COVERDALE AS AUTHOR IN THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

by

MARK GODWIN HOWARD

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Approval

Name: Mark Howard

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Coverdale as Author in The Blithedale Romance

Examining Committee:

Chairman: Jared R. Curtis

Evan Alderson
Senior Supervisor

Stephen Black

David Stouck

M. D. Fellman
External Examiner
Associate Professor
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.

Date Approved: March 11, 1975
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Author: (signature)

Mark Howard

(name)

March 11, 1975

(date)
Abstract

The Blithedale Romance by Nathaniel Hawthorne has been generally regarded as an unsatisfactory, even incoherent, work of fiction. Most critics have found the book a confusing mixture of genres and focuses, reflecting Hawthorne's inability to assimilate romance with realistic social criticism. Hawthorne's psychoanalytic critics have attributed Blithedale's incoherence to obsessive conflicts projected into the characters which Hawthorne could not confront and resolve by means of his surface story. Thus, although The Blithedale Romance is receiving a growing amount of critical attention, there have been few convincing attempts to find a unifying thematic and structural principle in it, and it remains the most enigmatic of Hawthorne's novels.

This thesis attempts to find a coherent form and focus in the novel, and to determine the book's significance in relation to the rest of Hawthorne's work.

To this end, Blithedale's critical history is reviewed, and the stumbling blocks which critics have encountered in trying to make sense of the novel are examined. Foremost among these is the narrator's, Miles Coverdale's, increasingly vague, mystified, vacillating, yet strangely literary relationship to Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, and their conflict, which has prompted the theory that Coverdale is an unreliable narrator whose tale is a distortion of certain real, external events. The body of the thesis consists of detailed textual analysis of Coverdale's psychology—specifically, his ambivalent attitudes towards the utopian venture of Blithedale, his three friends, and
himself as their observer; his unacknowledged feelings towards the three and the wish-fulfilling relationship between these and the characters' actual fates; his literary conception of his friends' struggles as a stage piece; his apparent ignorance of the course of the plot, yet "clairvoyant" anticipation of its outcome; and his subversion in a state of increasingly nightmarish fantasy.

The results of this study suggest that Coverdale is not simply an observer and actor in the world of the novel, but is the "author" and creator of that world. Unconsciously, Coverdale transforms reality into a drama enacting and gratifying his repressed sexual anxieties and obsessions. At no point is it possible to significantly distinguish between Coverdale's account of what happens or assessment of the characters, and the apparent truth. Coverdale is not a conventional unreliable narrator; because the story in its entirety is a projection of his own obsessions, irony is produced not by discrepancies between Coverdale's account and the "facts," but between Coverdale's conscious, acceptable, idealized attitudes towards his friends and view of his relationship to them, and the actual, repressed, anxious and hostile feelings which compel his projected drama towards its catastrophe. As a result of his efforts to repress these feelings beneath stances of sympathy and detachment, Coverdale's relationship to the reader is elaborately deceptive.

In this interpretation The Blithedale Romance emerges as a work of profoundly analytical and ironic psychological introspection, which provided Hawthorne for the first time with a form by means of which he
could transcend and explore his own conventional evasiveness and
duplicity as an artist, the tendency of his omniscient narrators to
conceal their stories' urgent, personal psychological content beneath
a literary, romanticizing, moralistic, and equivocating stance towards
the material.
"Do we dream the same dream twice?
There is nothing else that I am afraid of."

--Priscilla, in The Blithedale Romance
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Hawthorne, we all know, thought of himself as writing "romance." Judging from his prefaces, he was anxious to impress on his readers that romance requires a certain freedom to depart from surface probability and verisimilitude. The work of the romancer must not be "put exactly side by side with nature"; it must be "allowed a license with regard to every-day Probability"; it must not be held accountable, like a novel, for a "minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." The "characteristic and probable events of our individual lives" are not suitable material for romance. It requires "an atmosphere of strange enchantment" in which "the beings of imagination" have "a propriety of their own".

However, at the same time that Hawthorne insists over and over again on claiming this freedom of imagination to present "the truth of the human heart . . . under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation," he is anxious to assure us that he will indulge in it sparingly. He wishes the world created by his imagination to be "so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference." Throughout the prefaces there is an undertone of uncertainty and self-denigration in Hawthorne's treatment of the imaginative reality he seeks. In the Preface to The House of the Seven Gables he tells us that the reader may, if he wish, disregard the "legendary mist" which he has cast over events set in the present. Blithedale, he says, is a "Faery Land" where "the
creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics" (1). As for The Marble Faun, "The author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story." 6

At first glance, Hawthorne's tendency to disclaim the seriousness of his romances supports what has long been the most common view of them: that they reflect an increasing yet unsuccessful effort to set aside the gloomy, legendary Puritan and colonial past for the realistic treatment of contemporary life which Hawthorne saw as the province of the novel. Hawthorne's fiction from Gables on is almost universally judged inferior to The Scarlet Letter, and its failure is attributed largely to Hawthorne's inability to make its elements of romance--variously treated as "allegory," "melodrama," "supernaturalism," and so on--convincing amidst the humdrum details of its contemporary settings. The problem, which, Hawthorne tells us, "has always pressed very heavily upon him" (2), is seen as getting steadily worse. It is noticeable enough in The House of the Seven Gables, with its rather passive and retiring ghosts, murders that turn out to have been natural deaths, a wizard's deadly curse finally recognized as a "physical predisposition in the Pyncheon race," 7 and dark, unknown motives finally resolved into a simple matter of the Judge's greed. By the time we get to The Marble Faun, we find abundant complaints such as the following, that Hawthorne can not really believe in the Gothic mysteries of his plot, embedded as they are in descriptions of Roman art and life savoring of ladies' travel guides:
And the major difficulty in *The Marble Faun*, the weakness probably responsible for its unfortunate neglect, stems from his inability to create a unique realm of being for the characters and incidents in the romance; that is, to decide whether the novel's reality was to stem from the Italian actualities borrowed from the Notebooks or from a special, fabulous world created in terms of its symbolic necessities.

Despite his intentions, his work, alas, is only half romance, and it cannot satisfy two realms of probabilities at once. An author is quite justified in establishing his own world, with its special laws, if he will not remind us too much of ours. But fantasy is difficult to follow or allow when it takes place before so vividly reported a backdrop as Hawthorne's Rome. He needs Rome and its many masterpieces, which give meaning to the action and allow conversations which importantly reflect the speakers. But he must pay the price in realism for his use of this scenery. It is here he becomes halfhearted, unable to make his fantasy literally sensible and not quite unwilling to try. He multiplies coincidences that often, with his encouragement, seem mystically induced, and then belatedly and without conviction tries to account for them. He cannot manage to make Miriam's persecutor either man or Satan, although on differing occasions he tries to make him both, even as these several occasions and their presuppositions about the persecutor are mutually contradictory. He has a similar problem with Donatello as man and/or Faun.8

It is undeniable that Hawthorne shows in his letters and notebooks an attraction towards realism, in the several senses of a minute recording of trivial everyday incidents, the artistic representation of his actual surroundings and society, and particularly as a somehow more cheerful, comfortable pursuit than those "blasted allegories."9 He continually speaks of the present and its commonplace realities as "broad daylight," and associates romance with shadow and gloom. His concern at not being able to "throw any cheering light"10 into *The Scarlet Letter*, and his determination to "try hard to pour some setting sunshine"11 over the ending of *Gables*, are familiar indications that Hawthorne longed for a lighter atmosphere in his work, and that
he sought it by attempting the artistic treatment of the present. He wrote his publisher assuring him that only "thirty or forty" pages of Gables would be devoted directly to the Pyncheons' past.¹²

At the same time, it is clear that throughout his work Hawthorne shows an uncomfortable, vacillating preoccupation with the literal reality of his "Gothic" and "allegorical" devices—what Rudolph von Abele calls his "irrational symbols"¹³—matters such as the "A" on Dimmesdale's breast, Maule's curse, and Donatello's faun-like ears. Hawthorne seems unable to keep himself from engaging in tiresome equivocation with the reader over whether these are genuinely supernatural, or merely the product of popular superstition or of some naturalistic causation. According to Abele, the source of Hawthorne's dilemma is that he held a view of art whereby physical reality is significant only as a symbolic language expressing "ideal" spiritual truths, but at the same time he could not escape the influence of the nineteenth century's growing scientific naturalism.¹⁴ Consequently, he could neither abandon his supernatural devices, nor imbue them with the density of reality, of "lived experience."¹⁵ The Scarlet Letter, in Abele's view, is Hawthorne's only work in which he succeeded in making the reader's immediate, absorbing focus the story's quality as a real, concrete experience, rather than a symbolic dialogue. This quality is created by the book's "psychological texture."¹⁶

I mention Abele in particular because his view is a sophisticated version of what has been the most persistent critical complaint about Hawthorne from his own time to the present—against his "unjustifiably
abstract or allegorical elements.\footnote{17} In different ways, it has been said over and over again that, almost always with the at least partial exception of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's art offers us no sensually vivid and particular reality, no vision of "life as it is actually lived,"\footnote{18} but discourses on Sin or the Fall or some other "spiritual" matter, thinly disguised by insubstantial characters and often absurd plots. This view of Hawthorne's limitations has inspired a notion as to his place in the development of American fiction: he yearned towards the kind of realism, the artistic exploration of the social environment, that was to arise with Twain, Howells, and James, but never succeeded in escaping the intellectual vestiges of the Puritan past, among which were an inclination to treat material appearances as symbols of spiritual truths, and a rigid conception of life in terms of sin and redemption, guilt and expiation.\footnote{19}

This study is devoted to showing that this traditional judgment of Hawthorne obscures the nature of the problem behind his almost invariable hedging over the ontological status of his symbols, his hints in the prefaces, not entirely ironic, about the vaporousness of romance, the mysteries in his plots and characters' backgrounds which seem to call for literal explanations that are never provided. Consequently, it mistakes the nature of the search in which Hawthorne was engaged in his last two complete romances, and the solution he attained in The Blithedale Romance. Hawthorne's hinted dissatisfaction with romance did not stem primarily and directly from any intellectual influence such as scientific naturalism; it arose out of a sense, probably not
fully conscious, that the devices of romance were serving to obscure
the real "stuff" of his fiction. The "paint and pasteboard" of his
characters' composition are "but too painfully discernible" (2) not
because they violate everyday probability--Hawthorne's plots and
characters do so with actually increasing blatancy right through the
unfinished romances--but because the atmosphere and conventions of
romantic legend and fable in which he casts his tales violate a deeper
reality--the author's immediate, covert, personal relationship to his
material. In virtually all of Hawthorne's work prior to The Blithedale
Romance, Hawthorne's presence in his fiction took the form of an
undramatized but conspicuous narrative voice, who self-consciously
assumes the role of "romancer" towards his story. In other words,
Hawthorne's persona characteristically maintains towards his narrative
a relationship of artist to art-work, usually in the form of an artist
scrutinizing and reporting some legend, tradition, or piece of gossip.
This treatment of his material as legend, fable, or allegory served
Hawthorne as a means of distancing himself from its actual, personal
meaning. The narrative voice, busying itself extracting morals from
the story and treating it as a source for neat allegorical lessons,
casts an aura of objectivity over Hawthorne's relationship to his
story, as if his interest in it were as a symbol of some moral and
psychological truth. It has long been commonplace to point out that
Hawthorne's explicit moralizing is more often than not undermined by
the actual implications of his tales; it is not so generally recog-
nized that Hawthorne's very insistence on maintaining the role of
moralizer and allegorist even when he ironically undercuts it suggests an effort to preserve a secure relationship to the story, through an "official" meaning, even as the story gives itself away. "The Artist of the Beautiful" is a good example of this duplicity, and one concerned with precisely the problem that The Blithedale Romance indicates lay at the heart of Hawthorne's ambivalence and self-doubt: the relationship of the artist to life. The narrator of this tale affirms, in glowing rhetoric, the romantic cliché of the artist as a suffering outcast who renounces worldly success and triumphs over the world's disbelief to fulfill a spiritual vision:

There was, amid all her kindness towards himself, amid all the wonder and admiration with which she contemplated the marvelous work of his hands and incarnation of his idea, a secret scorn—too secret, perhaps, for her own consciousness, and perceptible only to such intuitive discernment as that of the artist. But Owen, in the latter stages of his pursuit, had risen out of the region in which such a discovery might have been torture. He knew that the world, and Annie as the representative of the world, whatever praise might be bestowed, could never say the fitting word nor feel the fitting sentiment which should be the perfect recompense of an artist who, symbolizing a lofty moral by a material trifle,—converting what was earthly to spiritual gold,—had won the beautiful into his handiwork.20

The narrator asserts that Owen's vision was worth attaining, worth the price of the world's incomprehension and even woman's "secret scorn," even though Owen's pursuit is pretty directly presented as a means of compensation for sexual inferiority and failure. The part of Hawthorne that wants to believe that an idealistic art is adequate compensation for a sense of inadequacy, isolation, and exclusion from experience is projected into the obtrusive style and presence of the persona; the
painful knowledge that it is not is "repressed," as it were, to the
level of detail and innuendo.

Hawthorne's incessant equivocation over natural versus supernatural
causation, the true nature of dark deeds in his characters' pasts; his
constant qualification of the veracity of reported incidents, all
reflect a similar half-retreat from the inner meaning of the story.
By casting doubt on the plausibility of a miraculous or Gothic event,
Hawthorne unconsciously resorts to rationalism as a barrier against the
episode's underlying significance. Precisely because it is charged with
intense covert meaning, the whole thing is safely reduced to an
unreality, a popular superstition. The mysterious death of Colonel
Pyncheon is a good example:

The company—tremulous as the leaves of a tree, when all are
shaking together—drew nearer, and perceived that there was
an unnatural distortion in the fixedness of Colonel Pyncheon's
stare; that there was blood on his ruff, and that his hoary
beard was saturated with it. It was too late to give assis-
tance. The iron-hearted Puritan—the relentless persecutor—
the grasping and strong-willed man—was dead! Dead, in his
new house! There is a tradition—only worth alluding to, as
lending a tinge of superstitious awe to a scene, perhaps gloomy
enough without it—that a voice spoke loudly among the guests,
the tones of which were like those of old Matthew Maule, the
executed wizard:—"God hath given him blood to drink!"21

The narrator goes on to mention rumors that the Colonel was murdered,
and concludes, "But it were folly to lay stress on stories of this
kind. . . . For our own part, we allow them just as little credence as
to that other fable of the skeleton hand, which the Lieutenant Governor
was said to have seen at the Colonel's throat, but which vanished
away, as he advanced farther into the room."22 At the same time that
the narrator discounts the legends surrounding the Colonel's death,
it is clear that he considers the man worthy of such a punishment for his hypocritical persecution of Maule: "The iron-hearted Puritan—the relentless persecutor—the grasping and strong-willed man—was dead!" The tone of exultation is unmistakable, and is confirmed later in the book when the narrator indulges in an entire chapter of ghoulish mockery against the dead Judge, the Colonel's modern counterpart. Dismissing as superstition the tradition that Maule's voice was heard serves to superficially distance us from the underlying pattern of the book, in which we are invited to enjoy Maule's revenge. Even more important, through the magical powers which the Maules exercise over the Pyncheons, they become—as Hawthorne's wizards, mesmerists, and scientists almost invariably do—artist-figures of a kind very different from Owen Warland; artists who wield a sadistic power over the souls and bodies of other people, especially young women. Hawthorne's Gothic devices, and material reported as rumor and legend, as well as the unclarified mysteries of his characters' pasts, almost always contribute to his fiction's deepest level of implication; with this in mind, it is easy to see that his narrators' habitual hedging over their literal veracity has little to do with an urge towards realism per se.

To understand Hawthorne's stories we have to be prepared to interpret the motives of his persona almost as if he were an unreliable first-person narrator. Hawthorne's attitude toward his material is not often stable and resolved, but divided and anxious. Whenever the narrator's tone or viewpoint obscures these tensions, his relationship to the reader is deceptive. The eccentricities of the narrator's
relationship to the reader and the story reflect a vacillating stance towards the most personal significance of plot and characters, yet the technique of omniscient narration did not afford Hawthorne any means of exploring the personality of his persona. In The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne hit upon such a technique. By dramatizing his own sense of himself as a narrator and artist, Hawthorne created a form capable of intricately and ironically revealing the split between this figure's announced and covert attitudes towards his material; his conscious and unconscious motivation; his benignity and idealism, and his coldness and voyeurism; his power over those into whose affairs he pries, and the draining, obsessive grip of their drama upon him. Hawthorne's earlier fiction abounds with figures who embody some of his awareness of himself, and his potential selves, as an artist; but only in The Blithedale Romance does such a figure exist in relationship to the plot and other characters, as an author in relationship to his fictional world. Coverdale is an Hawthornian artist in the process of transforming life into art. His covert motivation as artist is the fulfillment, through a fantasy-power over the lives of others, of repressed anxieties, desires, and resentments towards the other characters. He succeeds to the fullest; but because he has been driven by feelings which he has repressed beneath idealized views of his involvement with his "friends," feelings which he increasingly struggles against recognizing, their fulfillment is a compulsive process over which he has no control, and is self-destructive as well, because it negates any chance he had of experiencing love or friendship.
In *The Blithedale Romance* Hawthorne found a form by means of which he could explore the psychology of his own creativity. The covert motivation behind romance is revealed as a compulsion to control and destroy people who excite the artist's repressed anxieties; art is a defensive reaction against life. To show the full destructive power of this psychology over Coverdale's relationship to life, it is necessary that his fantasy-projection take its toll against other people, not just literary material. Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla are, at one and the same time, real, separate persons, and characters in Coverdale's fantasy-drama, dream-reflections of his repressed personality. While there is a process of transformation in the novel by which the characters and their actions assume more fully the aspects of projections of the narrator's imagination, their dual, inward-and-outer reality, their fantasy-significance, is evident from the beginning. Obviously, such a form involves ontological contradiction; reality in the novel is absolutely coextensive and identical with the narrator's projected fantasies. It is little wonder that critics who have been most sensitive to the eccentricities of Coverdale's relationship to his story have found the book incoherent. The task of this thesis is to demonstrate that this form, though ontologically "confused," is psychologically penetrating and thematically coherent. This, in turn, will serve to show that *Blithedale*, through the very violation of realism involved in the power of the narrator's fantasies over the reality he observes, achieves the density of "lived experience" which many critics besides Abele have found lacking in the book, in the
rich "psychological texture" of the subtle interplay between Coverdale's conscious and repressed motivation.

As a first step in demonstrating that Blithedale has this unusual form, in which reality obeys the dictates of the narrator's fantasies, this chapter will review the traditional approach to the novel, and the conclusions of the best of its more recent critics, in order to show that neither have been able to find a coherent form or consistent focus, because both alike are committed to the assumption that the novel is, or ought to be, "realistic"—in other words, that somewhere in what Coverdale recounts there is an "objective" reality that should be distinguishable from his peculiar, vacillating, distorting point of view.

In short, I will argue that the critics have failed to make sense of Blithedale because they have insisted on trying to interpret Coverdale as a conventional "unreliable narrator." In the concluding part of the chapter, I will show how Coverdale's transformation of his experience into fantasy is already apparent in that very aspect of the novel which critics have viewed as indicative of a realistic intent—it's treatment of a utopian community.

II

From Hawthorne's own day until well into this century, The Blithedale Romance was almost universally considered the prime example of Hawthorne's supposed effort to bring romance closer to contemporary reality and imbue it with the social criticism which generations of readers bred on Twain, George Eliot, Dreiser and so on had come to expect as the domain of serious fiction. This view is still widespread
today, and its basis is obvious—the novel's indebtedness to Hawthorne's experiences at Brook Farm. However, most critics lament that Hawthorne's effort to chronicle his disillusionment with social reform fails because he could not stick to his realistic theme, but reverted to a muddled, shallow, melodramatic romance, revolving around a banal love triangle and especially the mysterious past interrelationships among Zenobia, Priscilla, Moodie, and Westervelt. A few critics have taken the opposite position, and maintained that Hawthorne should never have tried to depart from his proper, "congenial" sphere of romance at all. However, regardless of their judgments, the critics agree that Blithedale represents an unsatisfactory mixture of genres and focuses: "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." Or again: "We are tempted to say that the book would have been better if it had been wholly devoted either to the autobiographical record of Hawthorne's disillusionment with Brook Farm utopianism or to the melodramatic and legendary events which are conjectured to form the prehistory of Coverdale's friends."24

This view of Blithedale is implicit in Henry James' study of Hawthorne, and later criticism has really only rendered James' judgment more explicit. James believed that Blithedale fails to satisfy a certain promise of "novelistic" realism established by its earlier chapters, those most fully devoted to the Blithedale enterprise itself.
Essentially, he criticized the book for failing to provide the realistic observation and ironic study of social manners at which it initially seemed to aim. Of course, James was rather naively imposing his own values as a novelist on Hawthorne; he is obviously partial to "objects and incidents touched with the light of the profane world--the vulgar, many-coloured world of actuality, as distinguished from the crepuscular realm of the writer's own reveries." 25 Nevertheless, his complaint that Blithedale increasingly takes the reader "too much out of reality" has echoed down through later criticism, and stands at the head of the tradition that the book is an attempt at realistic social commentary, spoiled by Hawthorne's incurable fondness for allegory or romance:

The portion of the story that strikes me as least felicitous is that which deals with Priscilla, and with her mysterious relation to Zenobia--with her mesmeric gifts, her clairvoyance, her identity with the Veiled Lady, her divided subjection to Hollingsworth and Westervelt, and her numerous other graceful but fantastic properties--her Sibylline attributes,--as the author calls them. Hawthorne is rather too fond of Sibylline attributes--a taste of the same order as his disposition, to which I have already alluded, to talk about spheres and sympathies. As the action advances, in The Blithedale Romance, we get too much out of reality, and cease to feel beneath our feet the firm ground of an appeal to our vision of the world--our observation. I should have liked to see the story concern itself more with the little community in which its earlier scenes are laid, and avail itself of so excellent an opportunity for describing unhackneyed specimens of human nature. 26

Later critics have been more careful to assert that a realistic intent is inherent in the book itself, rather than a demand imposed on it by their own viewpoint, but they agree with James that the subversion of "realism" by "romance" is responsible for "a certain want of substance and cohesion in the latter portions of The Blithedale Romance." 27

In fact, they would consider this an understatement. No one has had
much patience with the mysterious goings-on among Zenobia, Westervelt, Moodie and Priscilla, and I will argue that this is one of the main reasons Coverdale's role in the plot has not been realized.

The simplest evidence that Blithedale does not really establish any such realistic focus as a study of manners or of utopianism is Hawthorne's straightforward disavowal of this in his Preface. Critics have tended to ignore or dismiss this disavowal, and Frederick Crews has even maintained that the Preface misleads us into expecting a realistic account of Brook Farm: "One is left with the impression that Blithedale will be little more than an improvisation upon the author's recollections of Brook Farm, despite Hawthorne's mild protest to the contrary."28 Actually, Hawthorne goes out of his way in the Preface to insist that his Blithedale is an imaginative reality and that he has only drawn on his memories of Brook Farm as a source of material for his imagination. He calls Blithedale "a faint and not very faithful shadowing of Brook Farm" and "begs it to be understood" that he has treated the community as a proper subject for "fictitious handling" (1). As for his supposed interest in criticizing the Brook Farm experiment, or utopianism or reform in general, "His whole treatment of the affair is altogether incidental to the main purpose of the Romance; nor does he put forward the slightest pretensions to illustrate a theory, or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise, in respect to Socialism" (1). In fact, Hawthorne implies that he chose to model his setting on Brook Farm for reasons precisely the opposite those assumed by his critics—as a means of discouraging the reader from attempting to view
his story as a realistic or autobiographical fiction. A utopian
community, he seems to have felt, was the fanciful sort of place,
remote from ordinary experience, that would provide the proper light
by which to recognize the story as a product of fantasy: "In short,
his present concern with the Socialist Community is merely 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" (1). In all these statements of what he had not intended
to do, there is no feebleness or irony in Hawthorne's tone. Whatever
dissimulation or irony the preface might contain is confined to
Hawthorne's exaggerated emphasis on his characters' and story's unreality
as "mere" daydreams, which is, as I have mentioned, common to all the
prefaces and reflects Hawthorne's uneasy awareness of the actual
urgency of his art's fantasy content. It seems cavalier to maintain
that Blithedale aims at doing precisely what its author emphasized it
was not intended to do, when the realist critics themselves acknowledge
that the book cannot be seen as a coherent whole from such a viewpoint.
Why not search elsewhere for "the main purpose of the Romance"?

Since the 1950's, this is what many critics have done. They
began to notice that a great deal of the narrative is taken up with
Coverdale's reflections about his role as an observer and investigator
of his friends' affairs; that he continually vacillates over the
propriety of his prying into their lives, sometimes elevating it to a
practically God-ordained mission, sometimes wishing he could get free
of his obsession with them, sometimes chiding himself for his cold-heartedness; that he anticipates that events will end in a "tragical catastrophe," yet seems a curiously inept prober, unable to solve the most elementary riddles of the plot; that he admittedly distorts the other characters, and invents or even dreams much of his tale, yet Hawthorne doesn't seem to provide us with any means of seeing through his falsifications to reality. In view of these peculiarities, it has not been an uncommon conclusion, that Hawthorne was simply inept at handling first-person narration. Richard Chase, one of those critics who insists that Blithedale belongs to "the satirical-utopian genre," as "a study of the manners of liberal intellectuals," a comic examination of reformism, argues that Hawthorne failed to sustain this "novelistic" purpose precisely because he got wrapped up in "the status of Coverdale as an observer," and became preoccupied with debating the morality of Coverdale's prying into other people's lives. However, a few critics have tried to view Coverdale's limitations as a narrator as the real focus of The Blithedale Romance, rather than an issue into which Hawthorne was sidetracked, and have argued, quite rightly, that this shift of perspective is necessary if we are to make any sense of the book.

These critics run aground because they are unable to question their assumption that the book chronicles an "objective reality" distinguishable from Coverdale's unreliable, fabricating point of view. Essentially, their argument is that Coverdale is an unreliable narrator. Although Coverdale invents large portions of his narrative, we are provided
with insight into his motives for doing so, and enabled to tell what
is real from what is invented. The finest statement of this approach
is Frederick Crews' "A New Reading of The Blithedale Romance."33
According to Crews, Coverdale fabricates entire episodes out of a
desire to idealize life into romance, but, because he vacillates between
this and an urge to cynically, satirically record his disillusionment
with reality, he is also, at times, a faithful reporter of what actually
happens. Because Coverdale increasingly succumbs to the temptation
to abandon literal truth for the sake of creating an "ideal" drama,
the book evolves two plots. Fortunately, "Hawthorne can give us glimpses
of the truth within the false narrative—and a symbolic means of distin-
guishing between them—so that we can see the two plots separating and
then converging."34 The problem with all this is that Crews' "symbolic
means of distinguishing between" the narrator's romance and reality
proves entirely inadequate in the application. Crews never clearly
specifies what aspects of the plot have been invented by Coverdale, and
which are "fact," nor what motives and feelings in each character
represent Coverdale's idealization of him. The real basis on which he
tries to separate the chapters and scenes which represent fact from
those created by Coverdale's imagination is simple: episodes that are
"realistic" and "probable," and of which Coverdale is an accurate
first-hand witness, belong to reality (examples, I suppose, would be
which are legendary or dream-like, or in which Coverdale expresses
doubts about the accuracy of his senses, or confesses to adding
fictional touches to what someone else has told him, belong to his romance ("Zenobia's Legend," "The Wood Path," "Fauntleroy").

Now, it can be readily shown that the novel requires us to grant the same ontological status to those scenes that seem most fanciful, and in which Coverdale's reliability appears most suspect, as to the more down-to-earth episodes. This is so because at those frequent points in the book at which Coverdale seems grossly unreliable, practically by his own admission falsifying or inventing his story, we are never provided with the means of questioning his version of what happens. On the contrary, the intimations which emerge in the "questionable" scenes as to what is going on, are invariably confirmed by the "realistic" scenes. Together they point towards one plot—and, although this plot remains to the end, at least for Coverdale, a mysterious matter of conjecture, and is never absolutely verified by the characters, the reader is not allowed to question it. Throughout the novel, Coverdale's dreams and intuitions, his dubious exercises of "fancy" in imagining scenes, or in retelling what he has seen or heard, correspond to what we can discern of "reality." To illustrate this crucial point, let us look briefly at Coverdale's overhearing of Westervelt's conversation with Zenobia in the forest, and the interview which Coverdale imagines between Zenobia and Old Moodie at the end of "Fauntleroy"—two points at which Crews assures us Coverdale's account is not to be trusted.35 In the first scene, Coverdale goes out of his way to state that he may not have correctly overheard the two, but invented what he thought he heard in the process of reflecting on the
matter: "I hardly could make out an intelligible sentence, on either side. What I seem to remember, I yet suspect may have been patched together by my fancy, in brooding over the matter, afterwards" (104). And again, "By long brooding over our recollections, we subtilize them into something akin to imaginary stuff, and hardly capable of being distinguished from it" (104-05). Yet despite Coverdale's own suspicion that the conversation was partially invented by his "fancy," its implication that Westervelt is trying to force Zenobia to betray Priscilla back into his power fits with what "Zenobia's Legend" already enables us to suspect about the Professor's relationship to Priscilla, and is, of course, confirmed by later events. Similarly, its implication that there was some kind of odious bond in the past between Westervelt and Zenobia not only seems to confirm Coverdale's earlier "clairvoyant" intuition that "Zenobia is a wife" (47), but is strengthened by what we afterwards learn, that in Zenobia's history "there were whispers of an attachment, and even a secret marriage, with a fascinating and accomplished, but unprincipled young man" (189).

The interview between Zenobia and Old Moodie is an even more blatant instance of Coverdale's appearance of unreliability. Coverdale as much as admits to literary invention: "The details of the interview that followed, being unknown to me—while, notwithstanding, it would be a pity quite to lose the picturesqueness of the situation—I shall attempt to sketch it, mainly from fancy, although with some general grounds of surmise in regard to the old man's feelings" (190). In addition, he tells us that in "recording" Moodie's narrative as a whole,
"my pen has perhaps allowed itself a trifle of romantic and legendary license, worthier of a small poet than of a grave biographer" (181). Yet here again, the event which this incident anticipates—Moodie's transference of his brother's inheritance from Zenobia to Priscilla—contributes to, and is consistent with, the understanding we derive from the seemingly more reliable scenes. For example, in "The Three Together," which Crews contrasts with Coverdale's fantasizing as "a real crisis between real people,"36 Zenobia hints that it was precisely this transfer of inheritance that motivated Hollingsworth to abandon herself in favor of Priscilla (216).

The breakdown of the effort to interpret Blithedale as a proto-Jamesian experiment in unreliable narration is already discernible in remarks of Crews' such as the following: "As Coverdale's readers, we shall never know what Moodie really said; but we can be sure that Coverdale has adapted his words to the purpose of his romance."37 This amounts to saying that we can somehow know Coverdale is distorting a reality, without being able to determine what that reality is or how it differs from Coverdale's falsification. The critical self-defeat which lies in store for all attempts to treat Coverdale as an unreliable narrator becomes even clearer in an essay by Kelley Griffith entitled "Form in The Blithedale Romance." Griffith puts forth an interpretation remarkably similar to Crews'. Like Crews, he argues that Blithedale contains two plots, a series of real events and a series of subjective ones taking place in Coverdale's imagination, and that in the course of the novel the two plots separate, and then converge
in Zenobia's death. The difference is that Coverdale dreams those "shadowy" episodes in the latter half of the book, rather than fabricates them as a literary activity. The interesting thing about Griffith's essay is that he does not pretend to find any means by which we can discern what actually happens while Coverdale is dreaming:

The episodes in the dream sequence, therefore, are a stream-of-consciousness, dream mirror of the events in the first half of the book. But because they bring the Priscilla-Hollingsworth-Zenobia relationship to a crisis, they are also reflections of facts that Coverdale has found out in "waking moments" since the first half, facts that Coverdale chooses to leave hazy but which have enough significance to bring on the catastrophe that ends the book. The reader, of course, can never know specifically what these facts are because we see them only through the distorted medium of Coverdale's dreams.

This leaves us with a narrator who is unreliable with a vengeance; for reasons unexplained, he successfully obscures half the plot of the novel. Griffith is also at odds to explain the significance of Coverdale's dreaming. He says it has "allegorical significance," but doesn't elaborate; he treats it, somewhat similarly to Crews, as an effort by Coverdale to "shift events in his mind until he can settle on an arrangement satisfactory to himself," but also speaks of it as an involuntary plunge into mental chaos.

Predictably, the failure to make sense out of Coverdale as a conventionally, though radically, unreliable narrator, and the breakdown of the ontological assumption on which this approach was based—that somewhere in the novel there is an "objective reality" distinguishable from Coverdale's point of view—has led critics to the conclusion which they had originally set out to disprove—that
Coverdale's shortcomings as a narrator belong to Hawthorne himself. Crews epitomizes this reversion to the charge of incoherence in his newer reading of *Blithedale* in *The Sins of the Fathers*. A look at what Crews says about *Blithedale* in this book will bring out a point which I want to emphasize: that by and large, psychoanalytic interpretation of Hawthorne has thus far served only to reiterate traditional judgments. In *The Sins of the Fathers* Crews simply restates the long-standing view that Hawthorne's romances steadily deteriorate, and puts forth his theory that Hawthorne suffered from an oedipal obsession as a means of explaining this failure. Obviously, however, a psychoanalytic theory about an author does not excuse a critic from demonstrating that incoherence is in fact apparent in that author's characterization, plot, thematic structure, and point of view. As I have perhaps already implied, Crews' attempt to do this in the case of *Blithedale* rests on a critical presupposition about point of view that has nothing to do with psychoanalysis. This presupposition is that Hawthorne can not be ironically detached from Coverdale's hazy, vacillating, distorting treatment of his story, because he does not enable the reader to perceive a clear-cut reality behind Coverdale's fantasizing. Coupled with this is the assumption that Hawthorne was trying to write a realistic fiction, that he wanted to establish an objective reality, a "literal plot," independent of Coverdale's perspective: "as most critics have chosen to emphasize, the book is Hawthorne's *apologia* for leaving Brook Farm and scorning its visionary ideals. I am certainly willing to believe that this was
an important part of his intentions when he began writing . . . 42

crews thus sees hawthorne as setting out to write a realistic novel
satirizing brook farm utopianism, but becoming helplessly embroiled
in the secret, obsessive meaning of his material, its "private
symbolism," and attempting to salvage the book by attributing his
own distortion of its "literal plot" to his narrator. 43

the insistence that somewhere in the blithedale romance are the
remnants of a "literal plot," a reality separate from coverdale's
fantasies, is as critically self-defeating in the sins of the fathers
as it was in "a new reading." this is best seen in crews' view of
the significance of zenobia's death. in both interpretations, crews
sees the recovery of zenobia's body as a brutal and shocking awakening
to reality which makes coverdale "profoundly ashamed" of his fantasies. 44

yet in the sins of the fathers crews recognizes, quite accurately,
that zenobia's death corresponds to coverdale's secret wishes. he
observes that coverdale's "fantasies become at once more destructive
and more literary as he is continually rebuffed," 45 and glimpses the
covert motivation behind coverdale's longing for a catastrophe:
"it seems plausible to assume that one component of his feeling toward
zenobia—namely, the anxiety that has made the pale priscilla a safer
object of desire—has found the thought of her removal advantageous.
or we could surmise, with equal likelihood, that it is hollingsworth,
his rival for the affection of both women, against whom coverdale's
aggressive prophecies have been intended." 46 eventually, crews
admits that in zenobia's death reality and fantasy have somehow merged;
it is "the conjunction of a factual event with the worst sadistic fantasy." The midnight probing for Zenobia's corpse which Crews praises for its vivid, stark, unaffected realism, is a product of Coverdale's repressed wishes.

In fact, Crews recognizes all along that what happens in Blithedale somehow reflects the "secret inclination" of Coverdale's mind. In the earlier essay he says, "Clearly, there is a direct relationship between the workings of Coverdale's imagination and the tale he asks us to believe." He is even more emphatic in The Sins of the Fathers: "Hawthorne and Coverdale have virtually begged us to see the story of Coverdale's friends—not just his attitude toward it, but the bare facts of the story itself—as indicative of the inmost tendency of his mind." Crews' problem is his inability to conceive that this ontological otherworld, in which reality corresponds to a character's fantasies, could be the medium of a controlled narrative form. For him, the indistinguishability of Coverdale's fantasies from reality only reinforces the conclusion that Hawthorne is out of control, projecting his own obsessions onto reality through his narrator. It is the central contention of this thesis that a fictional world in which there is neither any distinction between "subjective" and "objective" reality, nor any attempt or intention of one, permits, as much as a conventional reality, a controlled and detached examination of the consciousness through which we view that world. That the world made accessible to us through Coverdale's mind consistently reflects his covert obsessions, anxieties, and wishes by no means prevents us from recognizing the
Ironic relationship of his conscious self to his repressed self, his inability to acknowledge his actual feelings, the subtle strategies by which he hastens the fulfillment of his melodrama, or, finally, the self-destructiveness of his repression. On the contrary, Blithedale’s combination of this fusion of fantasy and reality with first-person narration was a technical discovery that vastly expanded the psychological depth of Hawthorne’s fiction, and brought its psychological content into closer, less metaphorical relationship to the self.

