

The American Girl Abroad: Nation and Gender in *The Marble Faun*

Keiko Arai

In analyses of the representation of women in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, critics have chiefly focused on Miriam, the dark lady who challenges the patriarchal oppression of women, while Hilda has attracted less attention, as critics have largely considered that she is merely a copyist of the Old Masters and that she does not question nor repel the patriarchal system. For example, Michael Broek highly appreciates Miriam as "the only female artist in all of Hawthorne's novels," who represents "transgressive female power" (630), while he views Hilda as "nearly a mockery" (635). Todd Onderdonk focuses on Hawthorne's "anti-feminist gender politics," especially on his supposed obsession with female purity, and suggests that Hilda embodies Hawthorne's "ideal woman whose most prized attribute is a kind of non-existence" (96). Onderdonk argues that the close connection between Hilda and the Virgin Mary separates the former from female impurity, that Hilda is a perfect copyist who "provides the male essence, whether understood as reproductive or aesthetic, with immortality" (95), and that the ending of the novel shows "the future parental state of our ideal couple, artist/husband Kenyon, and reproductionist/wife Hilda" (96). On the other hand, Emily Schiller rejects the idea that Hawthorne advocates for Hilda, suggesting that there is a gap between the narrator and Hawthorne himself and that Hawthorne intentionally portrayed Hilda as "artificial and illogical," who is "a consciously self-constructed innocent struggling not to choose evil" (378). Additionally,

Schiller points out that Hilda's innocence, contrasting Donatello, is "the culturally (artificially) constructed innocence Hawthorne saw in many of the popular novels of his day" (384). As Schiller states, "the innocent American Girl, the ideal the popular press of the mid-nineteenth century termed 'True Womanhood,' is a perfect vehicle for this strategy of national innocence" (385), and Hawthorne "knew and had written about the seductions and the dangers of domestic innocence" (388). Moreover, focusing on the theme of "copying" in this novel, Carol Hanbery MacKay values the role of Hilda, who she views as "a portrait of not only Sophia but Hawthorne himself" (94). MacKay perceives Hawthorne's portrayal of Hilda's copying as "creative copying," different from commercial copying (94), and parallels the author's own copying of his notebooks in writing *The Marble Faun* to Hilda's inability to reproduce reality.

These views, however, have more or less pigeonholed Hilda into the conventional image of the angel in the house and failed to acknowledge her complicated development in the novel. This article instead sees Hilda as an "American girl abroad" and examines how she changes when encountering European culture that leads to her knowledge of sin and further her recognition of the woman problem.¹ While the ending of the novel largely follows the conventional plot of Victorian novels, where the engagement of Hilda and Kenyon seems to strengthen the idea of the angel in the house, Hilda's experience in Rome makes her transition from girlhood to womanhood rather complicated and even problematic. Hilda, who is not as radical as Miriam and is more conventional than Henry James' American girls, can be regarded as more than a simple copyist or an angel in the house in the patriarchal system, but as a reviser of the male Old Masters' art and as a new model of American womanhood.

1. Hilda as an American Girl Abroad

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially with the development of steamers, more and more Americans went to Europe to see the Old World, and the theme of “the American girl abroad” became a popular literary motif, especially as one of the genres of female writers’ travel writing, whose conventional pattern was revised by Henry James. Written more than ten years before the latter author’s “Daisy Miller,” *The Marble Faun* portrays Hilda as an “American girl abroad.” She is first introduced as “a slender, brown-haired, New England girl” while Miriam is depicted as “a dark-eyed young woman” (CE 4: 7). Hilda’s status as an innocent American “girl” continues to be seen in her depictions: “[a] fair young girl, dressed in white” (CE 4: 52), “the fair-haired Saxon girl” (CE 4: 56), and “the poor child” (CE 4: 62). The narrator notes that Hilda, due to her being an artist, enjoys freedom in Rome:

This young American girl was an example of the freedom of life which it is possible for a female artist to enjoy at Rome. She dwelt in her tower, as free to descend into the corrupted atmosphere of the city beneath, as one of her companion-doves to fly downward into the street;—all alone, perfectly independent, under her own sole guardianship, unless watched over by the Virgin, whose shrine she tended;—doing what she liked, without a suspicion or a shadow upon the snowy whiteness of her fame. The customs of artist-life bestow such liberty upon the sex, which is elsewhere restricted within so much narrower limits; and it is perhaps an indication that, whatever we admit woman to a wider scope of pursuits and professions, we must also remove the shackles of our present conventional rules, which would then become an insufferable restraint on either maid or wife. (CE 4: 54-5)

