IT IS A salient fact of American fiction that so much of it has been set in foreign parts and that every important novelist has managed to write at least one expatriate novel. Since Nathaniel Hawthorne was so congenitally house-bound, so thoroughly identified with his region in almost everything else he wrote, he seems to provide the a fortiori case. Certainly *The Marble Faun* stands at some remove from his three other major novels, which came so close together some years before and
constitute a kind of New England trilogy. Hawthorne's last completed work is by far his longest one, and he seems to have exercised an author's privilege in considering it his best. Henry James called that judgment into question, in his life of Hawthorne, while conceding that *The Marble Faun* was then probably the most popular of the four novels. James's revaluation may have had some effect on its declining status in the canon, as well as on the gradual heightening of critical interest in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, if not in *The Blithedale Romance*. But *The Marble Faun* was destined from the first to date more than the others, because it was more dependent on changing tastes and literary conventions. Always a self-conscious writer, Hawthorne was never more so than here; yet the result is uncharacteristic because, so far from home and unsure of his ground, he had to reinforce the delicate outlines of an ambitious plan by drawing heavily on bookish precedent and unassimilated tradition.

In the typical odyssey of the man of letters, Italy is cast in the role of siren, whose dalliances have been celebrated by Goethe's elegies, Byron's declamations, and countless other poetic tributes. The special attractions that beckoned American writers and artists seeking to fulfill their "dream of Arcadia"—especially that form of nostalgia which could be diagnosed as "Rome-sickness"—have been chronicled by Van Wyck Brooks.\(^1\) Historic and aesthetic factors combined to make "the Pictorial Land"\(^2\) a brilliantly ominous backdrop for the intrigues of Gothic romance, and Hawthorne had made an earlier entry into this storybook realm through the poisonous garden of "Rappaccini's Daughter." For a novel with a Roman setting, his most influential exemplar was Madame de Staël's *Corinne, ou l'Italie*, with its gifted and ill-fated heroine, its cosmopolitan passions, its philosophic discourses, rhapsodic improvisations, and educational tours of the principal monuments. Margaret Fuller, during the
Roman phase of her career, came to be regarded as a New England Corinne; and Hawthorne himself explicitly imitates a gesture from Madame de Staël when the lovers look for reflections in the Fountain of Trevi. He justified his choice of terrain in a preface, which—like his other prefaces—is also a plea for imaginative license and, more specifically, an apologia for his chosen genre, the romance, as opposed to the usual novel of manners or social observation. The crucial paragraph has been frequently quoted; but, since Hawthorne is never more elusive or ironic than when he claims to be stating his intentions, perhaps it may be quoted once again:

Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. It will be very long, I trust, before romance-writers may find congenial and easily handled themes, either in the annals of our stalwart republic, or in any characteristic and probable events of our individual lives. Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow.  

Our reading of this passage is retrospectively slanted by the underlined and amplified paraphrase in James's critical biography, the famous litany of cultural landmarks whose conspicuous absence made the American scene such unpromising territory for the artist. This may have been a justification for James's decision in favor of what the ivied ruins seemed to promise, the direction pointed by the later Hawthorne and pursued by the early James in "The Last of the Valerii" and
HAWTHORNE CENTENARY ESSAYS

Roderick Hudson. But if we reread Hawthorne's statement in his own context, the key phrase seems to be "without a trial." He had prodigiously tried to overcome the difficulties of which he is complaining; and, though he was never the man to relinquish his qualms, surely it may be said—and James would agree—that Hawthorne succeeded. Elsewhere he would have been the first to admit that he had been preoccupied most of his life with the delineation of shadows. Was there "no picturesque and gloomy wrong" to be discerned in the United States on the very eve of the Civil War? Writing from England where he composed his romance during 1859, basing it upon impressions noted during his previous year in Italy, and caught in the ambiguous position of an American between two worlds, he could only view them both with irony. It was dubious homage to the Old World to repair there in search of the sinister. As for the prosperous actualities of the New World, he had come to terms with them in his Custom House sketch before turning back again into that twilight America whither his European admirers preferred to be led.