However, Hawthorne had made use of a fusion of fantasy and reality before. In an essay entitled "How Ambiguous Is Hawthorne?" H. J. Lang notes that in some of his tales Hawthorne has "made it impossible to separate the artfully mixed planes of reality and dream."51 Lang points out that critics have all too often been misled into trying to resolve these tales’ ontological ambiguity—for example, debating whether Goodman Brown "really" attended a witches’ Sabbath, or "only" dreamed that he did. These are meaningless exercises, because the ambiguity is unresolvable. Our concern in reading these tales should not be to search out clues that will prove that what happens is real or dreamed, because Hawthorne has been careful not to provide any such conclusive evidence. "These stories are not detective stories; the physical detail may deceive."52 Rather, the focus of the story is how the hero’s experience affects and reveals his psychology, and the story is quite unambiguous about this. Brown ends up a morbidly suspicious man, condemning everyone for hypocrisy and secret sin,
because, quite apart from the question of whether his experience was in fact real, he never considers that it might not have been, and puts more faith in it than it warrants. Critics who draw conclusions from the story about Hawthorne's sense of the universality of hidden sin are falling into the same error as Brown himself, and attributing Brown's neurosis to Hawthorne. Similarly, in reading The Blithedale Romance, our critical problem is not the impossible one of separating Coverdale's fantasies from reality, because the two coincide; instead, we should concentrate on how the story's peculiar reality reveals the psychology of its narrator. Because reality responds plastically to the pressures of the artist's obsessions, anxieties, and desires--"Human character was but soft wax in his hands" (198)--the novel is capable of a much fuller and more intimate revelation of his self-deceitful mentality, through the contrast between the drama he creates and his announced feelings towards it, than it would have been had it adhered to conventions of realism. Unfortunately, critics continue to approach the plot as material for detective work, trying to decide what is real and what is dreamed or invented by Coverdale, or insisting on hard facts to clear up the mysteries of the characters' backgrounds and actions. In Blithedale the most obliquely suggested event has the status of a fact, because it, no more nor less than the seemingly more "solid" episodes, is a reflection of Coverdale's psychology. As we will see, Coverdale himself adopts the role of detective, precisely in order to avoid recognizing the subjective status of the reality he pretends to investigate.
As a first step in substantiating that *The Blithedale Romance* has this unusual form, let us look at that part of the book which critics have long believed to represent Hawthorne’s abortive effort to write a realistic novel of social criticism: the early chapters dealing largely with Coverdale’s attitude toward the Blithedale enterprise. It has often been pointed out that Coverdale cannot make up his mind over how he should feel about the affair, and Crews attributes this vacillation, like all vacillation in the book, to Hawthorne himself. This assumption is unjustified, in that Coverdale’s alternation between satire and enthusiasm in his reflections on Blithedale’s ideals is related to the fantasy-significance with which he has invested the enterprise from the very start. Coverdale treats Blithedale, and his involvement with it, as mock-heroic ventures:

"As we threaded the streets, I remember 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" (11). He is acutely conscious that "the greatest obstacle to being heroic, is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one’s self a fool" (10). Thus his thoughts on Blithedale continually revolve around efforts to reassure himself that, if he has betrayed a foolish optimism, his was a commendable sort of foolishness. "Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies, that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world’s destiny" (11). Blithedale’s purpose was "a generous one,
certainly, and absurd, no doubt, in full proportion with its gen-
rosity" (19)—yet, Coverdale insists, "let us take to ourselves no
shame" (20). "In my own behalf, I rejoice that I could once think
better of the world's improvability than it deserved. It is a
mistake into which men seldom fall twice, in a lifetime; or, if so,
the rarer and higher is the nature that can thus magnanimously
persist in error" (20). I think it can be shown that Coverdale persists
in affirming his devotion to ideals which he believes from the start
can never be realized because he must unconsciously resist recognizing
the real sources of his disbelief in people's ability to replace pride
with "familiar love" (19). These, in turn, are related to the personal
meanings which he attaches to "the blessed state of brotherhood and
sisterhood, at which we aimed" (13).

Quite early, a substratum emerges in Coverdale's idea of Blithedale;
it is a place where dreams can be realized: "Yet, after all, let us
acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow one's day-dream
to its natural consummation, although, if the vision have been worth
the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a
failure" (10-11). By "day-dream," Coverdale means the ideal of
reforming society; yet it becomes increasingly obvious that Coverdale's
notion of Blithedale as an opportunity to indulge in dreams involves
the emergence of repressed fantasies. For example, in the chapter
"A Knot of Dreamers" most of the dreaming consists of Coverdale's
spontaneous sexual reveries upon Zenobia—the fortunate glimpse of
white shoulder which she leaves exposed, her hot-house flower, and
finally, his vision "of that fine, perfectly developed figure, in Eve's earliest garment" (17). In such a context, it becomes clear that Coverdale's conscious view of Blithedale as an impractical, visionary enterprise is being infiltrated by a covert awareness that its new social order encourages the emergence of visions of a less idealistic sort, which are usually forbidden: "If ever men might lawfully dream awake, and give utterance to their wildest visions, without dread of laughter or scorn on the part of the audience--yes, and speak of earthly happiness, for themselves and mankind, as an object to be hopefully striven for, and probably attained--we, who made that little semi-circle round the blazing fire, were those very men" (19). Coverdale's mental picture of Zenobia as a naked "Eve" is conjured up by the imagery with which the Blithedalers adorn their enterprise. Blithedale is a "scheme for beginning the life of Paradise anew" (9). However, Coverdale takes this metaphor of regeneration more literally than the others, for which Zenobia playfully ridicules him (16-17). The atmosphere of literary pastoralism which he casts over Blithedale serves to dampen the anxiety caused by its sexual possibilities as a new Eden--a discomfort apparent in his reaction to his image of Zenobia. Thus Blithedale's fantasy-significance for Coverdale becomes dual; he likes to idealize it as a modern Arcadia, a picturesque, poetical sort of game in which adults can regress to make-believe. Yet despite this view of the affair as a childish fantasy, Coverdale is acutely conscious that the throwing off of conventional social status and manners offers exciting, but also alarming, possibilities of greater sexual freedom.
When he first arrives at the farmhouse and is introduced to the women, he hints at a sexual discomfort in the new situation which may reflect his own: they were "smiling most hospitably, but looking rather awkward withal, as not well knowing what was to be their position in our new arrangement of the world" (13). Later, in discussing the threat of Priscilla's falling in love with Hollingsworth, Coverdale is explicit about utopia affording something of an opportunity for a sexual free-for-all, even though it seems to encourage more gentle pastoral feelings, "the soft affections of the Golden Age":

There was the more danger of this, inasmuch as the footing, on which we all associated at Blithedale, was widely different from that of conventional society. While inclining us to the soft affections of the Golden Age, it seemed to authorize any individual, of either sex, to fall in love with any other, regardless of what would elsewhere be judged suitable and prudent. Accordingly, the tender passion was very rife among us, in various degrees of mildness or virulence . . . . (72)

For Coverdale, this removal from conventional sexual boundaries facilitates the projection of his sexual fantasies onto reality. The language of Coverdale's reveries about Blithedale suggests that his ideals of it are being unconsciously submerged in a private world of sexual dream. In the chapters "Blithedale" and "A Knot of Dreamers," it has often been noticed that there is a steady counterpoint of images of warmth and cold: Coverdale's "cozy pair of bachelor-rooms—with a good fire burning in the grate" (10), versus the snowstorm; the cheerfulness and vividness of the hearth fire in the old farmhouse, versus its "chill mockery" in the memory of a "frosty bachelor" (9); Zenobia's "certain warm and rich characteristic" (17), and the lawful daydreams of those "who made that little semi-circle round the blazing fire" (19),
versus "the cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warm us back within the boundaries of ordinary life" (18). The contrast between warm, pleasurable dreams and "cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms" urging a return to lawful limits is clearly suggestive of a conflict between fantasy and repression. Coverdale is peculiarly attracted to places of enclosed warmth, whereas for him the storm "seemed to have arisen for our especial behoof" as "a symbol" of inhibiting phantoms (18). Reality begins to reflect or "symbolize" Coverdale's psychological states.

Certain words and images seem to have particular psychological significance for Coverdale, and their repetition in different contexts interrelates his ideals of Blithedale and his life in town as different manifestations of a singularly ambivalent state of sexual fantasy and anxiety. Coverdale's sexual reveries continually evoke ideas of warmth and luxuriousness, and hints of excess:

But it was fortunate for us, on that wintry eve of our untried life, to enjoy the warm and radiant luxury of a somewhat too abundant fire. If it served no other purpose, it made the men look so full of youth, warm blood, and hope, and the women—such of them, at least, as were anywise convertible by its magic—so very beautiful, that I would cheerfully have spent my last dollar to prolong the blaze. As for Zenobia, there was a glow in her cheeks that made me think of Pandora, fresh from Vulcan's workshop, and full of the celestial warmth by dint of which he had tempered and moulded her. (23-24)

Coverdale uses virtually the same expressions to describe Zenobia.

He speaks not only of her "certain warm and rich characteristic," but of "the pride and pomp, which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's
character" (15) and her "bloom, health, and vigor, which she possessed in such overflow" (16). In Hawthorne such phrases almost always connote an enticing but also unsettling excess of sexuality—a discomfort apparent in Coverdale's hedging over whether these qualities are more desirable than "softness and delicacy." They are "preferable—by way of variety, at least" (15-16). Coverdale attempts to subdue the anxiety implicit in his fantasies by giving them a poetic, literary tinge, as when he compares Zenobia to a figure out of classical mythology in the above passage. Coverdale's penchant for sublimating sexual revery is discernible in his descriptions of his bachelor life in town. It is an isolated, passive, and genteelly hedonistic existence; the first chapter leaves Coverdale meditating in front of his fire, cigar and sherry in hand. Coverdale is strongly attracted to the security of this state, as opposed to the anxiety aroused by contact with Zenobia. At Blithedale he nostalgically recalls "that sweet, bewitching, enervating indolence, which is better, after all, than most of the enjoyments within mortal grasp" (19). However, there are indications that this genteel, dreamy life, appropriate to the "enwombed bachelor," is infected with the same "unhealthily" explicit and intense sexual fantasy as aroused by Zenobia: "The truth was, the hot-house warmth of a town-residence, and the luxurious life in which I indulged myself, had taken much of the pith out of my physical system" (40). This almost seems to describe the traditional belief in the physical harm of masturbation. Again, it is the recurrent patterns in Coverdale's language that suggest its underlying sexual implications; besides the
ideas of warmth and luxuriousness, the notion of his bachelor apartment as a "hot-house" immediately recalls Coverdale's sexual fetish, Zenobia's "hot-house flower" (15, 45).

Coverdale's fantasies about this flower, like the feelings he associates with the fire and the storm, provide a good example of how, very early in *Blithedale*, reality takes on the colouring of the narrator's obsessions. Coverdale is struck by the peculiarity that although Zenobia changes her flower every day, each one has the same essential character:

I noticed—and wondered how Zenobia contrived it—that she had always a new flower in her hair. And still it was a hot-house flower—an outlandish flower—a flower of the tropics, such as appeared to have sprung passionately out of a soil, the very weeds of which would be fervid and spicy. Unlike as was the flower of each successive day to the preceding one, it yet so assimilated its richness to the rich beauty of the woman, that I thought it the only flower fit to be worn. (44-45)

Obviously, it is irrelevant to ask how Zenobia manages to obtain these tropical flowers. We have entered a world in which things are real by virtue of their psychological meanings. This is the world of all Hawthorne's fiction, but in *The Blithedale Romance* there is a difference: the psychological imagery refers specifically and directly to the mentality of a single character, rather than to some vague region between the several characters and an abstract, omniscient consciousness. Just as Zenobia's sexual "luxuriousness" is equally a fact about her character and a reflection of the bent of Coverdale's imagination, the consistent yet ever-changing quality of her flower reflects a pattern in Coverdale's mind—the rhythm of fantasy, innumerable thoughts and images revolving endlessly around an unchanging obsession: "Fertina-
ciously the thought—Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!—irresistibly that thought drove out all other conclusions, as often as my mind reverted to the subject" (47). Coverdale falls into a similar state on the night of his arrival: "The night proved a feverish one. During the greater part of it, I was in that vilest of states when a fixed idea remains in the mind, like the nail in Sisera's brain, while innumerable other ideas go and come, and flutter to-and-fro, combing constant transition with intolerable sameness" (38).

Reality in The Blithedale Romance quickly becomes projective of the tension between Blithedale as a literary, pastoral, "ideal" adventure, and the "feverish fantasies" (45) aroused by Zenobia—the two sides of Blithedale as Arcadia and as Eden. Coverdale's ambivalence between these two groups of images is a conflict between genteel, sublimated fantasy and fantasy which is desublimated and explicitly sexual—a tension we have observed in Coverdale's previous life in town, and which also appears in the contrast between Zenobia and Priscilla. What is not involved is any contrast between fantasy and "reality." Crews would have it that Zenobia is "the implicit reproach to all escapism in The Blithedale Romance"; she represents "mature sexual challenge."55 This is quite accurate as regards her sexual significance, but it carries the misleading implication that she has some kind of absolute reality as a symbol of sexual truth, uncoloured by, and antithetical to, Coverdale's fantasizing. Actually, Zenobia's
character and appearance are associated throughout the book with art, artificiality, and especially stage-acting, as if Coverdale must place an "aesthetic distance" between himself and the emotions she inspires, or divorce her sexuality from her humanity (which is also evident in his fetishistic obsession with her flower). Here again, though, it is impossible to distinguish what is "real" in her character from what is projected onto her by Coverdale. We can see this in the passage which Crews takes as indicating Zenobia as a representative of sexual realism. Noticing that her flower has faded, Zenobia throws it away on the floor.

The action seemed proper to her character; although, methought, it would still more have befitted the bounteous nature of this beautiful woman to scatter fresh flowers from her hand, and to revive faded ones by her touch. Nevertheless—it was a singular, but irresistible effect—the presence of Zenobia caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia, in which we grown-up men and women were making a play-day of the years that were given us to live in. (21)

Although Zenobia does not gratify the pastoral fantasy of scattering flowers, she does create an "effect," in the manner of an actress. Furthermore, she has not interrupted a pseudopastoral scene, but such down-to-earth matters as a discussion of the economic plans of the community, and Coverdale's reflections on the hostility between the community and society, a "dawning idea . . . driven back into my inner consciousness by the entrance of Zenobia" (21). Clearly Zenobia, with her somewhat theatrical gesture, contributes to and partakes of Blithedale's make-believe. Coverdale later singles her out as an actress in the pastoral when he admits to Hollingsworth that he has
nothing to do in life but "play a part, with Zenobia and the rest of
the amateurs, in our pastoral" (43). If she frustrates Coverdale's
milder Arcadian fantasies, it is because Coverdale has cast her into a
sexual role antithetical to Blithedale's ideal of brotherhood.

We are now in a position to see that Coverdale's entire ambivalent
attitude toward Blithedale is a projection of an inner conflict of
sexual impulses; he successfully turns reality into a "private theatre"
(70) peopled with projections of his own sublimations, anxieties, and
desires. Coverdale, we have noticed, assumes from the start that
Blithedale must fail. Its vision, like all worthwhile visions, "is
certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure" (11).
This preconclusion is related to the actual meaning for Coverdale of
"the blessed state of brotherhood and sisterhood"—an attempt at
regression to childhood innocence. Coverdale is attracted to this,
but largely because the innocence is, in his case, only apparent; he
can spice the pastoral with still safely poetic fantasies about "Eve's
bower" (10) and so on. However, Blithedale's social organization
actually affords greater sexual freedom, and Coverdale's fantasies
hardly need an invitation. The threat to his "idealism" is really
internal, but here, as throughout the book, Coverdale projects
threatening aspects of himself onto the other characters. In his
eyes, Zenobia becomes Blithedale's nemesis. Eve and Pandora, to whom
he compares her, were both responsible for bringing sin and evil into
the world. Coverdale immediately associates Zenobia's character with
qualities antithetical to Blithedale's ideals. Although "we had
divorced ourselves from Pride, and were striving to supply its place with familiar love" (19), "our Zenobia—however humble looked her new philosophy—had as much native pride as any queen would have known what to do with" (13). She is "imperial" (13) and "haughty" (29); 
"pride and pomp . . . had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character" (15); she is most alive when there is "a spice of bitter feeling" (16). That these qualities, obviously related to Zenobia's sexual forcefulness, are incompatible with "familiar love," communitarian life, and the dissolution of class distinctions, is confirmed in action quite soon. However, these same actions confirm that Coverdale is also swayed by class prejudices, pride, and callousness, and that he has projected his own unsavory feelings onto Zenobia. For example, at the supper-table Coverdale senses the condescension of "we people of superior cultivation and refinement" (24) towards Silas Foster and his family, and especially includes Zenobia as being conscious of social superiority:

"Neither did I refrain from questioning, in secret, whether some of us—and Zenobia among the rest—would so quietly have taken our places among these good people, save for the cherished consciousness that it was not by necessity, but choice. Though we saw fit to drink our tea out of earthen cups to-night, and in earthen company, it was at our own option to use pictured porcelain and handle silver forks again, tomorrow. (24)

Zenobia had insisted that their life as "brethren and sisters" not begin until the next day (16), and she treats the meal as a regal celebration: "After this one supper, you may drink butter-milk, if you please. To-night, we will quaff this nectar, which, I assure you, could not be bought with gold" (24). Blithedale's real attraction is
as a paradise for upper-class intellectuals, where they can play at being peasants or, if they prefer, queens. However, Coverdale also chides himself "for secretly putting weight upon some imaginary social advantage" (25), and in fact we have heard him talk, not entirely ironically, about "the swinish multitude" and "the outside barbarians" (20). Priscilla's cold reception by both Zenobia and Coverdale also suggests a psychological affinity between them. The treatment the girl receives is explicitly viewed as a presage of the success or failure of Blithedale's ideals. Hollingsworth says, "As we do by this friendless girl, so shall we prosper" (30). The incident exposes Blithedale as a masquerade of brotherhood and benevolence; the "cheerful party" resents its comfortable atmosphere being broken by a real demand for help and sympathy. Coverdale guiltily reflects, "Perhaps it showed the iron substance of my heart, that I could not help smiling at this odd scene of unknown and unaccountable calamity, into which our cheerful party had been entrapped, without the liberty of choosing whether to sympathize or no. Hollingsworth's behaviour was certainly a great deal more creditable than mine" (29-30). Yet just before Hollingsworth knocked, and received no answer, Coverdale had been pompously proclaiming that "these ruddy window-panes cannot fail to cheer the hearts of all that look at them. Are they not warm and bright with the beacon-fire which we have kindled for humanity?" (25). Coverdale's suppositions as to why no one answers are interesting: "Whether to enjoy a dramatic suspense, or that we were selfishly contrasting our own comfort with the chill and dreary situation of the unknown person at the threshold" (25).
Again, Coverdale associates Blithedale with the cultivation of play-acting and theatrical effect, and the enjoyment of sheltered and secure sensual comfort. This reflects his own love of polite self-indulgence—a perfect atmosphere for discreetly sublimated fantasy. Zenobia's hostility to Priscilla stems from more direct sexual feelings. A part—probably a large part—of her reasons for coming to Blithedale is that it affords an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Hollingsworth, whom she has heard lecture, and who "moved me more deeply than I think myself capable of being moved" (21). This is obviously truer than she is aware: "What a voice he has! And what a man he is! Yet not so much an intellectual man, I should say, as a great heart" (21). Although she is probably not conscious of it, Zenobia is jealous of Hollingsworth's showing up with a suspected "protégé" (29). Coverdale, whose own interest in Blithedale is based on sexual fantasy, quickly marks Zenobia as the sexual force that will betray Blithedale's ostensible ideals and, along with it, disrupt the kind of "poetic" fantasy that idealism encourages. The melodrama is as yet unplanned, but from Priscilla's first appearance Zenobia shapes up as the villainess.

It is significant that the two characters who accept Priscilla unquestioningly, Hollingsworth and Silas Foster, are both lower-class and distinctly lack Coverdale's and Zenobia's social refinement. More important, however, is the impression we get of Hollingsworth. Critics have not paid very close attention to Hollingsworth's character as it comes across in the early pages of the book. In Hollingsworth's reproach to Zenobia and exhortation of the community to wholeheartedly
accept Priscilla, there is nothing to indicate that he is anything other than the epitome of the very spirit of brotherhood and compassion that Blithedale is supposed to foster. As such, his behavior is threatening to Zenobia and Coverdale alike. He ignores Zenobia in his fatherly concern for Priscilla, and he inflicts Coverdale with shame by exposing the masquerade of benevolence: "Hollingsworth's behavior was certainly a great deal more creditable than mine" (30). Yet even before Hollingsworth's appearance it is clear that Coverdale and Zenobia are both repulsed by Hollingsworth's philanthropy because it is an inhibiting force against their pastoral and sexual fantasies. His scheme for the reformation of criminals is too urgent and close to reality to be aesthetically pleasing, and to fit nicely into a counterfeit Arcadia. Zenobia calls it "a grimy, unbeautiful, and positively hopeless object" (21), which she wishes he would give up "as a mere matter of taste" (22). In confiding to each other that neither of them can stand philanthropists, Coverdale and Zenobia betray their real interest in Blithedale--as a place where "tolerably virtuous and comfortable individuals, like ourselves" (22) can retreat from the ugliness of the outside world into self-indulgent fantasy. Both seem immersed in the sexual possibilities of the situation. Their talk about Hollingsworth ends with a remarkable exchange of innuendos: "'If we wish to keep him with us, we must systematically commit at least one crime apiece! Mere peccadillos will not satisfy him.' Zenobia turned, sidelong, a strange kind of a glance upon me; but, before I could make out what it meant, we had entered the kitchen . . . " (22). Implicitly, this
connects sexual involvement with crime, and this, in fact, is what it entails for Coverdale. He turns the capacity for fierce passion and jealousy which we can sense in Zenobia's regal and haughty spirit into the destructive principle that negates Blithedale's ideals... Her overbearing sexual aggressiveness and energy are incompatible with brotherly love. On the other hand, brotherly love seems to involve a sublimation of sexuality—witness the rugged, virile Hollingsworth bestowing fatherly attentions on the child-like Priscilla. And both alike—Zenobia's intense sexuality and Hollingsworth's equally intense compassion and moral righteousness—threaten Coverdale with the exposure of aspects of himself he would rather repress—his sexual desires and anxieties, and his cold-heartedness. In the next chapter I will argue that the characters and destinies of Zenobia and Hollingsworth become transparently projective responses, on Coverdale's part, to these threats.

First, however, it would be useful to summarize what we are justified in concluding thus far. The Blithedale Romance is a psychological novel. Although it is concerned with exploring why human brotherhood is an unattainable goal, it seeks an answer not in an analysis of manners or of social theory, but in the actual, covert significance which the Blithedale enterprise and its ideals has for the characters, and in the psychological meanings which the narrator attaches to the characters. Coverdale's relationship to Blithedale and its people is almost immediately established as being based on an intricate but quite consistent and accessible logic of sexual fantasy. The book is structured to disclose the ironic relationship between
Coverdale's ostensible concern with Blithedale's ideals and his actual absorption in the adventure's conflicting sexual meanings as Arcadia and Eden, his anxious fascination with Zenobia, and his consciousness of Hollingsworth as a moralistic, guilt-inflicting, yet genuinely compassionate man. The fantasy-significance which each of these characters begins to acquire for Coverdale is indistinguishable from his reality. Vaguely, Coverdale's fantasies assume a dramatic form; Zenobia's sexual power is the enemy of Blithedale's ideals, and of the idealized, literary, sheltered fantasy which Coverdale hopes to enjoy. We are required to interpret character and setting as projected images of Coverdale's mentality; soon we must add plot to this as well. The patterns in Coverdale's language and imagery constantly direct our attention away from the literal interest of his story to a consciousness of his narrative as a reflection of his psychology. Coverdale's retrospective relationship to his story also helps establish this "egocentric" focus. We are aware not only that Blithedale will turn out to be an "exploded scheme" (9), but that Coverdale is a confirmed, "frosty bachelor" (9). This invites us to relate the causes of Blithedale's failure to the process by which Coverdale becomes enshrouded in his present cold listlessness and confirmed sexual failure. It directs our attention to the effects which the experience of the novel is having on the narrator.

I wish to quote one more passage, in order to show the consistency with which language and imagery are employed to trace Coverdale's vacillating attitude towards Blithedale to his sexual anxieties.
At the start of "A Crisis", Coverdale indulges in some half-satirical and flippant fantasies about the future of the community, such as how "in a century or two, we shall every one of us be mythical personages" (129)—and then tries to convince Hollingsworth that he really believes in Blithedale as a practical enterprise. If we wish to know why Coverdale finds it so difficult to admit to himself his actual disbelief in Blithedale's chances of success, we need only look at the metaphor which he uses to express his sense of life's unalterable sordidness:

"Altogether, by projecting our minds outward, we had imparted a show of novelty to existence, and contemplated it as hopefully as if the soil, beneath our feet, had not been fathom-deep with the dust of deluded generations, on every one of which, as on ourselves, the world had imposed itself as a hitherto unwedded bride" (128).
Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscillas
Coverdale's Drama as Projected Fantasy

I

As now should be apparent, my crucial point of departure from the corpus of Hawthorne criticism, especially my predecessors in psychoanalytic interpretation, comes in that area of critical theory—nebulous yet dogma-ridden, strewn with hidden tautologies and presuppositions—concerned with authorial "intention" and "detachment" and "consciousness." Crews and Abele both argue that in The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne failed to realize certain intentions because his characters had intense and secret obsessive meanings for him which he could not effectively confront and resolve by means of his literal story. The vacillation in Coverdale's opinion of Blithedale, himself, and the other characters; the increasing vagueness of events and Coverdale's ineffectuality as an investigator; the fantasy-significance of the plot, especially in its destruction of Zenobia and Hollingsworth; Coverdale's strangely literary, distorting, yet "clairvoyant" relationship to his friends and their affairs; and even the intricacy and subtlety of the book's psychological content, are all advanced as evidence that Hawthorne was unable to ignore, yet unable to cope with the personal meaning of his fiction. In Crews' view, Coverdale's ambivalent, distorting, ignorant and furtive relationship to his story indicates Hawthorne's own increasing evasiveness towards the psychological meaning of his plot. Now, my own position is that Hawthorne was more in control of his psychological
material than these critics believe, and that in *Elithedale* the exploration of this material as a compulsive and destructive motivation underlying artistic creativity can fairly be called the deliberate focus of the novel. However, it is necessary to make absolutely clear the grounds on which this matter of Hawthorne's intentions and control must be argued, if we are not to become embroiled in generalized assumptions or speculations about the relationship of the artist to the personal psychological content of his work. These grounds are textual. The transformation of Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla into actors in a sexual melodrama which has transparent fantasy-significance as a "defensive" response to anxieties which they are made to represent is demonstrably a function of Coverdale's psychology. Along with all of Coverdale's limitations as a narrator and observer, the novel's elements of fantasy-projection and wish-fulfillment can be shown to exist within the bounds of ironic characterization. On this textual evidence, we are justified in drawing the inference that in *Elithedale* Hawthorne was capable of the controlled and deliberate examination of the psychological content and functions of his art.

In this chapter we will look further into the psychological sources of Coverdale's anxiety towards Zenobia, in order to show that what happens to her in the course of the novel—not just her death alone, but her desperate pursuit of Hollingsworth and betrayal of Priscilla—has the logic of a revengeful and sadistic response to precisely the kind of anxiety she arouses in Coverdale. Similarly, we shall see that Hollingsworth's transformation from a man who strikes Coverdale as being
of godlike compassion (43, 71) into an inhuman monomaniac is a change that provides Coverdale with secret but nonetheless discernible gratifications, and his fate in the novel is appropriate to the intimidating meaning which he has for Coverdale. Yet at the same time Hollingsworth's narrowly-conceived character is a projection of aspects of Coverdale's repressed personality, and in this capacity he serves as Coverdale's instrument of revenge against Zenobia, for whose death he conveniently bears the guilt. If these correspondences between plot and characterization and the "inmost tendency" of Coverdale's mind indicated that Hawthorne was naively projecting his own anxieties and fantasies into his story through Coverdale, we could expect the text to be highly secretive about the process of fantasy-projection, and also about the nature of Coverdale's anxieties, in keeping with Hawthorne's supposedly increasing evasiveness towards the fantasy-content of his art. Actually, however, the text goes out of its way to reveal the sources of Coverdale's anxiety and to suggest that the melodramatic roles which the characters assume are of Coverdale's creation. Coverdale is overtly shown as regarding his "friends" as literary material, turning them into "characters... on my private theatre" (70). The parts which the characters enact are patently literary and explicitly theatrical. In the tradition of the Hawthornian persona, Coverdale treats his characters and story as art, even though they ostensibly belong to life; but in his case we are able to see the strategies of fantasy-projection underlying this relationship to his material. Similarly, the lead parts in Coverdale's drama are familiar Hawthornian types--
Zenobia is the "dark lady," Hollingsworth the obsessed idealist, the mad experimenter, and the unforgivable sinner. Whereas Crews treats these figures and the pattern of fantasy which he believes they represent as having an autonomous, deterministic status in Hawthorne's work—that is, they uncontrollably impose themselves on Hawthorne's material despite his intentions—Blithedale enables us to see that these types are in fact creations of the artist, in some cases projections of the artist, whose personalities and fates not only reflect his anxieties, but serve his psychological needs. In the next chapter we will explore the paradox of chaos versus control in Coverdale's relationship to his fantasy-drama, and also the ironic aspects of Coverdale's character—in other words, the deliberate self-images he adopts to prevent recognizing the actual nature of his involvement with his friends and its sordid and painful motivation. First, however, we must look at how Coverdale's fantasies exercise a creative, specifically literary power over the fates and even the personalities of his friends.

We have already seen that Coverdale is obsessed with a fascinating yet disturbing abundance of sexual power in Zenobia; however, in order to understand the anxiety she causes Coverdale, we must note that her sexual intensity absorbs certain conventionally masculine qualities. There is something large and coarse about her. "Her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have, or than they could afford to have, though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of Zenobia's entire development" (15). Her manner and
speech are "free" and "careless," "scoening the petty restraints which take the life and color out of other women's conversation" (17). Her laughter is "mellow, almost broad," "not in the least like an ordinary woman's laugh" (16). The very fullness of her sexuality violates accepted ideals of feminine beauty and decorum, namely "softness and delicacy" (15), and "gentleness, grace, modesty, and shyness" (17). She is open, forceful, and commanding. Altogether, her sexual power encompasses a "masculine" aggressiveness in flaunting woman's proper, subdued weakness and passivity.

Coverdale expresses more admiration than disapproval of these qualities, even though he hesitantly notes that "some fastidious persons" might hold a contrary opinion (15). However, it seems that what attracts Coverdale in these moments is the openness with which Zenobia casts about her spell:

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. One felt an influence breathing out of her, such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying—"Behold, here is a woman." (17)

When we come to Zenobia's feminism, the threatening force of her aggressive and rebellious personality for Coverdale reveals itself, even though he is at pains to convince himself and everyone else that he is in sympathy with her cause. Right from the start, Zenobia assumes a tone of leadership, and envisions a reversal of conventional sex roles: "By-and-by, perhaps, when our individual adaptations begin to develop themselves, it may be that some of us, who wear the petticoat,
will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!" (16). We get some idea of Coverdale's feelings on this point in a suggestive pass-at-arms sparked by Coverdale's contention that a woman is always happier than a man:

"How can she be happy, after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the substance of her whole life? A man has his choice of innumerable events."

"A woman, I suppose," answered I, "by constant repetition of her one event, may compensate for the lack of variety."

"Indeed!" said Zenobia. (60)

Zenobia almost certainly means marriage and childbirth, but Coverdale's reply is more suggestive of sexual intercourse. Either way, it is implied that Coverdale is hostile to Zenobia's attack on "the relation between the sexes" (44). He seems to want to confine women to a passive and purely sexual function, and this reflects his own self-doubt as a male. As is clear from his relationship to Priscilla, Coverdale cannot feel comfortable with any kind of real sexual relationship to a woman, or even mutually conscious feelings; he is at ease only with a woman who is sufficiently passive, naive, and indifferent to him to allow him to practice a secret, idealized and intellectualized voyeurism on her, which doesn't threaten to expose his inadequacy, and even affords a sense of power and superiority. Zenobia on the other hand is doubly threatening to Coverdale's shaky masculinity; she scorns feminine decorum and passivity by aggressively pursuing another man, and she combines this sexual aggressiveness with a rebellious aspiration towards a man's intellectual freedom, independence, and power.
We can sense Coverdale's defensiveness towards Zenobia's intellectuality and feminism in his disparagement of her literary work, which consists partly of "tracts in defence of the sex" (33). He hints that it is banal and plebian—"such literature goes everywhere" (33)—and that prettiness and sentimentality are faults "inevitable by literary ladies" (37). He is certain that "her poor little stories and tracts never half did justice to her intellect" (44), whose "natural tendency lay in another direction than towards literature" (15). When Coverdale describes what her proper place might be, it is clearly anything that will reveal her charms. She would make a good "stump-oratress" because she can "talk with so much vivacity as to add several gratuitous throbs to my pulse" (44). "The stage would have been her proper sphere; because the image of her form and face should have been multiplied all over the earth. It was wronging the rest of mankind, to retain her as the spectacle of only a few" (44). This desire to confine Zenobia to a sexual sphere is accompanied by an insinuation that her reforming zeal is a mere feminine whim: "she made no scruple of oversetting all human institutions, and scattering them as with a breeze from her fan" (44).²

In "Eliot's Pulpit" Coverdale goes so far as to reduce Zenobia's feminist ardour to an outlet for sexual agitation. When Zenobia decries that "if I live another year, I will lift up my own voice, in behalf of woman's wider liberty" (120), Coverdale smiles in a way suggestive to Zenobia of "a low tone of feeling, and shallow thought"; he senses that the liberty Zenobia seeks is actually sexual, the freedom to urge her passion on Hollingsworth. When she and Hollingsworth later walk off
together, arm-in-arm, Zenobia presses Hollingsworth's hand to her breasts in a gesture "sudden and full of passion" (124). In Coverdale's view, women are, after all, entirely wrapped up in their "one event"; they become feminists because of amorous problems:

What amused and puzzled me, was the fact, that women, however intellectually superior, so seldom disquiet themselves about the rights or wrongs of their sex, unless their own individual affections chance to lie in idleness, or to be ill at ease. They are not natural reformers, but become such by the pressure of exceptional misfortune. I could measure Zenobia's inward trouble, by the animosity with which she now took up the general quarrel of woman against man. (120-21)

By implication this, as much as Hollingsworth's rantings, makes sexual subordination to man woman's proper place. Hollingsworth is only repeating Coverdale when he says that women who seek independence are "poor, miserable, abortive creatures, who only dream of such things because they have missed woman's peculiar happiness" (123). In light of this, the rather silly fantasies by which Coverdale seeks to prove his sympathy with feminist demands can hardly be taken seriously as a genuine acquiescence in women's freeing themselves from sexual slavery.

It is customary to treat the irony of Zenobia's being undone by a desperate passion for a male supremacist like Hollingsworth as Hawthorne's satirical comment on feminism. This may or may not be true; but it is, in any case, irrelevant. There is every indication that the irony is Coverdale's. He professes himself amused by the discovery that militant feminism is a sublimation of sexual emotions, and Zenobia's fate seems perfectly calculated to gratify and assuage exactly the resentments and anxieties which she arouses in Coverdale. What better downfall for a proud, scornful woman, who excites yet intimidates him
with a too abundant and aggressive sexual power—a power linked to the rejection of male dominance—than to become entralled in a hopeless, desperate, and, in Coverdale’s eyes, criminal passion to a man who is transparently an image of wish-fulfillment for his timid, scorned, yet sexually obsessed “rival”—a profound, masculine, irresistible fellow who effortlessly conquers the lady’s heart, yet is completely immune to her sexual power. Hollingsworth enacts a sadistic revenge against Zenobia; by rejecting Zenobia after she has fallen for him, he reduces her to what is traditionally the ultimate female degradation. Yet all of the psychological motivation for her destruction is located in Coverdale, not Hollingsworth, who, it is insinuated, has only been interested in chasing after an inheritance, and is oblivious to how he has affected either woman’s heart. Coverdale’s motivation is contradictory—he resents being ignored by Zenobia in favor of Hollingsworth, yet all the while makes it clear that he is afraid of realistic sexual involvement, especially with so powerfully intimidating a woman as Zenobia. This, however, is the ambivalence we could expect from a man in whom sexual wishes are so inextricably entangled with sexual anxiety.

What happens, at bottom, is that masculinity becomes equivalent to sadism and repression. Out of his insecurity, Coverdale quickly feels Zenobia’s intense sexual power an emasculating threat, fused as it is with an aggressive and overbearing personality. Realistic sexual experience becomes emasculating, there is a retreat into fantasy, yet still the only secure object of sexual interest is, ironically, a woman who is desexed, consistently oblivious to him, and perfectly weak and passive. The repressive sexual ethic and subordination of woman which Coverdale
believes he opposes, actually protect him against his anxieties and exist to maintain male superiority. Thus it is not inappropriate in itself that Zenobia's rebellion against woman's position is an act of sexual aggressiveness, for it is precisely woman's sexual power that male-dominated society seeks to destroy. In order to maintain one's "masculinity"—that is, superiority and power over woman—Zenobia's sexual attraction must be resisted, and she must be punished for unleashing it. The character of Hollingsworth is a projection of this twisted logic—he combines overwhelming masculinity with an asexual mentality; all of his masculine energy is sublimated into his obsessive ideal.

