

HAWTHORNE'S DIALOGUE WITH ROME:
THE MARBLE FAUN

In the summer of 1858 when Hawthorne began the sketch which was to mature into *The Marble Faun*, he had written no fiction for five years, and it was over six years since he had completed work on *The Blithedale Romance*. He had not intended that there should be such a break in his work as a novelist. In the autumn of 1852 he started on a novel, but had to set it aside because of the Pierce campaign. When he sailed for England in July, 1853, it was with the intention of beginning soon a novel that would make use of his experience in that country. But although he compiled voluminous notebooks, it was April of 1858 before he produced his sketch for an English novel, and he promptly and permanently set it aside. When he sketched out *The Marble Faun* in the summer of that year, his fanciful idea promised to continue the themes that were central to his finest work. The four years spent in England and the year and one-half spent in Italy, however, had produced a great change in the forces which fed Hawthorne's creative imagination. As a result, when he finally wrote *The Marble Faun* it was a work which dealt only superficially with the themes he had treated before.

Although some critics have recently argued that *The Marble Faun* is not to be judged on the same basis as the earlier works, the novel has generally been read as though it were produced in 1853 when Hawthorne was preoccupied with exploring the nature of evil, or with analyzing the effects of guilt; but Hawthorne's « tragic vision » had shifted from the Celestial City to The Eternal City. His experience of Rome was the culmination of his European experience, of years

of carefully observing persons and places and things, of making subtle distinctions, of discovering what it meant to be an American, or to be an Englishman, or to be an Italian, or a Catholic. Rome gave a physical immediacy to his sense of the past, which had so belatedly had its total immersion; and Rome provided him with a concept of a city that showed him at least the possibility of a material city of God, and that provided for the individual soul while at the same time it joined the present being to a community as well as to generations past and to come. Hawthorne's passage to Rome did not quite reach the stage suggested by Whitman's image of « a passage to India »; but *The Marble Faun* can be read in many ways as similar in conception to E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

Far from demonstrating the superiority of American culture, or spiritual life, or innocence to its European counterpart, Hawthorne's last novel issues from a mind that regards nationality with boredom; feels, in fact, a weary exasperation with most human institutions; and sadly considers guilt and sorrow in at least some measure as inevitable to the human condition. It is clear that when Hawthorne sketched out his novel, he must have operated much as he had when he designed his earlier novels. He had his contrasting characters with their heavily « representative » natures; there were symbolic towers; denials and affirmations in public places; God's nature and man's city; a framework of carnivals; and other devices typical of his earlier work. The elaborate structure, however, instead of serving the drama of his characters, served only to bear the weight of the author's dialogue with Rome. Hawthorne's divided and sub-divided mind finds expression in the ambiguities and inconsistencies of his characters while at the same time it seems, in a detached way, to regard the various voices as one syllable, meaningless and profound, echoing from the stones of The Eternal City.

Considering his background, it is remarkable how little attachment Hawthorne felt for America. So far as the country was concerned, he had seen little of it, and he wondered how

one could be expected to feel patriotism for such a geographical expanse. While he believed in the principles of a republic and of democracy, he felt scarcely any attachment to the political entity « The United States of America ». The « Customs House » section of *The Scarlet Letter* had made him unwelcome in Salem, and his writing a campaign biography for the anti-abolitionist Franklin Pierce had caused his friends in the Boston—Cambridge—Concord area to drop off from him, as he remarked, like autumn leaves. It was with a sense of relief and a sense of *going* home that he left America for England.

If he had any illusions about American innocence, his encounters with Americans during his four years as American Consul to Liverpool would have dispelled them. « I first got acquainted with my own countrymen there », he wrote to his publisher Fields, and in *Our Old Home* he recorded that he grew better acquainted with many of the American characteristics during those four years than in all his preceding life. His customs jobs in America had been peaceful sinecures, but in Liverpool he was in almost daily contact with officers and men of the merchant marine who were involved in murders, beatings, robbery, and other violent crimes. He had to deal with Americans who were desperate to assert their claims to English titles or estates, or who, free from the restraints of their home town, became involved in sordid debauches. And the news from America was grim. He wrote (March, 1854) to his friend Horatio Bridge that it sickened him to look back to America, and he wrote (September, 1856) to his friend W. D. Ticknor that America looked like « an infernally disagreeable country this side of the water ». By contrast there was his feeling for England which he was later to attribute to the character of Redclyffe in *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*:

He began to feel the deep yearning which a sensitive American — his mind full of English thoughts, his imagination of English poetry, his heart of English character and sentiment cannot fail to be influenced by, — the yearning of the blood within his veins for that from which it has been estranged . . .

