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Author(s): Leonardo Buonomo

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Leonardo Buonomo

Marked by sickness and recovery at the outset of spring, Miles Coverdale's early days at the utopian community portrayed in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* have been interpreted as a symbolic death and rebirth sequence (Merish 176). After surviving a bad cold, a minimalist homeopathic cure, and a diet of wretchedly smoky water-gruel prepared by fellow resident Zenobia, Coverdale not only regains his health but, thanks to an immersion in rigorous outdoor farm work, also acquires an impressively muscular physique. For a while he seems to have become, quite literally, a new man. Gone is not only his cold, but also his previous effete, urban self who wrote graceful lines in a warm, well-carpeted bachelor apartment in Boston. His new body, which the gruff farmer Silas Foster describes in the tones of a proud coach, seems well fitted for the task the Blithedale community has taken upon itself, namely re-building American society.

As it soon becomes clear, however, Coverdale's new outward appearance, like other outward appearances in the story, is deceptive. Although he has taken himself out of Boston, he has not quite taken Boston out of himself, as is demonstrated by his return there in August, presumably for a short holiday, and by the remarkable speed with which he resumes his old lifestyle. Hawthorne foreshadows this turn of events in Chapter 6, by giving us access to Coverdale's aching longing, after his first miserable night at Blithedale, for the genteel, privileged comforts he has left behind. In the morning, waking up shivery with fever in his fireless room, Coverdale cannot even contemplate "extruding so much as a finger into the icy atmosphere" (3:41) around him and wishes the reformation of society might be postponed indefinitely. Although as yet blissfully unaware of the Spartan regimen in store for him in the next few days, Coverdale curses his folly for having joined an enterprise so alien to his temperament and tastes, much more attuned as they are to the delights of his snug, elegant apartment and the "hundred dishes" at his command for dinner at the Albion House (40). One of the many

realistic bits Hawthorne included in his not so aptly named *Romance*, the reference to the Albion is also part of a transatlantic dialectic that runs like a thread through the book. The name Albion is in fact a powerful reminder of the strong and lasting cultural ties between the young North American republic (New England, in particular) and Great Britain, even while the former was engaged in the construction of a distinctively national and supposedly independent culture. Coverdale's fond evocation of, and evident attachment to, a place whose very name pays homage (and allegiance) to the former mother country, also exposes very early on the ambivalence of his cultural patriotism and of his commitment to a project intended to regenerate American society. Although Coverdale underplays, in rather affected, self-deprecating tones, the relevance of his literary pursuits, he informs us, at the end of the book, that his poems were deemed representative enough to be included in Rufus Wilmot Grisworld's *The Poets and Poetry of America* (3:246), an actual publication and one of the most nationalistic literary projects published in the United States in the antebellum era.[1] Coverdale's tastes and lifestyle—which seem to mimic those of a British gentleman of leisure—run contrary to his role as a national author.

Through the character of Coverdale, whose gaze and voice guide us throughout the narrative, Hawthorne recreates a time and place in America in which the debate over national identity is inevitably affected by cultural and ideological influences, as well as tastes and fashions, from across the Atlantic. Indeed, Hawthorne uses individual susceptibility to these forces as a way to delineate character and delve into personal relationships within the Blithedale community. In this sense, his first-person narrator Coverdale, a voracious reader of catholic tastes (the center-table, in his apartment, is "strewn with books and periodicals" [3:40]), is a serviceable guide to the community and, for all his passivity, a catalyst for revealing the formidable hurdles on its path. In particular, his perspective helps bring into focus from the very beginning the precariousness of an experiment aimed at eradicating social differences and the traditional division of labor in the midst of a market-based economy, and encouraging a new openness and flexibility of thought, expression, and faith in a place still redolent of its rigid Puritan heritage.[2]

During his recovery, Coverdale compensates for his meager diet by gorging himself on books, reading "interminably" both American and