He had been at his best in casting a romantic light on the commonplace, or in investing familiar objects with symbolic meanings. Noting down his visit to Arezzo, and to a certain well described by Boccaccio, he expressed the modest hope that he might be remembered for his description of the town pump at Salem.4 He had tried and would try again, without success, to work out one or another of the related ancestral themes that had been haunting him during his English sojourn. In America the limitations of his material had stimulated him in the techniques of enhancement; in England there was so much paraphernalia, already so enhanced and overcrowded with the trappings of association, that he found little or nothing to add. The traditional richness of the symbols seemed to keep him from making effective use of them. He was not near enough to his
subject matter, as he had been in America, or far enough from it, as he might be in Italy. There he was too far away, Henry James would feel, and that feeling was doubly significant: "Hawthorne forfeited a precious advantage in ceasing to tread his native soil." Many years afterward, generalizing on William Wetmore Story and His Friends, James faced the problem more squarely with a sort of retraction: "the 'picturesque' subject, for literary art, has by no means all its advantage in the picturesque country." Hawthorne really could not be expected to improve upon the coloring of his Italianate scenery. Rather, he exploited it as a richly contrasting background for those somber characterizations which he was better qualified to portray.

Mrs. Hawthorne, in editing Passages from the French and Italian Note-Books, parenthetically affirmed that her late husband's insight "was only equalled by his outsight." Such wisely praise is well merited by the American Notebooks; and the two capacities are still commensurate, if somewhat bedimmed, in the English Notebooks. As for the continental notebooks, we must await Norman Pearson's complete edition in order to judge them fairly. Yet it might be observed that the Passages highlight the hard-headed Yankee facets of Hawthorne's character, whereas his native journal disclosed more of the dreamy Transcendentalist. Travel abroad brings out common traits in dissimilar compatriots, and Hawthorne as a tourist stood closer to Mark Twain than to a cultivated European who might have crossed the Alps for his Italienische Reise. Though Hawthorne was more the shy puritan than the bumptious philistine, he remained painfully conscious of his provinciality. He did not guy the guides with Mark Twain's stock question, "Is he dead?" But Rome, as a city of tombs and vaults, the graveyard of past cultures, ministered congenially to his lifelong preoccupation with death. The Innocents Abroad could even find laughing matter in the grisly cemetery of the Capuchin Convent, elabo-
rately decorated with human bones. Touring the adjacent church a decade before, Hawthorne had happened on one of those physical details which he cherished for their emblematic potentialities: a monk, laid out for burial, suddenly bleeding. Hawthorne had been in Rome less than a month, and here was a whole chapter for his new book: "The Dead Capuchin." Here was the body, then, but where was the mystery?

It seems to have been one of Sophia Hawthorne's editorial principles to omit the main passages that had been worked into *The Marble Faun*, so that her published text does not allow us much opportunity to watch Hawthorne at work. However, we can see him noting down such locations as the Virgin's Shrine, storing up such encounters as the buffalo calf on the Appian Way, and entertaining such fancies as the possibility of lodging in one of the papal tombs at Saint Peter's. We can even learn that his hero's tower room, presided over by the skull in the adjoining oratory, was actually the bedchamber of his fragile daughter, Una. The place that lends its landscape to the subtitle of *The Marble Faun, or The Romance of Monte Beni* is closely modeled on the antique Villa Montauto rented by the Hawthornes for two summer months at Bellosguardo, not far above Florence, where Fenimore Cooper had been—and Henry James was to be—among the various American sojourners. Now habitations are not merely backgrounds but often the very matrix of Hawthorne's fictions, which sustain a cloistered indoor atmosphere occasionally relieved by a breath of fresh air. *The Marble Faun*, though refreshed by a series of sylvan interludes in Tuscany and the Campagna, is set for the most part in the macabre and malarial capital. Hawthorne's strongly ambivalent attitude toward "the sad embrace" of Rome is tensely poised in the remarkable two-page sentence at the beginning of Chapter XXXVI. Spending two successive carnival seasons there, he reacted to the first with all his inherent austerity and partici-
acted rather more in the frolic spirit of the second one, as another strategic chapter attests.