Basically, what Hawthorne objected to in American life was its formlessness and its rootlessness; its centrifugal movement that seemed to be more intense than ever. Religion in America, to his view, typified the dispersion, and as another form of the nationalism it received his *non serviam*. With « The Celestial Railroad » (1843) he made plain his contempt for the direction which American Puritanism had taken via Unitarianism to Transcendentalism. In « Earth's Holocaust » (1844) all churches, from cathedrals to white, wooden New England chapels were consumed to ashes by the reformers, and Hawthorne was willing to acknowledge that they were all made of corruptible stuff. Although the need for spiritual communion is a central theme in Hawthorne's work, he could never find such community in America. He was not baptized and never sought to identify himself with any specific religious organization.

English country houses gave him a deep sense of what was meant by such words as « family » and « home », and of what it meant to have a sense of place. For him, of course, the knowledge came too late, and he commented ironically on the fact that an American democrat should feel such an attraction to the product of England's caste system. After his first six months in Rome, Hawthorne knew what it was he had been searching for in order to find spiritual peace. But again, the knowledge was incompatible with his native idealism. The Catholic Church was superbly adapted to human needs, he acknowledged; nevertheless, priests were only men. The visual forms of the religion and the sheer availability of its blessings impressed him strongly.

In America, conversely, it seemed to Hawthorne that religion itself was the priest. American Protestant sects served the ideas of reformers, or served such strong personalities as Hawthorne's character Hollingsworth; they were dedicated to a patriotic optimism; and their political dogmas of industry and opportunity were quite at odds with his personal sense of what should be the concern of religion — as well as with the theological premises of the historic Christian disciplines.

In « The Celestial Railroad » Hawthorne had put the giant Transcendentalism in place of Bunyan's Pope and Pagan. In the decade following the publication of that story, he could observe most of the major Protestant denominations split apart over the issue of slavery. In 1861 he could write to Bridge:

... we should see the expediency of preparing our black brethren for future citizenship, by allowing them to fight for their own liberties and educating them through heroic influences. Whatever happens next, I must say that I rejoice that the old Union is smashed. We never were one people, and never really had a country since the Constitution was formed.

While he continued to feel certain local attachments, Hawthorne's judgment of America was that it had been a thorough failure in providing for those needs which must be satisfied through community. In his notebooks there is evidence that he considered several times the possibility of making his home in Europe. When he returned to America, an American's return to his ancestral home in England was to be the obsessive idea in his pathetic struggle to create a final romance.

Only after he had lived a while in England, did Hawthorne realize the extent to which America had made him. Like Cooper a quarter of a century before, he discovered the radical nature of his democratic thinking, and he found himself in a culture that seemed positively medieval — a kind of Massachusetts yankee at King Arthur's court. It was a direct confrontation with man's cultural history that paralleled the direct involvement with man's depraved nature necessitated by his consular duties. Hawthorne had soon abandoned the idea of writing any fiction while he served as consul. In whatever time could be rested from official duties, he dedicated himself to studying the life about him. The usual tourist spots were covered, and there were repeated, painful visits to art galleries. But on the evidence of his notebooks, what moved Hawthorne most and told him most about European life was archi-

ecture — the castles, cathedrals, and historic strongholds, but also humbler forms, stone cottages, country churches, and above all the ancient cities themselves.

In America the individual had seemed of supreme importance, and the Emersonian « Now » rang with assurance. In England, Hawthorne re-affirmed his faith in the individual and in the present, but with diffidence; and in Rome he had to confess that the individual seemed an infinitely small thing and the present but a moment in time. It was not merely the aesthetic presence of so much shaped stone that moved Hawthorne, but the consciousness of the forms of human life, the traditions and ceremonies, which it embodied. The organic theory of architecture about which Horatio Greenough wrote as did Emerson and Thoreau found expression on many occasions in Hawthorne's English notebooks. He preferred his philosophy and his history, as well as his sermons, in stone. In this respect, America had little to offer in comparison with Europe. American land, comments Middleton, the American protagonist of *The Ancestral Footstep*, « '... is but so much grass; so much dirt, where a succession of people have dwelt too little to make it really their own' ».