Coverdale's resistance to Zenobia's sexuality as an intimidating, dominating power comes out strongly in their meeting in the elegant drawing room of her town residence. Coverdale sees Zenobia as trying to scorn him and overpower him by her sheer magnificence and voluptuousness. She uses her sexual power as an instrument of her hostility and contempt. Coverdale tries to resist with reflections that tinge her with something of the character of an expensive whore, but to no avail:

It cost me, I acknowledge, a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned against her, in my secret mind, and strove so to keep my footing. In the gorgeousness with which she had surrounded herself—in the redundancy of personal ornament, which the largeness of her physical nature and the rich type of her beauty caused to seem so suitable—I malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste.

But, the next instant, she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles. I saw how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased, and should do a thousand things that would have been ridiculous in the poor, thin, weakly-characters of other women. (164-65)
This moment of greatest hostility between Zenobia and Coverdale brings out the intimidating power for Coverdale of Zenobia's "passionate, luxurious" being, and "the largeness of her physical nature." Later in the scene Coverdale compares her to a "lioness" about to turn to bay (171)—an image of violent energy similar to the deadly "tiger-like character" of Cleopatra in The Marble Faun. Coverdale continues to be fascinated by Zenobia, but it is easy to see that his secret "masculine egotism" (123) feels safer with "the poor, thin, weakly characters of other women."

The representative of these other women is, of course, Priscilla, and a look at Coverdale's fond remarks about her reveals the sources of her charm—weakness, sexual immaturity, and naivety. Priscilla's childishness allows Coverdale to disguise sexual curiosity as paternalistic affection. Whereas Coverdale feels irritated and guilty over his "feverish fantasies" (45) about Zenobia, he can idealize his interest in Priscilla into an almost fatherly sentimentality: "it seemed as if we could see Nature shaping out a woman before our very eyes, and yet had only a more reverential sense of the mystery of a woman's soul and frame. Yesterday, her cheek was pale; to-day, it had a bloom. Priscilla's smile, like a baby's first one, was a wondrous novelty" (72-73).

Most of all, Coverdale is charmed by her weakness, clumsiness, and childishness: "But Priscilla's peculiar charm, in a foot-race, was the weakness and irregularity with which she ran" (73); "Her imperfections and short-comings affected me with a kind of playful pathos, which was as absolutely bewitching a sensation as ever I experienced" (73);
"we were all conscious of a charming weakness in the girl, and considered her not quite able to look after her own interests, or fight her battle with the world" (74). For Coverdale, this childishness spells sexual immaturity, and sexual immaturity means weakness—just as Zenobia's full-blown sexual maturity is a threatening power. Only in the child-woman can Coverdale contemplate "the mystery of a woman's soul and frame" without either his guilt or his anxieties being aroused. Her childish innocence ensures that she will remain a safely passive and unsuspecting object of his curiosity. In total contrast to Zenobia, Priscilla remains steadily unconscious of the state of her feelings. When Zenobia makes her passionate gesture to Hollingsworth at the end of "Eliot's Pulpit," Priscilla appears to Coverdale to magically droop and fade, but she tells him, "It is my heart, as you say, that makes me heavy; and I know not why. Just now, I felt very happy" (125). This naivety is just what Coverdale needs to pursue his "purely speculative" (48) interest in the secrets of womanhood. Coverdale metaphorically equates Priscilla's unconsciousness of her feelings with physical virginity, and his self-appointed task as prober of other people's hearts becomes a pseudo-sexual act, affording him in fantasy the power and control over woman that he cannot achieve realistically: "No doubt, it was a kind of sacrilege in me to attempt to come within her maidenly mystery. But... I could not resist the impulse to take just one peep beneath her folded petals" (125).

And here again, we can see that there is a correspondence between the character of Hollingsworth and Coverdale's secret desires and anxieties
towards the two women. Just as Hollingsworth's rejection of Zenobia
gratifies Coverdale's fear and resentment of her, Coverdale suspects
Hollingsworth of sexual intentions towards Priscilla which are
projections of his own interest in her. Hollingsworth, like Coverdale,
is paternalistic towards Priscilla, but Coverdale, in his own image, sees
sexual motives beneath this. The difference is that whereas Coverdale
wishes to keep Priscilla naive and innocent, as a perfect subject for
his prurience, he believes Hollingsworth threatens her with real sexual
experience: "But what if, while pressing out its fragrance, he should
 crush the tender rosebud in his grasp!" (79). The consistency and
elaborateness of Coverdale's sexual imagery is amazing. Priscilla is a
"rosebud" with "folded petals," whereas "Zenobia has lived, and loved!
There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed
rose!" (47). Coverdale expresses other fears of Priscilla's being
maimed by a strong, brutal touch; Hollingsworth's masculinity is
evidently callous or sadistic. Now, Coverdale's fear never materializes,
and it contradicts both Hollingsworth's tenderness towards Priscilla and
his repressed, asexual nature. However, in a way Hollingsworth does live
up to Coverdale's expectations, by consenting to Priscilla's betrayal back
into the hands of Westervelt, whose exploitation of her is, if anything,
prurient and sadistic. There is, finally, little difference between the
sexual cruelty Coverdale fears that Hollingsworth will exercise on
Priscilla, and the cold-hearted fanaticism that destroys Zenobia—both make
sense only as reflections of Coverdale's fear of women and desire for a
destructive power over them, whether it is the sexual power of a male
ogre or the callousness of a repressed idealist. And just as Coverdale sympathizes with Zenobia, he can see himself as engaged in a chivalric effort to "save Priscilla": "When a young girl comes within the sphere of such a man, she is as perilously situated as the maiden whom, in the old classical myths, the people used to expose to a dragon" (71).

We begin to discern Coverdale's unconscious strategy; by projecting his own impulse towards prurience and sadism into the other male characters, he gratifies his sexual anxieties at the same time that he represses the awareness of them in himself and forks the guilt of their fulfillment off on his projections. He can continue to indulge a covert, prurient fascination with Zenobia and Priscilla's "mystery," and all the while see himself as their champion, or at least sympathizer, against masculine cruelty and insensitivity.

Coverdale's final conversation with Zenobia, and his troubled thoughts about her death, further identify Coverdale's conflicting resentment and anxiety towards her, stemming from the ambivalent, attractive-repulsive nature of her power for him, as the motives behind her destruction. Coverdale's resentful sense of being excluded from the hearts of the women because Hollingsworth, "by some necromancy of his horrible injustice, seemed to have brought them both to his feet" (124), is a more consciously acceptable feeling than the sexual anxiety that secretly approves of Hollingsworth's cold-hearted exploitation of them. In their final talk, Zenobia is proud and imperious towards Coverdale, and contemptuous of her rival, yet she abases herself towards Hollingsworth, justifying his treatment of her and degrading herself
almost to a slut. Zenobia is obviously not "disenchanted; disenthralled" (218), as she insisted to Hollingsworth's face in the previous scene, judging from her reply to Coverdale's attack on the man:

"Hollingsworth has a heart of ice!" said I, bitterly. "He is a wretch!"

"Do him no wrong!" interrupted Zenobia, turning haughtily upon me. "Presume not to estimate a man like Hollingsworth! It was my fault, all along, and none of his. I see it now! He never sought me. Why should he seek me? What had I to offer him? A miserable, bruised, and battered heart, spoilt long before he met me! A life, too, hopelessly entangled with a villain's! He did well to cast me off. God be praised, he did it!" (225)

Although there is a surface reconciliation between Coverdale and Zenobia, this scene could only intensify Coverdale's resentment. For Zenobia, Coverdale is still the poetaster, the balladier, the timorous man in need of "a nurse to make your gruel" (227), and she remains proud, dominating, and intimidating towards him. True, she calls it a pity she did not set out to win Coverdale's heart instead, but adds that mere handsomeness in a man hasn't mattered to her since her girlhood, "when, for once, it turned my heart" (227)—a sexual slight to whatever male self-conceit Coverdale might have, and one carrying the ugly implication of a similarity in Zenobia's eyes between Coverdale and the hideous Westervelt. Her hand leaves "a lingering pressure," but only because Coverdale is her last link with Hollingsworth: "So intimately connected, as I had been, with perhaps the only man in whom she was ever truly interested, Zenobia looked on me as the representative of all the past, and was conscious that, in bidding me adieu, she likewise took final leave of Hollingsworth" (228).
Is it any wonder that Coverdale promptly lies down and dreams a dream leading up to a "tragical catastrophe" (228)? The work of his "rival's" heart of ice is so perfect a gratification of his own resentment and anxiety that we could conclude without the dream, that somehow Coverdale has caused Zenobia's death. Zenobia's slighting of him in favor of Hollingsworth, and her sexual intimidation of him, are both threats to his sorely emaciated male egotism. It is not surprising then, that the recovery of Zenobia's body, in which Hollingsworth penetrates her breast with a hooked pole, is a fantasy of sexual sadism: "Hollingsworth at first sat motionless, with the hooked-pole elevated in the air. But, by-and-by, with a nervous and jerky movement, he began to plunge it into the blackness that upbore us, setting his teeth, and making precisely such thrusts, methought, as if he were stabbing at a deadly enemy" (233). Again, the sexual motivation of this fantasy, the urge to assert a brutal revengeful power over the woman, belongs to Coverdale, and the advantage of fantasy-projection is that Hollingsworth bears the guilt. Throughout the chapter, Coverdale is quick to notice the signs of nervousness and fear in Hollingsworth, and quick to capitalize with a moral on the wound he gives Zenobia's body, near the heart (235). Nevertheless, Coverdale's sympathy with Zenobia is genuine; his repressed anxieties fulfill themselves despite his conscious feelings and will. Characteristically, Coverdale's repressed, compulsive motives are concealed beneath benevolent and idealistic or "spiritual" reflections about his friends. In "Midnight," for example, we can glimpse Coverdale's unconscious determination that Zenobia finally
submit to male authority, beneath his pious concern for the fate of her soul:

One hope I had; and that, too, was mingled half with fear. She knelt, as if in prayer. With the last, choking consciousness, her soul, bubbling out through her lips, it may be, had given itself up to the Father, reconciled and penitent. But her arms! They were bent before her, as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility. Her hands! They were clenched in immitigable defiance. Away with the hideous thought! (235)8

In the latter portions of the book, and especially at the end, Coverdale is fond of viewing the fulfillment of his secret wishes as the will of "Providence" or "Destiny"—"Had I been judge, as well as witness, my sentence might have been stern as that of Destiny itself" (161). Zenobia, shockingly, refuses to submit to her fate with proper feminine meekness and decorum, and her own words indicate that it is Coverdale, not just Hollingsworth, who has longed for her reduction to the timid, submissive, Priscilla-ish woman. In their final interview Zenobia accuses Coverdale of turning the affair into a ballad—in which her role is that of the wronged maiden who sorrowfully yet meekly accepts her fate: "tell him something pretty and pathetic, that will come nicely and sweetly into your ballad—anything you please, so it be tender and submissive enough" (226). This practically identifies Coverdale's "literary" relation to the characters as a means of achieving some kind of malevolent power over their lives.

So far we have considered Hollingsworth's character and part in the melodrama as a fulfillment of sadistic and repressive urges which the text locates in Coverdale. However, Hollingsworth has several
intricately related facets as a projection of Coverdale; he is not only a wish-fulfillment figure, exercising the magnetic and totalitarian male power over women which Coverdale conspicuously lacks, he is also a projection of Coverdale's actual self—that is, a metaphorical, indirect image of the Hawthornian artist. On top of this, Coverdale's transformation of Hollingsworth into an agent of desires in himself which are inadmissible to consciousness is in itself a kind of revenge, and removal of a threat. Hollingsworth's change from a tender, religiously benign figure to a papier-mâché monster permits a reversal of the initial moral contrast between him and Coverdale that is really as crass as this: Hollingsworth becomes the bad guy, and by doing so enables Coverdale to appear as a good guy. The psychological profits which Coverdale reaps from the creation of this repellent and patently literary monomaniac are so glaring that it is surprising that Coverdale has duped as many critics as he has into buying Hollingsworth as the villain of the tale.

I mentioned in the first chapter that Hollingsworth disrupts the atmosphere of comfortable, self-indulgent fantasy which Coverdale casts over Blithedale with a stern demand that the community prove itself by acting more charitably towards Priscilla. In this scene, and elsewhere in the early chapters, Hollingsworth's benevolence is equated with the love of God, and explicitly contrasted with Coverdale's impersonal curiosity, sourness, and other nasty traits. His exhortation on behalf of Priscilla is couched in the rhetoric of a sermon:
"Let us not pry farther into her secrets," he said to Zenobia and the rest of us, apart—and his dark, shaggy face looked really beautiful with its expression of thoughtful benevolence— "Let us conclude that Providence has sent her to us, as the first fruits of the world, which we have undertaken to make happier than we find it. Let us warm her poor, shivering body with this good fire, and her poor, shivering heart with our best kindness. Let us feed her, and make her one of us. As we do by this friendless girl, so shall we prosper!" (30)

While he is sick, Coverdale tells Hollingsworth that his tenderness "seems to me the reflection of God's own love" (43), and regards him as a priest or saint, "marked out by a light of transfiguration" (40). Also, he repeatedly contrasts Hollingsworth's humanity and piety with his own attitudes, which he describes as cold-hearted, selfish, and bitter. Whereas "of all our apostolic society, whose mission was to bless mankind, Hollingsworth, I apprehend, was the only one who began the enterprise with prayer" (39), "if I said my prayers, it was backward, cursing my day as bitterly as patient Job himself" (40). He wishes that he had nothing to do with the reformation of society, "selfish as it may appear" (40), and believes himself likely to "die blaspheming" (41). Finally, he includes himself in man's general cruelty and callousness, to which Hollingsworth is a rare exception.

This passage is important in that it reveals Coverdale's assumption that masculinity is equivalent to cold-hearted sadism:

Hollingsworth's more than brotherly attendance gave me inexpressible comfort. Most men—and, certainly, I could not always claim to be one of the exceptions—have a natural indifference, if not an absolutely hostile feeling, towards those whom disease, or weakness, or calamity of any kind, causes to falter and faint amid the rude jostle of our selfish existence. The education of Christianity, it is true, the sympathy of like experience, and the example of woman, may soften, and possibly subvert, this ugly characteristic of our sex. But it is
originally there, and has likewise its analogy in the practice of our brute brethren, who hunt the sick or disabled member of the herd from among them, as an enemy... Except in love, or the attachments of kindred, or other very long and habitual affection, we really have no tenderness. (41-42)

This association of masculinity with callousness and brutality appears elsewhere: "For, young or old, in play or in earnest, man is prone to be a brute" (73). Coverdale frequently criticizes "masculine grossness" and insensitivity towards women (47, 102-03). However, it is apparent to Coverdale in both the scene of Priscilla's reception, and in his sick-chamber, that Hollingsworth is more humane and caring than he, and this makes him unpleasantly conscious of his own selfishness, indifference, and iron-heartedness. Obviously, Hollingsworth's transformation into a callous exploiter of female hearts serves to reverse this disagreeable and guilt-inflicting contrast: Hollingsworth assumes Coverdale's selfishness and masculine sadism, and Coverdale can appear as a benign, sympathetic fellow out to save the ladies from this monster. As we could expect, this is accompanied by a shift of emphasis in Hollingsworth's sexual characteristics; while Coverdale is ill, he associates Hollingsworth's tenderness with unmasculine qualities, womanliness and priestliness: "there was something of the woman moulded into the great, stalwart frame of Hollingsworth" (42); "But, dear Hollingsworth, your own vocation is evidently to be a priest" (43). Later, when Coverdale is busy conjuring up lurid images of the monomaniac, he dwells on Hollingsworth's masculine qualities—the great shaggy head with the stern features and dark frown, and so on.

At the same time, however, Coverdale returns to the notion of Hollingsworth as a priest, but now to denote blind and fanatical
devotion to an obsessive purpose which is actually an egotistical and sadistic self-aggrandizement. In Coverdale's fantasies, Hollingsworth undergoes a melodramatic transformation from a reflection of the loving Father, "his Maker's own truest image," to a fiend, a "steel engine of the Devil's contrivance" (71). This transformation can fitly be called theatrical and Gothic, but the important point is that it has nothing to do with the realistic observation or even intuition of character. It is a fantasy which, like all of Coverdale's fantasies, comes true, and our task is to determine the unconscious logic of which it is a product. We have seen that it effects a convenient reversal of moral appearances, but beneath this, the destruction of Hollingsworth as an image of religious compassion suggests that Coverdale secretly hates the "spirituality" and ideals of brotherhood to which he consciously wants to believe he is devoted. As indicated by the guilt which Hollingsworth's benevolence causes him to feel, altruism is a repressive force inhibiting the gratification of his fantasies and morally challenging his cold-heartedness. Coverdale, surely, stands to gain some sadistic pleasure from the reduction of this figure of more-than-human kindness and holiness to a criminal, in somewhat the same way as Lawrence saw Dimmesdale and Hester secretly, gloatingly making a mockery of their belief, "which was really cunning disbelief, in the Spirit, in Purity, in Selfless Love." If we wish to gauge the depth of Coverdale's idealism, we have only to notice, as few critics have done, the glaring dissonance with which his thoughts pass, in the episode of his illness, from the religious tone of his appreciation of Hollingsworth
to his most explicit and prurient fantasies about Zenobia's body and its sexual history.

We have already seen that Hollingsworth's part in the plot enacts Coverdale's repressed fantasies of exercising a sadistic male power over Zenobia. Although this projection distances Coverdale's uncharitable urges from his conscious awareness, the text establishes important parallels between Coverdale's personality and Hollingsworth's transformed character which enable us to see the callous monomaniac as a projected image of Coverdale's identity as the Hawthornian artist. Sadism is an essential part of Coverdale's motivation in turning his friends' lives into a melodramatic fantasy, and monomania aptly describes the grip which this drama and its secret motives have upon him. The first real suggestion of monomania in Hollingsworth comes when Coverdale comments about his unsocial irritability on the evening of his arrival: "The poor fellow had contracted this ungracious habit from the intensity with which he contemplated his own ideas" (36). That night we find Coverdale himself suffering from an obsession: "I was in that vilest of states when a fixed idea remains in the mind" (38). Similarly, Coverdale's suspicion that Hollingsworth's "heart, I imagine, was never really interested in our socialist scheme" (36) reminds us that Coverdale himself is attracted to Blithedale for reasons other than its announced purposes--reasons related to obsessive fantasy--but that Hollingsworth bears the guilt for the wrecking of the enterprise. Like Hollingsworth, Coverdale is absorbed in obsessions which are destructive of Blithedale's ideals; but moreover a sensitive reading
of Coverdale's reflections on "men who have surrendered themselves to an over-ruling purpose" suggests that Hollingsworth's egotistical obsessiveness is finally a projection of Coverdale's secret relationship to his story and characters:

It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle. When such begins to be the predicament, it is not cowardice, but wisdom, to avoid these victims. They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse underfoot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second, and the third, and every other step of their terribly straight path. They have an idol, to which they consecrate themselves high-priest, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious, and never once seem to suspect—so cunning has the Devil been with them—that this false deity, in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness. And the higher and purer the original object, and the more unselfishly it may have been taken up, the slighter is the probability that they can be led to recognize the process, by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism. (70-71)

Melodramatic as this is, it is not hard to recognize in it Coverdale's own features as author. Like his character Hollingsworth, Coverdale becomes obsessed with an overruling purpose—in his view, to solve some problem or mystery presented by Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla. As he himself comes to realize, and to futilely resist, his obsession with these figures and their "secret" absorbs all of his thoughts, so that he finally has no real individual existence. So much Coverdale is willing to admit; but the passage reminds us of other aspects of Coverdale's obsessiveness that he struggles to repress, partly by projecting them onto his characters, and partly through his very pose
of being a detective into the affairs of others. As with Hollingsworth, Coverdale’s obsession causes him to sacrifice his friends with inhuman coldness; he is driven by repressed sexual anxieties to destroy both Zenobia and Hollingsworth. Yet in the "iron features" of his obsession he can "see only benignity and love"; he insists throughout the novel that his interest in Zenobia and Hollingsworth has been motivated only by the highest sympathy. In fact, just before he turns Hollingsworth into a satanic figure here, he assures us, "I loved Hollingsworth, as has already been enough expressed" (70). Finally, Coverdale even describes Hollingsworth’s obsession as being self-projective, a process of "all-devouring egotism"; his "false deity . . . is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness." This is strongly suggestive of the way in which reality in the novel takes on the colouring of Coverdale’s obsessions—how the characters and their drama are stamped with the iron features of Coverdale’s anxieties. In all, Hollingsworth is an image of Coverdale’s artistry—his compulsively transforming reality into sadistic fantasy, while maintaining an idealistic view of the motives and nature of his involvement through self-deceptive poses.

The transformation of Hollingsworth himself is one of the best examples of this process, and we have already uncovered the gratifications which it offers. However, to catch the wider significance of this transformation and of the character it produces, we should note that the highly literary quality of both corresponds to Hawthorne’s own techniques and character types. Coverdale’s psychology reveals the
covert motivation of Hawthorne's own creativity. Hollingsworth the
idealist-turned-monomaniac is easily recognized as one of those
abstractly conceived, "symbolic" or "allegorical" figures who people
Hawthorne's fiction, with the difference that the text is structured
to reveal how he serves the private psychological needs of his author,
quite apart from the explicit moral which he is designed to illustrate.
Coverdale's transformation of Hollingsworth employs the stock literary
techniques associated with these characters. He is melodramatically
changed from a figure of religious compassion to a fiend, seduced by the
Devil into sacrificing his friends to a "cold, spectral monster" (55).
"This," Coverdale sighs, "was a result exceedingly sad to contemplate,"
but it does provide a neat irony, in that Hollingsworth's inhuman
fanaticism "had been mainly brought about by the very ardor and exuber-
ance of his philanthropy" (55). Also, of course, it offers a profound
moral: "I see in Hollingsworth an exemplification of the most awful truth
in Bunyan's book of such;--from the very gate of Heaven there is a
by-way to the pit!" (243). Finally, the character's appearance and
personality are strongly Gothic: "In my recollection of his dark and
impressive countenance, the features grew more sternly prominent than
the reality, duskier in their depth and shadow, and more lurid in their
light; the frown, that had merely flitted across his brow, seemed to
have contorted it with an adamantine wrinkle" (71).

These ingredients of melodrama, Gothicism, moral irony and allegory
are prominent in a great many of Hawthorne's characters, including
Aylmer, Rappaccini, Ethan Brand, Chillingworth, and the "model" in
The Marble Faun, but we can be much more specific about Hollingsworth's affinity with the types of Hawthorne's fiction. He belongs to that host of artists, scientists, and intellectuals obsessed with coldly probing, controlling, and experimenting on other people's minds and hearts. Coverdale views his philanthropic theory as an experiment in psychological alchemy: "A great black ugliness of sin, which he proposed to collect out of a thousand human hearts, and that we should spend our lives in an experiment of transmuting it into virtue!" (134). Repulsed as he is, Coverdale has no qualms about the opposite reaction, converting virtue into vice, and in fact he epitomizes the coldly prying, manipulative attitude toward people, motivated ostensibly by idealism, but covertly by sadism, which appears throughout Hawthorne as the artist's unforgivable sin. It is Coverdale who first brings up the idea of psychological experimentation, in criticizing Hollingsworth's plan "for the reformation of criminals, through an appeal to their higher instincts": "He ought to have commenced his investigation of the subject, by perpetrating some huge sin, in his proper person, and examining the condition of his higher instincts, afterwards" (36). It is hardly coincidental that this is precisely what Hollingsworth does in the book; on the surface, he becomes its chief sinner. As he does so often, Coverdale anticipates what happens because the plot is his projected fantasy; and it is because the story is a creation of its narrator's repressed obsessions, that The Blithedale Romance takes us one step deeper than Hawthorne's fiction was able to go before. One more veil of allegory is lifted, another defense is circumvented; in Coverdale, we
can glimpse that the apparent coldness of the prying, manipulating artist-figure is actually a pose through which he attempts to conceal from himself and from us his intense emotional involvement in his plot and characters as self-projective fantasies.

In the next chapter, we will turn to the several species of subconscious duplicity in which Coverdale excels, which provide perhaps the strongest evidence that the novel's fantasy-content functions entirely as a product of Coverdale's artistry, and that this art of fantasy-projection is subjected to intense ironic scrutiny. However, before we leave Hollingsworth, we must remark on one more indication that his character and part in the novel are of Coverdale's making. It has to do with Coverdale's strange "intuitive" powers. Coverdale envisions Hollingsworth's turning into a monomaniac, and anticipates his role in the plot, well before what we have seen of Hollingsworth's actual behavior provides sufficient grounds on which these things could be deduced from observation. In other words, Coverdale's view of Hollingsworth as "fast going mad" (56), becoming enslaved to his "cold, spectral monster" (55), and willing to cast aside his friends "unless they could minister, in some way, to the terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God" (55) precedes actions on Hollingsworth's part which confirm it. It seems unlikely that Coverdale could have foreseen the full course of Hollingsworth's "philanthropy," even down to his exploitation of his friends, as he does in "The Convalescent," from the evidence available at this point, which consists of Hollingsworth's grumpy self-absorption at the dinner table (36), his statement to
Coverdale—which Coverdale refuses to believe—that "the most marked trait in my character is an inflexible severity of purpose" (43), and the fanaticism of his condemnation of Fourier (53-54). Hollingsworth's ominous query "But how can you be my life-long friend, except you strive with me towards the great object of my life?" (57) comes just after Coverdale has suspected that Hollingsworth is only interested in using his friends. Hollingsworth, like all of the characters, confirms Coverdale's view of him, but that view is not pieced together through observation. It is contained, rather, in two long, generalized, meditative and moralistic essays (54-56 and 70-71), a method of exposition which strengthens our sense of it as an imaginative creation of Coverdale, having particular psychological significance for himself. Coverdale's arrival at a complete and, as it turns out, accurate view of Hollingsworth's motives and intentions before he has more than began to reveal them, together with Hollingsworth's several ways of belonging more to art than to life, and the wish-fulfilling functions of his role, compel us towards the notion, unusual as it is, that Coverdale's anxieties have gained a creative power over life.

II

A glance at the object of Coverdale's prophetic powers can do a great deal to clear up the significance of his fascination with mysterious, spiritual, "Sibylline attributes," which has exasperated critics from Henry James on. Furthermore, the nature of Coverdale's clairvoyance confirms what I have argued in relation to Hollingsworth, that characters and plot alike are creations of Coverdale's sexual fantasy.
In fact, mesmerism and clairvoyance are projected images or metaphors of Coverdale's fantasy-power, just as Hollingsworth's monomania is a projection of Coverdale's obsession and sadism. Coverdale's interest in Priscilla's spirituality involves a peculiarity that has gone unnoticed; although it is Priscilla who is supposedly clairvoyant, it is Coverdale who exercises seemingly clairvoyant powers by "intuiting" that Priscilla is possessed of them. In the scene in which Priscilla visits Coverdale while he is sick, Coverdale considers the girl "odd" (49) and dwells on her physical wanless—a condition which Zenobia has remarked would encourage a poet like Coverdale to view her as "spiritual" (34). This is what he does; he believes he catches a strange resemblance between Priscilla and Margaret Fuller just as the girl brings him a letter from that lady—a resemblance involving "a partial closing of the eyes, which seemed to look more penetratingly into my own eyes, through the narrowed apertures, than if they had been open at full width" (51-52). Priscilla, understandably, is annoyed by this intimation that she possesses strange spiritual powers, as it would remind her of her enslavement to Westervelt: "'I wish people would not fancy such odd things in me!' she said, rather petulantly. 'How could I possibly make myself resemble this lady, merely by holding her letter in my hand?'" (52). Coverdale dismisses the matter, but there are other suggestions that he is unconsciously casting Priscilla as the Veiled Lady. He uses the word "medium" twice in the scene in connection with her (49, 51). Coverdale apparently has some "reason" for wanting Priscilla to be "spiritual," as we have seen he has motives for Hollingsworth's becoming a ruthless monomaniac.
Ironically, however, it is he who exercises intuitive powers: "One forenoon, during my convalescence, there came a gentle tap at my chamber-door. I immediately said--'Come in, Priscilla!'--with an acute sense of the applicant's identity" (50).

We don't have to look far to discover the nature of Coverdale's clairvoyance. Just as he associates Priscilla's bodily debilitation with "spiritual" capabilities, he sees himself as acquiring a clairvoyant power while sick, which obsesses him with the idea that Zenobia has been married:

there is a species of intuition--either a spiritual lie, or the subtle recognition of a fact--which comes to us in a reduced state of the corporeal system. The soul gets the better of the body, after wasting illness, or when a vegetable diet may have mingled too much ether in the blood. Vapors then rise up to the brain, and take shapes that often image falsehood, but sometimes truth. The spheres of our companions have, at such periods, a vastly greater influence upon our own, than when robust health gives us a repellent and self-defensive energy. Zenobia's sphere, I imagine, impressed itself powerfully on mine, and transformed me, during this period of my weakness, into something like a mesmerical clairvoyant. (46-47)

This state in which "the soul gets the better of the body" produces Coverdale's most explicit and prurient speculations about Zenobia's sexual history--"feverish fantasies" which turn out to be prophetic in more than one instance: "Zenobia is a wife!" (47) and "she is a sister of the Veiled Lady!" (45). We could hardly ask for a more ironic revelation of the self-deceptive workings of Coverdale's projective imagination--spiritual intuition turns out to be equivalent to adolescent sexual fantasy--yet this fantasy is prophetic, reality corresponds to it. The spiritual "mystery" of which Coverdale is so fond turns out to be secretly synonymous with the mystery of woman's body. Zenobia's
"unconstrained and inevitable manifestation, I said often to myself, was that of a woman to whom wedlock had thrown wide the gates of mystery" (47). Coverdale's fascination with Priscilla's "mysterious qualities which make her seem diaphanous with spiritual light" (129) conceals the same impulse towards prurient investigation--the desire "to come within her maidenly mystery" and "take just one peep beneath her folded petals" (125). The most notorious indication of the meaning of Priscilla's mystery for Coverdale is the symbolism he finds in her purses: "Their peculiar excellence, besides the great delicacy and beauty of the manufacture, lay in the almost impossibility that any uninitiated person should discover the aperture; although, to a practised touch, they would open as wide as charity or prodigality might wish. I wondered if it were not a symbol of Priscilla's own mystery" (35). Coverdale's speculation on both Zenobia's and Priscilla's "mystery" includes obtrusive vaginal symbolism, but there is an important difference. The sexual interest is apparent to Coverdale only in regards to Zenobia, and, because it is recognized, it causes guilt: "I strove to be ashamed of these conjectures" as "a sin of wicked interpretation, of which man is often guilty towards the other sex" (47). On the other hand, Coverdale is unaware of the prurience of his interest in Priscilla, and it is here that the usefulness of her spirituality and Coverdale's motives for perceiving her as "spiritual" become evident: the idealized sexual repression which this spirituality represents is a cover for indulgence of sexual curiosity. On the surface, wan, vapid little Priscilla appears to serve Coverdale as a safe refuge in innocent sentimentality
from the thoughts aroused by Zenobia, but her repression actually makes her a more comfortable object of sexual interest, because the interest can be kept secret even from himself. As an object of covert sexual fantasy, Priscilla is indeed a "Veiled Lady," yet still the "sister" of Zenobia, possessed of the same mystery. From the first chapter of the novel, Coverdale's imagination connects Zenobia with the Veiled Lady--both are subjected to extraordinary adolescent curiosity (the latter in "Zenobia's Legend"), only, as Coverdale remarks, Zenobia's disguise is "a little more transparent" than the medium's (8). Priscilla's fantasy-significance, like Hollingsworth's, is testimony to Coverdale's "cunning disbelief" in his own moralistic, repressive, vaguely Christian idealism.

Later, in the pseudospiritualist Westervelt, we shall see that mesmerical power partakes of the masculine sadism projected into Hollingsworth. The point which I want to make now is that the logic or meaning of Priscilla's identity as the Veiled Lady, and her secret relationship to Zenobia, resides in their unconscious significance for Coverdale. As with Hollingsworth, elements of plot and characterization which are stale, insubstantial and mechanical as portraits of life, become pregnant with psychological reality once we view them, as the text invites us to do, as "literary" products, creations of Coverdale's fantasy.

III

In the first chapter we saw that Coverdale marks out Zenobia as the prime contributor to Blithedale's illusoriness as a "masquerade" or "pastoral" and also holds her responsible for the failure of its equalitarian and altruistic ideals. Her proud, "imperial," overtly
sensual personality and presence exacerbate Coverdale's sexual fantasies and anxieties, with the result that her fate is a fantasy-revenge inflicted on her by Coverdale to punish and destroy her intimidating sexual aggressiveness and power. Coverdale's need to exercise a control over Zenobia and the feelings she arouses is also the motive behind his literary and theatrical treatment of her character. By the end of "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla" Coverdale has cast her as the "tragedy queen" of his melodrama, of whose outcome he wots more than he would care for us to know. Coverdale reduces Zenobia, as he does Hollingsworth and Priscilla, to a literary type with a melodramatic role, not only to create an "aesthetic distance" between himself and her sexual intensity, but also so that he can contemplate her agony and destruction with proper artistic detachment. Coverdale is never quite able or willing to recognize Zenobia as a human being; by treating her as art, he tacitly allows his repressed sadism to take its rigid, compulsive course.

Zenobia is immediately recognizable as one of Hawthorne's "dark ladies." She is possessed of all the predictable characteristics: hair that is "dark, glossy, and of singular abundance" (15); a rather large physique; a sensual and exotic aura; biblical name or pseudonymn; an obscure past and origin; haughtiness, pride, and a capacity for "bitter feeling"; a strong rebellious sense of male persecution (by Westervelt) and injustice. However, critics have noticed that even among the representatives of this type she seems less real, less of a concrete human individual, particularly in comparison to Hester Prynne, and also that she is a less sympathetic figure than either Hester of Miriam.
For those critics who demand "realistic" characterization as a sine qua non of the novel, there is no redeeming Zenobia from the first of these differences; but our contention that both of them reflect Coverdale's reduction of her personality to that of a villainess in a melodrama renders Zenobia's literary quality psychologically revealing.

In his first mention of Zenobia, Coverdale dwells on her name being a pseudonym, calling it "a sort of mask in which she comes before the world, retaining all the privileges of privacy" (8). Soon afterwards, he remarks that Zenobia "encouraged its constant use, which, in fact, was thus far appropriate" (13) because it fits her imperial demeanor and "native pride." An atmosphere of disguise, playacting, and unreality is thus cast over her character, and it is strengthened by the unusual practice of her friends calling her by her pen name, and the public knowing her by her real one. If, as we have seen, Zenobia enjoys adopting a literary personality, and playing the queen in Blithedale's masquerade, Coverdale has compelling motives to confirm her status as art. His immediate object is to render her sexuality less formidably alive and human:

Zenobia was truly a magnificent woman. The homely simplicity of her dress could not conceal, nor scarcely diminish, the queenliness of her presence. The image of her form and face should have been multiplied over the earth. It was wronging the rest of mankind, to retain her as the spectacle of only a few. The stage would have been her proper sphere. She should have made it a point of duty, moreover, to sit endlessly to painters and sculptors, and preferably to the latter; because the cold decorum of the marble would consist with the utmost scantiness of drapery, so that the eye might chastely be gladdened with her material perfection, in its entireness. (44)

Despite Coverdale's enthusiasm, he needs in his own mind to "chasten" his fantasies by regarding Zenobia as a stage character or aesthetic
artifact. We should add that this transforms her sexuality from a power into a thing—a passive object of contemplation. The fetishistic bent of Coverdale's voyeurism—his concentration on objects such as Zenobia's flower and Priscilla's purses as symbols of feminine "mystery"—similarly dehumanizes womanliness. Coverdale's sexual appreciation of Zenobia often has an aesthetic tinge; his imagination relishes the hint of sensuality amidst the appearance of prim decorum, as if this were a kind of artistic effect. This, again, is related to acting and disguise: "the homely simplicity of her dress" is like a pastoral costume Zenobia has assumed, amidst which the suggestion of sensual splendor is all the more exciting: "She was dressed as simply as possible, in an American print, (I think the dry-goods people call it so,) but with a silken kerchief, between which and her gown there was one glimpse of a white shoulder. It struck me as a great piece of good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse" (15).

Coverdale's reduction of Zenobia's sexuality to an art object, characteristically for purposes of both voyeuristic pleasure and personal security, is part of a larger effort to repress his personal emotional involvement in what happens to his friends by adopting a pose of aesthetic detachment towards their fates. These fates are the product of his "literary" manipulation, the projection of his own anxieties and wishes onto reality; yet, ironically, their quality as stage melodrama enables Coverdale to witness them with the disinterestedness of a mere spectator. Coverdale explicitly turns the action into a melodrama in "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla," the chapter in which
he calls the three "characters . . . on my private theatre" (70).
Zenobia is cast as the haughty villainess, harboring murderous intentions towards her innocent and maidenly rival. She gives Priscilla a glance which "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 mingle[s] the ratsbane with her lover's bowl of wine, or her rival's cup of tea" (78).
Zenobia's fierce passion is destined to become criminal, as for Coverdale it already is; yet some sort of objective crime is necessary to justify the punishment. If we read closely, we can see that that punishment has already been determined; Coverdale makes it pretty clear that Hollingsworth is more conscious of Priscilla's charm. He mentions "the expression of tender, human care, and gentlest sympathy, which she alone seemed to have power to call out upon his features. Zenobia, I suspect, would have given her eyes, bright as they were, for such a look" (72). Yet even though it is Zenobia who is doomed, Coverdale reserves his sympathy for Priscilla—a sympathy which proves very serviceable in reassuring Coverdale of his own humanity: "Had I been as cold-hearted as I sometimes thought myself, nothing would have interested me more than to witness the play of passions that must thus have been evolved. But, in honest truth, I would really have gone far to save Priscilla, at least, from the catastrophe in which such a drama would be apt to terminate" (72). Priscilla, after all, has the advantage of being virginal, and, as we have seen, Coverdale would like to keep her that way. "As for Zenobia, I saw no occasion to give myself any trouble."
Her heart, Coverdale smugly observes, "must at least have been valuable while new" (79). Zenobia has already been judged and condemned before Coverdale's "secret tribunal" for the crime of sexual and worldly experience. She is already the scheming rival and adulteress, before her "Legend" and her conversation in the forest with Westervelt "confirm" these sins. "Nevertheless," Coverdale can preen himself in a triumph of secret hypocrisy, "I was really generous enough to feel some little interest likewise for Zenobia" (79). But not enough to prevent the destruction of her "passionate force" by "some sufficiently tragic catastrophe" (79).