Good American husband that he was, he had conscientiously accompanied his "artistic" wife around the monuments and through the galleries, and he had not neglected to do his sight-seeing homework in Murray's guidebooks. This was scarcely an adequate preparation, as he must in his modesty have realized, for acting as cicerone to a wide circle of Anglo-American readers eager to wander vicariously among the masterpieces. For all his antiquarian sympathies, he was very easily put off by the faded or encrusted state of so many primitive paintings—a response which, in his wife's estimation, simply asserted his own perfectionism. Actually, philistinism can seldom have ventured farther than the suggestion, in The Marble Faun, that it would be charitable to cover the frescoes of Giotto and Cimabue with whitewash. Yet fascination was not always overmastered by inhibition when Hawthorne confronted the female nude, in spite of Sophia's retroactive blue pencil. He lingered nervously over the sensual impenitence of Titian's Magdalen before he concluded, on a note of virtual self-reproof, "Titian must have been a very good-for-nothing old man." Most of the living artists he knew were Americans, and he knew them better as fellow New Englanders than as artists. Hiram Powers, the ingenious Vermonter in Florence, delighted him because he did not "put his life wholly into marble." William Story, the affable dean of the American colony in Rome, had originally turned from law to sculpture in order to execute a statue of his eminent father, Mr. Justice Story of Massachusetts. And when Hawthorne sat for his own bust, the sculptress was Miss Maria Louisa Lander of where else but Salem?

Under the circumstances, it was extremely bold of him to attempt anything in the nature of a Künstlerroman, and altogether unlikely that such an attempt would be highly seasoned by
Scènes de la Vie de Bohème. Though his artists have their studios which reflect their respective imaginations, their initial meeting place is a museum, the Campidoglio; and their further walks and talks together have somewhat the aspect of guided tours. Between the travelogue and the story, however, a neutral distance is kept; otherwise the characters would be dwarfed by the age and scope of their environment. The pathos of their individual strivings, as contrasted with the impersonal chill of the museum-world through which they stray, is emphasized in such chapters as “The Emptiness of Picture Galleries.” Except for the beggars, the street urchins, and the omnipresent and invisible clergy, we meet few Roman citizens. Nothing beyond the occasional glimpse of a French uniform tells us—and Hawthorne himself seems totally unconcerned—that we are standing on the threshold of the Risorgimento. For nineteenth-century Americans, a trip to Europe was bound to become a return to the past—classical, medieval, or Renaissance in Rome, but never quite modern. The visual analogue for Hawthorne’s art was that which Washington Irving had cultivated: the sketchbook of the traveling amateur draftsman, whose water colors owe much of their gentle charm to the unfamiliar scenes they catch in so artlessly personal a fashion. Fortunately the vistas now opening up before Hawthorne had been familiarized through many a reproduction or set piece, so that he could more or less take their literal contours for granted and concentrate upon his psychological evocations.

In his preface he apologizes for having made fictional use of certain actual sculptures by his artist-friends. Such an acknowledgment failed to allay the wrath of Arnold Schönberg when Thomas Mann ascribed the twelve-tone system of musical composition to the demonic hero of Doctor Faustus. But Hawthorne’s American sculptor, Kenyon, seems a mild and marginal figure by comparison, an observer-spokesman who is clearly
STATUES FROM ITALY

related to the artist-inventors of Hawthorne's tales, endowed with similar powers of cold penetration, but not so obsessive and more urbane. His relation to the title character is that of counselor if not confidant, and there are moments between them that remind us of the all but psychoanalytic interchange between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter. In speaking of a title role, we are stretching a point, since the marble faun itself can be no other than that of Praxiteles, from which the narrative takes its Capitoline departure. The faun-like human being, Donatello, linked by the Florentine sculptor's name with his boyish David, is unquestionably a creature of flesh and blood. What comes into question—what gives the book its more didactic English title, Transformation—would seem to be his hard-won acquisition of a soul. The author of A Wonder-Book and Tanglewood Tales looked upon "this race of fauns" as "the most delightful of all that antiquity imagined." A story "with all sorts of fun and pathos in it" might be contrived about their intermingling with humanity. Hawthorne could be trusted to moderate the fun; and it remains a striking thought that he chose, in the very year of Darwin's Origin of Species, to celebrate "a natural . . . link betwixt human and brute life, with something of a divine character intermingled." 13