The first half of this citation depicts Hilda as a free and independent girl who acts as she likes and yet remains innocent, resonating with Alexis de Tocqueville's considerations in *Democracy in America*, published about twenty years before *The Marble Faun*. Comparing the American girl with her European counterpart, especially in Catholic countries, Tocqueville noted the peculiar freedom and high morality of unmarried young women in America, seeing them as among the most characteristic aspects of American democracy. While Lauren Weiner views Henry James as the most Tocquevillian of American writers (34), Hawthorne seems to share this Tocquevillian idea of America in creating Hilda, perhaps revealing his democratic nationalism, which was prevailing in mid-nineteenth-century America. However, the latter half of the citation suggests that women's freedom is still restricted, demonstrating Hawthorne's awareness that even American democracy is not perfect, especially in terms of gender roles.

Hawthorne's concerns on gender are reflected in the portrait of the American girl Hilda in this novel. While the novel's ending largely follows the conventional plot of Victorian novels, Hilda's experience in Rome is closely connected with the issue of gender, and her development from a girl to a woman does not reflect a simple transition from the innocent American girl to the angel in the house. From the seemingly main contrast between European experience and American innocence emerges a contrast related to gender, specifically the contrast between Father and Mother.

As critics have discussed, there is a stark distinction between Hilda and Miriam, and one of these differences is that Miriam is the father's daughter and Hilda is the mother's daughter. Miriam's father arranges her marriage, which she rejects, but the shadow of the model, who turns out to be a "reverend Father" (*CE* 4: 186), haunts her persistently. Bound by this shadow, Miriam paints many pictures of women who enact revenge upon men, and

through her paintings and eventually through the murder, she symbolically gets revenge on the father. Interestingly, her challenge of patriarchy is described as something she inherited from her mother: “But there was something in Miriam’s blood, in her mixed race, in her recollections of her mother—some characteristic, finally, in her own nature—which had given her freedom of thought, and force of will, and made this pre-arranged connection odious to her” (*CE* 4: 430). Miriam’s yearning for freedom that is linked to “her English mother” (*CE* 4: 430) is suppressed by her Italian father, whose family name reminds the narrator of something Evil.

On the other hand, Hilda’s recollection of New England is always related to the image of her mother, in which the father figure never appears. In a sense, Hilda’s encounter with Europe can be seen as that with the Father figure. After coming to Rome, Hilda ceases to paint her original picture and becomes a perfect copyist of the Old Masters’ paintings, until witnessing the murder.

2. Hilda’s Knowledge of “the Father’s Sin”

Preceding James’ international novels where his innocent American girls encounter a world of experience in Europe, *The Marble Faun* juxtaposes Hilda’s transition from girlhood to womanhood in Europe with her knowledge of sin. In Hawthorne’s novel, the American girl’s discovery of sin leads her to feel skeptical about the Father figure, as after witnessing the murder, Hilda’s attitude toward the Old Masters changes:

Hilda’s despondency, nevertheless, while it dulled her perceptions in one respect, had deepened them in another; she saw beauty less vividly, but felt truth, or the lack of it, more profoundly. She began to suspect that some, at least, of her venerated painters, had left an inevitable hollowness in their works, because, in the most renowned of

them, they essayed to express to the world what they had not in their own souls. They deified their light and wandering affections, and were continually playing off the tremendous jest, alluded to above, of offering the features of some venal beauty to be enshrined in the holiest places. (*CE* 4: 338)

Hilda's view deepens, allowing her to look past the beautiful surface of the Old Masters' pictures, and she, who represents an innocence different from Donatello's, also further develops as a character by witnessing the murder. Significantly, Hilda's recognition that the pictures of Old Masters do not represent the truth, despite their beauty, is deeply linked with the problems of gender and religion. The narrator ironically juxtaposes the sensual female figures and the Virgin Mary in Old Master's paintings:

