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Fiction's Likeness:

Portraits in English and American Novels

from *Frankenstein* to *Middlemarch*

by Elizabeth Hollander

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

The City University of New York

1999

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FICTION'S LIKENESS:
Portraits in English and American Novels from *Frankenstein* to *Middlemarch*
by Elizabeth Hollander

Dissertation Director: Rachel M. Brownstein

Abstract

This dissertation looks at the way the theme of portraits came to enhance and complicate the conditions of narrative in English and American fiction during the nineteenth century. As figures of narrative ekphrasis, fictional portraits evoke various ambiguous, paradoxical, often competitive relations, not only between subject and spectator, painter and sitter, but between the realms of experience that they seem to embody. My readings of a variety of works from both sides of the Atlantic show how portraits were used to effect various kinds of fictional transformation -- in terms of narrative mode, gender, genre, character and aesthetic consciousness -- which served an arena for working out different problems in the narrative construction of fictional reality. Focusing on the mechanics and development of the portrait trope is especially helpful in illuminating a complex and potent gender paradigm which figures prominently in all these texts, and indeed in most aspects of word and image relations in the nineteenth century.

The argument begins with *Frankenstein*, which establishes a narrative mode informed by the interdependence of looks and speech and uses a portrait to effect a crucial link between mimetic artifice and authorial self-formation. Chapter 1 explains the narrative mechanism of portraits in Gothic works by Matthew Lewis, Charles Maturin, Washington Allston and Washington Irving. Chapter 2 examines Romantic anxieties of self-exposure and authorship in a group of short fictions about portraits and simulacra by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. Chapter 3 addresses these developments in narrative genre, using Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Herman Melville's *Pierre* to analyze the role played by portraits in the attempt to overcome or transcend previous Gothic and Romantic conventions of authorship and gender. Chapter 4 considers how the narrative function of portraits intersects with developing iconographies of realism in works by Hawthorne, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Louisa May Alcott. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a reading of how the portrait likenesses in *Middlemarch* establish the dynamics of its central marriage triangle and thus participate in the novel's more comprehensive modulation between aesthetic sensibility and societal norms.

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Introduction

This dissertation looks at the way in which the theme of portraits came to enhance and complicate the conditions of narrative in English and American fiction over the course of the nineteenth century. Fictional portraits evoke various ambiguous, paradoxical, often competitive relations, not only between subject and spectator, painter and sitter, but between the realms of experience that they seem to embody. Over the course of the nineteenth century these relations served as a kind of medium for working out different problems in the narrative construction of fictional reality. My readings of a variety of works drawn from both sides of the Atlantic show how these evocations of identifying likeness were used to effect various kinds of fictional transformation -- of narrative mode, of genre, of character and consciousness -- in which the relations between portrait, subject, spectator, and artist imply corresponding or complementary configurations of author, reader, character, and text.

Magical or otherwise mysterious portraits were a stapie device of Gothic narrative, often appearing in frame narratives to precipitate the telling of an internal story, and then serving a pivotal function in its development. Charged with both the Gothic dimension of narrative enhancement and the Romantic ambivalence about artistic self-exposure, the revelatory or monitory portrait also became an important device in later realistic fiction, though its function was somewhat altered. The encounter with a portrait that had once served to precipitate or frame a narrative became a means for signaling, within a narrative, an unforeseen or undiscussed dimension of the relationships among characters, or of characters' views of themselves. Over the course of the century these uses of portraiture were informed by an increasing awareness of and interest in the fine arts, and thus expanded the range of the trope. In England especially, where literary attitudes toward the visual arts had always been more circumspect, the portrait scene occasioned more aesthetic discourse than it had before, and thus began to allow for a kind of internal commentary on the

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aesthetic procedure of the novel as a whole. Partly because of their mimetic directness, and partly because of their long use as narrative devices in nonaesthetic contexts, portraits were ready emblems for the peculiar intersection of imagination and fact that realistic fiction had become. The multivalent identities and conflicts between maker and made, subject and spectator, person and picture were especially useful for figuring, and sometimes even resolving, tensions between different perspectives on the mimetic enterprise.

The theoretical context which most aptly frames this study is the consideration of verbal and visual relations which has lately come to be called ekphrasis. This term, which originally referred to a descriptive set-piece in which a work or art or craftsmanship is described in detail, has been revived in the last few decades, largely by way of redefining the legacy of romanticism, chiefly in poetry. The range of its use is instructive. Murray Krieger has used the concept of ekphrasis quite broadly, to refer to a field of poetics defined by, and in some sense addressing itself to, the interactions between verbal and visual modes of cognition. Mack Smith, following Krieger, has rarified the concept still further, to refer to a mode of self-referentiality in language that evokes vision only metaphorically. Other theorists of ekphrasis have maintained more strictly mimetic sense of the term, as a literary representation of a work of visual art. W.J.T. Mitchell and Wendy Steiner have developed the more specifically rhetorical notion of a linguistic response or attitude toward plastic art in terms of a larger philosophical context of distinguishing verbal and visual modes of articulation. John Hollander has invoked the Renaissance idea of the *paragone*, or competition between the arts, to consider the interacting spheres of word and image as generating a special kind of poetic discourse. Despite their differences, most of these approaches to ekphrasis are predicated on the same basic idea of a prior visual experience somehow being conveyed through or addressed in words, and the difficulties or opportunities afforded by the gap between the two experiences.[1]

Theorists of verbal and visual relations have only lately begun to explore the rather different concept of narrative ekphrasis, the deployment of wrought images in fiction.

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Narrative treatments of pictures are generally motivated by a kind of mythology, which assigns roles or values to works of art and uses them to facilitate or complicate or ironize the processes and conditions under which a story may be narrated or read. Instead of problematizing an implied analogy or competition between verbal and visual perception, theories of narrative ekphrasis consider how language generates a rhetoric of images to produce its own effects. James Heffernan discusses the elements of the mythology in the context of Romantic poetics. Françoise Meltzer, writing on the imaginative processes of storytelling throughout history, takes the connection to images in a more theoretical direction. Susan Shidal Williams has lately explored portraiture as a trope of the mechanics of authorial self-making in the context of nineteenth-century American fiction. Abigail Rischin's recent dissertation on different modes of nineteenth-century ekphrasis also advances the notion of a "mutually beneficial, verbal-visual dynamic" (13) between narrative and picture.[2]

The portrait trope expounded in this study is an example of narrative ekphrasis. Although it involves verbal descriptions of encounters with images, its primary rhetorical effect is not discursive but narratological. Instead of competing with or occasioning linguistic utterance, the depicted image is enlisted in the formation of a narrative world that includes it. What is important about the image has less to do with its non-verbal impact than the fact that it embodies certain properties -- mimetic likeness, temporal continuity, personal perspective -- that are crucial to narrative fiction. The image becomes emblematic, not of a separate mode of cognitive experience, but rather of peculiar or problematic aspects of mimetic identity, which the narrative itself must come to resolve.

This approach differs in several ways from the familiar assumption of an implicit comparison or contrast between verbal and visual representation. The concept of what has been called Pictorialism, the analogy between linguistic and pictorial techniques for evoking images, is readily conflated with ekphrastic description[3], A famous example is the passage describing the boating scene in Chapters 30-31 of *The*

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Ambassadors, which is regarded simultaneously as a pictorialist effort to emulate the techniques of Impressionism, and as an ekphrastic invocation of a (possible) Impressionist work itself. Narrative ekphrasis on the other hand preserves the distinction between the act of looking at a picture and the experience of seeing what it depicts; the transition from seeing to depiction to viewing thus becomes a subject of the trope, rather than a stylistic element within it.

Another effect of the narrative approach is that it makes the documentary aspect of ekphrasis quite irrelevant. Most fictional portraits are examples of what has been called "notional ekphrasis" [4] descriptions of works of art which no one has ever, or can ever, actually see. But many instances are references to -- and sometimes prolonged engagements with -- extant works of art, which the reader may see independently of the text. From the descriptive point of view, the distinction between real and invented images can matter a great deal because literary treatment of an image one can actually look at, whatever its genre, will always invite comparative response, and will thus sound a critical note. In narrative terms, however, it makes very little difference how a work of art in a text is made to look, nor what kind of effect it might have on how a reader would look at a real object. Its significance lies in the scheme of the narrative, and is unchanged by whatever visual experience may be summoned -- real or imagined -- to illustrate it.

My argument is text-based; that is, it proceeds as a thematic survey of different uses of and contexts for the portrait trope. When I discuss multiple texts by some author, it is in order to expound the development of the trope, rather than that of the particular writer. Similarly, though certain lines of connection are indicated, especially between Hawthorne and Eliot, which point to later developments in James, this does not purport to be an influence study. The primary focus here is on the mechanics of the trope itself, and its value as an interpretive tool for considering certain crucial but elusive associations in the nineteenth-century imagination. The Prologue shows how the frame structure of *Frankenstein* establishes a narrative mode informed by the interdependence of looks and

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speech, and how the novel's crucial link between mimetic artifice and authorial self-formation culminates in a scene involving a portrait. Chapter 1 explains the narrative mechanism of portraits in Gothic fiction, looking first at how they modulate between frame and core narratives in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer*, and then at their more pointed, annotative function in American works by Washington Allston and Washington Irving. Chapter 2 examines a Romantic conceit in which the making of a pictorial likeness seems to generate a text which itself calls into question the grounds or modality of authorship. The primary texts here are a group of short fictions about portraits and simulacra by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe, which each recall and expand upon different aspects of the relation between maker and made in *Frankenstein*. Chapter 3 addresses developments in narrative genre, using Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Herman Melville's *Pierre* to analyze the role played by portraits in the attempt to overcome or transcend previous Gothic and Romantic conventions, especially those having to do with the relation between authorship and gender. Chapter 4 considers how the narrative potentialities of the portrait identity intersect with the developing iconography of realism in works by Hawthorne, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Louisa May Alcott. Chapter 5 concludes the study with an extended reading of the portrait likenesses in *Middlemarch*, which link the aesthetic and prosaic environments of the novel; by establishing the dynamics of its central marriage triangle, these likenesses effect a more comprehensive modulation between aesthetic sensibility and societal norms figured in the mimetic totality of the novel itself.

The narrative treatment of persons and pictures developed in the very shadow of English Romantic poetics, which made a point of regarding the temporal fixity and duration of images as a challenge or rebuke to the possibility of telling stories. Keats used painted images in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to demonstrate the inherent conflict between beauty and narration, while the urn on which they appear becomes a model for poetic

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sensibility. In "Ozymandias" Shelley uses an inscribed ruin of a statue to show that the only true stories are those that poetry, with its built-in undulations of meaningful reference, can dismantle. Both poems react to the same troubling modern discovery, made most crucially for poetry by Wordsworth, that time alters not things, but meanings, and that for language to retain the possibility of eternal truth requires a sacrifice of fixed reference. In Keats' and Shelley's poems this sacrifice is figured by the absence of bodies: the deserted town of Keats's imaginings, the lost trunk of Shelley's notional ruin, each stake out poetic territory as circumscribing rather than containing or conveying people and actions. Un-telling, the communication of the untold or unspeakable, becomes the province of poetic utterance once and for all, and the species of that vision that forms its central trope is a metaphoric one: the imagination, which occupies the space between material and spiritual experience.

Telling, on the other hand, which must move bodies in and out of places, and cope with the passage of time both in the course of the story and the reading of the page, generates very different ideas about images. Unlike Romantic poets, novelists had little occasion to refer to Classical art; neither the doctrine of Ut Pictura Poesis, which compared poetry to painting, nor Lessing's influential distinction between temporal and spatial art, which subverted the doctrine, had much of an impact on narrative. Portraits, on the other hand, were an integral part of just the sort of social structures and transactions with which narrative fiction was concerned.

At the end of the eighteenth century portraiture was still regarded more as a communications medium than as an art. That the genre was elevated by the exertions of important Romantic artists -- Reynolds did for portraiture what Scott did for fiction -- only confirms its underdog status in neoclassical discourse, where the sanctioned pictorial genres, themselves ranked below sculpture, were historical and allegorical painting.[5] By contrast, the traditional discourse of portraiture had to do not with formal attributes but with moral and social status of individuals. At different times since the Renaissance the function of portraiture had been delineated as the

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confirmation of public status or the revelation of moral character[6]. Although they might include attributes or guises that could allude to epic or heroic events, the primary function of portraits was to document the existence of persons, and preserve the potency of their presence, in spite of death or distance. It was in this respect that portraits become a valuable expository tool for Gothic and Romantic narrative, which concerned itself with the events which separate and unite persons.

Intertwining with this narrative suggestiveness of portraits in fiction was another associated trope of an imagined or constructed personage, a simulated Other or Double which embodied crucial problems of authorial control and gender. The portrait trope does much to illuminate a very basic gender paradigm which figures more or less prominently in all these texts, and indeed in most aspects of word and image relations in the nineteenth century. Unlike political or historical gender relations, the gendered construction of looks and words is deeply idiosyncratic; though it follows a basic equation (looks=feminine, words=masculine) its significance must be parsed according to the imaginative framework implied by or generated in individual texts.

The forcefulness of the connection between gender relations and mimetic issues is best understood by considering the myth of Pygmalion, who in Ovid's version spurned the flesh and blood women of his community and instead realized his own ideal woman in marble. The importance of this myth in nineteenth-century culture has been invoked by feminist thinkers as emblematic of the male dominated society and its impossible expectations of womanhood. In the Romantically inflected nineteenth century, however, Pygmalion registered as an artist, who loved his masterpiece so much that it become real.[7] Rousseau's influential version of the story, a dramatic sketch written in 1775, figures the Romantic problem of achieving absolute identity with and expression in a work of art. His Pygmalion prays that he can die in order that Galathée may live -- that his overflow of life, which is killing him, assume her form.[8] When she does awaken, she identifies with him, indicating that his prayer has been answered, but then the play is over. At the turn of the nineteenth century Mme. de Genlis replied with a sequel, in

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which the education of Galathée engages pertinent debates about social and gender roles;[9] at the end of the century W. S. Gilbert advanced a still more satiric revision, in which Galatea, having innocently disrupted Pygmalion's marriage and otherwise respectable lifestyle, sorrowfully but wisely reverts to stone.[10] Even this sketchy progression should suggest how readily the idea of perfect identity with and self-expression in art becomes bound up with the fiction of companionate marriage: both raise the question of whether the Romantic ideal of union with an Other, once realized, is sustainable within the limits of ordinary existence.

In *Frankenstein* the stories of making something and marrying someone are set up in an opposition so polar that it becomes a kind of identity: escaping from his domestic sphere and his designated bride into the world of science, Victor Frankenstein is an Enlightenment Pygmalion, who rejects female companionship and devotes himself to realizing a rationalist ideal. To make your dream live and to live with your dream are two very different things. Mary Shelley's gloss of the Romantic nightmare that launched her own creation suggests that the drastic consequences of creating a new being proceed from the introduction of a new perspective:

> His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade....He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold, the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes. [xi] [11]

The problem with Pygmalion's masterpiece is not how he makes her but what she will make of him. After such a transformation, what becomes of the artist's ideal? Would the living masterpiece turn out to be, like Victor Frankenstein's perverse creation, an unmanageable monster? Or a gorgon who would avenge her marble state by turning men to stone at a glance? Over the course of the century the network of mimetic and authorial relationships between portrait, painter, viewer and subject provided a useful narrative space in which these questions about the aims of mimetic effort and the dynamics of gender relations could be considered.

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Frankenstein's fundamental shift of perspective also comprehends a range of narrative and authorial themes and authorial themes. In his treatment of *Frankenstein* as a precursor of realistic fiction George Levine[12] suggests specifically literary anxieties about the difficulty, even the absurdity, of fabricating people and situations out of words. Levine rightly claims that overcoming these anxieties was a deliberate undertaking of nineteenth-century realism, and finds in the creature's monstrosity a particularly flexible emblem for whatever feels unbearable or impossible about mimesis at a given moment. But he neglects one very important anxiety about fiction that the central duality of *Frankenstein* particularly embodies: put plainly, it is an evasive author's risk of being exposed by his own creation, a risk made all the more vivid by the creation's human shape. This authorial anxiety about self-exposure, the simultaneous desire for art to reveal and conceal the self, is an important dimension of the property of likeness embodied in a portrait, which links the inanimate image both to its living subject and to its maker.

There is a kind of rhetorical declaration inherent in all kinds of monitory likeness, especially those which emerge from a forgotten past or neglected sin: its syntax is "Behold me, and thereby behold yourself: my aspect reveals your nature, because I exist in a prior (or revisionary) relation to you, which identifies you morally in ways you did not expect: I know your secret, even if you don't." The creature's narrative in *Frankenstein* reminds us that the *locus classicus* -- or rather, *locus romanticus* -- for this mode of confrontation is in *Paradise Lost*, by evoking Eve's story of coming to life in Book 4. Here Eve is called away from the delights of her own reflection -- the first image she sees, by a mysterious voice which leads her to Adam. The encounter simultaneously corrects and confirms her mistaken impression of her own primariness. Having seen and loved herself first, she can only compare his image -- unfavorably at first -- to her own. [4:477-89] Only after he claims her in speech, informing her of his precedence, does he revise her primal reflection.

> I yielded, and from that time see
> How beauty is excelled by manly grace
> And wisdom, which alone is truly fair. [4.489-91]

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The shift of Eve's attention from her own reflexive image to Adam's revisionary rhetoric confirms a gendered opposition between feminine spectacle and masculine language, but the difference between Eve's way of experiencing herself and Adam's, is also the difference between seeing and reading, which is a difference between experience and interpretation. For Eve at the poolside, seeing and being seen are the same condition, until voices move her on to deal with Adam, who knows who she is and why she is there. What Adam later calls "Beauty's powerful glance," which serves as both chastening monitor and delectable reward, can bypass and conflate the moral distinction between subjective agency and objective contingency: the mirror collapses viewer and viewed into one identity. Reading, on the other hand, entails a consciousness of boundaries and distinctions that derives from a sense of time and change. [13]

The appropriation or circumscription of Eve's visual self-containment by Adam's verbal interpretation is readily glossed as masculine power and privilege taking charge of societal and cultural forms; the same gesture can be read as analytic, referential language assuming dominion over cognitive and aesthetic experience. The passage makes it easy to see how the gendered model of appropriation comes to inflect the relation between cognitive modes, and certainly provides a useful paradigm for word and image relations. For example, Susan Shidal Williams has shown how in Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*, language seems to compensate for its own referential deficiencies by speaking for an image, appropriating its speechless, static impact, and undertaking to complete it,[14] much as Adam's revisionary masculine claim on Eve's looks is meant to complete her humanity. I want to suggest that the fictional relations between prior picture and later language are not only, like gender relations, more fluid, more available to multiple construction, than strict adherence to this model of appropriation would allow; but that the relation was, for this very reason, deliberately undertaken in nineteenth-century fiction as a means for feeling

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out the limits of the medium.

Adam's domesticating summons recalls a similar scene of exposition in Book 2, when Sin identifies herself to Satan as his daughter, and Death as the issue of their incestuous union. [2:727-815][15] Both scenes are interruptions: Sin intervenes to break up the horrific struggle between Satan and Death, a Protean "shape,/ If shape it might be called that shape had none" [2:666-7] by revealing their filial -- if incestuous -- relations. Adam similarly breaks up Eve's quieter but equally intense communion with the "Shape within the wat'ry gleam", to draw her into interactive, if hierarchical, domesticity. While Sin's gesture of admonition and rebuke becomes in Adam an invitation into a socialized world; yet the echo of Sin's speech in Adam's declaration to Eve recalls that lurking Shape, suggesting something formless, resistant, and uncontrollable in the otherwise harmonious scheme of the marriage he proposes.

My point, then, is that the revisionary power of declared identity is deeply, and by definition, ambivalent. To insist on an identity across gender divisions, to shift difference to likeness, is to hold out the prospect of loss and gain. The ambiguity of gender also complicates the revisionary effect of language on vision, so that the Shape that is explained away haunts the arrangements made possible by the explanation, is both necessary and inimical to them.

These complexities are reflected in mid-century representations of the visual arts, which often invoke a conflict between mimetic images and the glosses imposed upon them. Under the Romantic dispensation mimesis could be authenticated simply by its fidelity to Nature. The Romantic ideology of naturalism was championed in Victorian novels, but as the century advanced, narrative fiction was increasingly confronted the task of distinguishing between natural and artificial standards of truth. In representing the social world, with its materialistic aims and its superficial forms, the mechanism of semblance ran the risk of becoming monstrous literalness, which obstructs and distorts truth rather than revealing it.

By the end of the century the act of making a picture out of a person had developed

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into a complex self-referential trope for making fictional people out of words, which could be used to explore a range of mimetic and professional issues. Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and, more lately, James' "The Real Thing" (1892) have come to be recognized as especially canny and potent parables of the modern (what some would call post-modern) consciousness that personality is at least as much product of artifice, "constructions" or representations, as it is an organic or spontaneous condition of being, and that art is chiefly responsible for revealing and expounding this fact. The mutations of Dorian Gray's image and the inflexibly bourgeois character of the undrawable Monarchs are particular features of a more general phenomenon of the arty narrative -- usually a tale, but sometimes a whole novel -- featuring some combination of painter, model, and patron/critic which serves as a meditation about art and society. Though James produced probably the largest and most comprehensive body of work in this genre, and Wilde its best-remembered example, the genre was pervasive during the last decades of the century on both sides of the Atlantic. Other well-known examples include Rudyard Kipling's *The Light That Failed*, George DuMaurier's *Trilby*, and a host of lesser-known works by Hardy, such writers as Arnold Bennett, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and Americans like Arlo Bates, Henry Adams, and the early Edith Wharton. In these works the studio provides a forum for debates about form and conflicts between aesthetic and social value which in a sense enacted the transformation of the earnest morality of Victorian Realism into the more self-conscious formalism that characterizes Modernist sensibility.

It is generally agreed that this phenomenon of late Victorian fiction emerged from a French literary influence which gradually increased as the ghosts of the Napoleonic wars were laid to rest. As the works of Balzac, Flaubert, and Baudelaire crossed the channel, English novelists were increasingly exposed to the various mimetic philosophies vying to be called Realism, many of which were expounded in studio scenes. The French discourse of Realism, however, assumed a unity of purpose in painting and fiction that did not really correspond to mid-Victorian ways of thinking

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about art, which were still deeply influenced by the Romantic preoccupations with poetry and with Nature. While the French influence was of huge stylistic importance to English novelists, the thematic prominence of art and artists in Victorian literature owed a great deal more to the peculiarly Anglo-American tradition of using portraits to push the boundaries of narrative technique and perspective than has yet been explored. This tradition plays an important role in the development of both realist and aestheticist literary agendas.

A brief look at a major text from the French tradition will help illustrate the distinction. One of the first works of fiction to use the relationships among artist, model, image, and critical audience to explore the relation between mimetic precision and spiritual temptation is Balzac's remarkable 1831 story titled *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* ("The Unknown Masterpiece") which, along with *The Marble Faun*, is one of the most significant literary representations of pictorial art produced in the nineteenth century. In this tale a young disciple of art (fancifully identified as Poussin) is introduced by his preceptor to a crazy old painter, a Hoffmannian Maestro named Frenhofer, whose obsession with the veracious rendering of form has kept him at work on the same picture for decades. Reluctant to talk about it at first, the old man explains that the figure, called "La Belle Noiseuse," is nearly perfect, a work of genius, and that he needs only a perfect model to complete her. The young Poussin, staggered and competitively spurred by Frenhofer's virtuosity, offers his mistress as a model in return for a glimpse at the masterpiece, which no one has ever seen. The failure of the present, living woman to correspond with the lost painted one determines the outcome of the story: in the climactic scene, the old man rejects the real woman for his created ideal, but not before the latter is revealed to his astonished disciples as an incoherent mass of paint, a monstrous mess of overexercized skill. Staring at his beloved masterpiece, Frenhofer retreats into a solipsistic trance; as Poussin and his friend gaze sorrowfully on this image of ruined genius they notice in one corner of the canvas one perfect foot, a miracle of painterly feeling and intelligence, pulsating with

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life amid the senseless daubs surrounding it.

Overall, Balzac's tale very succinctly represents the crisis in the relation between artistic aspiration and mimetic veracity felt by all European writers of this epoch. Its distinctively French elements are its utter frankness and lack of sentimentality about sexual politics and the complete absence of the kinds of narrative and psychological pressure we will be considering in Anglo-American fiction of the same period. As in the Anglo-American tradition, these aspects are linked. Though dominated by men, the two halves of Balzac's tale are named for the two female figures of the story: Gillette, Poussin's young mistress, whose faith in her lover is crushed by his insistence on exposing her, and Catherine Lescault, the legendary courtesan of Frenhofer's past who is supposed to have served as the original model for his picture. Gillette drops out of the story as soon as she in the presence of the picture. As a fictional being she is thus far more effectively killed off by picture than, say, the heroine of Poe's "The Oval Portrait" , who literally dies with her portrait's last brushstroke is laid in, but whose vital gaze persists on the canvas long after her death, and occasions the narrative in which she appears. While Catherine Lescault's image carries plenty of erotic and aesthetic freight, her identity -- as a person, or even as a mystery -- has no significance at all, and never did. The obliteration of her image is clearly an emblem for the conflation of artistic control with the exposure and legibility of the female body; but legibility in this sense has nothing to do with narrative progression. The task here is not to discover her story, or Frenhofer's, but to discern her body, and so to retrieve -- at least in theory -- the forgotten desire from the incoherence of its fulfillment.[16] This mode of retrieval has nothing to do with the recollection or composition of past events, nor with the possibility of future ones.