From the cerebral Hawthorne, attracted by the very paganism of the theme, Italy seems to have compelled a belated respect for the animal side of human nature—not in its uneasy coexistence with the spiritual side, but in a pristine purity of its own. Donatello, to the woman who loves him, seems "a creature in a state of development less than what mankind has attained, yet the more perfect within itself for that very deficiency." 14 Strange, sweet, playful, friendly, rustic, wild, charming—Hawthorne's epithets make quite a pet of him. He may be a throwback to the childhood of the race, an atavism from the Golden Age, when all men were spontaneously happy because
they lived in uncorrupted harmony with nature. Hence he has the gift, or has had it before his Roman exposure, of conversing with the animals. His lineage, both natural and supernatural, can be traced back to the Greek migrations, and also can be linked with a local Tuscan myth sadly involving a tutelary naiad. The ambiguity of his whole situation is invisibly symbolized by a train of speculation to which Hawthorne keeps coyly returning until the last sentence: whether or not Donatello's curly hair conceals the hirsute and pointed ears of a faun, not to mention whether he possesses "a certain caudal appendage." This tricksy sprite coalesces with the image of a contemporary who is hardly less vague, the Count of Monte Beni, a young Italian aristocrat who does not know his own age and has never read Dante. The romance about him was inspired, so the narrator informs us, not so much by the Marble Faun of Praxiteles as by Kenyon's unfinished clay model of Donatello's head, with its groping hints of his perplexity, struggle, and change.

For his pair of heroines, Hawthorne chose to reincarnate an old antithesis: blond for innocence and brunette for experience, as in The Blithedale Romance. Hilda, like the fair Priscilla, would have been called a White Lily by D. H. Lawrence; but where Priscilla's feelings were externalized, Hilda's are projected from within. "Her womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil," says her fellow American admirer Kenyon, who has modeled a replica of her hand—even as Hiram Powers had of his little daughter's—and has put her into plaster as maidenhood gathering a snowdrop. Hilda is an orphan whose transparent virginity seems to have won her the unmolested freedom of the menacing city. She has not ceased to be, as Hawthorne does not tire of reminding us, a daughter of the Puritans. It is paradoxical and yet not inappropriate that she practices her own cult of the Virgin,
tending the lamp at a shrine which adjoins her studio amid the doves on the roof top. Her pursuit of the arts, as Hawthorne intimates that a woman's should be, is sensitively appreciative rather than strikingly original; in short, her skill is that of a professional copyist. In vivid contradistinction to her, the other heroine, who comes as close as any character to being the real protagonist of the drama, is not only an ambitious painter but seems to specialize in forceful depictions of "the idea of woman, acting the part of a revengeful mischief towards man." Over and over again the subjects of her sketches compulsively re-enact the battle of the sexes, which invariably culminates in the grim triumph of aggressive feminism: Jael assassinating Sisera, Judith exulting over Holofernes, Salome with the head of John the Baptist.

Miriam Schaefer's family name accords her a doubtful advantage over the other characters, since it proves to be an assumed one. She proves to be indeed the darkest of Hawthorne's dark ladies. Though her fate is not so blankly tragic as Zenobia's at Blithedale, her origin is considerably more mysterious and her allure is appreciably more magnetic. Her appearance seems to have been suggested to Hawthorne by the sight of a raven-haired Jewess at a Lord Mayor's banquet in London some years before. Though the precise details of Miriam's identity continue to be shrouded in secrecy, she is evidently the hyphenated child of an Anglo-Jewish mother married into a decadent line of Italian nobility. Whenever the veil is lifted a little, the breath of a scandal is felt; but it is wafted to us so delicately that we can never be sure how far she has been compromised by it. She has experienced sorrow and suffering, obviously; but to what extent has she experienced sin? Can she be innocently involved and not be contaminated? Hawthorne exhibits his usual compunctions in equivocating between fatality and the responsible will. Artistic allusion conspires with historical innu-
endo to associate Miriam with the favorite Reniassance heroine of the Romantics, Beatrice Cenci, and with the dark doom of incest and parricide related by Stendhal and dramatized by Shelley. Historically speaking, it would now seem that the veritable Beatrice was less victimized by her father and more compliant in his murder than the notorious tale would have had it. Yet her tearful visage, as Henry Murray points out, "had been assimilated to the most moving theme of the current mythology of the heart, that of abused female innocence."  