Part of the fascination of the European cities was their horror. Hawthorne's walks took him everywhere, into the Liverpool slums and the filthy byways of London's City, where he discovered what poverty could mean. In Rome the beggars swarmed everywhere, even in the gates and courtyards of the most splendid churches and palaces. The degree of poverty was something unimagined in America, and when he first encountered the poor children of England's major cities, Hawthorne wondered what it signified to be human; the condition of the children of the poor made him question the existence of his own soul. He asked how such little wretches, deformed, diseased, starved, filthy, could be informed with an immortal principle — and if they had no immortality, he asked in « Glimpses of English Poverty », what claim could he assert for his own?

It is as though he saw for the first time that his regard

for personal salvation, the principle that was to inform his Hilda in *The Marble Faun*, could be considered an exotic, or at best a provincial, luxury. Hawthorne's description of his reaction to the children of the London poor suggests how deeply he was moved:

Slowly, slowly, as after groping at the bottom of a deep, noisome, stagnant pool, my hope struggles upward to the surface, bearing the half-drowned body of a child along with it and bearing it aloft for its life, and my own life, and all our lives. Unless these slime-clogged nostrils can be made capable of inhaling celestial air, I know not how the purest and most intellectual of us can reasonably expect ever to taste a breath of it. The whole question of eternity is staked there. If a single one of those helpless little ones be lost, the world is lost!

He saw elsewhere « countless multitudes of little girls » who had been taken from workhouses, educated at charity-schools, and by and by were to be apprenticed as servants. They looked stupid, animal, and soulless. Such encounters stirred Hawthorne deeply and raised in another form the question of what significance attached to an individual life, or, for that matter, to the universe. In *The Marble Faun* the question is raised in ironic ways; as when the central characters find their aesthetic contemplation of churches, or their reveries before shrines, interrupted by the persistent presence of beggars; or by a dispiriting sense of the countless generations that have worn out their more or less identical lives in the same stone buildings; or by a reflection upon the same, desperate prayers raised through the centuries in the same, if at times modified, temples to shifting constellations of gods.

All the factors that had contributed to puzzle and challenge Hawthorne in England were to be intensified and prolonged in Rome. In England the superb cathedrals seemed anciently rooted, but in Rome there were churches centuries older. In many instances they were composed visibly of parts of pre-Christian temples, and some of these rested upon the altars raised by vanished peoples to gods unknown. Churches

were everywhere in the city, their bells were continually to be heard, and priests and monks were everywhere to be seen. The people went in and out of the churches at their individual need, partaking, as it seemed to Hawthorne, of the sacraments of the church with casual ease. The city's poor were thoroughly at home in churches that he compared to gigantic jewel cases. Nothing made sense to the democratic, puritan mind. More than ever Hawthorne felt himself in a kind of existential world where none of the values about him had meaning, and where his own interior values were being drained away. In the flux of Roman experience, all judgments were apt to find themselves reversed the following day.

In April, 1958, Hawthorne sketched out the story (published posthumously as *The Ancestral Footstep*) of an American who returns to his ancestral English home. While he worked on it, he got the idea of doing a fanciful piece about a faun who finds himself amongst the human race. The story of the American had to be set aside, and no doubt Hawthorne intended to resume work on it that summer. But the faun idea took over his creative imagination. The idea lent itself to certain obvious developments, and when Hawthorne sketched it out at Florence in the summer, he must have thought of the projected work in terms of his American novels — an exploration of how evil operates on a human soul, and the ensuing guilt, isolation, penitence, sorrow.

When the family returned to Rome in October, he could not resume work on the novel chiefly because of Una's severe, recurrent attacks of malaria. Rome, with its omnipresent reminders of man's mortality, took on a tragic cast which intensified his already highly ambivalent feelings for the city. At times it was a « loathsome corpse »; at times he confessed a deeper attachment to it than to any other place he had ever known:

... we are astonished by the discovery, by and by, that our heartstrings have mysteriously attached themselves to the Eternal City, and are drawing us thitherward again, as if it were more familiar, more intimately our home, than even the spot where we were born.

Everything about the city, as well as the campagna and Florence, seemed to contribute to the development of his sketch for the novel. When he set about the final writing in the summer of 1859, at Redcar in Yorkshire, the themes of the novel and the characters served repeatedly to introduce the Roman setting and to provide Hawthorne with a chance to express the shifting and conflicting reactions which had made up his life in Italy and most particularly in Rome.

