THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE: A RADICAL READING

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The shelf of books written about Nathaniel Hawthorne in the last few decades presents a remarkably consistent interpretation of the author as a humanist, continually reminding a democratically progressive, romantically self-assertive era about the reality of human imperfection. His intellectual ambiguity parallels his moral humility: when properly conscious of its small measure, the mind will not choose among interpretations of reality, knowing that all too probably it will merely be pridefully imposing its own constructs on God's unfathomable designs. While one can read in 1939 that a romantic interpretation of *The Scarlet Letter* (wherein Hawthorne is supposed to be championing Hester against her persecutors) was almost a commonplace,[1] such a view is now raised in the criticism only to have its obvious falsity proclaimed. And no suggestion remotely so daring has been advanced for Hawthorne's other novels at all. *The Blithedale Romance*, for example, is universally taken to be the study of a Utopia that fails because original sin, the heart's inclination toward evil, accompanies the reformers into their New Eden and there, unleashed by their naïve self-trust, destroys all.

This interpretation, elegantly varied from book to book and article to article, has flourished despite its acknowledged inability to cope with large segments of the action. Of Westervelt and the Veiled Lady nothing more edifying can be found in standard criticism than that "the 'mysterious' aspects of Hawthorne's plot are certainly not likely to hold our attention long today!"[2] It is generally agreed that Hawthorne did not successfully blend the realistic details drawn from his participation in the Brook Farm community with the melodramatic plot; the book is too leadenly realistic for a romance, but too fantastic for a novel. Some critics deplore Hawthorne's misguided ambition to chronicle the real, while others regret the waste of first-

[1] Neal Frank Doubleday, "Hawthorne's Hester and Feminism," *PMLA*, LIV (1939), 825–29.

[2] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *Hawthorne*, revised ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 192.

rate social material.[3] The narrator, though recognized as a familiar Hawthorne "type," is regarded as unwisely chosen for the circumstances: his coldness keeps him too remote from the action to convey its life, his prying makes him unpleasant company for the reader, and his ignorance almost suggests the possibility of an unreliable narrative. Until recently, most critics have maintained that while Priscilla is unquestionably Hawthorne's favored feminine character, he failed to surmount the problem of rendering goodness; consequently, the book does not effectively realize its moral position against the contrastingly sinful Zenobia.

No doubt there have been novels as ineptly written as this catalogue of faults implies, even by major novelists. Yet one cannot help noticing that the overwhelming intent of the criticism has been to maintain the view of Hawthorne as cautionary moralist, even if artistry and coherence must be discarded in the process.[4] Irving Howe, for example, speaks of the book's "radical incoherence," its almost total failure to realize its intentions.[5] But what, then, *has* Blithedale realized? Suppose one were to assume that the novel contains a coherent action; what sense would one then find in it? The following interpretation results from such an approach. It discovers that *The Blithedale Romance* embodies a radical romanticism. Blithedale Farm is a subverted Utopia, but its downfall is not original sin. The community is destroyed by the lingering pressures and effects of the repressive social organization it has tried to escape. In human experience, the self is born into a society, and has never known freedom. Hawthorne is concerned with those evils in the soul that are "the result of ages of compelled degradation" (p. 124).[6] The attempt to liberate reveals that man carries his cage around inside him and will, when left alone, recreate his oppression.

We begin by accepting Hawthorne's prefatory statement that *Blithedale* is, regardless of its sources, a romance and not a novel. It does not try to imitate appearances, surfaces, and probabilities,

[3] Mark Van Doren, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Biography* (New York, 1949), p. 189; Robert C. Elliott, "*The Blithedale Romance*," *Hawthorne Centenary Essays* (Columbus, 1964), p. 105.

[4] In all fairness it must be added that the two books which argue against the humanist interpretation of Hawthorne also consider *The Blithedale Romance* an incoherent failure. Rudolph Von Abele, *The Death of the Artist* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 71–83; Frederick C. Crews, *The Sins of the Fathers* (New York, 1966), pp. 194–212.

[5] Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (New York, 1957), p. 154.

[6] References are to Volume III of the Centenary Edition of Hawthorne's works, *The Blithedale Romance* (Columbus, 1964).

though it reserves the right to use fact for its own purposes. Brook Farm was most apt for his intentions, Hawthorne says, because it permitted him to "establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives" (p. 1). *The Blithedale Romance* is the literary realization of an imagined world, just as Brook Farm itself was an attempt to realize an imagined world. Moreover, as is often the case in Hawthorne's fiction (e.g., "Rappacini's Daughter," "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molyneux"), the work realizes a particular character's imagined world. What Blithedale "is" is inseparable from what it is to Coverdale, for nothing is known in the book but what is known by him. To ask whether there could be a more accurate rendering of the story than Coverdale's, is—given the absence of corrective devices in the narrative—a meaningless question. The book's reality is Coverdale's world; ultimately he is its only character, and everything that happens in the novel must be understood in reference to him. Of course *Blithedale* has characters, but so do allegories in which characters represent fragments of the psyche. Of course, too, *Blithedale* incorporates much cold fact in its fantasy, but so do day-dreams, and so do such works as *Moby Dick* and *Walden* where the facts are wrought into the texture of an imagined truth.

While, for his more transcendental contemporaries, this truth corresponds, *a priori*, to an absolute reality, for Hawthorne it signifies simply the inclinations of the imagining mind—the mind objectified, the mind made accessible. Hawthorne remembers Brook Farm as "essentially a daydream, and yet a fact" (p. 2), and this statement tells us how to regard the romance. If there could be a daydream so powerful in its effects as to alter the dreamer's life—if there could be a daydream which became real, and was followed out to its natural consummation (p. 10)—that reality would correspond to the world of *The Blithedale Romance*. Such reality is, of course, the stuff of much, or most, modern literature. The hero's adventures occur on the stage of his own psyche, and through them we comprehend that psyche.

It cannot be said of Coverdale that he adventures, since he is a notably passive character. He takes the role of the dreaming mind, a passive consciousness, observing the figures of his own "conscious sleep" (I borrow the phrase from Hawthorne's early story "Alice Doane's Appeal"). Much of the story is puzzling and obscure to the dreamer who, even as he imagines it, is trying to understand it. The

story contains its own explanation, and yet its meaning is exasperatingly elusive. Coverdale experiences frustration, anxiety, rage, despair, anticipation, depression; he loves and then hates the three main characters, his moods swing from exaltation to unutterable weariness —and he conveys his intense absorption in the lives of the three in many passages, of which this is a sample:

> Nevertheless, there seemed something fatal in the coincidence that had borne me to this one spot . . . and transfixed me there, and compelled me again to waste my already wearied sympathies on affairs which were none of mine, and persons who cared little for me. It irritated my nerves; it affected me with a kind of heart-sickness. After the effort which it cost me to fling them off—after consummating my escape, as I thought, from these goblins of flesh and blood, and pausing to revive myself with a breath or two of an atmosphere in which they should have no share—it was a positive despair, to find the same figures arraying themselves before me, and presenting their old problem in a shape that made it more insoluble than ever.
>
> I began to long for a catastrophe. (p. 157)