Her portrait by Guido Reni in the Palazzo Barberini, which was rumored to have been painted shortly before her execution, was the most widely admired and the most commonly reproduced picture of the day. Pilgrims sought it out with a curiosity which could only be compared to the subsequent and slightly more sophisticated vogue of that femme fatale, the "Mona Lisa." "The History is written in the Painting," Charles Dickens had responded to it in his Pictures from Italy, "written, in the dying girl’s face, by Nature’s own hand." Miriam and Kenyon might well debate the merits of Guido’s "Battle between Saint Michael and Satan," but his Beatrice seemed beyond the reach of mere art. She had dominated a recognition scene in Herman Melville’s Pierre, and Melville eagerly procured a copy for himself at Rome in 1857. Even Henry James, though cognizant of the disillusioning afterthoughts, could meditate on "our prolonged sentimental consumption of the tenderest morsel, as we have mostly felt it, in all pictorial portraiture." It is not surprising, then, that Reni’s Beatrice become a talisman for Hawthorne, or that his recurrent adjective for her was “magical.” Her influence was present already in the pathetic and poisoned decoy, Beatrice Rappaccini. In the notebooks, the expected tribute is duly paid: "It is the most profoundly wrought picture in the world." Yet Hawthorne, who repeatedly came back to see it, was shrewd enough to wonder whether the canvas itself
would exert the same appeal if the beholder were unaware of the extraneous associations. Nevertheless, it is Hilda’s supreme accomplishment, in *The Marble Faun*, to be able to copy the original and to capture all its nuances. More than artistry, her accomplishment presupposes affinity.

“She is a fallen angel,” Hilda comments on Beatrice, “—fallen, and yet sinless.” Miriam cannot let so naïve a contradiction pass by her unchallenged; and when she reminds Hilda of Beatrice’s tragedy, Hilda becomes implacably severe in her condemnation: “Yes, yes; it was terrible guilt, an inexpiable crime, and she feels it to be so.” Thus the conversation leads us back, as all occasions do, to Miriam’s secret. This has its malign personification in her model, the villain of the piece, whose speeches are well-night inaudible and whose misdeeds are never quite pinned down. Visually, he is picturesqueness itself, “dark, bushy-bearded, wild of aspect and attire,” ready to pose as saint or sinner without revealing his own personality. Hawthorne presents him enveloped in “Subterranean Reminiscences” and heralded by a legend of the catacombs not unlike the motif of the Wandering Jew: a man-demon restlessly seeking a companion in misery. Miriam is shadowed by her specter, is presumably blackmailed by his obscure claim upon her, and is threatened with an ostracism from which the ardent Donatello suddenly acts to deliver her. In the one decisive action of the plot, prompted by her glance of mute entreaty, Donatello seizes upon an opportune moment to plunge her evil genius down to his death—and afterward to his startling final emergence as the dead Capuchin, whose corpse turns out to be the accusing symbol of their crime. The height from which he has been thrown is the Tarpeian Rock above the Forum, whence the ancient criminals were dispatched. As for the timeless depth it overhangs, Miriam has just declared to Hilda: “The chasm was merely one of the orifices of that pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere.”
The deed, from which the doers recoil in spontaneous horror, has had an unseen and half-unseeing witness; and that is where Hawthorne, whose habitual stance is the aloofness of the detached onlooker, comes forward to score a Dostoevskian point. "While there is a single guilty person in the universe," so Hilda reproaches Miriam, "each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt." Miriam, though she has not raised a hand, is implicated as Donatello's accomplice. Hilda, who unwittingly found herself looking on and registering the shock, feels caught up in a chain of complicity which runs around the world. Consequently it is her own self-portrait that she beholds in the pictured and copied lineaments of Beatrice Cenci, and the resemblance is generally remarked and variously interpreted when Signor Panini depicts her as "Innocence, dying of a blood-stain." In virginal discovery of evil, as a lone sufferer for the sin of another, she wanders through the labyrinth distraught until she finds herself at the ultimate center, "The World's Cathedral," Saint Peter's, where she paradoxically endeavors to ease her Puritan conscience within the confessional. This episode would be even more extraordinary if it had not been anticipated by a novel which Hawthorne may well have read, Charlotte Brontë's Villette. There the issue is more centrally the romance between a Protestant heroine and a Catholic hero. Here it is more tangential, since Hilda cannot claim the Church's solace without embracing its doctrines, and her Kenyon will be shocked by the halfway lengths to which she seems willing to go. Yet it serves to discharge the mounting tensions between respect and suspicion which drew Hawthorne to, and repelled him from, the "Altars and Incense" of Roman Catholicism.