They seem to take up one task or the other—the disrobed woman whom they call Venus, or the type of highest and tenderest womanhood, in the mother of their Saviour—with equal readiness, but to achieve the former with far more satisfactory success. If an artist sometimes produced a picture of the Virgin, possessing warmth enough to excite devotional feeling, it was probably the object of his earthly love, to whom he thus paid the stupendous and fearful homage of setting up her portrait to be worshipped, not figuratively, as a mortal, but by religious souls in their earnest aspirations towards Divinity. And who can trust the religious sentiment of Raphael, or receive any of his Virgins as Heaven-descended likenesses, after seeing, for example, the Fornarina of the Barberini palace, and feeling how sensual the artist must have been, to paint such a brazen trollop of his own accord, and lovingly! (*CE* 4: 337)

In this passage, Hawthorne makes Hilda “ignor[e] all moral blotches in a character that won her admiration” (*CE* 4: 338) and thus evades Hilda's direct

confrontation with the problem of sexuality. The narrator, however, repeatedly links European Fathers to illicit sexuality, and condemns the sensual tendencies of not only the Old Masters' paintings, but also of the religious fathers in Europe, by suggesting that Rome contained "a priesthood, pampered, sensual, with red and bloated cheeks, and carnal eyes" (*CE* 4: 411). As Hilda is half aware of patriarchal fathers' sexual corruption, her knowledge of "the father's sin" is connected with her knowledge of sexuality, making her different from Hawthorne's previous fair ladies though Hawthorne seems to evade referring to this directly.

Nevertheless, Hilda plays a role in representing a different view from the patriarchy's in advocating for female power. While Miriam, a father's daughter, seeks for "pardon and paternal affection" under the "outstretched hand" of Pope Julius' statue after the murder (*CE* 4: 318), Hilda seeks, first and foremost, for mother's help: "Oh, my mother! My mother! Were she yet living, I would travel over land and sea to tell her this dark secret, as I told all the little troubles of my infancy" (*CE* 4: 211). Becoming a "melancholy girl" (*CE* 4: 341) after recognizing the hollowness in Old Masters' paintings, Hilda for the first time feels "the exile's pain" (*CE* 4: 342) and "yearn[s] for th[e] native homeliness," dearly remembering "her native village, with its great, old elm-trees, and the neat, comfortable houses, scattered along the wide grassy margin of its street, and the white meeting house, and her mother's very door" (*CE* 4: 342). Not having her actual mother, Hilda wishes to pray in front of the Virgin Mary, though she recognizes that she cannot find the Virgin Mary she needs:

If the painter had represented Mary with a heavenly face, poor Hilda was now in the very mood to worship her, and adopt the faith in which she held so elevated a position. But she saw that it was merely the flattered portrait of an earthly beauty, the wife, at best, of the

artist, or, it might be, a peasant-girl of the Campagna, or some Roman princess to whom he desired to pay his court. (*CE* 4: 347)

Though Hilda is willing to convert in favor of the Mother, she cannot kneel at the Virgin Mother, because she sees the earthly woman in the pictures painted by male painters. Accordingly, Nina Baym argues that Hilda rejects “the mother-figure,” because the latter is not “a virgin” (368) that embodies the Victorian sexless ideal. However, Hilda longs for a figure of Woman: “why should not there be a Woman to listen to the prayers of women; a Mother in Heaven for all motherless girls like me!” (*CE* 4: 348). Significantly, Hilda’s feeling that there is no Woman for women resonates in an essential way with what Miriam says about Guido’s Beatrice: “if a woman had painted the original picture, there might have been something in it which we miss now. I have a great mind to undertake a copy myself, and try to give it what it lacks” (*CE* 4: 68). While Hilda continues to reject Miriam, her recognition of the existence of sin, in fact, results in her sharing Miriam’s skepticism of male authorities and her longing for a woman who represents a female figure for women. Though not as radical as Miriam, Hilda, in the latter half of the novel, is not simply a girl that obeys the patriarchy. Considering that Hilda’s copying of the Old Masters’ works is gradually and increasingly skewed, Hilda’s copying practice, after witnessing the murder, is rather a revision of male texts by female hands.