The language of this passage suggests strongly that these characters are figures of the imagination, even though Coverdale claims they are none of his; and at the same time testifies to an all-consuming involvement with them on the narrator's part. Why, against this testimony, is Coverdale persistently described in the criticism as a coldly curious, but emotionally indifferent, psychological detective?[7] Largely because nobody has considered these hints that Priscilla, Zenobia, and Hollingsworth may not be "real." If they are real, then Coverdale's feelings about them are very hard to account for, being clearly more appropriate to an author than an observer: and precisely this difficulty accounts for the theory of Coverdale as a Jamesian (e.g., out of *The Sacred Fount*) narrator. Frederick Crews's interpretation of *The Blithedale Romance* as the record of Coverdale's attempt to write about real people is the most ingenious attempt to date to explain Coverdale's stance without jettisoning the assumption that the book em-

[7] A favorite passage in critical discussion supports this view only when quoted, as it invariably is, in part. Coverdale muses, "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." "But," he immediately continues, "a man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm. It now impresses me that, if I erred at all in regard to Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, it was through too much sympathy, rather than too little" (p. 154). In its entirety the passage portrays one of Coverdale's irritated and frustrated oscillations of mood as he chafes in a situation of which, by now, he would be glad to be free.

bodies a literal experience communicated to us by a narrator-journalist.[8] Most criticism has avoided these perplexing emotions completely and concentrated on Coverdale's ineffectiveness, which is mistaken for indifference. Then, remembering that according to the stereotyped view of Hawthorne's artist, artists are coldly curious, and falsely believing that Coverdale is an artist, critics show that Coverdale indeed fits the type.[9]

Of Coverdale's ineffectiveness there can be no doubt. His many attempts to control, influence, even involve himself with the characters, are rebuffed. Where at first he is a kind of steady center in their circle, he is gradually pushed aside; as he becomes superfluous, he finds himself strangely drained of energy. A parasitism is implied precisely opposite to that commonly assumed to exist in the novel. We do not find Coverdale drawing his life from the characters, but find him losing it to them. In Chapter XXIII the abandoned Coverdale complains that he has been wandering like an "exorcised spirit that has been driven from its old haunts, after a mighty struggle." The three had "absorbed my life into themselves. . . . The more I consider myself, as I then was, the more do I recognize how deeply my connection with those three had affected all my being" (pp. 194–95). Earlier he has

[8] The best word on the subject is to be found in a story by Cervantes which is known to be one of Hawthorne's sources for "Young Goodman Brown" and is quoted in an excellent article, "How Ambiguous Is Hawthorne?" by H. J. Lang, reprinted in A. N. Kaul, ed., *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), pp. 86–98. In this story, a witch talks about participating in a Witches' Sabbath. "There is a prevalent belief that we attend these meetings only in our imagination and that the devil merely pictures for us all those things that we afterwards relate as having happened to us. Others take the contrary view and maintain that we really do go, in body and soul. As for myself, I hold that both opinions are true, and that we do not know when we go in one way or the other, for the reason that everything that takes place in our imaginations happens so intensely that it is impossible for us to distinguish between the imaginary and the real" (p. 90).

[9] It is essential to realize that Coverdale is not considered, either by Hawthorne or himself, to be an artist. He is an amateur, a dilettante, a minor—because uncommitted—poetaster. The reason, in fact, for his withdrawal to Blithedale is that he wants to become an artist and feels he cannot become one in society. To say that he is an artist because he has written *The Blithedale Romance* is to beg the question, since all first-person narrators thereby become artists; further, not a single reference in the book suggests that Coverdale's narration is meant as a literary activity, while a number of chapter titles (VI, "Coverdale's Sick-Chamber"; XII, "Coverdale's Hermitage"; XXVI, "Zenobia and Coverdale"; XXIX, "Miles Coverdale's Confession") attribute the literary form of the narrative to an unknown third person.

Conversely, many an analysis of Hawthorne's artist suffers from the prominent position given to Coverdale in the argument. See especially Millicent Bell, *Hawthorne's View of the Artist* (New York, 1962), a book seriously weakened, if not rendered useless, by the extent to which the characters chosen for analysis are not artists.

spoken of his life as having been "attenuated of much of its proper substance" through his involvement with these characters (p. 157). His passivity and their energy are two aspects of a single event, the dream in which the dreaming mind is possessed by its images.

The gradual drift of the characters, over the novel's course, away from harmonious relations toward polarization and eventual violent confrontation represents a process of split and struggle within the personality. Imagery of masks and veils, much noted in the criticism, contributes to the dreamlike atmosphere of uncertain identities, and figures the indirect, misleading, and elusive ways in which truth is at once embodied and muffled in fantasy. The carnival or pageant during which Zenobia is repudiated by Hollingsworth represents a moment of truth when the characters cease to pose as people and appear as the imaginary or mythical figures they *really* are—Zenobia as the soul's queen, Hollingsworth as its wrathful judge. And the catastrophic conclusion leaves Coverdale forever psychically inert, never able to achieve that unity of being which would have enabled him to have a purpose in life.

The trip to Blithedale Farm is Coverdale's attempt to find a purpose. The narration chronicles the failure of his inner exploration. In the opening chapters he undertakes the familiar journey into the self in search of one's inner core, the struggle to make contact with the sources of life and energy within and to return to the surface, refreshed and rejuvenated. In Boston Coverdale enjoys the "sweet, bewitching, enervating indolence" (p. 19) of a genteel bachelorhood, parcelling out the social days among "my pleasant bachelor-parlor, sunny and shadowy . . . ; my centre-table, strewn with books and periodicals; my writing-desk, with a half-finished poem in a stanza of my own contrivance; my morning lounge at the reading-room or picture-gallery; my noontide walk along the cheery pavement, with the suggestive succession of human faces, and the brisk throb of human life, in which I shared; my dinner at the Albion . . . ; my evening at the billiard-club, the concert, the theatre, or at somebody's party, if I pleased" (p. 40). This pleasant life lacks vigor; in its atmosphere of tepid hedonism, art is but another languid pastime. Coverdale leaves it behind to liberate and test his talent. He wants to become a poet, "to produce something that shall really deserve to be called poetry—true, strong, natural, and sweet" (p. 14).

The withdrawal and search are symbolized in two parallel ways, which may be distinguished as the public and private, or outer and

inner dimensions of Coverdale's quest. The movement from Boston to Blithedale supplies an outer form for the journey, which is paralleled on the inner stage by a movement from Priscilla, the Veiled Lady (the Spiritual Ideal: Love and Art in genteel society), to Zenobia. Boston represents the prison of institutions and conformity. Leaving the city with other members of the community, Coverdale notes "how the buildings, on either side, seemed to press too closely upon us, insomuch that our mighty hearts found barely room enough to throb between them. The snowfall, too, looked inexpressibly dreary, (I had almost called it dingy,) coming down through an atmosphere of city-smoke, and alighting on the sidewalk, only to be moulded into the impress of somebody's patched boot or over-shoe." And Coverdale draws a fine transcendental moral from his observations: "thus, the track of an old conventionalism was visible on what was freshest from the sky" (p. 11).