Nevertheless, the over-painted nude on Frenhofer's canvas and the overlooked model behind it underline an association of mimetic veracity with intellectual and erotic desire which Victorian novelists began to assimilate with their own narrative concerns. In Balzac's tale the feminine power to compel the masculine attention simply

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and frankly engenders the split between subject and object, seer and seen. While French fiction went on in such works as the Goncourt Brothers' *Manette Solomon* (1867) and Zola's *L'oeuvre* (1886) to develop a rivalry between the power of feminine sexuality and the lure of art, English and American fictions, with their more problematic gendered construction of image and word, or vision and interpretation, tended to view them as allies, or metaphors for each other. Examining the continuity between uses of portraiture in Romantic and Victorian fiction affords a fresh perspective on this powerful association, and on its peculiar relation to the development of narrative technique.

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TEXTS AND CITATION FORMAT

Anyone now writing about *Frankenstein* has to decide between the once-standard 1831 version and the shorter 1818 text.[17] Because Shelley's emendations reinforce the self-descriptive character of the book, and because my chief claims about its relation to other works are thematic rather than historical, I use the later edition, documenting significant divergences from the 1818 version in the notes. All other texts are standard paperback or reader's editions. For the convenience of readers using other editions all bracketed page citations include a chapter number (and volume or book number where applicable) followed by a colon and the page number of the edition cited. For example, [II.3:257] indicates Volume II, chapter 3, page 257.

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NOTES

[1] See Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: the Illusion of a Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Mack Smith: *Literary Realism and the Ekphrastic Tradition* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1995); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)

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also *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Steiner, Wendy. *Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation Between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1982) and John Hollander: *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[2] See James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: the Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*; (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1993); Françoise Meltzer, *Salome and the Dance of Writing: Portraits of Mimesis in Literature.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Susan Shidal Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Ante-bellum America* (Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Abigail Rischin, *Speaking Looks: Varieties of Ekphrastic Experience in Nineteeth-Century Literature* (dissertation, Yale University, 1995).

[3] Marianna Torgovnick deliberately does this to advance her claim about the rhetoric of seeing in the Introduction to *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism and the Novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[4] See John Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit* 7.

[5] For discussions of the low status of portraiture in neoclassical discourse see Robert Altick, *Painting From Books: Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900.* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985). E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation.* (New York: Pantheon, 1961); Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: the Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). For an analysis of the Romantic shift in the terms of the poetry/picture analogy see Wright Lee Renssaeler, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W.W. Norton: 1967) and Roy Park, "'Ut Pictura Poesis": the Nineteenth-Century Aftermath." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (1969):155-164.

[6] On the shifting standards of signification applied to portraiture during the Renaissance, see Harry Berger, "From Body to Cosmos: the Dynamics of Representations in Pre-Capitalist Society" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91:13 (1992): 557-602.

[7] For a discussion of Ovid's story, and its connection to Islamic prohibitions against simulation see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989) 340-344.

[8] Galathée's name appears to have been Rousseau's innovation. See the introduction and text to *Pygmailon: une scène lyrique* (1775). Rousseau, *Oeuvres completes* II. xcix-ci, 1224-1231.

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[9] It was called *Pygmalion et Galatée; ou La Statue animée depuis vingt-quatre heures* and it appeared in *Nouveaux Contes Moraux et Nouvelles Historiques*, (1802-3), which Mary Shelley is known to have read when she began writing *Frankenstein*. See Burton Pollin, "Philosophical and Literary Sources of *Frankenstein*" *Comparative Literature* 7:2 (1965): 97-109.

[10] *Pygmalion and Galatea: an Entirely Original Mythological Comedy in Three Acts*. First performed in 1871.

[11] Author's introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* (New York: Signet/NAL, 1965) vii-xii.

[12] See his introductory essay to *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[13] The dynamics of priority and revision are still further complicated by Adam's subsequent description of his own first moments in Book 8, which parallels Eve's story point for point. Just as her visible form follows the prior model of his body, his version of the primal story will follow her narrative model of waking, self-regard, and questioning.

[14] Susan Shidal Williams argues for example that Hawthorne's attitude toward visual arts advances this paradigm. See *Confounding Images* Chapter 2

[15] Here the inversion of epistemological priority is explicitly a matter not only of gender but of generation: when Sin identifies herself to her parent, she inverts the order of knowing whereby parents instruct and define the world to their children.

[16] For a particularly succinct account of the epistemological implications of the story see Lawrence R. Schehr, "The Unknown Subject: About Balzac's *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 12-13:4 (1984): 58-69. For a more socially oriented analysis see Marie Lathers, "Modesty and the Artist's Model in *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*" *Symposium* 46:1 (1992): 49-71.

[17] Two important arguments have been advanced for favoring each text. Mary Poovey's seminal reading of the revisions as a retraction from the extremities of the earlier text is based chiefly on the differences in Shelley's portrayal of Victor Frankenstein. Katherine Hill-Miller argues for the greater sophistication and self-awareness of the second version, based on the different portrayals of Elizabeth. See Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and Katherine Hill-Miller, *My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley, William Godwin, and the Father-Daughter Relationship* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995).

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Prologue -- *Frankenstein* and the Image of Fiction

> "My dear Victor," cried he "what, for God's sake, is the matter? ...What is the cause of all this?"
> "Do not ask me," cried I, putting my hands before my eyes...*he* can tell. -- Oh, save me! save me!"
>
> *Frankenstein* 5:60[1]

This revealing little exchange takes place shortly after the completion and animation of Victor Frankenstein's obsessive creation, an oversized, composite figure made up of cast-off parts of defunct human beings. On discovering that the fruit of his months of labor is hideous and deformed, Victor has fled from the house, and returned with relief to find it empty. A dear old friend has turned up, and the horrified scientist is on the point of dismissing the scene of waking as a bad dream, when he is overcome by a vivid hallucination of his monster. What is remarkable about this moment is that Victor attributes the power of speech to his creation, who will not in fact acquire it for many chapters. That this articulateness is invoked to substitute for his own inability to speak hints at a the crucial rhetorical displacement of the creator by his creature that emerges when the Creature does indeed begin to speak.

Frankenstein's prototype of creative anxiety is especially compelling because it associates so closely two distinct modes of figuration: the physical simulation of human form -- and the linguistic act of self-representation in narrative. On the one hand there is the story of a hideous creature's material formation in the laboratory and charnel house, inflected both with the fear and physical disgust associated with childbirth, and with the excessive narcissism of Romantic idealism. On the other is the concentric structure of autobiographical narratives that forms the book -- Walton's to Victor's to the Creature's -- which establishes a rhetorical paradigm for self-disclosure, a transformation that entails both a declaration of identity and a revelation of the speaker's relationship to the listener. Together they form a remarkable parable about the implications of mimetic action.

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One of the most important of these implications is reflexivity. Bent on transcending the boundaries of physical life, Frankenstein very deliberately but unconsciously makes an alter-ego, an autonomous being that nevertheless is tied to him by a curious double bond. The relation between creature and creator is both one of likeness (in trying to assimilate into a social world, the Creature acquires knowledge with the same single mindedness as Victor has had in retreating from it) and polarity (the Creature acquires progressively more control of the situation as Frankenstein loses it). Victor has thus produced both an Other, an anti-self or counterpart who goes where he cannot, is what he is not; and a Double, a mirror who reveals the essence of his creator.

This protean relation lends itself to a great variety of glosses: the monster's destructive and hideous aspect has been interpreted psychologically, as a projection of Victor's -- and possibly his author's -- desires or hostilities. The possibility of motherless creation has been read by a number of feminist critics as a means of denying or suppressing, maternity, inflecting the relationship with a whole range of feminine anxieties about childbirth.[2] In another sense, Victor's failures can be seen as the failures of Enlightenment ideals of progress, producing unsuspected monsters of intellectual overconfidence. The figures of Rousseau and Godwin loom particularly large in the story of a father abandoning his experimental child, whose subsequent development without proper nurture suggests equally the personal and intellectual imbalances resulting from their work.[3]

What gives all these readings their potency is the fundamental rhetorical relationship, whereby the creator's account of his imaginative and physical efforts is displaced and entirely revised when his creature assumes the narration of his own existence. This new level of consciousness articulated by the Creature, which is intolerable, and eventually inimical, to its creator, nevertheless compels his recognition and response. If Frankenstein's most important act is to have made a living person out of dead bodies, the creature's is to declare himself to his maker. In

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defining their relationship the Creature transforms it. Before their encounter, the story has been Victor's: we have seen him as a child, as a student, and finally as master of the great mystery. The story of his achievement, for good or ill, has been entirely his own. With the Creature's narrative a new perspective opens up, and in the shift of narrative voice the very nature of Victor's transgression changes from a crime against divine prerogatives to a failure of social responsibility.[4] Whatever their relationship may symbolize, it is clear that the Creature insists on asserting that relationship while the creator resists knowing it. In charging his maker with the responsibility for his happiness the Creature reveals promethean hubris to be a failure of self-knowledge, and thus establishes a new dispensation for the narrative as a whole. It is not merely that, with Walton, we are faced with the question of whose story to believe and endorse; it is that with the Creature's story we are compelled to consider the contingency of those narratives on each other. The shift from Frankenstein's perspective to the Creature's *is* the story.

The peculiar contingency of the embedded narratives radically alters the act of confession, which ordinarily sets up the speaker as an example of sin and punishment or redemption into a dimension of self-discovery.[5] Victor, whose narrative appears first, tells his story in just this way, i.e., in order that Walton may learn from his example. Whether that means shunning the dangers of ambition or learning from Victor's own mistakes and so being able to succeed where he has failed is uncertain, but in the end the difference is immaterial: the point is that the listener make use of the story by judicious identification with its protagonist. The Creature, by contrast, tells his story in order to assert his identity and claim his rights, to demand recognition and finally obedience. Unlike an expiatory confession, which relieves the speaker and warns the listener, the mechanism here is neither cathartic nor exemplary, but therapeutic and imperative. Although he fails in this larger design of securing a mate, he comes as close as possible to achieving his essential goal of socialization simply by being able to command an audience at all: the listener is

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transformed into a participant in and agent of the speaker's fate.

This imposition, whereby being an audience or a witness constitutes a kind of intervention in the narrative, defines the dynamics of modern fiction. The roles imposed on audiences by other narrative genres tend to be critical: disciples are called upon to dispute, to judge, or to be instructed by its example; or else they are invited to identify completely with a spirit or emotion evoked by story as a whole, without discriminating among disparate elements of the drama. The reader of modern fiction, by contrast, is expected not only to empathize with and detach from different elements of the story at different junctures, but to become increasingly conscious of the criteria on which both responses are based, so that the conclusion of the story seems to have been drawn by the reader as much as being plotted by the author.[6]

The final key to the rhetorical structure of *Frankenstein* is Walton, whose own narrative provides both external boundaries and internal cohesion for the rhetorical and moral relationships in the novel. Walton is a synthesis of Frankenstein and the Creature, figuring both Frankenstein's thirst for knowledge and the Creature's need for society and confidence, in particular for a monitor. His function as a unifying ego is also formal in that his story contains theirs: he has heard both their autobiographies, and his final actions (unlike those of Coleridge's sadder and wiser wedding guest, which can only be conjectured), indicate clearly that he has heard them both. Even more important, however, is that he has seen them both. Walton is the only character other than Victor who initiates and sustains a conversation with the Creature without being driven away by his looks.

Barbara Johnson was the first of several critics to point out that all three of the major autobiographical narratives of the book are initiated by the need to persuade someone of something. In the scenes she adduces, all three narrators invoke vision as somehow operating in narrative's despite. [7] Consider the moment in letter 4 when Victor resolves to tell Walton his story. Encouraged by Victor's solicitude for his

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ambitious enterprise, Walton has begun to talk in high-handed terms of how little he cares for the price of success, when the *sight* of Victor's face stops him:

> As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived he tried to suppress his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers; a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused. At length he spoke, in broken accents: "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? have you also drunk the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!" [26][8]

Victor thus attempts to hide his face from Walton in order to tell his tale -- but the ambiguity of the act is revealed by Walton's ability to perceive the gesture as intensifying precisely the emotion it is intended to conceal, in a sense prefiguring the larger evasion and self-betrayal that creating the monster constitutes. The Creature covers Victor's eyes in a similar manner when he commences his own narrative, at his creator's behest:

> "...Begone! Relieve me from the sight of your detested form."
> "Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence. "Thus I take a sight from thee which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me and grant me thy compassion....Hear my tale." [11:97]

Here too, although its rationale is very strong the attempt at invisibility fails. Victor refuses to accept the Creature's very literal construction of his word "sight" as something distinct from listening. The Creature of course has good reason for trying to maintain that distinction, but the impossibility of keeping his looks out of his story, attested by his maker's refusal to keep his eyes covered, is a clue to the importance of their association.

Walton's letters to his absent sister frequently refer to their inability to see each other: he remarks that his first letter after embarking comes "on a merchantman bound homeward from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years." [21] But letter 4, in which he sees the Creature for the first time and thereafter encounters Victor Frankenstein, opens with on a curiously

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optimistic note of futility: "so strange an accident has happened to us that I cannot forbear recording it, though it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession." [22]

The persistence of seeing in these passages suggests that, despite the impulse to take what is seen and what is heard as operating at cross purposes, seeing is a necessary concomitant of listening, and the autobiographical act in particular is somehow contingent on visual affect. Walton's reminder that reading his text and seeing him are both contingent on the same homecoming points to the further understanding that reading, like bearing witness, entails both vision and language. Reading, specifically reading narrative, effects a synthesis of linguistic and visual power, which derives not only from the conjuring of images by descriptive language -- a very ancient rhetorical effect -- but from the peculiar experience of taking in language, and not the speaker, through the eye. The reader of a tale is drawn into what is happening differently from the hearer of one, because the illusion of seeing the substance of the tale comes itself from an unseeing object: the reader and the teller of the tale are invisible to each other; each thus carries a burden of self-awareness that ordinarily never intrudes on the relation between speaker and hearer.

It is easy to forget that the Creature's own most compelling experiences are, like his primary impact on the world, not rhetorical but visual. It is not simply that he understands his alienation from the community of man to proceed from his hideous looks; it is that his standard of civility, his access to the domesticated civilization, to language itself, is visual. He watches the De Laceys speak and read, and when eventually he learns to say words, then to read them, himself, it is without ever actually exchanging words with them. He himself is, in effect, always a reader, taking in and accumulating linguistic experience without engaging in verbal communication. The literary experience which enables him to make sense out of his situation is ultimately a matter of seeing. The effect of the Creature's hideousness, then, is to force his listeners to become readers, and thus take on this consciousness.

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If telling his story is the Creature's essential gesture in the direction of humanity, his experiences of seeing and being seen reveal an obstacle to the completion of that gesture that is equally essential to his self-understanding: the priority of looks over words, not only as an index of inherent virtue, but as a medium of emotional exchange. This value is primarily embodied in the female characters of the novel, who are adopted into nurturing families on the basis of their looks, and thus seem to invert the Creature's condition. In having the Creature's existence be the result of Frankenstein's bizarre confusion of hideous carnage with ideal beauty, it seems quite clear that the novel is questioning what Peter Brooks calls the "speculary order," which privileges looks over words. But in the Creature's experience as a reader the link between looks and gender is accorded a peculiar relation to the narrative act which suggests that there is more to the construction of speculary value than its restrictive effect on speech. Instead the fissure between looks and language becomes a kind of parable of the relation between different modes of self-definition[9] that sets the terms for the revisionary consciousness which the Creature so remarkably embodies[10] and which constitutes the fundamental narrative force of the book. As we will see, the juxtaposition of speculary and rhetorical experience in the novel converge in a crucial episode of narrative formation involving a portrait, which dramatizes the Creature's transformation from a watching, reading Other into the rhetorically dominant, revisionary Double that he becomes.

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Much of the book's significant action occurs in the shifts from one narrative mode to another: from letters to speech, from confession to indirect report. These shifts establish a multiplicity of perspectives not just in the voices or personae of their different speakers but in the relation of speakers and forms of speech to the reader. An important example of this occurs just after the Creature's escape and Victor's collapse into brain fever. Nursed back to consciousness by Clerval, Victor receives a letter from Elizabeth giving an account of Justine. As a plot device, the letter provides

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an impetus for Frankenstein's recovery by compelling him to write to her; but as a literary event it introduces a perspective on events yet to occur. The following paragraph, which is the core of the letter, reads like a proleptic version of Frankenstein's own story.

> One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favorites was a judgement from heaven to chastise her partiality. She was a Roman Catholic, and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor girl! she wept when she quitted our house; she was much altered since the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to her manners which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her residence at her mother's house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased her irritability, but she is now at peace forever. She died on the first approach of cold weather, at the beginning of last winter. Justine has returned to us, and I assure you that I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and expressions continually remind me of my dear aunt. [6:64]

The exposition necessary to understand the trial of Justine could have been accomplished by a dozen other means;[11] but only in the context of a thorough but casual news-from-home letter could the story be told so as to encapsulate so perfectly the relationship between Frankenstein and his Creature, even echoing small details ("She died on the first approach of cold weather"). As an evasive Romantic, Victor of course reads this tale of parental antipathy and abandonment without ever registering its similarity to his own situation. The reader, however, is being invited to see the Creature as Frankenstein's "neglected daughter" long before hearing him speak on his own behalf. In the coincidence of the appearance of the letter with the disappearance of the Creature we are also made aware that the source of this parallel is something written. That Victor's failiure of consciousness is specifically a failure of reading is borne out by the Creature's later behavior. Instead of simply fulfilling the letter's

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prophesy by enacting the same sequence of events, the Creature actually reinforces the literary connection between Justine's story and his own by implicating her in a crime he himself has committed. He has never read this letter, but in deliberately putting Justine into his own place the Creature demonstrates an attunement to the dynamic of substitution and identification on which the dramaturgy of fiction depends.[12]

The Creature's literary education is clearly a model for the self-consciousness that Victor has failed to learn. It occurs in two stages: before he reading his actual history in Frankenstein's notes, he reads works of history, biography, fiction and epic -- all narrative genres. It is in *Paradise Lost* that the Creature first experiences his own situation.

> It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He has come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature, but I was wretched, helpless and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. [15:124]

Having thus identified with both with the pristine originality of Adam and the bitter alterity of Satan, he finds these affinities "strengthened and confirmed" in his encounter with Frankenstein's journals:

> Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day that I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred.' [15:124-5]

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This is a remarkable sequence, in which he creature reads, then narrates, himself in terms of Milton's figures. In between he encounters another very different sort of text, which he uses very different language to describe: where Milton's imaginative work presents "situations" which he can "refer" to his own, in Frankenstein's literal account of making the disgusting details are "set in view", allowing him to recognize himself as a "filthy type" of his creator. Language and reference make for metaphorical self-awareness; vision and semblance are linked to the literal truth that makes the metaphor count for something. Completing this sequence is his own curiously involuted utterance, which apostrophizes the audience whom he is already directly addressing.

This integration of the facts of his origin with *Paradise Lost* seals the Creature's identity as monstrous inversion of Adam. But an earlier version of it has already occurred on visual terms.

> I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers--their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in the transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I came to believe that I was in reality the monster I am, I was filled with the bitterest sense of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not entirely know the fatal defects of this miserable deformity. [12:108]

The moment described in the passage occurs in the prelinguistic phase of his development, when he has discovered the existence of language, but not how to use it himself. He adduces this moment of seeing by way of explaining his conviction that he must learn to speak the DeLaceys' language before he approaches them. In other parts of his narrative the Creature uses Milton to elaborate on his contingent and alienated nature; in this oblique but pronounced reference to Eve's primal encounter with her own reflection [4.49-91][13] he establishes a link between self-knowledge, vision and speech that resonates in his later, more rhetorical comparisons.

In Milton's text the two key moments of Eve's narration are marked by voices: the first identifies the image she sees in the pool as her own: "What thou see'st,/What

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there thou see'st, fair creature is thyself" it says, promising, if she turns away from her own image, a more satisfying existence with him "whose image thou art," to whom may then bear "multitudes like thyself". The second is Adam's, explaining to her that she is part of him, that he has given her life, and that he now claims her "Henceforth an individual[14] solace dear". [4.486] Together these voices draw her away from her narcissistic absorption in her own image, and into domestic, linguistic, and sexual intercourse with Adam -- all non-visual modes of gratification, which evidently carry greater benefits "I yielded, and from that time see/how beauty is excelled by manly grace/And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" [4.489-491]. Here, language signals an understanding of the difference between solitude and community, which is essential to the development of moral consciousness, and which vision does not guarantee. In his own version of this scene the Creature internalizes these voices, insofar as he comes to accept his reflection as his own, and is impelled to attempt a mode of community with the De Laceys that does not depend on looking and being looked at. He does not as yet understand the "fatal defect" of his ugliness, which will be brought home to him only after he has learned to speak, but he concludes that voices and speech may distract from appearances, work at odds with them, and finally seem to counteract them. It is this idea that eventually prompts him to try out his newly acquired speech on old de Lacey, who is blind, and palliate his looks in advance. But this effort to invert the progression from image to language fails: his declaration of identity is pre-empted by the intrusion of the horrified Felix, who attacks him out of hand. In the end he is compelled to tell his story to one who has already seen him: his creator.

The Creature's oblique identification with Eve's encounter with her own reflected image provides particularly rich nexus of associations, not just between vision and speech but between looks and gender.[15] The moment by the poolside stresses Eve's speculary self-containment -- what Adam later calls "Beauty's powerful glance" -- which conveys both disturbing female sexuality and the beneficent moral influence of

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visible beauty on the consciousness of the beholder.[16] In this connection the monster's horrible looks are set directly against the beautiful looks of the female characters in the novel, most importantly of Elizabeth, whose benevolent beauty is just as horribly reflected in the Creature's destructiveness as Victor's own voracious selfishness. Victor's account of his childhood delineates two distinct functions fulfilled by Elizabeth, one for himself and the other for his retrospective alter-ego, Clerval:

> She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardor of my nature, but that *she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness.* And Clerval...might not have been so perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his generosity, so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, *had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring ambition.* [6:64, emphasis added]

In this picture of Victor's prelapsarian life Elizabeth is, like Walton, a unifying figure, binding two different temperaments to the same end by two different means. Although we are to understand that Elizabeth's primary mode of virtue is a kind of passive benevolence, the two different iterations of her influence on Victor and Clerval suggest that there is more than one way that it can operate.[17] Looking closely at the passage, we notice that Victor is "subdued", while Clerval is instructed, by her example; the word "semblance", although used in reference to the generic quality of gentleness further suggests that her impact on Victor is both transformative and visual; the "unfolding" of goodness to Clerval, on the other hand, implies persuasion and speech. That neither faculty is specifically named, moreover, suggests an integration so perfect as to preclude the distinction between them.

Felix and Walton likewise have "more than sisters" who maintain the domestic haven, but not this synthesis of looks and language: Agatha De Lacey's primary function is to be visible to the Creature. When he encounters her, first of all the De Lacey cottagers, her visual aspect is clearly the key to the larger delights of civility and cultivation that they represent. Yet she makes no utterance of any importance, and with the arrival of Safie, and the Creature's concomitant leap into language,

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Agatha's presence becomes to some degree redundant: her role is most important in the Creature's pre-linguistic state. The role of Walton's sister Margaret, on the other hand, the invisible and inaudible Mrs. Saville, is exclusively to see and read, to be the person to whom Walton is accountable. His letters are initially sent to reassure her of his safety and his prudence in the face of increasing risk. Later in the novel Walton broods despairingly about the possibility of ever returning home, blaming himself for the disaster he anticipates, he invokes again his sister's reaction "And what, Margaret, will be the state of your mind? You will not hear of my destruction, and you will anxiously await my return." [202]

All of these feminine figures to one extent or another fulfill the Romantic (specifically Wordsworthian) function of an Other onto whom the desires and affections of a precious or abandoned self can be projected, a mode of self-retrieval in memory, which allows would-be Romantic heroes like Clerval and Felix De Lacey and Robert Walton to wander from the domestic spheres of influence, and still be assured of return. Frankenstein, on the other hand, seems to be running away from something. The faintly coercive overtones of Elizabeth's dual aspect in the passage cited above -- her ability to "subdue" him to her "semblance" suggest that, whatever he may wish for, Victor sees something in her that he can't control, that rather threatens (promises) to control him. Instead of assuming the kind of authority over his household that might, at least, be represented by marriage (as, say, Felix hopes to do), Frankenstein flees the mirroring Elizabeth to create instead his own Other, a projection into the future which he hopes will conquer death, and confirm his choice. Once made, however, the Creature belies Frankenstein's motive by being not a redeeming, controllable Other but a reproachful and aggressive double, the grotesque flip side of Elizabeth's gently reforming mirror.

> His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his

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> shriveled complexion and his straight black lips. [5:56]

Like the scientific knowledge that Victor seeks, or the knowledge of the world that the Creature takes in through watching and reading, beauty's affective power is two-edged, and the viewer, like the seeker of knowledge, is susceptible to both good and evil constructions of what is before him.[18] If feminine beauty represents domestic affection, the Creature's looks are an emblem of Frankenstein's alienation from his family, his past, and perhaps especially, his mother; the particular intensity with which they harden and repel his hitherto devoted creator in an instant betokens a direct inversion of Elizabeth's ability to subdue to her semblance.