As critics have extensively examined, Miriam is closely connected with Beatrice, who is a victim and victimizer of her father. After witnessing the murder, however, Hilda is also linked to the image of Beatrice. When she looks into the mirror, she finds both Beatrice’s face and her own reflection:

Now, opposite the easel, hung a looking-glass, in which Beatrice’s face and Hilda’s were both reflected. In one of her weary, nerveless changes of position, Hilda happened to throw her eyes on the glass, and took in both these images at one unpremeditated glance. She

fancied—nor was it without horror—that Beatrice’s expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face, likewise, and flitted from it as timorously.

“Am I, too, stained with guilt?” thought the poor girl, hiding her face in her hands.

[...] It was the intimate consciousness of her [Beatrice’s] father’s sin that threw its shadow over her, and frightened her into a remote and inaccessible region, where no sympathy could come. It was the knowledge of Miriam’s guilt that lent the same expression to Hilda’s face. (*CE* 4: 205)

Beatrice’s portrayal connects Hilda and Miriam, and in a sense, Hilda becomes “a daughter who knows her father’s sin” through her knowledge of Miriam’s guilt. Accordingly, Spencer Hall argues that Beatrice Cenci in this novel symbolizes “the potentialities both for guilt and for a sorrow” and also “a common womanhood to which both Miriam and Hilda belong” (90). When Hilda and Miriam talk about Beatrice for the first time in Chapter 7, Miriam reveals her surprise regarding Hilda’s perfect copy of Beatrice, saying “It is strange, dear Hilda, how an innocent, delicate, white soul, like yours, has been able to seize the subtle mystery of this portrait” (*CE* 4: 67). In other words, though her innocence is evident, Hilda unconsciously feels a deep enough sympathy to understand the sorrow of Beatrice (and Miriam) and to become a Beatrice herself. After witnessing the murder, Hilda’s “strange sorrow” (*CE* 4: 330) motivates a painter to paint her portrait, representing her “as gazing, with sad and earnest horror, at a blood-spot which she seemed just then to have discovered on her white robe” (*CE* 4: 330). Reminding viewers of Beatrice Cenci’s portrait, Hilda’s portrait is originally titled as “Innocence, dying of a Blood-stain!” (*CE* 4: 330) though it is later altered by the picture-dealer to “The Signorina’s Vengeance” (*CE* 4: 331). While this change is depicted ironically, it

still implies the exchangeability or the kinship between sin and sorrow in Beatrice (a daughter who knows her father's sin).

Hilda's skepticism of the Old Masters leads her to an encounter with more powerful fathers: Catholic Fathers. Hawthorne makes a stark contrast between the American girl and the European father when Hilda's possible conversion becomes a problem: "Had the Jesuits known the situation of this troubled heart, her inheritance of New England puritanism would hardly have protected the poor girl from the pious strategy of those good Fathers" (*CE* 4: 344). In the chapter titled "The World's Cathedral," Hilda feels that St. Peter's is "a material home" for a whole Religion (*CE* 4: 351), and this image of home is connected with the image of the Father, contrasted with Hilda's Protestant mother in New England. Hilda, "the New England maiden," feels "as if her mother's spirit, somewhere within the Dome, were looking down upon her child, the daughter of Puritan forefathers, and weeping to behold her ensnared by these gaudy superstitions" (*CE* 4: 351). In this tension between Catholicism and Puritanism—and Father and Mother—Hilda, for the first time, enters a confessional. Hilda and the priest call each other "Father" and "daughter" (*CE* 4: 358), and she introduces herself as a stranger in Italy and a motherless girl. The priest uses the word "home," in his attempt to make Hilda convert: "Come home, dear child—poor wanderer, who hast caught a glimpse of the heavenly light—come home, and be at rest!" (*CE* 4: 362). However, she does not accept the authority of "absolution from mortal man" (*CE* 4: 359) and rejects the priest's suggestion. Her attraction to and rejection of Catholicism reflects Hawthorne's own. Correspondingly, Gilbert P. Voigt suggests that Hawthorne had been anti-Catholic before he went to Italy, though, after he actually experienced Roman Catholicism, he found some practices attractive (i.e., the confessional), just like Hilda.