Blithedale, in contrast, is a radical community which aims, in an atmosphere of informality and innovation, to establish forms of labor and of love which will express and liberate, rather than inhibit and distort, the human spirit. It hopes to restructure human relationships around the principle of "familiar love" and to "lessen the laboring man's great burthen of toil." Life is to be "governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based" (p. 19). Coverdale is not deeply interested in the community's economic aims, for as a man of means he feels little tie to the working classes. Yet he recognizes a common interest, since work and leisure are both socially controlled activities. As for the aim of more natural and loving relationships between human beings, Coverdale has his version of that goal as well. The springtime in which Coverdale leaves for Blithedale symbolizes (as has often been noted) the rejuvenating and regenerating purposes of his withdrawal from society, as well as the optimism implicit in his quest. The severe snow he encounters represents the necessary death of the social self prior to spiritual rebirth. He contracts a bad cold, and points out that its severity is directly due to the "hot-house warmth of a town-residence and the luxurious life in which I indulged myself" (p. 40).[10] Recovering, he rejoins the community on May Day, exulting in the belief that he has been reborn.

> My fit of illness had been an avenue between two existences; the low-arched

[10] There is an interesting and close analogy in the literal use of hot and cold to define conditions of life, and the identification of the overly social life with overheating, to the first chapter of *Walden*. That first chapter had been in existence, in varied forms, for several years, and there is no reason why Hawthorne might not have known it.

and darksome doorway, through which I crept out of a life of cold conventionalisms, on my hands and knees, as it were, and gained admittance into the freer region that lay beyond. In this respect, it was like death. And, as with death, too, it was good to have gone through it. No otherwise could I have rid myself of a thousand follies, fripperies, prejudices, habits, and other such worldly dust as inevitably settles upon the crowd along the broad highway, giving them all one sordid aspect, before noontime, however freshly they may have begun their pilgrimage, in the dewy morning. The very substance upon my bones had not been fit to live with, in any better, truer, or more energetic mode than that to which I was accustomed. So it was taken off me and flung aside, like any other worn-out or unseasonable garment; and, after shivering a little while in my skeleton, I began to be clothed anew, and much more satisfactorily than in my previous suit. In literal and physical truth, I was quite another man. (p. 61)

Obviously, Coverdale thinks his struggle is over. In truth it is about to begin. Recognizing only external obstacles, Coverdale has naïvely imagined that removal from society would be sufficient to liberate the powers of self. He is as yet unaware that inhibiting forces exist within as well as without.[11] His innocence is paralleled by the community's here, for it believes in the possibility of reform without revolution.

The true, deep aim of Coverdale's quest is private; he wants to tap the soul's reservoir of energy, to make contact with its passionate, creative, active principle. This principle underlies, or animates, all forms of human self-expression whether in work, love, or play. It is the source of all impulsive, creative, and passionate activity; hence sexual and poetic energy are but varying forms of the same drive and, consequently, Zenobia, who unites in her person sex, art, and nature, is its perfect symbol. Of course, in addition, she is politically radical. Though the life-principle is not inherently or originally political, it inevitably comes in conflict with society because it is continually asserting the primacy of self and activity over institutions and stability. Society, whose necessary goals are permanence and control, forces this romantic energy into the mold of rebellion.[12] Zenobia, from soci-

[11] Roy R. Male, in *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision* (Austin, 1957), defines the theme of *The Blithedale Romance* as Hawthorne's criticism of the "recurring American efforts at transformation without tragedy" (p. 139). The tragedy Male has in mind is the unavoidable tragedy of original sin; man may hope to be redeemed, but cannot hope to avoid sin and suffering.

[12] Irving Howe, I believe, reverses the causal order when he says that Zenobia's sexuality is related "both in its power and its limits, to her political boldness. . . . Zenobia's intellectual and political audacity makes possible a new kind of personal freedom" (p. 171). Zenobia's political attitudes are consequence, not cause, of her personal freedom.

ety's point of view, is morally suspect, as is the energetic and passionate principle she represents. She is the real aim of Coverdale's search, and that is why she is waiting to greet him at Blithedale, and why in comparison to her the rest of the enterprise pales and looks unreal, becomes "a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia" (p. 21). She, and not the community, represents the reality Coverdale is seeking.

In this symbolic function, Zenobia is the creative energy both of nature and the self; without committing himself quite to a transcendental view of the unity of all things Hawthorne does at least imply a relation between nature and the creative self. But Zenobia's role is not by any means encompassed in this dual function; she is also, most impressively and concretely, a woman, and Hawthorne outperforms the feminists in the decisive way in which he links the liberation and fulfilment of the male to his understanding of and relation to woman. Not the threatening dark lady of the post-Victorians, nor even the ambivalently conceived symbol of experience, both fascinating and frightening, in Philip Rhav's famous formulation,[13] Zenobia is simply, as Coverdale says, "a magnificent woman" (p. 44). She is a depiction of the eternal feminine as earthy, maternal, domestic, natural, sensual, brilliant, loving, and demanding, and is described mainly in images of softness, radiance, warmth, and health, none of which are even slightly ambivalent or ambiguous in their emotional import. Her voice is "fine, frank, mellow," her hand "very soft and warm," and her smile "beamed warmth upon us all." Her laugh is "mellow, almost broad," her modes of expression "free, careless, generous" (pp. 14–16). Coverdale summarizes by saying that "we seldom meet with women, now-a-days, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all; their sex fades away and goes for nothing, in ordinary intercourse. Not so with Zenobia" (p. 17). Later he is to become rhapsodic remembering the "native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and . . . the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust" (p. 44). Von Abele points out that Zenobia is linked with the domestic Phoebe Pyncheon in that both are characterized in sun metaphors;[14] seeing her as a sun-ripened Phoebe will perhaps save us from being "morbidly sensitive" about Zenobia, a state which Coverdale, when he feels it,

[13] Philip Rhav, "The Dark Lady of Salem," *Partisan Review*, VIII (1941), 362–81. Rhav accepts Coverdale as a Paul Pry. The essay's greatest contribution to an understanding of *The Blithedale Romance* is its perception that Coverdale, when he claims to be in love with Priscilla, is lying. "It is evident on every page that the only genuine relationship is that of Coverdale to Zenobia" (p. 377).

[14] Von Abele, p. 78.

attributes to his "illness and exhaustion" and not to sinister qualities in the lady herself (p. 44).[15]

Two aspects of Zenobia do not fit the unambiguous picture I am presenting here: first, her feminism and, second, the exotic flower, daily renewed, which she wears in her hair. Unquestionably Hawthorne does not think much of Zenobia *as a feminist*. "Her poor little stories and tracts never half did justice to her intellect," he says, praising the intellect even as he deprecates the form it has found to express itself. "I recognized no severe culture in Zenobia; her mind was full of weeds. It startled me sometimes, in my state of moral, as well as bodily faint-heartedness, to observe the hardihood of her philosophy; she made no scruple of oversetting all human institutions, and scattering them as with a breeze from her fan" (p. 44). Zenobia is uncultured because culture is a matter of society, institutions, and the past. True original energy is, by its nature, somewhat barbaric: Walt Whitman was shortly to dramatize this point. Under the pressure of historical circumstances, Zenobia has become a female pamphleteer. The role is inherently unworthy of her (her true place is in a timeless natural setting such as Blithedale aspires to be), but it is the best she can do in a society that offers woman no worthy roles at all. Lastly, Coverdale's references to his own faint-heartedness make clear that Zenobia's "hardihood" is not being criticized; on the contrary, she illuminates Coverdale's feebleness.

