Donatello and Miriam in this chapter parallels the one between them in chapter 9, when Miriam advised Donatello to flee from her for his own sake. This time, Miriam also presses Donatello to leave her and, as in Chapter 9, Donatello does not. A few moments later, Miriam and

Donatello find themselves at the Tarpeian Rock, which is said to be the precipice from which the traitors to the city and laws of Rome were thrown. When Donatello asks Miriam for her opinion about throwing people over the precipice, she replies that “It was well done. Innocent persons were saved by the destruction of a guilty one, who deserved his doom” (Hawthorne 1995: 136). Right after her utterance, Donatello notes the Model’s presence and throws him down the precipice, a scene Hilda witnesses. After killing the Model, Donatello becomes a new person, closer to the Biblical heroines of Miriam’s sketches. The narrator explains that his action “had kindled him into a man”(Hawthorne 1995: 138). Interestingly, the narrator refers to Donatello as a man now, as if killing the Model had been a rite of passage from adolescence into manhood. He does not appear to be condemning the action, but links it with the ancient Roman custom of punishing traitors and, in a more subtle way, to the Biblical heroines who committed crimes to defend their kin.

When Miriam questions Donatello’s action, he merely replies “I did what your eyes bade me do, when I asked them with mine” (Hawthorne 1995: 138). The third time Donatello asked Miriam for permission to kill the Model, she granted it. Although she initially refused to believe Donatello, Miriam finally acknowledged that “Yes, Donatello, you speak the truth! My heart consented to what you did. We two slew yonder wretch” (Hawthorne 1995: 139). Regardless of her past actions, Miriam is now definitely connected with those women who broke the father’s law. Miriam assures Donatello that “it is no crime that we have committed” because “One wretched and worthless life has been sacrificed, to cement two other lives forevermore” (Hawthorne 1995: 140), and her words seem to be supported by History via the use the ancient Romans gave to the Tarpeian Rock. Donatello, the human embodiment of Praxiteles’ Faun where two different natures harmoniously coexist, has executed the representative of the Past, as if giving way to a new era.

The only witness to their crime was Hilda, the one person described as incapable of coping with sin, an idea reinforced by the absolute whiteness of Hilda’s dresses. Throughout the story, Hilda has been always referred to as angel-like. Her place is literally above ground level and Hilda’s only company is a flock of white doves and the Virgin’s shrine, which are respectively considered symbols of peace and purity. She lives in a tower, which brings to mind the term ‘Ivory Tower’ and all its literary implications. This term appeared for the first time in the Biblical Song of Solomon and in the 12th century it was already in use as a

metaphor for the Virgin Mary (*Turris Eburnea*). Later that night, Miriam and Donatello passed by Hilda's tower and Miriam shouted: "Pray for us, Hilda! We need it!" (Hawthorne 1995: 142). However, "The window was immediately closed, and her form disappeared from behind the snowy curtain" (Hawthorne 1995: 142). Although she clearly loved and defended Miriam, Hilda had already shut her out of her life.

The following day, Hilda did not meet the friends' appointment at the Church of the Cappuccini. By the time they reach the painting, Miriam sees it under a completely different light. She is now capable of putting herself in the Archangel's shoes and finds the scene too neat. From Miriam's perspective,

A full third of the Archangel's feathers should have been torn from his wings; the rest all ruffled, till they looked like Satan's own! His sword should be streaming with blood, and perhaps broken half-way to the hilt; his armour crushed, his robes rent, his breast gory; a bleeding gash on his brow, cutting right across the stern scowl of battle! He should press his foot hard down upon the Serpent, as if his very soul depended upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half-over yet, and how the victory might turn! And, with all this fierceness, this grimness, this unutterable horror, there should still be something high, tender, and holy, in Michael's eyes, and around his mouth. But the battle never was such child's play as Guido's dapper Archangel seems to have found it! (Hawthorne 1995: 148)

Miriam's statement makes Kenyon suggest her to "paint the picture of man's struggle against sin" (Hawthorne 1995: 148). She replies that "The picture would have its share of truth, I assure you, but I am sadly afraid the victory would fall on the wrong side" (Hawthorne 1995: 148). Taking into account the author's conception of the art of writing, as can be deduced from some hints in his prefaces, from his books, and from the sketch "Main Street", Miriam's comment regarding that painting can be read as a parallel to the author's ideas with respect to the conventional novels of his time: excessively beautiful, perfect and unstained. But, just like Hilda, also disconnected from reality.