On the one hand, Hawthorne, through Hilda, appreciates the comforting

and intimate ways Popish faith applied to human events, which cannot be found in Puritanism (*CE* 4: 346); by confessing the secret, Hilda is relieved and becomes “a girl again” (*CE* 4: 358). Thus, Hawthorne appreciates, to some extent, the softening or humanizing effect of the Catholic practice of confessional. On the other hand, he demonstrates a negative attitude toward the worldliness of Catholic fathers, as reflected in Hilda’s words: “If its ministers were but a little more than human, above all error, pure from all iniquity, what a religion would it be!” (*CE* 4: 368). Ultimately Hilda denies her conversion, situating her as a mother’s daughter: “But what have I done that a girl of New England birth and culture, with the right sense that her mother taught her, and the conscience that she developed in her, should not do?” (*CE* 4: 367).

3. Hilda’s Faith in the Woman and the Mother

Hilda’s strong attachment to the women’s sphere, characterizing her domesticity and purity, still represents her potential power that transcends various differences and overcomes the patriarchal system. In the scene of St. Peter’s, Hilda feels sympathy for a Catholic woman who comes out of a confessional, saying “I am a poor heretic, but a human sister; and I rejoice for you!” (*CE* 4: 356). This sisterhood relationship transcends the line between Catholicism and Protestantism, which such male characters as Kenyon and the Catholic Father tell Hilda to observe. Additionally, through taking care of the Virgin’s shrine and her worship of Divine Womanhood, Hilda demonstrates the idea that being a Woman transcends the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism present at the beginning of the novel. To Miriam, who says that it is a Catholic practice to attend to the Virgin’s shrine, Hilda answers, “You must not call me a Catholic. A Christian girl—even a daughter of the Puritans—may surely pay honour to the idea of Divine Womanhood, without

giving up the faith of her forefathers” (*CE* 4: 54). Again, Hilda tells Miriam that she sometimes wishes to pray to the Virgin, because the Virgin “was a woman once” (*CE* 4: 69). Hilda’s view that being a Woman could transcend various differences resonates with Miriam’s perceptions of Beatrice, specifically when she appeals to Hilda for her sympathy toward Beatrice: “Poor sister Beatrice! For she was still a woman, Hilda, still a sister, be her sin and sorrow what they might” (*CE* 4: 68).

Hilda declares that the light of the Virgin’s shrine has a religious significance for her though she is not a Catholic, as she does not consider her faith in the Virgin and the Catholic faith as identical. Her religious feeling for the Virgin resembles her respect for what her mother taught her, and represents a faith in the Woman or the Mother. The Virgin Mary offers Hilda “a woman’s tenderness responding to her gaze,” and the narrator suggests that “if her oppressed heart besought the sympathy of Divine Womanhood [...] [i]t was not a Catholic, kneeling at an idolatrous shrine, but a child, lifting its tear-stained face to seek comfort from a Mother” (*CE* 4: 332).

If the grand and magnificent architecture of St. Peter’s symbolizes the power of the paternal Father, the Virgin Mary shrines, which can be found at every corner of the streets where common people live, embody the Mother and the Plebeian. In their travels, Kenyon finds that Donatello “kneel[s], but as each of the many shrines, where the Blessed Virgin in fresco, (faded with sunshine and half-washed out with showers,) looked benignly at her worshipper; or where she was represented in a wooden image, or a bas-relief of plaster or marble [...] or restored from a mediaeval antiquity, these places of wayside worship” (*CE* 4: 297). Though Kenyon criticizes Catholicism in the novel, he exceptionally shows a positive attitude toward the Virgin Mary:

It appeared to the sculptor, that Donatello prayed the more earnestly and the more hopefully at these shrines, because the mild face of the

Madonna promised him to interceded, as a tender mother, betwixt the poor culprit and the awfulness of judgment.

It was beautiful to observe, indeed, how tender was the soul of man and woman towards the Virgin Mother, in recognition of the tenderness which, as their faith taught them, she immortally cherishes towards all human souls. (CE 4: 297)

Though Kenyon reproaches Hilda's confession, he is attracted to the Virgin Mary, a part of Catholicism. Repeatedly linked with tenderness, the Virgin Mary represents something human, but pure, and different from the paternal authorities. Early in the novel, the narrator reveals the legend that if a lamp at the Virgin's shrine disappears, "the tower itself, the palace, and whatever estate belongs to it, shall [...] become the property of the Church" (CE 4: 52). As a contrast, Hilda, who devotedly takes care of a shrine of the Virgin Mary and in a way prevents it from being controlled by the Paternal church, represents the Woman's power that can match or transcend the paternal religious system.