For that hothouse flower Zenobia has had to suffer a great deal of critical abuse.[16] But when one reads that it was "so fit, indeed, that

[15] The fact that Zenobia assumes a name is often taken to indicate her lack of openness. But this interpretation doesn't hold up. To begin with, the name "Zenobia" is a true name for her in the sense that it expresses her character; she has chosen a name that reveals her, not one that hides her. Second, her real name is well known to all (see p. 93), so that we must assume that "Zenobia" has not been adopted for purposes of escaping or hiding an identity.

[16] The most curious interpretation of the flower is that introduced by Newton Arvin, who says that it symbolizes Zenobia's desire to compete with men! (*Nathaniel Hawthorne* [New York, 1929], pp. 197–99). Symbols may be forced in all directions, but there must be a shred of relation retained between tenor and vehicle. A hothouse flower simply cannot be used to represent something mannish. R. H. Fogle, in *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark*, revised ed. (Norman, 1964), takes a common view when he says that the flower symbolizes Zenobia's pride; Coverdale says so too at one point. Yet the problems of this reading can be seen in the result: "one might say that she falls because she is perfect and ripe for destruction. . . . Thus richly endowed, in her pride she fails to sacrifice to the infernal Gods, who love humility in men" (p. 173). The problem is not whether Zenobia is proud, but how Zenobia's pride is regarded. Fogle *thinks* he is taking the traditional view of Hawthorne; but in the traditional view, gods are not infernal. Even Von Abele, the most perceptive of Hawthorne's critics, says that the flower because it is an exotic is "a forced bloom bred by man for his lust's pleasure" (p. 80).

Nature had evidently created this floral gem, in a happy exuberance, for the one purpose of worthily adorning Zenobia's head" (p. 45), it is difficult to assert that it symbolizes sensual evil, or something unnatural. It *is* sensual, but neither evil nor unnatural. That is its point: it proclaims that Zenobia's nature is passionate as well as pastoral. It may frighten the sexually morbid, but in itself it is innocent. One may hazard that what Hawthorne is trying to do here is precisely to reinstate sexuality as a legitimate and natural element of femininity—and, by implication, of maleness. It will be a sign of Coverdale's "recovery" when his feelings about Zenobia no longer embarrass him. And because, in Zenobia, all kinds of passionate and creative energies have united in a fundamental Eros, we can say that Coverdale's freedom depends on his ability to accept woman in her totality. The major block to Coverdale's release of energies is—because these energies are passionate—his inability to acknowledge passion as an element of human character. It is about Zenobia, and not Priscilla, that he ought to be writing poems; then he would be doing something more than contriving stanzas. Art is passionate and it celebrates passion; rejecting this truth, Coverdale is incapable of mature artistry and must remain a childish man, an ineffectual "poetling" (to borrow Whitman's phrase). Until man becomes able to accept the fact that the source of his strength is "erotic" (in the large sense of the term) he will be unable to draw on it. The narrative of *The Blithedale Romance* demonstrates Coverdale's incapacity. The ability freely to accept the woman is frequently the test of a man in Hawthorne's writings—one which he invariably fails.[17]

The relation between Coverdale and Zenobia begins auspiciously, as they sit together beside the blazing kitchen fire. But the fire is only of brush-wood; its energy will not endure. Were Coverdale the man so easily to solve his problems, he would not have needed to go to Blithedale to confront them. Silas Foster (the story's chorus) predicts the fire's imminent death, and then a knock on the door announces the arrival of Hollingsworth and Priscilla, who will put out Blithedale's fires permanently by killing Zenobia. Zenobia is soon laughingly to forecast her own doom when she calls Hollingsworth the "sable knight" and Priscilla the "shadowy snow maiden who . . . shall melt away at my feet, in a pool of ice-water, and give me my death with a pair of wet slippers" (p. 33). Priscilla and Hollingsworth are heavily veiled, and the veiling both obscures and yet displays the hidden

[17] Traditional interpretations have it, of course, that he successfully overcomes the temptation embodied in the woman.

beings beneath. Priscilla's cloak hides everything of her person except its all-important insubstantiality; Hollingsworth in his snow-covered coat looks like a polar bear (p. 26). Hollingsworth is continually portrayed in images amalgamating fire and ice. He is a polar animal, an iron savage. The imagery of iron and of cold is clear enough, defining Hollingsworth as severe, rigid, and, except on his one topic, unpassionate. The iron metaphors foreshadow his eventual appearance as a Puritan judge, for Hawthorne's Puritans are always iron men.[18] In *The Blithedale Romance* we also find iron imagery applied to society (p. 19). The point of the animal imagery is that Hollingsworth, although he does not know it, derives his energies from the savage core of his nature just like everyone else. The high morality of his philanthropy encourages a fatal delusion, fatal because when in his ignorance he repudiates Zenobia he destroys himself.

But at the moment of his entrance into the novel this debacle lies in the future, and Hawthorne concentrates on delineating the man of iron in his frowning and yielding faces, faces which make him appear, falsely, to be a *loving* man of iron. Hollingsworth immediately displays his two faces; one, turned upon Priscilla, "looked really beautiful with its expression of thoughtful benevolence" (p. 30). The other, turned to Zenobia (who has just repulsed Priscilla's overly emotional approach to her), is "stern and reproachful; and it was with that inauspicious meaning in his glance, that Hollingsworth first met Zenobia's eyes, and began his influence upon her life" (pp. 28–29).[19] The outcome of the story is foreshadowed in these first glances, but Coverdale is long reluctant to accept what he has seen. Against all testimony, Hollingsworth's included, he persists in imagining that Hollingsworth is a benign and loving parent, a kind and tender priest who

[18] This fact was first observed by Q. D. Leavis in "Hawthorne as Poet," *Sewanee Review*, LIX (1951), 179–205, 426–58. This article, in ways a milestone in Hawthorne criticism, shows very clearly how reluctant critics are to follow the romantic implications of their own analyses. Thus, having fully discussed the meanings of the iron men in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," Mrs. Leavis goes on to say *without any evidence* that there is "no doubt" that the May Lord and May Lady entered into a finer bond when they joined the community of iron men—and were married in the ceremony of the iron men's church—no doubt, that is, in Hawthorne's mind. But Mrs. Leavis' own discussion of iron imagery has established the doubt, beyond question.

[19] A recent article of great interest, "Some Rents in the Veil: New Light on Priscilla and Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*," by Alan and Barbara Lefcowitz (*Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, XXI [1966], 263–75), clarifies Zenobia's behavior in this scene. She, as well as Coverdale, thinks Priscilla is a prostitute. See, for confirming evidence, pp. 27, 29 in *The Blithedale Romance*.

will remain noncompetitively on the sidelines and bless all the participants in the action.