While Kenyon and Miriam were discussing art, Donatello's attention had been caught by a dead capuchin whose coffin was at the altar. Kenyon's interest in human anatomy to improve his sculptures makes him suggest having a look at the corpse. Once they got closer, they found out that the dead capuchin was no other than Miriam's Model. Upon their arrival by his coffin, a stream of blood started running from the corpse's nose. As Miriam herself explains to Kenyon, legend has it that when something like that happens, it

means that the murderer of the deceased person is nearby. The fact that the dead Model had been, in fact, a capuchin monk is not a coincidence within what I consider Hawthorne's maneuvers in favor of the advancement of society. The Capuchins were founded within the Catholic Church as a more conservative branch of the Franciscans. The Capuchins advocated for going back to the origins of the Church, to a more traditional religion. This is precisely what Hawthorne did not seem to stand for. On the contrary, the narrator does not blame Miriam for the capuchin's death, he sympathizes with her and states that "there had been nothing, in his lifetime, viler than this man" (Hawthorne 1995: 153). The narrator rather places the blame on the Model's behavior. Miriam feels reassured and tells the dead man "No; thou shalt not scowl me down! Neither now, nor when we stand together at the Judgment Seat. I fear not to meet thee there" (Hawthorne 1995: 153). What is more, the narrator passionately describes the transformation which Miriam underwent before addressing the dead man:

It was wonderful to see how the crisis developed in Miriam its own proper strength, and the faculty of sustaining the demands which it made upon her fortitude. She ceased to tremble; the beautiful woman gazed sternly at her dead enemy, endeavouring to meet and quell the look of accusation that he threw from between his half-closed eyelids. (Hawthorne 1995: 153)

As Miriam had previously told Kenyon, her conscience is as white as Hilda's. Like Beatrice Cenci and the Biblical women she paints, Miriam did what she had to. The narrator depicts her as a brave woman who chose to take charge of her destiny and move forward.

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

Even though the outcome of the interview between Miriam and Hilda is not what the former expected, somehow Miriam could anticipate it. Before she gets to Hilda's place, the narrator describes what the pure young woman was doing: she saw her reflection in a

mirror and “fancied — nor was it without horror — that Beatrice’s expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face” (Hawthorne 1995: 164). This scene is seized by the narrator’s plea for Beatrice Cenci’s innocence:

Who, indeed, can look at that mouth — with its lips half-apart, as innocent as a baby’s that has been crying — and not pronounce Beatrice sinless! It was the intimate consciousness of her father’s sin that threw its shadow over her, and frightened her into a remote and inaccessible region, where no sympathy could come. (Hawthorne 1995: 164)

Although the narrator uses this statement to assert Hilda’s innocence, it can also be read as his way of affirming Miriam’s, who had previously been linked to Beatrice. The blame is thus placed in the father’s law, which both Beatrice and Miriam broke. Nonetheless, Hilda follows her natural instincts and when Miriam tries to hug her, Hilda rejects her. Miriam immediately realized that she had lost Hilda’s friendship and tried to make her understand that she was:

A woman, as I was yesterday; — endowed with the same truth of nature, the same warmth of heart, the same genuine and earnest love, which you have always known in me. In any regard that concerns yourself, I am not changed. And believe me, Hilda, when a human being has chosen a friend out of all the world, it is only some faithlessness between themselves, rendering true intercourse impossible, that can justify either friend in severing the bond. Have I deceived you? Then cast me off! Have I wrong you personally? Then forgive me, if you can! But, have I sinned against God and man, and deeply sinned? Then be more my friend than ever, for I need you more! (Hawthorne 1995: 166)

Hilda, however, does not comprehend Miriam’s reasoning. She simply knows that killing a man is a crime against man and a sin against God. Fully comprehending where Hilda comes from, Miriam points out to her that “As an angel, you are not amiss; but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you!” (Hawthorne 1995: 167). Hilda is too perfect for an imperfect world; within her robes of white purity, Hilda is quite a radical character who believes that “the sins of generations past have created an atmosphere of sin for those that follow! While there is a single guilty person in the universe, each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt” (Hawthorne 1995: 169), ignoring the purpose of Christ’s death according to the Bible. Hilda’s attitude recalls that of those characters who see the speck in their brother’s eye,

but do not notice the log in their own, which can be interpreted as one of the author's strategies to expose what he considered the flaws of the traditional social establishment. As in a theatrical play, the location of the story changes after the climax and the plot shifts to the two male characters. Donatello left Rome and sought refuge in his ancestors' villa, where Kenyon meets him. Once again, Kenyon senses that something is amiss, but respects his friend's privacy, not pressing to know more. Interestingly, although his family's villa is almost empty, Donatello has chosen to stay in a tower room which had "served as an oratory" (Hawthorne 1995: 204) and was filled with paintings representing martyrdoms and other Catholic ornaments. Donatello's tower is at odds with Hilda's. Instead of a dove-cote, it is called an "owl's nest" (Hawthorne 1995: 204). He is not in the tower to avoid contact with the sin in the world, but to reflect upon his own sin. Unlike Miriam, Donatello feels guilty and thinks of himself as a criminal.