The alignment of feminine beauty with the Creature's hideousness is charged not just with the risks and transports of sexuality but with the possibility of social integration, which is defined by an alignment of looks and language. Each female character figures this relation differently. The story of Elizabeth's rescue from a foster family of "dusky" Italian peasants, which forms a kind of boilerplate for the subsequent biographies of the female characters, and for the Creature himself.

> Her hair was of the brightest living gold....Her brow was clear and simple, her blue eyes cloudless, her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as a distinct species.....The peasant woman, perceiving that my mother fixed eyes of wonder and admiration on this lovely girl, eagerly communicated her history." [1:34]

This configuration of the apparition of a beautiful newcomer and the precipitation of her story is repeated a little later:

> When my father returned...he found playing with me in the hall of our villa a child fairer than pictured cherub....The apparition was soon explained. [1:34]

Replaying the scene with the father instead of the mother has the effect confirm the Edenic overtones of these childhood scenes, but it also confirms the link between the effects of beauty and those of language. Elizabeth's dual capacity to soften and

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attract, to subdue to semblance and unfold virtue is emblematic of a prelapsarian unity of vision and speech, where motherly nurture and patriarchal judgement concur, where explanations reinforce looks, instead of having to compensate for them.

Safie's narrow escape from a barbaric Turkish harem into literate, European domesticity provides introduces an ambivalent gloss for Elizabeth's story in both social and linguistic terms. For one thing, the colors are reversed: the girl plucked from the darkness is herself dark, and plants herself among the fair Westerners to assimilate their language and customs. Here too Victor's seemingly tender conceit of regarding his beloved as a possession is reiterated on far uglier and cruder terms in the terms on which Safie's beauty is can be traded on as a token for her father's wealth, a medium of worldly rather than spiritual exchange. "Felix rejected his offers [of money] with contempt, yet when he saw the lovely Safie, ...the youth could not help owning to his own mind that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard." [14:118]

Just as Safie's dark tresses and white skin evoke the bungled effects of the Creature's own composition, her education inverts his, in that it closes the gap between looks and speech. She escapes from her prison, notably without the help either of her lover or of language; finding her way to England, her reward is to acquire the literacy that her father has enslaved her by withholding. She has moved, in other words, from a condition like the Creature's, in which looks preclude effective language (in this case literacy), into that same ideal order in which language enhances, explicates, or confirms speculary affect. Through the acquisition of speech Safie's dark, exotic, erotically charged beauty can be properly assimilated, at least initially, into the domestic scene. But the balance is precarious: her mastery of the language is inferior to the Creature's, and his own intervention in the De Lacey household makes it unclear what her future will hold.

The fissure between looks and language suggested by the Creature's affinities with Safie is finally confirmed in the story of Justine, a girl of inferior social standing,

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who succeeds in winning the devotion of the Frankensteins by her flattering desire to emulate the saintly Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein. "She thought [Mme Frankenstein] the model of all excellence and endeavored to imitate her phraseology and manners...She is very clever and gentle and extremely pretty....her mien and expressions continually remind me of my dear aunt"[6:64] In Justine's case that the perfect harmony of looks and history both suggest an impulse to improve her social status: her "prettiness" -- rather than the "angelic" beauty ascribed to Elizabeth and Safie -- her resemblance to and imitation of Mme Frankenstein suggest that her virtue, too, is imitative, a copy of the real thing.

The day of her trial, Victor remarks that "her countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her feelings, exquisitely beautiful." [8:78] Elizabeth notices not the beauty but the gentleness and honesty of her friend, even in her moment of doubt "Her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile, yet she has committed a murder."[8:82] Despite their winning effects on the Frankensteins, Justine's looks fail to cut any ice with her judges at all, because what is demanded of her is a story. Her chastened beauty is as helpless against the verbal and logical demands of the law as the Creature's eloquence is against society's demand for attractive looks. Even Elizabeth's speech on Justine's behalf misfires, gaining sympathy only for her own generosity toward the outcast, and not for the one for whom she speaks. The Creature's interrupted colloquy with De Lacey fails, conversely, because his plea for benevolent protection has a story but no looks to back it up.

Something rather more complicated is going on here with regard to visual and linguistic effectiveness than either the passage from Edenic vision and fallen language or the conflict between impotent femininity and logocentric patriarchy can properly account for. Although the theme of the relation between looks and language is clearly gendered, the variations make the relation itself seem not polar but dialectical: it is the shifting terms of their conjunction and disjunction, rather than their symbolic

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opposition, that we have to consider. Elizabeth represents a unity of speculary and rhetorical influence -- semblance and unfolding -- from which Victor falls away. The Creature embodies that fall in the disjunction of his linguistic and visual experience -- his hope for reconciling them emerging, imperfectly, from the texts from which he learns to read. But there is something the matter with the Creature's literacy: he does not write. Although what he claims to use language for is to gain sympathy without reference to looks, it seems inherent to his condition that he must force his looks on his listeners, and so render his own language ineffective.

What then is the source of his emergent dominance, his ability to confront and command his maker? What is implied by the breakdown in unity of affect represented by the Creature and prefigured by Justine that allows for the later shift that occurs in the Creature's assuming authorship of his own narrative? How is Safie's hopeful but unresolved assimilation of looks and language connected with Walton's assimilation of Victor's and the Creature's sensibilities? How does the visual aspect of the Creature's relation to the world, inflected as it is both with gender and the consciousness of being an artificial being, inform the rhetorical power that the Creature's autobiographical narrative represents, and by means of which he triumphs over his creator?

It is with these questions in mind that I turn to the only episode in *Frankenstein* that involves a man-made image other than the Creature -- the portrait of Mme Frankenstein, which the Creature manipulates in order to implicate Justine in the murder of William. The event it important because it marks the Creature's first unequivocally evil action, his first undertaking as a villain. It is also just at this point that the Creature's narrative most intimately dovetails with Frankenstein's, explaining the mystery of Justine's implication in the murder.

After his disastrous unveiling, the Creature's first violent act is a reactive gesture: when the De Laceys take flight, he burns down their abandoned cottage. Although bent on avenging his sufferings at the hands of humanity in general, he is in fact uncertain about the terms on which to approach his creator, whom he still hopes to appeal to,

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rather than command. It is not till after he journeys to Geneva to seek out Frankenstein that his desperation manifests itself fully in the destruction of another human being. There he encounters little William, and it occurs to him that the child might be too young to have learned visual prejudice against him. "If therefore I could seize him and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth." [16:136] But William Frankenstein rejects these advances, screaming and covering his eyes, and belying the Creature's naive expectations of his innocence: "Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre." -- the child has already read the stories that can assign meaning to looks. The boy then identifies himself, enraging the monster to the point of murder, by naming his father: "...My papa is a syndic -- he is M. Frankenstein -- he will punish you. You dare not keep me." Realizing who is in his clutches, he strangles the boy, exulting in having found a way of getting at his enemy. Then he notices on the child's body a miniature portrait of Mme Frankenstein, long since dead:

> In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed with deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned; I remembered that I was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright. [16:136]

Elizabeth's "living power to soften and attract" here returns in the painted face of the mother, and just as it has repelled Victor it repels the Creature, who for the first time fails to be soothed and refreshed by the spectacle of human beauty. His fantasy of the transformation from "divine benignity" to "disgust and affright" on the face before him instead recalls Victor's post-creation nightmare.

These echoes eventually crystallize when the Creature, fleeing the corpse of the murdered child, encounters the sleeping Justine in a nearby barn and turns the picture to his own account. He decides to make her look like the murderer by planting the portrait on her. The logic whereby possession of the portrait indicates the

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murderer of the child is never expounded, but we are to understand that the placement of the image, engineered as it is by the Creature, substantiates the narrative about the murder which is later imposed upon Justine. Interestingly, no account of Justine's supposed crime is ever actually given, although the implication is clear that she is to have murdered William to obtain the miniature. The force of the picture, which Justine resembles, reinforces her beauty and renders her incapable of speaking effectively in her own defense.

This episode is perhaps the most coherent example in the book of how narrative links rhetorical persuasion with semblance and identity, and their deep implication with gender as well. That the father is named and the mother pictured is a powerful instance of how the gender paradigm in which language is masculine and looks are feminine entails a greater complexity than the attribution of verbal activity to men and visual passivity to women. If the mute image of the dead woman seems to lead us directly to the mute impotence of Justine, whose account of herself can be manipulated by the patriarchal confessor, it is because the image itself is a locus of power. The Creature responds to the portrait in a way that suggests it has the same power to "soften and attract" to "subdue" which Victor has attributed to Elizabeth -- i.e., the power of sexuality, but also its power to change the narrative, simply by being moved from one place to another. The portrait is susceptible of misprision -- but it is in another sense impervious to the stories that surround it, true or false. That the image of the dead mother is not only the key to the false story but also the witness to the true one confirms the monster's old intuition that images are more authentic than words, truer, if not more persuasive.[19] Justine's beauty, which betokens her authenticity, is essentially ratified by her resemblance to Mme Frankenstein -- she is a pale copy, both morally and visually, of the archetypal female of the piece. Here too it is her affinity with the painted form that finally inspires the monster's impulse to do damage to her living one: "Here...is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me." On an unexplained impulse, he speaks

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gently, like a lover, to wake her,[20] only to recoil at the possible consequences of doing so: "The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer?" He then rationalizes himself into doing her damage;

> Thus would she assuredly act if her darkened eyes opened and she beheld me. The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me-- not I, but she, shall suffer; the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment! Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned how to work mischief. I bent over her and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress. She moved again, and I fled. [16:136]

The Creature's journey to Geneva has in a sense constituted a reversal of the growth he has experienced outside the De Lacey's cottage; rejected by old age, he has reached out to youthful sexuality in the form of the drowning girl, and childhood in the form of William. What we have here is a reenactment of the Creature's own birth moment, in which the Creature assumes the role of the creator. He has become the "pale student of unhallowed arts" bending over his deformed creation -- the hateful persecutor into which his vengeance and desire have transformed Justine's innocent body, and a reminder of Victor's dreamed transformation of Elizabeth's beauty into the corpse of the same mother whose portrait precipitates this scene.

The Creature here effects a dual transformation: in transferring the artificial image from the bosom of the boy-child to the folds of the young woman's skirts, he assumes a mature sexuality, which subverts both the truth and the benevolence of femininity represented by the maternal image, in favor of a destructive and deceptive eroticism, which mirrors the attributes of his clever, dysfunctional creator. By this logic the Creature emerges as the monster he has been made out to be: his ugliness, once an ambivalent sign of artifice, emerges here as the underbelly -- not of Elizabeth's beauty, but of Victor's chaste and distracted aversion from it. Instead of the ghastly horrors of female sexuality, the monster's ugliness reminds us of the destructive, manipulative forces of gynephobia. The Creature, once pitiably forlorn as

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Frankenstein's "neglected daughter" or repressed sister, has finally become a man.

The transformation of identity is, like Victor's, mimetic as well as erotic, for the Creature here sets in motion a sequence of events which dramatize the terms of his own existence as he sees them. Like Victor's, the act allows him both to evade responsibility and to project his identity. The product of Victor's creative labors thus becomes an author in his own right, manipulating clear verities to produce a fictitious narrative so persuasive that it elicits corroborating words even from one who knows it to be false -- Justine herself, who finally confesses to the crime in order to relieve herself of the burden of being misperceived. Justine becomes a stand-in for his innocent and persecuted self, unable to palliate or limit an overwhelming prejudice, unaided by her adoptive family, her fate sealed by someone else's crime. Like him she has, no clear account of her circumstances, and like him she finally acquiesces in the monstrous identity imposed upon her.

The portrait episode thus demonstrates the final stage of the Creature's transformation from despised and terrifying Other to the dominant, obsessive Double who will dog Victor Frankenstein to the end of his life in search of a mirroring counterpart of his own. The episode is immediately followed by the demand for a mate which both closes his narrative and clinches his fixation on his creator, "consumed by a burning passion which you alone can gratify." [16:137] Having mimicked his maker's evasive act of creation the Creature thus assumes his most potent aspect -- not as a humble supplicant for acceptance and love, but as Victor's peremptory, articulate, sexually charged alter-ego, demanding an audience, rebuking his parent, and completing the circuit of disjunctive selfhood initiated by his creation: Victor's displacement of Elizabeth's subduing semblance by an externalized, fabricated Other.

That the three speculary elements engaged in this episode -- the portrait, Justine's cultivated resemblance to Mme. Frankenstein, and the Creature's own

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perverted human form -- are the product of mimesis suggests some underlying kinship among them, an idea about semblance and authenticity that as central to the mythology of the book as direct rhetorical confrontations between the Creature and Victor and Walton. According to this idea, looks are more authentic than words -- more enduring, more incontrovertible, more identifying: just as the Creature's looks irrevocably confirm "accursed origins", Elizabeth's virtue and Mme. Frankenstein's benevolence, both figured by their beauty, are first principles to which all subsequent events must be accountable. Looks cannot be edited, like Walton's manuscript, or revised, like Victor's account of his life's work.

On the other hand they are by virtue of this very intransigence powerful agents of irony. Justine's failure in the courtroom, and the degradation of the harem that Safie escapes, show how beauty is susceptible of misprision, and exploitation, by social forces and prejudices. In this sense both Safie's and Justine's situations gloss the fundamental perversion of human beauty wrought by Frankenstein in his creature, so that his hideousness becomes an aspect of the depredations of socialization and knowledge. With the Creature's manipulation of the portrait emerges the dimension of artifice that underscores the effects of imaginative rather than social, construction, and with it the problems of priority and self-consciousness that inhere in the narrative structure of the book. It is in this imaginative sphere that looks can paralyze and silence, albeit only momentarily: their ultimate effect is to initiate reversal. At the very beginning of *Frankenstein* a brief apparition of the Creature, which coincides with Walton's ship becoming ice-locked, marks the opening of the story. Victor Frankenstein creates an image so overwhelming that it absolutely reverses the course of his obsession, making him flee what he had neglected everything to pursue, and to suppress the violent passions he had hitherto indulged. The Creature's visual experiences of himself and the cottagers prompt him first to stay hidden where he is and then to learn to read stories and tell them; in the end the portrait similarly stops him short, but it also moves him to invent the fiction implicating Justine.

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These instances of spectacle all derive their power from the ability to suspend action without suspending emotion, and so to effect change. For while action may by momentarily stopped by spectacle, the movement of the narrative is not. Instead something new is precipitated out of what has come before, either because a new action or direction is undertaken or, as in Walton's case, an earlier intention becomes charged with a different meaning. In the Creature's Miltonic affinities we see that the question of specular value is, like the creator and creature's opposing autobiographies, not so much a matter of truth as it is of revision. The power of an image to alter the meaning of someone's action is analogous to the effect of the monster's charged autobiography, which alters the terms in which we understand the subject we are reading about.

From his final colloquy with Walton we know that it is the Creature's way with words and not his impact on the eye that ultimately affirms the potency of his artificial and secondary condition. But his eloquence derives *from* his hideousness, and is finally contingent upon it, if he were simply abandoned and wretched rather than visually repellant he would never feel the need to master Milton's dialectic skills. It is not the speculary universe from which the Creature is initially barred, but rather a particular construction of speculary value, one in which the impact of spectacle can itself be limited or manipulated by language. The Creature's acquired rhetorical power betokens the will to communicate, to participate in the world; he succeeds in asserting his claims, not on the world at large but only on his maker, whom he does not hesitate to command, despite his professions of humility. In the end, his rhetoric is answerable, by Frankenstein's neurotic abhorrence but by Walton's own clear, level-headed rationality, which points out the illogic and obsessiveness of the Creature's own complaints. What can't be countered is the Creature's image: against this Walton must close his eyes and master himself, till the thing before his eyes if finally "lost in darkness and distance".

If command of language represents moral autonomy in the novel, visual

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experience is a trope of self-knowledge, and the mirroring that all representation entails. The Creature doubles his creator, he also surpasses him in his sensitivity to the nature of his own condition, to the hopelessness of his own fall. This superior degree of self-consciousness is figured most potently in the Creature's hideousness, the barrier that alienates him from the society for which he yearns, and so compels him to master the rhetorical tools by which he hopes to win it over. But it is also figured in the complementary beauty of Elizabeth, whose imaginative, rather than rational, sway over Victor's passions stimulates his own neurotic repulsion from the world -- not alienating him as an Other, but catapulting him into a narcissistic cocoon of causes and secrets and dead bodies -- a travesty of creation that fails entirely to cope with its consequences precisely because it fails to recognize its own projections.

It is by means of this mirroring, the ability to make identifications among characters, and to transform them into each other -- that *Frankenstein* extends its central myths of creation and control into the more self-conscious -- and more domestic -- domain of fiction. The Creature's disjunctive experiences of visual and linguistic persuasion represent a transformation from a morality based on the unity of image and meaning to an ethic of secondariness, of interpretive vision and revision, of semblance and imitation, that inheres in the literary experience of narrative. Moving beyond the polarity of Elizabeth's and the Creature's respectively beneficent and hideous mirrors, the portrait episode shows not only that beauty's power to soften and attract is charged with the risk of monstrous mirroring or oedipal vengeance, but that these effects themselves are essential and inevitable elements in the formation of narrative, and must somehow be assimilated into it.

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NOTES

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[1] Page references are to the Signet/NAL edition of the 1831 text, unless otherwise noted. References to the 1818 text are from the Broadview Edition, edited by D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994).

[2] In describing his first departure for Ingolstadt Frankenstein alludes to the "Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father's door" [3:45]. Although the remark refers to his detested creation, it resonates in a different key when we know that Shelley, knowing her own birth to have killed her mother, became pregnant immediately upon leaving her father's house, with a child that was to be stillborn. There is no need to rehearse the extent of the to which this connection is implicated in the novel, but it is worth pointing out that the fusion of Shelley's maternal experiences with her literary relations with her own parents is one of the *Frankenstein*'s principle modernities, and that this insight is creditable chiefly to feminist approaches to the work. For the gist of the novels' focus on maternity see Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976): 90-121 and Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-century Women's Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 100-119. For two very different perspectives on Shelley's sense of daughterhood see also Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* and Katherine C. Hill-Miller, *"My Hideous Progeny"*.

[3] Several critics besides Poovey and Hill-Miller have explored the novel's theme of rupture between intellectual generations and in particular the influence of Rousseau. Christopher Small reads Shelley's premise as a critique of the variety of Romantic radicalisms in which she was -- by parentage, marriage and the currents of history -- inevitably and profoundly involved; Paul Cantor examines her use of Rousseau's idea of self-fashioning -- the identification of maker and made -- in the context of her contemporaries' political and literary agendas. Peter Brooks and David Marshall consider how the Creature's acquisition of language enlarges on Rousseau's conception of language as an instrument of sociality which simultaneously defines and atones for the loss of the natural state. James O'Rourke adduces some of Shelley's later writing on the philosopher to analyze the novel's complex perspective on the relation between Rousseau's treatment of his children and the formation of his philosophical views. See Christopher Small, *Ariel Like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary, and Frankenstein* (London: Gollancz, 1972); Paul Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Mythmaking and English Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Peter Brooks, "'Godlike Science/ Unhallowed Arts': Language, Nature and Monstrosity" in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, George Levine and U.C. Knoepflmacher, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 205-220; David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau and Mary Shelley* (University Chicago Press, 1988) 178-227; James O'Rourke, "'Nothing More Unnatural': Mary Shelley's Revision of Rousseau." *ELH* 56 (1989): 543-569.

[4] As a parent, Frankenstein recapitulates the crime of Laius, who attempts to suppress the existence of a child who is destined to destroy him. Unlike Oedipus, Laius never becomes aware that the horrible prophesy has indeed been fulfilled.

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[5] The most succinct, albeit perhaps not the most lucid, formulation of the novel's use of autobiography is Barbara Johnson's: "*Frankenstein* can be read as the story of autobiography as the attempt to neutralize the monstrosity of autobiography. Simultaneously a revelation and a cover-up, autobiography would appear to constitute itself as in some way a repression of autobiography." See Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987): 146.

[6] In the story of a simulation gone out of control George Levine has very penetratingly discerned an allegory of realistic fiction itself, an expression of anxieties specifically connected to mimetic creation -- the re-presentation of a familiar but elusive reality in an unreliable medium. Beth Newman's discussion of the frame structure of the novel proceeds in more deconstructive terms to consider the simultaneously implicating and alienating effects of reporting other first person narratives in one's own. Although I refer more specifically to the rhetorical and mimetic perspectives of other critics in considering how the literary dimension of the novel derives from the different modes of moral existence associated with speculary and rhetorical relations, it is finally Levine's lead that I follow in regarding *Frankenstein* as a parable about mimetic fictions, and the depth of both authorial and readerly investment in them. See George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1981) and Beth Newman, "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: the Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*" in *A Frankenstein Casebook*. Ed. Fred Botting. New Casebook Series. New York: Macmillan, 1995: 166-190.

[7] She does observe that Walton's Victor's and the Creature's autobiographies "all depend on a presupposition of *resemblance* between the teller and the addressee....The teller in each case speaking into a mirror of his own transgression." See *A World of Difference* 146.

[8] In the 1818 version, Victor volunteers to tell Walton his story on his own, with an allusion to Walton's own aspirations both more hopeful and more casual, and a promise of a whacking good story that lends the introductory frame a distinctly authorial note:

> I do not know that the relation of my misfortunes will be useful to you, yet, if you are inclined, listen to my tale. I believe that the strange events connected with it will afford a view of nature, which may enlarge your faculties and understanding. You will hear of powers and occurrences, such as you have been accustomed to believe impossible: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed. [Macdonald and Scherf 62]

The other allusions to seeing, both the Creature's covering Victor's eyes and Walton's references to seeing his sister, are both in the original.

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[9] In generating his equation between social or coherence and linguistic signification Brooks concedes that the Creature's "wish for a *semblable* may itself belong to the imaginary order", yet this very willingness to allot a role to the mimetic aspect of human contact underestimates the interdependence of visual resemblance and rhetorical persuasion so elaborately established in the novel as a requisite of civilized domesticity. See "'Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts'" 207-8.

[10] Marshall points out the importance of the Creature's mimetic relation to humanity -- that he is similar, but not identical, to the man who made him, and to the human beings he wishes to consort with, and notes the centrality of semblance, or visual rhyming, in the scheme of pairing and doubling that proliferates in the novel, particularly in the relations between the sexes. See *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* 208.

[11] Beth Newman observes the clumsiness of the letter's interpolation of missing background, but also notes the significance of this singular shift of narrative voice to a feminine one, which can nevertheless report only in the second and third person. See "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*" 173, 187 n.10.

[12] Victor's imaginative failure to connect himself to the stories he reads is not to be taken as a distaste for literature -- on the contrary, he quotes more than his share of Wordsworth and Shelley in enlarging on the subject of his own feelings. But his favored texts, like his utterances, are notably non-narrative, and more significantly, his attitude toward literature is distinctly escapist: convalescing again, he finds "instruction and consolation in the works of the Orientalists" but it is clear that he is not interested in recognizing himself in what he reads "I did not contemplate making any use of them other than temporary amusement." [6:67] Victor frequently invokes Wordsworth -- both directly and indirectly -- to convey his feelings in the absence of the Creature, but these emotions are always elevating or soothing, and always at a remove from his immediate situation.

[13] In particular, he is alluding to the following lines:

> A Shape within the watry gleem appeard
> Bending to look on me, I started back,
> It started back, but pleased I soon returnd,
> Pleas'd it returnd as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathie and love" [4.462-5]

[14] i.e. inalieable or indivisible.

[15] In reading the monster's hideousness as a trope of the repression of woman's literary voice, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar implicitly take the attribute of speculary impact to be the mere absence or deprivation of language, rather than something complementary or instructive with it. See *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979: 240-242.

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[16] Concluding his story to Raphael with the consummation of his nuptials, Adam admits that no other sensual pleasure can compare with sex

> ...these delicacies
> I mean of Taste, Sight Smell, Herbs, Fruits, and Flowrs,
> Walks, and the melodies of Birds; but here
> Farr otherwise, transported I behold,
> Transported touch; here passion first I felt,
> Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else
> Superiour and unmov'd, here only weak
> Against the charm of Beauties powerful glance. [8.530-533]

In Book 9 he argues with Eve that they should not separate:

> I from the influence of thy looks receave
> Access in every Vertue, in they sight
> More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
> Of outward strength; while shame, thou looking on,
> Shame to be overcome or over-reacht
> Would utmost vigor raise, and utmost unite.
> Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel
> When I am present, and thy trial choose
> With me , best witness of thy Vertue tri'd. [9.309-16]

[17] This passage is an addition of the 1831 version, the words "soften and attract" deliberately inserted to associate Elizabeth with the Creature's later response to Mme. Frankenstein's portrait (see below) In place of Victor's more generalized and self-centered report of Elizabeth's virtues he earlier has a brief account of the differences in their education, in which he contrasts their temperaments rather minutely, with the effect of emphasizing dualities which in the later version are distributed more between Victor and Clerval. It is notable for our purposes that in the earlier version Elizabeth studies drawing, and exhibits a greater interest in imagined or created things than in real ones. "The world was to me a secret, which I desired to discover; to her it was a vacancy, which she sought to people with imaginations of her own." [Macdonald and Scherf 66]

[18] The duality is reinforced by Victor's famous Freudian nightmare. Horrified by the opening of the Creature's "dull yellow eye", Victor flees to his room, where he sleeps and dreams that the figure of Elizabeth dissolves as he embraces her into the corpse of his dead mother, a powerful association of death with sexuality which is further annotated by the appearance of the newly animated creature on its heels:

> I started from my sleep with horror;...when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the shutters, I beheld the wretch--the miserable being whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed. His eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaw opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear;

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> one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. [5:57]

Here we have a rudimentary juxtaposition of looks and speech, neither of is intelligible to Victor: the jaw opens and the grin wrinkles, but he can find no coherent expression in the voice or face. Only a faint correspondence between the "dull yellow eye" of the Creature and the "dim and yellow light of the moon," which "forces its way" into the room, seemingly in the Creature's guise, obtrudes to alert the reader to the continuity of the sequence, and the potency of the visible.