What had promised to be the central theme, Donatello's fortunate fall, was taken up only occasionally. It was as though man's fall, too, had taken on a different value for Hawthorne, and was being seen in a perspective that blurred religious distinctions and viewed morality as capable of being modified in the organic process of history. The drama of Donatello and his friends was to have taken place against the background of Rome, that ancient, monstrous, beautiful, complex expression of human life. As it turned out, the setting overpowered the original, fanciful idea, and the novel became the record of the dramatic struggle between the author and the ancient city, between a personal idealism and common realities, between an American and history.

The first third of *The Marble Faun*, while it brings in the major characters and advances to the murder, is chiefly intent on the setting. All of the tourist's Rome is there: the sculpture gallery of the Capitol, the catacombs, painters' studios, the Borghese Villa and its gardens, a sculptor's studio, and Rome by day and by night. The observations in the notebooks are methodically used. As the action of the work follows Hawthorne's movements and his major moods — the first spring in Rome, the summer at Villa Montauto, the sad winter of 1858-59, and the final Carnival — the author's voice is continually heard.

In all of Hawthorne's novels there is a sense of his presence, and with each successive one it becomes more marked. There is, however, in all the American novels a sense of his detachment from the experience he is rendering. If he was passionately involved in the creation of *The Scarlet Letter*, the

characters nevertheless have each an integrity of conception that gives a quality of Greek tragedy to their encounters. Hawthorne's very personal sense of alienation broods over *The House of the Seven Gables*, but the characters have a distinct life. In *The Blithedale Romance* he consciously wears the mask of Miles Coverdale, even though at times the mask is his own face. No character in *The Marble Faun*, however, has a consistent identity. Each one, at times, is speaking the author's thoughts as he recorded them in his notebooks, and this is true even when they contradict one another. Hawthorne is always, somehow, « there ».

In much of the novel Hawthorne speaks directly to the reader, even when it would have been a simple matter to transfer his remarks to a character; and, when a character expresses an opinion that Hawthorne does not want to be taken as his own, the opinion is cautiously qualified. Hawthorne had projected aspects of his own personality into such disparate characters as Chillingsworth, Aylmer, Clifford, and Coverdale; but in *The Marble Faun* he communicated contradictory aspects of his own personality in single characters. Kenyon, the « man of marble », inadvertently repulses Miriam even as Hawthorne felt that his own reserve inadvertently chilled others. The warm sympathy Kenyon has for Donatello at Monte Beni was like the warm sympathy Hawthorne knew he had communicated to such a friend as Pierce or Melville. Donatello's joy in nature is Hawthorne's and even more, the joy he had observed in his son Julian. Donatello's estrangement from nature was Hawthorne's, as when Una was believed to be dying, and all the fountains seemed broken.

It is almost comic to see how Hawthorne uses Hilda with her sorrow to express his own sense of agonized weariness at treading for the hundredth time the cold marble floors of the art galleries of Roman palazzi. And Kenyon's desperate struggle to make the clay express the quality of Donatello's personality he feels to be true is Hawthorne's sardonic comment on his own struggle to make words capture the same personality. No doubt with his first sketch for the novel Hawthorne had

different intentions for his characters, but in the course of writing it he transformed his fanciful idea to his felt reality. The narrow but certain moral sense which had guided him in the past had become diffused by a variety of Roman experiences.

Few characters are more objectionable to the modern reader than Hawthorne's Hilda, the daughter of the Puritans. She is accused of being egotistic and frigid, and her rejection of Miriam is considered inexcusable. The principle which Hilda represents, however, was one which Hawthorne had always believed valid and central to religious conduct. That a mortal's first duty is to his own salvation was sound Puritan teaching; and in the pursuit of his salvation he was to shut out all possible access of evil, whether it came from family, friends, or others.

If virtue was thereby « fugitive and cloistered », as Milton maintained, it nevertheless had its eye on the sole prize worth striving for — salvation. Bunyan's Christian, when he saw the way to save himself, put his fingers in his ears so as not to hear the cries of his wife and children « and ran crying, ' Life, life, eternal life ' ». It is this purest Puritan strain which makes of Hilda a lodestar for the Unitarian Kenyon. He depends upon a reasoned morality, but he believes that Hilda's heart instinctively knows truth. Like the steel blade to which she is twice compared, she slices a clear distinction between good and evil. Furthermore, Hawthorne intends to suggest that the principle Hilda represents, unswerving virtue in pursuit of salvation, is the one which serves the ideal of womanhood. It is with this idea that the daughter of the Puritans keeps a lamp burning at the loftiest shrine in Rome to the Blessed Virgin.