By now we should not be surprised that shortly after this Zenobia assumes the very role of villainess in which Coverdale has envisioned her. As a thinly fictionalized account of her intention of betraying Priscilla back into the power of Westervelt, the ending of "Zenobia's Legend" is a scenario of Zenobia's part in the melodrama. Yet as such it conspicuously simplifies her feelings and thereby renders her a less sympathetic figure. Her fictional self shows no qualms or feelings of any kind about helping the magician recover the Veiled Lady; all we are told is that the girl's "mortal terror, and deep, deep reproach . . . could not change her purpose" (116). In contrast, in her actual conversation with Westervelt, Zenobia insisted at first that she would be faithful to Priscilla—"she loves me, and I will not fail her" (104)—and even when the girl's harmfulness was disclosed, Zenobia's horror was directed against Westervelt rather than her. Nevertheless, Coverdale's literary fantasies are once again "prophetic": a cloak-
and-dagger plot turns up against Priscilla, and Zenobia fingers the bodkin and ratbane despite her compunctions.

As the "tragic catastrophe" approaches, it becomes even clearer that the transformation of Zenobia into a literary character effects a reduction of her humanity that enhances the propriety of her destruction. Significantly, it is at that moment of greatest hostility between her and Coverdale, in her town drawing room, that she appears most artificial and art-like to him. In this scene, Zenobia's appearance, manner, and surroundings are physical projections of Coverdale's secret anxieties about her—the scornful, malevolent, yet overwhelming power of her sexuality, and his self-projective sense of her as the source of the snobbish and hedonistic attitude responsible for the failure of Blithedale's ideals: "it struck me that here was the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination, revelling in various methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease" (164). The fulfillment of Coverdale's own fantasies is explicitly an artistic transformation: "Even her characteristic flower, though it seemed to be still there, had undergone a cold and bright transfiguration; it was a flower exquisitely imitated in jeweller's work, and imparting the last touch that transformed Zenobia into a work of art" (163-64). Art is associated with the coldness and rigidity of stone, as in Coverdale's need of "the cold denorum of the marble" to temper his desires. Coverdale's metamorphosis of his "friends" into characters in a melodrama freezes his conscious human sympathies while his destructive fantasies take their course.14

In Zenobia's climactic confrontation with Hollingsworth in "The Three Together," the tension between the scene's emotional impact and
its theatrical quality, particularly Zenobia’s, becomes ludicrous. The chapter has the quality of a stage scene; it not only consists of continuous dialogue in a fixed setting, but Coverdale discovers the characters in distinct and familiar poses--Hollingsworth sitting with Priscilla at his feet, and Zenobia standing before them, at the base of Eliot’s pulpit (212; compare 77). At the crisis of her fate, Zenobia is literally an actress: "But Zenobia (whose part among the masquers, as may be supposed, was no inferior one) appeared in a costume of fanciful magnificence, with her jewelled flower as the central ornament of what resembled a leafy crown, or coronet. She represented the Oriental princess, by whose name we were accustomed to know her" (213). As the latter remark implies, Zenobia has become her melodramatic role; the illusion, the masquerade has become reality. Real as Zenobia’s passion is, it belongs to art, because reality has been transformed into art. Coverdale even wonders whether Zenobia’s flushed appearance is due to make-up: "her cheeks had each a crimson spot, so exceedingly vivid, and marked with so definite an outline, that I at first doubted whether it were not artificial" (213). Even Zenobia’s dead body is an aesthetic artifact--"She was the marble image of a death-agony" (235). In the hideous stiffness of her corpse, we see the final product of the cold, rigid compulsiveness of Coverdale’s art. His turning Zenobia into a patently theatrical figure at her crisis is his means of defensively enveloping her sexual power and her agony in an atmosphere of fiction. Coverdale has an interest in preventing Zenobia from becoming too real and too fully human. Like Hawthorne’s undramatized personae, he
expressly treats his story and characters as art in order to dampen and repress their fearful impact on his own feelings. However, unlike in Hawthorne's other work, in *Blithedale* the motives and feelings of the artist-narrator are consistently accessible despite his deceptive relationship to the story and reader.

In the next chapter we will plunge into the core of Coverdale's personality—his fantasy-projection and his subconscious duplicity. We shall see that his psychology is an astonishingly subtle revelation of the conflicts and deceptions underlying Hawthornian artistry and narration—the characteristically ambiguous atmosphere between dream and reality, the incessant, seemingly pointless speculation on unsolved mysteries and ambiguities, the odd combination of idealism and prurience, detachment and anxiety, moralizing and despair in the narrator's tone.

So far, we have seen that Coverdale treats the characters and plot as literary and dramatic creations, and that what the characters become and what happens to them—their parts in the melodrama—are designed to appease Coverdale's secret fears and resentments, and gratify his secret wishes. We have noted too, that to various extents the characters are projected images of Coverdale's own repressed, unamiable qualities.

We are now in a position to assert that Coverdale is in fact shown to be in the grip of a compulsive power that involuntarily, uncontrollably transforms reality into a realization of repressed desires—in other words, that the projection of fantasy onto reality is a concrete, observable act rather than something which we only surmise to take place on the basis of a wish-fulfilling relationship between the plot and
Coverdale's anxieties. Furthermore, we will see that, in keeping with the repressed, compulsive nature of Coverdale's creativity, there is an intensely ironic relationship between his deliberate, acceptable views of his duty and feelings towards his friends, and the hidden pain and malice towards them, and vague sense of guilt and responsibility for their fates (particularly Zenobia's), which he struggles increasingly to repress and deny. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that subconscious duplicity towards himself, the other characters, and the reader pervades everything of importance that Coverdale says about his feelings and involvement with the three. Yet its most important aspect has gone virtually unnoticed by the critics—the deceptiveness of Coverdale's self-publicized ignorance and bafflement over what is going on, and the deceptiveness of his silent obliviousness. It is the rending of this veil that provides the most compelling evidence for Coverdale's secret manipulation of his friends' destruction.
Coverdale's transformation of reality into art has always been viewed as a distortion of some "literal" reality. This is so of Crews' view that Coverdale needs to idealize life by inventing a romance distinct from what really happens. Similarly, in *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature*, Richard Poirier regards Coverdale as a satirical self-portrait of Hawthorne's own penchant for artistically handling life as if it were art. Hawthorne for once "becomes the critic of what otherwise victimizes him: the distortion of reality by art or by style."¹ "In Coverdale Hawthorne scrutinizes his own tendency to soften reality by giving it the quality of art—as if what happens were, say, a pastoral or melodrama."² Like Crews, Poirier believes that Coverdale's "essentially childish" effort to transform what he observes into romantic art is thwarted by the intransigence of reality. Coverdale "must face the anguish of finding that life, notably the lives of others, will not be shaped by the often conflicting pressures of his aestheticism and his morality."³

Coverdale is certainly a self-critical reflection of Hawthorne's own characteristic way of relating to his story as literature. However, Coverdale succeeds at becoming "an imperialist of the inner lives of other people"⁴ to an extent that Poirier doesn't imagine; he doesn't distort reality, he engrosses it. His repressed wishes exercise a fantasy-power over the actions and fates of the other characters, and
he projects his own repressed self into their personalities. These processes are associated with Coverdale's treatment of the plot and characters as art, and reflect the covert psychology of Hawthorne's creativity. Coverdale's inability to confront his feelings of pain, resentment, and anxiety over his friends, his fear of recognizing his malevolent involvement in their destruction, and his need to assert poses of either chivalric benevolence or detached speculativeness towards them are the sources of his typically Hawthornian peculiarities as a narrator and observer--his vacillating view of the nature and morality of his interest in his friends; the contradiction between his prophetic insight and his ineffectiveness as a detective; his endless, equivocating speculation on the truth behind obscure and mysterious incidents; his sense of becoming immersed in a dream-world, offset by his insistence that he is a mere onlooker of affairs that are none of his concern. In this chapter we will examine the ironic relationship between Coverdale's manifest behavior and stances as an observer, and the repressed feelings and compulsive wishes that are uncontrollably turning the reality he observes into a self-projective, "literary" fantasy. First we will consider the dream-like quality of much of Coverdale's experience, in order to show that Coverdale's imagination ineluctably fuses fantasy and reality to create a world in which things are real because of their fantasy-significance, and that this involuntary operation of his mind is a subliminal creative power effecting the fulfillment of repressed wishes.

Nina Baym is the only critic I know of who treats the world and events of the novel in their entirety as a dream-reflection of
Coverdale's psychology. However, although she is alive to the "innerness" of Blithedale's reality, she is insensitive to the oddities of Coverdale's relationship to the story that suggest he has an active and creative, specifically artistic power over it as its "dreamer"—his prophetic dreams, his literary treatment of the characters and plot, the correspondence between them and his covert wishes, his longing for a catastrophe, and so on. She accepts Coverdale at his face value as purely an observer, a "passive consciousness." Consequently, the course of Coverdale's dream-turned-reality is unaffected by his intense involvement in its psychological content. We can reach a truer understanding of Coverdale's experience if we combine Baym's view of its ontological status as a "daydream which became real" with Crews' and Poirier's insight into its creative, artistic nature. In this view, Blithedale's fusion of fantasy and reality results from a compulsive process of fantasy-projection, whereby Coverdale's repressed personality exercises an inexorable power over the world of his experience, a power equated with artistic imagination.

Hawthorne's work provides at least one major antecedent to this idea of the artist's possessing a malevolent power over other people through the projection of repressed wishes onto reality: "The Prophetic Pictures" (1837). Hawthorne's treatment of the theme in this story deserves some close attention, not only because the unnamed painter anticipates the view of the artist implicit in Coverdale, but because the tale suggests, by way of contrast, that the intensely ironic
scrutiny of Coverdale's self-deceptive poses and repressed motives represents a concern for achieving a greater depth of psychological realism, and also a shift of emphasis, over Hawthorne's earlier work. In "The Prophetic Pictures" the narrator performs the typically Hawthornian function of a teasing mediator between the reader and the central ambiguity of what is actually happening in the story. Is the painter merely possessed of superior sensitivity and powers of observation, which enable him to discern Walter's and Elinor's repressed feelings, and guess their consequences—or does he have a prophetic power to see into the future—or do his portraits and sketch suggest thoughts of murder to the two lovers, and thereby bring it about, aided by the suggestive power of the very notion that he has a prophetic or magic power over the lives of his subjects—or does the painter really have some kind of nonrational, magical power over their lives, as if they were themselves creations of his art? The narrator avoids confirming any of these possibilities as the truth about the artist's powers, and indulges in the predictable stratagems of equivocation. For instance, the "darkest," most fascinating and disturbing possibility is treated as a folly of popular superstition. The narrator informs us that in colonial times it was common for the painter to be considered a magician, or even Satan himself, and that "these foolish fancies were more than half believed among the mob."7 Walter recalls that "the old women of Boston affirm . . . that after he has once got possession of a person's face and figure, he may paint him in any act or situation whatever—and the picture will be prophetic."8
Elinor replies, "if he has such magic, there is something so gentle in his manner that I am sure he will use it well." Yet the story increasingly suggests a sinister motivation in the painter, which finally emerges as an egotistical, fascinated conviction of his ability to control the fates of his subjects as if they were themselves creations of his art. As we saw in the first chapter in relation to "Young Goodman Brown," the protagonist's psychology is the key to many of Hawthorne's tales which allows us to circumvent the narrator's preoccupation with unresolvable ontological ambiguities and to recognize that the story is at bottom more concerned with certain emotionally potent self-awarenesses than with questions of fact or reality. It is hinted that the painter's statements to Elinor that he merely paints what he sees, and wishes he were wrong in their case, involves an unconscious duplicity similar to Coverdale's professions to being a mere observer, with benevolent intentions. With "seeming carelessness," he shows Elinor a sketch of Walter about to stab her, while he expresses the hope that their actual fates "quite belie my art." This can be taken as a well-intentioned warning, as he himself treats it at the end of the tale, but it has the aura of an evil suggestion, especially since Walter may have seen the sketch. For despite his optimistic and benign assurances to Elinor, shortly afterwards we see the painter enthralled with the sensation that his art has a power over life, and part of him at least is obviously anxious to see it confirmed that he is "a chief agent of the coming evil which he had foreshadowed." Walter is worked up to the crime by the power of the portrait, a power likened to
magic: "Still, Walter remained silent before the picture, communing
with it as with his own heart, and abandoning himself to the spell of
evil influence that the painter had cast upon the features."11 The
painter's prevention of the murder only serves to strengthen in himself
"the same sense of power to regulate their destiny as to alter a scene
upon the canvas. He stood like a magician, controlling the phantoms
which he had evoked."12

And in fact, Walter and Elinor act like puppets of the artist; the portraits do not so much mirror or foreshadow their emotions, as create them. The noticeable absence of any motivation in Walter himself for his homicidal passion further encourages the conclusion that it has been nurtured in him by the "evil influence" of the portraits. The only available motivation is in the painter, who is seized by a Faustian aspiration to power. Yet the nature of the crime, a man's murdering his wife, is suggestive of the sadism which we have observed in Hollingsworth, who also destroys a woman who loves him. Just as the psychological sources of Hollingsworth's sadism are located not in himself, but in Coverdale, we have only to look at Hawthorne's description of the painter's mental "disorder" to recognize him as a preliminary sketch of the outwardly "sympathetic," but inwardly cold, sexually anxious, excluded, resentful and obsessed artist:

Like all other men around whom an engrossing purpose wreathes itself, he was insulated from the mass of human kind. He had no aim--no pleasure--no sympathies--but what were ultimately connected with his art. Though gentle in manner and upright in intent and action, he did not possess kindly feeling; his heart was cold; no living creature could be brought near enough to keep him warm.13
This is as far as the tale goes into the artist's malady, and it is here that we see the divergence of *The Blithedale Romance* from Hawthorne's earlier treatment of his artist-figures. The tales are content to present an image of the artist as an unhealthily obsessed and isolated being, in association with a pattern of action suggestive of sexual disorder and, in "The Prophetic Pictures," with a notion of the artist's possessing a malevolent power over life. But only in *Blithedale* are the psychological contents of these clichés of plot and characterization fully disclosed. Equivocation over the nature of the artist's power is cast aside, and all of the pieces come together: the cold-hearted artist achieves a control over the social and sexual reality from which he is excluded by turning it into a fantasy fulfilling his own hostile wishes.

There is abundant evidence that Coverdale becomes immersed in a state of dream-consciousness which effects the artistic, yet also unacknowledged and obsessive, transformation of reality into fantasy. Even before this state of fantasy-projection appears in Coverdale, there are indications that the novel involves a creative fusion of reality and dream. When Zenobia ridicules Coverdale's "poetic" suppositions about Priscilla on the evening of his arrival, by suggesting that "you had better turn the affair into a ballad" (33), her satire of the sentimental, melodramatic, literary bent of Coverdale's imagination ironically foreshadows her actual fate: "It is a grand subject, and worthy of supernatural machinery. The storm, the startling knock at the door, the entrance of the sable knight Hollingsworth and this shadowy snow-maiden, who, precisely at the stroke of midnight, shall melt away
at my feet, in a pool of ice-cold water, and give me my death with a pair of wet slippers!" (33). Midnight—a pool of cold water, Zenobia's death, a wet slipper left behind—what sweeter revenge on the woman who persistently ridicules Coverdale's poetical talent, than for her to become a victim of it. A few moments before this hint that Coverdale's literary fantasies will achieve an aggressive power over life, Coverdale espies a whimsical image of reality being created out of dream:

"Good Mrs. Foster took her knitting-work, and soon fell fast asleep, still keeping her needles in brisk movement, and, to the best of my observation, absolutely footing a stocking out of the texture of a dream. And a very substantial stocking it seemed to be" (32).

Less whimsical is the growing sense in this chapter "Until Bedtime" that the secure world of daylight consciousness is threatened to be engulfed and overwhelmed by a mysterious, sinister, violent dream-world. The storm outside is "like another state of existence," a nightmarish realm struggling to erupt into consciousness: "The evening wore on, and the outer solitude looked in upon us through the windows, gloomy, wild, and vague, like another state of existence, close beside the littler sphere of warmth and light in which we were the prattlers and bustlers of a moment" (37). We recall that the storm is a "symbol" for Coverdale of "the cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the boundaries of ordinary life" (18). The opportunity for fantasy implicit in Blithedale's rejection of normal social repressions, the "boundaries of ordinary life" whose symbol is the city, contains the
danger of a plunge into inner chaos: "The sense of vast, undefined space, pressing from the outside against the black panes of our uncurtained windows, was fearful to the poor girl, heretofore accustomed to the narrowness of human limits, with the lamps of neighboring tenements glimmering across the street. The house probably seemed to her adrift on the great ocean of the night" (36). Coverdale becomes increasingly disturbed by a sense that everyday consciousness is being eroded by vague, unintelligible dream-experience, and he associates this experience, as here, with images of darkness, indefinite space, chaos, and fluidity.

Thus we are well prepared for Coverdale's "half-waking dreams" at the end of the chapter, and for his entering into a world in which reality behaves as a dream-like manifestation of his own psychological state:

Had I made a record of that night's half-waking dreams, it is my belief that it would have anticipated several of the chief incidents of this narrative, including a dim shadow of its catastrophe. Starting up in bed, at length, I saw that the storm was past, and the moon was shining on the snowy landscape, which looked like a lifeless copy of the world in marble.

From the bank of the distant river, which was shimmering in the moonlight, came the black shadow of the only cloud in heaven, driven swiftly by the wind, and passing over meadow and hillock--vanishing amid tufts of leafless trees, but reappearing on the hither side--until it swept across our door-step.

How cold an Arcadia was this! (38)

The black shadow of the solitary cloud rushing right over the house is an omen of Blithedale's fate, just as Coverdale's dreams contain a "dim shadow" of the catastrophe. The normally separate realms of reality and dream have merged, and the result is that the "external" world observed by Coverdale manifests a logic of psychological symbolism,
while still maintaining its status as reality. This fusion of dream and reality is a creative state, in that it "anticipates" the plot, and the peculiar reality it creates is an artistic product—the scene is like "a lifeless copy of the world in marble." Coverdale's dream experiences, his premonitions of the characters' fates, and the art-like quality of the world he observes all reflect the infusion of fantasy-significance into that world. We have already seen that Coverdale's foreboding of Blithedale's failure is based on the same sexual anxieties that lead him to project a tragic catastrophe for his friends. The feverishness of this first night, in which Coverdale is plagued by some "fixed idea" relating to Blithedale's fate, anticipates Coverdale's "feverish fantasies" about Zenobia the following day. Blithedale's reality has merged with Coverdale's inner world of obsessive desires and fears.

In his illness and convalescence Coverdale begins to react to an awareness that he has been engulfed in obsessive fantasy. This reaction intensifies in the course of the book, and assumes two aspects. First, Coverdale tries unsuccessfully to recover a realistic, rational, healthy state of mind—to escape his uncomfortable absorption in the "mystery" of Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla—and this at first involves a short-lived effort to keep his mind on the supposed purpose of his being at Blithedale, the attempt at a communitarian life. As these efforts fail, and Coverdale feels himself more and more inextricably enthralled in an obsessive nightmare, he resorts to the delusive self-reassurance that his interest in the melodrama is only a casual intellectual curiosity.
Leaving Coverdale’s self-deceptions for later, we can see that Coverdale fares no better than Blithedale’s critics in finding an objective reality in his experience. Implicitly, Coverdale views his convalescence as a recovery from a “sick” morass of fantasy and a return to a state of mind that is at once “realistic” and properly spiritual. While he is ill, Coverdale repeatedly implies that it is only because he is sick that he is susceptible to obsessive thoughts which are too explicitly prurient not to cause discomfort and guilt; he associates sexual fantasy so closely with a diseased state of mind and body as to leave little doubt that he considers intense and undisguised sexual feelings pathological:

I know not well how to express, that the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust—in a word, her womanliness incarnated—compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her. Illness and exhaustion, no doubt, had made me morbidly sensitive. (44)

This prepares us to recognize in Coverdale’s exultant sense of his recuperation as a kind of Christian rebirth (61) a relief at having recovered from an unwholesome state of fantasy, especially since Coverdale’s spiritual uplift precedes his last long discussion of the Blithedale enterprise itself (61-66). However, at the end of "A Modern Arcadia" Coverdale has left the community behind, and is obsessed with the "riddle" of his three friends, even though he uneasily observes that this "is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation" (69).

Coverdale’s leaving Blithedale is an effort to free himself from the obsessive fantasy embodied in the three. As usual, he pretends to
be talking about Blithedale as a utopian community, when he says that he is fleeing its "intangibility and mistiness of affairs" (141) in order to "take an exterior view of what we had all been about" (140) from a stable, conservative perspective. However, we will see that this pose of intellectual objectivity is but another means of escaping vague, half-repressed feelings of sexual exclusion and resentment. The chaos Coverdale actually fears is not Blithedale's intellectual fermentation, but the emotional confusion and pain of his obsessive yet unacknowledged involvement in the fantasy drama:

But, as matters now were, I felt myself (and having a decided tendency towards the actual, I never liked to feel it) getting quite out of my reckoning, with regard to the existing state of the world. I was beginning to lose the sense of what kind of a world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might or ought to be. It was impossible, situated as we were, not to imbibe the idea that everything in nature and human existence was fluid, or fast-becoming-so; that the crust of the Earth, in many places, was broken, and its whole surface portentously upheaving; that it was a day of crisis, and that we ourselves were in the critical vortex. Our great globe floated in the atmosphere of infinite space like an unsubstantial bubble. (140)

This is the same sense of a threatening vastness, chaos, vagueness, and fluidity that Coverdale experienced on the evening of his arrival. Coverdale has been plunged into a maelstrom of dream, and he feels himself pulled towards the vortex. Long before, he described Blithedale as a journey into "the waste of chaos" (52); the consequence of his release from the "boundaries of ordinary life" is his irrevocable submersion in a world of projected fears and obsessions. His effort to recover a solid sense of reality by returning to town fails so completely that not even Coverdale can pretend it has succeeded.
Coverdale's observations from his hotel window, far from indicating that he has attained an objective consciousness, betray the same absorption of reality into an atmosphere of dream and the same intrusion into reality of strands of obsessive fantasy, as his reveries about his three friends. The scene provides clues as to why Coverdale cannot escape fantasy-projection. Coverdale has no sooner settled down into his chair, than he positively begins to savor the very sensations of dreaminess, vagueness, and unreality that had caused him such anxiety at Blithedale. He relishes the feeling of being immersed in a world of shifting phantasmagoria:

At one moment, the very circumstances now surrounding me—my coal-fire, and the dingy room in the bustling hotel—appeared far off and intangible. The next instant, Blithedale looked vague, as if it were at a distance both in time and space, and so shadowy, that a question might be raised whether the whole affair had been anything more than the thoughts of a speculative man. I had never before experienced a mood that so robbed the actual world of its solidity. It nevertheless involved a charm, on which—a devoted epicure of my own emotions—I resolved to pause, and enjoy the moral sillabub until quite dissolved away. (146)

Coverdale's description of himself as an epicure should raise our eyebrows, and hardly a second glance is needed to see that he has retreated to the same passive, mildly sensual and self-indulgent state of pleasurable fantasy as he cultivated in his bachelor apartment and his hermitage. There is the same womb-like security of being enclosed, all alone, in a warm, sheltered place, complete with cigar, sherry cobbler, and a rather too abundant fire: "Summer as it still was, I ordered a coal-fire in the rusty grate, and was glad to find myself growing a little too warm with an artificial temperature" (145).
Coverdale sees himself as relapsing from Blithedale's masculine life of physical labor into his former dandyish sloth; he says that "all the effeminacy of past days had returned upon me at once" (145) and remarks on the "ebb-tide of my energies" (148). Yet Coverdale's immediate inspiration for this regression is Blithedale's pigs, "the very symbols of slothful ease and sensual comfort" (143)!

Coverdale believes that "they alone are happy," and he associates their self-content with a state of consciousness that mingles dream and reality: "Peeping at me, an instant... they dropt asleep again; yet not so far asleep but that their unctuous bliss was still present to them, betwixt dream and reality" (144).

Coverdale fails to separate reality from dream because he is addicted to the pleasures of fantasy, which are safe and comfortable as long as they do not involve the anxieties excited by his three "friends." However, those anxieties always creep back into Coverdale's reveries, creating a rhythm in his thoughts. His consciousness pulsates not between "objective consciousness" and fantasy, but between fantasy that offers isolated, secure self-gratification—what Abele calls "genteel autoeroticism"—and threatening fantasy that too directly exposes sexual feelings and thereby arouses the inevitable anxieties.

This infiltration of anxiety into Coverdale's pleasantly sublimated hedonism is implicit in the imagery of his hermitage, the locus classicus of emwombed voyeurism in Hawthorne. This "hollow chamber, of rare seclusion" (98), like Coverdale's bachelor apartment and hotel room,
is a place for lazy, solitary reverie. Its atmosphere is dreamy, warm, and soporific; Coverdale feels a "sensual influence" in the "pleasant scent of the wood, evolved by the hot sun." "Many trees mingled their fragrance into a thousand-fold odor" (101). Yet the imagery is bursting with the very sexual anxieties that necessitate Coverdale's retreat into solitary, sublimated fantasy: "A wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and, after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy" (98). The chamber "had been formed by the decay of some of the pine-branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled with its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulchre of its own leaves" (98). This is a floral "allegory" of the basic fantasy of the book, that of a destructive matrix of sexual entanglements among three or four characters, and of the central anxiety that is the creative stimulus of this fantasy—fear of the aggressive female, "of unusual size and luxuriance," whose embrace is strangling. Thus, the rest of the chapter invites us to relate this imagery to the plot itself. Coverdale wants to warn Priscilla "that her fragile thread of life has inextricably knotted itself with other and tougher threads, and most likely it will be broken," and that if she has surrendered her heart to Hollingsworth, "it is like casting a flower into a sepulchre" (100). Zenobia cries that her "miserable bond" with Westervelt "will strangle me at last!" (104).

Notice, however, that the plot reverses the direction of the aggression implicit in the imagery—the women are victims of male sadism.
and cruelty. The plot is not simply a reflection of Coverdale's anxieties, but a futile means of attempting to free himself from them by manipulating the destruction of the characters in whom they're embodied. Coverdale's creativity follows the rhythm of his fantasy. His isolated, sheltered nooks are his favorite spots for his literal but trivial artistry, his genteel, sentimental poetry, which we can guess consists of a gluttonous indulgence in discreetly spiritualized sexual revery.16 The hermitage was "an admirable place to make verses ... or to meditate an essay for the Dial" (99). In contrast, Coverdale's "authorship" of the plot is a compulsive, repressed response to sexual anxiety, and as such it is associated with states of mind that are painful, obsessive, nightmarish, and chaotic. In Coverdale's state of consciousness "betwixt dream and reality," the intrusion of anxiety into his idealized, "poetic" fantasy is the impetus to a fresh development in the projected drama, and the dissolution of Coverdale's tranquillity by renewed, anxious obsession with his three friends. We have seen this happen at the start of the novel, when Coverdale's Arcadian, pastoral fantasies about Blithedale run afoul of Zenobia. The hermitage becomes a place for "voyeuristic" observation, in which Coverdale "learns" of the incipient plot against Priscilla, and of a past connection between Zenobia and Westervelt. And these figures reappear to consummate the plot, in view of Coverdale's hotel window. As his sense of exclusion and alienation grows, Coverdale half-consciously seeks to escape from the obsessive fantasy by impelling it to its "tragic catastrophe," and this necessitates stronger self-
reassurances of the propriety, benevolence, and détachement of his interest in his friends' fates.

In all of its phases, Coverdale's fantasy is associated with art and literary invention. His hostile reflections on Hollingsworth in the hermitage have the form of an allegory of Hollingsworth's treatment of a yoke of oxen (100). Moments later, he warns Priscilla against Hollingsworth by means of the most sentimental literary convention imaginable; he enlists a passing bird to be his messenger (100). Coverdale's bitter feelings seem to stimulate some kind of "literary" creativity, even though there is often an ironic contrast between its surface prettiness and inanity and its "inner diabolism." Coverdale's reflections and observations in his hotel room offer a fairly complete picture of the merging of fantasy and reality in his consciousness, the artistic and also projective nature of this condition, and the transition from quiescence to obsession. Despite the warm, comfortable sluggishness of his situation, its "enwombed" atmosphere, Coverdale's ambition to recover a sense of reality by returning to "the settled system of things" (141) appears to get off to a promising start. He listens to the activities of the city and hotel, and "felt as if there could never be enough of it" (146). However, he is interested in these noises because they are "suggestive." Coverdale is clearly less inclined than his fellow bachelor-artist Clifford Pyncheon to enter the social reality from which he has detached himself. Instead, he retreats simultaneously into art and his state of enwombment:
Yet I felt a hesitation about plunging into this muddy tide of human activity and pastime. It suited me better, for the present, to linger on the brink, or hover in the air above it. So I spent the first day, and the greater part of the second, in the laziest manner possible, in a rocking-chair, inhaling the fragrance of a series of cigars, with my legs and slippered feet horizontally disposed, and in my hand a novel, purchased of a railroad bibliopolist. The gradual waste of my cigar accomplished itself with an easy and gentle expenditure of breath. My book was of the dullest, yet had a sort of sluggish flow, like that of a stream in which your boat is as often aground as afloat. Had there been a more impetuous rush, a more absorbing passion of the narrative, I should the sooner have struggled out of its uneasy current, and have given myself up to the swell and subsidence of my thoughts. (147)

The imagery of moving water connects Coverdale's somnolent state with the "ebb-tide" of his energies and also with the alarming sensation of "fluidity" he felt at Blithedale. Coverdale's mind absorbs the supposed opposites of community and city into a common realm of dream-experience with a common psychological symbolism. The images of stream and current hint that this half-waking state of consciousness has an inevitable, uncontrollable direction—but, paradoxically, a direction likened to that of a narrative. As the projected fantasy moves towards its catastrophe, there is a growing tension between the manipulated, staged quality of the plot as a "literary" creation of Coverdale and Coverdale's sense of being enthralled in an obsessive yet incomprehensible dream. His repressed anxieties and wishes are deterministic forces beyond his control which project themselves onto reality despite the measure of conscious sympathy which he does have for their victims, among whom, in the end, we can see that he is included.

Just how inescapable fantasy-projection is for Coverdale is apparent from his observations from the hotel window. Coverdale's
descriptions fuse seemingly random slice-of-life realism with recurrent and obsessive psychological imagery. The backyards and grassplots become another one of those warm, enclosed places rife with imagery suggestive of an excess of sexual imagination. The sun "lay tropically there, even when less than temperate in every other region" (148). The fruit on the trees is "singularly large, luxuriant, and abundant; as well it might, in a situation so warm and sheltered, and where the soil had doubtless been enriched to a more than natural fertility" (148). There are the same ripening grapes as at the hermitage. Obviously this Edenic scene is an appropriate setting for the reappearance of Zenobia. Similarly, Coverdale's observations take on a voyeuristic tone even before Zenobia reappears for him to spy on. Coverdale's interest in the "suggestiveness" of what he sees becomes peeping-tomish. There is a "vastly greater suggestiveness, in the back view of a residence"; the front is always "a veil and a concealment" (149). The chapter ends with an overt act of projection. Over one of the windows of the boarding-house Coverdale spies a dove, "looking very dreary and forlorn" (152). Coverdale admits to investing her with "a slight, fantastic pathos," which vanishes when she flies away, but nonetheless the dove is back in the same place the next day, as if emblematic of Coverdale's undefined feelings of sadness in regards to Zenobia and Priscilla. Once again, reality acts as if it were a symbolic projection of Coverdale's state of mind.

The imagery alone might allow us to conclude that Zenobia and Priscilla's reappearance results from Coverdale's obsession with them,
but on top of this Coverdale is plagued by his obsession the night before he sees Zenobia in the window. His plight is similar to that of his first night at Blithedale, a night of "half-waking dreams" in which he was tormented by a "fixed idea" (38). Interestingly, Coverdale now admits that he left Blithedale in an attempt to free himself from his obsession with the three: "Dreams had tormented me, throughout the night. The train of thoughts which, for months past, had worn a track through my mind, and to escape which was one of my chief objects in leaving Blithedale, kept treading remorselessly to-and-fro, in their old footsteps, while slumber left me impotent to regulate them" (153).

After all this, the actual event of Zenobia's turning up in the boardinghouse seems a matter of course; "it was with no positive surprise, but as if I had all along expected the incident" (155). Coverdale himself seems to be coming to realize that reality is being created by dream, and to recognize Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla as creatures of his fantasy, having an obsessive grip on him: "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" (157). This is the context in which Coverdale says, "I began to long for a catastrophe" (157). Coverdale wills the "tragic catastrophe" because the melodrama is a relentless, tormenting fantasy whose emotional meaning he can neither
admit nor escape, much as he tries to intellectualize his absorption in it by thinking of it as some unspecified "problem." Emotional chaos and artistic control, nightmare and drama, become perfectly fused. Coverdale's three friends are at once "goblins of flesh and blood" and "actors in a drama," "upon my mental stage" (156).

The tension between Coverdale's conscious confusion and pain and the fatalistic control of the plot by his repressed anxieties reaches its climax in the midnight search for Zenobia's body. Zenobia's drowning is the catastrophe of his melodrama, which he has anticipated, planned, and as we will see, abetted, ever since his first night at Blithedale; yet at the same time it is an uncontrollable eruption of nightmare into reality. Hawthorne is absolutely overt about this:

I must have fallen asleep, and had a dream, all the circumstances of which utterly vanished at the moment when they converged to some tragical catastrophe, and thus grew too powerful for the thin sphere of slumber that enveloped them. Starting from the ground, I found the risen moon shining upon the rugged face of the rock, and myself all in a tremble. (228)

It is hard to see how it could have been indicated more plainly, that Zenobia's death is brought about by Coverdale's repressed self, projecting its wishes onto reality through dream. The inevitability of the moment is reinforced by the similarity of its atmosphere to Coverdale's first night of "prophetic" dreams, from which he also suddenly awoke into an eerie moonlight. In fact, the search for Zenobia's body in the river, starkly realistic as it seems, is a culmination of the imagery running throughout the book which suggests the absorption of reality into a "current" of dream, a dark, chaotic
flux, paradoxically moving in an inevitable direction. The black river, with its "slow, funereal motion, downward" (233), glides through some underworld of the mind. Its mysteriousness and obscurity are a projected image of the hidden workings of Coverdale's own consciousness. Zenobia once, in rejecting Coverdale's counsels, told him, "It needs a wild steersman when we voyage through Chaos!" (142). Ironically, but not surprisingly, Coverdale is her helmsman on this last voyage.

For, although he is genuinely shocked and horrified by Zenobia's death, Coverdale is at the same time curiously in control of matters in this scene. Beneath emotional chaos, his struggle to assimilate a horror which seems inconceivable, Coverdale acts with strange command, precisely as if, on some subliminal level, he knows what has happened and has planned how things will proceed. "A nameless presentiment" (231) leads him to precisely that spot on the river where that afternoon he had wondered whether anyone had ever drowned himself. He summons Hollingsworth to the task, and, as we noted previously, revengefully catches every sign of fear and nervousness in him, such as that "he was either awake, or sleeping very lightly" (229). He steers the boat, plans how they will go about their search, and picks out the exact spot where the body will be found. The scene perfectly blends his conscious horror and disbelief with repressed foreknowledge and control.

Our look at Coverdale's dream experience indicates that the interpretation of the plot as a projected fantasy of Coverdale's is not an esoteric theory at all, but is in keeping with the insight we are offered into Coverdale's peculiar states of consciousness. Coverdale's
inability to attain an "objective" state of mind; the persistent intrusion of his anxieties and obsessions into both his comfortable, regressive fantasies and his attempts at realistic observation; the association of his obsessive and prophetic dream-states and fantasies with art, yet also with inscrutability, chaos, and terror—all compel us to the conclusion that Coverdale's repressed self, manifested in his dreams, has a deterministic power over reality. The fusion of dream and reality is an ontological property of Coverdale's world, but it is also an observable process in his mind. Yet because Coverdale's fantasy-projection is part of his manifest psychology, we can recognize that his anxieties are compulsive forces autonomous from his surface feelings. While turning our attention to the subtle ways in which Coverdale assists the plot to its wish-fulfilling catastrophe, we must keep in mind that Coverdale constantly struggles to repress any suspicion that he has longed for or caused the destruction of his friends.