[19] In Peter Brooks's words, the Creature is "erotically medused" by the portrait, suggesting that the Creature's stratagem is a way of avenging his motherlessness (and, by extension, sexual deprivation) on a weak substitute. See "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts'" 211.

[20] Beth Newman points out that, far from having the overtones of rape which have been attributed to this scene, the Creature's behavior is tender, albeit deceptively so. See "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative" 175.

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Chapter 1 - Telling Portraits: The Gothic Frame

The concentric form of *Frankenstein* operates along the lines of Gothic quest, which leads its characters and its reader inward by means of a series of confrontations with pictures, mirrors, doubles, demonic villains, -- paradoxical semblances of humanity, both more and less than human. We have seen how the episode of the portrait miniature in *Frankenstein* effects a final and fatal phase of the identity between creature and creator, that phase in which the creature's function as double becomes both deliberate and murderous. Simulating the looks and influence of Victor's mother, the portrait becomes a token of the Creature's own simulated relation to humanity, which he can then abuse and abandon in the manner of his creator. The picture thus completes the reflexive loop of Victor's identity with the creature, recapitulating from within the story the same synthesis effected from the outside by Walton's framing narrative. This narrative function of images and likeness in *Frankenstein* turns out to be very much in keeping with the uses of portraiture in later Gothic writing.

The so-called "magic portrait" theme of Gothic and horror fiction covers a very broad range of devices, from the grotesque overkill of the ancestral portrait climbing out of its frame in *The Castle of Otranto* to the far subtler influences exerted, for example, by the images of various Pyncheons in Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*. In one common convention in early nineteenth-century fiction, a framing narrator or protagonist encounters a remarkable or mysterious portrait, and the ensuing narrative explains how it came into existence, usually by telling the story of its subject. The execution of the portrait is often merely a coda to the story, a device for bringing the narration back to the present. The function of such portraits is to entail the narrative account of their existence, thereby to expose the moral condition of their subjects to scrutiny. At the same time they provide a concrete link between

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the uncanniness of the romance and the familiarity of the frame context which specifically foregrounds the making of an artifact.[1]

The deferred explanation is standard element of Gothic suspense, deriving from the ancient forms of riddle and allegory. Something wondrous or terrific or mysterious is set before the reader or listener, and a familiarizing explanation is then furnished later. The pleasure lies in the wonder, the pursuit of the mystery, and the satisfaction of closure, which sanctions, in a way, the uncanniness of the original image. In a successful work, the degree to which the pleasures of mystery are explained away is offset by the depths to which the work of explanation must resort. Many narrative devices can serve as signals or points of entry into other stories: letters, found manuscripts, tales told by wanderers -- but portraits have qualities particularly adaptable to this function, allowing for a remarkably diverse range of effects both in terms of narrative structure and flow on the one hand and thematic coherence on the other. Because the image lasts *through* time -- because it is atemporal in Lessing's sense -- the image can serve to embody or stand for a moment in the past -- much as a ruin or other residuum of a former time can. It can also, as we will see, interpret the present, reconfigure it in new terms.

§ *The Monk*

Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1795) offers a variety of typically Gothic relations between concrete, personal images and narrative development. The book is a pornographic satire of repressive religious and social institutions, the former embodied in the figure of the drastically hypocritical Fra Ambrosio, a reputedly angelic monk whose gradual corruption constitutes the main plot, and the latter explored in the more meandering fortunes of two pairs of lovers, both separated by rigid social codes -- who cross his path. Howard Anderson points out how ambivalent Lewis is regarding the internal and external sources of Ambrosio's downfall, and how central sexuality is in figuring the fuzziness of those boundaries.[2] Like many Gothic novels,

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however, it links these forces of desire to the force of the past: the architectural boundary of regions above and below ground, complementing the inside/outside natural/perverse human/divine boundaries explored in Ambrosio's desires, suggest not only levels of consciousness but the juxtaposition of ancient and modern ideas, an opposition reflected in the two pairs of lovers whose stories intertwine with Ambrosio's.

The Monk uses the recognition of likeness as a kind of moral index of its characters, the kind of relationship between moral identity and simulated likeness developed in *Frankenstein* and later works, but it also provides some very basic examples of how portraits and effigies function in Gothic as narrative mechanisms, marking shifts of setting and enhancements of scope. One such example is the statue of St. Francis which stands outside the Abbey and serves as a letter drop for Agnes and Raymond, and thus alerts Don Lorenzo to their affair. Toward the beginning of the book, Don Lorenzo, who is about to visit his sister at the neighboring Convent of St. Claire, observes a "unknown Cavalier" obviously bent on secrecy, place a letter at the foot of the statue and retire to the shadows to wait. When the nuns of St. Claire file by to confess at the Abbey, Lorenzo discovers to his amazement that the intended recipient is his sister Agnes, and that the Cavalier is his friend Don Raymond, who later explains the details of the story in his long inset narrative. Many ironies attend this scene: having himself just fallen in love at first sight with Dona Antonia (Don Raymond's cousin, who will fall into Ambrosio's clutches) Lorenzo nevertheless tries to dismiss the mystery of the letter as a *mere* love affair [I.1:29] -- As it turns out the relentless pursuit of love affairs activates all branches of this complicated story, producing both its greatest mysteries and most lurid revelations.

The relatively commonplace device of the statue as letter drop would be negligible, if it were not signally reinforced by the appearance of a complementary effigy, the statue of St. Claire inside the convent in which both Agnes and later Antonia will be immured. Toward the end of the novel Lorenzo discovers Agnes, who has been

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given up for dead, in a secret dungeon under the statue, which the nuns are all too terrified to touch. Here too the image is accompanied by a text -- not a letter this time but a lie: a horrifying story concocted by the villainous and repressive Domina [III.3:364-7], according to which the hand of a violating thief remains affixed to the stone shoulder of the saint, a residual admonition to any who would touch the statue. As it turns out of course the "hand" conceals the secret lever, which opens the door to a subterranean passage where the lost Agnes is finally discovered, and where too Ambrosio effects his final climactic rape of Antonia, and discovers his true relation to her.

Both statues thus serve as portals from one level of narrative to another, the first introducing the backstory of Raymond's love affair with Agnes, the second literally taking the characters underground to reunite and resolve their story. The juxtaposition of letter or story with image is thus a kind of signal, a convention on the order of, say, a fright chord in a movie score. Just as the fright chord both signifies and creates menace, the statue with the legend attached to it, or the letter at the foot of it, betokens a mystery in which we may expect to become involved. The statues of St. Francis and St. Claire are of course effigies rather than portraits. They simulate *bodies*, not persons, and their narrative function has more to do with their status as enduring structures, emblematic of the past and of the church: stone flesh which marks the threshold of repressed desire, even as it affords a means of transgression. But *The Monk* also contains two important portrait episodes, in which the relation of likeness and identity are brought to bear on the meaning of the story as well as its structure.

One is the episode of the legendary Bleeding Nun, Beatrice de Cisternas, whose ghost is given the run of Lindenberg castle every five years. The unexpected entanglement of the ghost in the affairs of Agnes and Raymond has impressed many critics as a powerful emblem of the dangerous consequences of suppressed desire, which figures in the course of the Raymond-Agnes story as a monitory as well as

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dilatory presence. What is seldom noted is that the whole story of the Bleeding Nun is introduced when Agnes portrays her in a grotesque drawing, in which a large group of figures are all terrified by her appearance. When Don Raymond questions Agnes about the subject of her drawing, she expresses elaborate mock incredulity that Don Raymond should not have heard of her, and then proceeds to explain the history of her ghost:

> Fain would I recount to you her life; but unluckily till after her death She was never known to have existed, Then first did She think it necessary to make some noise in the world, and with that intention She made bold to seize upon the Castle of Lindenberg. Having a good taste, she took up her abode in the best room of the House: and once established there, She began to amuse herself by knocking about the tables and chairs in the middle of the night. [II.1:139]

Continuing in this satirical vein, Agnes explains that after causing endless disturbances in the castle, the nun's ghost was partially exorcised, so that she is now supposed to haunt the castle only one night in every five years. Though Agnes herself scoffs at the story, she claims she is obliged to suppress her incredulity before her mother and her nurse, Cunegonda, who both believe the story. The sketch is in fact drawn from Cunegonda's testimony of having actually seen the ghost, and duly includes her portrait as well: "There she is! I shall never forget what a passion She was in, and how ugly She looked while She scolded me for having made her picture so like herself!" [II.1:141]

It is sometime later that Agnes devises her plan to elope with her lover by impersonating the Nun's ghost the night prescribed for her roaming. The plan goes awry, and Raymond ends up eloping with the real ghost, who takes his declarations of passion most seriously, and will not leave him. It is only in the course of exorcising her unwanted presence that Raymond discovers the story of Beatrice de las Cisternas, a lapsed and debauched nun who, having murdered at the behest of her beloved, was then murdered by him. Because her bones have been left unburied, Beatrice's ghost has haunted the castle of her murderer long past his death, and only Raymond -- by

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virtue of family relation and to some extent his inadvertent pledges -- can restore her remains to hallowed ground, where her spirit also may rest.

Agnes's playful, skeptical account of the ghost gives no indication of the Nun's thwarted passion, but it does allow her to advance her flirtation with Don Raymond to an outright declaration, for she uses the occasion to present her own portrait to him. In this sense Agnes unwittingly allies her pictured self with the pictured Nun (and Cunegonda as well), and in a sense prepares riskier and more significant impersonation of the Nun to follow, which will in turn prove to have very high stakes indeed. For by the end of the novel Agnes will have suffered just as much for yielding to passion as Beatrice has. A reluctant nun, she too breaks her vow of chastity and must undergo lengthy and horrible torments before she can be at peace. It is, as Peter Brooks and others have pointed out, a Gothic lesson in taking desire seriously, and in the power of the past.[3]

The story of the nun by itself would simply enhance or annotate Agnes' situation. But the juxtaposition whereby Agnes actually portrays the nun -- first in her satirical drawing and then in her own person -- implicates both the reader and Agnes herself in the association. Neither we nor Agnes know anything of Beatrice's history at first, yet the drawing Agnes clearly derives from her own sense of freedom from the excesses and constraints of such an existence as the nun's. The ghost's intervention has the peculiar mechanical effect of bringing Agnes's drawing to life -- or rather *into* life -- in ways that call Agnes's assumptions about both reality and passion into question. The guise Agnes assumes in the attempt to free herself cannot be cast off so easily when its intended effect fails. Instead of her story operating as an external, monitory parable of what could- and will -- happen to Agnes, Beatrice's ghostly presence will actually interrupt and take over Agnes's story, thwarting her plans for escape and effectively turning Agnes into another version of herself.

The other portrait in *The Monk* is less mechanically involved in the plot, but it fulfills a similar moral function: at the beginning of the novel we see Ambrosio, the

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too-perfect divine, contemplating a painted Madonna with kinky devotion. [I.2:40-41] When Rosario, the young novice who has been his protégé, unmasks and emerges as Matilda, Ambrosio is astonished to find that she resembles the picture. Matilda explains that she is indeed the model for the Madonna, having caused it to be painted and sent to Ambrosio, and hearing of his love for the image she has risked entering the monastery by fraud to be near him. In the course of things, Matilda proves to be a corrupt siren, who masterminds his decline into lechery and sorcery, appearing both as instigator and victim of his desire.[4] Ambrosio's uneasy regard for the portrait seems to initiate a series of revelations, beginning with Rosario's curious resemblance to it, and progressing through Matilda's declaration, first of her gender, then of her lust. As the story progresses, Matilda shows more and more what she is made of, but the Madonna portrait all but disappears from the story. Instead she offers him with each new discovery a different kind of image: first a magic mirror, which ostensibly shows what is happening in other places, but actually displays his own pornographic fantasies. Later, when she lets him in on the secret of the demonic powers at her disposal, she summons another illusory image, this time of Lucifer in his most beautiful and attractive aspect. The portrait of the Madonna itself returns, however, in the book's bizarre finale, when Satan claims his rightful prey at last: in a speech that mirrors Matilda's earlier (false) confession Lucifer explains that Matilda has been his own messenger, made to resemble the image that has so excited Ambrosio, to tempt him to further vices [III.5:440].

The mimetic status of the picture thus turns out to have been the very fulcrum of the monk's moral self-deception, the measure of his own participation in his ultimate perdition. Again, the moral force of this reversal is plain: in allowing himself to be persuaded that an image of holy purity could be generated by the personal passion that Matilda claims to have cherished for him, and could thereby authorize unholy lust, Ambrosio has succumbed to the blandishments of his own suppressed desires; and we as readers have been drawn into Ambrosio's own moral difficulties by the same device.

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But unlike the magic mirror and the Satanic spirit-image, the Madonna picture is innocent, for all its potency: only the desire it excites induces corruption.

In his assessment of the technical exigencies of Romantic narrative, Robert Kiely maintains that the chief problem was temporal -- "For the novelist," he observes, "there was no retreat to the short form, to the equivalent of the sonnet or ode." In this view the Gothic convention of the inset story, like the claustral setting of prison or dungeon, is a clock-stopping device which allows the Gothic novelist to "explore the imaginative possibilities of 'spots of time' and at the same time to "fit them into a coherent, comprehensible, and sustained narrative."[5] George Haggarty's concept of the "Gothic Tale" stresses the aspect of Gothic technique that modulates between subjective and objective modes of consciousness, whose aim is not narrative cohesion but epistemological identity, the "breakdown of the disjunction between subject and object"[6] What I am suggesting here is that the temporal pivotings of the inset narrative are, in the figure of the portrait or effigy, specifically enlisted in the exploration or retrieval (or, as we will see accumulation) of personal identity, and that the particular mode of narrative that develops from this figure not only endures in subsequent genres of fiction, but allows for an element of self-referentiality that foregrounds the very processes by which such explorations and retrievals must take place.

In *The Monk* the imbedded tale of the Bleeding Nun breaks out of its confines just as surely as her image breaks out of the picture frame of Agnes' satirical sketch; having been invoked for the purposes of the lovers' escape from *their* confining situation, her story escapes their control, invading and actually usurping their own narrative, derailing its planned route and eventually bringing it to its climax in the convent dungeon. Conversely, the transformational image in Ambrosio's story, which serves as a matrix of his moral decline, turns out to operate in precisely the opposite direction: here the image is innocent of commerce with reality, of intrusion into the narrative; it bears no tale of its own, but is rather subject to the narrative fantasies

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and manipulations of Ambrosio and his demonic guides. Yet both episodes stake their moral efficacy on the appropriate correlation of images with things, on the proper understanding of likeness. Like Frankenstein's monstrous child and painted mother, the figures of Beatrice and the painted Madonna each provide a medium of resemblance, by which narrative content may be generated out of entirely subjective response. In each case a manufactured image provides a narrative structure whereby the integrity of the likeness is first put at issue, then inverted, and finally restored; and in each case the process reveals a moral dimension of the story inaccessible from the outset.

§ *Melmoth the Wanderer*

In most Gothic tales the explanatory narrative is conjoined to the image with the help of an outside party, who shows the narrator the picture and tells him or provides him with the text of the story. In these cases the course of main narrative simply becomes coextensive with the story behind the portrait, but in other cases a more complicated set of connections is allowed to play itself out. In *Melmoth, the Wanderer* (1820) Charles Maturin subverts the portrait trope to explore the conflicting narrative impulses of deferral and closure. Here it is the destruction of a portrait that initiates narrative, a train of tales which compound rather than explain the mystery of its subject.

John Melmoth, the frame figure and descendent of the title character, finds the portrait, which is accompanied by the maddeningly fragmentary manuscript of one Stanton, from which he divines that the Wanderer has engaged in a demonic bargain to defy the laws of man and nature for a hundred and fifty years while he tempts other souls, including Stanton's, to perdition. He does not, however, learn anything definite either about the man or the curse. Having read Stanton's appalling testimony, the young man looks up at the portrait:

> He was within ten inches of it as he sat, and the proximity appeared increased by the strong light that was accidentally thrown on it, and its

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> being the only representation of a human figure in the room. Melmoth felt for a moment as if he were about to receive an explanation from its lips. [3:59] [7]

Surprisingly, he does not; instead, remembering his instructions, he destroys the portrait, ripping it out of its frame and then, when the curled canvas appears to grin at him, tearing it to shreds and burning them. The Wanderer himself then appears, just long enough to tell his terrified descendent that the fire makes no difference, and vanishes.

A sequence of narratives ensues, not so much concentric as serially strung together, within the extended narrative of Monçada, a shipwrecked Spaniard who washes up in Chapter 4. Each of these tales culminates in a scene in which Melmoth makes an unspeakable offer to the distraught protagonist, which presumably will release the sufferer from current torments at the price of his soul. But Melmoth's offer invariably backfires; his effectiveness as a tempter is always being undermined by the monitory impact of his having turned up at all. In the Tale of Guzman's Family, Walberg's cruelty to his father and children increases to what would seem to be an already quite damnable extreme: only when Melmoth actually appears to make his offer does he relent and reform. It is as if his own presence exercised some kind of braking action on the downward trajectory of his victims, so that against all odds they redeem themselves at his expense.[8]

Though the strung-together stories range wildly over different geographical, social, religious and moral terrain, they all turn upon the thwarting of someone's desire for a peaceful domestic life. Stanton's story begins with the blasting of two different bridals, before Stanton himself ends up seeking escape from a madhouse at the hands of a cousin. Monçada similarly attempts to escape from the monastery in which he has been immured against his will and take up loving relations with his estranged brother. The subterranean life of the hidden Jews he eventually encounters is a fugitive domestic existence, a ménage based on a fragile lie and susceptible at any moment to annihilation by the Inquisition. The Tale of Guzman's Family has the

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Walbergs unhappily caught between excesses of luxury and poverty, deprived of the stability of domestic life; and the story of Elinor Mortimer's foiled marriage also keeps her marginal and alone, achieving domesticity only at the price of her lover's sanity and her own strength. If Melmoth fails to damn these people's souls eternally, he does manage to inflict permanent damage on their domestic relationships, to defer their liberation from the Gothic imperatives of inheritance and reputation until it is really too late to salvage much in the way of healthy, bourgeois family affection.

When we consider that Melmoth's mysterious power itself consists not only of extended longevity, but of omniscience and the ability to go anywhere, it seems clear that Melmoth is an agent of narrative momentum as much as of moral damnation, but as such his problem remains the same: he hovers in the margins of the tales, goading and trailing and lurking behind closed doors, egging the story on; yet whenever he finally discloses himself and his bargain to his targets, the momentum ceases: the proposition is rejected, and the story closes up. The Wanderer's own story, meanwhile, remains perpetually open: we are always waiting to learn the origin of his power. No explicit relation between the portrait and fate of the Wanderer is ever really spelled out: neither the story of the making of the portrait -- nor the making of the bargain -- is ever properly told. The closest we come is a vague account of his Faust-like career, and an uncanny death scene which only draws a tighter circle around the fatal bargain itself.[9]

With the appearance of Immalee, however, the balance of morality and narrative momentum shifts. Immalee is the daughter of a Spanish nobleman, shipwrecked on an island in infancy. Like Melmoth, however, she is introduced by a mystifying legend which obscures her origins. The island, we are told, was the original home of the bloodthirsty goddess Seeva, whose "hideous idol, with its collar of human sculls [sic], forked tongues darting from its twenty serpent mouths, and seated on a matted coil of adders, had there first received the bloody homage...of her worshippers."[14:272] Long since destroyed by an earthquake [10] the abandoned

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island has become a sort of tropical haunted castle; when a mysterious female figure is eventually spotted there, gestures of self-mutilation dedicated to her, which are gradually outnumbered by graceful offerings of fruit and flowers. The mystery is penetrated by a pair of intrepid lovers, who go separately to consult the Goddess and find each other in the old temple, where the ruined idol lies in fallen fragments. A beautiful white-skinned woman appears, clad in flowers and speaking an unknown language, to sanctify their union.

Melmoth finds Immalee and instructs her in the ways and languages -- and especially the religions -- of the world, imparting a strange combination of cynicism and evangelical passion in his lessons. Where others encounter the Wanderer only at the nadir of their fortunes, Immalee welcomes him to her lonely paradise, accepts his tutelage, and is eager to follow him back to Europe. They are separated, however, and she gets there by other means. When they are reunited Immalee (now called Isidora) baffles Melmoth's efforts both to corrupt her and to save her, by refusing either to betray him or to desert her family, despite their callousness and petty corruption. With Immalee's story the tempter is finally caught in the violent ambivalence of his own temptation; it is he who must resist and withstand the pressure of *her* desire -- first to leave the island with him, then to marry him, and finally to disclose their marriage to her family. Immalee is thus established as Melmoth's morally opposite number -- a figure of preternatural survival and profound alienation, as benign and innocent as he is malignant and knowing. Though mortal, her innocence is inexorable as his evil, as original, and finally as futile.[11] Intent on sanctifying their secret relationship, she participates in a satanic marriage without knowing it; the marriage bond is unholy, neutralized only by her death. The paradox of Melmoth's being unable to accept the sacrifice of his one willing victim makes their relationship a stalemate.[12]

This is not the terminal episode of the novel, which goes on to enumerate other more typical victims of Melmoth's power. Nevertheless, as Joseph W. Lew has pointed

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out, with Immalee's story the character of the narrative as a whole changes -- from fragmentary, elaborately documented texts or speechs, with constant reminders of the framing situation, to an omniscient and continuous narrative that incorporates further inset stories, but utterly loses sight of the original frame until the very end.[13] Immalee's story also inverts the moral paradigm of the other tales, for here Melmoth emerges for the first time as a protagonist, a person whose thoughts are available to the reader. It is as though under her influence, the narrative smoothes itself out -- Melmoth is allowed to become the protagonist he is obviously designed to be.

If as Chris Baldick remarks "there is in this dungeon of a book something like a realist novel trying to escape" [14] Immalee is most certainly the key. The secret lovers' tryst over which she first presides is an inversion both of her own nuptials and the blasted wedding of Stanton's account; similarly, her "rescue" from the island inverts the scheme of disrupted domesticity, imprisoning her in the bosom of a shallow, self-seeking family, and their plans for an odious marriage. Most revealingly, her mysterious emergence from the blasted image of Seeva echoes Melmoth's own destroyed portrait, and thus figures Immalee as the same kind of ambient, preternatural being, who emerges only gradually onto a scene on which she has long been an influence; an agent of love, as he is of despair. Immalee thus embodies both the opposing moral principle and the opposing narrative principle to Melmoth's downward spiral. If the Wanderer exerts a sort of Gothic force of narrative deferral, Immalee represents the counter-force of redemptive closure, in the form of domestic marriage.

In *Melmoth*, then, narrative drives seem to be released with the destruction of images -- and then appear to lose their way, having lost the retrospective grounding of a framing encounter with a spectator. Yet in the end Melmoth's extended life-span is virtually concurrent with the endurance of the portrait; the destruction of the image -- though it occurs at the outset of this extremely long novel -- actually anticipates the Wanderer's final death-scene by only a few days. Thus while the novel seems to

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derive its initial momentum from Maturin's defiance of the explanatory portrait convention, its resolution reverts to the alignment of the hero's supernatural career with his perfectly ordinary portrait. What proves to be the novel's central conflict between chaotic demonism and grounded domesticity -- what Baldick sees as its stifled realism -- is thus dually figured, in the polarized images of Melmoth and Immalee, and in the framing conceit of the inherited portrait.

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The portrait episodes in *The Monk* and *Melmoth* are both attended by supernatural elements, which serve to deepen the psychology of the stories in which they appear. But the value of portraits, as a later generation of Gothic storytelling indicates, is the degree to which they can enhance the psychological dimension of a story without having to resort to supernatural effects. Ghosts are residual traces of another time; demons are messengers from another sphere. But a portrait is all by itself a window on the time and place of its making -- representing and in some sense bearing the burden of a reality distinct from the current of narrative. The portrait mediates between the reality of looking at it and the reality in which it originated, not simply by virtue of likeness, but also by its invocation of the mimetic process by which it came to be made.

Portraits are not, nor do they represent, anything so transcendent as Nature or anything so impersonal as History. Instead they materialize a particular moment of seeing, of making, of individual being, which is equivalent in weight and scope to the equally particular and personal moment of looking *at* the portrait. This seemingly casual equilibrium of viewer and portrait is the source of a particular sort of magic, whereby the portrait is a vehicle, a medium which allows the one dead or absent (or repressed) to be uncannily but indisputably *here, now* to another person for whom that presence is (or should be) especially meaningful. A picture does not have to be opened and read, like a text or a tomb; it cannot seek out its audience, or declare a particular relation it. Instead, a picture says simply "Behold!" and a picture of a

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person says in particular "Behold *me* (and my story, and yourself, and whatever it is that my image can activate in your consciousness)".

Where any sort of spectacle or apparition can initiate a narrative by serving as the residue of a prior or hidden story, portraits are especially conducive to story-telling because they suggest links between not only times and places but personal identities; as such they evoke not historic events but emotional ones, without being explicit in any way that might compete with the verbal narrative. With portraits the question of narrative or descriptive ekphrasis raised by historical or mythological painting -- "What's happening *in* the picture" -- which has become such a chicken-and-egg game for theorists of representation -- is thus displaced by the more elemental question "Who *is* this? what is this person's story?" and by its very significant Romantic extension, "What does this person's identity mean to *me*?" For the declaration of identity to and with another is crucial to taking control of one's own story.