In relation to Coverdale, Hollingsworth's role is very complicated. He is an alter ego, an admired version of the self, energetic, forceful, attractive, and purposeful to an extreme. He is also a father figure, rival and judge of the self. Perhaps we may infer from this coincidence of roles that Coverdale's weaknesses derive from the simple fact that he has too much respect for authority. Thus the alter ego is authoritarian. Coverdale supposes that the father within the self will rejoice at the son's maturity; he supposes that the father is an admirable model, a great emancipator. He assumes that his admiration for Hollingsworth as an individual will be reciprocated in kind. But Hollingsworth is a jailor who admires nothing in individuals, and desires nothing but their submission. He must dominate, and his morality serves his tyranny. His pretensions to being a romantic are "hollow" (Hollingsworth—Hollow-worth?). His nature does not change in the course of the novel, but Coverdale's perception of him alters. More accurately, Coverdale comes to accept what he has already perceived but refused to credit.

From the first he knows that Hollingsworth's "heart . . . was never really interested in our socialist scheme, but was forever busy with his strange . . . plan" (p. 36). Why then has he come to Blithedale? Coverdale thinks at first it is because, an outcast himself, he feels at home among outcasts (p. 55). But this is wrong; Hollingsworth has come, as Howe puts it, to "bore from within."[20] His motive is acquisition of the Blithedale property for his own uses. He wants to inspect it and to establish through Zenobia the means of acquiring the land if he fancies it. This means that his relation with Zenobia lacks, on his side, passion. "In the case of both his initial commitment to Zenobia and his later courting of Priscilla, Hawthorne suggests that his motive is purely economic; he is chasing Old Moodie's brother's fortune from one inheritrix to another."[21] Apparently, Hollingsworth rescues Priscilla from the clutches of Westervelt, after having connived in returning her to the magician, not because he has had a crisis of conscience, but because he has learned about the reversal of fortune. "It is only three days," Zenobia says to Hollingsworth at her "judgment" scene, "since I knew the strange fact that threatens to make me poor; and your own acquaintence with it, I suspect, is of at least as old a date" (p. 216).

[20] Howe, p. 167.
[21] Von Abele, p. 76.

This scene of repudiation takes place two nights after Coverdale has witnessed the rescue of Priscilla (p. 204).

Hollingsworth wants the Blithedale property as the ground for his reform school. The contrast with Blithedale's purposes could not be more complete, and indeed his plans require dispossessing the Blithedalers as a preliminary. Far from envisioning a free relation between man and nature, Hollingsworth's scheme involves shutting man away from nature in an institution—a building—which conforms not to the spirit of the individuals within it, but to *his* spirit. Forever busy planning his structure to the last detail, his goal of a solid material edifice represents a negation of the organic ideal, in which shape flows from within and is never perfected, remaining sensitive to inner flux. While the Blithedalers are programmatic nonconformists who tolerate all styles of life—"whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist"—Hollingsworth would impose, through his institution, a conforming sameness on individuals. He would not encourage people to grow in their ways, but force them to grow his way. Thus, he is not a romantic gone wrong, but a false reformer. We should not forget how the Transcendentalists detested philanthropists. A man like Thoreau, for example, would never for a moment have been deceived about Hollingsworth's true nature: "if I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life . . . for fear that I should get some of his good done to me,—some of its virus mingled with my blood." Hollingsworth's vision denies the human freedom on which Blithedale is based and rejects the fundamental transcendental tenet, belief that man is divine and that therefore all men must treat each other as gods. Lastly, accepting as it does social judgments of morality and guilt, Hollingsworth's scheme to reform criminals perpetuates the social definitions of human nature that the romantic soul rejects. In sum, Hollingsworth does not represent a corrupted extreme of romantic libertarianism. He is the opposite principle, the spirit of authoritarian domination.

In Blithedale he is a true subversive, in a manner only superficially depicted by his maneuvering with respect to the Blithedale property. He brings to the farm the very principle it has been established to escape—subordination of the individual to the state. Hollingsworth is not, however, an obvious representative of mid-century Boston. Boston in fact sees him as just another amusing romantic, for from its complacent middle ground all varieties of extremism look alike. Boston is certainly far more "liberal" than Hollingsworth, having leav-

ened its Puritan heritage with a certain amount of hedonism. But Blithedale recognizes no distinction between Boston 1640 and 1840, because to it all societies which exist on inhibition or exploitation to any degree are evil. Although Hollingsworth is anachronistic in genteel Boston, from the vantage point of the community he is the spiritual core of society. If Boston is blind in failing to see that Hollingsworth is totalitarian rather than anarchistic, Blithedale may be equally myopic in refusing to distinguish better and worse among bad societies. The Blithedalers cannot consider the possibility that society may inherently be founded on repressive principles: this goes counter to all their aspirations. And Hawthorne, though he shows the disintegration of the community, does not seem to be demonstrating thereby that the Blithedalers are mistaken in their hope that society *need* not be founded on repression. He is showing something else—that repression is impossible to escape, rather than that it is functional. The Blithedalers may be foolish and naïve but they represent the only truly moral point of view in the book. The view of authority, as personified in Hollingsworth, is a romantic view: authority is tyranny.

The plot of the novel shows how Hollingsworth uses the power which has been granted to him by the other characters, to destroy. The crux of the plot is his choice between two women; the surface reason for his choice is money. Having no sense of the women as people, he is unaware of the meanings of his choice in terms of the book's larger logic. One might ask, indeed, whether Hawthorne's plotting is not irrelevant and mechanical here. Of course it says something about Hollingsworth, that he makes his choice solely on economic grounds. It points up his lack of passion, reinforces his image as a man of institutions, concerned with things, substances, mass, power, money. Too, the disparity between the reason for his choice and the line of moral righteousness with which he dismisses Zenobia—his complete failure to see that in manipulating human passions he has done something deeply wrong—makes an acerbic comment on society's moralism. Hollingsworth's sanctimonious morality is no more than rationalization; yet, like society, Hollingsworth has the power to make his moral judgments stick.

The rerouting of the fortune from Zenobia to Priscilla is also of significance. Though Zenobia, for most of the book, is the wealthy sister, the depiction of her does not utilize money for its effect. Her richness is all of body and spirit. She dresses in homely, dateless rustic garb and is continually portrayed in natural images—even the hot-

house flower is real. She operates in a frame independent of money. This is not true of Priscilla, who has been deformed by poverty. Whether one thinks of her as the seamstress or as the Veiled Lady, one finds her intimately connected with economic questions, servant to an environment that demands artifice. As a seamstress she makes one highly specialized luxury item, a finely wrought silk purse. Whether this product has sartorial or sexual meaning, it is created for a jaded market. As the Veiled Lady, Priscilla herself is artifice: Hawthorne brings this out quite clearly in the Boston scenes of the novel, where the two women undergo striking transformations. Zenobia, though beautiful as ever, seems curiously artificial and dead despite the amazing luxury of her dress, perhaps because of it. The hothouse flower has been replaced by a jewel, and this metamorphosis signifies the way, in an artificial context, her attractions seem unnatural. Coverdale, talking to her, cannot rid himself of the sensation that she is acting a part (p. 165).