European works, nonfiction and fiction: "Mr. Emerson's Essays, the Dial, Carlyle's works, George Sand's romances (lent me by Zenobia,) and other books which one or another of the brethren or sisterhood had brought with them" (3:52). It is tempting to imagine that, as was true of Hawthorne during his stay at Brook Farm in 1841, Coverdale's reading of Carlyle might include the lecture *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840), one of the most influential nineteenth-century treatises on the idea (and ideal) of masculinity. If that were the case, Coverdale's reading of Carlyle would coincide with his close observation of, and intimate contact with, Hollingsworth during the period when the latter's "more than brotherly attendance" gives the sick Coverdale "inexpressible comfort" (3:41). It is almost as if the Carlyle godly hero, strong, virile, and yet capable of pity and compassion, had stepped off of the page and materialized in the brawny, shaggy form of Hollingsworth. With time, however, Coverdale comes to reconsider his early assessment of Hollingsworth and finds it woefully inaccurate, especially as regards Hollingsworth's capacity for human sympathy. Repelled by Hollingsworth's monomaniacal commitment to a plan for the reformation of criminals, and the passionate fervor with which he tries to make a convert of him, Coverdale even comes to suspect ulterior motives behind Hollingsworth's attentiveness to him. Recalling the early days of their acquaintance, Coverdale must acknowledge, however, a moment of utter sincerity in Hollingsworth when the latter identified "an inflexible severity of purpose" as the "most marked trait" in his own character (3:43). Another author Coverdale has been reading in order to while away the time during his sickness, namely Charles Fourier, causes a startling manifestation of that inflexible severity. Coverdale's own response to Fourier is ambivalent, if not downright contradictory. He finds his writings "horribly tedious" and yet engrossing because of the inescapable analogy between Fourier's utopian system and Blithedale's. He judges the two systems similar and yet differing "as widely as the zenith to the nadir, in their main principles" (3:53). As he does elsewhere in the narrative, Coverdale simultaneously recognizes a kinship between Fourierism and Blithedale and makes a claim for the independence and originality of the American experiment. Despite his reservations, he chooses to share Fourier's writings with his new friend by translating or paraphrasing them from the French, thus assuming the

role of cultural mediator between Europe and America. Blithedale and Fourierism might be, literally, worlds apart "in their main principles," but Coverdale unhesitatingly interprets Hollingsworth's violent rejection of Fourier's ideas as a disavowal of Blithedale. And Hawthorne makes it clear, despite his mockery of Fourierism—of all passages, Hawthorne makes Coverdale quote Fourier's prophecy that in a perfect world the ocean will turn into "limonade à cèdre"—that Hollingsworth's reaction is no laughing matter. Its intensity, in Douglas Anderson's words, "points to reservoirs of implacable, pathological hostility in his nature" (45). After a half-hearted attempt at levity ("Why did not the Frenchman make punch of [the ocean], at once"), Hollingsworth dismisses Fourier with the verbal fervor of an exorcist or, perhaps more accurately, of a fire-and-brimstone Puritan preacher. His invective against Fourier, peppered with words pertaining to the semantic area of Christianity (unpardonable sin, the Devil, infernal regeneration, Paradise, *etc*.), culminates with an epithet—"The nauseous villain!"—which has to do with the sphere of the senses and, in particular, with taste (in line with Coverdale's comment, a few lines above, that Hollingsworth spoke "in utter disgust" [3:53]). Hollingsworth's physical revulsion at Fourier's theories suggests a rejection of the very principle of pleasure (including sensual pleasure) that Coverdale understands to be at the basis of the Frenchman's particular brand of socialism. By having Hollingsworth respond so virulently to a vision of the world that carried "to its ultimate conclusion the rejection of the doctrine of original sin," celebrated desire, and predicted the "instinctual and emotional liberation" of mankind (Beecher 3–4), Hawthorne gives us an early glimpse of Hollingsworth's development in the rest of the narrative.

Hollingsworth's condemnation of Fourier—all the more extraordinary considering it is triggered by Coverdale's light-hearted rendering of the Frenchman's philosophy—foreshadows his future description as the type (if not the reincarnation) of "a Puritan magistrate, holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft" (3:214). It also raises the question—which I believe to be central to Hawthorne's evocation and use of his Brook Farm experience in *The Blithedale Romance*—of how European currents of thought and cultural models are received and processed when they cross the Atlantic. Because of its Puritan heritage

(as represented by Hollingsworth), New England seems to be the least suitable ground for a transplantation of Fourier's ideas.