It is this intertwining of "Who is that?" and "Who am I?" effected by the portrait presence within the expansive space of fictional narrative that makes an encounter with a portrait, with or without the accompanying text, such an important arena for the development of narrative technique. As a frame the portrait allows for a kind of regulated traffic between separate realities, suggesting always a mystery, often a mystery of identity, which it is up to the story to resolve. As a simulation, on the other hand, the portrait image always has the potential to get out of control -- not just by climbing out of its frame and overtaking the action, but more importantly by shifting the ground on which the identification is based.

Unlike marble or gilded monuments, portraits are ordinary objects, ubiquitous and commonplace in any but the most impoverished domestic settings, which gives them an immediacy and a flexibility that intractable statues and contingent ghosts don't have. In order to have the proper transforming effect on Don Giovanni the avenging stone Commendatore must come to life and follow its quarry back to his dining room; but a portrait's impact is not only direct but intimate: its *there*-ness is

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as inevitable and as ordinary as the furniture of a house. In a very real sense, portraits *are* furniture, accumulating with passing generations in family estates. In miniature, they often serve as tokens in the negotiation of marriage contracts, as well as well as filial devotion or loverly fidelity.[15] Often worn close to the body, portrait miniatures thus also mark it, and thus seem to identify one person not only with but *by* another.

Such links, however, are as ambiguous as they are strong. The portrait miniatures in *The Italian* offer a typically Gothic example of how portrait identifications can misfire: when the villainous Schedoni correctly recognizes himself in the miniature around Ellena's neck, each incorrectly supposes, and for different reasons, that he is her father; as it turns out her father is Schedoni's murdered brother, his lost daughter is her half-sister. The link between them is refracted by family likeness -- his to his brother, hers to his daughter. The emergence of the miniature occurs at a potentially incestuous moment effects a radical change in roles, in *self-command*. The point is not so much that their identifications are inaccurate but that the process of identification is itself too demanding and complex to be reducible to a single correspondence, a single piece of information; the identities themselves, properly understood, turn out to mean something different from what originally seemed to spring from them, and so entail the work of narrative to resolve them.[16]

The capacity of fictional portraits to operate as emblems of projected or reflected or revised identity remains their most important literary attribute, if only because a story -- however big or small, can always be made out of the transmutation of portrait and spectator: a man looks at a portrait and finds himself watched (*Melmoth)*; another recognizes a portrait where he doesn't expect to, and betrays his own identity (*The Italian*); a third finds that encounters a portrait of someone he does not recognize, but whom the reader knows is connected to him (*Frankenstein*). Portraits and effigies thus participate in a mode of framing, in which the relationships between beholder and beheld, narrator and audience, past and present can be momentarily aligned into a

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continuum by the conceit of mimetic identity and temporal duration. The contemplated image forms a dimensional pivot which actually reverses the spatial relationship implied by the narrative: the story gets larger within the confines of the portrait's perimeter until it comes in a sense to contain the shorter, shallower story in which the picture appears.

Narratives likewise offer points of identification between reader and subject -- as Milton's poem and Frankenstein's notes provide the creature with referents for, and perspectives on, his own situation. And texts can, to some extent, operate as framing objects. The found-manuscript conceit in James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1822), for example, turns on the capacity of a manuscript to offer a double image of its author, by establishing two different frames of narrative -- one inside and one outside the found text.[17] But in order for a letter or manuscript to speak with an absent (or departed) voice, it must take up the narrative line, and so must temporarily suppress the context in which it is read. A portrait on the other hand can convey not only the significance but the presence of a past life or remote identity *into* the present narrative; the active current will be disrupted only by the moment of looking itself, which can be manipulated to sustain a variety of relations to the action. While the medusan moment of recognition or fascination can stop language and the action of the narrative dead in its tracks, that moment can in its own turn become part of the action itself.

The static image which could arrest or comprehend time and so unseat the power of language was a common theme of Romantic poetry. Lessing's famous definition of temporal and atemporal media, based on sculpture, established a new set of terms for the old competition between word and image known in the Renaissance as the Paragone. For English poets in particular, language, with its mutable and slippery aspects of meaning, faced the old challenge of how to represent durable, palpable matter with renewed thoughtfulness and irony. Percy Shelley's "Ozymandias", for example, plays on the pivotal relation between a concrete image and a text to make

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its own joke about the elliptical narratives of history, and their impact on the referential identity implied by language. The statue of the tyrant precipitates the words on the pedestal, which serve as a condensed story of its being. That the words outlast both the statue and the deeds of the one whose greatness it represents is an irony not only about the pride of tyrants and the vanity of creation but about the relation between language and image.

Where Keats celebrates the enduring pictorial moment, isolated from narrative, as a model for poetic language, Shelley has ancient words survive, in a distorted synecdoche for the image, the monumental figure for whom and about whom they purport to speak. The ironic displacement of their meaning, whereby "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair" becomes a warning instead of a boast, derives from the distorted relation between the moment of making and the moment of seeing, a gulf of time and history that is pointedly *un*bridgeable. The story of that distortion remains untold, if only because it is the inevitable and universal story of absolute power's decline and fall. The visible object and the power it is meant to represent are alike residual, while the language itself, what the poet elsewhere calls "a thrilling vapour of the air"[18] is permitted to sustain itself through the ages not only in spite, but by means of their decay. Note though that language here is understood to be a poetic rather than narrative, medium. The narratable *events* entailed in making and unmaking Ozymandias' dominion have the same linguistic half-life as the monument itself. That the sonnet offers its own bit of narrative framing for the image ("I met a traveler once, who...") suggests not narrative momentum but further poetic displacement -- this time from vision to speech. The testimony of the statue is thus doubly ironized by its own ruin and by its being relayed in the words of a traveler, recorded by the poet.[19]

As we will see the narrative treatments of portraiture pursue a very different course, and derive from a very different relationship between linguistic and visual reference. Where poetic ekphrasis tends to consider the temporal endurance of

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pictures and statues on a historic scale, taking classical artifacts especially as embodying the spirit of an immortal past, remote yet always fresh, the portrait images of Gothic narrative on the other hand tend to be harbingers of a far more recent past, their continuity providing a source of personal, rather than cultural or historic, reflection. In Gothic, the past is a nearby, but not always accessible region, like the unconscious or the illicit; the portrait surface marks and mediates the strange contiguity of Here and There, Then and Now.

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So far we have considered the portrait as a trace of a person, an invocation of its subject's story, which enables certain kinds of narrative modulation, in the story of someone else. But portraiture also affords another, more self-conscious dimension to the moment of looking. The portrait is a simulation, which serves a kind of commentator on or critic of reality, including the reality of making: it is the work of human hands, looking back with human eyes. As a simulated artifact, the portrait always has the potential to be a mirror. Even though the person whose image it most literally "mirrors" -- in the sense of conveying likeness -- is often dead or absent, this potentiality for mirroring remains as fixed and integral an aspect of the image as its reference to its subject; the reflected (or projected) object will change from viewer to viewer, even as its referential relation appears unchanging. A fictional portrait may thus come to be identified with, (i.e., to represent, or transform) its maker, its viewer or its subject, and may also do all at once.

Implicit in the mechanism whereby a portrait can precipitate or revise a narrative is the understanding that to recognize an image of a person is to discover something about one's own identity, just the way that to frame a story -- either as teller or listener -is to assume a position within it. In *Frankenstein*, the narrator Robert Walton's affinities with Victor and his creature make it clear how frame narrators are especially liable to encountering doubles or mirrors in the persons whose stories they retell, simply because in reporting someone else's story they are invariably also

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reporting their own. But in a larger sense, too, it shows how the relationship between a frame narrative and the story it contains or introduces is itself a doubling relation: the frame discloses or provides access to an inner story, which in turn uncovers significance in the events of the story that introduced it. Victor Frankenstein in this sense *is* his creature's "human frame", both in narrative and in psychological terms -- and Walton, whose frame story encompasses and gives onto their relationship, is in the same manner identified with both figures.

As a work of art then the portrait mediated between narrative modes, not just by re-presenting figures inside and outside the frame, but by invoking the revisionary relation between them as well. Two excellent and very different examples of how to exploit this revisionary aspect of the panted surface come from America, where the problem of reconciling the need to assert an original cultural identity with the burden of a gigantic literary legacy was particularly strong. The frame device, setting an immediate present against a recent past, provided a useful structure for conveying a simultaneous sense of continuity and displacement that informed American cultural consciousness. Without directly addressing issues of national or cultural identity Washington Allston and Washington Irving both manage to frame stories of the old world in terms of the new, and thus inflect their very different aesthetic concerns with the energetic consciousness of a new dispensation, a fresh approach to an old story.

§ *Monaldi*

In 1822 by the American painter, poet and theorist Washington Allston wrote a remarkably influential Gothic narrative which enlarges the possibilities for what a framing image can actually identify. A friend of Coleridge, Allston wrote a good deal of poetry, and several important works of aesthetic theory; *Monaldi*, not published till 1841, was much admired on both sides of the Atlantic for its vivid imagery and unusual premise, which combined Gothic extremities and violence with a Romantic agenda of moralized aesthetics and a redemptive sentimental ending.[20]

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Allston's work is particularly interesting for its unusual rendering of the Paragone, or rivalry between poetry and painting, as a struggle between moral and cognitive faculties, rather than mimetic effects. The eponymous hero of *Monaldi* is a noble and successful painter who is finally driven to murder and madness by a Iago-like nemesis, a proud, failed poet named Maldura. His story figures the moral propensities of his two protagonists characters as straddling of two contending media -- two modes of communicating truth. Here the framing picture is not a portrait but vivid and mysterious allegory, which the frame narrator, an American traveler bound slowly homeward from Italy, comes across in a monastery. Taking the traveler on a tour of the convent's art treasures, the prior remarks that they have one picture "worth twenty galleries" [11] of all the rest [21] -- but here again words fail: the prior is suddenly called away before he can explain[22]. Left alone, the narrator takes a wrong door, and stumbles into a room:

> I seemed to be standing before an abyss in space, boundless and black. In the midst of this permeable pitch stood a colossal mass of gold, in shape like an altar, and girdled about by a huge serpent, gorgeous and terrible....Such was the Throne. But no words can describe the gigantic Being that sat thereon--the grace, the majesty, its transcendent form; and yet I shuddered as I looked, for its superhuman countenance seemed, as it were, to radiate falsehood; every feature was in contradiction--the eye, the mouth, even to the nostril--whilst the expression of the whole was of that unnatural softness which can only be conceived of malignant blandishment. It was the appalling beauty of the King of Hell....at his feet knelt one who appeared to belong to our race of earth....It was a man apparently in the prime of life, but pale and emaciated, as if prematurely wasted by his unholy devotion, yet still devoted--with outstretched hands, and eyes upraised to their idol, fixed with a vehemence that seemed almost to start them from their sockets. The agony of his eye, contrasting with the prostrate, reckless worship of his attitude, but too well told his tale: I beheld the moral conflict between the conscience and the will--the visible struggle of a soul in the toils of sin. I could look no longer. [15]

When his guide returns, we learn that what has just been described is indeed a picture. In answer to the narrator's inquiries about the artist, the prior places a manuscript in his hands: "I do not offer it to gratify your curiosity: it will touch, if I am not mistaken, a worthier feeling." What the story must solve then is a riddle of

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morality, rather than identity. The stupendous image of hellish beauty is juxtaposed to the mysterious "worthier feeling" with which the reader/narrator is supposed to respond.

Accordingly, the manuscript begins with a detailed account of the moral character of the rivals, who are first introduced as schoolfellows. Monaldi is a Romantic genius, a sweet, nerdy introvert, innocent of any feeling but admiration for the brilliant, worldly friend. Maldura, equally sensitive, is hopelessly in the toils of neoclassical "rules" and their concomitant dependence on external judgement. [23] When, in the course of things, the painter succeeds and the poet fails, Maldura's jealous pride drives him to hire Count Fialto, a well-known seducer, to make it look as though he his having an affair with Monaldi's entirely innocent wife Rosalia. The scheme works too well: in a jealous frenzy the sensitive painter stabs his wife and vanishes raving into the countryside. Later we learn that Rosalia is not dead, and Monaldi, quite mad and horribly emaciated, is picked up and nursed back to temporary sanity by a penitent Maldura. The poet's eagerness to confess his guilt brings on the painter's relapse, and a brief, final chapter recounts the deranged artist's return to his father-in-law's house, where he paints the remarkable picture described at the opening of the story; and his subsequent flight to the hermitage where the frame narrator first sees him.

Frame and core stories are linked by a series of shared leitmotifs -- the horrific and chastening impact of haggard, mad faces; lapses or failures of communication -- which underscore the cognitive rivalry between looks and language. At the very opening of the frame story the narrator encounters a wasted, motionless figure, sitting on a stone in front of a remote hovel, all eyes and beard. The moment is characterized by speechless fascination by the spectacle: "I stood before him like one statue gazing upon another" [11]. He makes no attempt to communicate, convinced "that words would but fall upon his brain like drops of water upon marble." The scene is interrupted by an old woman, whose words are too unintelligible to provide an explanation, but manages to direct the narrator to the monastery. This early

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encounter with the lunatic Monaldi is recapitulated in several different ways in the core narrative, foreshadowing Monaldi's chance meeting with Maldura in Rome, Maldura's encounter with the mad Monaldi in Naples and Maldura's initial encounter with Fialto.

Just as these shared allusions shift and mutate throughout the core story, the framing allegorical image keeps shifting its affinities with the personages of the story that accompanies it. In his own gloss of the picture Monaldi explains that he himself has stared the "appalling beauty of the King of Hell" in the face it is clear that we are to regard the figure of human wretchedness groveling before it as a kind of spiritual self-portrait:

> Your earthly philosophy teaches that the Prince of evil is hideous. And you think to serve the world by it. Miserable folly! Men flee from what is frightful. So would they from sin, did it take the shape you have given it. But *I*--I have seen it, face to face, enthroned in the majesty of Hell. Look! That is the form in which he whom men call Satan appears to the living. Ay, 'tis with deadly beauty that he wins your souls. But the *evil mind*, which you now see mixed with it transpires not on earth, when he tempts you; 'tis only in hell that his victims behold and hate it." [18:245]

Monaldi here expounds the cherished Romantic principle that evil is entrancing and compellingly beautiful, an insight which we are clearly to take as true.[24] But he speaks from the experience of his jealous delusions. The moral status of the painter's allegorical gloss is strangely slanted by the false corollary that beauty alone is destructive. "How beautiful," he says of Rosalia's unsuspecting smile "may even a lie look! Oh, Sin, take always this form, and the world, with all its grave philosophy, its solemn pomp of reason, is yours. But I know its hollowness..." [13:175]. Monaldi has no direct dealings with the slanders, the evil temptation he describes in the portrait is linked with no other face than Rosalia's, which like Justine Moritz's compromising possession of the portrait in *Frankenstein* is innocent of the false constructions to which invisible forces have made it vulnerable.

The truth of the picture remains, but it is Fialto's beauty, not Rosalia's, that

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reveals the truth of the central demonic figure. On his first appearance we learn that Fialto's person, though handsome, is

> ...but a fine statue, on which many women might gaze with impunity; 'tis only when animated by his master-mind--when his devil's heart rises to his angel's tongue, that it becomes an object of worship--fatal to the rash woman who shall then dare to look and listen. [10:128]

In the story's underlying competition between image and language, vision is undoubtedly the winner -- the deck is stacked from the beginning to show that vision is always closer to truth than language. This is why it takes more than Maldura's language-driven jealousy to corrupt Monaldi's faith. As a "fine statue" with an "angel's tongue", Fialto incorporates both visual and verbal modes of appeal; he manipulates both rumor and appearances to do his dirty work. But in transferring the poet's jealousy and vengeance to the painter, he also turns Monaldi's purity of vision into kind of insanity. Prior to Fialto's interference Monaldi's chief attribute has been a kind of unifying simplicity associated with vision and empathy, rather than speech or persuasion. As a suitor he impresses Rosalia with his uncanny sympathy with the various temperaments of the old Renaissance masters, but he declares himself to her in looks, not words. So profound and absolute is his bias that despite his penetration into the ambitious character of Michelangelo, Monaldi cannot divine the character of his ambitious friend the poet. Later, however, the painter's madness reveals that what appeared to be innocence is in fact a profound cognitive fissure between verbal and visual understanding. Thus when Maldura finally confesses his role in Monaldi's disaster the painter suddenly fails to recognize him, and refuses to believe in his identity.

> Thou liest! Maldura was my friend--he was honest, righteous. He has no wings as thou hast. Avaunt, devil! [17:237]

Having been told the truth, Monaldi can now see Maldura as a devil, but cannot be brought to name him as one: the truth can only exist for him visually.[25]

Although Monaldi here identifies his false friend as the devil of his visionary

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painting, it is the human figure that corresponds most readily with what the reader knows of the poet's story--far better, indeed, than it does with Monaldi's. It is Maldura who seems at the outset to give himself up to "malignant blandishment" in place of disinterested art; in his unsuccessful courtship he confuses the love of a virtuous noble woman with the trophies and honors of success [3:44]. It is Maldura, too, who experiences the confrontation of revealed evil explicated in the painter's gloss, most acutely when the triumphant Fialto returns from the scene of the murder to taunt him with the unexpectedly horrible outcome of his schemes:

> I acted in my need, and under thee, thou superlative tempter! so the world would not waste a curse on me. But what tempted thee? Oh, I forgot -- thou art a poet. Well thou hast reached the ideal of sin; and I give thee joy of thy bloody chaplet." [15:199-200]

Having corrupted the painter's purity of vision, Fialto here scoffs at the detached self-involvement of the poetic pretension. It is a curiously pragmatic critique, which like Monaldi's crazed vision places Maldura on the throne of evil. Yet the effect of his words is to aggravate the poet's remorse and so launch his penitential quest for Monaldi's recovery.

While Fialto's malevolent coupling of verbal and visual power allows him thus to redistribute the moral balance of the characters' attributes, it is ultimately the distended vision of Monaldi's madness that finally fuses their identities into a new form. Thus we hear that in his convalescence

> he would sometimes fancy himself to be Fialto, then Maldura, but more often he was one among the dead, and that Rosalia had come to upbraid him; for he had in some way or other connected her image with a spirit. [18:242]

It is from this conflation of personae that the allegorical picture finally emerges, to reconfigure the opposing sensibilities of false ambition and true vision into a single, potent image which even the artists' own glosses can't do full justice.

Bryan Jay Wolf sees the central relationship in *Monaldi* as representing a typically Gothic duality between the principles of internal and external cognition.[26] At the

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beginning, this certainly seems to apply: Monaldi's inner-directed imagination seems purer than Maldura's literary dependency on external reassurance, but it turns out also to be more fragile, unable to withstand the pressure of a duplicitous world, and helpless when confronted with malice, guilt and betrayal. Later on, the self-serving motives behind Maldura's confession suggest a kind of authorial competition, a wresting of the narrative -- or in this case the moral focus *of* the narrative -- from Monaldi's inner consciousness to his own. In the end the mad painter's vision trumps the poet's agonized confession, not by superior inwardness, but because its outward expression extends beyond both the poet's remorse and the painter's madness and into a larger sphere of the narrative.

Precipitating Monaldi's final flight, the appalling image prepares the way for the novel's resumption of the frame, which supplies its own revisionary figures. Maldura and Fialto are gone; instead there is Allston's American narrator, who like Robert Walton combines the familiar patterns the lives of the characters with a distinct aura of separateness. Then there is the obliging prior, who acts as a kind of aesthetic overseer of the whole business, and who duly invites him to witness "the closing scene" [249] of the painter's life, as a kind of reward for his sensitivity. The real reward, however, turns out to be the chance to meet Rosalia, who after long banishment is restored to her dying husband's bedside. The narrator's regard for her provides the final, redemptive link between the worlds of the core and frame stories:

> It seemed strange that a mere narrative should attach us so deeply to one we never saw; but so it was; the thought of meeting Rosalia made my heart beat as if I had known her for years...it was most like the feeling we have for a beloved sister--the purest, and most delicate sentiment of which our nature is capable. [250]

With what Romantic convention codified as the "speaking looks" of redemptive femininity, Rosalia's wordless glances restore the sanctity of Monaldi's uncorrupted vision.

In *Frankenstein* Captain Walton proves himself a worthy container of the story by

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being willing to listen; what equips Allston's traveler to relay the story is his readiness to be detained and haunted by images -- first the hollow eyes of the mad painter, then the painted faces of hellish entrapment, and finally the saintly perfection of Rosalia's beauty, which complements and reverses the hideous splendor of the demonic figure in the picture. In the end the purity of vision is restored by the narrator, less because he is an agent of language than because as a spectator he empathizes with Monaldi's agonies without himself being subject to the delusions underlying them. Despite the novel's dependence on his voice, it is in his eye that the truth of vision is finally restored.

§ "The Story of the Young Italian" and its frames[27]

Portraits cannot go out of their way to reveal themselves, but they can be hidden, and must therefore be uncovered by someone else. The key moments of revelation and closure that frame *Monaldi* rely on the discretion of the Prior, who tests and eventually approves the narrator's visual sensitivity before he shows the portrait. In "The Story of the Young Italian" (1824) Washington Irving uses the same model of discreet revelation to map and expound the necessary elements of successful fiction writing: controlled detachment in the storyteller and open susceptibility in his audience. The Paragone has no place here: art is a matter not of cognitive truth but individual experience; the disjunction between picture and text is manipulated to underscore the fissure between the privacy of aesthetic experience and the mediocrity of public convention.

The actual story of the Young Italian is really the core narrative of a three-part story in a longer sequence titled "Strange Tales by a Nervous Gentleman", which makes up Part One of Irving's *Tales of a Traveler* (1824). The framing conceit for this sequence narrated by the Nervous Gentleman is a hunting party, which has been confined by a storm to the house of a bachelor Baronet for the night. A sequence of burlesque and grotesque ghost stories ensues, most of which involve pictures, each

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told by a different character in a different style. The party decides to retire for the night, and a contest for who will get the haunted room inaugurates the next phase of the frame narrative: the Nervous Gentleman spends a miserable night unable to take his eyes off of a portrait in his bedroom, which haunts and draws him inexplicably and so horribly that he is compelled to leave the room and sleep on the sofa. In the morning the Baronet offers his own tale to explain its provenance: it was given to him by a young, unhappy Italian he once met in Venice, with a mysterious habit of looking over his shoulder like a hunted animal. With it came an explanatory memoir, which the Baronet reads to the company.

His story turns out to be familiar Gothic fare, albeit relatively condensed: a sensitive, passionate second son of an aristocratic family is buried by an unfeeling father in a convent, where he learns to paint from a monk with a particular penchant for corpses. Miserable with monastic confinement, Ottavio runs away to Genoa, where he apprentices himself to a painter, and falls in love with the beautiful Bianca, whose portrait he sketches on a commission, and whose image inspires all his subsequent work. On the death of his master he accepts the hospitality of an important patron, a Count who invites him to stay at his seaside villa. There he befriends Filippo, the Count's son, and is reunited with Bianca, who becomes the Count's ward. Filippo promises to help the lovers and serve as go-between when Ottavio returns to Naples to nurse his dying father, and for two years he maintains a faithful correspondence with Bianca. On returning to Genoa to claim her, he learns that Filippo has betrayed them both: he has told Bianca that Ottavio has died and married her himself. Enraged, Ottavio murders him, and is immediately overcome with remorse and horror. He cannot shake the haunting image of his victim: the portrait is a therapeutic attempt to relieve the sensation of being followed, but only makes matters worse. The written confession ends with Ottavio's addressing his friend the Baronet, explaining that he will go now to Genoa to give himself up to justice.

Unlike the shifts of identity in *Monaldi*, which emphasize different aspects of a

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single duality, the story generates a series of substitutions and doublings which move the narrative along. The stern father from whom Ottavio flees during the first half of his story is progressively supplanted first by the death-obsessed painter-monk from whom he learns his craft, then by the benevolent artist-master, and finally the rich patron, who resumes the paternal role. Ottavio's various rivalries -- with his brother, with a favorite of his father's, and finally with Filippo himself -- establish his position in the different settings of the story. The haunting image of the beautiful Beloved is supplanted by that of the deceitful Enemy; and their marriage, based on a deception, yet has the flavor of truth, for in marrying Bianca Filippo has done little more than double for Ottavio in his absence.

Framing these dualities of love and deceit and authority is another pair of figures, which emphasizes the story-teller's art over his substance. When the Baronet finishes reading Ottavio's testimony, everyone in the hunting party clamors to see the portrait. The Baronet allows them to be guided by the housekeeper, one by one, to see it and all attest solemnly to its uncanny effect -- but in the end we learn what he confides only to the Nervous Gentleman, that the joke is on them: he has had them each shown to a different room, and so each guest has responded to a different image. This final twist has several implications. First it places the Baronet and the Nervous Gentleman in an exclusive class among the characters, as being the only ones who have seen the portrait that truly corresponds to the story. The Baron's framing deception also has implications for the story itself. Ottavio's Gothic story of betrayal and failed revenge gives way to the story of a successful and ironic lie. The deceiving Filippo whose image is irresistible, is transposed into the canny Baronet, who controls access to the image. The power embodied in the portrait, a secret shared only by the master of the house, the privileged guest, and the reader, is itself transformed from vengeance to art.