The two accomplices seem the less likely couple to have been drawn together. But Donatello has acted to share the burden of Miriam's moral estrangement, and Miriam is more
than willing to share the moral responsibility for Donatello’s act. Momentarily, during an interlude in the Borghese Gardens, he had shown her his bucolic world; he had set everyone dancing, whereupon her nemesis had interrupted the dance. What seemed to be Arcadia was Eden, after all, whose denizens were foreordained to fall and be expelled. Miriam and Donatello would seem to be bound forever by the serpentine coils of their guilty collusion, and we might expect them to take their further way like Adam and Eve—or like the young groom and bride at the end of “The May-Pole of Merry Mount.” Yet Donatello’s immediate reaction is to flinch from Miriam’s tender advances; when she tests him by laying her hand next to his, he refrains from taking it; thereupon he must leave her and make a penitential retreat to his tower in the Appenines. There his sympathetic visitor and traveling companion is Kenyon, who in turn receives a clandestine visit from Miriam. His reserve has prevented her from confiding in him before, albeit she might have provided more inspiration than Hilda for the smouldering voluptuousness of that tigress-like Cleopatra which he has somehow been sculpting. Now, when Miriam pours out her heart to him, he is able to reassure her of Donatello’s love. It is as if the crime had to take place and be fully assimilated before the passion could manifest itself and be consummated. The two experiences are so intertwined that Kenyon arrives at this severe, if tentative, verdict: “Worthy of Death, but not unworthy of Love.”

Love, in a Hawthornesque efflorescence, blossoms among the ruins. The lovers are reunited under the blessing of the bronze pontiff who oversees the market place at Perugia; and though they subsequently disappear and reappear in altered guises, Hawthorne leaves their wanderings uncharted to give them privacy for sexual fulfilment. This, too, is marked by its symbolic statue—a fallen goddess, if not an angel, recovered
from underground, pieced together, and hailed as the long lost and vastly more beautiful original of the Venus di Medici. Hawthorne's notebooks again contain an account of the excavations that gave him the notion, as well as an account of his prolonged flirtation with the Venus di Medici herself, standing “in chaste and naked grace” at the Uffizi in Florence: “I felt a kind of tenderness for her; an affection, not as if she were one woman, but all womanhood in one.” So bemused was he by his morning communion with her that, after spending his evening with the Brownings, he could not help concluding his daily notation: “The Venus di Medici has a dimple on her chin.” Melville, paying his respects in a lecture on “Statuary in Rome,” had reminiscently likened her modest pose to that of the native maidens he had seen in the Typee Valley. In conferring an extra dimension upon his characters by associating them with counterparts in the sphere of art, Hawthorne resembles Proust. To be sure, his range is much more limited; his taste is insecure, to say the least. His preference for sculpture, rather than painting, lends his creations a tangible quality which they might otherwise lack. It also favors a marble whiteness over the colors on the painter's palette. He was emphatic in his objections to the flesh-tinted statues of John Gibson.

Hawthorne may or may not have read Lessing's *Laokoon*, albeit the snake-entangled group at the Vatican could not but appeal to his allegorical instincts. Kenyon's aesthetics are not unlike Lessing's, however, when he criticizes the "Dying Gladiator" and remarks that "in any sculptural subject, there should be a moral stand-still, since there must of necessity be a physical one." The approach of *The Marble Faun* is sculptural; the stasis of the ages is upon it; and its movement is reducible to a sequence of standstills or *tableaux vivants*. For a longish novel, it has a small cast: mainly the four characters introduced in the first chapter, plus the model whose protean
disguises are not enough to enlarge the *dramatis personae*. Three of the four are artists in some degree and, therefore, primarily spectators: the sculptor, the painter, the copyist. The fourth, idly posing for them, would seem to be the most passive of all; yet his quick shove is the single burst of activity; and his psychic transformation could be rendered as a metamorphosis in stone. All of them strike attitudes and engage in colloquies: duets, trios, and quartets in varying combinations. The ambulatory pace and unwieldy pageantry put us in the mood for opera—let us say *La Vestale*. The construction of the book displays Hawthorne’s neatly symmetrical workmanship. There are fifty chapters, each with its essayistic heading and its topographical shift. The fatal climax occurs betimes in Chapter XVIII, followed by a remorseful withdrawal extending through Chapter XXXV, and completed by an accelerating countermovement toward the center and toward an equilibrium. The total pattern may be roughly divided into three equal sections: the first is melodrama; the second, pastoral; and the third, carnival.