Perhaps the pre-Rome Hawthorne would have left the matter of Hilda there. But the Italian way of treating abstract ideas would give him no peace. The Italian painters' practice of infusing a warm humanity into their works, and especially into their Madonnas, outraged him at times. For that matter, the very human qualities of the Italian priesthood and aristocracy broke in continually upon his sense of propriety. And the

ordinary Romans seemed always to have befouled with a token of their humanity precisely the spots chosen by Sophia for an access of the sublime. The Italian painters' use of the same model for mistress, for Venus in glowing nudity, and for Madonna in heavenly robes confounded him:

And who can trust the religious sentiment of Raphael, or receive any of his Virgins as heaven-descended likenesses, after seeing, for example, the Fornarina of the Barberini Palace, and feeling how sensual the artist must have been to paint such a brazen trollop of his own accord, and lovingly? Would the Blessed Mary reveal herself to his spiritual vision, and favor him with sittings alternately with that type of glowing earthliness, the Fornarina?

Apparently she would, for Hawthorne proceeded to praise Raphael's cherubs and madonnas « and withdraw all that we have said ». Both he and Sophia blasted the Roman clergy in their notebooks, and Sophia wrote that her sense of the corruptions of the priests, and some, she recorded, were « said to be peculiarly corrupt », made her sensible of a hollowness and emptiness in every ceremony she saw.

As the novel proceeds, the Hilda principle is made more flexible. The daughter of the Puritans is placed in a position similar to that in which she had found Miriam; she has an overwhelming burden and needs to confide in someone. She tries prayer to saints, who were once human beings and keep « within their heavenly memories, the tender humility of a human experience ». But she finds the human element is necessary, and so she confesses to a priest. How far Hawthorne has gone in compromising the Puritan principle can be seen in Hilda's response (Chapter 50) to Kenyon's question, « ' Then you are not a Catholic? ' »:

' Really, I do not quite know what I am . . . I have a great deal of faith, and Catholicism seems to have a great deal of good. Why should not I be a Catholic, if I find there what I need, and what I cannot find elsewhere? '

She echoes a direct comment of Hawthorne to the reader (Chapter 38) as she continues:

'The more I see of this worship, the more I wonder at the exuberance with which it adapts itself to all the demands of human infirmity. If its ministers were but a little more than human, above all error, pure from all iniquity, what a religion would it be!'

Hawthorne's disclaimers about Catholicism are now given to Kenyon, but it is clear that Hilda has changed. No longer the perfect copyist, she sees as profoundly as before the intention of the artist, but her new knowledge of reality enables her to see the limitations of every work of art — and of every mortal. She still affirms that there is « only one right and one wrong », but her point of view is expressed in the context of a discussion of the way in which « a mixture of good . . . may be in things evil », so that Kenyon's description of her position as « unworldly and impracticable theory » seems to be Hawthorne's last word on the subject.

In contrast with the care Hawthorne took to soften the rigidities of Hilda, almost nothing was done to restore the sorrow-stricken Miriam. Except for the scene at Perugia, Miriam makes but few brief appearances in the second half of the novel. After her vivid moments leading up to the murder and shortly thereafter, Hawthorne reduces his dark heroine almost to the status of a voice off-stage. Her conduct at Perugia, however, is striking. While waiting for Donatello to recognize her at the base of the statue of Pope Julius, she uses language that should be used in relation to Donatello's penitence. Unlike Hawthorne's tortured sinners in the American novels, Donatello merely placed himself beneath the statue and felt the blessing upon his spirit. Miriam, without prompting from anyone, tells Kenyon,

' . . . his heart must be left freely to its own decision whether to recognize me, because on his voluntary choice depends the whole question whether my devotion will do him good or harm. Except he feel an infinite need of me, I am a burden and fatal obstruction to him !'

In these words, Kenyon, who had been reading an old copy of Dante's *Divine Comedy* at Monte Beni, might have re-

cognized, albeit oddly adapted to a lover, the conditions of voluntary choice and infinite need which lead Dante's sinners to God. It was Miriam, too, who proposed that Donatello's election should be made in a public spot, at high noon, and where the statue of Pope Julius extends its hand in blessing. In assisting the sinner, through his love for her, to find salvation, Hawthorne's dark heroine (albeit no Fornarina) is functioning like the Madonna.