II

The aspect of Coverdale's subconscious duplicity which has enjoyed the most remarkable success in going undetected is that which most directly conceals his authorship of the plot—his constant professions of bafflement over the past history of the characters and the nature of their present entanglements. Practically everyone has accepted Coverdale's ignorance over what is going on at face value, and considered it a flaw in Hawthorne's handling of his first-person narrator. Crews especially emphasizes Coverdale's obtuseness, as a sign that
Hawthorne himself "backed away from the simplest explanations of fact" in an effort to evade the private, oedipal symbolism of his plot. "No narrator," Crews tells us, "ever had worse luck than Coverdale in learning the most essential facts about the figures whose story we are supposed to enjoy." This remark perfectly expresses Crews' reversion to the idea that in _Blithedale_ Hawthorne was trying—desperately—to write a straightforward story. My position is that Coverdale's prolonged mystification over most of the fundamental matters of the plot is, like all of the peculiarities in his relationship to his story, a manifestation of his intricately self-deceptive psychology, and that this psychology is, not just the crux of the novel, but the novel itself. The entire world of _Blithedale_ is a projected fantasy of Coverdale's; yet because of the drastic split in Coverdale between his admissible self-images and the repressed feelings and wishes which he projects onto reality, the projected world of the book consistently serves to ironically expose the deceptiveness of Coverdale's surface personality. In other words, since the unfolding of the plot through the process of fantasy-projection proceeds independently of Coverdale's surface volition, the reader is enabled to discern what is going on despite Coverdale's puzzlement—and, equally important, can detect that Coverdale's ignorance is self-imposed, since, naturally, the same information and awareness that are available to the reader are also available to the first-person narrator, if he exercises sufficient insight. In this section, I will show that such a modicum of insight is needed to recognize some of the crucial facts of the plot—such as that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady,
and that Zenobia intends to betray her back into the hands of Westervelt—that it is inconceivable that Coverdale has not done so. Furthermore, there is evidence that he has done so, and that he represses his awareness of what is going on, and willfully remains ignorant, in order to let the plot take its wish-fulfilling course without the interference of his conscious sympathies. His self-deceptive pose of mystification also has the advantage of concealing from himself his own covert endorsement of the characters' fates. The result is a doubleness wondrous in its perfection: Coverdale can persuade himself that he is really interested in saving his friends, and especially Priscilla, from a catastrophe, and at the same time consciously ignore the often blatant indications of what is happening, and thus render his supposed benevolence an ineffectual wish, while the characters rush to their secretly gratifying destruction. To uncover this duplicity, we will conduct a very simple investigation, yet one to which Blithedale's critics have been singularly remiss in applying themselves: we will test Coverdale's ostensible ignorance and confusion against the implications of the text. The results will show that if Coverdale is as poor a detective as he appears, he must have motives for wanting to be, because he persistently and incredibly fails to catch an abundance of clues to the characters' past and present relationships, clues that are unmistakable to a careful reader.

First of all, we should note that Coverdale is less than open in reporting his thoughts to the reader. He repeatedly tells us that he dreams, or is obsessed with the "mystery" or "problem" of his friends,
or engages in innumerable fruitless speculations on their intentions towards each other, without ever disclosing anything very definite about the contents of his thoughts and suspicions. Typically, he remains vague and general: "I spent a great deal of time, uselessly, in trying to conjecture what Hollingsworth meant to do with them—and they with him!" (68); "I remained under the tuft of maples, doing my utmost to draw an inference from the scene that had just passed" (87); "in all the weeks of my absence, my thoughts continually reverted back, brooding over the by-gone months, and bringing up incidents that seemed hardly to have left a trace of themselves, in their passage. I spent painful hours in recalling these trifles, and rendering them more misty and unsubstantial than at first, by the quantity of speculative musing, thus kneaded in with them" (194). Coverdale is so persistent about concealing his thoughts and proclaiming his mystification, that we might guess he has reasons for obscuring—and actually rendering obscure—his state of awareness and suspicion of what is happening. He is no less secretive about his dreams and obsessive reveries. On only one occasion does he tell specifically what he has dreamt (153), but even here he doesn't give any details about "the train of thoughts which, for months past, had worn a track through my mind" (153). He conspicuously avoids revealing anything about the "fixed idea" that obsesses him on the night of his arrival. Coverdale must have some kind of motivation for withholding his thoughts from the reader so pertinaciously.

Early in the novel, Coverdale's suspect mystification is detectable in his failure to connect Priscilla with Old Moodie. When Moodie
approached Coverdale in the first chapter, Coverdale advised him to take his favor to Hollingsworth (7), and later, in answer to Coverdale's question as to how he met Priscilla, Hollingsworth says, "An old man brought her to my lodgings . . . and begged me to convey her to Blithedale, where--so I understood him--she had friends" (30). Shortly afterwards, Coverdale sees Priscilla knitting one of her silk purses, and remarks, "I remembered to have seen just such purses, before. Indeed, I was the possessor of one" (35). Now, Coverdale knows that it is Old Moodie who sells these purses (see 83-84); why, then, does he seem not to suspect that Moodie was the old man who brought Priscilla to Hollingsworth? In "A Visitor from Town," Coverdale talks as if he doesn't believe Hollingsworth and Moodie have met before, noting that Hollingsworth addressed "the stranger as an acquaintance" (83). Yet in the same chapter, we get a strong hint that Coverdale's probing and speculation actually serve to prolong "riddles" which he is in a position to solve. When Coverdale asks Moodie who makes the purses, Hollingsworth pointedly interrupts, "Why do you trouble him with needless questions, Coverdale? . . . You must have known, long ago, that it was Priscilla" (85). Coverdale does already know that Priscilla makes the purses, and that Moodie sells them; it is just not probable that he could be blind to a connection between the two. However, at this point we can't tell whether Coverdale is practicing a deliberate deception on the reader, by appearing more obtuse than he really is, or whether he is actually trying to keep himself in the dark.

Sometimes Coverdale's questionable behavior as a detective takes the form of mere silence; he simply passes over, without comment,
scenes which afford important clues about the matters he is supposedly investigating. The most outstanding instance of this is "Zenobia's Legend." The conclusion of this piece, it will be recalled, transparently recounts Zenobia's meeting with Westervelt in the woods, and his warning to Zenobia to "fling the girl off," lest she "plague you . . . in more ways than one" (104). Now, Coverdale is the only member of Zenobia's audience in a position to recognize this, since he overheard her conversation with the Professor. Although Coverdale distrusted his senses in that scene, the legend should assure him that he overheard correctly. He should be able to recognize the "more ways than one" in which Priscilla will be Zenobia's evil fate: "In love, in worldly fortune, in all your pursuit of happiness, she is doomed to fling a blight over your prospects" (115). He must be able to see that Zenobia has reached the decision to betray Priscilla back into Westervelt's power. And it is inconceivable that he could miss the implication that Priscilla is the Veiled Lady, for Zenobia suggests it so bluntly that any spectator could catch it: "Just at the moment, so far as can be ascertained, when the Veiled Lady vanished, a maiden, pale and shadowy, rose up amid a knot of visionary people, who were seeking for the better life" (114). Nevertheless, when Zenobia flings her piece of gauze over Priscilla, while saying, "Arise, Magician! . . . Here is the Veiled Lady!" (116), Coverdale simply treats the incident as a happy dramatic effect: "Her nerves being none of the strongest, Priscilla hardly recovered her equanimity during the rest of the evening. This, to be sure, was a great pity; but, nevertheless, we thought it a very bright idea of Zenobia's, to bring her legend to so effective a conclusion" (116).
At the moment, this naivety may seem ironic and insinuating; but as Priscilla's betrayal approaches, it becomes increasingly obvious that Coverdale really does want to remain ignorant, and also appear ignorant, of that event, which means that he ignores or represses the compelling evidence available to him which clearly would enable him to anticipate it. When the two women and Westervelt reappear together in the boardinghouse, Coverdale tells us that he "contrived, and alternately rejected, innumerable methods of accounting for the presence of Zenobia and Priscilla, and the connection of Westervelt with both" (160). It is hard to believe that Coverdale could honestly be so baffled over these things, in view of what he overheard in the forest, and the implications of Zenobia's legend, especially since he sees Zenobia passionately engaged in a discussion with Westervelt (158), as she was in the forest when he urged her to "fling the girl off." In the scenes leading up to Priscilla's disappearance in the carriage with Zenobia and Westervelt, there are a number of indications that Coverdale does suspect much of what is going on. His peroration on his duty as an observer of Hollingsworth and Zenobia hints at an accurate anticipation of their crime: "But still, no trait of original nobility of character; no struggle against temptation; no iron necessity of will, on the one hand, nor extenuating circumstance to be derived from passion and despair, on the other . . . would go unappreciated" (161). Iron necessity of will clearly applies to Hollingsworth, and passion, despair, and struggle against temptation to Zenobia. In the forest Coverdale heard Zenobia exclaim at first that she would be faithful to Priscilla, and when he
takes leave of Zenobia upon returning to town, she is troubled and in need of a "confidant," even though she appears to have won Hollingsworth (141)—which suggests her reluctance to go through with Westervelt's scheme, and fear of its futility. Furthermore, when Coverdale "began to long for a catastrophe," he said that Priscilla "must perish by her tenderness and faith" (157). However vaguely stated, Coverdale's anticipations are in accord with the actual plot against Priscilla; implicit in them is an awareness that Priscilla will come to grief because Zenobia, in conspiracy with Hollingsworth, betrays her in some way out of fear of her as one who is fated to be her "deadliest enemy" in love (115).

In the chapter "They Vanish," Coverdale's behavior is truly remarkable. He observes that Zenobia's and Priscilla's interests are so opposed "that, on one part or the other, a great grief, if not likewise a great wrong, seemed a matter of necessity" (168). He clearly senses that Priscilla is being borne towards some ill fate, designed by Zenobia and involving Westervelt. Yet, incredibly, he fails to recognize that Priscilla is adorned in the costume of the Veiled Lady: "She was now dressed in pure white, set off with some kind of a gauzy fabric, which . . . seems to be floating about her like a mist" (169). Coverdale's only reaction is, "I wondered what Zenobia meant by evolving so much loveliness out of this poor girl." He seems to have forgotten that at the climax of her legend Zenobia, "arriving at the catastrophe, and uttering the fatal words . . . flung the gauze over Priscilla's head" (116). There are other clues—the look of "melancholy kindness"
Zenobia bestows on Priscilla, suggesting her reluctance—which, however, Coverdale "could not understand" (169), Zenobia's Judas-like kiss of Priscilla just afterwards, and the fact that Westervelt "was elaborately dressed, as if for some grand entertainment" (172). Nevertheless, after all this, Coverdale tells us that he has been able to reach "no further, by my most earnest study, than to an uncertain sense of something hidden from me" (174). And later, in the village hall, Coverdale acts as if it is not until there that he realizes Priscilla is the Veiled Lady, and Westervelt her mesmerist; he says that upon recognizing Westervelt, "a quick association of ideas made me shudder, from head to foot" (200).

Undoubtedly, Coverdale has been exposed to sufficient evidence to be able to recognize Priscilla's identity and the nature and purpose of the plot against her. In putting himself forth as if he were totally in the dark, Coverdale is lying to us either with cynical deliberateness, or as a result of lying to himself. This question can be decided on the basis of Coverdale's motivation. He has obvious reasons not only to appear ignorant of Priscilla's approaching fate, but to actually keep himself ignorant of it—or rather, vaguely aware that she is in danger, so that he can convince himself of his sympathy for her, but not sufficiently suspicious as to be able to hinder the execution of the plot. Coverdale secretly wants Priscilla's betrayal to take place, because it is the mechanism by which Zenobia incurs some tangible and thereby punishable guilt for her aggressive and brazen sexual behavior, and also the means by which Hollingsworth consummates his character as the fiend.
Coverdale predicted he would become, by cold-heartedly agreeing to the betrayal of his darling in order to further his obsessive ends. However, these malicious wishes must be repressed, as they cannot very well be if Coverdale is consciously aware of what is about to happen, but does nothing to prevent it. The extent to which his destructive desires threaten to become conscious is evident from the reflections in which he "began to long for a catastrophe" shortly before the scene of Priscilla's abduction in the carriage. The plot against Priscilla cannot be carried out, and Coverdale at the same time remain convinced of his own benevolent intention of saving her, unless he can also convince himself of his ignorance of what was about to happen. As usual, he succeeds with brilliantly self-deceptive duplicity in maintaining his humanitarian stance even as Zenobia's and Hollingsworth's crime is carried out, by casting a veil over his own eyes. When he looks at Priscilla, "there fell upon my heart an intolerable burthen of despondency, the purport of which I could not tell, but only felt it to bear reference to her" (171). In view of such vague sympathy, Coverdale will doubtless be excused for the feebleness of his rescue attempt. He asks Priscilla whether it is her choice to go, when he already knows that she has no free will.23

However, Coverdale inadvertently gives the game away. He blatantly stirs up Zenobia's fear and jealousy of Priscilla, in respect to Hollingsworth, even though he knows that Priscilla is in danger. He taunts Zenobia with reminders of Priscilla's "susceptibility" to Hollingsworth, and with the idea, which he expressed to himself long
before (78-79), that Hollingsworth prefers Priscilla to herself because of the girl's submissiveness: "Hollingsworth could hardly give his affections to a person capable of taking an independent stand, but only to one whom he might absorb into himself. He has certainly shown great tenderness for Priscilla" (167). In Coverdale's own words, his repeated mention of Hollingsworth to Zenobia in ways suggestive of his attraction to Priscilla is "provocation" (171). Zenobia at first turns pale, but at last explodes with scathing bitterness, "It is dangerous, sir, believe me, to tamper thus with earnest human passions" (170). At the same time she assumes "a malign look which wandered from my face to Priscilla's" (170). Far from trying to prevent Priscilla's betrayal, Coverdale freshly incites the fears in Zenobia which motivate it. Yet, even though he is obviously trying to revengefully, jealously sting Zenobia with fear and ridicule the man she loves, and as clearly as he would be gratified by Zenobia and Hollingsworth incurring some guilt worthy of severe punishment, Coverdale can tell Zenobia that he keeps bringing up Hollingsworth out of "an uncertain sense of some duty to perform" (170)! In the very act of manifesting his indifference to Priscilla as a pawn by means of which Hollingsworth and Zenobia achieve the criminality for which he has destined them (see 161), Coverdale can believe that he wants to save her. However, as Zenobia herself recognizes, Coverdale's pretense is rather too thin. As soon as Priscilla says that Hollingsworth told her to come to town with Zenobia, Coverdale has confirmed him as the arch-villain, and leaves the crime to its commission: "I wash my hands of it all. On Hollingsworth's head be the consequences!" (171).
The plot against Priscilla is the clearest instance of Coverdale's blinding himself to what is going on so that his melodrama can take its course. However, Coverdale's naivety is also suspect in the matter of Zenobia's punishment—that is, Hollingsworth's abandonment of her for Priscilla. In "Fauntleroy," Coverdale learns that Zenobia and Priscilla are half-sisters, that Zenobia inherited the wealth of Moodie's brother because Moodie himself was supposed dead, and also that Moodie knows he is actually entitled to this inheritance. In the interview between Moodie and Zenobia at the end of this chapter, Moodie all but states that he will deprive Zenobia of her wealth, and bestow it on Priscilla, if Priscilla comes to any harm. Coverdale knows that she has, and is thus in a position to suspect that the transfer of the inheritance will take place. It is improbable that he could not anticipate the effect which this event would have on Hollingsworth's "affections." The very fact that he believes Hollingsworth consented to Priscilla's betrayal in the first place shows that he is aware that the man is willing to sacrifice even the woman whose docile temperament he prefers—and for what reason, if not to further his obsessive scheme by securing Zenobia's wealth? Long before, Coverdale told us that Hollingsworth has no room for "individual attachments, unless they could minister, in some way, to the terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God" (55)—meaning his monomaniacal "philanthropic theory." In light of this understanding of his character, Coverdale is suspiciously slow to recognize Hollingsworth's financial motivation towards Zenobia. For example, when Hollingsworth tells him of the building he plans to
construct at Blithedale, "I offer my edifice as a spectacle to the world . . . that it may take example and build many another like it,"

Coverdale says that he is completely baffled: "Twist these words how I might, they offered no very satisfactory import" (80). Yet it is really incredible that he could fail to recognize that Hollingsworth is talking about his reformatory, and not a cottage he plans to share with Zenobia. Coverdale has "seen him, a hundred times, with a pencil and sheet of paper, sketching the facade, the side-view, or the rear of the structure . . . as lovingly as another man might plan those of the projected home, where he meant to be happy with his wife and children" (56).

Later, in the woods, when Westervelt implies to Coverdale that Hollingsworth is deliberately exploiting Zenobia's feelings in order to secure "the necessary funds for realizing his plan in brick and mortar" (94), Coverdale's spontaneous imitation of Westervelt's cynical laugh indicates he has secretly entertained the idea himself. And in "A Crisis," Coverdale does admit, at least, that he has realized that Hollingsworth has gotten ahold of Zenobia's wealth (132). It would be far from impossible, then, for Coverdale to foresee that the transfer of the inheritance would bring about Hollingsworth's rejection of Zenobia and renewed concern for Priscilla.

However, in the scene in which Hollingsworth rescues Priscilla on the stage of the village hall, Coverdale shows the same combination of ostensible naivety and covert anticipation as before Priscilla's betrayal. He obviously relishes the opportunity to torment Hollingsworth over his complicity in the girl's fate; he whispers, "What have you done
with Priscilla?" into his ear "like an evil spirit, bringing up reminiscences of a man's sins" (200), and Hollingsworth reacts "as if I had thrust a knife into him." Yet in complete contradiction to the view of Hollingsworth's motives which this aggressive question implies, Coverdale betrays no hint of cynicism over Hollingsworth's reasons for recovering Priscilla from Westervelt; he summons her out of her trance with "the whole power of his great, stern, yet tender soul" (203).

Coverdale does not want it to appear to either himself or the reader that he has anticipated the full extent of Hollingsworth's crassness, yet there are indications that he has done precisely that, on some repressed level of awareness. He suspiciously avoids any explanation at all of what has brought him to a performance of the Veiled Lady, except to make it sufficiently clear that it has to do with his obsession with his friends. His first question to Hollingsworth is about Zenobia, and it seems innocuous enough until we consider how it is asked. Upon recognizing Hollingsworth in the audience, Coverdale feels himself "irresistibly moved to step over the intervening benches, lay my hand on his shoulder, put my mouth close to his ear, and address him in a sepulchral, melodramatic whisper:--'Hollingsworth! Where have you left Zenobia!'" (197). Coverdale calls this impulsive act an "attack" on Hollingsworth, and indeed, it allows us to see Coverdale anticipating with relish the progress of his melodrama, in an unguarded moment. His "sepulchral, melodramatic" tone carries the unmistakable implication that Hollingsworth's purposes towards Zenobia are none too kind, and the idea of his "leaving" her somewhere suggests abandonment of her.
Perhaps we can also detect Coverdale's enjoyment of his drama, in his
"breathless suspense" over his usual "presentiment of some strange
event at hand" (201). However, Coverdale must repress his anticipation
of events, and appear baffled by what is happening, precisely because
the plot gratifies secret, malevolent wishes which he mustn't consciously
admit. For him to acknowledge his anticipation of the plot would bring
him into dangerously close contact with the feelings which accompany
that foreknowledge. Coverdale could hardly convince himself more
easily of his harmlessness towards his friends, than by believing that
he doesn't know what's going on among them.

As his melodrama rushes towards its catastrophe, the self-
protective function of Coverdale's naiveté becomes more apparent.
Shortly after the episode in the village hall, we see Coverdale rushing
back to Blithedale "to learn the upshot of all my story" (205), experi-
encing a mysterious "wild exhilaration" (205) alternating with a
"sickness of the spirits" (206), and a foreboding of some impending evil.
Coverdale's unaccountable and "causeless" sensations can be nothing
other than his repressed emotions over the anticipated catastrophe of
his story, but in view of the danger of their surfacing, we could almost
predict that Coverdale would rehearse his bewilderment over the entire
matter. We will see that when Coverdale is confronted by his three
friends at Eliot's pulpit, Zenobia actually implicates him in her
destruction, thereby heightening the urgency of his asserting his ignorance:

And what subjects had been discussed here? All, no doubt,
that, for so many months past, had kept my heart and my
imagination idly feverish. Zenobia's whole character and
history; the true nature of her mysterious connection with
Westervelt; her later purposes towards Hollingsworth, and,
reciprocally, his in reference to her; and, finally, the degree in which Zenobia had been cognizant of the plot against Prisilla, and what, at last, had been the real object of that scheme. On these points, as before, I was left to my own conjectures. (215-16)

This is something of a climax to Coverdale’s attempt to obfuscate his own mind. All of the matters over which Coverdale professes to be mystified are clear enough. They have been hinted too often, or revealed too plainly, to be mistaken, and their approaching consequences Coverdale could and does forbode. Yet Coverdale seems to take refuge in the fact that few of the solutions to these "riddles" become absolutely explicit, and to find in this an excuse to remain hazy about everything. Implicitly, Coverdale demands that the plot resolve itself into a matter of clear-cut, objective fact, and the utility of this attitude is obvious: he can turn his back on the inner, obsessive, nightmarish quality of the whole experience, the deep pull which the story has on his repressed emotions. Remaining preoccupied with the supposed obscurity of events enables him to avoid confronting their obsessive significance. Coverdale must persuade himself of his confusion because the destructive direction of his melodrama is all too discernible; it is just not possible that at this late moment Coverdale could honestly be in doubt about such matters as the "real object" of the plot against Prisilla, or Zenobia’s complicity in that scheme. His effort to envelop even the most fundamental awarenesses in a vague uncertainty indicates the desperation with which he fears to recognize the fulfillment of his own repressed desires, in what has happened and is about to happen.
In his final talk with Zenobia, after which he lies down and dreams her death into reality, we can see Coverdale's blinding of his conscious awareness to the approach of his long-awaited catastrophe, as well as a suspension of his conscious emotions. Throughout the scene, Coverdale makes only brief remarks which do little to reveal his thoughts and feelings about Zenobia's fate, except to sustain a monotone of "reverent sympathy." When she has gone, Coverdale noticeably fails to clarify what's going on in his mind. He simply remarks that he is "worn-out with emotion on my own behalf, and sympathy for others" (228), and falls asleep. There is something bizarre about this, in keeping with his dream's magical causation of Zenobia's death. It is as if Coverdale's waking consciousness has been suspended in a haze, so that it cannot interfere with the realization of his repressed fantasy. For in this chapter intimations of Zenobia's imminent death are so numerous, and so blatant, that it is otherwise inconceivable that the thought could not occur to Coverdale, that she is about to kill herself. It never does, even though he remarks upon the "deathlike hue" of her face (233), and, when she gives him her hand in farewell, exclaims, "How very cold! ... What can be the reason? It is really deathlike!" (227). Zenobia replies that "the extremities die first, they say," and that "when you next hear of Zenobia, her face will be behind the black-veil; so look your last at it now—for all is over!" (227-28). She also fiercely exclaims that Hollingsworth has murdered her, and that she will haunt him (226). Earlier, Coverdale and then Zenobia herself said that she was on trial
"for her life" (213, 214). An observer who misses clues like these must have repressed motives for doing so powerful enough to enshroud his rational faculties.

That is, unless Coverdale is simply lying to the reader about his state of awareness and anticipation—a supposition which must be rejected because Coverdale would have nothing to gain, psychologically, by such a course. The immediate purpose and value of Coverdale's stance of naivety is self-deception. By repressing his anticipation of events and attendant emotions, and keeping himself baffled, he can allow the plot to realize his repressed wishes and at the same time avoid the recognition that this is what it is doing. The disparity between Coverdale's stance of naivety and puzzlement and the knowledge which is available to him confirms that Coverdale's surface relationship to his story is deceptive. The glimpses we get of the covert excitement with which he anticipates the course of his play, plus his terror of recognizing his own malicious interest in it, should alert us to the key realization that the "logic" behind all of his peculiar and contradictory behavior as a narrator and observer is a constant tension between the repression and reemergence of overwhelming emotions towards his friends. The two prime strategies by which Coverdale struggles to repress the tormenting or gratifying, but ever-obsessive feelings which bind him to his friends' fates, are intellectualization and idealization. In the remainder of this chapter we will take a peep beneath these two self-deceiving masks, an undertaking which, like the scrutiny of Coverdale's perpetual bafflement, is particularly
important for reaching a new understanding of the novel, since the majority of *Blithedale's* critics have failed to penetrate Coverdale's facades, even though for himself they are shaky bulkheads indeed, through which that dark undercurrent of passion and self-knowledge threatens to pour with growing vehemence.

III

At the start of this essay I mentioned, as one of the ways in which point of view in *The Blithedale Romance* is an ironic examination of the eccentricities of Hawthorne's omniscient narration, that Coverdale's incessant speculating reflects the preoccupation of Hawthorne's narrators with ambivalences. Their characteristic vacillation over the credibility of supernatural events and rumors about the characters' backgrounds or motives is rooted, not as it seems, in intellectual and empirical uncertainties, but in the matter's underlying emotional significance. We have just now seen that Coverdale's fruitless speculating is a means of conscious retreat from the intertwined pain and pleasure attached to his repressed anticipation of the plot. However, Coverdale evades these feelings not only through ignorance, but through the very stance of being a detached observer and investigator. At the same time that he turns his back on what is going on, he persists in intellectualizing his interest in his friends, by regarding what are really reflections of unresolved emotional tensions within himself as external, empirical problems. This might seem an unavoidable consequence of the projection of those tensions onto reality, if it were not for the fact that Coverdale so blatantly
uses his pose of intellectual detachment to avoid acknowledging his feelings towards his friends and their conflict; even as, on several occasions, his very stance of being an investigator of their lives becomes a means of releasing revengeful emotions towards them.

A close look at Coverdale's belief that his obsession with his friends is an intellectual interest in the factual solution of a mystery or "problem" will chronicle a sustained and more or less desperate flight from introspection, not at all unlike the submersion of the emotional and psychological significance of material accomplished by earlier narrators' concern with questions of fact and plausibility.

Coverdale's penchant for transforming emotionally potent subjects into matters for factual speculation, thereby concealing from himself to a great extent the personal emotional roots of his interest in them, is well illustrated by his fascination with the question of Zenobia's virginity. As Crews points out, the answer to this question is obvious. Coverdale's inability to accept it indicates an emotional block, which he disguises as an uncertainty as to matter of fact. At bottom, Coverdale cannot decide whether sexual passion in a woman is damming or not; his compulsive anxieties treat it as such, but on more than one occasion Coverdale responds favorably to Zenobia's beauty and sexual display, and complains about the repression of these in most modern women. This emotional split is unnerving when too directly experienced, as we can see from the admixture of excitement, guilt, and feeling of being "defrauded" (46) which arises from Coverdale's feverish intuition that "Zenobia is a wife." Consequently, Coverdale decides on the spot
that his interest in Zenobia's sexuality is "purely speculative" (48). He represses his deadlocked emotional conflict by steadfastly regarding her sexuality as an object of factual speculation. He tells her that he is seeking to discover "the mystery of your life" (47), which turns out to be "the true nature of her mysterious connection with Westervelt" (215). Was it an "attachment" or a "secret marriage" (189)? Of course, the answer to this question determines whether Zenobia's aggressive pursuit of Hollingsworth is adulterous. The matter is never resolved to Coverdale's satisfaction. At Zenobia's funeral, he still hopes to probe Westervelt, in his "eager curiosity to discover some tangible truth, as to his relation with Zenobia" (239). However, this perpetual uncertainty is really what Coverdale secretly wants. By keeping himself preoccupied with the question whether Zenobia is a wife, Coverdale can pretend that his interest in her is simply as one of a number of mysteries before him, and can avoid confronting the real problem, which is in his own feelings. The question which he investigates, with its strong moral tinge, is actually irrelevant to this problem. Regardless of whether or not Zenobia was married to Westervelt, or how many and what kinds of "attachments" she has had in the past, the facts are that she is a brazenly sensual woman and is in mad pursuit of Hollingsworth. No disclosure about her past could resolve Coverdale's deep ambivalence over her—the tension between his anxiety over her sexual boldness and his resentful, jealous sense of sexual exclusion. But regarding the whole thing as a question of whether Zenobia's intentions towards Hollingsworth are adulterous does enable Coverdale to disguise his own
powerful emotional ambivalence towards her beneath an attitude of disinterested yet sympathetic moral judgment, which affords him the luxury of reflecting, "was it not a perilous and dreadful wrong, which she was meditating towards herself and Hollingsworth?" (127).

Coverdale's insistence on being a detached observer and investigator is directly proportional to the threat of his recognizing his emotional involvement. Perhaps the best example of this is his well-known speech about his part in the story of his friends being like "that of the Chorus in a classic play" (97). This passage has been--I am tempted to say--dutifully treated by critics, as a set piece on Coverdale as "a spiritualized Paul Pry," an observer who witnesses the actions of others, searches into their hearts, and feels vicariously through them, without becoming involved on his own behalf. However, no one has asked why Coverdale formulates this view of his relationship to his friends just when he does, immediately after his meeting with Westervelt on the forest path, and just as he is looking forward to overhearing an anticipated encounter between Zenobia and the Professor. Obviously, it sanctions his spying as an "office" for which he has been chosen by "Destiny," but if we realize how Westervelt has secretly affected Coverdale, we can see that his insistence on his detachment is a response to a more pressing need for self-reassurance. Westervelt is a projection of Coverdale's repressed personality--all of those "unspiritual," essentially sadistic attitudes which lie beneath his facades, and actually motivate him as an artist. I will present the full evidence for this later; here it is sufficient to show that
Coverdale finds Westervelt so repulsive because he senses that his own real feelings towards his friends are being exposed. In fact, Coverdale tells us right off that his distaste for the man springs from his "freedom of expression," his "naked exposure" of a personality that should be kept hidden:

His countenance—I hardly know how to describe the peculiarity—had an indecorum in it, a kind of rudeness, a hard, coarse, forth-putting freedom of expression, which no degree of external polish could have abated, one single jot. Not that it was vulgar. But he had no fineness of nature; there was in his eyes (although they might have artifice enough of another sort) the naked exposure of something that ought not to be left prominent. (91-92)

The Professor's remarks about Zenobia, Priscilla, and Hollingsworth, put forth in superior, satirical, and suggestive tones, echo back to Coverdale his own feelings towards them, stripped of the coating of benevolence, sympathy, and "ideality" in which he envelops them. His opinion of the respective physical merits of Zenobia and Priscilla perfectly reflects Coverdale's unacknowledged feelings; Priscilla is one of those delicate, nervous young creatures, not uncommon in New England, and whom I suppose to have become what we find them by the gradual refining away of the physical system, among your women. 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. Zenobia, even with her uncomfortable surplus of vitality, is far the better model of womanhood. (95-96)

There could hardly be a more exact summary of Coverdale's intense and anxious fascination with Zenobia, and unadmitted contempt for Priscilla's sickliness, beneath his professed attraction to her "spirituality."

Throughout much of the passage, Westervelt echos Coverdale almost verbatim.
Coverdale too complains about the repressed character of local women, and contrasts them to Zenobia: "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"—she exudes "a certain warm and rich characteristic, which seems, for the most part, to have been refined away out of the feminine system" (17). At bottom, Coverdale too knows that Zenobia is the preferable example of womanhood, despite her "uncomfortable surplus of vitality." Priscilla is simply a means of relief from this discomfort, a safer, but less satisfying, object of contemplation, and we occasionally get a glimpse of Coverdale's repressed opinion of her "Sibylline attributes," in remarks about "the thin and watery blood that left her cheek so pallid" (188), and so on. In one remarkable instance, he admits that Priscilla is simply a "poor little seamstress, as Zenobia rightly called her," and that this spiritualizing of her is only idle "fancy-work" (100)—and then turns around and attributes this "skeptical and sneering view" to the influence of Westervelt (101)!

Coverdale has good reason to disavow these unsentimental moments, which disclose his secret agreement with Westervelt's blunt sexual appraisal of the two women, because they strike at the heart of his protective idealization of himself as an emotionally detached observer, incapable of being hurt by what happens.

Perhaps even more threatening is Westervelt's derisive "sketch of Hollingsworth's character and purposes" (94), because it confronts Coverdale with his own opinion of the man, "despiritualized."
Westervelt's tone nakedly exposes all of Coverdale's snobbish contempt for Hollingsworth's manners and social standing, his sexual jealousy that such a boor should succeed with Zenobia, and his suspicion that he is intentionally exploiting her, which is too uncharitable to be admitted—all of those real and slightly rotten feelings, which Coverdale customarily lumps beneath oozings of spiritual gravy, lofty, compassionate, moralizing speeches about how sad the downfall of such a noble and tender soul. Westervelt's ridicule of Hollingsworth's single-mindedness—"He hammers away upon his one topic, as lustily as ever he did upon a horse-shoe!" (94)—is, if anything, milder than Coverdale's, who has said that because of his "prolonged fiddling upon one string," "it required all the constancy of friendship to restrain his associates from pronouncing him an intolerable boor" (56). It is little wonder that Coverdale involuntarily joins in Westervelt's cynical laughter, or that when his resentment of Hollingsworth and contempt for his "philanthropic absurdities" (100) emerge later, he must again disown his feelings by calling them Westervelt's.

The psychological utility of Coverdale's comparison of his part to that of the "Chorus in a classic play," as the "one calm observer" appointed by fate to witness his friends' drama, should now be obvious. It is a blanket denial of his personal emotional and sexual involvement with his friends, which Westervelt has exposed through virtual mimicry of Coverdale's own half-concealed attitudes. The speech is testimony to Coverdale's urgent need to reassure himself of his disinterestedness, to take refuge from his feelings in the invulnerable stance of impartial sympathy and moral judgment.
My own part, in these transactions, was singularly subordinate. It resembled that of a Chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment, and bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, on the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond. Destiny, it may be--the most skilful of stage-managers--seldom chooses to arrange its scenes, and carry forward its drama, without securing the presence of at least one calm observer. It is his office to give applause, when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distil, in his long-brooding thought, the whole morality of the performance. (97)

As we have seen him do towards Zenobia, Coverdale represses his feelings by cultivating an "aesthetic" detachment. However, the context suggests that Coverdale's prying and speculating are also means of repression. After Westervelt has gone, Coverdale chides himself for missing a choice opportunity to learn something more of the connection between Zenobia and Priscilla (96). In view of Westervelt's dangerous pricking of Coverdale's secret jealousy over Zenobia, we can guess that it is less important to Coverdale that he actually find anything out, than that his preoccupation with this mystery, or any mystery, distract him from the painful and bitter feelings aroused by what he knows is going on.

This resort to snooping and prying only makes matters worse between him and his friends, especially Zenobia, so that Coverdale's retreat from his feeling of being excluded from their affections only serves to intensify the mutual alienation. As it becomes plain that both of the ladies have fallen for Hollingsworth, Coverdale cannot admit that he is sexually hurt; instead he takes refuge in his intellectual game. This repression of his resentment must be a powerful stimulus
to the process of fantasy-projection, the turning of his friends' relationships into a destructive drama satisfying his own unacknowledged bitterness, for by not being able to admit his pain, and driving it underground, Coverdale makes himself fair game for unconscious compulsion. The final links in the chain of psychological determinism are pathetic: as, on the one hand, hostility mounts between Coverdale the snoop and the objects of his investigation, and, on the other, Coverdale is increasingly threatened with the awareness that he is responsible for his friends' fates, he can only cling to his self-image as the ideal, detached observer more pertinaciously than ever, although the pretense has worn thin even for himself. The drop of the curtain leaves him wasted by numb sensations of pain and longing and regret, feelings which because of the intensity of his repression he can't even understand.

To catch the defensive, repressive function of Coverdale's speculating, we must pay attention to the context in which it occurs, as in the case of Westervelt's onslaught. There is often a very obvious relationship between the painfulness of his situation and the thoroughness with which he absorbs himself in the mysteries surrounding his friends. A major example is Coverdale's explicit devotion of himself to "the study of individual men and women" at the start of "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla." Just previously, Zenobia and Hollingsworth subject Coverdale to the most sustained barrage of scorn and satire against him in the entire novel. Zenobia begins it with a bitingly humorous vision of Coverdale's becoming like Silas Foster,
the conclusion of which gives an adequate idea of its character:

"Already, I have noticed, you begin to speak through your nose, and with a drawl. Pray, if you really did make any poetry to-day, let us hear it in that kind of utterance!" (67). Hollingsworth follows this up by stating his unhumorously contempt for Coverdale as a dilettante—"Miles Coverdale is not in earnest, either as a poet or a laborer" (68)—and by way of contrast, boasting of his own single-minded determination. The implication of all this, confirmed by Zenobia's adoring comment on Hollingsworth's "strong and noble nature," is that the iron-willed philanthropist is by far the more attractive specimen of masculinity to Zenobia and Priscilla, than the wishy-washy poetaster. Coverdale confesses himself "a little hurt," and speaks with some sarcasm about "my unworthy self," but instead of really retaliating, or facing the pain of his realization that Hollingsworth has conquered both women, he immediately wraps himself up in his speculations:

"I spent a great deal of time, uselessly, in trying to conjecture what Hollingsworth meant to do with them—and they with him!" (68).

And, at the start of the next chapter, we find Coverdale talking of his interest in the three as if they formed part of an abstract, almost mathematical problem, at the same time that he sketches his lurid portrait of Hollingsworth as a satanic monomaniac! Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, says Coverdale, stand out in his imagination as "the indices of a problem which it was my business to solve" (69). Yet Coverdale can even admit that his absorption with the three centers on a feeling of loneliness and exclusion (70), without relating his
sinister image of Hollingsworth to his own emotions. The stratagem of self-deceit through which Coverdale avoids recognising his jealousy and malevolence towards Hollingsworth, his desire for him to become an ogre and a criminal, is the subtlest act of intellectualization in the book, and it brings home just how closely the reader must be on guard, to catch the deceptiveness of Coverdale's manifest personality.