The style is more formal in conversation than in the author’s narration, which does not differ much from the whimsical tone and speculative habit of the notebooks. In operatic or Shakespearean fashion, characters apostrophize situations or address themselves in streams of self-consciousness:

“Be quiet,” said Miriam to her own heart, pressing her hand hard upon it. “Why shouldst thou throb now? Hast thou not endured more terrible things than this?”

The second person singular is warranted, here and elsewhere, by the assumption that some speeches have been translated from the Italian. Yet, though she professes to have thrown decorum to the winds, Miriam’s heart-to-heart talk with Kenyon about Hilda—presumably in English—leaves something to be desired in the way of untrammeled expressiveness:
"Oh, you are right!" said Miriam; "I never questioned it; though, as I told you, when she cast me off, it severed some few remaining bonds between me and decorous womanhood. But were there anything to forgive, I do forgive her. May you win her virgin heart; for methinks there can be few men in this evil world who are not more unworthy of her than yourself."  

It could not be argued that the spoken language sounds much more colloquial in Hawthorne's other writings, and it may be relevant to recall that he himself was noted for taciturnity. Yet, in his own person, he maintained an open and amiable relationship with his reader, whom he was fond of taking by the hand while discursively pointing out the sights, illustrating with anecdotes, and moralizing with symbols. Thus the first page of *The Marble Faun*, among better known statuary, calls attention to a sculptured child between a dove and a snake—an allegory of "the Human Soul, with its choice of Innocence or Evil." A casual fig tree at the side of the road, twisted by the grasp of a clambering grapevine, becomes an object lesson inviting a temperance lecture. Kenyon, who makes this observation on Hawthorne's behalf, is constantly being challenged by Donatello to supply a pat moral for each passing instance. Hence Kenyon plays the moralist at the conclusion: looking back at Donatello's involvement and retribution, he proposes a pair of alternative morals; but they are mutually incompatible, and Hilda is both too hopeful and too reverent to accept either of them.

The second, the theological alternative, has been more commonly accepted by critics. This invokes the Augustinian doctrine of *felix culpa*, the fault that bears a fortunate consequence. In the long run, it may be all for the best that the Faun blundered into his mortal trespass; for it has taught him the ethical basis for distinguishing between good and evil; and, by struggling
through that grim education, he has achieved a higher state. Such is the opinion that Miriam naturally holds. Accordingly the book becomes in essence a *psychomachia*, a conflict within the soul; there the Archangel and the Devil pursue their unending fight; and it is fitting that the bust of John Milton can be viewed in Kenyon's studio. "Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his?" If we retain any doubt, if we follow Lawrence's advice for dealing with Hawthorne and "listen to the diabolic undertone," we should reconsider the prior alternative, which is based on naturalistic premises and opposes a pessimistic heresy to an optimistic orthodoxy, pagan degeneration to Christian regeneration. This entails belief in man as potentially a happy and healthy animal, whose "genial nature" could not but be warped by the serious pressures and complex demands of latter-day living. Such a conception looks forward to the hard primitivism of Nietzsche, rather than backward to the soft primitivism of Rousseau. Though Hawthorne's treatment of sex is ostensibly tepid—as we might expect from a son of the Puritans lately accredited to Queen Victoria—there are Lawrentian implications in the love story he does not tell but insinuates between chapters and behind scenes, which has its subterranean archetype in the buried and rediscovered fragments of Venus.