Hawthorne's handling of Donatello is even more extraordinary. After the crime, Hawthorne applies the Puritan psychology of conversion to his sinner. There is conviction of sin and with it the awakening of the soul, the humanizing of the faun. Donatello leaves Rome as a City of Destruction and goes through his period of despondency leading to despair and thoughts of suicide. Then Kenyon (Reason, Instruction) persuades him to take up his burden. At this point, Hawthorne drops the matter of sin and guilt, precisely where, in the light of his earlier works, it should have proved most suitable to his genius. What might have been a pilgrim's progress to Rome loses its penitential aspect. There are crosses along the way and shrines to the Madonna. « Beholding these consecrated stations, the idea seemed to strike Donatello of converting the otherwise aimless journey into a penitential pilgrimage ». Whether he actually did so or not, Hawthorne does not let us know.

For his struggle-of-the-burdened-conscience, Hawthorne turns awkwardly to Hilda, and her burden is relieved by a New England priest. Although Hawthorne had always believed that sin and suffering, not crime and punishment, were important, Donatello plans to turn himself over to the law. It is not that Hawthorne believed the Roman judges to be less corrupt than the Roman priests. As he causes Miriam to remark, « ' I have assured him that there is no such thing as earthly justice, and especially none here, under the head of Christendom ' ». In his transformation, Donatello takes on nothing of the tragic dignity of Adam, penitent for having sinned against his God. Donatello has become a modern man in wrong with so-

ciety, who is « bound to submit himself to whatsoever tribunal takes cognizance of such things, and abide its judgment ».

Kenyon, who so far as the reader can discover never knows exactly what has caused the fearful change in his friends, is the self-appointed spiritual guide to Donatello. His advice, however, is for a kind of muscular Christianity, « effort! crowd it out with good . . . »; at best his advice is moralistic, and when he prescribes travel to Donatello, « The little adventures and vicissitudes of travel will do him infinite good », he sounds precisely like the conductor on « The Celestial Railroad ».

Hawthorne makes Kenyon representative of a broad strain of American moral thinking. That such thinking was not to Hawthorne's taste is evident from such an author-to-reader passage as this, shortly before Kenyon takes over his ministry to Donatello. « . . . the iron rule in our day to require an object and a purpose in life » is Hawthorne's subject:

It makes us all parts of a complicated scheme of progress, which can only result in our arrival at a colder and drearier region than we were born in. It insists upon everybody's adding somewhat — a mite, perhaps, but earned by incessant effort — to an accumulated pile of usefulness, of which the only use will be to burden our posterity with even heavier thoughts and more inordinate labor than our own. No life now wanders like an unfettered stream; there is a mill wheel for the tiniest rivulet to turn. We go all wrong, by too strenuous a resolution to go all right.

In the light of such a view, Kenyon's counsel to Donatello to make the wide world his cell was scarcely intended to be an endorsement of the American Protestant ethic.

Kenyon seems quite incapable of taking his own advice when, on returning to Rome, the discovery that Hilda has disappeared crushes his spirits. In one of the finest passages in the novel, Hawthorne describes Kenyon's state of mind, which might very well have been his own state of mind during his second winter in Rome when Una was gravely ill. The ponderous gloom of the past bore down irresistibly upon the

individual sorrow. « Your own life is as nothing » when compared with the immeasurable distances stretching through triumphal arches, past obelisks to the brilliant sky. You ask for « a gleam of sunshine, instead of a speck of shadow, on the step or two that will bring you to your quiet rest. How exceedingly absurd! » Thus Hawthorne measured his individual significance against the Eternal City.

If the doctrine of work and effort seemed all wrong, and the hope of happiness absurd in the face of the Roman record of ancient cultures and man's continuous, futile adaptations, it was like whistling in the dark to repeat the idea so popular in Concord that « all towns should be made capable of purification by fire, or of decay, within each half century, » or to boast that in America each generation had only its own sins and sorrows to bear. For Hawthorne, the damage had been done; placed against the evidence of time, the tensions he had posited in *The Marble Faun* dissolved away. The image of the faun was to have given way to the image of an American Adam, with the archangel Kenyon prating of progress. But the image of man that pervades the work is that which came to Kenyon as he mused over the statue of the Laocoön in the Vatican sculpture gallery: man and his generation forever in the coil of evil, an image that had always been part of Hawthorne's creative imagination. Now, however, Hawthorne felt differently, and he wrote of Kenyon:

What he most admired was the strange calmness diffused through this bitter strife; so that it resembled the rage of the sea made calm by its intensity, or the tumult of Niagara which ceases to be tumult because it lasts forever. Thus, in the Laocoön, the horror of a moment grew to be the fate of interminable ages.

This was the vision of man's condition which informed the work Hawthorne constructed from the stones of Rome.

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