In contrast, pallid Priscilla comes to life. In the city she is in her element. Although Coverdale asserts that her beauty is so delicate that "it was safest, in her case, to attempt no art of dress," he declares in the next breath that her marvellous perfection is due to consummate art. "I wondered what Zenobia meant by evolving so much loveliness out of this poor girl." As a result of this art, Priscilla has become a symbol of matchless purity and innocence. But it takes the city to bring her meaning out. "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." And Coverdale then expresses the book's most bitter paradox. "She is as lovely," he proclaims, "as a flower" (p. 169). In other words, Priscilla is the true artificial flower of the book, the flower that appears natural in the city, the domain of repression and artificial pleasures. Zenobia's flower, in the distorting glass of civilization, looks fake. She does not belong here, but Priscilla fits in.

The point of this is that, as money is intricately and intimately bound into the fabric of society, and as Priscilla is a creature of society and Zenobia is in revolt against it, the money *belongs* with Priscilla. "The upshot of the fable is that Priscilla's conformism triumphs, but Zenobia's rebellion destroys her."[22] Moodie's decision to redirect the fortune, appropriately enough, stems from Zenobia's failure properly

[22] Von Abele, p. 80.

to treat Priscilla as a sister. There is every indication that he has insinuated Priscilla into Blithedale just *as* a test of Zenobia. To accept Priscilla is, for Zenobia, to accept the very shape of womanhood she is in rebellion against, society's version of the feminine. She loses her fortune, then, because she refuses to surrender on society's terms. The wrath of society, relayed to her by Hollingsworth, who acts (as he has acted in bringing Priscilla to Blithedale) as Moodie's surrogate, is inevitable.[23]

The money motif, then, plays an important clarifying role, elucidating relations between symbols and reinforcing the contrast between Zenobia and Priscilla. It is often said that Zenobia is Eros and Priscilla Agape, where the terms are understood in their Neoplatonic sense of earthly versus spiritual love. If we take Eros in its more contemporary sense, it must be opposed not to Agape, but to Thanatos, and that indeed is what Priscilla represents. Where Zenobia is the life force, capable of good, capable of evil but above all simply a reservoir of energy striving to realize itself, Priscilla is spirituality opposed to life: love without passion, art without energy, woman without body. Woman without body, as we know from such stories as "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," is dead. Love without passion, as a story like "The Shaker Bridal" tells us, is no love at all. Art without energy, as a story like "The Artist of the Beautiful" reveals, is impotent art, incapable of sustaining or embodying human life.

As Zenobia is the natural and eternal woman, Priscilla is the woman in history, distorted by her social role and misrepresented by the ideals derived from her. She is considered an inferior being, subjected, exploited, and yet idealized. The ideal is pernicious because it derives from woman's subjected state and ultimately ennobles the condition of slavery. As seamstress Priscilla represents the whole range of exploited feminine roles in society, all of which, from wife to prostitute, were viewed by feminists as examples of economic subjection of woman to man. As the Veiled Lady, Priscilla stands for the feminine ideal. Just as Zenobia projects a part of Coverdale's personality, Priscilla too represents part of Coverdale, but here there is a diver-

[23] What is the meaning of Moodie, the shy derelict with the eye patch, much in the public eye and yet seldom seen, who sits obscurely in the bushes when he visits Blithedale and is fed like an "enshrined and invisible idol" (p. 83)? Father of Zenobia and Priscilla, manipulator of fortunes, he must be one of the book's "infernal" deities, to whom Zenobia neglects to sacrifice. The trinity is completed (blasphemously) by Westervelt and the dove, Priscilla.

gence in the parallel because Priscilla is less an active force than a channel for forces. The true opposition, in terms of Coverdale's psyche, is between Zenobia and Hollingsworth, but Priscilla *plays the role* of Zenobia's anti-self. This is entirely appropriate to Priscilla's status as a medium. "I am blown about like a leaf. . . . I never have any free will" (p. 171).

The various meanings of Priscilla are centered on her role as woman in the city. This presentation has always struck readers as the most "incoherent" part of the book; first, because it is hard to grasp the interrelatedness of her two incarnations, let alone to interpret the obscured meanings of the Veiled Lady. Second, according to whether Priscilla is viewed as herself the most abject victim of social tyranny, or as an agent in the service of that tyranny, the point of view toward her changes radically. In the first instance she is an object of almost bathetic compassion, but as an agent she is regarded with fear, distrust, and repugnance. Priscilla the seamstress is rendered almost entirely in images of feebleness, illness, and furtiveness. She is physically almost a cripple—notice her limping run—and though dexterous with her needles is clumsy in all other ways. Domestically inept, incapable of assuming any of the farm chores, she is permitted to run about like a child and is generally regarded as a case of arrested development. She has little in common with the blond maidens of Hawthorne's other novels, possessing neither the sunny domestic girlishness of Phoebe nor the polar, vestal inflexibility of Hilda. She is simply a victim, her physical and mental debilitation directly caused by the conditions of her exploited life. Hawthorne's picture of her approaches the grotesque, but is counterbalanced by stress on her gentleness, her timidity, her original sweetness of nature, and a quite striking and significant animal wildness that develops as she recovers at Blithedale.

Coverdale's imagination is much taken up with the spectacle of her frailty, but, as he himself has to admit, Priscilla is mostly a shadowy background for his own fantasizing, a void for the poet to decorate. She is, in fact, a fine subject for the kind of poetry Coverdale writes. The poetic impulse to idealize the vapid leads, inevitably, to vapid poetry. Moreover, the celebration of feebleness and frailty turns these qualities into admired attributes, and thus the genteel poet does his part in maintaining the status quo by praising it. It is hard to shake the appealing image of Priscilla out of the heart, but there is no hope for man or woman unless she is dislodged. The condition of woman in the

nineteenth century, in a word, is slavery.[24] Hollingsworth's response to the idea of an alteration in her status is appropriately ferocious.

> Her place is at man's side. Her office, that of the Sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning Believer . . . the Echo of God's own voice, pronouncing, "It is well done!" All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be, false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities, void of every good effect, and productive of intolerable mischiefs! Man is a wretch without woman; but woman is a monster . . . without man, as her acknowledged principal! As true as I had once a mother, whom I loved . . . if there were a chance of their attaining the end which these petticoated monstrosities have in view, I would call upon my own sex to use its physical force, that unmistakable evidence of sovereignty, to scourge them back within their proper bounds! (pp. 122–23)

The reference to physical force as evidence of sovereignty reveals Hollingsworth more clearly than ever, and indicates as well how true it is that woman is a slave in his system, rhetoric notwithstanding. His words strike Coverdale as "outrageous," the "very intensity of mas-

[24] The question of Hawthorne's views about Margaret Fuller have long bedeviled the discussion of his feelings about Zenobia and women's rights. Despite the fact that Priscilla is specifically, and rather elaborately, linked to Margaret Fuller in the novel, critics have insisted that she is the source for Zenobia, because Zenobia like Miss Fuller is a feminist residing at a Utopian community. But the two women share no traits.