Conceivably those alternatives might be reconciled by being transposed into modes of twentieth-century thinking. That the Fall should give rise to self-improvement is a hypothesis which parallels Toynbee's theory of Challenge and Response in the growth of cultures. That civilization should be attained at the cost of a certain anguish fits in with the Freudian progression of consciousness from the id to the superego. Hawthorne's hero pays the price for evolving by literally undergoing imprisonment, while Miriam concludes by kneeling in prayer—significantly at the Pantheon, inasmuch as the frame of refer-
ence has broadened from the Catholic to the pantheistic. Her honeymoon with Donatello has ended, in the masquerade of a Contadina and Peasant, amid the “polluted flowers” and grotesque confusions of the carnival—a kaleidoscope which Hawthorne cleverly shakes, instead of carefully tracing his patterns to a detailed culmination. His ambiguous ending so mystified readers that he was forced to add an explanatory postscript to the second edition wherein he refrained from explaining his ambiguous postulate. Understandably, he did not feel obliged to unravel everything like Mrs. Radcliffe, and he had gone further than ever before in moving “between the Real and the Fantastic.” Yet it had been harder this time to stay on middle ground; he had oscillated between an archaeological reality and an allegorical fantasy; his vision of evil had become so generalized that even James would complain of vagueness. Hawthorne’s defense would be Hilda’s attack upon “this inclination, which most people have, to explain away the wonder and mystery of everything.” And it is through Hilda’s eyes, through her sense of wonder, that the final prospect is relayed to us.

Hilda is the precursor, not merely of James’s international heroines, but of his private ambassador who discovers that Europe is more entangling than could be foreseen. She has not only shared the guilty knowledge of her two friends’ transgression; she has been lured, through her duty of delivering Miriam’s packet, into the Palazzo Cenci itself; for even Hilda must go underground, as it were; and during her incarceration, the Virgin’s Lamp is extinguished. Hawthorne is loth to account for her temporary disappearance, except by opaque allusions to those clerical auspices which she had once besought and which seem to have the situation well in hand. Inevitably, she and Kenyon are brought together in their mutual loneliness. Homeward bound, she is still linked to the sphere they are...
leaving through Miriam's bridal gift, the Etruscan bracelet with its seven sepulchral gems. Hawthorne is never more himself than in the nostalgic paragraph where, mingling his sensibilities with hers, he contrasts the "crumbly magnificence" of Rome with the "native homeliness" of her New England village. Easing "the exile's pain," he loses no opportunity to bring the parable home by transatlantic cross-reference: the weather, the vegetation, the sanitation, the housing, the sociability, the wine versus the cider. It is an American who refuses to join in Donatello's improvised bacchanal; it is a less dignified member of our "Gothic race" whose confetti damages the dignity of a Roman Senator's coachman. And it is "An Aesthetic Company," a moonlight ramble of young American artists, which makes the Via Sacra reverberate to the choral strains of "Hail, Columbia!" When Kenyon goes back, the sculpturesque clouds will be his sole art gallery; yet he has seen no spectacle as gorgeous as a sunset in America.

Half a generation later, Roderick Hudson would opt for Europe, where his talent would fizzle out at Rome. His fellow sculptor, the Franco-Italo-American Gloriani, who is a cynic and seems at times a charlatan, would reappear at Paris in The Ambassadors, where he would personify the wise maturity of the artist who has intensely lived. If an innocent New World met a corrupting Old World to frame a beginner's formula for James, he could develop the corollaries and vary the complications: a refined example is the adjustment of the Italian prince in The Golden Bowl, who is so propitiously named Amerigo. From Daisy Miller (1878) to Tennessee Williams' novella, The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone (1950), we could trace the decline in American innocence. In William Styron's recent and powerful novel, Set This House on Fire, the agent of corruption is an American; the Italian peasants are the true innocents; and a Hollywood company has appropriately been
producing a film about Beatrice Cenci. Hawthorne, almost exactly a century before, intervened none too soon in repatriating his two expatriates; and his own return journey across the Atlantic took place not long after he had finished his romance. His four remaining years were not truly productive, doubtless for a complication of reasons. One of them may have been that what James suggestively calls the apple of Europe had turned—even more suggestively—into a "Borgia cup." At all events, though The Marble Faun may not be as compact or controlled as Hawthorne's former successes, there are moments when it reaches farther or plunges deeper. His horizons opened late in life; but it must have been a great satisfaction, for the contriver of "Drowne's Wooden Image" or "The Snow Image," to reshape his fancies in classic marble.