The images of Catholicism, the Virgin Mary, and Catholic sisterhood are frequently linked with so-called dark ladies in Hawthorne's previous novels. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester holding Pearl is compared to the Virgin Mary, and in the chapter titled "Another View of Hester," the narrator shows that Hester comes to identify herself as a "Sister of Mercy" through her charity (CE 1: 161).² In *The Blithedale Romance*, Zenobia, after breaking her ties with Hollingsworth at Eliot's pulpit, says to Coverdale: "I intend to become a Catholic, for the sake of going into a nunnery" (CE 3: 227). Accordingly, John Gatta examines how the interest in Divine Maternity is found in the works of Protestant writers and argues that "[e]specially for writers like Hawthorne and Stowe, figures of divine maternity [...] challenged the predominantly masculine symbol-system inherited from Puritan forebears" (4). Considering that the images of

Catholicism and the Virgin Mary tend to be linked to the dark ladies and that the latter are used to show a challenging of paternal Puritanism and patriarchy, it is unusual that Hilda, a so-called fair lady, approaches Catholicism in *The Marble Faun*. Critics have extensively discussed the relationship between Hilda and Catholicism, pointing out that although she nearly converts and eventually rejects the religion, she essentially adopts Catholicism, despite her rejection. Central to these arguments is the issue of religion, but considering that Hilda is attracted to the Virgin Mary even before she witnesses the murder, her approach to Catholicism can be discussed in terms of gender. In other words, she is interested in and attracted to Catholicism, because it provides the worship of a woman figure. In nineteenth-century America, the Virgin Mother's virginity and maternity was regarded as the ideal model of womanhood, and in 1854, Pope Pius IX decreed the Immaculate Conception. Thus, the relationship between Hilda and the Virgin Mary emphasizes Hilda's virginity. However, Hilda's attachment to this figure simultaneously embodies her belief in the power of women that transcends various boundaries, such as those of religion and nationality. In fact, in her seeking a Woman for women, she is associated with the feminist ideas represented by Hawthorne's dark ladies.

4. Hilda and Sisterhood

Hilda's sense of sisterhood finally overcomes the crucial gap between the Good and the Evil within her, and serves to restore her relationship with Miriam. After the murder, Miriam appeals to Hilda for their friendship, saying "You were to me as a younger sister; yes, dearer than sisters of the same blood; for you and I were so lonely, Hilda, that the whole world pressed us together by its solitude and strangeness," but Hilda ultimately rejects this plea, saying "Do not come nearer, Miriam!" (*CE* 4: 207). Their conversation

emphasizes the difference between an experienced woman and an innocent girl: while Miriam is a woman, Hilda is “a poor, lonely girl, whom God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as when she put it on” (CE 4: 208). Miriam criticizes Hilda as being merciless and severe, saying: “As an angel, you [Hilda] are amiss; but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you!” (CE 4: 209). Though she is severe, Hilda curiously asks Miriam for advice: “[...] But I am alone—alone! Miriam, you were my dearest, only friend! Advise me what to do!” (CE 4: 211). Thus, Hilda unconsciously appreciates her sisterhood union, and Miriam feels a vital bond between them though Hilda does not recognize it. It is worth noting that Miriam values her relationship with Hilda more than Hilda acknowledges, and it is Hilda’s refusal that hurts Miriam most. As such, Miriam appeals to Kenyon, explaining how Hilda’s refusal ostracized her from the woman’s sphere: “She was all Womanhood to me; and when she cast me off, I had no longer any terms to keep with the reserves and decorums of my sex [...] when she cast me off, it severed some few remaining bonds between me and decorous Womanhood” (CE 4: 287). In this passage, the issue is something other than that of Good and Evil. Rather, it reflects issues of gender. Miriam regards her sin and sorrow as something common among women, similar to Hester’s famous speculation on the happiness of women in *The Scarlet Letter*.