Interestingly, as if deliberately trying to goad Hollingsworth into a passion, Coverdale speaks of Fourierism in terms of national identity, emphasizing its Frenchness at a time when, in the United States, France was widely believed to be the most morally lax country in Europe.[3] In particular, Coverdale calls attention to the *secular* nature of Fourier's system of thought, a not too subtle evocation of the notorious reputation of France as a godless country: "But is there not something very characteristic of his nation in Fourier's manner of putting forth his views? He makes no claim to inspiration. He has not persuaded himself—as Swedenborg did, and *as any other than a Frenchman would*, with a mission of like importance to communicate—that he speaks with authority from above" (3:54, emphasis added).

Another telling French connection comes into play in the early stages of Coverdale's relationship with Zenobia. In a passage quoted earlier, Coverdale refers generically to "other books" he read during his recovery as belonging to unnamed male and female members of the community, thus placing no emphasis whatsoever on the possible relation between the type of books, or their contents, and the gender of their owners. By contrast, he makes a point of identifying Zenobia, previously characterized as a female reformer and the author of "tracts" in defense of her sex (3:44), as the individual who lent him George Sand's romances. In so doing, he links her name with that of a French writer who, like Fourier, advocated equality between men and women within the institution of marriage as part and parcel of social progress, a position many regarded as a serious threat to the very foundations of society. Because of her defiance of gender norms, both in her works and lifestyle, George Sand was reviled in American magazines (and their British counterparts, still widely read in America).[4] Many were the critics and reviewers who sounded the alarm about the popularity of Sand's novels among American readers, describing her romances as a vehicle of moral contamination. The possible contagion of pernicious ideas that might spread as a result of Sand's popularity was often characterized as a specifically French disease attacking a sound Anglo-Saxon body. Boston's *Christian Examiner*, for example, described Sand and other French novelists as

agents of profligacy, "sent forth. . . to enervate and demoralize. . . the strong-hearted youth of New England" (qtd. in Mumford 400). One of the few dissenting voices in antebellum America was, significantly, that of Margaret Fuller—partly the model for Zenobia—who, in her review of Sand's *Consuelo*, went so far as to call Sand "the best living French writer." Keenly aware of Sand's "scandalous" reputation, Fuller argued that American readers should base their opinion on her writing, not on gossip about her private life: "whatever the stains on her life and reputation may have been, there is in her a soul so capable of goodness and honor as to depict them most successfully in her ideal forms" (*Margaret Fuller* 457, 462).[5]

Hawthorne does not make us privy to Coverdale's opinion about Sand, nor to his response to her writings. We have no way of knowing if, or to what extent, he shares the view of most contemporary American critics who, while reluctantly acknowledging Sand's genius, decried the use she made of it. What we do know, however, is that Coverdale is familiar with Zenobia's stories and tracts and is not impressed by them. He argues that the written word is not the proper medium for her personality, which strikes him as too expansive and undisciplined to find suitable expression within the narrow confines of syntax and style. Apparently, Coverdale subscribes to the traditional idea of writing as a male prerogative inasmuch as it depends on the faculty of reasoning. By calling Zenobia a remarkable, even a magnificent woman, indeed *the* woman, he casts her in the role of ultimate representative of her gender and as such naturally incapable of intellectual clarity and rigor. Furthermore, he describes her as born to be a model for painters or sculptors, born to be admired, to be the ideal object of the male gaze (moments after making her acquaintance, in Chapter 3, he mentally undresses her). She also excels, according to his account, in her readings from Shakespeare, thus giving evidence of her enormous untapped potential as a stage actress, a figure with which she is insistently associated. As was often said of Margaret Fuller, Zenobia—in Coverdale's view—is at her best as a communicator, in oral (if not oracular) form: "She was made. . . for a stump-oratress" (3:44). She is said to possess a remarkable gift for storytelling that, like public speaking, reading, and acting, requires a flair for performance. Indeed, a whole chapter—"Zenobia's Legend"—showcases her ability to tell "a fanciful little story, off-hand,

in a way that made it greatly more effective than it was usually found to be when she afterwards elaborated the same production with her pen" (3:107). Immensely charismatic, passionate, and instinctive, Zenobia, as seen by Coverdale, lacks the temperament to *elaborate*, to structure and present her ideas effectively, to give them proper shape in writing. For all his self-deprecation, Coverdale portrays himself as a fastidious and sophisticated verbal craftsman (he works for days on the same poem, to "contrive" the best possible stanza). By contrast, he emphasizes Zenobia's gift for fashioning a story seemingly out of thin air and transfixing her audience by sheer personal magnetism, an ability that aligns her with the mesmerist Westervelt.