Coverdale attributes the unreal luridness and melodrama of his vision of Hollingsworth—in his words, its exaggeration—not to the intense and hostile emotional involvement with the man which it obviously suggests, but to an empirical flaw in his "mode of observation":

Of course, I am perfectly aware that the above statement is exaggerated, in the attempt to make it adequate. Professed philanthropists have gone far; but no originally good man, I presume, ever went quite so far as this. Let the reader abate whatever he deems fit. The paragraph may remain, however, both for its truth and its exaggeration, as strongly expressive of the tendencies which were really operative in Hollingsworth, and as exemplifying the kind of error into which my mode of observation was calculated to lead me. (71)

Coverdale offers quite a full explanation of what this error is:

If we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again. What wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all—though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage—may be said to have been created mainly by ourselves! (69)

This sounds so straightforward that its evasiveness has gone unnoticed.

We should ask what motivates Coverdale in the first place, in his choice of what aspects of Hollingsworth he exaggerates out of proportion, or why he is compelled to exaggerate at all. And, beyond this, Coverdale's fear of isolating the characters from many of their "true relations"
turns out to be specious, especially in Hollingsworth's case. Coverdale's friends are as exclusively absorbed in their mutual relationships as is Coverdale himself, and Hollingsworth is the most single-minded of them all. In short, Coverdale struggles to retain a sense of his objectivity, even as he manufactures his ludicrous "monster," by treating the intense emotional content of his portrait of Hollingsworth as an after-effect, not a cause, of its exaggeration: "The issue was, that, in solitude, I often shuddered at my friend" (71). His seemingly conscientious admission that he distorts Hollingsworth's character is really an effort to conceal from himself that that distortion is motivated by his own feelings.

As he does so often, however, Coverdale lets the cat out of the bag, with an inconspicuous, almost parenthetical little remark. After his eminently quotable announcement, "It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively to the study of individual men and women," Coverdale adds, "If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance" (69). More than anything else Coverdale says, this statement is the "casual opening" (90) which suddenly admits us to the covert "logic" of his mind. For Coverdale is saying, quite simply, that introspection leads immediately to mental illness. This statement prepares us to interpret both the entire collection of stances which Coverdale adopts towards his friends, and his fantasy-projection also, as means of avoiding self-knowledge. Rather than admitting to himself
that he feels deeply hurt and resentful that Hollingsworth has conquered both Zenobia and Priscilla, and thereby producing a "diseased action of the heart," a helpless, painful awareness of his own self-doubt and loneliness, Coverdale distances himself from these feelings by projecting his revengefulness onto reality, through his transformation of Hollingsworth, and by then assuming a sympathetic, moralistic, objective attitude towards the figure he has created.

In the long run, however, even Coverdale's projective art cannot save him from his sense of inadequacy and exclusion, and in the end it only threatens to expose the uglier feelings which have compelled the characters to their fates. Coverdale never succeeds in either confronting or escaping his feelings; his repression is effective just to the extent that he cannot quite understand his pain, and doesn't want to try.

In the course of the novel there are many arresting instances of Coverdale's lack of introspection. Coverdale is notoriously unable to see the alienating effect on others of his prying, impersonal manner. In his encounter with Old Moodie in the first chapter, Coverdale first makes it obvious that he doesn't want to be bothered with the old man's favor, and then proceeds to barrage him with questions about the nature of his business, and his interest in Zenobia. Plain as it is that Moodie withdraws his request because of Coverdale's personal indifference and offensive nosiness, Coverdale ascribes Moodie's hesitation to his own eccentricity: "But the old fellow, in his civil and demure manner, was both freakish and Obstinate; and he
had now taken some notion or other into his head that made him hesitate in his former design" (7). Coverdale is equally blind to his alienation of Priscilla. While he is recovering from his sickness, Coverdale issues the first of many complaints that Priscilla cares less for himself than for either Zenobia or Hollingsworth (50). Yet his treatment of her when she comes to visit pointedly indicates why she is not particularly fond of him. Priscilla brings him a gift as a gesture of friendship, but Coverdale almost immediately becomes preoccupied with some mysterious resemblance between the girl and Margaret Fuller. Although at this point Coverdale could not know that his observation is especially irksome to Priscilla because it reminds her of her stigma of abnormality as the Veiled Lady, his inability to respond to her except as a mystery would repel anyone: "She hastened out of the room; and this was the last that I saw of Priscilla, until I ceased to be an invalid" (52). Later, as part of his campaign to "save" Priscilla from Hollingsworth, Coverdale lectures her about the folly of being too happy, and at the same time tries to pry into her past: "Have you nothing dismal to remember?" (75). It's no wonder that the girl runs straight off to Hollingsworth's feet.

Coverdale becomes almost pathetic in his inability to recognize the disparity between his actual behavior towards his friends and the ideal sympathy and detachment by which he is able to convince himself he is motivated. We have already looked at an excellent example of this, in his belief that his stinging of Zenobia's jealousy towards Priscilla, just as she is about to escort the girl back to the stage, is called
forth by a sense of duty. Even more ironic are two occasions on which Coverdale tries to hurt the women who "reject" him, while he tells himself that he is simply trying to probe their feelings. The first of these moments comes at the end of "Eliot's Pulpit," when Coverdale falls in with Priscilla and says that he cannot resist one attempt "to come within her maidenly mystery" (125). Coverdale has just witnessed Zenobia's sudden gesture of love to Hollingsworth, and he is obviously trying to hurt the man's other female devotee, and alienate her from him, by insinuating how likely Hollingsworth is to return Zenobia's love: "Any man, even if he be as great as Hollingsworth, might love so magnificent a woman. How very beautiful Zenobia is! And Hollingsworth knows it, too!" (126). Coverdale talks as if he is only interested in forcing Priscilla to examine her own feelings—a highly ironic demand—but his intentions are so blatant that by the time he has finished, even he cannot dissemble about them:

> There may have been some petty malice in what I said. Generosity is a very fine thing, at a proper time, and within due limits. But it is an insufferable bore, to see one man engrossing every thought of all the women, and leaving his friend to shiver in outer seclusion, without even the alternative of solacing himself with what the more fortunate individual has rejected. Yes, it was out of a foolish bitterness of heart that I had spoken. (126)

As usual, this moment of honesty brings up feelings too malevolent and hopeless to be endured; Coverdale retreats to his speculating almost before we can snatch a second glance, "wondering—as I had wondered a thousand times, already—how Hollingsworth meant to dispose of these two hearts" (126-27).
The second time Coverdale's prying becomes a transparent medium for his bitterness and jealousy is in his drawing-room confrontation with Zenobia, in which he feels overpowered and scorned by her proud and distant magnificence. In an obvious effort to strike through this attitude and wound her heart, Coverdale ridicules Hollingsworth in a tone of urbane superiority bristling with ill-concealed hate. Yet, incredibly, he believes that this attack is some kind of investigatory "experiment" (166), a stratagem to uncover her feelings: "I determined to make proof if there were any spell that would exorcise her out of the part which she seemed to be acting. She should be compelled to give me a glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real" (165). That Coverdale is really this blind to his own feelings and motives is indicated by his calling his remarks on Hollingsworth "pitying" and "half-kind" (166), when they are nothing of the sort. Similarly, when Zenobia defends Hollingsworth and returns Coverdale's ridicule, Coverdale only says that he "admired her fidelity" (167), as if he were not offended—and proceeds immediately to stir up Zenobia's fear of Priscilla until he catches her turning pale, as pale "as if a shroud were round her" (167). This is the man who shortly before announced that he was the best of all possible observers for Hollingsworth and Zenobia, who takes the highest possible view of their motives and actions (163). The irony is almost too obvious—the masquerade too ludicrous—Coverdale's rehearsing his speculative interest in Zenobia's feelings, while his "experiment," in the true tradition of Alzymer and Rappaccini and Chillingworth, verges on sadism.27
The importance of all this goes beyond the demonstration that Coverdale's stance of being a detached observer is a defensive measure to prevent the recognition of the drama's relentless pull on his sexual feelings. On a broader plane, we are justified in concluding that The Blithedale Romance, more than anything else Hawthorne wrote, is a sustained tour de force in an ironic mode of psychological fiction. In it Hawthorne creates an utterly deceptive, and self-deceptive, narrator, and enables us to see through to the covertly sadistic or self-evasive function of each aspect of his behavior, even though his relationship to what he observes is nonrational and magical. As a literary form, this is unique and bizarre; but, in life, it is perhaps not uncommon for a man to flee an evil dream, and all the more so, if he awoke to find himself living in it. It has been argued that for Hawthorne himself, writing became a compulsive process of fantasy-projection, entangled with a mass of evasive tactics. Perhaps, in the end, it did; but not in The Blithedale Romance. Here, for once, Hawthorne managed to contain the entire process of the uncontrollable transformation of reality into destructive fantasy, plus the defenses against recognizing this malevolent compulsion, within the psychology of a character—and that psychology is delineated with a depth and intimacy of irony unequaled in his work.

IV

Our look at the novel's ironic treatment of Coverdale's evasive self-images will conclude with two matters which I have mentioned often already: Coverdale's belief that his interest in his friends is
motivated by a benign and ideal sympathy, and the growing threat of his
being forced to recognize that his involvement with them has actually
been malign, and has contributed to their catastrophe. As with his
stance of detachment, Coverdale's pronouncements of his love for and
lofty estimation of his friends intensify in proportion to his bitterness
and the eagerness with which he anticipates their downfall. Distinguishing between Coverdale's facades of benevolence and detachment is a bit artificial, because there is no contradiction between them, and because Coverdale often asserts at the same time that he has no personal stake in the action, and that, as a disinterested observer, he strives earnestly to take the highest possible view of his friends' errors. However, it is evident that he feels some degree of tension between an impersonal interest and the compassion he ought to display:
"Had I been as cold-hearted as I sometimes thought myself, nothing would have interested me more than to witness the play of passions that must thus have been evolved. But, in honest truth, I would really have gone far to save Priscilla, at least, from the catastrophe in which such a drama would be apt to terminate" (72). Coverdale's solution is to persuade himself that his detachment is not that of idle, prying curiosity, but is that of a spiritual inquest, in search of the profoundest morals of his friends' fates. It is very common for Hawthorne's narrators to assume this position towards their stories; but Coverdale's three-dimensionality as a dramatized character allows Hawthorne to place this stance in an ironic perspective. It is fascinating to watch Coverdale strike up the golden notes of love and
spirituality, each time he runs a particular risk of recognizing his nasty nosiness or, much worse, his repressed, murderous desires.

I have mentioned that in "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla," Coverdale appears startlingly blind to the possibility that his vision of Hollingsworth as a monster might reflect his own deep-seated, hostile emotions towards the man. His resistance to this realization is registered by his professions of loving concern, among which the following stands out for the ingeniousness of its logic: "Thus, as my conscience has often whispered me, I did Hollingsworth a great wrong by prying into his character, and am perhaps doing him as great a one, at this moment, by putting faith in the discoveries which I seemed to make. But I could not help it. Had I loved him less, I might have used him better" (69). More importantly, however, Coverdale obscures the malice in his sketch of Hollingsworth's character and purposes by maintaining an idealistic language and tone, which impart a nobility to Hollingsworth's original intentions, and a tragic pathos to their degradation: "And the higher and purer the original object, and the more unselfishly it may have been taken up, the slighter is the probability that they can be led to recognize the process, by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism" (71). The affectation of tragedy, like all Coverdale's affectations, serves him well, so well that it is one of the primary advantages of thinking of his friends' struggles as a theatre piece. We will see that Coverdale can even openly indulge his malign and sadistic wishes, as long as he maintains the right, "spiritual" tone. Meanwhile, in
"Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla," in which Coverdale first envisions the developing sexual rivalry as a tragic drama, with Zenobia the loser, he expresses his benevolent concern for each of the characters. He is even "generous enough to feel some little interest likewise for Zenobia" (79), even though her heart is secondhand, or worse.

Coverdale sometimes idealizes his friends simply in order to repress his actual feelings towards them. This very plainly occurs while Coverdale is sitting in his hermitage. As was mentioned, he gives way to some ungenerous but honest thoughts about Hollingsworth and Priscilla, and then disavows them by attributing them to the influence of Westervelt. The displacement of his actual resentment and contempt for Hollingsworth, indifference to Priscilla's "realities," and "disbelief in moral beauty or heroism" (101) onto his fiendish alter ego is accompanied by an instant and very deliberate restoration of idealism:

I recognized, as chiefly due to this man's influence, the skeptical and sneering view which, just now, had filled my mental vision in regard to all life's better purposes. And it was through his eyes, more than my own, that I was looking at Hollingsworth, with his glorious, if impracticable dream, and at the noble earthliness of Zenobia's character, and even Priscilla, whose impalpable grace lay so singularly between disease and beauty. The essential charm of each had vanished. There are some spheres, the contact with which inevitably degrades the high, debases the pure, deforms the beautiful. (101)

Coverdale's language is that of the sentimental versifier, the artist of the beautiful, the parlor neoplatonist, and it stands him in good stead. He has urgent cause to hear those spiritual chimes, since he has been forced to recognize an affinity between himself and the worldly, cynical Westervelt, and reluctantly admits that "a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him" (102).
However, Coverdale's idealism comes in handiest later, when he begins to entertain explicit wishes that his friends come to grief—when he feels himself longing for a catastrophe, in "The Boarding-House," and when he praises himself as the best of all possible observers for his two victims, Hollingsworth and Zenobia, shortly afterwards. These moments are the pinnacle of Coverdale's art of self-deception, and we would surely allow them to be masterpieces, if the slightest part of our own nature would admit itself responsive to his. In the first, Coverdale perfectly veils from himself his own nervous, weary desire to have done with his tormenting goblins by encouraging their destruction, through the tone of witnessing high tragedy—which entails an exalted view of both the actors and his own interest in their fates:

I began to long for a catastrophe. If the noble temper of Hollingsworth's soul were doomed to be utterly corrupted by the too powerful purpose, which had grown out of what was noblest in him; if the rich and generous qualities of Zenobia's womanhood might not save her; if Priscilla must perish by her tenderness and faith, so simple and so devout;—then be it so! Let it all come! As for me, I would look on, as it seemed my part to do, understandingly, if my intellect could fathom the meaning and the moral, and, at all events, reverently and sadly. The curtain fallen, I would pass onward with my poor individual life, which was now attenuated of much of its proper substance, and diffused among many alien interests. (157)

In this last sentence Coverdale casts himself as a pathetic victim of the play—an observer who gives up his own separate existence in order to reverently witness his friends' tragedy. There is some truth in this; Coverdale's obsession with the three does leave him wasted—not, however, by an excess of sympathy, but by tormenting, ambivalent feelings over the catastrophe brought about by his compulsions, especially in
regards to Zenobia. In every respect, Coverdale uses the tone of the compassionate playgoer to mask his helpless obsession with the three, which is at once malicious and self-destructive.

The second passage, at the start of "Zenobia's Drawing-Room," makes use of the same devices, but the contrast is even more glaring between the sadism of Coverdale's thoughts and his lofty, compassionate appreciation of the sinners' nobility—as we should expect, for the more sinister Coverdale's fantasies become, the more benign he must appear to himself. As usual, there is an obvious stimulus to Coverdale's self-idealization—Zenobia has just dropped the curtain on his peeping. He is clearly trying to justify his motives as an observer, in response to her "pitiless rebuke." Thus, whereas shortly before we saw him "affected . . . with a kind of heart-sickness" (157) by his failure to escape the three, Coverdale now expounds his "duty" as their observer more fervently than ever, practically to the extent of calling it a God-ordained task:

For, was mine a mere vulgar curiosity? Zenobia should have known me better than to suppose it. She should have been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart, which impelled me (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in other lives, and to endeavor—by generous sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned me—to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves. (160)

This pretty self-estimate prefaces Coverdale's most remarkable expression of his malevolent desires towards Hollingsworth and Zenobia, precipitated, perhaps, by Coverdale's "keen, revengeful sense of the insult inflicted by Zenobia's scornful recognition." Despite the
heavy coating of compassionate understanding, its sadism is unmistakable, because it conjures up what was obviously for Hawthorne a very powerful image of sadism released under the guise of pious motives—the persecution of the witches or of the Quakers, in both of which his ancestors took part. In his imagination, Coverdale tries, condemns, and burns Hollingsworth and Zenobia at the stake—and the whole thing is done "mournfully, and with undiminished love";

Of all possible observers, methought, a woman, like Zenobia, and a man, like Hollingsworth, should have selected me. And, now, when the event has long been past, I retain the same opinion of my fitness for the office. True, I might have condemned them. Had I been judge, as well as witness, my sentence might have been stern as that of Destiny itself. But, still, no trait of original nobility of character; no struggle against temptation; no iron necessity of will, on the one hand, nor extenuating circumstance to be derived from passion and despair, on the other; no remorse that might co-exist with error, even if powerless to prevent it; no proud repentance, that should claim retribution as a meed—would go unappreciated. True, again, I might give my full assent to the punishment which was sure to follow. But it would be given mournfully, and with undiminished love. And, after all was finished, I would come, as if to gather up the white ashes of those who had perished at the stake, and to tell the world—the wrong being now atoned for—how much had perished there, which it had never yet known how to praise. (160-61)

In the scene that follows between himself and Zenobia, Coverdale seems to affirm his "indefatigable human sympathy" (163) towards her in a pathetic effort to be reaccepted as a friend. However, we cannot ignore Coverdale's malevolent wishes as easily as he does himself. When Coverdale later sees in Hollingsworth "all that an artist could desire for the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate, holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft" (214), and about to sentence Zenobia to the stake, we can recognize that he is simply an agent of
Coverdale's sadism. That scene of Zenobia's "trial" is the fulfillment of the wishes Coverdale expresses here; Zenobia addresses him then as "Judge Coverdale" (214).

It should be noticed, however, that here in his own thoughts Coverdale projects the responsibility for his two sinners' judgment and punishment onto "Destiny." After Zenobia's suicide, when Coverdale is busy assessing each character's moral deserts, he continues to put heavenly powers to good use by turning them into agents of his own wishes. The source of judgment becomes more clearly moralistic and religious--it is now Providence, God, or Heaven. This sudden piety in Coverdale is suspect, not only because there is little basis for it in his character, but also because during the recovery of Zenobia's body and her funeral, Coverdale says much that betokens little Christian conviction, but savors rather of agnosticism. The "enigma of the eternal world" (233) obscures the fate of Zenobia's soul, and, likewise, the sound of the dirt hitting her coffin is human life's last "vain hope of bringing an echo from the spiritual world" (239). For a man of little faith, Coverdale seems inordinately confident how God will judge the characters. Zenobia is the only sinner for whom he mentions the possibility of "God's infinite forgiveness" (235) and "God's infinite mercy" (240)--we should add, "the wrong being now atoned for." Coverdale enjoins God to make short work of the Professor: "Heaven deal with Westervelt according to his nature and deserts!--that is to say, annihilate him" (241). As for Hollingsworth, Coverdale visits him years later precisely as if to make sure that his fate in the drama meets the
requirements of poetic justice: "But, Hollingsworth! After all the evil that he did, are we to leave him thus, blest with the entire devotion of this one true heart, and with wealth at his disposal, to execute the long contemplated project that had led him so far astray? What retribution is there here?" (242). However, all's right with the world; Hollingsworth is a broken man, crushed by the guilt of Zenobia's death. We will look into the exquisite revenge which his fate affords Coverdale later; for now, we should note that Coverdale seizes a final opportunity to expound the tragic pathos of his fall, now in Christian terms—"from the very gate of Heaven, there is a by-way to the pit!" (243). Coverdale's questionable Christian sentiments at the end of the novel are simply the final means by which he projects the fulfillment of his revengeful wishes onto some other agency, and at the same time makes his interest in his friends seem compassionate and "spiritual."

There are indications, however, that Coverdale's strategies of projecting his malevolent desires and the guilt of their fulfillment away from himself are not as successful as they appear. It has been shown that Coverdale's most emphatic assertions of his detachment and benevolence come at times when he is in particular peril of having to admit his bitter and resentful feelings. The threat of this dreaded self-awareness becomes greatest as the story approaches the catastrophe for which Coverdale has longed. However, at this point the threat comes not only from within—that is, through the emergence of hostile thoughts in Coverdale's mind—but also, and primarily, from without. The projected fantasy in which Coverdale is inescapably trapped turns its
creator into another of its victims, by mockingly implicating him as an agent of the evil at hand, in much the same way as Westervelt is a mocking projection of Coverdale's repressed personality and attitudes. Although Coverdale has fled the awareness of his own malign involvement all along, the play itself begins to accuse him in "The Masqueraders"—in fact, this episode makes little sense unless we do suppose that Coverdale is responsible for the impending catastrophe. It starts with Coverdale rushing back to Blithedale "to learn the upshot of all my story" (205), his mind reeling between moments of "wild exhilaration" and the foreboding "that some evil thing had befallen us, or was ready to befall" (207). Because of this presentiment, Coverdale is curiously afraid to encounter his friends face to face: "A nameless foreboding weighed upon me. Perhaps, should I know all the circumstances that had occurred, I might find it my wisest course to turn back, unrecognized, unseen, and never look at Blithedale more. Had it been evening, I would have stolen softly to some lighted window of the old farm-house, and peeped darkling in" (206-07). In Coverdale's fear of returning too abruptly, and the furtiveness with which he resolves to reapproach and spy out the community, it is impossible not to detect a fear of his suddenly being forced to see himself revealed as "a chief agent of the coming evil which he had foreshadowed." He feels that it is positively "dangerous! to pursue his obsession with Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla any further:

Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla! They glided mistily before me, as I walked. Sometimes, in my solitude, I laughed with the bitterness of self-scorn, remembering how unreservedly I had given up my heart and soul to interests that were not mine. What had I ever had to do with them? And why, being
now free, should I take this thraldom on me, once again? It was both sad and dangerous, I whispered to myself, to be in too close affinity with the passions, the errors, and the misfortunes, of individuals who stood within a circle of their own, into which, if I stept at all, it must be as an intruder, and at a peril that I could not estimate. (205-06)

As usual, we can discern the nature of Coverdale's anxiety by the very stance which he adopts to allay it. Coverdale's insistence that he has nothing at all to do with the three is his last, boldest, and most desperate effort to avoid facing the emotions by which he is bound to them, such as that wild exhilaration that accompanies his foreboding of some evil. Increasingly as Coverdale feels himself pulled into the maelstrom of his fantasy, he turns from pretending that he is sympathetically involved, to denying that he is involved at all. Upon the reappearance of his characters in the boardinghouse, he feels "a positive despair" to have to again devote himself to "affairs which were none of mine" (157). After Priscilla has been taken off in the carriage, he says, "it would appear reasonable that I should have flung off all these alien perplexities. . . . I was only an intruder" (174). When Coverdale finally comes before the three at Eliot's pulpit, this feeling of being an intruder rises to terror, yet it still masks the real nature of his fear.

Coverdale has urgent cause to deny that there is any reason he should be concerned with the three, because the masqueraders, and then Hollingsworth and Zenobia themselves, confront him with his malign involvement. The masqueraders' exuberance echos Coverdale's own emotions--his wild exhilaration, the "bacchanalian ecstasies" which he anticipates
from the ripe grapes in his hermitage (206), and even the "sickness of
the spirits" into which his excitement modulates—the "fainter tones"
of their "merriment and riot . . . assumed a kind of mournfulness" (211).
Yet, whereas Coverdale doesn't understand his "causeless buoyancy" (206)—
and would prefer not to—the masqueraders' "Satanic" mirth brings out,
and parodies, Coverdale's repressed, malevolent exultation over the
approaching gratification of his bitterness: "'The voice was Miles
Coverdale's,' said the fiendish fiddler, with a whisk of his tail and
a toss of his horns. 'My music has brought him hither. He is always
ready to dance to the devil's tune!'" (211). The final confirmation
of Coverdale's sharing in the demonic joy is his return of the
masqueraders' laughter—which, as we have noted before, is a stock
Hawthorndian sign of a character's secret responsiveness to an evil
thought or spectacle, familiar from "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman,
Major Molineux," and the chapter "The Wood-Path," in which Coverdale
joins in Westervelt's derisive laughter over Hollingsworth.

However, the masquerade is a frolic in comparison to what follows.
When Coverdale comes upon Zenobia's trial, he again feels that he is an
intruder, but his reception confirms the meaning of his "species of
terror" (214) and intense desire to be away. In opposition to his own
sense that he has "no right to be or breathe there" (214), both Zenobia
and Hollingsworth assert the appropriateness of his presence. Zenobia
tells him that he would have enjoyed the spectacle of her condemnation
to death: "You are welcome! But you come half-an-hour too late, and
have missed a scene which you would have enjoyed!" (212). She addresses
him as if he might have foreseen her fate: "Do you know, Mr. Coverdale, I have been on trial for my life?" (214)—and, indeed, he has sensed that she is "on trial for her life, or perchance condemned, already" (213). Above all, she appoints Coverdale to that office with which we have seen him identify: "Had I been judge, as well as witness, my sentence might have been stern as that of Destiny itself" (161). Quite rightly, she recognizes that "Judge Coverdale" would find "two criminals, instead of one" (214). However, there is irony in her remark that he would ensure fair play, because, when she attacks men's readiness to condemn a woman in their "secret tribunals," and then pretend as if they have done her no harm, Zenobia pointedly addresses Coverdale, even though she is answering Hollingsworth's self-defence:

"Ah, this is very good!" said Zenobia, with a smile. "What strange beings you men are, Mr. Coverdale!—is it not so? It is the simplest thing in the world, with you, to bring a woman before your secret tribunals, and judge and condemn her, unheard, and then tell her to go free without a sentence. The misfortune is, that this same secret tribunal chances to be the only judgment-seat that a true woman stands in awe of, and that any verdict short of acquittal is equivalent to a death-sentence!" (215)

Zenobia clearly includes Coverdale among the males who have secretly condemned her, and although this probably betokens on her part only a recognition of his sexual resentment and anxiety towards her, it has a significance beyond what she could attach to it. Zenobia's treatment of Coverdale, like the masqueraders', is a means by which the fantasy-drama mockingly calls upon its author to acknowledge his work, the upshot of his story. Coverdale is indeed "a mad poet hunted by chimeras" (211), or rather by goblins of flesh and blood, relentless
in demanding that their enchanter at least be compelled to witness the fates to which he has damned them. Of course, he never does confess his hand in his friends' "tragedy," nor the feelings which have compelled his involvement; but his repression is costly. As we will see, Coverdale must continue to expend a great deal of effort and ingenuity in order to keep himself deceived about his feelings, right through the final sentence of the novel. The emptiness of his life after leaving Blithedale reflects the strain of his continually having to bolster his defenses against feelings of guilt and longing towards his three ghosts, and particularly that same ghost who haunts Hollingsworth.

This concludes our study of the deceptive self-images by which Coverdale struggles to repress the awareness of his own anticipation and willing of the melodrama, and the revengeful feelings which motivate him. The consistency with which his stances of naivety and bafflement, sympathy and detachment, are played off against contexts suggesting the repression of available knowledge and foreknowledge, and his real, bitter feelings and malevolent desires, qualifies The Blithedale Romance as a masterpiece of ironic characterization. We must reject the charge that the irony of Coverdale's portrait is not "sufficiently unambiguous or sufficiently discernible to the reader."28 Few writers have dared to make a first-person narrator so completely self-deceptive as Coverdale, or succeeded in so thoroughly revealing what he seeks to hide from himself—and even fewer have attempted this without the benefit of a solid, factual reality distinguishable from the narrator's consciousness.
However, the achievement of this novel cannot be limited to a development in point of view; it is, above all, intensely personal. Blithedale is one of those rare books in which an author stumbles upon a form enabling or compelling him to perfectly transcend and criticize the expressive limitations, half-truths, and dodges inherent in his own creative habits. The novel escapes, and at the same time scrutinizes, Hawthorne's own characteristic tendency to intellectualize and idealize his relationship to his fictional material—to submerge his powerful emotional involvement in his plots and characters beneath a stance of austere, collected, stern yet compassionate moral wisdom. It has been pointed out many times that Coverdale is a self-critical image of certain aspects of his author, and also that, as a satirical portrait of an artist-intellectual, his character anticipates a common type of more recent literature, but the depth to which Coverdale embodies a self-analysis of Hawthornian artistry has not been realized. This depth is made possible by Blithedale's strange form, which completely fuses "inner" and "outer" reality, and the experience of living and the experience of imagining and creating, in order to show art as a compulsive gratification of anxiety by means of a fantasy-power over life. Literature abounds with ironic portraits of the artist as a snob, a dandy, and an emotionally repressive and immature personality, but The Blithedale Romance stands apart in its total concentration on the covert motivation of the artist's transformation of life, and the artist's evasion and repression of this motivation. In the frightening depth of its negative self-understanding, Coverdale's autobiographical meaning goes beyond his obvious elements of self-satire, to the kind of self-knowledge conducive to terror or despair.
Irrepressible Yearnings

Our prolonged groping for human emotions in the dark corners of Coverdale's heart has succeeded in distinguishing three kinds of consciousness in this intricate character, which are most accurately interrelated according to their degree of acceptability to his ego. Foremost in this respect are his intellectualized and idealized versions of his motives or, as he often says, his duty towards his friends—these are quite deliberately maintained in order to repress his actual feelings. Less agreeable are his sexual longing and the jealousy and pain occasioned by Hollingsworth's conquest of both women. Least admissible are his sexual anxiety and sadism and the fantasy-projection which gratifies them. Although the latter two are connected in that Coverdale's bitter sense of exclusion feeds his revengeful longing for Hollingsworth and Zenobia's destruction, they can be separated because his sadism entails a dream-power over the lives of his friends, whereas his jealousy implies no more than a conventional sense of the plot as an external reality. Coverdale's psychology is thus a bit more complex than a duality of protective facade and repressed, unpleasant truth, because of the all-important addition of his artistic power to turn reality into a projection of his repressed wishes, which replaces the expected contrast between the hero's surface consciousness and reality with a no less effective ironic relationship between his idealized self and his own malevolent fantasy. Unless we can grasp this extra turn of the screw, the book is lost to us. It must inevitably appear a naive projection of Hawthorne's own fantasies, narrated by a naive
alter ego, agent of the most bungled attempt to tell a story ever produced by a writer of Hawthorne's stature.

The irony of the novel's treatment of Coverdale's acceptable views of his relationship to his friends, through its suggestion of their many and elaborate repressive functions, demonstrates Blithedale's coherence and the detachment of author from narrator. However, our study of this irony has called for no more than passing glances at one aspect of Coverdale's emotional involvement, the destructive effect on himself of the compulsive fulfillment of his revengeful desires, stemming from the positive side of his ambivalent feelings towards Zenobia. Coverdale adds new and subtle twists to his self-deception in his efforts to convince himself that the barrenness of his life ever since leaving Blithedale is not caused by ineffaceable regrets concerning her. One of his stratagems to this end, his final confession that he was in love with Priscilla, is the only instance of his duplicity which has been widely recognized as such. Ever since Philip Rahv proposed, in 1941, that Coverdale's attraction to Priscilla is a "protective displacement"¹ of his emotions, an effort to escape the "painful doubleness," the "combined attraction and repulsion"² of his relationship to Zenobia, there has been a growing acceptance of the idea that Coverdale's real concern is with Zenobia and the fear and fascination she arouses, rather than her wan, wishy-washy, "spiritual" sister. This is so, but the history of Coverdale's efforts to repress, generalize, and distort his longings so as to obscure their real object affords abundant confirmation not only of the cunningness of his
self-deception, which few critics have extended beyond his last-minute lie, but also of the tension between control and victimhood in Coverdale's relationship to his projected fantasy. On the one hand, Coverdale's interest in Priscilla turns out to be purely exploitative, in the image of Westervelt's. Her betrayal serves to incriminate Hollingsworth and Zenobia; she is a projected image of Coverdale's own pain over Hollingsworth's conquest of Zenobia, through which he obscures this feeling in himself; and she is his ultimate revenge on Hollingsworth. On the other hand, in regards to Zenobia, the very success of Coverdale's revenge play reveals it a compulsive process of self-destruction; the alleviation of his anxiety through Zenobia's death only wastes his own life as well, congealing obscure and unadmitted longing, regret, and guilt into a final, frigid emptiness. It is important to recognize both the final significance of Priscilla as an instrument of Coverdale's repressed wishes, and the withering effect on Coverdale of his murder of Zenobia, for they confirm the error, fallen into by Rahv, Abele, and Crews, of taking the fates of the characters—Zenobia's death and Priscilla's marriage—to indicate the novel's and Hawthorne's judgments of them. They are, of course, Coverdale's judgments, and their realization is self-destructive. His anxieties were far more powerful than that part of himself that longed to overcome them.

Because of the intensity of his repression and intellectualization, Coverdale has trouble even recognizing that he has a sexual interest in the women. His desire has been so covert, that when his painful sense of exclusion does emerge, it naturally seems unfounded. Yet in one moment
of remarkable honesty, Coverdale resists his "rational" sense that he has no right nor reason to be hurt, and struggles to accept his feelings even though they are painful:

I stood on other terms than before, not only with Hollingsworth, but with Zenobia and Priscilla. As regarded the two latter, it was that dreamlike and miserable sort of change that denies you the privilege to complain, because you can assert no positive injury, nor lay your finger on anything tangible. It is a matter which you do not see, but feel, and which, when you try to analyze it, seems to lose its very existence, and resolve itself into a sickly humor of your own. Your understanding, possibly, may put faith in this denial. But your heart will not so easily rest satisfied. It incessantly remonstrates, though, most of the time, in a bass-note, which you do not separately distinguish; but, now-and-then, with a sharp cry, importunate to be heard, and resolute to claim belief. 'Things are not as they were!'--it keeps saying--"You shall not impose on me! I will never be quiet! I will throbb painfully! I will be heavy and desolate, and shiver with cold! For I, your deep heart, know when to be miserable, as once I knew when to be happy! All is changed for us! You are beloved no more!' And, were my life to be spent over again, I would invariably lend my ear to this Cassandra of the inward depths, however clamorous the music of a more superficial region. (138-39)

As always, however, momentary honesty only incites fresh efforts at evasion. Coverdale immediately proves just how much of a Cassandra his inward cry is, by intellectualizing his troubled sense of Blithedale's growing chaos and the reason for his flight to town, which becomes, in his mind, a resolve to "take an exterior view of what we had all been about" (140). Moments after his effort to listen to his "deep heart," Coverdale is clinging like a drowning man to a longing for "normality." He discovers that he has "a decided tendency towards the actual" (140), which obviously entails the dismissal of nebulous and unreasonable emotions.³

It should be noted that in the above passage Coverdale does not distinguish between his feelings for Zenobia and Priscilla. This
generalizing of his feelings serves to prevent him from recognizing that the real object of his heart-pangs is Zenobia. In "Eliot's Pulpit" Coverdale accidentally exposes the device by resorting to it in a context where it is obviously inappropriate. In this chapter Coverdale tries to restore himself to Zenobia's good graces through rather hyperbolic affirmations of his sympathy with feminist demands, such as his wish "to have all government devolve into the hands of women," at least for a millenium (121). Priscilla's disapproval, and her "entire acquiescence" in Hollingsworth's "outrageous affirmation... of masculine egotism" (123) make it as plain as day that she is the epitome of the stultified, submissive woman, and both Zenobia and Coverdale himself say so. Yet just as he is shocked by Zenobia's own submission to Hollingsworth, Coverdale talks as if his feminist sympathies had been in agreement with both women: "I smiled--somewhat bitterly, it is true--in contemplation of my own ill-luck. How little did these two women care for me, who had freely conceded all their claims, and a great deal more, out of the fulness of my heart" (124). Priscilla hasn't put forth any claims for "woman's wider liberty," only Zenobia. Coverdale knows this, but he subtly conceals from himself that he was out to court Zenobia's favor in particular, and that his bitterness is over her submission to Hollingsworth.

So effectively are Coverdale's feelings obscured, that he can approach seemingly very neigh to realizing that the source of his misery is Zenobia's love for Hollingsworth, only to have Priscilla serve in some way as a diversion. This is what happens in Coverdale's dream
in "The Boarding-House," although not entirely in the way we would expect. Here, Priscilla appears not only as an object of Coverdale's displaced emotions, but also as an image of his own emotional state—a self-projection. Note that it is Priscilla, not Coverdale, who reacts to Hollingsworth and Zenobia's kiss, and that her position as an observer is eminently characteristic of Coverdale—she peeping-tomishly watches through the window, which is what Coverdale has spent the whole day doing, observing the activities in the opposite boardinghouse:

... Hollingsworth and Zenobia, standing on either side of my bed, had bent across it to exchange a kiss of passion. Priscilla, beholding this—for she seemed to be peeping in at the chamber-window—had melted gradually away, and left only the sadness of her expression in my heart. There it still lingered, after I awoke; one of those unreasonable sadnesses that you know not how to deal with, because it involves nothing for common-sense to clutch. (153)

Although the dream describes a transference of Priscilla's sadness to Coverdale, the actual process must be the reverse, because there is nothing "unreasonable" about Priscilla's distress over Hollingsworth's requital of Zenobia's passion; Coverdale knows that the man has engrossed her heart. However, we have seen that Coverdale considers his own feelings of sexual exclusion unreasonable, and beyond the grasp of common sense: "It is a matter... which, when you try to analyze it, seems to lose its very existence, and resolve itself into a sickly humor of your own." What happens, then, is that Coverdale projects onto Priscilla the feelings of loneliness and emptiness stirred up in himself by Zenobia's neglect of him in favor of Hollingsworth—and then, apparently, further distances himself from the source of his sadness.
by treating it as a compassionate empathy with Priscilla! The tone of
the dream evokes more sympathy for the girl who fades sorrowfully away,
then any direct response to Hollingsworth and Zenobia's kiss—and in
this respect it not only displaces Coverdale's feelings onto her, it
renders them more acceptable and less anxious. Sexual jealousy over
Zenobia is concealed by tender, melancholy sympathy for Priscilla.
But best of all, this commiseration with Priscilla's loneliness,
rejection, and shy, weak, and passive victimhood—so like his own
ostensible fate—affords Coverdale the delights of self-pity, secretly
indulged. Through displacement and self-projection Priscilla is useful
to Coverdale as a tool which helps him repress and obscure his bitterness
and pain over Zenobia's love for Hollingsworth; she is also, as we will
see, an instrument by which he gratifies this bitterness.