After confessing what she knows at the confessional, Hilda changes so drastically that “Kenyon had never found her so delightful as now; so softened out of the chillness of her virgin pride” (CE 4: 370). On the surface level, her moral severity does not seem changed, as she still denies the idea of the Fortunate Fall and Kenyon considers her “a terribly severe judge” with regards to this (CE 4: 384). Simultaneously, however, she starts to feel “a painful doubt whether a wrong had not been committed, on Hilda’s part,

towards the friend once so beloved" (CE 4: 385). Being aware of "this moral enigma" (CE 4: 385), Hilda adopts a deeper perception on the matter, viewing the reality beneath the Old Masters' paintings and gaining a more complex point of view, by considering her relationship with Miriam from a different angle in addition to reflecting on her guilt or innocence. Finally, she realizes "the tie between Miriam and herself had been real, the affection true, and that therefore the implied compact was not to be shaken off" (CE 4: 386). In this passage, Hilda's sisterhood with Miriam transcends the problem of Good and Evil. She comes to feel guilty for rejecting Miriam, despite their sisterly friendship, and this change in Hilda's mind reminds her of the packet she promised Miriam she would bring to the Palazzo Cencis.

5. The Possibility of Change in the Idea of American Womanhood

Hilda's transition from girlhood to womanhood is symbolically represented in the scene at the Palazzo Cencis, namely "the paternal abode of Beatrice," where she crosses the "threshold" between innocence and experience (CE 4: 389). The house is seen as "a spot of ill-omen for young maidens" and Hilda, who enters the building, is described as "[t]he brown-haired, fair-cheeked Anglo-Saxon girl" (CE 4: 389). Hilda is emphatically depicted as an innocent American girl who crosses the threshold and enters the world of European experience, where she faces Evil and acquires complicated points of view. Considering that Hawthorne's previous fair ladies, such as Phoebe and Priscilla, do not directly face paternal fathers' sin, Hilda, who becomes a daughter that knows fathers' sins through her experiences in Europe, can be perceived as closer to Hawthorne's dark ladies. Significantly, *The Marble Faun* does attain a momentarily strong sisterhood, which is not achieved in *The Blithedale Romance*, in the ways it depicts the surpassing of the moral problem. Namely, Hawthorne presents the possibility of change in the idea of American

womanhood developing from the typical angel in the house to something more complex and more experienced.

Later in the novel, Hawthorne reveals several images of women liberated from imprisonment. First, at Kenyon's studio, Cleopatra "had now struggled almost out of the imprisoning stone; or, rather, the workmen had found her within the mass of marble, imprisoned there by magic, but still fervid to the touch with fiery life, the fossil woman of an age that produced statelier, stronger, and more passionate creatures, than our own" (*CE* 4: 377). Looking at this passionate figure of the "fierce Egyptian queen," Hilda confesses that she is ashamed to reveal to Kenyon "how much I [she] admire[s] this statue" (*CE* 4: 377, 378). Then, in Campagna, Kenyon finds a marble woman buried in the earth and reassembles it. Being "the prototype or a better repetition of the Venus of the Tribune" (*CE* 4: 424), the marble woman is described by the narrator as "one of the few works of antique sculpture in which we recognize Womanhood, and that, moreover, without prejudice to its divinity," namely, "a goddess [who] had risen from her long slumber" (424), and again by Miriam as "[a] far truer image of immortal Womanhood than the poor little damsel at Florence" (*CE* 4: 427). Though Kenyon separates Hilda from the marble goddess, this perfect goddess figure that represents Womanhood may be the one Hilda would seek for. Importantly, women's physical beauty is appraised both in Cleopatra's figure and in the marble goddess, representing an appreciation other than the Victorian (or Protestant) ideal of Womanhood that is based on spiritual or body-less beauty. Contrasting classical art and Victorian art, Baym regards the former as "an undisguised, though brilliantly controlled, expression of Eros, shamelessly and freely passionate exulting in the flesh," while the latter is a direct opposition. As Baym argues, Kenyon, who cannot "accept Donatello's deed"(362), cannot be a true artist and "without acceptance of sexuality there is no true manliness" (365).