When Miriam shows up in Donatello's villa thanks to Kenyon's help, the latter asks Miriam whether she is afraid of meeting Donatello under God's Eye and she replies "No; for, as far as I can see into that cloudy and inscrutable thing, my heart, it has none but pure motives" (Hawthorne 1995: 227). Once again, Miriam insists on having a clear conscience. Moreover, when talking about Hilda's rejection of Miriam, Kenyon acknowledges Hilda to be right while admitting that Miriam has "a thousand admirable qualities. Whatever mass of evil may have befallen into your life, (pardon me, but your own words suggest it,) you are still as capable as ever of many high and heroic virtues" (Hawthorne 1995: 230). That is, Kenyon's opinion can be taken as a counterbalance to Hilda's more categorical attitude. He does listen to Miriam and does his best to help both her and Donatello. As I have been proposing, Kenyon can be read as Hawthorne's representation of a possible new society. Thanks to Kenyon, Miriam and Donatello are temporarily reunited. Interestingly, although Kenyon explains to them that their "bond is twined with such black threads, that you must never look upon it as identical with the ties that unite other loving souls" and that "There would be no holy sanction on your wedded life" (Hawthorne 1995: 256), he also acknowledges that "The bond betwixt you, therefore, is a true one, and never — except by Heaven's own act — should be rent asunder" (Hawthorne 1995: 256). What is more, when Kenyon is leaving Miriam and Donatello, they all look upward and "there was the majestic figure [of Pope Julius] stretching out the hand of benediction over them, and bending down upon this guilty and repentant pair its visage of grand benignity [...] he approved, by

look and gesture, the pledge of a deep union” (Hawthorne 1995: 258), as if regardless of social conventions, their union had been sanctioned by a higher, more compassionate, authority, none other than Pope Julius III, who historically speaking can be considered a Renaissance man. For example, he granted permission to set up the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum* and the *Pontifical Gregorian University*, to provide priests with a well-rounded education. As opposed to the Capuchins, represented by the dead Model, Pope Julius III favored culture and progress within Catholicism, which reinforces the idea of Hawthorne’s supporting the birth of a new social order by his use of this Pope’s statue to bless Miriam’s and Donatello’s union.

At the carnival, Kenyon meets Miriam and Donatello once more, and she tells Kenyon her life story to “unveil” herself. Miriam had “English parentage, on the mother’s side, but with a vein, likewise, of Jewish blood, yet connected, through her father, with one of those few princely families of southern Italy, which still retain a great wealth and influence” (Hawthorne 1995: 341). Miriam also explains to Kenyon that while still a child, she had been engaged to “a certain marchese, a representative of another branch of her paternal house; a family arrangement between two persons of disproportioned ages” (Hawthorne 1995: 341). Breaking away from the establishment, Miriam disregarded the marriage contract and fled to Rome after devising a ruse to make others believe that she had committed suicide. When Miriam finished her story, she asked Kenyon if he thought her guilty and twice he said: “you were innocent. I shudder at the fatality that seems to haunt your footsteps, and throws a shadow of crime about your path, you being guiltless” (Hawthorne 1995: 341). He even adds that “Hilda, and Donatello, and myself – we three would have acquitted you, let the world say what it might” (Hawthorne 1995: 343). Kenyon deems Miriam to be innocent, as did the narrator before, and would have been ready to defend her against the opinion of society.

After this episode, and with the help of Miriam’s family connections, Kenyon reunites with Hilda and they end up getting married. Donatello feels he deserves to be punished and goes to jail for having killed the Model. Interestingly, the union between Kenyon and Hilda is blessed by Miriam at the Coliseum, where Kenyon proposed to Hilda. The couple noticed a “kneeling figure, beneath the open Eye of the Pantheon” and when it “arose, she looked towards the pair, and extended her hands with a gesture of benediction. Then they knew it was Miriam” (Hawthorne 1995: 364). Moreover, Hilda receives a wedding gift from her. It

was Miriam's bracelet, made up of "seven ancient Etruscan gems" which "became a connecting bond of a series of seven wondrous tales, all of which, as they were dug out of seven sepulchers, were characterized by a sevenfold sepulchral gloom" (Hawthorne 1995: 365). In the Christian world, number seven corresponds to both the seven capital sins and to the seven virtues. Evil and goodness represented by the same number, but still separated. Her gift is Miriam's way of reminding Hilda that both sin and virtue coexist in the world. It will also remind Hilda of Miriam's innocence and clear conscience.

The Marble Faun is the lengthiest of Hawthorne's books because it can be considered a compilation of all his literary, and even part of his social, ideas. His beliefs about literary genres are profoundly connected with his conceptions about gender and about male-female relations. Hawthorne's

Novels are replete with objections against social arrangements that tell so heavily and unjustly against women. [...]. Hawthorne's point, one might say, is not that essentialism makes social change impossible, but that it makes social change impossible unless differences between women and men are taken into account. (Baym 2005: 118)

He presents the reality of his times and exposes a number of unjust attitudes towards women by means of his own art. The women's role in society has been contested via Kenyon's reflections, apart from some of the narrator's own comments. Besides, the denouement of the story can be read as emphasizing Miriam's triumph; although Hilda rejected her, Miriam was not declared guilty and she will always be present in the newlyweds' lives through her mysterious wedding gift. The art of the author's imagination, so important for Hawthorne while so dangerous for his contemporaries, shows in *The Marble Faun* how necessary progress was.

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