This transformation is further supported by the series of ghost stories leading up to the framed tale, which form a kind of taxonomy of artistic impulses or motivations.

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In the first a ghost and a portrait in an old chateau together point to a mystery, which a guest tries to fathom; his aristocratic host, obsessed with historical detail, provides the heroic background but withholds the ultimate revelation, pleading family loyalty, and the tale (which its narrator warns is only an "*anecdote*" [394]) is never completed: history and social prerogative are at war with art. The second tale is a joke: the ghost that apparently haunts the portrait turns out to be a very ordinary thief, and the widow who catches him marries rich in the end: art as an instrument of deception and gain. The third story -- of a bold, merry soldier who finds the furniture in his room dancing wildly in the middle of the night and gallantly offers to partner the wardrobe, suggests the motive of pure pleasure. The fourth, in which a morbidly sensitive and visionary (read: German) student finds he has joined himself in spiritual marriage to a corpse, invokes the Romantic motive of hopeless desire, the fusion of eros and death. The ghost in each story stands for a different spirit in which art may be undertaken, and while the witness engages with that spirit in the position of an artist.

With story of the mysterious portrait in the Baronet's house these roles are made literal: there is no ghost, only a work of art which carries the reproach of the dead man, felt by the artist/murderer and transmitted to canvas, where it extends its touch to the Baronet's nervous guest. Instead of a single artistic perspective the forces embodied in the portrait are divided between the Nervous Gentleman, whose susceptibility to the image reflects the artist's own experience, and the Baronet, whose deceptions echo that of its subject. Unaffected by the portrait himself, the Baronet experiments with its power on his guests, confiding his manipulations to the sensitive witness. Where in Allston's tale the Prior's agency is thoroughly circumscribed by the words and the reactions of the narrator, the Baronet's authority intervenes between the stories of the two sensitive narrators, the framing Nervous Gentleman and the framed Young Italian. His mediating narrative and manipulative ownership set the terms of the story, and the Nervous Gentleman ends his narrative with the Baronet's words, but in the end neither has the final say; the editorial voice of Geoffrey Crayon

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interjects to close the story for good.

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In her influential study of Gothic conventions Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the symmetry of inside and outside, and the impenetrability of the boundary that both separates them and defines their correspondence, a definitive structure of Gothic form, and a major source of its potency. What she calls the "interfacing surface" may take a variety of forms, but the pattern is invariable:

> The self and whatever it is that is outside have a proper, natural , necessary connection to each other, but one that the self is suddenly incapable of making. The inside life and the outside life have to continue separately, becoming counterparts rather than partners, the relationship between them one of parallels and correspondences rather than communication. [13][28]

The declaration or resolution of the polarized identity entails some violent disruption of a mediating surface. Observing that the most extreme instances of violence in Gothic are reserved for the breaking of boundaries -- e.g. the fire in *Melmoth*, or the riot in *The Monk*,

Sedgwick identifies this disruption as "one of the characteristic energies of the Gothic novel." She implies further that these energies are emblematic of the narrative frustrations -- "the difficulty the story has in getting itself told" -- [14] which also characterize the Gothic. I have tried to show here that unlike other Gothic barriers the device of the framing portrait narrative is generally used to expand or enhance the possibility of communication, even as it preserves the energy of narrative obstruction and irreconcilable polarity of self and other. The narrative may establish a polar or doubling relation between stories or identities, but in the presiding portrait the liminal barrier between them becomes permeable, revelatory and potentially redemptive, rather than frustrating and opaque. While the confrontation with a painted image seems to effect a single, totalizing identity -- between person and thing, subject and spectator, making and seeing etc -- the very variety of identities that a portrait may

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silently summon affords a fluidity of resolution that defies Gothic rupture. Instead of the violent gestures of breach or collapse, portraits effect the ambivalent transferences evoked by likeness, sympathy, and artifice. The "interfacing surface" is charged, not just epistemologically, with the burden of identity, but also creatively, with the possibility of new meaning.

Where in *The Monk* and *Melmoth* the narrative potency of a personally identified image serves primarily to enlarge on psychological motivations, the American tales share a sophisticated use of the portrait to sustain a complex doubling relation between frame and core narratives. The iconography of Allston's tale is Romantic, and uses the disparity between verbal and visual modes of perception to dramatize the moral dilemmas of skepticism. Irving's tale is likewise about artistic perception, but here the Romantic transmission of pure or original sensation is only half of the story; the other half is expressed in the canny manipulation of audiences and effects. Instead of asserting a moral or cognitive division between verbal and visual experience, the visual sensibilities of painter and spectator are enlisted in the narrative's larger scheme of aesthetic integration, whereby the internalized story of rivalry is transposed into a balance of aesthetic faculties -- empathy and detachment, credulity and deception -- which serve together to ratify the portrait's magic and to protect it from the abuses of a vulgar audience.

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NOTES

[1] The appearance of the Creature at the beginning of Walton's narrative, a fleeting and anticipatory doubling of Victor's appearance some pages later, fulfills this same function. The apparition lasts just long enough to suggest a mystery: the ensuing narrative explains the identity behind the Creature, the details of its making, and its presence in its current setting. So too does the Creature explain the incriminating placement (though not the execution) of the portrait miniature of Mme. Frankenstein. But as I have suggested the ironies attendant upon the

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Creature's identity with Victor are very particularly reinforced by the portrait's associations, not just with femininity, but with mimetic artifice.

[2] See Anderson's introduction to *The Monk,* World's Classics Edition. (New York: OUP 1980): xii. All page citations to the text refer to this edition.

[3] Nancy Caplan Mallersky discusses the mirroring relation between Agnes and Beatrice at length, emphasizing how the episode serves to reinforce the connection between the Raymond/Agnes plot to the Ambrosio and Antonia, noting especially how the appearance of Beatrice's ghost is recapitulated when the ghost of Antonia's mother, intervenes in her abduction. The ghost of course proliferates parallels: Peter Brooks links the irrepressible ghost of Beatrice to not to Agnes but to her mother, whose desire for Don Raymond keeps them apart. Howard Anderson likewise finds the pattern of intractable desire interfering with progress of the hero, and adds the Prioress of Agnes' convent to the pattern. See Nancy Caplan Mallersky, "The Exploding Matrix: The Episode of the Bleeding Nun in M.G. Lewis's The Monk" in *Forms of the Fantastic,* ed. Jan Hokenson and Howard D. Pearce (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986): 41-47, esp. 46; Peter Brooks, "Virtue and Terror: *The Monk.*" *ELH* 40 (1973): 249-263, esp. 254; and Howard Anderson, "Gothic Heroes" in *The English Hero,* ed. Robert Folken Flik. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1982: 205-221, esp. 216.

[4] For a more complete discussion of the ambiguity of Matilda's moral action see Peter Grudin, "The Monk: Matilda and the Rhetoric of Deceit." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 5:2 (1975): 136-146.

[5] Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972): 20.

[6] George Haggerty *Gothic Fiction, Gothic Form* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989): 13-14, 44.

[7] All page citations refer to the World's Classics Edition (New York: OUP 1989).

[8] Amy Elizabeth Smith looks at the tales in *Melmoth* as a series of experiments in psychological observation, which to some extent belie the religious motives of the book. See Amy Elizabeth Smith, "Experimentation and 'Horrid Curiosity' in Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer." *English Studies* 74:6 (1993): 524-535, esp. 530.

[9] The rest of the tales are similarly driven by the deferral or denial of explanation, which seem to come later and later in each tale. Thus Monçada finds out relatively soon why he has been placed in the convent, but the story of Immalee's abandonment on the Indian island is revealed only very late in Melmoth's encounter with her father, after the story of Elinor Mortimer (which itself defers explanation till the bitter end) has been concluded.

[10] Later devotees insist that this image "had been seen ascending amid the blaze of lightening that consumed her shrine ...and firmly believed she had withdrawn to

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some happier isle, where she might enjoy her feast of flesh, and draught of blood, unmolested by the worship of a rival deity. " [14:272]

[11] David Eggenschwiler sees the importance of this moral opposition between Immalee and Melmoth as an indication of the breadth of scope in Maturin's exploration of spiritual needs beyond what nature and normality have to offer. Commenting on its departures from the otherwise "systematic allusion" to Gretchen/Faust relationship in Goethe, Eggenschwiler notes that Immalee's insistent purity puts her on a par with Melmoth's preternatural condition, so that instead of his dragging her down the two move in opposite directions toward the sublime. See David Eggenschweiler, "Melmoth the Wanderer: Gothic on Gothic" *Genre* 8:2 (1975): 165-181, esp. 176-7.

[12] Kiely notes Melmoth's paradoxical relation to marriage: "Melmoth, the 'destroyer' is not a mad rapist or a frivolous seducer, but a constant husband united in unholy matrimony with his victims....Marriage, the traditional symbol of order, expectation, and continuity, is transformed into an inevitable but unregenerative alliance" (*The Romantic Novel in England* 200).

[13] He points out further that after one rather violent interjection of the whole chain of narrative relays between us and Immalee, the novel gives up on making any allusion to the mediation of Monçada, or to any explanations of how the story comes to be known. See Joseph W. Lew, "'Unprepared for Sudden Transformations': Identity and Politics in Melmoth the Wanderer." *Studies in the Novel* 26:2 (1994): 173-95, esp. 178-9.

[14] "Intermittently it hints that the most powerful "enemy of mankind" is not the Devil but poverty and inherited property; but it never manages to break out of its Gothic Bastille." See Introduction to *Melmoth, the Wanderer*, xix.

[15] For example, see Susan Shidal Williams discussion of the status of portrait miniatures exchanged in courtship in 19th century America in *Confounding Images* 21-24.

[16] In her careful unpacking of this episode and a similar situation in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*" Eve Sedgwick points out that the confusion of likenesses usually involves siblings, a reminder that "similarity is not the same as identity" But more striking from a narrative point of view is how these mistakes of identity always entail a confusion of *placement*, of context. Sedgwick continues that the miniature cannot "represent the identity of one person alone. The crucial thing that Ellena and Schedoni both have to learn...is their identity in relation to each other; and the same acts of retracing carried out on a single portrait identify, or provisionally identify and permanently associate, the two of them." See Sedgwick, "The Character in the Veil": Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel." *PMLA* 96:2 (March 1981): 255-270. The passage quoted is on 261-2 .

[17] Karl Miller finds in this literal, literary doubling a remarkably rich vein of material for his meditation on the modern tradition for the multiplication of the self on paper.

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See his opening discussion of Hogg in *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 1-20.

[18]

> For from the serpents gleam a brazen glare
> Kindled by that inextricable error
> Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
> Become a dim and ever-shifting mirror
> Of all the beauty and the terror there

From "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery," attributed to Percy Shelley. As presented in John Hollander *The Gazer's Spirit*, 143-147. See also W.J.T. Mitchell's dicussion of the ekphrastic politics of this poem in "Ekphrasis and the Other" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91:3 (1992): 695-719

[19] For a remarkably lucid discussion of the narrative suppressions in this poem, and the historical context in which its ekphrastic irony is also intended to operate, see James Heffernan, *Museum of Words* 115-119.

[20] He began it not long after returning his second significant sojourn in London, between August 1811 and August 1818, during which he established his reputation as the foremost American painter, a fact which suggests an autobiographical strain in the work. An avid reader of Gothic Romance, Allston may well have read *Frankenstein* on its first publication in England in January 1818, (the earliest documented American printings were taken from the 1824 edition). See Nathalia Wright, ed. *Correspondence of Washington Allston* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1993): 596-7; on Allston's reading, see Appendix 4, 612-618; also William Gerdts and Theodore Stebbins, *"A Man of Genius": The Art of Washington Allston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979): 14.

[23] All page citations to *Monaldi* refer to the facsimile edition collected in *Lectures on Art, Poems and Monaldi*, ed. Nathalia Wright, (Gainsville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967).

[22] The narrator at this juncture believes that the painting in question is a superior La Franco which he has just noticed. "Next to his great work at Santa Andrea della Valle, it was the best I had seen by that master" [12] -- This image is a fictional painting by a real painter, and thus a candidate for the kind of speculation so interesting to modern ekphrasists: La Franco was known for his handling of cloudscapes and sunsets of the kind described the opening lines, and in several different pictorial passages of the novel. In narrative terms, however, the La Franco picture turns out to be a red herring: it is the entirely fantastic -- and entirely fictional -- image that serves the catalytic function of linking both the events of the narration with those of the frame and more specifically here the sensibilities of the narrator with those of the protagonist.

[24] An indication of Monaldi's Romantic orthodoxy in his first successful work, which depicts "the first sacrifice of Noah after the subsiding of the waters; a subject of

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little promise from an ordinary hand, but of all others, perhaps, the best suited to exhibit that rare union of intense feeling and lofty imagination which characterized Monaldi....There was no dramatic variety in the kneeling father and his kneeling children; they expressed but one sentiment--adoration; and it seemed to go up as with a single voice. "[28] Maldura's career as a poet, on the other hand, is characterized by the failure of his much-heralded first publication--"a long and elaborate poem; in which it appeared to him, every established rule that could apply to his subject had been strictly observed." [32].

[25] "The Romantics did not invent the story that Lucifer was the most beautiful of the angels before his fall, but there were more peculiarly fascinated by the nature of that beauty as it appeared after the blight." (Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* 199).

[26] Maldura confesses by narrating the painter's story back to him, in the hope that Monaldi will draw his own conclusions gradually, but Monaldi doesn't get the allusion. This recalls an earlier moment when Monaldi narrates what he takes to be Rosalia's latest infidelity back to her in the form of fictional story, which she fails to identify with her own situation. [12:155-163] Considering the story's emphasis on the sympathetic impact of narrative on listeners, it is remarkable how lightly the moralizing voice of the story passes over the destructiveness of Maldura's penitence. Perhaps this irony is taken for granted, the selfishness of penitential zeal having been such a popular target of anti-Catholic satire in the Gothic.

[28] Wolf, *Romantic Re-vision* (Chicago: University Chicago Press 1983): 68.

[27] All page citations refer to *Tales of a Traveler* (New York: Library of America, 1991).

[28] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno Press, 1980): 13.

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Chapter 2 - Telling Portraits: The Fictive Mirror

If the bare fact of likeness opens up narrative possibilities, the complications of identifying a work of art with a number of different informing forces creates a still richer dimension of narrative self-consciousness, which affords a distinctive line of literary exploration. In the Gothic format we have been looking at the framing narrative or accompanying text supplies a kind of platform for the modulations effected by the portrait. The painted image might gloss its accompanying text, as in *Monaldi*, or serve as a medium of transposition or identification, as with the Nun's portrait in *The Monk*. In *Melmoth* and in *Frankenstein* the use of a portrait to link remote times or identities makes it a kind of emblem of narrative momentum, while in Irving's hands the portrait becomes touchstone of aesthetic empathy and ironic distance, essential tools of the fiction-writer's art. In all these cases the portrait derives its power from its stasis relative to narrative: as a concrete object it operates as a fixed point of reference on which various narrative or psychological projections may converge. In Romantic fictions, however, the power of the portrait presence derives less from its fixity in relation to the temporal or perspectival mutations of narrative, than from the suggestive possibility of mutation in the image itself. In *Monaldi*, for example, the portrait becomes important as an artifact as well as a likeness, endowed with gifts not merely preternatural, but visionary and prophetic, and potentially redemptive. If the Gothic portrait is a monitory image that bears witness to a significant past and conveys it the present, the Romantic portrait is an inspired image which turns out to portray someone (or something) unsuspected at the time of its making. The picture carries a story not behind it but within it, a latent possibility of transformation, which rather than being explained by the narrative seems to be released into it.

In *Emma* Jane Austen exploits the potentiality of a portrait image to represent

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different persons to different people to play one of her many edifying jokes on her heroine. In chapter 6 she has Emma mistake the source of Mr. Elton's admiration and solicitude about her portrait of Harriet Smith. Where clear-eyed Knightley criticizes her drawing, Elton praises it, and takes elaborate pains to have it framed. Emma herself is too clear-eyed not to know that Elton's motives are amorous and not critical, but convinces herself and Harriet that his admiration is for the sitter, not the artist. When, to her chagrin, she discovers his true motives, she is insulted by their shallowness, and the selfishness of his lovemaking.[1] A small episode in the gradual unfolding of her delusion, the mistake nevertheless encapsulates the nature of Emma's misguided sensibility, which like Agnes's in *The Monk* derives largely from her resistance to acknowledging the force of her own needs and desires, in this case to play fairy-godmother to Harriet. In confusing her subject with herself she establishes both her credentials and her ineptitude as a maker of heroines, and thereby, in Rachel M. Brownstein's elegant formulation, her fitness to be one herself.[2] In the next chapter we will see how a later generation of novelists use this device -- the portrait as a marker for a phase of heroic self-making -- to probe deeper into self-image, and its gendered implications, than Austen does. Here, the suppression of self-knowledge is figured more pointedly as a denial of authorial responsibility.

That Emma's manipulation of other people -- her fiction-making -- turns out to be a kind of unintentional self-portraiture also reflects a more fundamental and gender-neutral truth of Romantic fiction: that the mimetic act is inescapably charged with the reflexivity of desire. In making an artificial person the artist both sublimates and externalizes those profound fears and longings which are, in the Romantic view, the defining elements of selfhood. As an independent entity the created figure affords an opportunity to displace what may be an intolerable burden of self-knowledge onto something that the artist can evade, or control, or renounce -- or for that matter embrace, the desire to achieve self-knowledge and the desire to suppress being equally potent, if not always equally conscious: a mirror may mask or

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reveal, shield or expose, depending on who looks into it, and why.

The frame structure of Gothic fiction emphasizes the moment of confrontation with the image as an extension of the act of reading. Another Romantic trope focuses more on the elusive passage between making and showing, to convey some of this authorial ambivalence about self-exposure. In this convention the portrait serves not as a framing identity but as a form of a simulacrum or artificial double, which on one hand reads as a division, or projection of the self, but which also evokes the fundamental mimetic principle of art: a double is manufactured copy of a given *something* that alters, simply by dint of being *something else*, the status of being anything at all. In order to achieve completion as a separate entity, the copy must claim an authority over the original that derives precisely from its second-order existence. Victor Frankenstein proposes to re-create humanity, but in devoting himself to the process he loses all capacity to understand what achieving it might mean: it is his creature who comprehends and announces their relationship. In articulating this claim Frankenstein's creation yields an unexpected insight -- that to exist as constructed or secondary being adds a new dimension to the use of language, whereby the acts of self-disclosure and story-telling by which a speaker establishes his identity simultaneously declare his autonomy. This rhetorical innovation is most keenly felt and expressly explored in American fiction. Insofar as America itself can be seen a Romantic construct, it sustained a relationship to Europe, especially to England, very much like that of the creature to Frankenstein, needing acknowledgement and acceptance from its progenitor while at the same time demonstrating superior intuition and unforeseen power. American artists were thus conscious of a dual obligation to meet the demands of new and utterly untapped resources, while yet relying on a thoroughly acculturated tradition for their means of doing so.

Poe and Hawthorne, two writers deeply -- and very differently -- absorbed with literary convention, both wrote fictions of making that acknowledge with unique clarity

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the fluidity of the relation between making and self-fashioning, whereby an author may be subject to the power of his own creation. Their favored form for this mode is the tightly circumscribed world of the short tale, where the need to establish an immediate connection between reader and subject is both more acute and less difficult than in a longer narrative. Instead relying on intermediary readers or narrators, the narrative is framed by its own brevity: the reader is both readier to be immersed in fiction and more aware of the artifices that sustain it. Poe and Hawthorne grappled with this dual effect in the form of not-quite-human figures who impinge on and disrupt ordinary experience. Two of them -- Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1842,45) and Hawthorne's "The Prophetic Pictures" (1837) -- avail themselves directly of the trope of portraiture to expose different risks of mimetic fidelity; two others -- Poe's "William Wilson" (1839) and Hawthorne's "Feathertop" (1852) -- are parables of simulation which, like *Frankenstein*, raise more deliberate questions about what it means to pass for human. Taken together this group of tales help explicate the link between the mirroring effects of portraiture and the problem of effecting a meaningful reality in writing. In Poe's case we find the portrait trope expressing the resolution of mimetic issues raised by the double story, while in Hawthorne's case the portrait trope seems on the contrary to introduce a problem more thoroughly taken up in the story of an autonomous simulacrum.

§ Poe's Synthetic Figure -- "William Wilson" and "The Oval Portrait"

Deeply indebted to both Allston's and Irving's tales of rivalry, portraiture, and appalling crime, Poe's famous doppelgänger story actually begins with a condensed version of the Gothic frame -- the deathbed confession of a sinner. The opening establishes a motive for telling the story which, like the frame in *Melmoth*, dispenses with the intervention of either portrait or text:

> I would not, if I could, here or to-day, embody a record of my later years of unspeakable misery, and unpardonable crime. This epoch--these later years--took unto themselves a sudden elevation in

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> turpitude, whose origin alone it is my present purpose to assign. [337]

Here, however, the central narrative problem of *Melmoth* is evaded. Instead of losing sight of the explanation in the details of the crime, the career of the conscienceless Wilson, too evil for even his own words, is literally reduced to a pretext. The "embodiment" of the record suggests an identity of text and person which implicates the act of reading in a far more radical way, for as we come to understand, it is not so much the "elevation" from ordinary to extraordinary wickedness that the integrating narrative explains as a shift in the reader's own relation to what has happened.

In their early days as schoolfellows, the original relation between Wilson and his twin is not moral but mimetic. Wilson's double appears actually to derive his moral authority from the cultivation of a resemblance that only he can recognize.

> That *he* observed [the similarity] in all its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent; but that he could discover in such circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance, can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than ordinary penetration. [3] [344]

The process of simulation resembles that by which Agnes becomes an ever-more literal portrait of Beatrice in *The Monk*. Where Agnes renders a picture, then assumes the shape and finally the destiny of her subject, Wilson's double perceives a foundation of likeness between them, a perception exclusive to himself and his namesake, on which he then bases a mimicry that metamorphoses over the course of the narrative into an identity, which again is characterized cognitively as much, if not more, than it is morally. The episodes of thwarted villainy emphasize not so much that one is good and the other evil, but rather, as in *Frankenstein*, that one understands their relationship and the other refuses to acknowledge it. If the relation of semblance is expressed in terms of portraiture, the competitive relation is signaled primarily in terms of speech, specifically in the contrast between the narrator's robust voice (which he describes as "household law" in his early youth) and the odd, yet persistent whisper of his nemesis.

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The portraitist thus gradually assumes the roles of monitor, pursuer, judge and nemesis, to the point where the tormented narrator finally runs him through with a sword. By the time this climax is reached, it has become impossible to distinguish between them, and the tale ends, not with the resumption of the confessional frame, but with the dying words of Wilson's double, in which defeat and victory seem likewise to be completely fused.

> You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead--dead to the World, to Heaven and to Hope! In me didst thou exist -- and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself. [357]

The totality that has thus far depended on the existence of separate, dual entities collapses at the moment of narrative completion, and each gesture enacted in the murder represents a victory for the other side: morally, the sinner conquers his conscience, but as a narrator Wilson is digested by his formerly voiceless double. The climactic murder thus completes a merging of identities which has occurred in the process of our own reading about it.

Throughout his career Poe returned to this theme of fictive embodiment in a series of tales which despite drastic differences in tone and treatment all register clearly as metaphors for the creation of fictive persons. The grotesque dismemberments of "How to Write a Blackwood Article"[1838] and "The Man That Was Used Up"[1839] are overtly occupied with the Gothic problem of obstructed narrative; at the other end of his uncanny spectrum, the metaphysical dialogue "The Power of Words" [1845] offers the possibility of whole planets physically being spoken into existence. William Wilson's story both literalizes and moralizes the process: a complete self is made out of the narrated conflict between two complementary but self-contained figures, linked nonetheless by likeness. The relationship between Wilson and his double is, like the relation between reality and fiction, author and audience, language and meaning, conceivable only in the act of reading.

In "The Oval Portrait" [1842,45] literally supplies an image for this literary mechanism that allows it to be charged with tenderness as well as wonder, and,

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though it is a much shorter tale, the portrait conceit allows Poe to do some aesthetic theorizing as well. Here the portrait becomes not a revealing mirror but a vampyric doppelgänger of its subject, gradually taking on the vitality that ebbs away from her as the artist paints it. Like "William Wilson" it is a half-framed narrative, which opens with a wounded traveler holing up for the night in an abandoned castle in the Apennines. In his bedroom he finds a number of portraits "and a small volume, which had been found upon the pillow, which purported to criticize and describe them."[481] Reading for some time he moves to shift the candlelight and discovers a hitherto neglected portrait of "a young girl, just ripening into womanhood" which startles and fascinates him.

> As a thing of art nothing could be more admirable than the painting itself. But it could have been neither the execution of the work, nor the immortal beauty of the countenance, which had so suddenly and so vehemently moved me. Least of all could it have been that my fancy, shaken from its half slumber, had mistaken the head for that of a living person. I saw at once that the peculiarities of the design, of the *vignetting*, and of the frame, must have instantly dispelled such an idea--must have prevented even its momentary entertainment. [482]

This is a very clear statement of the problematic effects of fiction: quality of execution, beauty of subject, while valuable, are beside the point, as is the possibility of real delusion. The narrator ponders the problem, gazing at the portrait, till he is finally "satisfied with the true secret of its effect": "I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute *life-likeliness* of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me." "*Life-likeliness*" is a remarkable term, suggesting probability and semblance at once. As with Wilson's double, simulation is the source of power here, an aspect of artifice distinct from either "execution" or "fancy". The fictive presence transgresses a boundary -- not of truth, for it does not deceive, nor morality, for it does not act -- but of reality, of life itself. What confounds and appalls and subdues is not beauty, either of subject or the painted object that portrays her -- but rather the transposition of life onto a blatantly non-human object, a painted surface.