The physical presence of a female figure is differently depicted at the famous carnival scene as “a gigantic female figure” (*CE* 4: 445) that violently shoots at Kenyon’s chest, and after a while, Hilda suddenly reappears. Hilda, “dressed in a white domino, and looked pale, and bewildered, and yet full of tender joy,” is starkly contrasted with the grotesque female figure at the carnival with “a gesture of despair and rage” (*CE* 4: 446), though the latter can be seen as a transformed figure of a passionate and powerful woman imprisoned in the mold of the innocent American girl. Importantly, these scenes are closely connected to Kenyon, implying Hawthorne’s idea that the change in American womanhood is not only concerned with women, but also with American men. Kenyon, who is partly attracted to passionate women, though overwhelmed and disgusted by their violent power, shows Hawthorne’s ambivalent attitude toward the possible changes in the idea of womanhood.

Though Hawthorne portrays Hilda as more aware than his previous American girls, his exploration of the American girl abroad seems to stop at the Palazzo Cencis scene, where the innocent American girl dares to cross the threshold into the world of experience. Appearing after several days of absence, Hilda accepts Kenyon’s marriage proposal. The ending of the novel, to a large extent, shares the conventional plot of Victorian novels, as Hilda takes Kenyon—an American man—back to America and makes a domestic home, where Hilda is to be “enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband’s fireside” (*CE* 4: 461). Their marriage represents a democratic marriage, where a man and a woman are tied by mutual love, and Hilda’s American home is a female-centered one, contrasting the paternal home of European fathers. Nevertheless, Hawthorne ends rather ambiguously. To Kenyon, who asks Hilda to be his “counsellor” (*CE* 4: 460) and to “guide me [him] home,” she answers: “I am a poor, weak girl, and have no such wisdom as you fancy in me” (*CE* 4: 461). Hawthorne evades exploring what happens after

Hilda passes the threshold into the European world of experience—that is, he stops exploring whether American girlhood or womanhood may change. Thus, Hilda does not become a confident “woman,” but remains “a poor, weak girl.”

Additionally, it is meaningful that Hilda receives a bracelet from Miriam and brings it home with her. The Etruscan bracelet is “the symbol of as sad a mystery as any that Miriam had attached to the separate gems” (*CE* 4: 462), embodying Hilda as something different from the simple stereotype of the innocent American girl. The bracelet symbolizes the sisterly bond between Miriam and Hilda, or the sin and sorrow that women share, and also suggests Hawthorne’s idea that American culture, in some ways, requires European complexity.

Hawthorne, unlike James, avoids portraying his American girl as becoming a new woman who openly questions conventional gender roles, but his profound concern about the woman problem is reflected in the complex portrayal of an American girl and further in his examinations of American democracy. Thus, this novel is more than a travel writing book about an American girl abroad.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was given as a paper at the *Conversazioni in Italia: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe* on June 9th, 2012. I would like to thank those who participated in the session and provided me with valuable comments and questions.

¹ Similarly, Cushing Strout reads this novel as an international novel that finally shows the rupture between Europe and America. In line with this perspective, Adam Ochonicky focuses on the role of American tourists in Europe, who could possibly take over European civilizations and make a

better one in America. Linking the image of “home” with the issue of national identity, Laurie A. Sterling views Hilda as “the living embodiment of the female gender role created by the American domestic ideal” (99) and considers that her marriage to Kenyon in America creates “the mid-century model of the patriarchal home” (109). On the other hand, Conrad Shumaker suggests that Hilda resembles the prophetess, that Hester Prynne portrayed at the end of *The Scarlet Letter*, though she evokes earlier Puritans in Hawthorne’s works through her uncompromising purity. While Miriam and Donatello reflect an Old World history, Hilda represents “a new order, with the white light and white wisdom of the recovered candlestick” though she needs softening (80). Thus, Shumaker argues that *The Marble Faun* is “a nostalgic work, a last attempt to affirm the upward course of American history using a symbol system that had been profoundly threatened by actual history” (83). Blythe Ann Tellefsen suggests that this novel centers on the issue of American identity, discussing it in relation to African Americans and Catholic immigrants. Pointing out the Roman Catholic Church’s power and perceiving Donatello and Miriam as Africanists, Tellefsen links Hilda, who rejects Miriam, with the nationalistic and exclusivist America in the mid-nineteenth century and has a rather dark vision of the nation.

- ² The Sisters of Mercy is a Catholic organization established in Dublin in 1827, and one of its aims is to offer women shelters. The Sisters of Mercy, “Our History.”

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