One of the ways in which she thus serves him is her betrayal,
which Coverdale allows and encourages in order to incriminate Zenobia
and Hollingsworth. Priscilla continues to be instrumental in Coverdale's
revengeful fantasy to the end, for as Hollingsworth's wife, she has a
hand in his defeat and reduction from the man Zenobia loved—virile,
forceful, and determined—to a frightened, clinging, remorseful child.
If there is any room for doubt about Coverdale's actual feelings towards
Priscilla, the final chapters dispeL it. At the end of the "trial" at
Eliot's pulpit, after Zenobia's accusations have made it more clear
than ever that Hollingsworth has simply exploited both women for the
inheritance, having first consented to Priscilla's betrayal and then
recovered her upon learning of her sudden wealth, Coverdale imaginary
that Priscilla might be able to turn the fellow down, and be able to
evaluate his conduct towards herself and Zenobia. Instead she responds
with perfectly mindless faith to the beck of the man who has so
thoroughly used her. For once, the moronic simplicity of "this poor
Priscilla," as Coverdale calls her, is a bit too blatant to be
sentimentalized:

I watched Priscilla, wondering what judgment she would pass,
between Zenobia and Hollingsworth; how interpret his behavior,
so as to reconcile it with true faith both towards her sister
and herself; how compel her love for him to keep any terms
whatever with her sisterly affection! But, in truth, there was
no such difficulty as I imagined. Her engrossing love made it
all clear. Hollingsworth could have no fault. That was the
one principle at the centre of the universe. And the doubtful
guilt or possible integrity of other people, appearances,
self-evident facts, the testimony of her own senses—even
Hollingsworth's self-accusation, had he volunteered it—would
have weighed not the value of a mote of thistle-down, on the
other side. (220-21)

There is something inhuman and cruel about this degree of simple-
mindedness, and it comes out at Zenobia's funeral. Coverdale expects
Priscilla to be overwhelmed with grief, only to realize again that
"a character, so simply constituted as hers, has room only for a single
predominant affection" (241). Priscilla is insensitive to anything
except her happiness with Hollingsworth—but this, ironically, includes
Hollingsworth himself. In the glimpse Coverdale gets of their married
life, Priscilla is an almost sinister figure, deriving a "veiled
happiness" from Hollingsworth's misery, enjoying the chance to cradle
his shattered psyche as if she were a child mothering its favorite doll.
Yet at the same time that she blissfully gluts herself on his regression
and emasculation, she continues to worship him as if her were the same
man as of old:
As they approached me, I observed in Hollingsworth's face a depressed and melancholy look, that seemed habitual; the powerfully built man showed a self-distrustful weakness, and a childlike, or childish, tendency to press close, and closer still, to the side of the slender woman whose arm was within his. In Priscilla's manner, there was a protective and watchful quality, as if she felt herself the guardian of her companion, but, likewise, a deep, submissive, unquestioning reverence, and also a veiled happiness in her fair and quiet countenance. (242)

It would be hard to imagine an emptier relationship, if one could call it that at all. Although Hollingsworth clings pathetically to Priscilla, she can't relieve his torment over his "murder" of Zenobia, "whose vindictive shadow dogged the side where Priscilla was not" (243). Doubtless she is too simple to recognize it. For she too is isolated in her own separate world, a quaint little world of childish pleasure and hero-worship.

It would also be hard to conceive of a fate for Hollingsworth that would more exquisitely gratify Coverdale's vengefulness and resentment towards him. Not only is the big, brawny, lady-killing giant finally slain by self-distrust and guilt, there is a vindictive irony in the inanity of Priscilla's "deep, submissive, unquestioning reverence," for Priscilla is simply the kind of woman whom Hollingsworth has demanded, the "unreserved, unquestioning Believer" (122). From the moment Hollingsworth calls to her, after Zenobia's attack, it is clear that in Coverdale's scheme of things Priscilla is an agent of his revenge, an instrument in Hollingsworth's degradation:

"Priscilla," said Hollingsworth, "come!"

Zenobia smiled; possibly, I did so too. Not often, in human life, has a gnawing sense of injury found a sweeter morsel of revenge, than was conveyed in the tone with which Hollingsworth spoke those two words. It was the abased and tremulous tone of a man, whose faith in himself was shaken, and who sought, at last, to lean on an affection. Yes; the strong man bowed himself, and rested on this poor Priscilla. Oh, could she have failed him, what a triumph for the lookers-on! (219)
As it turns out, there is an even greater triumph in her fidelity. "The entire devotion of this one true heart" (242) is hardly a blessing; its mindless insensitivity only intensifies Hollingsworth's isolation.

We can now fully appreciate the absurdity of Coverdale's asking us to believe that he has all along harbored a secret love for Priscilla, and that he has spent the rest of his life pining over her loss. When he sees her for the last time, years later, he hardly acts as a secret lover; he ignores her in his determination to sting Hollingsworth with guilt for the death of Zenobia. Coverdale needs to believe himself that he is in love with Priscilla, in order to fend off his intense and painfully mixed feelings over Zenobia. Few critics have noticed that Coverdale first hints at his secret affection for Priscilla just at a point where his feelings towards Zenobia especially need to be repressed, at the start of his last conversation with her and shortly before her death:

It suits me not to explain what was the analogy that I saw, or imagined, between Zenobia's situation and mine; nor, I believe, will the reader detect this one secret, hidden beneath many a revelation which perhaps concerned me less. In simple truth, however, as Zenobia leaned her forehead against the rock, shaken with that tearless agony, it seemed to me that the self-same pang, with hardly mitigated torment, leaped thrilling from her heart-strings to my own. (222)

We can confidently identify Coverdale's "one secret" here with the "one secret" which he says in the final chapter "I have concealed . . . all along" (247), since his supposed heartache for Priscilla would be analogous to Zenobia's unrequited love for Hollingsworth. Coverdale seems to be going to extra lengths to deceive us, when he heralds a
transparent falsehood as a long-standing "secret" that he finally "confesses," but the advantages of deceiving himself at this point are clear. Ludicrous as it is, the notion that he feels an anguish over the loss of Priscilla equivalent to Zenobia's agony distances his emotions from Zenobia and her fate, at the same time that it makes him appear especially sympathetic with her. To the same end, he views himself as a priest, "called upon to minister to this woman's affliction" (222)—a lofty role which denies the possibility of his personal involvement as a would-be rival of Hollingsworth.

The reason why Coverdale would want so intensely to conceal from himself and the reader that his "irrepressible yearnings over the Blithedale reminiscences" (246) center on Zenobia can be surmised from the very tone of his confession that he was in love with Priscilla. Blushingly, apologetically, Coverdale turns away his face, and stammers out his "foolish little secret." D. H. Lawrence rightly ridiculed the "dribbling" sentimentality of this; it is hard to see how Coverdale could more convincingly deny the seriousness of his feelings. But this is precisely what he wants to do; as always, Coverdale's diversion of his emotions to Priscilla transforms them into something innocuous, by bringing them safely within the bounds of sentimental convention. Still, the notion that he has loved Priscilla all along lends a human warmth to his involvement with his friends; it seems like a bid to make himself a more sympathetic figure.

In contrast, it is clear that the feelings about Zenobia which actually haunt Coverdale are not so uniformly harmless nor quaint.
The triumph of Coverdale's puritanical and sadistic urges does not resolve his conflict between anxiety and desire, nor consequently his ambivalence towards Zenobia. All it does is paralyze him with unfulfilled longing, mixed with a dull sense of regret, shadows of guilt, and his perennial reservations over her. There are several indications that he is obsessed with "irrepressible yearnings" towards her: he keeps her slipper, found on the river bank, and remarks that "I left Blithedale within the week after Zenobia's death, and went back thither no more. The whole soil of our farm, for a long time afterwards, seemed but the sodded earth over her grave" (245). However, it is certain that, to the end, Coverdale cannot overcome his anxieties. Even at Zenobia's funeral, he continues to try to satisfy his curiosity over her sexual history. He manages to endure Westervelt "in my eager curiosity to discover some tangible truth, as to his relation with Zenobia" (239). Although Coverdale complains that this hope is disappointed, Westervelt is actually as clear about Zenobia's sexual experience as a gentleman could be: "Love had failed her, you say! Had it never failed her before? Yet she survived it, and loved again--possibly, not once alone, nor twice either" (240). Coverdale's obsession at this late hour with the same spurious doubt about Zenobia that arose practically upon his first sight of her can only mean two things: first, that he secretly judges her entire worth as a person, and attractiveness as a woman, on the basis of her sexual mores, and secondly, that he wants to think as well of her in this way as he can, but can never stifle his doubts. Although he is sure to have abandoned any hope that she could actually have been a
virgin, he can still try to believe that her sexual attitudes might have been relatively proper and "maidenly." In this respect her suicide speaks greatly in her favor; it proves that she possessed deeper feelings than Westervelt's worldly attitudes. Thus Coverdale even fantasizes at one point that Zenobia might have died in the manner of a "wronged" virgin:

Zenobia, I have often thought, was not quite simple in her death. She had seen pictures, I suppose, of drowned persons, in lithe and graceful attitudes. And she deemed it well and decorous to die as so many village-maidens have, wronged in their first-love, seeking peace in the bosom of the old, familiar stream--so familiar that they could not dread it--where, in childhood, they used to bathe their little feet, wading mid-leg deep, unmindful of wet skirts. (236-37)

This reverie is clearly a projection of Coverdale's own fancies onto Zenobia; its sentimentality is characteristic of him, and, as Zenobia would say, the whole scene would come nicely and sweetly into his ballad. It is unlikely that a woman who feels herself at odds with "the whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot" (224), and who dies "as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility" (235), would indulge in such an affectation. Coverdale's supposition that she did reflects his own ambivalence towards her. He is attracted by the fantasy that she might have been as pure and innocent of heart as a village maiden, but at the same time is repulsed by the irrepressible sense that she was not, so that he concludes that she was an actress, and a bit of a fraud. Of course, Coverdale can't reach a final judgment of her; his attraction to her and his repression are perfectly deadlocked.

The bigotry of the grounds on which Coverdale secretly tries her requires no comment; however, their hypocrisy does. For, after Zenobia's
death, Coverdale seems to adopt the chivalric sentiment that a lady is never to blame, and magnanimously attributes her faults to the influence of her male associates. Yet even as he does so, we can glimpse the proceedings of his secret tribunal. For instance, he tells Westervelt at the funeral, "I have long considered you as Zenobia's evil fate" (240), and soon adds, "Whatever stain Zenobia had, was caught from him" (241). At first glance, this betokens a generous sympathy with Zenobia as a victim of male insensitivity and persecution—which is doubtless how he wants to see her; but there is the lurking implication that Zenobia was soiled from the very start by a sexual connection with Westervelt. Underneath, Coverdale is enslaved to a prudishness crueler than the "masculine egotism" (241) which he holds responsible for Zenobia's fate.

However, Coverdale himself is a victim of his repression, his life wasted by the tormenting, unending struggle between his longing and his anxiety. In the last chapter Coverdale goes to remarkable lengths to believe that something other than the painfully conflicting feelings surrounding Zenobia by which he is still obsessed is responsible for the artistic, sexual, and social barrenness of his life. He puts the blame for all this emptiness not only on a love for Priscilla—although he calls it "an absurd thing ever to have happened" (247)—but also, to some extent, on his disillusionment with "human progress." In this latter respect he is even willing to indulge in a little self-satire, about his willingness to die for a worthy cause, "provided, however, the effort did not involve an unreasonable amount of trouble" (246). However, this levity can hardly conceal the despair, which has nothing
to do with the failure of ideals in which he never believed in the first place. Coverdale's stagnation for "more than twelve long years" (235) since leaving Blithedale has the aura of a neurotic fixation, however much he tries to trivialize its cause. Coverdale struggles to repress his growing despair at being in the grip of obsessive anxieties and sadistic impulses, but it emerges in a gloomy sense of his own death or stagnation that anticipates the oppressively guilt-ridden melancholy of The Marble Faun. Coverdale early evinces a certain attraction to death; while sick, he believes that he is ready, and says that "it still impresses me as almost a matter of regret, that I did not die, then" (42). Much later, he indulges in some absurdly idealized fancies about how the Blithedalers will practice "a sweet, calm way of dying" (130). Yet at the same time, in view of the underlying destructive course of his drama, he seems a bit too interested in anticipating the first death in the community, and the first burial on its land. The hint of a personal foreboding of "death" closely bound up with his sadistic fantasy grows quite strong in "The Masqueraders," the chapter in which Coverdale feels a "wild exhilaration" alternating with "a sickness of the spirits" over the approach of his catastrophe. Triumphant, revengeful joy is offset by a mournful sympathy with the victim, which seems to merge into a sense of his own imminent death or, we could say, putrefaction. At the very pool of the river where Zenobia will drown, Coverdale wonders "if any overladen soul had ever flung its weight of mortality in thither, and if it thus escaped the burthen, or only made it heavier" (208). Coverdale reflects of
Blithedale, "There was my home; and there might be my grave" (206). In keeping with this sense of the presence of death, the chapter abounds with images of death and—interestingly—rottenness and decay, the cumulative effect of which is to suggest that the realization of Coverdale's malevolent desires somehow entails his own inner death or stagnation. The farmhouse shows "no more signs of life than in a dead man's unshut eyes" (208). Coverdale flings "some rotten fragments of an old stump" at the lethargic, indifferent cows (209). The witch Moll Pitcher threatens to root Coverdale to the earth, where he will be a living prisoner of decay: "the green moss shall grow all over him, before he gets free again!" (211). Finally, in fleeing the masqueraders, Coverdale falls over a very old, decayed, moss-covered pile of firewood, which provokes an intriguing fantasy: "In the fitful mood that then swayed my mind, I found something strangely affecting in this simple circumstance. I imagined the long-dead woodman, and his long-dead wife and children, coming out of their chill graves, and essaying to make a fire with this heap of mossy fuel!" (211-12). It seems to me that this incident especially foreshadows Coverdale's final, confirmed sexual failure, isolation, and torpor; the ghosts of a wife and family hint at the love and fulfillment lost to him as a frosty bachelor, in whose heart, as Coverdale implied long before, there can only burn the "chill mockery of a fire" (9). Despite Coverdale's "customary levity" in the last chapter, "the joke is a little too heavy" (101). Coverdale cannot escape a dim awareness that the victory of his anxieties through the destruction of Zenobia has negated whatever hopes still attached
him to life. Contact with Zenobia shattered the secure, well-protected

fantasy of Coverdale's previous life, and even though he succeeds in

removing her, he cannot overcome the longings, anxieties, and regrets

which she aroused. In the end we see him trying to live his old life

of safely isolated, genteel comfort—"Being well to do in the world,

and having nobody but myself to care for, I live very much at my ease,

and fare sumptuously every day" (246). But, as implied by his

abandonment of poetry, "spiritual" and sentimental visions have lost

their power to conceal that this life is a slow and aimless drifting

towards death.

The novel ends, then, by strongly suggesting that Priscilla's

marriage to Hollingsworth is but the final way in which she is useful

to Coverdale (that most skillful of stage managers), this time as a

wet-nurse presiding in a subtly cruel fashion over Hollingsworth's

reduction to a cringing child; but also that, for all its ingenuity,

the success of Coverdale's revenge play only completes his inner

desiccation. This understanding of the significance of the characters'

fates confirms our central contention that Blithedale sustains a

thoroughly detached perspective towards Coverdale's projective technique

of allaying his anxieties. Regardless of the extent to which Coverdale's

sexual fears reflected Hawthorne's own, the novel's decisive portrayal

of Coverdale's final, empty fixation on what he destroyed, and Priscilla's

inhuman simplicity, which we can at last see is as heartless as it is

brainless, discounts the notion held by the major psychoanalytic

critics, that the bare facts of the denouement—Zenobia's death and
Priscilla's marriage--reflect the novel's, and Hawthorne's, judgment of the characters. Rahv, Abele, and Crews all contend that the dominant part of Hawthorne's personality endorsed Zenobia's destruction, and rewarded Priscilla with a kinder fate because she is a better girl than her sister--docile, repressed, and "spiritual" rather than bold and brazen. Although they allow that Hawthorne had reservations over his puritanical impulses, they still maintain that in writing the book he was himself driven by the same anxieties and compulsions as are evident in Coverdale, who thus is simply a naive authorial projection. The novel is finally a simple moral tale about the virtuousness of repression and the folly and wickedness of sexual forthrightness:

But this "better model of womanhood" commits suicide for want of love, while the obstreperous Hollingsworth is collared by Prissy and dragged to the altar. The puritan morality of predestination takes its toll as the story closes. Humanity is divided into the damned and the saved, irretrievably so, and never the twain shall meet.5

Zenobia perishes, but Priscilla endures . . . she wears her sex, as women of her class in her day were intended to do, in a secret place, while Zenobia flaunts it abroad; and the upshot of the fable is that Priscilla's conformism triumphs, but Zenobia's rebellion destroys her. . . . The clear implication of the affair is that "virtuous" people like Priscilla, whom Coverdale loves at a distance, are sexually modest, but that "sinister" people like Zenobia and Hollingsworth are sexually bold, even though they both dissemble their boldness.6

Crews follows suit: Zenobia's death reflects an "unconscious logic"7 which grips Hawthorne as well as Coverdale, and Hollingsworth's clinging to Priscilla's skirts is supposed to be "a real marriage"8!

Once it is recognized--as Crews and Abele do--that there is a correspondence between the characters' fortunes and Coverdale's anxieties, statements such as these, referring the repressive logic
back to Hawthorne, are pure and simple carelessness. The revengeful and sadistic fantasies of Zenobia's death and Hollingsworth's defeat continue to function within the bounds of Coverdale's intensely ironic characterization; at the end, we are provided with unambiguous indication of the toll which the gratification of his repressed desires exacts from Coverdale himself, and of the frightening vapidness of his little helpmate in revenge, Priscilla. Though exploited by everybody, she turns out to be the "evil fate" not only of Zenobia, but of the man who marries her as well. Repression triumphs, but there is nothing even ambivalently positive about the light in which this outcome is placed. This sets the book apart from much of Hawthorne—for example, The Marble Faun, in which there is an effort to believe that Donatello's masochistic guilt is spiritually uplifting. The Blithedale Romance has been called the most negative of Hawthorne's novels. It is, because it is the most personally honest. The end is graced by no sad and reverent showman, affirming the stern spiritual necessity of the repressions and punishments which are imposed—or rather, we see that showman backstage, when his spiritual tricks have failed him, haunted by the ghost of his victim, unable to conceal his emptiness, and with nothing left to protect him from his remorse and stifled longing than a pathetic lie.
Emotional Deficits: *Blithedale* as a Novel of Social Criticism, After All

In this chapter I will summarize what I believe is the central psychological theme of *The Blithedale Romance*. Up to now, I have been concerned with demonstrating the novel's unique form as a projected fantasy of its narrator. To this end, the novel's characters have been shown to have a mixture of dream-functions as agents of Coverdale's repressed desires, objects and victims of his anxieties, and sometimes threatening, sometimes useful projections of his repressed personality. To borrow a phrase from Zenobia's indictment of Hollingsworth, Coverdale's story is "all self" (218). Yet, if we are to catch the full import of what *Blithedale* has to say about the psychological patterns which we have traced to Coverdale, we must recognize a paradoxical capacity of reference in the novel's form: because Coverdale's psychology is projected onto reality and forms the logic of reality, it gains the status of a societal, rather than only an individual, neurosis. As I said at the end of the third chapter, *Blithedale*’s achievement is a personal one— it is Hawthorne’s discovery of a form enabling him to reach the self-transcendence and self-criticism necessary to overcome the conventionalized duality, and duplicity, of his fiction—the disparity between manifest and covert meaning and subject matter. However, as we are reminded by the example of books such as *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Pierre*, *Women in Love*, and *The Castle*, the novel is capable of very closely fusing self-criticism with the criticism of a society. *The Blithedale*
Romance might seem ill suited to this task, because it cannot create a vision of society clearly distinguishable from the psychological propensities of the narrator's mind. In fact, however, the novel succeeds in powerfully suggesting that those very propensities—terror of woman's sexual power and aggressiveness, sadism, voyeurism, emotional repression, intellectualization, idealization, a mania for manipulation and control—are the sicknesses of a culture and a times. These patterns are embodied in every male character in the book, and their all-inclusiveness compels us not only to recognize Hollingsworth, Westervelt, and Moodie as projections of Coverdale, but also to include Coverdale, along with the others, as one form and part of a psychological syndrome—a set of reactions to a common anxiety that reflects Hawthorne's critical understanding of himself as a man and artist and at the same time a vision of the particular diseases of the heart cultivated by his society. In short, each of the men manifests some form of mental cruelty towards the women, a need to hold them in some kind of subjection so as to protect himself from their unknown powers. The entire male population of the novel is infected with Zenobia-phobia, and the dazzling array of perversities of the spirit in which they indulge—cynicism, monomaniacal idealism, spying mania, mesmerism, pseudo-spirituality, and exploitation and manipulation of all sorts—are their reactions to this fear.

We can begin to establish the essential psychological identity of the male characters by noting the different capacities in which they are self-projections of Coverdale. In the second chapter we saw that Hollingsworth's repressive idealism and his cold-hearted exploitation
of Zenobia project Coverdale's revengeful desire to enjoy a superior masculine power over Zenobia. Westervelt and even Old Moodie enact the same desire, and function in other ways as images of Coverdale's repressed self.

It has already been detailed how Westervelt threateningly exposes to Coverdale his own genuine opinion of the respective physical merits of Zenobia and Priscilla, and his contempt and jealousy towards Hollingsworth, when they first meet in the forest. Westervelt's mimicry of Coverdale's real, unspiritual feelings is accompanied by a number of indications that Westervelt is a projection of part of Coverdale that he doesn't want to know about. The circumstances of their encounter are suggestive of Westervelt's innerness as a self-image. As so often in Hawthorne, the forest in Blithedale is a psychological underworld, a setting for dream-experience—and Coverdale has entered it, on this occasion, for the express purpose of "self-communion" (89). Westervelt appears just as Coverdale, in a mood of intense self-absorption, turns the forest into a simile of a heart into whose secret recesses he is seeking entrance: "I abated my pace and looked about me for some side-aisle, that should admit me into the innermost sanctuary of this green cathedral; just as, in human acquaintanceship, a casual opening sometimes lets us, all of a sudden, into the long-sought intimacy of a mysterious heart" (89-90). Westervelt affords Coverdale more intimacy with his own heart than he cares to have. Coverdale has actually come into the forest to enjoy one of his orgies of spiritualized autoeroticism—despite his solemn, religious tone, his "innermost sanctuary"
is another enclosed place in the bushes into which he plans to thrust himself, like his hermitage, whose "branches yielded me a passage, and closed again, beneath, as if only a squirrel or bird had passed" (98). The affinity of his mood with his languid sensuality in the hermitage and the hotel is obvious; Coverdale sets out "with my heart full of drowsy pleasure" (89), heading for the land of wet dreams. Westervelt dissipates this "spiritual state" (90); his urbane, sneering tone brings out all the "lewdness" and nastiness of Coverdale's feelings towards his friends. Several more things identify Westervelt as an image of Coverdale's repressed self. He is a dream-figure, a "spectral character" (95) who "had almost the effect of an apparition" (91). He particularly goads Coverdale by insisting that they know each other, and treating him with condescending familiarity. His age, handsome appearance, and cultivated, dandyish manners connect him with Coverdale. However, his appearance and manners also mirror the falseness of Coverdale's own exterior, the "moral humbug" of all of his poses of benevolence, detachment, lofty spiritual sympathy, and so on: "I felt as if the whole man were a moral and physical humbug; 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" (95).

Later on, Westervelt's mesmerism becomes an image of Coverdale's own pseudo-spiritual, sadistic artistry, damning in the precision with which it mirrors his dressing up of his sadistic control over the
characters with idealized, spiritual motives. When, in the village hall, Coverdale hears examples of "the miraculous power of one human being over the will and passions of another," his "unutterable . . . horror and disgust" is ironically directed at the very image of his own fantasy-power: "Human character was but soft wax in his hands; and guilt, or virtue, only the forms into which he should see fit to mould it" (198). Westervelt's show also brings out all the prurience underlying Coverdale's professed speculative or spiritual interest in Zenobia and Priscilla. Despite a "delusive show of spirituality" (200), Westervelt subjects Priscilla to a kind of repeated spiritual rape, forcing her to "hold intercourse with spirits" whom "death, in requital of their gross and evil lives, has degraded below humanity. . . . outcasts, mere refuse-stuff, adjudged unworthy of the eternal world" (199). Shocked, Coverdale fervently avers that "she had kept, as I religiously believe, her virgin reserve and sanctity of soul, throughout it all" (203).

Nevertheless, the prurience of Westervelt's exhibition has its counterpart in Coverdale's own attempts to investigate Priscilla's folded "mystery." And, while he is waiting for the show to begin, Coverdale busies himself yanking the strings of one of his own puppets; he torments Hollingsworth "like an evil spirit" (200). Westervelt is finally a demonic image of the worst aspect of Coverdale's subconscious duplicity--his cold-hearted control and destruction of the objects of his anxiety under the guise of a dispassionate, spiritual and intellectual interest in probing "psychological phenomena" (200).

In contrast, Old Moodie is a projection of Coverdale as a victim of his own repression; lifeless, torpid, and empty, he bears no small
resemblance to the man we see Coverdale become. Nevertheless, he is a more remote, and far less threatening self-image than Westervelt—a figure whose history of shallow materialism lends itself to the comfortable moral fableizing with which Coverdale treats it in "Fauntleroy." Like Westervelt, Moodie arouses Coverdale's disgust, but it has none of the fear of a "secret hatefulness" (172) in himself being exposed, which we can sense in his revulsion from the Professor. As Coverdale says, Moodie is a rat without teeth (83); without the mischief of Westervelt's "wicked grin." Still his resemblance to Coverdale is far-reaching, extending even to Coverdale's fantasy-power over the plot.

As an image of the wages of repression, his life is totally void of any vital energy—a condition about which Coverdale is somewhat ambivalent.

At one point the thought even occurs to Coverdale, that he may one day be as dead inside as the old man:

. . . I tried to identify my mind with the old fellow's, and take his view of the world, as if looking through a smoke-blackened glass at the sun. It robbed the landscape of all of its life. . . . When my eyes are dimmer than they have yet come to be, I will go thither again, and see if I did not catch the tone of his mind aright, and if the cold and lifeless tint of his perceptions be not then repeated in my own. (84)

For the time being, Coverdale is alive to a vitality in the earth to which Moodie is dead, and he feels it as a sexual intensity: "the sultry heat-vapor, which rose everywhere like incense, and in which my soul delighted, as indicating so rich a fervor in the passionate day, and in the earth that was burning with its love" (84). Yet because Coverdale is afraid of being scorched by too close contact with this energy, he shortly afterwards recommends Old Moodie's gloom as "a sort
of cooling regimen," "should any of our fraternity grow feverish with
an over-exulting sense of prosperity" (87-88). Repulsed as Coverdale
sometimes is by Moodie's torpor, he cannot resist seeing it as a handy
refuge from experiences that threaten to grow too "feverish"--the word
he uses to describe his nervous fantasies over Zenobia. At the end of
the novel, Coverdale says that Blithedale has since been overrun with
Old Moodies: "Where once we toiled with our whole hopeful hearts, the
town-paupers, aged, nerveless, and disconsolate, creep sluggishly
afield" (246). This mirrors forth not only his own stagnation, but that
of all the men, each of whom has his own way of denying and resisting
life, especially in its most disconcerting form, woman's love.

All of them act towards Zenobia in ways suggestive of an urge to
control, manipulate, and destroy a woman whose "uncomfortable surplus
of vitality" endangers their dominance. Moodie is no exception.
His furtiveness and secretiveness about his purposes resemble Coverdale's,
who often goes about questioning people in whispers and undertones.²
Like Coverdale, Moodie appears to be a passive observer of the action,
yet actually exercises a hidden control over it. As a behind-the-
scenes manipulator of Priscilla's and Zenobia's fates, he is an agent of
Coverdale's fantasy-power, like Hollingsworth. At one point Coverdale
compares him to "an enshrined and invisible idol" (83), and in fact he
is the sinister deus ex machina of Coverdale's melodrama; his transfer
of wealth from Zenobia to Priscilla leads directly to Zenobia's rejection
and suicide. "As with Coverdale and Hollingsworth, Moodie's contribution
to Zenobia's destruction is ostensibly motivated by love and concern for
Priscilla, but we have only to glance at his interview with Zenobia to see what feelings his action gratifies. The scene invites us to enjoy Moodie's secret power over Zenobia; his threatening and peremptory treatment of her is a gratuitous attack on her "haughty" superiority (190):

"Now, leave me! Linger not a moment longer; or I may be tempted to say what would bring a cloud over that queenly brow" (192). As with Hollingsworth, Moodie's part in the plot has the effect of gratifying fantasies of male dominance and cruelty for which there is more motivation in Coverdale than in himself.

We can now grasp the common identity of the male characters as manifestations of a single psychological pattern. Coverdale, unable to accept or realistically pursue his sexual interest in either Priscilla or Zenobia, secretly dreams the course of Zenobia's destruction, thereby completes his own embalment in loneliness and emptiness, and ends up trying to believe that he loved Priscilla, whom he has actually exploited as one of his agents. Hollingsworth, incapable of sexual feelings or love, feigns them in order to further an obsessive ideal, and in doing so first betrays Priscilla, then dumps and condemns Zenobia; in the end, he proclaims that he loves Priscilla, in order to procure her new wealth. Moodie, slowly putrefying amidst the stale odor of insipid material fantasies, admires Zenobia as an ego-boosting reflection of his own past wealthiness, nevertheless puts in his two bits for her destruction, and, loving vacuous little Priscilla best, provides her with ample dowry for a vacuous marriage. Westervelt's relationship to either woman is overtly prurient, sadistic, and manipulative, and he is both incapable
of feelings himself and insensitive to those of his victims. Each of these isolated, maimed, and rotting spirits suggests a personality whose emotional capacities have been irremediably crippled, incapable of a personal relationship of any kind with either man or woman, and releasing the repressed pain of its isolation in the twisted form of an urge to exploit, control, and destroy the most powerful threat to its repression—woman. Three of the four finally decide that they "love" Priscilla, but this actually reflects a further flight from the danger of emotional involvement; the vapid little thing makes about as much serious demand on one's feelings as an old dishrag.

This intense emotional stultification and sadistic need to control a threatening world of other persons as objects of anxiety emerge as the common psychological roots of a great number of the male character-types in Hawthorne's fiction. Hollingsworth, Westervelt, and Coverdale are all in their own way psychological experimenters; Westervelt and Coverdale are artists; Hollingsworth is at once an obsessed idealist, a cold-hearted sinner, and hypocritical Puritan judge; Westervelt is the fiend and magician; Moodie is the dubious father. Traces of these identities are sufficiently shared to further indicate their affinity—Coverdale appears at different times as idealist, judge, and fiend, Hollingsworth as a father-figure, and so on. Regardless of the various intellectual, spiritual, idealistic, or even materialistic aims they adopt to rationalize and glorify their malady, all of the men are singularly incapable of love, brotherhood, or friendship. Sexual fears are the source of this problem, but their defensive reactions to them
extend beyond the repression of sexual feelings to a general emotional paralysis, and that urge to destroy which Lawrence heard as the diabolical undertone of American fiction. This emotional vacuousness, often sadistic in itself, is obvious enough in their relationships with the two women. We are told that Moodie loved his first wife and daughter simply as brilliant ornaments to his wealth, and that his second marriage was prompted by "torpid despair" (185). Just as Coverdale fears he has no real place in his friends' affections, Fauntleroy "had laid no real touch on any mortal's heart" (183). Similarly, despite their superficial opposition as cynic and idealist, Westervelt and Hollingsworth are identical in their cold-hearted contempt for and inability to understand the feelings of their female victims. Like Coverdale, they are capable of only an intellectual response to emotional crises. When Zenobia finally lashes out at Hollingsworth for his exploitation of everyone, his reply shows the extent to which he has succeeded in idealizing his callousness: "This is a woman's view ... a woman's, whose whole sphere of action is in the heart, and who can conceive of no higher nor wider one!" (218). Not to be outdone in his indifference to Zenobia's feelings, Westervelt calls her suicide "an idle thing--a foolish thing" (239), and "a mere woman's whim" (241) at her funeral, and leaves no doubt as to what he thinks of her heart: "'Her heart!' answered Westervelt, contemptuously. 'That troublesome organ (as she had hitherto found it) would have been kept in its due place and degree, and have had all the gratification it could fairly claim!" (240). In his scornful incomprehension of Zenobia's anger in
the forest, Westervelt is the epitome, or caricature, of the overly intellectualized, emotionally repressed mentality discernible in his fellow men:

As for Westervelt, he was not a whit more warmed by Zenobia's passion, than a salamander by the heat of its native furnace. He would have been absolutely statuesque, save for a look of slight perplexity tinctured strongly with derision. It was a crisis in which his intellectual perceptions could not altogether help him out. He failed to comprehend, and cared but little for comprehending, why Zenobia should put herself into such a fume; but satisfied his mind that it was all folly, and only another shape of a woman's manifold absurdity, which men can never understand. (102-03)

Coverdale tellingly observes, "Nature thrusts some of us into the world miserably incomplete, on the emotional side" (103), and for once we can accept his word, even though, as so often, he betrays more than a touch himself of what he can criticize in the others.

We have already traced the source of this emotional "incompleteness" to Coverdale's sexual anxieties; however, we are far from dependent on Coverdale's psychology to reveal the sexual basis of the men's immaturity. The novel is so directly an exploration of sexual neurosis, that it is hardly surprising Hawthorne included a fable-like episode that all but explicitly links male insensitivity to fixation in a state of adolescent sexual trauma. I mean the story of Theodore in "Zenobia's Legend." It has been observed that Theodore's fear of kissing the "virgin lips" (113) concealed beneath feminine drapery is indicative of "regressive flight," a male inability to face the reality of woman's body resulting in a retreat into a mixture of prurient fascination and nervous avoidance. Critics, though, have not often recognized that the anxiety implicit in this vaginal symbolism is treated as the source of
the very emotional "deficiencies" we have been looking at in all the men. Theodore is a parody of the emotional childishness underlying the men's curious combination of voyeuristic prurience with frigid intellectuality. Like Coverdale, who feels that he has "a decided tendency towards the actual" (140), Theodore "prided himself upon his common-sense" and "on his sturdy perception of realities" (110, 111). Like Westervelt, he has a "natural tendency . . . towards skepticism" (113).

All three use rationalism as a barrier against sexual feelings; Theodore scoffs at the sensational stories about the lips he is invited to kiss (113). The Veiled Lady, like Zanobia, takes the sexual initiative and offers herself to Theodore, and his response, which reminds us of Coverdale's inability to recognize a woman as a person instead of an object of fearful and curious speculation, is comically juvenile. Theodore felt himself almost injured and insulted by the Veiled Lady's proposal that he should pledge himself, for life and eternity, to so questionable a creature as herself; or even that she should suggest an inconsequential kiss, taking into view the probability that her face was none of the most bewitching. A delightful idea, truly, that he should salute the lips of a dead girl, or the jaws of a skeleton, or the grinning cavity of a monster's mouth! Even should she prove a comely maiden enough, in other respects, the odds were ten to one that her teeth were defective; a terrible drawback on the delectableness of a kiss!

"Excuse me, fair lady," said Theodore—and I think he nearly burst into a laugh—"if I prefer to lift the veil first; and for this affair of the kiss, we may decide upon it, afterwards!" (113)

Theodore is a caricature of the emotional infantilism underlying the men's efforts to dominate, control, and destroy the women. A braggart drunk who undertakes a peeping-tom expedition and hides himself in a lady's dressing room in order to win a bet, he reveals as the logic
of the men's relationships to the women a set of sexual attitudes that are roughly those of a thirteen-year-old. Because of this fixation, he is destined for the sexual deprivations of frosty bachelorhood—doomed, like Coverdale, "to desire, and waste life in a feverish quest" (114).