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Having thus formulated the cause of his wonder the narrator turns again to the book and reads the tale of the lively and beautiful maiden who marries an obsessive painter. Reluctantly agreeing to sit for him, she feels her vitality sapped out of her bit by bit with each stroke of her husband's brush, but he is oblivious to the damage until the image is perfected with a final touch. The story concludes with the completion of the transference:

> ...for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while yet he gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with loud voice, 'This is indeed *Life* itself!' turned himself suddenly round to his beloved--*she was dead*! [486]

This tale is often compared with Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" (1841), in which the scientist Aylmer finally succeeds in removing the hand-shaped birthmark on his otherwise perfect wife's cheek at the cost of her life. In both stories the inexorable will to artistic perfection leads to the destruction of the beloved woman, but while in Aylmer's case there is no question of the destructiveness of the artist's drive -- his aim is, after all, to erase, not create -- Poe's portrait story preserves the ambivalence of both forces: the painter's wife is undoubtedly a victim of his work, but unlike Aylmer's wife she is also its rival: her death is the outcome of a losing battle, not a sacrifice. That vitality that supplies the picture's final perfection, moreover, implies a mode of positive, if not voluntary, contribution,[4] The utter passivity of Aylmer's wife at all stages of the tale, on the other hand, assures us of the one-sidedness of his gesture: whether we see it as directed against imperfection, against the passive resistance of his wife's femininity, or against the intractable materiality of bodies -- Aylmer's undertaking is clearly an aggressive act. In Poe's story by contrast, because of the ways in which his wife's vitality is made both to conflict with and nourish his work, the painter's execution of the portrait may be seen either as a defensive or synthetic gesture, albeit a costly one. Not only does he undertake to create rather than destroy, but he attempts -- cruelly, as it turns out -- to unite the passions of his existence.

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> And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. [484]

The emphasis of the final sentence is carefully ambiguous, balancing love and art, and finally containing them both in the undeniable success of the depiction. If the fever of creation makes him oblivious to her debilitating illness, it is because he is successfully transferring her life to canvas. While the success of Hawthorne's mad scientist is morally ironic, the achievement of Poe's artist is technically ambiguous: has he killed her? or immortalized her? [5]

Poe famously declared that the most poetic of subjects was the death of a beautiful woman, but "The Oval Portrait" is the only prose tale he managed to write in which the poetry of the subject is not killed off by macabre effects. Where the Ligeia and Berenice and Madeline Usher are themselves projections of the horrors of the grave, the face in the Oval portrait emanates nothing but the luminous beauty of being aestheticized to death. For Poe the problem of fictive embodiment is primarily conceptual rather than moral: how to describe and characterize the fictive condition, its peculiar transgression of the boundary between imagination and fact. In this sense the portrait's intervening surface serves the same function as the resurrected bodies of the dead women of his ghost stories, or the bizarre dismemberments of his comic tales. In shifting the medium from names and texts and grotesque bodies to a portrait, however, this story of artistic appropriation infuses the process with the less cerebral, and more Romantic, paradoxes of gender and erotic desire, so that the uneasy boundary between art and reality is charged with passion. This elegant conceit for the distillation of reality into fiction evokes the essential, primitive dread of simulation -- that likenesses kill -- without succumbing to the distractions of morbid detail or Gothic accouterment. That hypnotic, appalling "Life-likeliness" is something the reader/spectator/narrator can feel without recourse to anything more harrowing than a brief text. The emphasis on mimetic transcendence rather than loss or duplicity

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or decay reminds us more effectively of the ways in which personality is itself a kind of fiction, that the making of an identity -- whether in art or in life -- is at once imperative and lethal.

§ Hawthorne's Simulations -- "The Prophetic Pictures" and "Feathertop"

For Hawthorne the relation between people and images offered an arena of a different -- and considerably wider -- range. Far more than Poe Hawthorne was responsive to the presence, the *there*ness, of pictorial images and the ways they can inform or coextend with the apparent progressions of a temporal process. In the Colonial Gothic tale "Edward Randolph's Portrait" (1838), for example, the painted image is itself an apparition, emerging like a ghost from an obscuring layer of dirt and age to do its monitory work before relapsing into near-invisibility. The eponymous image in "The Great Stone Face" (1850), conversely, endures patiently, waiting for the hero's moral development to catch up with it.

"The Prophetic Pictures" (1837)" [6] actually juxtaposes portraits with a narrative image, in a literal attempt to configure different aspects of the storyteller's art. Here a painter, legendary for his penetrating vision, makes a pair of portraits for a young couple on the occasion of their engagement; circumstances precluding the execution of a double portrait, he nevertheless paints them simultaneously, to capture an interactive effect in their expressions which interests him. He also makes a fanciful sketch of the joint composition he would have liked to have put them in. The portrait likenesses are perfect, yet each painted face carries a singular expression quite unexpected: in the woman's a look of anxiety and despair, in the man's a look of cruelty not untouched by madness. Their characters are established by their initial reactions to the portraits: Walter, the husband, is cheerfully flippant; his wife Elinor is alarmed and saddened. The painter also shows Elinor, but not Walter, the double sketch, which is not described. The painter departs on a journey: time passes, and the couple's resemblance to their portraits becomes so marked that Elinor hides them. In

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the final climactic scene the painter, haunted by his achievement, returns to the couple's home to find Walter making a murderous attack on the wife. This of course turns out to be the enactment of the suppressed sketch.

The tale is oddly contorted - more preoccupied with the painter's sensation of power, than with the substance or implications of his insight. That the wife loves the man she knows will kill her, and that the husband makes himself into a murderer in order to justify her increasing misery, are not really elements of the story at all. Even the final, moralizing note of the tale deliberately undermines the force of their interrelationship, treating their reactions to the prophesy as disjunct alternatives:

> Could the result of one, or all our deeds, be shadowed forth and set before us--some would call it Fate, and hurry onward--others be swept along by their passionate desires--and none be turned aside by the PROPHETIC PICTURES. [469]

At the beginning of the story Walter praises the painter's "gift of adapting himself to every variety of character, insomuch that all men--and all women too... -- shall find a mirror of themselves in this wonderful painter." [456] It is the Painter, not his images, who is identified with his subjects. Later on the painter is described as resembling his own portraits:

> His visiters [sic] were sensible of a kindred between the artist and his works, and felt as if one of the pictures had stept from the canvass to salute them [460]

Both these instances suggest that the painter, rather than the portrait, is a kind of conduit for emotion, a medium through which a subject may be mirrored, who will in turn manifest himself on the canvas. The painter's relationship to his subjects, and not their relationship to each other, is the subject of the story. For though hardly anything is explained about the characters of Walter and Elinor, Hawthorne is at pains to explain that the painter

> did not possess kindly feelings. His heart was cold....For these two

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> beings, however, he had felt, in its greatest intensity, the sort of interest that always allied him to the subjects of his pencil....So much of himself--of his imagination and all other powers--had been lavished on the study of Walter and Elinor, that he almost regarded them as creations of his own, like the thousands with which he had peopled the realms of Picture." [466]

What began as artistic empathy starts looking like narcissism when, on his way back to see the portraits, the painter muses on his own accomplishment, apostrophizing "glorious art!" with the "proud, yet melancholy fervor" of Promethean ambition:

> "Thou art the image of the Creator's own. The innumerable forms that wander in nothingness, start into being at they beck. The dead live again. Thou recallest them to their old scenes, and givest their gray shadows the lustre of a better life, and once earthly and immortal." [467]

It is striking how closely these words recall the ambitions of Victor Frankenstein, who also wants to reverse the process of death, and create a new kind of being. Hawthorne's painter, unlike the hounded Victor, makes a more lucid connection between the endowment of vitality and the force of determinism:

> "Thou snatchest back the fleeing moments of History. With thee, there is no Past; for, at thy touch, all that is great becomes forever present....Oh, potent Art! as thou bringest the faintly revealed Past to stand in that narrow strip of sunlight, which we call Now, canst thou summon the shrouded Future to meet her there? Have I not achieved it! Am I not thy Prophet?" [467]

And at this point Hawthorne's narrator chimes in with his own version of Victor's later warning to Walton:

> It is not good for man to cherish a solitary ambition. Unless there be those around him, by whose examples he may regulate himself, his thoughts, desires and hopes will become extravagant, and he the semblance, perhaps the reality, of a madman. [467]

The semblance of madness turns out not to be the painter's at all: it is Walter Ludlow whose obsession drives him over the edge of sanity and into murder. Yet the story's emphasis on the painter's capacity, rather than his subjects' characters, renders the distinction unnecessary. On arriving at the house, the painter stops

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'involuntarily on the threshold" of the room, and watches Walter and Elinor, unaware of his presence, in the act of looking at their portraits. A careful description of their faces and attitudes follows, concluding with Walter's absorbed contemplation of his own likeness. Then the following sequence, which ends the story:

> The painter seemed to hear the step of Destiny approaching behind him, on its progress toward its victims. A strange thought darted into his mind. Was not his own the form in which that Destiny had embodied itself, and he a chief agent of the coming evil which he had foreshadowed?
>
> 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. Gradually his eyes kindled; while as Elinor watched the increasing wildness of his face, her own assumed a look of terror; and when at last, he turned upon her, the resemblance of both to their portraits was complete.
>
> "Our fate is upon us" howled Walter. "Die!"
>
> Drawing a knife, he sustained her, as she was sinking to the ground, and aimed it at her bosom. In the action, and in the look and attitude of each, the painter beheld the figures of his sketch. The picture, with all of its tremendous coloring, was finished.
>
> "Hold, madman!" cried he sternly.
>
> He had advanced from the door, and interposed himself between the wretched beings, with the same sense of power to regulate their destiny, as to alter a scene upon the canvass. He stood like a magician, controlling the phantoms which he had evoked.
>
> "What!" muttered Walter Ludlow, as he relapsed from fierce excitement into sullen gloom. "Does Fate impede its own decree?"
>
> "Wretched lady!" said the painter. "Did I not warn you?"
>
> "You did," replied Elinor calmly, as her terror gave place to the quiet grief which it had disturbed. "But -- I loved him!" [468-9]

Following the sequence closely we can see that the moment of the painter's identification of himself with Destiny coincides with the final phase of Walter's transition into madness and murder, as though the artist's own "semblance of madness" were finding its reality, its true manifestation, in his subject, while his responsive, empathetic eye is mirrored in the face of the watching Elinor. The couple's destiny is indeed upon them: the artist at the door has literally made them into emblems of his own impulses. This transformation is complete with the climactic drawing of the dagger, which "finishes" the picture. "interposing himself" between the two, the painter confirms this identity, asserting his responsibility for the 'wretched beings" -- persons half-transformed into fictions -- that his art has generated.

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Hawthorne wrote a number of tales about artists which investigate aspects of artistic endeavor, all of which hint at without ever owning up to the participation of magic. It is suggestive that in this very early venture the spirit under exploration is neither poetic, like the sculptor Drowne's Pygmalion-like inspiration in "Drowne's Wooden Image" (1844), nor aesthetic, like Owen Warland's enduring passion for the fragile in "The Artist of the Beautiful", written in the same year; it is a little more like the daguerrotypist Holgrave's problematic heritage in *The House of Seven Gables*: rhetorical, and specifically fictional -- the art of the story-teller, which entails both fabricating unreal persons and generating interactions between them.

The narrative hub of the tale -- the clue to the relationship between the husband's expression and the wife's -- takes the literal form of a picture, which is revealed to the sensitive wife but not to the desperate husband, nor to the reader, who are thus both relegated to a state of restless surmise.

Given that the drama of realized prophesy focuses on Walter's communion with his portrait, the prophetic sketch of the murder seems somewhat superfluous. The power of an image is hardly in the story it tells: Even Dorian Gray's grotesquely animated portrait registers only the moral qualities associated with his actions, and not the actions themselves. The portraits' expressions match those of their subjects at the crucial moment should suffice as a synecdoche for prophesy. Yet Hawthorne not only makes the active relation between the two of them the central mystery of the story; he even replicates the painter's prophetic sketch quite needlessly, in a passage describing the general impression of the portraits on the couple's friends:

> A certain fanciful person announced, as a result of much scrutiny, that both these pictures were parts of one design....Though unskilled in the art, he even began a sketch, in which the action of the two figures was to correspond with their mutual expression. [465]

This proliferation of suppressed images undermines the power of the story's conceit, it emphasizes the importance of there being a coherent, *representable* action both to

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"correspond to" the implied relationship of the people portrayed, and to be withheld from both Walter and the reader. This action remains hidden and deferred till the final moment of the *story* reveals its nature, which is identical to the moment of authorial intervention by which the painter extricates himself from the encroaching identity of himself with his subjects. If the actual prophesy is covered -- concealed and comprehended both -- by the narratively neutral portrait images, then the theme of prophesy is itself also a cover for the reflexive tendency to which the mimetic artist is vulnerable.

I remarked earlier that once the painter has intervened and the crisis reached, Walter and Elinor's faces drop their acute expressions and relapse into repressed states. Although they all do it very differently, many other of Hawthorne's artist-stories engage this pattern of momentary illumination, which is simultaneously belied and defined by the lapse into fragmentation or torpor that follows it. Owen Warland's ephemeral life-work flutters and falls twice, each at a different phase of his self-understanding. "Drowne's Wooden Image", a less well-known story, tells of a stolid maker of stolid wooden figureheads, who on the mysterious inspiration of a beloved model makes a masterpiece -- and then relapses into his block-like condition, entirely unmoved either by the loss of his powers or the loss of the lady. The most radical iteration of this pattern of ephemeral coherence is a remarkable, under-read tale called "Feathertop" (1852), which returns to the theme of an author's relationship to her fictions. The last tale of Hawthorne's to be published before the appearance of *The Marble Faun* in 1859, it is the work of a far surer and more experienced author than that of "The Prophetic Pictures", but it raises similar questions about the nature of authorial control.

The story describes the genesis and short life of an artificial man, the whimsical creation of a notorious witch. Tired of her usual enterprises Mother Rigby undertakes

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"to produce something fine, beautiful, and splendid, rather than hideous and horrible." She decides at first to eschew witchcraft, and "keep within the bounds of everyday business" constructing a distinctly unmagical figure out of a broomstick and other household items, to use in her fields.[7] A true Pygmalion, however, she proves to be too susceptible to her own art. Entranced by her preposterous creation, she succumbs to the temptation to animate him, taking the magical pipe from her own mouth and compelling the pumpkinhead to draw upon it himself. By way of a joke on the "men of straw" who run the world, she endows him with a sleek appearance which only children and animals can see through, and sends him out to court the daughter of a local burgher who has once insulted her. Armed with his pipe and instructions on how to maintain his façade, the scarecrow's suit is a wild success - but in a chance encounter with a mirror he discovers his own true looks, and returns to his parent in despair to break the spell of his animation.

Like all mimetic figures Feathertop is a double being, a duality in one body which alternates between lifelessness and animation, integrity and fragmentation, jaunty self-confidence and abject shame. What crystallizes in the course of the story is how this mode of duality entails a consciousness of artifice which it turns out that he cannot sustain. Frankenstein's monster learns what it means to be a simulacrum in discovering his origins. Although Feathertop knows from the beginning that he is a fabrication -- Mother Rigby having admonished him that his true scarecrow-nature will be revealed should he fail to keep sucking on the magic pipe she has given him -- he does not know how wide the gap is between artifice and reality. The pretense of appearing sleek, integral and plausible, while actually being crude, composite and ridiculous turns out to carry an unbearable burden of self-doubt. What Feathertop loses in the mirror is not the illusion of humanity, but the hope of achieving authenticity in the successful deployment of that illusion.

Hawthorne parodies the Promethean myth by imbedding Feathertop's tragedy of self-confrontation within a very different story about an artist trying to break out of a

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rut. In "The Prophetic Pictures" the juxtaposition of the hidden prophesy and the revelatory portraits affirms the artist's ability both to penetrate his subject and, in intervening at the end, to set limits on the scope of his work. In "Feathertop" Mother Rigby's creative act begins as a deliberate experiment in limiting her art. In reversing her decision she launches her creation on an odyssey which reveals those limitations in any case. Having attempted practical utility, she is seduced by her own aesthetic powers into playing with moral utility, exploiting her creation to shame the world and avenge herself on an old enemy. Feathertop's experience of the world exposes the shabbiness of this approach: his shock of recognition in the mirror, which carries him directly back to her, serves a vicarious function, much as the spectacle of Walter's madness in the face of his own image enjoins the painter's own hubris. When, like Frankenstein's creature, Feathertop returns to confront his creator with the consequences of her actions, their exchange both reveals the reflexiveness of their relationship and underwrites the success of Mother Rigby's authorial self-masking.

Seeing him return home distraught, the indignant witch rails fiercely against the human beings who have evidently seen through her deception, and cast out her "child". But Feathertop corrects her:

> "The girl was half-won; and methinks a kiss from her sweet lips might have made me altogether human! But," he added, after a brief pause, and a howl of self-contempt, "I've seen myself, mother! -- I've seen myself for the wretched, ragged, empty thing I am! I'll exist no longer!" [1121]

Without further ado he plucks the life-giving pipe from his mouth and collapses at his creator's feet, leaving her to muse on the excessive delicacy of feeling that has destroyed his chances of being truly human:

> Poor Feathertop!... I could easily give him another chance, and send him forth again tomorrow. But, no! his feelings are too tender; his sensibilities too deep. He seems to have too much heart to bustle for his own advantage, in such an empty and heartless world. Well, well! I'll make a scarecrow of him, after all. 'Tis an innocent and a useful vocation, and will suit my darling well...and as for this pipe of tobacco, I

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need it more than he! [1122]

In allowing him to relinquish his claims to life, Mother Rigby seems to release her creation from the crushing burdens of self-consciousness, much as the painter in "The Prophetic Pictures" rescues Elinor at the eleventh hour from destruction, if not from tragedy. Here there is no tragedy; for though Feathertop's despair is genuine, his suicide is unreal, its pathos canceled by his creator's decree that he remain unresurrected. Her final appropriation of the animating pipe reinforces the sense that Mother Rigby uses her creation vicariously. Because he has assumed the burden of self-consciousness in her stead, she may console herself that her success has been too great for her public, thus affirming a mimetic division of labor between maker and made: the risk of exposure is his job; knowing when to retreat is hers.

>>><<<

The potency of Mother Rigby's witchcraft and Feathertop's plausibility are alike dependent on the good offices of Dickon, the muse of the pipe. Conjurer and conjured must use the same words ("Dickon! Another coal for my pipe!") to summon this insubstantial presence, who functions as a kind of fulcrum between the precincts of reality and magic, clearly more a linguistic than a moral entity. In lending falsehood the necessary vitality to become fiction, the disembodied Dickon occupies the same space as William Wilson's doppelgänger: the threshold of identity between life and art, sinner and conscience, unity and duality. Significantly, it is in criticizing Hawthorne that Poe uses a strikingly similar model for the crossing boundaries of meaning:

> One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a *very* profound undercurrent, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all.[8]

The extraordinary image of one level of meaning *overturning* a another suggests not simply antithesis but competition, presumably for some claim on the reader. Poe's

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emphasis on *calling* meaning to the surface might simply refer the deliberate undertaking of textual explication or exegesis by a reader -- but *calling* is hardly a readerly thing to do, and in the fleeting personification of the literal and the allegorical invoked by Poe's competitive "overturning", the possibility persists that a current of meaning might call upon its own dark undertow for momentary illumination, a kind of rhetorical self-betrayal.[9]

This idea of parallel courses between literal and allegorical meaning is in fact perfectly expressed in the relationship between Wilson and his mysterious double. In the end Wilson confronts his enemy, who has found a voice -- the unbearable voice of allegory, emerging at the last minute to declare the conflict between active fiction and moralizing allegory extinct, and allows for a narrative mode which figures personal identity as the upshot of synthetic process. The same synthetic gesture is at work in "the Oval Portrait" where instead of truth or conscience it is the vitality of the subject which is overturned -- transmitted, upset, inverted and finally supplanted -- by mimesis.[10] Both tales depend, implicitly or not, on the presence of a reader/spectator, in whose consciousness alone the synthesis of notional and actual, form and substance, can be comprehended.

In Hawthorne's stories, by contrast, the trope of fictive making effects a disjunction of maker and made, of will-less or lifeless form and animating principle, and a moral is offered that deflects attention from the problem of evaluating their relationship with which the reader is nevertheless charged.

> Shall I confess the truth? At its present point of vivification, the scarecrow reminds me of some of the lukewarm and abortive characters, composed of heterogeneous materials, used for the thousandth time, and never worth using, with which romance-writers (and myself, no doubt, among the rest) have so over-peopled the world of fiction. [1105]

This description of Feathertop's pre-animate state makes it explicit that the story figures a literary process, and that the scarecrow's failure in duplicity signals some kind of deep anxiety about its effects.[11] What remains unclear is whether this

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skepticism about fiction is addressed to Feathertop's self-doubt or in the disinterested authority of a Mother Rigby's confident, superior mastery. Where the couple in "The Prophetic Pictures" enjoin the painter to intervene on their behalf, the scarecrow takes the Romantic fall entailed by mimetic action on himself, while the witch smokes on, ready for the next project. [12] But Feathertop's sacrifice is two-edged, his delicacy rebuking his creator's callousness just as surely as it protects her from the consciousness of duplicity. Whether the scarecrow's tale is told to ensure its author's continued confidence and potency, or to expose the costs they incur, will remain a matter of the reader's own preferences or sympathies regarding authorship, for it is clear that Feathertop's anguished self-consciousness and Mother Rigby's bemused detachment are equally their author's own.

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In all of the Gothic works we looked at earlier the portrait serves as a synecdoche or talisman for some fundamental spirit of art. The stories themselves are investigations of fictive truths-- in all of them transformation are effected or attempted which invert or reveal something unexpected about the moral constitution of the characters. All of them too exploit the way that framing relation between narratives corresponds to the transitional presence of the portrait subject. Allston's devil and human worshipper comprehend the mad painter's experience and that of his most impenetrable enemy in a variety of dimensions which only an image can simultaneously present; in Irving's sequence the image activates the story but is then contained and closed by it, so that ghostliness is tamed into art, but both are tamed -- or rather put into their respective places-- by storytelling. The images in *Melmoth* serves as an emblem of the literary resonances of what appears to be a moral struggle between Gothic and Domestic forces.

In each case the framing portrait allows a Romantic tale to be identified with a proximate and plausible present. The immediate and sensational impact of the core story is preserved, while the more accessible or familiar experience that frames it

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extends its imaginative valence -- its symbolism, its suggestions -- into a different mode of fiction entirely. Thus the story of Beatrice de la Cisternas intrudes itself upon that of Don Raymond's and Agnes's courtship and transmutes it from comedy to Gothic; thus, more subtly, Irving imbeds the Gothic tale of an artist haunted by guilt in the comic tale of the Baronet's self-screening manipulations. In each case the effect of the portrait serves at once to gloss and to stimulate the framing transition that it also marks.

With Poe and Hawthorne's tales of simulation this complex synthesis of annotation and modulation is pushed still further into the realm of authorial self-exploration. Each writer uses a different aspect of the act of *portrayal* -- the combination of doubling and making -- to express a fundamental paradox of fiction that to create a mimetically persuasive person entails both the assertion of control and the risk of exposure. Poe's transformational narratives show how representation by nature -- or rather, by artifice -- devolves on a paradox, such that an individual can be responsible for creating an alternative self, a projected essence, *only* with materials that he believes to be Other. Hawthorne's fables of making, in which an artist's ambivalence is annotated and revealed by the anguished self-confrontations of vicarious effigies, are about what an author's investment in undertaking a fiction might have to deny about itself.

The figures in these stories serve neither as impersonal allegories nor as confessional self portraits; they are rather fictive selves, which play out, among other things, their authors' own peculiar dramaturgy of making, their methods of negotiating the conflicting forces of fiction and allegory, of composition and interpretation, of making and meaning. If the witch and the sinner are agents of mimetic enterprise, the sacrificial scarecrow and the ghostly, moralizing double are allegorizing forces, moral constructions of literal fact that become incorporated into the medium of fiction as a whole. Where Frankenstein and his monstrous creature configure social and political, as well as imaginative complexities of achieving personality or selfhood, the

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scarecrow and the doppelgänger embody the more specifically literary problem of figuring a potential or possible person, whose function appears to be assimilation into reality but who enacts, at the same time, some fundamental resistance to it.

In each case, this resistance actually achieves its climax in an ironically impotent suicide, an act of self-destruction that signals not so much moral despair as a transmutation from one imaginative framework to another. In realistic fictions, the Romantic trope of an animated simulacrum could not survive as such, but as we will see in the next chapter, the portrait sustained much of its monitory and reflexive power. Just as the portrait's multivalent identifications with maker, subject, and spectator could modulate between temporal schemes or narrative modes, its autonomous impact as a simulated person could be charged with the burdens of conscience or ironic detachment, making it a witness to or participant in the transformations undergone by a more robust fictional self.