Hawthorne did not like Margaret Fuller. He thought she was intellectually pretentious; her vast reading had neither improved nor disguised a fundamentally mediocre and conventional mind. Such criticism is not applicable to Zenobia. Her intellect may not be most fitly expressed in literature, but it is unquestionably fine (p. 15). Secondly, Hawthorne objected violently to what he interpreted as a false spirituality in Margaret Fuller—surely not a claim one can bring against Zenobia! A reading of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* reveals that Margaret Fuller accepts an ideal of femininity as spiritual and noncorporeal. She discusses—or pretends to discuss—the entire context of woman in the world and in her relations to men, without once referring to sexuality except in such phrases as "mists of sensuality" which imply that the ultimate relations between men and women should be sexless. She images the ideal relation between the sexes as that between father and daughter, mother and son, or brother and sister. There is no place for Zenobia there! Lastly (and this will surprise a reader who moves from Hawthorne to Fuller), she talks a good deal about the "electric" nature of woman's intelligence, a belief in which makes her take mesmerism quite seriously. "To this region, however misunderstood, or interpreted with presumptuous carelessness, belong the phenomena of magnetism, or mesmerism" ([London, 1850], p. 97). Here, if anywhere, is her link to *The Blithedale Romance,* and here is the explanation of her tie to Priscilla. If Hawthorne is saying anything about Margaret Fuller here, it is that her feminism is false, for it leads to Priscilla-worship, idealizes a hideous exploitation as an example of spirituality. Margaret Fuller, more than she realizes, is a pathetic victim of society; her feminism has not succeeded in freeing itself from the conditions it rebels against. What Hawthorne says is that Margaret Fuller was a far more ordinary person than she supposed herself to be; but he says over and over again that Zenobia is extraordinary.

culine egotism," which "deprived woman of her very soul, her inexpressible and unfathomable all, to make it a mere incident in the great sum of man" (p. 123). Coverdale does not recognize in his own alternate version of the ideal relations between woman and man an equal, if less savage, egotism, and he is piqued by the indifference with which his declamation in favor of women is received by Zenobia and Priscilla.[25] And he is wrong when he interprets Zenobia's words, "Let man be but manly and god-like and woman is only too ready to become to him what you say" (p. 124), as her submission to Hollingsworth's views, for her qualification is vital. Except as man takes woman as a free spirit, equal to his own and with the same rights, he is not manly or godlike.

Priscilla, the "gentle parasite," the "type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it," rewards Hollingsworth for his defense of slavery with a "glance of . . . entire acquiescence and unquestioning faith" (pp. 122–23). In her approbation it is clear that she and Hollingsworth belong together, and as they entered the novel together so they will leave it. Though she adores him, Priscilla can never be Hollingsworth's wife or friend. In the beginning she is his child, and at the end she is his nurse. And she is fulfilled in her role as caretaker and guardian to the broken Hollingsworth, thus literally realizing the idea that a degrading conception of woman implies a degradation of man. If man idolizes a crippled spirit, he will cripple his own. Man "is never content," Zenobia comments, "unless he can degrade himself by stooping towards what he loves. In denying us our rights, he betrays even more blindness to his own interests, than profligate disregard of ours" (p. 122). Expanded to cover all the meanings of Zenobia's presence in the book, her remark can stand as the novel's epigraph; yet even she does not fathom the depths of that blindness.

These matters are recapitulated on a much more intimate and—given the temper of the times—dangerous level in the story of the Veiled Lady. When Priscilla is not making purses she is performing on the stage as the subject of Westervelt's mesmeric powers. In these appearances she wears a many-layered, gauzy white veil. The Veiled Lady is the Victorian ideal of womanhood as a spiritual (noncorporeal)

[25] Coverdale's ideal woman is Mary, the mediating mother; his mind is engaged with the relation between father and son, and he subordinates the woman into this primary relationship. His system certainly does not allow for assertions of freedom by woman. Perhaps Hawthorne feels that *all* the ideals, in this situation, are social products and hence corrupted.

being, carried to an extreme and implicating in its extremity the basest kinds of human emotions. Though she is proclaimed as a being almost entirely spiritual, she is in fact a "possessed" creature owned and exploited by Westervelt. She is in a position which denies her spiritual nature even while pretending to demonstrate it. The particular being in whose service she performs is a cosmopolitan devil, his name implying his worldliness. Like Moodie, another urban figure, he lives off the proceeds of his exploitation; but where the one employs her physical talents, the other employs her very soul. As a cosmopolitan charlatan, he caters to a curious set of prurient and voyeuristic tastes in the audience, which comes to see purity violated, modesty exhibited. F. O. Matthiessen spoke of Hawthorne's Hilda as performing a kind of spiritual strip-tease—the phrase is even more aptly applied to Priscilla, for the veil functions largely to excite the viewers' interest in what it conceals. The Veiled Lady titillates even as she appeals to an ideal of feminine purity. On the one hand, talk of purity "veils" what is actually taking place; on the other, the purity itself contributes to the excitement of the display.

The veil, along with the references to Priscilla's insubstantial frame, and metaphors of shadows and melting snows, and contrasts to Zenobia's ample proportions, goes far to suggest that in this ideal of spirituality a crude equation has been made with lack of body. As woman is *literally* less and less physical, she is more spiritual, as though these were quantitative matters. To deny the flesh is to deny the emotions flesh arouses, and this ideal indeed denies the normality of sex. Zenobia's flower becomes a jewel in Boston because society considers sex unnatural. Westervelt's game inhibits the acceptance of sex as normal by holding up a flesh-denying ideal of purity. Simultaneously he controls his audience's emotions through participation in an act of ritual violation of that very ideal. Yet, the denial of sex is not Westervelt's ultimate goal; he is aiming to suppress the radical Eros itself, in its totality. Ideally, he would use Zenobia to deny herself; failing that, he seeks to blot her image out of the hearts of men by polluting it. The Veiled Lady's exhibitions are cathartic spectacles to draw off and channel threatening emotions; they are rituals of socialization.

Westervelt is a hideous creation, and he exists somewhere in the deepest layers of Coverdale's mind. Coverdale meets him in the forest, always Hawthorne's locale for the soul's profundities. In Coverdale's mind he operates as the demon of sexual cynicism and fear, the internalization of society's life-denying strategies. "The Professor's tone

represented that of worldly society at large, where a cold scepticism smothers what it can of our spiritual aspirations, and makes the rest ridiculous. I detested this kind of man, and all the more, because a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him" (pp. 101–102). Westervelt within the psyche tarnishes the images of all women; he is the principle of "dirty-mindedness."[26] Zenobia, too, has been in bondage to him, and in a sense always will be so; but at the same time she has fundamentally escaped him. The two seem to occupy separate spheres. They cannot touch. In the forest Coverdale notices that "as they passed among the trees . . . she took good heed that even the hem of her garment should not brush against the stranger's person" (p. 102). Watching them again at the boarding house, he observes that "it still seemed to me, as on the former occasion, that Zenobia repelled him—that, perchance, they mutually repelled each other—by some incompatibility of their spheres" (p. 156). A key contrast between the two is made in terms of heat and coldness, so that Westervelt's deviltry is linked to all the other images of rigidness and coldness in the book, to the rigid, passion-repressing, "puritannical" part of the personality.