Zenobia may also recall the quintessentially romantic figure of the *improvisatrice*, popularized by the international success of Madame de Stäel's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), a work with which Hawthorne was familiar (as attested, in particular, by both his *French and Italian Notebooks* and *The Marble Faun*).[6] Hawthorne does not mention de Stäel in *The Blithedale Romance*, but he might be said to evoke her when, right before listing Coverdale's sickbed readings, he introduces the name of Margaret Fuller. It is Coverdale who utters that name when, upon receiving a letter from Fuller from the hands of Priscilla, he suddenly notices an undefined similarity between these two women. Not surprisingly, this episode has received a great deal of attention for being a blatant red herring, a rather clumsy attempt, on Hawthorne's part, to preempt any speculation on the parallels between Fuller and Zenobia. What should also be noticed, however, is the placing of this episode in the story as well as the material object—a letter—that prompts Coverdale to mention the name of Fuller. For all intents and purposes, her letter becomes part of the reading material that occupies Coverdale during his recovery. Her name, that of a champion of European romantic women writers (Mitchell 97) and an accomplished translator of Goethe, is thus added to those of Emerson, Carlyle, Sand, and Fourier, further strengthening the transatlantic, cosmopolitan character of Coverdale's readings.

Fuller's admiration for de Stäel was well known, as were the similarities between their biographies, to the point that Fuller's contemporaries had dubbed her the "Yankee Corinna."[7] That Fuller had been particularly fascinated by, and to some extent had identified with, the charisma and performative abilities of de Stäel's best-known heroine, is suggested

by her characterization of her own alter-ego Mariana, in *Summer on the Lakes,* as an "*improvisatrice*" (60).[8] Both de Staël and Fuller were closely associated with Italy, the country they had elected as their ideal homeland, and one that was believed to give foreign women artists a freedom of thought and action that was unthinkable in their native lands. It was in the realm of feeling and passion that Italy, particularly as construed by the Romantics, was deemed to allow a free rein, the outward expression of inner impulses and emotions unchecked by social convention and propriety. And Italy, in *The Blithedale Romance*, is mentioned in connection with Zenobia. Catching a glimpse of her countenance when she becomes aware that Priscilla is a dangerous rival for Hollingworth's regard, Coverdale notes that it "would have made the fortune of a tragic actress, could she have borrowed it for the moment when she fumbles in her bosom for the concealed dagger, or the exceedingly sharp bodkin, or mingles the ratsbane in her lover's bowl of wine or her rival's cup of tea." The circumstances, however, relegate those scenes, and the chance that Zenobia might act them out, to the plane of fantasies. "Custom," Coverdale observes, exercises a powerful restraint over "our mode of wreaking our wild passions." Moreover, the drama unfolding before his rapt gaze is still in its early stages and thus unlikely to reach boiling point: "had we been in Italy, instead of New England, it was hardly yet a crisis for the dagger or the bowl" (3:78). As was the case with de Staël and Fuller, Italy here represents a dimension where a woman need not censor the expression of her feelings. But from a troubled male's perspective, a woman's unrestrained passion takes on a distinctly sinister connotation. The Italy with which Coverdale associates Zenobia harkens back to the irrational, violence-prone setting of Shakespearean and Jacobean drama and the murderous reputation of Lucrezia Borgia.