Blithedale thus identifies an insurmountable adolescent sexual crisis as the source of the men's cruelty towards the women, and of their need to hold them in various kinds of subjection. Coverdale's sense in "Eliot's Pulpit" that the "masculine egotism" of Hollingsworth and of "millions of despots like him" is "the well-spring of all these troubled waters" (123) is but a half-truth, and perhaps a cunning one at that. For male domination and sadism turn out to be masks concealing juvenile terrors. A boy's deepest disgrace is to be proven a sissy, and the quickest way to be convicted is to display either fear or affection; Blithedale's menfolk, in the immemorial tradition of boyhood, resort to callousness towards women in order to repress the sexual feelings that render them so vulnerable to these weaknesses. Of course, prurience thrives, because by reducing woman to a physical thing, it renders her a safe object of examination and control, and prevents any shameful and unnerving exchange of feeling. Coverdale can believe that he is exempt from "masculine egotism" by flaunting enlightened sentiments on women's rights, but among the men he is Theodore's closest counterpart in his puerile fear of feminine "mystery," and the crude assertion of male supremacy for which he condemns Hollingsworth is but a fantasy-response to this fear. Hollingsworth is a boy's wish come true, just at
that age when he feels uneasy and embarrassed over his emerging sexual feelings. The lady-killing idealist has a more than casual affinity with a type of hero who has flourished in twentieth-century America, propagated by Hollywood and the popular novel—the big, strong, "real man," who, although women swoon over him left and right, never betrays a hint of weakness, conquers them with dispassionate suavity, and invariably leaves them tear-ridden behind, his perfectly collected self-conceit never ruffled for a second. Hollingsworth, however, finally falls from his seemingly impregnable obliviousness to Zenobia’s feelings—after she's dead—and when this happens, he develops "a self-distrustful weakness" and becomes "childlike, or childish" (242). "Manhood" has become dependent upon the absence and repression of personal feelings, particularly sexual affection, as opposed to prurience and cruelty. Emotional surrender to a woman is emasculating. The seeming opposites of male prudence and repression of womanhood turn out to be allies in the men's struggle to maintain some sort of resistant power to the fearful force exerted on their immature emotions by woman's sexuality.

It is important to recognize that the perverted notion of masculinity embodied in Hollingsworth is actually a product of the adolescent sexual anxieties apparent in Theodore and Coverdale, lest we misread Blithedale's examination of the sexual and emotional disorders of its times, which are closer to those of our own than we admit, with our easy contempt for Victorian repression. Especially in its description of the audience in the village lyceum hall, The Blithedale Romance portrays a society becoming at the same time more exclusively intellectual and cerebral,
more sexually repressed and physically debilitated, and increasingly manipulative and sadistic in its attitudes towards other people.

Coverdale's remarks on the women in the audience echo earlier complaints about the pale sexlessness of modern women (15-17, 95), except that their "delicacy" is now equated with intellectuality: "There was likewise a considerable proportion of young and middle-aged women, many of them stern in feature, with marked foreheads, and a very definite line of eyebrow; a type of womanhood in which a bold intellectual development seems to be keeping pace with the progressive delicacy of the physical constitution" (197). With the exception of the old Yankee farmers, the men are effeminate and intellectual, "pretty young men--the schoolmaster, the lawyer, or student-at-law, the shopkeeper--all looking rather suburban than rural" (197). It is implied that this disproportionate cultivation of mind and "spirit" and repression of the body has led to emotional disorder. The "mysticism, or, rather, the mystic sensuality, of this singular age" (198) consists of a fascination with the idea of wielding a sadistic and destructive power over other people, and particularly their feelings. The man who relates the stories of a wizard who magically annihilates the affections of lovers, widows, and mothers conforms to the type of intellectuality combined with physical vapidness: "a pale man in blue spectacles" (198). From the examples of Coverdale and Westervelt we can be sure that in these unbalanced men intellectuality and what passes for spirituality have been put in the service of denied sexual urges, twisted into sadistic and nihilistic channels. It is a common theme, that in modern America society's
distrust of the intellectual is only surpassed by the intellectual's distrust of himself, stemming from an unacknowledged fear of sexual inferiority such as we can see in Coverdale. Crews and Abele have pointed out that Hawthorne in particular treats the artist or intellectual as a sexually anxious and immature figure. However, we can appreciate the subtlety of Blithedale's insight when we realize that far from exalting some image of crude masculinity in reaction against a culture that seeks to dull the separate physical, sexual identities of both man and woman, the novel treats the stereotype of masculinity, in the person of Hollingsworth, as a fantasy of that culture, helping to satiate its deep fear and hostility towards the female.

In his remarks on The Scarlet Letter and especially Dimmesdale, Lawrence traced this fear and hostility towards women precisely to an identification of masculinity with repression. Dimmesdale, the sexually timid, "spiritual" man, is, ironically, emasculated by his sexual experience with Hester, the voluptuous woman who triumphantly seduces and then scorces him, because he has turned his purity, his ability to successfully deny sexual desire, into a way of proving his masculinity. "Dimmesdale had . . . fallen from his integrity as a minister of the Gospel of the Spirit. He had lost his manliness."5 Hester "had dished him and his spirituality, so he hated her. . . . The women make fools of them, the spiritual men. And when, as men, they've gone flop in their spirituality, they can't pick themselves up whole any more. So they just crawl, and die detesting the female, or the females, who made them fall."6 The plot of The Blithedale Romance involves a response to the
males' fear of their spiritualized egos being deflated by an aggressive woman; not only does the voluptuous woman (Zenobia) fail to seduce the idealistic man (Hollingsworth), she is destroyed by his idealism—that is to say, his repression—which is exactly what it is designed to do.

Lawrence saw the destructive "battle of wills" between man and woman as a neurotic consequence of modern man's effort to subject his physical being to the control of his intellect and spirit. The Blithedale Romance certainly suggests as much, in view of its characters' perverse tendency to disguise their disturbed emotions beneath intellectual and idealistic attitudes. This helps us see that Blithedale's panorama of emotional disorder has broader sources than the sexual repression we associate with Hawthorne's century. The repression of sexual feelings is only one technique by which the ego attempts to control the emotional forces of life, from which it has become increasingly alienated by a culture which in myriad ways demands the development of analytic and manipulative skills at the expense of emotional experience and personal relationships. Sexual repression is now a familiar bugaboo, one of the evils perpetuated by our ancestors, but all of the other signs of the warping of man's emotional life rampant in The Blithedale Romance are also rampant in Western civilization today—the denial of love and passion and glorification of sexual prurience and sadism; the urge to control other people as objects of manipulation; the disintegration of human community, of moral and emotional bonds among men; the neurotic sublimation of personal pain and anxiety into intellectualized forms of cruelty; the rationalization of inhumanity
through artistic or scientific ideals. Today our emotional health and maturity are stunted more by material and technological obsessions than "spiritual" ones, but as the damage is similar and equally great, it is perhaps of minor consequence in which particular god we take refuge from our cursed potential to experience life along the full range and depth of our emotions. Moreover, Hawthorne's work registers the shift from spiritual and religious to material and technological rationalizations for cruelty; the zealous Puritan persecutor is succeeded by the sadistic experimenter on mankind, and a figure like Professor Westervelt, with his suave discourse on "psychological phenomena" (200) followed by his manifestly prurient exhibition, anticipates technological man's ingenuity for gratifying fear, anxiety, lust, hate, or whatever human emotions plague him in the guise or manner of some dispassionate, abstract logic.

More broadly, however, The Blithedale Romance implies that civilization per se—we can add, regardless of its passing sexual mores— involves an unhealthy warping of man's emotional life, because it forces man to seek indirect and disguised means of gratifying his feelings, and consequently alienates him from the understanding of his own emotions. Civilization, with its imposing array of ideals and causes, spiritual and technological, provides an abundance of convenient shields behind which people can hide from their gut selves. Hawthorne's criticism of society is finally that the intellectualization or rationalization of consciousness, which is necessary for material progress and also systems of spiritual and moral belief, has neuroticized both man's intellect
and his animal self, because man forces the two into an incompatible union in his futile effort to transcend his "lower" nature. Instead of openly experiencing and expressing his anxiety, jealousy, and passion, Coverdale masks them beneath intellectual and spiritual poses, with the doubly harmful consequence that his conscious self has no control or understanding of his submerged feelings and his spiritual and intellectual consciousness is a fraud. Coverdale is simply swimming with the stream of human history when he uses his "higher" capacities of the mind to provide rationales and blinds for the release of elemental fears and passions, which may be rendered so brutal by the very secretiveness with which they are satisfied.

Blithedale's indictment of the artificial systems created by the intellect for man's "loss or submergence of emotion" places it within a tradition of social criticism beginning with Romantics such as Blake and Wordsworth but especially strong in this century. The socially-enforced alienation of man from the emotional substance of life—the love, hate, terror, and joy that we two-legged creatures share with other animals—is perhaps the central theme in Kafka, and is prominent in Faulkner, along with an acute sense of the power of a society and its ideas or ideals to warp the emotional life of its members (Light in August is an excellent example). The sense that human experience and consciousness are becoming increasingly estranged from what is of elemental value about being alive, and the intense desire to regain contact with it, are discernible also in Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Conrad, and Lawrence. For example, Strether in The Ambassadors wakes
up to the kind of emptiness we have seen in Coverdale:

Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular; so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? ... And it's as if the train had fairly waited at the station for me without my having had the gumption to know it was there. Now I hear its faintly receding whistle miles and miles down the line. What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that.9

However, Coverdale has not simply suffered a loss of experience because he is afraid to be more than an observer; he has turned art, spirit, and intellect into means of revenge and protection against life. According to Richard Poirier, American writers have been particularly concerned with escaping the limitations placed on the mind by social artifice and in doing so have implicitly treated literary conventions as extensions or analogies of social, moral, and intellectual conventions.10

Some such equation is apparent in Coverdale, who adopts an aesthetic distance towards life and imposes conventions of pastoral, romance, and melodrama on it in order to gratify the regressive anxieties and sadism underlying society's repression and male dominance. To finally place Blithedale and its theme of the distortion of man's emotional life by society's effort to objectify consciousness within the context of American fiction and modern literature in general, we have to focus on the novel's eccentric form, because it is that form which made possible Hawthorne's self-liberation from the emotionally repressive conventions of his own art and society. We will conclude by discussing how Blithedale's form, reflecting Hawthorne's very personal sense of himself as a man and artist, compels us to assign the book a rather unusual place in the literary tradition.
Conclusion

At the start of this essay I mentioned the long-standing complaint against Hawthorne, that his work rarely succeeds in fusing "romance," "symbolism," or "allegory" with the sense of experiencing a concrete, particular reality. Philip Rahv goes so far as to deny all of Hawthorne's long fictions the status of novels, because of their failure to portray "life as it is actually lived," and to attribute this not only, like Henry James, to "the newness and bareness of the national scene," but also to inhibiting elements in America's intellectual heritage, namely Puritanism.¹ In my view, The Blithedale Romance contradicts every aspect of this criticism. Although Blithedale employs symbols, it is not a symbolic story, in the sense that we are compelled to translate what happens into an abstract or generalized logic—as we must do with tales such as "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." Much less is it an allegory. Rather, Blithedale is precisely about the "lived experience"² of a character, Coverdale, and its logic is the ironic exploration of his psychology. However, both the kind of human experience Hawthorne was concerned with examining in the book and his technique of doing so have proved a bit beyond the ken of his "realist" critics. Implicitly, they prescribe that the novelist shall limit himself to "the concrete manifestations of the real and . . . its everyday textures,"³ whereas Hawthorne, in anticipation of practically every major novelist of this century, recognized that the concrete, observable aspects of human experience cannot be understood apart from the inner workings of consciousness, particularly the unconscious. Hawthorne not only wrote
true novels, he infused them with a psychological understanding absent among his contemporaries, centered on the concept of the unconscious and making full play of all of its strategies, which were not to be formulated until half a century later by the psychoanalysts—projection, wish-fulfillment, repression, compulsion, and so on. Of Hawthorne's novels, The Blithedale Romance is most clearly and completely a psychological novel, in that it focuses totally on the analysis of a single consciousness, and its moral and social criticism is an offshoot of its psychological penetration—as we could not say of the theme of the "Fortunate Fall" in The Marble Faun or The House of the Seven Gables' fable-like condemnation of callousness and greed.

Hawthorne's psychoanalytic critics have already shown that his psychological understanding is precociously "Freudian." These critics performed the valuable service of recognizing that Hawthorne's art, with its unreal, heavily yet elusively symbolic atmosphere, arose not from some hypothesized social deprivation and vestigial Puritanism, as the realist critics maintained, but from an intense and generally secretive inner necessity to explore depths of human desire and fear and self-deceit which would have shocked his readers had they been able to enter the alien psychological world which he created. My crucial disagreement with the psychoanalytic critics is that I believe The Blithedale Romance is unique among Hawthorne's works, in that it abandons the conventions of romantic, allegorical, and symbolic storytelling which enabled Hawthorne to equivocate over and obscure the psychological content of his art, and achieves the realistic, analytical,
and ironic examination of this psychology at its source, the artist himself—paradoxically, through a nonrealistic, fantastic form. There is nothing more profoundly real in psychological literature than Coverdale's manipulation and destruction of people who excite his anxieties at the same time that he convinces himself he is a benevolent and detached bystander, yet because art is the vehicle of Coverdale's revenge on life, the novel's form intentionally violates reality. It seems to me that in writing a book in which psychological truth and the logic of the unconscious become so all-determining and real as to engross physical and social reality and render them implements and objects of their necessities, Hawthorne not only at last found a novelistic form enabling him to fully elucidate his central theme of the artist's emotional disorder, but in doing so realized a vision of experience that is more akin to the literature of our century than his own—that of reality being inexorably psychological, created uniquely within each of us, yet by forces we do not understand or control, and with no access to an objective truth.

Since this psychological perspective has been the impetus of most of the formal developments of the twentieth-century novel, we might expect that in its conception and representation of experience and reality The Blithedale Romance again has a greater affinity with, say, The Castle or Mrs. Dalloway than with Bleak House or Middlemarch. From time to time critics have noted that in one way or another—for example, in the dream-quality of much of Coverdale's experience—Blithedale seems precociously like the psychological fiction of this
century. Our conclusions about Blithedale's form and point of view enable us to greatly expand this occasional sense of the book's modernity. In the spirit of purely descriptive and comparative criticism, and with no interest in making any plea for Hawthorne's contemporary "relevance," we can state that in the most fundamental matters of how a novelist conceives of, represents, and artistically structures human experience, The Blithedale Romance is closer to the novel of our times than its own. Four formal and thematic aspects of Blithedale—all closely related to its concentration on "depth psychology"—particularly link it to more recent psychological fiction: its ironic, analytical treatment of an authorial self-image; its concern with the psychology of the artist and of artistic creativity; its denial of the categories of subjective and objective, and creation of a world in which "fantasy" and "fact" merge indistinguishably; and, as a consequence of the absence of an objective reality, a development of narrational unreliability that carries its own negation, in that the concepts of truth, falsehood, and verification become meaningless in regard to matters of "fact" and apply only to the psychological honesty of statements—which we may or may not be able to determine.

Ironic introspection, the psychological exploration of an autobiographical character, is an obvious and prominent focus of the novel during the last sixty odd years, as we are reminded by examples such as Joseph K., Stephen Dedalus, Virginia Woolf's heroines, Saul Bellow's artists and intellectuals, and so on—although we might add that none of these figures, with the exception of Kafka's fictionalised
selves, endures quite the sustained depth of psychoanalytic scrutiny to which Coverdale is subject. On the whole, the nineteenth-century novelist tended to have a more secure sense of his own social position and function as an artist, and had little stimulus to turn his art into a means of delving into his own psychology. We can appreciate just how atypical of its times the ironic self-analysis in Blithedale is, by contrasting it with Hawthorne's other novels, in which the omniscient point of view establishes an authorial distance from similar psychological material. Three passages from The House of the Seven Gables, The Scarlet Letter, and Blithedale will illustrate striking differences in the degree and kind of analysis to which the psychological pattern is subject:

And it was in this hour, so full of doubt and awe, that the one miracle was wrought, without which every human existence is a blank. The bliss, which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy, shone around this youth and maiden. They were conscious of nothing sad nor old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it. The dead man, so close beside them, was forgotten. At such a crisis, there is no Death; for Immortality is revealed anew, and embraces everything in its hallowed atmosphere. 5

Old Roger Chillingworth, throughout life, had been calm in temperament, kindly, though not of warm affections, but ever, and in all his relations with the world, a pure and upright man. He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself. But, as he proceeded, a terrible fascination, a kind of fierce, though still calm, necessity seized the old man within its grip, and never set him free again, until he had done all its bidding. He now dug into the poor clergyman's heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man's bosom, but likely to find nothing save mortality and corruption. Alas for his soul, if these were what he sought! 6
A bachelor always feels himself defrauded, when he knows, or suspects, that any woman of his acquaintance has given herself away. Otherwise, the matter could have been no concern of mine. It was purely speculative; for I should not, under any circumstances, have fallen in love with Zenobia. The riddle made me so nervous, however, in my sensitive condition of mind and body, that I most ungratefully began to wish that she would let me alone. (48)

The first passage is typical of The House of the Seven Gables in that the narrator focuses on the moralistic interpretation of psychologically intriguing events—in this case the mutual realization of love between a young man and woman being somehow dependent upon the death of an ogreish older man. Of all Hawthorne's novels, Gables is most committed to maintaining an atmosphere of romantic fable at the expense of confronting its own psychological meaning. In contrast, Hawthorne's moral viewpoint in The Scarlet Letter is more elusive because it is closely bound up with his complex exploration of his characters' psychology. Beneath its moral and allegorical trappings, The Scarlet Letter is a psychological novel, but of a kind very different from Blithedale. As illustrated by the passage describing the corruption of Chillingworth's purpose, the narrator provides objective moral and psychological interpretation; he stands outside the world of the characters, analyzing and commenting upon their psychological development. This, by and large, is the usual technique of the nineteenth-century novel, although late Victorian writers such as George Eliot and Henry James began to enable their characters' psychology to unfold independently of the omniscient viewpoint. However, in Blithedale the narrator, together with his moral and psychological insight, becomes himself the subject of psychological analysis. The very idea of the artist-narrator's
providing a correct perspective is undermined, and we are left on our own to ferret out the subtle self-deceit in his announced stances towards what he observes. In the passage I have quoted, the reader must rely on his own sensitivity to the text to detect that Coverdale's assertion of his "purely speculative" interest in Zenobia is an attempt to repress the confused assortment of sexual feelings and fantasies which she arouses. More so than *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance* requires an analytical response from the reader; it provides us only with the intricate, raw phenomenon of Coverdale's mind. The contrast between the two novels—one in which psychological experience is interpreted from an external point of view, the other in which such an intermediary framework is lacking—is analogous to the contrast between, say, a novel by Conrad or Hardy and *Ulysses* or *The Sound and the Fury*. At bottom, the form of the latter books reflects a change in the artist's sense of himself; he is less confident than his Victorian predecessors in the validity of restructuring experience according to a moral or philosophical viewpoint, and strives instead to present experience, in all of its moral or philosophical complexity, directly to the reader. This self-reassessment of the artist's function corresponds with the turn towards a literature of ironic introspection, and the advent of "depth psychology" must have been a major stimulus to both changes. The artist becomes more self-conscious, and distrustful, of the psychological functions and gratifications of his own art and identity—as an artist—an attitude apparent in the almost savage irony of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and in the self-doubt over the value of art and
"spiritual aspiration" reflected in such figures as Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse and K. in The Castle. If something like this happened—if the development of the psychological novel beginning with the later Victorians eventually helped provoke an introspective concern in the artist for exploring and evaluating his own psychology—
The Blithedale Romance is a prototype of modern fiction. As a work of profound psychological introspection stimulated by Hawthorne's much-deplored self-doubt as an artist, his realization that his creativity had covert psychological functions beneath its spiritual and moral purposes, Blithedale anticipates the widespread introspection and self-reevaluation by the artist in this century, and also the formal developments to which this self-questioning led—specifically, the elimination of the notion of an objective consciousness from point of view, the direct representation of psychological experience with all of its complexities of moral and meaning implicit in the representation itself rather than interpreted to the reader by a supposedly sacrosanct personality, invulnerable to irony.

If carried far enough, the denial of objective consciousness leads to a view in which reality is inescapably psychological—a projection of each person's wishes, inclinations, and eccentricities onto an unknowable something that cannot otherwise be ordered. In contemporary literature particularly, and especially in the drama of Albee, Pinter, and Ionesco, the psychology of the characters creates the reality they experience, and there is an acute sense that these separate realities can never actually meet. However, the sense of man's isolation in a world shaped
by his own psychology is older than the "absurdists." In the library scene in *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus sees Shakespeare, as an archetypal artist, endlessly projecting his own obsessions into his work, never encountering a reality not colored by his own desires and resentments and old wounds. His drama, like Coverdale's melodrama, is "all self":

> He found in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible. Masterlinck says: *If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep.* *If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas his steps will tend.* Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves.

Hawthorne not only gave complex expression to this predicament in Coverdale's projection of his own obsessive anxieties and wishes onto reality, he realized that the mind, as a very consequence of its self-imprisonment, has a creative power unlimited by the boundaries of rationality. In writing a novel whose form involves absolute ontological contradiction—that of a narrator who is both a living partaker in and observer of an experience and an artist creating it—Hawthorne anticipated the denial in much modern literature of a contradiction between the real and the imaginary. The imaginary can yet be real; what Coverdale doesn't even know that he longs for can produce a drowned corpse. The plot could easily be that of a short story by Borges, whose tales constantly evoke the power of the mind to create its own reality, and the interchangeability of fantasy and fact, memory and invention, accident and will.

At the conclusion of one of Borges' tales, the narrator, having decided that a man who once lost his nerve in a battle successfully
willed himself to die heroically in that same battle forty-two years later, thereby remaking not only the past but all human history afterwards, remarks: "I have guessed at and set down a process beyond man's understanding, a kind of exposure of reason ... A few years from now I shall believe I made up a fantastic tale, and I will actually have recorded an event that was real." In its bold assertion of the power of the unconscious over reality, The Blithedale Romance points towards such an "exposure of reason." Although Hawthorne's later work indicates that he realised neither the philosophical nor artistic potential of the strange form he discovered, in that he obviously felt uncomfortable about the surrealism in the late, unfinished romances, Blithedale nevertheless puts Hawthorne in a new, peculiar light. Purely by working out a form that would enable him to explore his own psychological predicament as a man and artist, this writer who is traditionally thought of as an old-fashioned allegorist obsessed with pretty morals and the Puritan past molded a vision of human experience and reality which we today, under the pressure of similar psychological self-awareness and self-doubt, are just coming to appreciate.
List of References

"Blithedale and the Critical Tradition: The Problem of Form"


3Preface to The Marble Faun, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce, Claude M. Simpson, Matthew J. Bruccoli, et. al. (Ohio State University Press, 1968), p. 3. Volume IV of The Centenary Edition. Future references to The Centenary Edition will appear in the notes as, for example, Centenary, II, 255, except for references to The Blithedale Romance, which will be placed in the body of the text in parentheses, for example, (120).

4Centenary, II, 1.

5Centenary, II, 2.

6Centenary, IV, 2-3.

7Centenary, II, 304.


11Letter to Fields, November 29, 1850, quoted by William Charvat in his Introduction to The House of the Seven Gables, Centenary, II, xxii.
Letter to Fields, October 1, 1850, quoted by Charvet, Centenary, II, xvii.


Ibid., pp. 23-26.

Ibid., p. 19.

Ibid., p. 30.


Philip Rahv, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Partisan Review, 8 (1941), 362. In this essay Rahv defines the portrayal of "life as it is actually lived" as "the intention of the novel" and on this basis argues that all American writers before the Civil War were "pre-novelists" (p. 364). Hawthorne was unable to write true novels because his upbringing and environment inhibited him against encountering experience. My own viewpoint, which this thesis works towards establishing, is that Blithedale can be denied that status of a novel only by an arbitrarily restrictive definition, and that Hawthorne's subject matter was not dictated negatively by any social "privations." I will consider Rahv's view in the Conclusion.

See Rahv, p. 366. In an introductory essay to the selection from Hawthorne in Major Writers of America, ed. Perry Miller, Newton Arvin, Eric Bentley, et. al. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), Edward H. Davidson says, "Chiefly because he reflected a long-ago Puritan way of thinking about and looking at the world; because, in a real sense, he made his fiction out of 'cases of conscience'; and, because he reflected certain moral ideas of his own time, Hawthorne can rightly be regarded as a latter-day Puritan, a moral symbolist. . . . . . . . . . .

Hawthorne rediscovered what another Puritan, Jonathan Edwards, had long ago known: the world contains meaning. Men may know or be ignorant—in theological Puritanism the terms were 'saved' or 'condemned'—insofar as they are provided with the perception to read and understand that world of sign, symbol, and meaning all around them" (I, 690).

Major Writers of America, I, 756.

Centenary, II, 15-16.

Ibid., p. 16.
This appears to be the position of Roy Harvey Pearce, who says in his Introduction to The Centenary Edition of the novel, that in Gables Hawthorne had, "in dealing with contemporary life, already strained his conception of the romance to its limits" (p. xxv), and that in Blithedale "he was writing the sort of fiction for which his taste, talent, and understanding had not prepared him" (p. xxvi). See also Mark van Doren, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: William Sloane, 1949), p. 189.

The first passage is from Nina Baym, "The Blithedale Romance: A Radical Reading," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 67 (1968), 545; the second is from Crews, The Sins of the Fathers, p. 194.


Ibid., p. 108.

Ibid.


Thus Richard Chase remarks in The American Novel and its Tradition (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), p. 86: "We are not allowed to see Coverdale directly and the author, having granted him the privileged position of first-person narrator, cannot question his behavior and does not put him on the spot by involving him very deeply in the action." See also Doren, p. 189.


Ibid., p. 83.

Ibid., p. 85.

American Literature, 29 (1957), 147-70.

Ibid., p. 169.

Ibid., pp. 151, 163.

Ibid., p. 166.

Ibid., p. 169.

50 Abele, one of Hawthorne's earliest psychoanalytic critics, also interprets Blithedale as an uncontrolled, vacillating projection of Hawthorne's conflicts that destroys the coherence of a "literal plot." Although his view of the particular psychological content of the novel is distinctly different from Crews'-he interprets "Hawthorne's works as projections of his own inner conflicts about the artist-role" (The Death of the Artist, p. 73)--his general conclusions anticipate Crews' position in The Sins of the Fathers. Like Crews, Abele argues that Hawthorne had conscious intentions which flounder amidst unsuccessful characterization, poor plot construction, and a vacillating, contradictory point of view towards the story because he could not resolve, within the context of his "literal" tale, the underlying conflicts embodied in his characters (p. 77). Hawthorne helplessly, indecisively alternated between the conflicting perspectives of two opposed self-images projected into Coverdale and Hollingsworth. Coverdale is an idealistic, artist-of-the-beautiful side of Hawthorne which he "saw consciously as charming, romantic, nostalgia-breeding, but unconsciously as weak, inexperienced, effeminate, and essentially regressive" (p. 76). Hollingsworth is an Ethan Brand figure, resembling "the Byronic outcast: mysterious, gloomy, masculine, violent" (p. 77). Consciously, Hawthorne wants to identify with the "Coverdale" side of himself, and repress the "Hollingsworth"--but the viewpoint and judgments of this repressed personality are constantly intruding and rendering the book ambivalent. Hawthorne cannot "fully accept" the Coverdale in him, nor "wholly reject" the Hollingsworth (p. 82): "It is a curiously self-defeating
work, taken in all. Written by the Coverdale part of Hawthorne's personality, it manipulates the ruin of his Hollingsworth side; yet Hollingsworth, for all his deficiencies as man and as symbol, is more impressive than Coverdale the snopper . . . Fascinated by Zenobia, Coverdale-Hawthorne yet encompasses her ruin as it were for the sake of a homiletic; as for Priscilla, his love of her is a species of genteel autoeroticism. Yet, because the other sides of Hawthorne could not be quiet during this attack upon them, one has the feeling that Coverdale is as nasty as he is not because Hawthorne wanted him to be, but because he could not help himself" (p. 81). The main trouble with viewing Blithedale as a naive projection of authorial schizophrenia is that there is no vacillation at all in the novel's treatment of Coverdale—his conflicting attitudes towards himself and the others are reflections of the tensions between his deliberate poses and his repressed feelings. Similarly, the vacillation in the treatment of the two women is shown as a product of Coverdale's sexual anxieties. We perceive the characters through Coverdale, and this point of view serves to reveal their ambivalence as projections of his psychology. Like Crews, Abele senses that there are elements of self-projection in the novel's characterization and plot, but cannot consider the possibility that the novel could have a form allowing these to function within the context of the story as aspects of Coverdale's psychology.


52 Ibid.


54 I borrow this expression from Abele, p. 76.

55 The Sins of the Fathers, p. 205.

56 Ibid.

"Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla: Coverdale's Drama as Projected Fantasy"

1 The Sins of the Fathers, p. 201.

2 I am indebted to Abele's remarks on this passage, p. 79.

3 For example, Abele (pp. 79-80) reflects that Zenobia's poor showing as a feminist once she falls for Hollingsworth may be "intentional irony."
4 Abele gives an apt description of the sexual polarities represented by Coverdale and Hollingsworth: "The contrast between him (Hollingsworth), barrel-chested, imposing, deep-voiced, virile, and the delicate, shy Coverdale is reminiscent of that between Owen Warland and Robert Danforth; its sexual facets are quite interesting. Coverdale, 'a bachelor, with no very decided purpose of ever being otherwise,' is nonetheless very sensitive to the sexuality of women, whether the woman be a 'wan' sempstress like Priscilla or a 'warm' Zenobia. But neither of these women evinces the slightest sexual interest in or desire for him; Priscilla is indifferent throughout; Zenobia once, in an odd moment, wishes aloud to Coverdale, just before drowning herself, that she had fallen in love with him instead of with Hollingsworth—but that she goes on to drown herself anyhow makes this a somewhat ironic remark. And Coverdale nourishes his interests in secret: Priscilla never knows that he has 'loved' her, and he does not even know himself that he has 'loved' Zenobia. Hollingsworth, however, attracts women automatically: the whole movement of the book revolves on Zenobia's jealousy of Priscilla with respect to him. Yet he seems not to care, for in the cases 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. It is really difficult to see him, sexually potent as he appears, as deeply interested in love of any kind except his own fanatic philanthropism" (pp. 75-76).

5 Centenary, IV, 377-78.

6 "Priscilla's gaiety, moreover, was of a nature that showed me how delicate an instrument she was, and what fragile harp-strings were her nerves. As they made sweet music at the airiest touch, it would require but a stronger one to burst them all asunder" (75).


8 Crews has a field day with this passage, but his remarks on it are one instance in which his oedipal interpretation distorts the nature of Coverdale's anxieties and ignores part of the novel's psychological pattern. According to Crews, Coverdale secretly sympathizes with Zenobia's defiance of the ogre-father Hollingsworth and his heavenly counterpart, but must quench the thought because for the intimidated son rebellion against the father, or Father, is unthinkable. However, the plot, far from trying to appease Hollingsworth, effects his reduction too,
by means of his guilt over Zenobia's death and marriage to Priscilla. Crews makes no mention of this guilt, nor of the emasculation which accompanies it, but Coverdale, as we still see in the fourth chapter, appreciates both. Hollingsworth's downfall, like Zenobia's, corresponds to Coverdale's secret wishes. See The Sins of the Fathers, pp. 210-11.

9 The melodramatic transformation of a character of exceptional benevolence or piety into a maniacal sinner is a stock Gothic theme—see, for example, the hero of Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, and Ambrosio in Matthew Lewis' The Monk.


12 In addition, Coverdale surmises that Hollingsworth prefers Priscilla's submissive mental vacuity to Zenobia's "proud, intellectual sympathy" (225)—a notion with which he later taunts Zenobia (see p. 167): "I use to see, or fancy, indications that he was not altogether obtuse to Zenobia's influence as a woman. No doubt; however, he had a still more exquisite enjoyment of Priscilla's silent sympathy with his purposes, so unalloyed with criticism, and therefore more grateful than any intellectual approbation, which always involves a possible reserve of latent censure" (78-79).

12 Thus Coverdale remarks, "It irritated me, this self-complacent, condescending, qualified approval and criticism of a system to which many individuals—perhaps as highly endowed as our gorgeous Zenobia—had contributed their all of earthly endeavor, and their loftiest aspirations" (165). Coverdale is obviously not one of these individuals; but turning both Zenobia and Hollingsworth into traitors to Blithedale allows him to see himself as more faithful to its ideals.

14 Kenyon in The Marble Faun provides another example of art serving simultaneously as an instrument of fantasy and repression. His sculpture is continually represented as a means of treating passionate subjects, such as Cleopatra, with a cooling detachment. He also has a touch of Coverdale's cruelty towards the objects of his sexual nervousness. Miriam, seeing that she considers her sexually "suspect," cries at him, "You are as cold and pitiless as your own marble" (Centenary, IV, 129).
"Destiny's One Calm Observer"


2. Ibid., p. 126.

3. Ibid., p. 125.

4. Ibid., p. 94.


6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., p. 726.

9. Ibid., p. 728.

10. Ibid., p. 730.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.


15. Compare Coverdale's description of Priscilla's love for Zenobia: "And, out of the loneliness of her sad little existence, Priscilla's love grew, and tended upward, and twined itself perseveringly around this unseen sister; as a grape-vine might strive to clamber out of a gloomy hollow among the rocks, and embrace a young tree, standing in the sunny warmth above" (186). There is another such amorous grape vine in *The Marble Faun*: "There grew the fig-tree that had run wild, and taken to wife the vine, which likewise had gone rampant out of all human controul; so that the two wild things had tangled and knotted themselves into a wild marriage-bond, and hung their various progeny—the luscious figs, the grapes, cozy with the southern juice, and both endowed with a wild flavour that added the final charm—on the same bough together" (Centenary, IV, 242). In *Elithedale* this imagery is developed so as to suggest that Coverdale's response to such an "uncomfortable surplus" of sexual energy and aggressiveness is an unconscious sadism; he anticipates a bloody harvest from the ripening grapes in his hermitage.
"I counted the innumerable clusters of my vines, and disreckoned the abundance of my vintage. It gladdened me to anticipate the surprise of the Community, when, like an allegorical figure of rich October, I should make my appearance, with shoulders bent beneath the burthen of ripe grapes, and some of the crushed ones crimsoning my brow as with a blood-stain" (99). Although Coverdale believes that his intentions here are "liberal and hospitable," the hint of sadistic joy is confirmed much later when Coverdale, rushing towards the catastrophe of his drama with a "wild exhilaration" (205), longs to derive "bacchanalian ecstasies" from his grapes (208). His devouring the grapes just before encountering the masqueraders is like an orgiastic ritual celebrating the approaching climax of the "tragedy."

Coverdale resorts to this sentimental diction as a euphemistic medium for his overly explicit thoughts about Zenobia, even though it doesn't conceal the object of his interest: "There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!" (47). This metaphorical use of the rose is, of course, a direct borrowing from literary convention as old as medieval romance.

Lawrence, p. 83.


See, for example, William L. Hedges, "Hawthorne's Blithedale: The Function of the Narrator," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 14 (1960), 305.

The Sins of the Fathers, p. 205.

Ibid., p. 196.

However, we are provided with a telling clue: Coverdale says that his fixed idea "remains in the mind, like the nail in Sisera's brain" (38). After his defeat in battle by Barak, Sisera, a Canaanite chieftan, took refuge with a woman called Jael, who, while he was sleeping in her tent, drove a tent peg through his skull (Judges 4.12-22). As suggestive of a fear of aggressive women, this story accords with Coverdale's feelings towards Zenobia. It apparently had a measure of fantasy-significance for Hawthorne as well, since he refers to it again, and much more vividly, in connection with Miriam in The Marble Faun (Centenary, IV, 43).

In fact, when Priscilla tells him this, she is echoing his own words: "I am blown about like a leaf," she replied. "I never have any free-will" (171). At the start of the chapter, Coverdale
saw, "Priscilla was only a leaf, floating on the dark current of events . . . she probably guessed not whither the stream was bearing her, nor perhaps even felt its inevitable movement" (168). Incidentally, note the recurrence of the imagery of dark water, moving in an inevitable direction.

24The positioning of these disclosures in the narrative is significant: they immediately precede Coverdale's attendance of the exhibition of the Veiled Lady, in which Hollingsworth snatches Priscilla back from Westervelt, whereas Hawthorne could have placed them after that scene. If he had done so, Coverdale's apparent naivety over Hollingsworth's intentions could not have been suspect.


27Interestingly, Zenobia's false tone of detachment in answering Coverdale's ridicule of her lover parodies Coverdale's own pretense of being an impartial spectator; she speaks "as a friend of Mr. Hollingsworth, and, at the same time, a calm observer" (166). The latter facade is an ironic echo of Coverdale's belief that he is the "one calm observer" chosen by Destiny to witness its drama (97).

28The Sins of the Fathers, p. 196.

29For Coverdale's affinity with artist-figures and narrators of twentieth-century literature, see Poirier, pp. 115 ff.; Male, pp. 150-51; and Griffith, p. 16.

"Irrepressible Yearnings"

1Rahv, p. 376.

2Ibid., p. 378.

3As he does so often, however, Coverdale inadvertently suggests the actual reason for his wanting to get away from Blithedale. He imagines that after years of travelling, "I might fling aside my pilgrim-staff and dusty shoon, and rest as peacefully here as elsewhere" (140). This remark alludes to the madness of Ophelia, and thus hints at the very pain and love-sickness and mental chaos which Coverdale has repressed:

How should I your true-love know
From another one?
By his coxcomb hat and staff
And his sandal shoon. (Hamlet IV.v.23-26)
Emotional Deficits: Blithedale as a Novel of Social Criticism, After All

Silas Foster, that very untranscendental Yankee, is a minor exception.

For examples, see pp. 26, 197, 199.

Lawrence, pp. 83-84.

See The Sins of the Fathers, pp. 208-09.

Lawrence, p. 90.

Ibid., p. 91.

Ibid., p. 90.

Chase, p. 84.


For Poirier's application of this idea to Hawthorne, see pp. 110-15.

Conclusion

Rahv, p. 362.

The phrase is Abele's, p. 19.
3 Rahv, p. 364.

4 For instance, see Griffith, pp. 25-26.


6 Centenary, I, 129.