Finally, the combination of Veil and Devil suggests that the Lady may even be a delusion, conjured up to deflect men from true ideals, such as (perhaps) those embodied in Blithedale and its resident goddess. This delusory ideal, though it promises fulfillment, in fact means incompleteness for man and woman. So we have seen, and so Zenobia tries to imply in her "Legend of the Silvery Veil" (Chapter XII, the middle of the book). Theodore, sneaking into the Veiled Lady's dressing room for a peep, is asked for a kiss by the shadowy figure. The idea

[26] At the same time Westervelt, like many another demon, functions to utter certain truths that Coverdale no more than any social being of his time could admit to entertaining. Thus, although he is the mesmerist who works Priscilla's spiritual powers, he derides her spirituality to Coverdale. "Some philosophers choose to glorify this habit of body by terming it spiritual; but, in my opinion, it is rather the effect of unwholesome food, bad air, lack of out-door exercise, and neglect of bathing, on the part of these damsels and their female progenitors; all resulting in a kind of hereditary dyspepsia" (p. 96). Thoughts like these are obviously forbidden; having thought them, Coverdale will be anxious to disown them. Westervelt's habit of uttering truths should not blind us to his diabolic nature, nor should his nature make us assume that he can only tell lies.

Through Westervelt there is an interesting link, to my knowledge unnoticed, between James and Hawthorne. Much has been written about the influence of Hawthorne on James, and *The Blithedale Romance* is generally accepted as an influence on *The Bostonians*. But the funeral scene of *The Blithedale Romance*, in addition, where the demon lover is interrogated by the narrator and gives certain answers about the nature of the dead woman, is strikingly similar to the one in *Daisy Miller*.

repels him; he imagines all kinds of horrors beneath the veil, and refuses the request. Failing to accept the physical side of relations between the sexes, he forfeits his opportunity to set the Veiled Lady free. She sorrowfully disappears, but not before Theodore has seen her lovely face, the memory of which is to haunt him for the rest of his life and make his existence seem unsubstantial. In this story, Zenobia is actually assimilating the Veiled Lady to herself: insofar as the Veiled Lady is a girl or woman, she must be treated as a being of flesh and blood. Life is "realized" only in the flesh. Priscilla is imprisoned in the "ideal" which men like Theodore and Coverdale have imposed on her. The ideal keeps people dead, keeps them forever unrealized, makes a society of phantoms no more real than the Lady herself.

Priscilla in Blithedale, then, is enormously dangerous, but only Zenobia sees it. From the beginning her energies are absorbed in attempting to detach Priscilla from Hollingsworth, so that there may be a longed-for union of the forces of passion and control, a union that might make a whole, vigorous self. Zenobia's strategy, since she is incapable of artifice, consists largely in contrasting Priscilla's physical meagerness to her own full womanhood. The tactic is self-defeating, for the more Zenobia demonstrates the nature of her rival, the more she calls up the prior socio-moral commitments of the men. However pathetic Priscilla, in the fragility of her physical frame, may appear to be, and however she is an exploited slave in her relation to men, she is not helpless in a battle against Zenobia. Men will fight to the death to defend her as a slave. In this sense, both the men in the story are on her side, and Zenobia succeeds only in aligning the men against her. Increasingly she defines the conventional polarity of pit and pedestal and puts herself in the pit. The more the contrast between the Boston and Blithedale women is clarified, the more uncomfortable Coverdale becomes and the more angry Hollingsworth. In the long run, Hollingsworth is immune to Zenobia because she stands for the romantic individualism and freedom he so abhors. In the long run, too, Coverdale cannot overcome his attachment to genteel poetry and the genteel way of life to serve the romantic muse.

Thus, in full season, the adventure at Blithedale leads to a polarization of forces so extreme that even the earlier anxious moments at the farm can be remembered as harmonious. Acting under a confluence of forces, Hollingsworth takes on his core identity as Puritan judge and condemns Zenobia. His action signifies, on all levels of her meaning, her death. As the life force, she has been put down; as woman, she

has been denied a place in a world administered by men. She kills herself, as she must, but the marble imagery of the scene by the rock shows that she is, before her suicide, already dead. With her death Blithedale, too, dies for Coverdale; his chance is finished. He returns to Boston in desolation, looking ahead to an empty future, from the vantage point of which only these months at the farm will appear to him to have been "real." He leaves Blithedale not a new man but a mutilated one. His inner quest has ended in catastrophe because he has proven too weak to become free.

The destruction of Hollingsworth is particularly interesting. From the social vantage point, he has triumphed, but as an aspect of Coverdale he must go down to destruction with the rest of the personality. It has been his supreme folly to imagine that he has acted as an "inspired" man; acted, that is, on energy supplied from higher sources. But it seems as if he too has ultimately derived his powers from Zenobia, as though she were the book's true sun, its sole source of energy. Casting out Zenobia, Hollingsworth inadvertently casts out his own vitality and thus ruins himself. He makes himself into a fit mate for Priscilla, and is seen some years later showing a "childlike, or childish, tendency to press close, and closer still, to the side of the slender woman whose arm was within his" (p. 242).

His act demonstrates that it is necessary, for the life of the organism, that the punishing tendencies of the soul be checked, for if left free they will crush it. The controlling forces within must themselves be controlled, because they will not control themselves; on the contrary, interpreting themselves as transmitters of the divine, they will brook no restraint. The goal, presumably, is in some kind of harmony in the consciousness between energy and restraint, but such a mediating force as is required Coverdale cannot supply. Agonizedly, he watches the drama of his fragmenting psyche, but cannot impress himself on the warring forces. Eventually he witnesses his own collapse.

Undoubtedly books have been written on the complementary theme, the dangers to the personality when the passionate energies are given free rein, rather than when the punishing and repressive capacities are released unhindered. But *The Blithedale Romance* is not such a book. We cannot even hypothesize, after reading it, what Hawthorne would "do" with the theme of complete self-expression, because this novel is about the murder (and suicide) of self-expressive energies in the soul. Utopias do not work because they never succeed in freeing themselves from the many subtle pressures of the society they think to

leave behind.[27] Indeed, the judging core of the personality, an anarchic and intemperate concentration of inhibiting forces, is far more severe when it is not muffled by the easygoing life of Boston which, if it inhibits the passions, also inhibits their punishment. We cannot see *Blithedale* as a book saying that society does well insofar as it controls the passions, on the assumption that without control the soul is a passionate and evil anarchy. We have to see Hawthorne saying, rather, that insofar as society seeks to eliminate the passions altogether it seeks its own eventual suicide: there is no society without people, and there are no people without passion. What Hawthorne's hero might do if he were free, one does not know, because he cannot free himself.

[27] On the surface level of the book, as Howe has noted, there is a similar failure to shake off social dependence; for Blithedale "by virtue of being subject to the demands and pressures of the market . . . becomes a competitive unit in a competitive society" (p. 169).