To return to the early phase of Coverdale's stay at Blithedale, his sickbed readings seem to contribute in no small measure to the improvement of his health and mood. Having drawn nourishment from the words of advanced, reform-minded thinkers, Coverdale initially rejoices in what he sees around him at Blithedale. Convinced he has shed his old self, he eagerly takes his place in a community that seems to have successfully discarded the capitalistic division of labor and recreated a harmonious pre-industrial relationship with nature. It is this part of Fourier's thought, rather than the preposterous prophecies with which

he had earlier provoked Hollingsworth, which Coverdale now conjures up approvingly: "Emerging into the genial sunshine, I half fancied that the labors of the brotherhood had already realized some of Fourier's predictions. Their enlightened culture of the soil, and the virtues with which they sanctified their life, had begun to produce an effect upon the material world and its climate" (3:61–62). And yet, with the benefit of hindsight, he colors this impression with a shade of uncertainty. The very character of the participants in this enterprise—"persons of marked individuality" whose strongest (and perhaps only) bond is the rejection of their previous mode of life—appears to him to have doomed it from the outset. In his search for apt equivalents to the odd, unlikely aggregation of which he was part, Coverdale draws upon his knowledge of classical antiquity and modern American and European culture.

Significantly, in a novel in which make-believe, disguise, and masquerade figure so prominently, Hawthorne here makes Coverdale focus on the matter of attire. Having seemingly discarded fashion and its inevitable social-class profiling, the Blithedale residents are said to don their old clothes with the intent—which Thoreau would have certainly approved—of wearing them out. Described as the counterparts to the classical Arcadians of poetry and stage in everything *but* their costume, they could very well be the extras in a modern-dress version of a Shakespeare play or an opera. Plain and shabby though it is, their apparel cannot quite conceal their middle or upper-class, educated background which peeps through the defaced fabric. Their appearance thus suggests a performance or a form of camouflage. It is, in Coverdale's own words, "gentility in tatters" (3:64). When he attempts to present this scene as it would have appeared to an external observer, or a spectator, Coverdale travels imaginatively through space, time, history, and literature, coming up with references to real and fictional figures and situations that do not bode well for the fate of Blithedale. His similes recall a sequence of *tableaux vivants* that, as we learn in Chapter 13, are among the community's modes of amusement:

> Often retaining a scholarlike or clerical air, you might have taken us for the denizens of Grub-street, intent on getting a comfortable livelihood by agricultural labor; or Coleridge's projected Pantisocracy in full experiment; or Candide and his motley associates at work in their cabbage-garden; or anything else that

> was miserably out at elbows, and most clumsily patched in the rear. We might have been sworn comrades to Falstaff's ragged regiment. (3:64)

The reference to Coleridge's unrealized Utopian scheme is particularly revealing. Although at Blithedale the scheme does at least get off the ground, it does not take long before Coverdale becomes convinced it is fragile and misguided. What shatters his illusions is the realization that while even an urbane—and urban—gentleman such as himself can master physical labor, it is physical labor that, proving impervious to any attempt at transfiguring, idealizing, and romanticizing it, will end up mastering him and his companions: "The clods of earth, which we so constantly belabored and turned over and over, were never etherealized into thought. Our thoughts, on the contrary, were fast becoming cloddish" (3:66). What the experiment of Blithedale ultimately proves to Coverdale is that, to the representatives of the educated, privileged elite such as himself, the prospect of truly becoming yeomen is absolutely terrifying. Doing away with the division of labor, in accordance with Fourier's plan, has a leveling effect on society that may lead to egalitarianism, but it is downward-oriented. To the increasingly skeptical Coverdale it seems that Blithedale, a modern re-enactment of Arcadian pastoralism, is only truly inspiring and elevating when seen from afar or through the idealizing lenses of sympathizers, admirers, or aspiring adherents. From their enamored point of view, the grace, balance, and repose of classical antiquity can coexist harmoniously with hard-fisted Massachusetts husbandry. But a closer look and, more importantly, the actual experience of physical toil soon dispel the illusion. Always a keen observer of clothing (one of the most visible markers of class), Coverdale takes a wicked pleasure in noting how it betrays the newcomers' quick discomfiture: "I seldom saw the new enthusiasm that did not grow as flimsy and flaccid as the proselyte's moistened shirt-collar, with a quarter-of-an-hour's active labor, under a July sun" (3:82).

Nor is Blithedale any more convincing as a replica of the Forest of Arden from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Coming from the lips of the mesmerist Westervelt, that comparison does not even have the redeeming naiveté of the aspiring members of the community. Coverdale immediately detects the insulting mockery behind the elegant literary allusion, just as he discovers, a little later, that Westervelt's aesthetically

pleasing appearance is, at least in part, a deception. The stranger, whose stealthy visit to Blithedale intrudes upon Coverdale's introspective "holiday" in the woods, is in fact an imitation of a handsome and fashionable gentleman. Not only does his gross sensuality show on his face (Hawthorne's choice of words—the "naked exposure of something that ought not to be left prominent"—almost suggesting a nineteenth-century flasher), but his wide-mouthed laughter also reveals that his "remarkably brilliant" teeth are fake (3:92, 95). After catching sight of the telltale gold band around the upper part of Westervelt's teeth, Coverdale treats that part of his anatomy as a synecdoche, as if its fakeness bespoke the fakeness of the whole person: "his wonderful beauty of face, for aught I knew, might be removable like a mask; and, tall and comely as his figure looked, he was perhaps but a wizened little elf, gray and decrepit, with nothing genuine about him save the wicked expression of his grin" (3:95). As deconstructed in Coverdale's mind's eye, Westervelt's humanity is a trick, an ingenious feat of mimicry, like that of the magically animated scarecrow in Hawthorne's "Feathertop."

Given his visceral response to Westervelt, it comes as no surprise that Coverdale should judge the title of *professor* on his card as no less fraudulent than his physical appearance. His suspicions are confirmed when, later on, he sees Westervelt in full Oriental regalia on the stage of a lecture-hall giving a performance as a mesmerist. Westerveld's preposterous outfit, which makes him look like "one of the enchanters of the Arabian Nights" (3:199), consigns him to the world of popular entertainment and cheapens the practice of mesmerism. The tawdriness of the scene seems to sum up the fate of this European import, originally intended as a method of bodily and mental healing, in the United States. As Bridget Bennett has noted, "its transformation from a secretive practice carried out by elite and entitled individuals in specially prepared venues, to one that was taken from place to place by traveling showmen practitioners, is an example of the important transatlantic cultural connections that were being laid out" in the nineteenth century. In *The Blithedale Romance*, Bennett contends, "Hawthorne delineates the transformations" that mesmeric performances "have undergone within the last decade or so, making it clear that for all Coverdale's purported desire to live within a utopian community, he is anchored to a life in which this kind of entertainment, and the materialism it

implies, are inescapable" (71, 82).[9] Troubling in itself, as Hawthorne saw it, mesmerism as practiced by Westervelt is further debased by his theatrics and his use of its broad sensational appeal for personal gain. It may seem fitting that his performance in the lecture-hall is disrupted by Hollingsworth, a genuine heir to those Puritans who would have regarded mesmerism as a form of witchcraft (in addition to considering almost any entertainment highly suspect). But in the light of what we know about Hollingsworth's designs upon the land on which Blithedale has been established, his rescue of Priscilla, whom Westervelt had been exploiting as the mysterious Veiled Lady, is laced with irony. For he himself wants to gain control of and dominate his fellow human beings, indeed a whole community to which he has gained access under false pretenses. The impression that, far from obtaining her freedom, Priscilla simply changes hands from one manipulator to another, is inescapable.

Hollingsworth might very well be a mesmerist himself when he attempts to make Coverdale a convert to his scheme. Thinking back to that crucial moment in their relationship, Coverdale characterizes Hollingsworth's powerful influence as a form of animal magnetism which reached into his innermost depths: "there is still a sensation as if Hollingsworth had caught hold of my heart, and were pulling it towards him with an almost irresistible force. It is a mystery to me, how I withstood it" (3:133–134). As in his encounter with Westervelt, Coverdale experiences an overwhelming sense of revulsion that finds expression in unmistakably sexual language: "I saw in his scheme of philanthropy nothing but what was odious. A loathsomeness that was to be forever in my daily work! A great, black ugliness of sin. . . Had I but touched his extended hand, Hollingsworth's magnetism would perhaps have penetrated me with his own conception of all these matters" (3:134). Significantly, the breach between Coverdale and Hollingsworth occurs during a conversation about the future prospects of Blithedale, prompted by the residents' plan of erecting a communal architectural structure on the model of Fourier's phalanstery. Hollingsworth's dismissal of the plan comes as no surprise, since any consolidation or growth of the community would threaten the realization of his own project. But it is worth noting that once again he and Coverdale find themselves at odds over a subject that has something to do with Fourier's theories. It seems no accident that Hollingsworth's contemptuous

reaction to Coverdale's talk should be triggered by the mention of the phalanstery, because the non-hierarchical philosophy inscribed in that structure is antithetical to his desire for domination. As in Chapter 7 ("The Convalescent"), the French reformer is an invisible presence that interposes itself between Hollingsworth and Coverdale, keeping them separate. Fourier's theories or even the simple evocation of his name, seem to throw Hollingsworth's ruthlessness of purpose into bold relief. In his resistance to Hollingsworth's project and, indeed, to his domineering personality, Coverdale thus finds himself in the unlikely role of Blithedale's and Fourier's champion. As Frank Christianson has put it, "Coverdale's positioning of himself as Blithedale's defender against Hollingsworth's machinations is terribly ironic: he speaks for Blithedale but he never fully participates in the experiment" (125). It is a measure of Coverdale's ambivalence that, telling of the dismantling of Blithedale after the tragic death of Zenobia at the book's end, he declares the experiment a failure inasmuch as it had departed from its original conception and lapsed "into Fourierism." Almost echoing, albeit in softer tones, Hollingsworth's earlier anathema, Coverdale here equates the community's espousal of the Fourier model as a fall from grace followed by swift retribution: "dying, as it well deserved, for this infidelity to its own higher spirit" (3:246). It seems fitting that, in completing his retrospective account of the Blithedale experience, Coverdale should resume, in a way, the question of America's unresolved relation with Europe, of its incapacity to pursue a truly original course in the construction of its society. As he recalls it, with a mixture of severity and regret, the story of Blithedale—America writ small—is ultimately one of betrayal of founding principles and only partially achieved cultural and ideological independence.

Notes

[1]Hawthorne was very familiar with the nationalistic bent of Griswold's activity as editor and critic, having been included in Griswold's anthology *Prose Writers of America* (1847). Tellingly, he sounded the nationalist note himself in a letter to Griswold (December 15th 1851) that was subsequently read at a commemorative meeting in honor of the recently deceased James Fenimore Cooper. Acknowledging the homage that a number of eminent men of letters had paid or were going to pay to Cooper, Hawthorne expressed the hope that "in the eyes of the public at large, American

literature may henceforth acquire a weight and value, which have not heretofore been conceded to it" (16:517).

[2]According to Byron L. Stay, the story told in *The Blithedale Romance* "hinges on the complex relationship between the Blithedalers and the Puritans." This is made particularly evident by Hawthorne's use of the rock formation known as "Eliot's Pulpit." "With this significant setting,"—writes Stay—"Hawthorne reaffirms the power of the past to influence the present while he examines the dangers of misunderstanding this influence" (283).

[3]Hawthorne did not have to look very far to find evidence of this opinion. His wife Sophia claimed that France was "the most corrupt of all cultivated nations" (qtd. in Wineapple 182).

[4]On the American reception of Sand, see Mumford.

[5]As Charles Capper has pointed out, even Fuller herself, earlier on, "despite her appreciation of Sand's independence and sincerity," had "doubted her strength of character and intellect" (242).

[6]According to Renée Bergland, traces of de Staëls influence can be found in abundance in Hawthorne's production and correspondence. In her view, "All four of Hawthorne's published novels can be read as responses to *Corinne*" (102). It is also worth noting that in their youth Sophia Hawthorne and her sister Elizabeth had been ardent admirers of de Stael, as T. Walter Herbert has shown in *Dearest Beloved.* For an analysis of Hawthorne's borrowings from, and references to, *Corinne* in *The Marble Faun,* see Rodier.

[7]Most notably by Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Ellery Channing (*Memoirs* 1:215; 2:7). On the parallels between de Staël's and Fuller's lives, see Blanchard and Cook. On de Stael's importance as an early role model for Fuller, see Marshall (45–47).

[8]According to Jonathan Cook, the "closest Fuller came to the role of a Corinne-like performance artist. . . was in her pioneering Conversations in Boston" (59).

[9]On the fortune of mesmerism in the United States and Hawthorne's attitude towards, and literary use of, this practice, see Coale (2000; 2001) and Stoehr.

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