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NOTES

[1] It is worth noting further that in *Clueless* (1995), the recent and otherwise quite loose adaptation of *Emma* into the modern vernacular of Beverly Hills high-school students, this episode of the portrait is carefully preserved. Because the image in question takes the form of a photograph, however, it becomes completely implausible, and strikes one of the few false notes of the film. No one would put a snapshot of someone in his locker to enshrine the person who held the camera: even the artiest of portrait photographs are just too directly traces of their subjects to sustain that ambiguity of association. Because this is not the kind of implausibility that is in keeping with the tone of the rest of the film, this episode is probably the only thing in *Clueless* that one needs to have read *Emma* to appreciate properly. Both the impulse to preserve the episode and its failure to "translate" without support from the text are reminders of how differently the desire to mediate between story and image is fulfilled in the 20th century's photographic world, which embraces both the isolated moment of the snapshot and the encompassing cosmos of the movies.

[2] Brownstein explores the affinity between reader and heroine as a kind of shared act of self-making in *Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels.* (New York: Viking, 1982)

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[3] All page numbers refer to *Poe: Tales and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1984) unless otherwise noted.

[4] This conceit of rivalry suggests other constructions besides the conflict of vitality and morbidity or (as Hawthorne construes it) perfection and imperfection. In *L'oeuvre* (1886) for example, Zola adapts the theme to pose the conflict in terms of sexual versus creative energy, which is ultimately destructive to the artist, rather than the model, although she too is allotted her share of anguish in being forced to pose for him. This is the French mode, in which feminine sexuality and fecundity wars with mimetic generation, instead of being imaginatively allied with it.

[5] This question is made explicit in the first published version of the tale, originally called "Life in Death" (usually rejected by modern editors for its long, and later excised passage describing the narrator taking opium at the beginning), published in April 1842. To the conclusion of the story it adds the following line: "The painter then added--"but is this indeed Death?'" *The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Tam Mossman (Philadephia: Running Press, 1983): 738

[6] All citations are from *Hawthorne: Tales and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1982).

[7] It should be noted that this description of Feathertop's composition invokes the piecemeal inheritances of a specifically American literary culture. On a skeleton of basic domesticity (a broomstick-backbone, etc) is hung a variety of cast-off effects suggestive of secondhand European conventions: a coat "of London make", and "a pair of scarlet breeches, once worn by the French Governor of Louisbourg, and the knees of which had touched the lower step of the throne of Louis le Grand" -- which in turn are tinged with Frontier savagery or animism: "The Frenchman had once given these small-clothes to an Indian powwow, who parted with them to the old witch for a gill of strong waters, at one of their dances in the forest." [1105] Viewed in this light, the scarecrow's collapse might well suggest Hawthorne's sense of having exhausted the resources -- both literary and professional -- available to an American writer of fiction.

[8] From Poe's review of *Mosses from an Old Manse* and *Twice-Told Tales* -- for *Godey's Lady's Book* November, 1847. Quoted here from *Poe: Essays and Reviews* (New York: Library of America, 1984): 582-3. The emphasis is Poe's.

[9] While it may hint of violent upset or reversal, the act of "overturning" something to establish a fact also distinctly evokes the clinical scrutiny of the archeologist or detective. In terms of an approach to fiction, the clearest vindication of Poe's model of parallel meaning in his own work is undoubtedly the detective sequence, which I take to include not only the Dupin stories, but all the tales which detail concrete, sequential action -- whether the upshot be murder or arrest -- whose meaning, or specific relation to a general scheme or intention, emerges by controlled degrees within the narrative itself. "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Cask of Amontillado", "The Pit and the Pendulum" all accomplish this -- in a way that "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "Ligeia" do not.

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[9] Speaking of the remarkable allegory the aesthetic prior in *Monaldi* remarks "there is a tremendous reality in the picture that comes home to every man's imagination; even the dullest feel it, as if it had the power of *calling up* the faculty in minds never before conscious of it". [17 -- emphasis added]

[10] The passage has been cited in two notably divergent interpretations of the tale. Pamela Schirmeister sees "Feathertop" as Hawthorne's most intimate revelation of his own doubts about writing fiction, arguing very persuasively that Mother Rigby's refusal to give her scarecrow another trial figures a renunciation of romance which is eventually reversed, after a long silence, in *The Marble Faun*. Ellen Westbrook reads the story as a series of reversals and affirmations of the reader's capacity to distinguish between the real and the imaginary. In her view Mother Rigby's final abandonment of her creation figures a master-author's reclamation of precisely that faith in "the efficacy of fiction" that the scarecrow-reader has lost. See Pamela Schirmeister, *The Consolations of Space: The Place of Romance in Hawthorne, Melville, and James* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) 16-23 and Ellen Westbrook, "Exploring the Verisiimilar: Hawthorne's "Wakefield" and "Feathertop." *Arizona Quarterly* 45:4 (1989): 1-23. The phrase cited appears on page 21.

[11] Most clearly adumbrated here is the notion of the sacrificial model explored by Jonathan Auerbach in his important essay "Executing the Model: Painting, Sculpture, and Romance-writing in *The Marble Faun*" *ELH* 47 (1980): 103-120. "Feathertop" also prepares the way for the larger and broader range of relations between artists and their models in that book, which I discuss below in Chapter 4.

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Chapter 3 - Post-Gothic: Engendering Images

In Anglo-American fiction between 1840 and 1860, the fictional portrait episode spanned a range of effects -- from spooky ancestral image of the Gothic to more modern-feeling encounters in studios and picture-galleries -- which all seem to embody contending forces of expression and repression in mimetic representation. Some of these conflicts are overtly technical: we have seen how Hawthorne and Poe used the very intimate form of the tale to gloss the mirroring impact of the portrait surface as a kind of textual or authorial self-fashioning. In early Victorian novels portraits are generally sites for self-recognition or self-fashioning in social terms as well, serving as imaginative touchstones for processes of personal transformation far more firmly grounded in the conventions of external society.

In the Gothic idiom, the persons of the core and frame narratives double or mirror each other, a relation underwritten, so to speak, by the conjunction of the portrait image with an explanatory text or story. As the narrative conventions of Gothic give way to newer methods, we find the compelling image serving its pivotal function more economically than the monitory narrative it had once summoned; in its very silence the device of the rebuking or revelatory portrait acquires some of its greatest potency. The confrontation with a portrait remains one of the few situations in which the *feeling* of supernatural or magical transport can be evoked without undermining the context of familiarity which in its broadest sense characterizes Victorian realism. Like Adam's domesticating claim on Eve, with its curious Hellish echoes, this effect swings two ways: on one hand the persistent portrait presence represents domestication of the magical or preternatural forces once represented by ghosts and magical transformations, a means of neutralizing the intrusive effect of supernatural devices in the otherwise plausible texture of narrative. But we may also find the fictional portrait acting like a cleverly disguised ghost, its evocative presence holding out for Gothic unsettlement, a talisman against just that kind of narrative domestication that

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plausibility seems to entail.

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Because a portrait cannot seek out or follow its intended audience, its relation to the viewers must itself be sought out, discovered, revealed and, in fiction, *read*. The frame narrative enforces a continuity between the acts of showing and beholding, telling and reading; but "Behold me" and "Hear my tale" are not identical imperatives, and post-Gothic instances of the frame convention derive a new kind narrative energy from the tension between them. A rather blatant, and therefore instructive example of this tension can be found in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1847) a narrative whose impact is equally dependent on the Gothic rhythm of unsettling spectacle and deferred explanation, and on the set-pieces and discursive, characteristic speeches of the domestic comedy of manners. It tells how a small country community is invaded by a mysterious, unconventional young woman, Helen Graham, who takes up residence with her young son in the local Gothic edifice, Wildfell Hall. The young, easygoing, good-looking squire Gilbert Markham, darling of the community, finds himself irresistibly drawn to this curt beauty, who makes a modest living as a portrait painter, and becomes the center of scandalous rumors. A third of the way through the novel, Helen's diary emerges, and the middle chapters are taken up with the history of her courtship by, marriage to, and flight from a brutal, high-born husband.

The core tale of Helen's horrific first marriage is a fine example of piled-on Gothic agony, full of minute detail, claustrophobia, and accumulated desperation; its frame, narrated by the privileged Markham, reads like Victorian detective narrative: though set in a small village, its scenes constantly change, as do the perceptions and attitudes of its narrator. What builds is suspense, not pressure: through a series of advances and setbacks, Markham and Helen gradually win each other's trust. The dark and mysterious history of the apparently fallen woman alternately suppresses and gives way to the more delicate, personal puzzle of what to make of her conduct

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towards Markham.

Here not only is the appearance of the suggestive portrait separated from its explanatory text by several chapters -- the deferral itself becomes an integral element of the plot. In Chapter Five Markham visits Helen Graham's studio, where he observes two portraits which represent her suppressed past: one of her son in his infancy, which he recognizes; the other, which has been turned to the wall, of a beautiful blond man with a full mouth. Only much later, when Markham's narrative arrives at his reading of Helen's diary, do we learn that this is Helen's husband, Arthur Huntingdon, from whom she has lately escaped. In revealing Huntingdon's portrait Markham not only opens a window onto Helen's past; his specific gesture of disclosing a hidden image also (in the inverted manner of the Gothic) prefigures an earlier moment. Several chapters later, Helen's diary recounts how, shortly after *their* first meeting, Arthur Huntingdon discovers his own image on the back of one of the youthful Helen's drawings, and insists on looking through the rest of her work for similar betrayals of her attraction to him. [18:155] The episode is one of several that leads to her marriage, and is meant to indicate -- to the reader, but not the naïve diarist -- the selfish brutality that will later make Huntingdon into a monster.

The revelation of the image -- specifically by *reversal* -- links the behavior of the wicked suitor and the good one in a wonderful nexus that allows us to register both the contrast and the similarities between them, but the gesture registers a change in Helen, and foregrounds the issue of her confidence. Like Huntington, Markham insists on the masculine prerogative of disclosing the hidden image, but when he asks who the subject of her portrait is, the older, more experienced Helen rebukes his impertinence by warning him that she will never gratify his curiosity. But of course sooner or later she must, and her eventual confidence in Markham precipitates the core narrative of the novel which explains why she has withheld it. The interval between the appearance of the portrait and the reading of the diary is the substance of Markham's story, which recounts the development both of their relationship and of his

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own character. Overall, his framing story of incremental advances and retreats of trust takes up as much room as her core narrative of degradation and despair. The good future husband's momentary identity with the bad old one suggests a typically Gothic polarity, but the extended frame narrative emphasizes the process of reconciliation, balancing past horrors with present ambiguities and future hopes.

In the Gothic idiom, narrative pressures -- the difficulty of the story's getting itself told -- are aligned with psychological pressures traditionally associated with the claustral imagery of the genre. Through the link of likeness the portrait effigy serves as a portal -- both a way in and a way out -- of the enclosing space, precipitating escape or entry in the crisis of narrative. In the aftermath of Gothic, we find these spatial boundaries redefined in terms of social constraints: imprisonment in the convent or the ancient text becomes imprisonment in a set of ideal or social relations, constructions of experience that inhibit authenticity. Here what the portrait enables is less a matter of escape, entry, or onward progress than of articulation and authority. The problem becomes not getting the tale told, but surviving the telling of it intact: art becomes a means of preserving the self-driven authority of Romantic sensibility within the normative, socially-driven forms of prosaic domesticity.

Formally, the revisionary momentum of pictorial likeness registers not so much in the mechanics of narrative progress, but in the expectations attendant upon genre. Many works of this period figure the kind of generic conflict adumbrated in *Melmoth* between the forces of vertiginous Gothic and Victorian domestication. The process whereby narrative barriers of the frame and core gradually yield to continuous narrative itself figures the problem of reconciling the truths and passions and dangers associated with Gothic or Romantic experience with the demands of domestic, bourgeois, normative society. In these cases a portrait can serve to communicate between the two modes of composing a character's own experience, revealing not identity so much as character. Instead of crossing moral or metaphysical boundaries between life and death, past and present, aspiration and transgression, crime and

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punishment, their revelations help to redraw the more arbitrary and morally ambivalent societal boundaries of gender, class, marriage, and legitimacy.

The transition from Gothic victimization to redeemed domesticity is often a story of personal empowerment, of overcoming obstacles, which *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* enacts both in its depiction of Helen's reluctant assimilation into a suspicious society and in its modification of the frame structure. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* the process of assimilation takes two generations, a temporal span which comprises and in a sense naturalizes the narrative disjunction of frame and core. Here the conflicting forces of Gothic intensity and progressive domestication are figured spatially, by the worlds of Grange and Heights. The physical movements between the two places, most importantly Catherine's defection from one to the other and her daughter's subsequent return, map the difficulties of reconciling Gothic romance with Victorian realism. Interestingly, what triggers the mediation between frame and core narratives is not a portrait, but the sequence of carved names -- "Catherine Earnshaw", "Catherine Heathcliff", and "Catherine Linton" [ch.3] -- which identify the multiple aspects and incarnations of Catherine in time, while establishing the origin of their meaning in the past. As such they present a mystery to Lockwood, the narrator, but although the story connecting the names is told, he remains alienated from any true understanding of the mystery -- as does, in a far subtler and more deliberate way, the teller of the story, Nelly Dean. Instead of confronting the story in the form of a face, with an answering, potentially mirroring gaze, Lockwood is compelled to read, to decipher, and thus to remain outside the story. What registers in the framing moment is not only that there is a story to be told, which may transform or implicate the hearer, but that the story is still going on, regardless of him. The mystery is not in the identity of the person named but in the relation of multiple identities to each other, a relation only comprehensible over and through time.

Meanwhile, the portraits in *Wuthering Heights* seem to be invoked deliberately to underline their own impotence in driving the narrative. Thus we find the futile

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Lockwood empathizing with a portrait of Edgar Linton in Chapter 8, while Nelly rhapsodizes about the virtues of her dead master. She explains that the companion portrait of his wife is missing, and it is only much later that we learn that Heathcliff carried it off, having spotted it at the Grange right after Edgar's death. The moment is revealing, for it indicates the persistence of the portrait convention as a kind of Gothic cliché: Heathcliff's single utterance on the subject captures its hollowness as well: "I shall have that home. Not because I need it but--" and there he breaks off to explain his unorthodox arrangements for opening the side of Cathy's coffin. [29:273] It is clearly preposterous that a man so elementally conscious of the disposition of moldy bones, and who moreover has been haunted for eighteen years by the ghost of his beloved, should be moved to furnish his house with her mere painted image, but Heathcliff does it all the same, not so much to demonstrate the extent of his possessiveness as to acknowledge the artistic conventions which have produced him; by removing the significant portrait from the sight of the framing narrator, he also thwarts the possibility of exploiting those conventions later. No need for portraits here indeed -- any more than Lockwood's genteel, rather self-satisfied influence is required to bring the young Catherine to happiness. Instead, balance among the living is eventually achieved in the mimetic, revisionary union of the young Catherine with Hareton Earnshaw, likenesses generated not by art but by the erotic, imaginative and moral persistence of the earlier generation.

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The mode of *Wuthering Heights* is mythic; its characters are forces, accumulated, released, and eventually reconciled in the more manageable personalities of the later generation, without recourse to the kind of confrontation between internal and external perspectives entailed in the portrait trope. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is a didactic melodrama, in which the characters are not so much inwardly developed as outwardly shaped, tried and chastened by their contact with each other. Here confrontations between internal and external conditions matter enormously: Helen's

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cloistered sufferings first challenge, then find relief in Markham's sunny publicity; but in the end these transformations are more schematic than imaginative. As framed narratives, both novels make emblematic use of portraits, but neither engages the trope very deeply in the processes of adjustment[1] that they document.

The personal image always carries something like the force of an actual presence, which appears to look out from another dimension of existence. When the rhetorical structure of the frame is abandoned the portrait image serves to mediate not between phases of the narrative so much as aspects of a particular character's role in it. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Herman Melville's *Pierre* (1852) are examples of what happens when the mechanical function of the portrait as a narrative or perspectival pivot becomes completely internalized, absorbed as it were into the narrative idiom of Bildungsroman. Here the effort at integration occurs within the personality of an individual, and once again we find portraits really at work *as* fictions themselves.

In achieving position, property, and loving marriage, the "disconnected, poor and plain" governess makes a familiar transition from the impotent, inchoate sensibility of Gothic Romance to the confident, disciplined, yet still Romantically sensitive autonomy of Victorian Realism. The transition takes the form of the discovery and assumption of an obstructed inheritance, a legacy not just of wealth and class, but of intellect and sensibility.[2] In breaking out of obscurity and poverty into privacy and autonomy Jane is driven by a deep resistance to Gothic dramaturgy of repression, and her greatest difficulties are encountered in the process of disengaging herself from the roles Victim and Monster that the Gothic disposition would demand. What distinguishes *Jane Eyre* is the peculiarly mimetic dimension in which these practical and moral transpositions are carried out: for Jane, becoming the mistress of her own estate means becoming the author of her own story, the confident, aesthetically distanced, teller of her tale.

Pierre (1852) is another example of what might be called aesthetic Bildung, though of course it is a very different kind of book. Where the Brontës' transitional

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fictions do earnest work to resolve and integrate the imaginative forces of vertiginous or hermetic Romance and sustainable bourgeois Domesticity, Melville finds Domesticity and Romance equally illusory and corrosive, and *Pierre* is a nervy satire on their respective genres designed simultaneously to pander to and express his contempt for their audiences. Like *Jane Eyre*, his story documents an individual career as a literary mutation from one species of Romantic narrative to another -- from pastoral fable (Pierre in the country, preparing to succeed to princely estate by drinking excessive bowls of milk) to Gothic allegory (Pierre in prison, calling for "another body" and killing himself and Isabel with a vial of poison from her bosom). Aside from its heavy literary self-reference, the book is full of cultural, religious, and artistic iconography: it makes persistent use of architecture and statuary, for example, to invoke simultaneously the absolute objectivity and the mutability of time. Ultimately the book excavates and eviscerates, as Sacvan Bercovitch has characterized it, "the rhetoric of self-discovery" (256)[3] but in doing this it also uncovers a similar dynamic between the comprehensibility of visual and verbal media, which play themselves out in Pierre's unfolding relationships with pictures, with femininity, and with the possibility of knowledge.

Each of these novels is to some extent haunted by the frame convention it appears to eschew, and each exploits a different kind of fictional portrait convention to figure its protagonist's efforts at self-formation outside of it. Jane's first-person narration successfully frames her earlier self only through a remarkable control of readerly empathy and narrative distance, and we will see how the portraits Jane paints become markers for phases of her development within the framework of that voice that permit her to sustain it. In *Pierre*, the central juxtaposition of the frame convention -- the portrait image and the story behind it -- permeates the narrative surface, so that the gradual disintegration documented by the novel springs directly from that gap between image and explanation. Here portraits serve to bracket and rebuke the hero's failure to achieve precisely the kind of integration Jane manages.

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In each case the portrait trope shifts the narrative emphasis from reading -- the identification of reader with viewer, viewer with subject -- to self-definition, agency and responsibility.

Like Helen Graham and Heathcliff, Jane Eyre and Pierre Glendinning are both deliberately deviant protagonists, designed to challenge literary and social convention at once. Because both are also provisional artists -- Jane is an amateur painter, Pierre a failed novelist -- we find the authorial anxieties invoked in *Frankenstein* and other fictions of doubling are shaping themselves more to the context of social and cultural mutation. Most important of these is the problem of whether fiction, and mimetic art generally, reveals or conceals reality, more specifically whether the truth about the world can only be told by concealing the self. We have seen how Poe and Hawthorne use the conceit of making portraits to enact those tensions between exposure and concealment -- or in Poe between animation and vitiation -- which result in the displacement of author by his creation, or vice versa.

Jane and Pierre on the other hand literally face the problem of composing their experience in behalf of their creators, seeking coherence (recognition, balance, self-knowledge, autonomy, etc) through (among other means) the integration of identifying image and explanatory narrative. In both cases, moral or social development is a function of an explicitly aesthetic process. Jane succeeds and Pierre fails, for reasons widely different from each other, but the point is that their trajectories coextend with the undertakings of their authors. Thus Pierre's own derivative, fragmentary novel is, like the incoherence of his relation to Isabel, an emblem of the fundamental confusion about the nature of representation which is one of *Pierre* 's basic themes. In the same way, Jane moves between extreme elements of her character with precisely the fluctuations of conviction that her creator seems to undergo in letting her do it, so that her successes and compromises embody those of Brontë's romance. At stake in both cases are precepts not only of morality but of representation: what are the processes by which a protagonist comes to recognize, or

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a reader comes to understand, his or her situation?

A crucial aspect of self-authorship is gender, especially the possibilities afforded (and the consequences incurred) by reaching across its boundary. Jane and Pierre are confronted with a range of gendered Others to choose from. They each engage in processes of alienation from or identification with those Others which become integral to their respective movements through the various social, physical and social spaces they inhabit, and play key roles in their success and failure. Without her imaginative ability to identify with masculine passion and patriarchal firmness Jane would not have the opportunity to make either of her decisively feminist moves. Pierre, awakened to the potency of his father's past, perversely lays himself open to too many feminine affinities, and exhausts himself in the confusion. To the basic question of mimetic self-exploration is added the question: What principles of gender-identification are to be relied upon to produce a coherent self-image sufficiently permeable by outside forces to advance in the world yet not so vulnerable to them as to disintegrate under their pressure? What these two very different retro-Gothic works share is their complex implication of gender in the relation, not just between language and image, but between narrative and pictorial representations of personality.

§ *Jane Eyre*: Concealed Portraits and Revealed Voices

I have called *Jane Eyre* a Bildungsroman because it documents a transformation that coincides with the achievement of maturity, but adolescence, the period of transformation which both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* draw very vividly, is almost completely absent from Jane's otherwise detailed account of her life. Adrienne Rich famously called it "a tale" rather than a novel[4] -- i.e., a narrative whose primary gestures, formally and morally speaking, are disclosure and concealment, rather than growth or development. The tensions between hiding and showing are more complicated than Gothic conventions can really sustain. The first moment of the book finds Jane sandwiched between a pane of glass and a concealing

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curtain, which is ripped away by the brutal John Reed. But violent exposure is supplanted by violent concealment when she is thrust ruthlessly into the unvisited Red Room. At Lowood, she suffers the humiliation of public disgrace, but also enjoys the delights of open community: learning and shared confidence. In general, exposure has valuable consequences; Jane's restoration to her proper fortune depends on initially on Mrs. Reed's belated disclosure of Jane's existence to the uncle in Madeira, and in the end on the revelation of her identity by St. John Rivers. Overall, too, the gesture of revelation seems to be a masculine prerogative. Even Rochester both shows as much as he hides, but his canniest ruses -- the sham marriage, the cross-dressing Gypsy disguise -- all suggest an empathy with femininity that makes him her worthiest match.

Yet concealment is Jane's personal specialty; "I never saw a girl her age with so much cover" says one of the less sympathetic servants at Gateshead Hall [2:10][5]. Whether or not it is good for her Jane always wants to be invisible -- to see without being seen, to remain hidden from public view, safe from the forced exposure. At the same time, she is deeply resistant to repression, to the expectation that to be hidden is to be, de facto, in the power of that which exposes. It is this resistance that drives her to speak, to command an audience and declare her thoughts -- especially to those who would assume the power either to sequester or expose: Mrs. Reed, Rochester, and St. John Rivers. While these spoken revelations bring her autonomy and self-command, she continues to shrink from visual exposure, finding her greatest happiness in the company of obscure women and, in the end, a blind man. That in the end she takes charge not only of her husband's vision but of his right, or writing, hand reminds us that Jane's is the progress of an author -- who can both enter into and draw upon the feelings of others and regard her past self with empathy and distance. Like Frankenstein's creature, she seeks a way into the world without unduly exposing herself; for her, as for him, the process of becoming a fit teller of her own story entails a reorganization of the relation between vision and language. [6]

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As a child, Jane's visionary temperament is established at the outset, nourished by the sublime, arctic landscapes of Bewick's *History of British Birds* ("the letterpress thereof I cared little for, generally speaking" [1:6]) and by the Gothic specters of the Red Room. Both of these visual experiences precipitate Jane's first act of self-making, her defiant speech to Mrs. Reed, who has palmed her off on Mr. Brocklehurst as a liar: "*Deceit is not my fault!*" she shouts. "But you are passionate, Jane, that you must allow," is the reply. [4:32] The exchange sets forth a mimetic problem as well as a moral one. Mrs. Reed's coldness knows no difference between passion and falsehood; her own deceptions are entirely justified in her mind by her respectability. Though this authority, which Jane's violent truth-telling subverts, is cruel and unjust, it is real, and in the more neutral environment of Lowood Helen Burns teaches Jane the realistic lesson that strong emotion, however authentic, will distort or hide the truth in the ears of her listeners [8:62].[7]

Education offers Jane access to new forms of expression. "I learned the first two tenses of the verb être and drew my first cottage...on the same day"[8] That night, she fantasizes about future achievements, more satisfying than food:

> I feasted instead on the spectacle of ideal drawings, which I saw in the dark; all the work of my own hands: freely pencilled houses and trees, picturesque rocks and ruins, Cuyp-like groups of cattle, sweet paintings of butterflies hovering over unblown roses, of birds picking at ripe cherries, of wrens' nests enclosing pearl-like eggs, wreathed about with young ivy sprays. I examined too, in thought, the possibility of my ever being able to translate currently a certain little French story-book which Madame Pierrot that day had shown me; nor was that problem solved to my satisfaction ere I fell sweetly asleep. [9:65]

Instead of the polar landscapes that supported her isolation at Gateshead, Jane's inward eye now feeds on natural subjects and domestic scenes. Her ambitions are notably more vivid and specific in the pictorial vein than in the linguistic one, the new language affording a vaguer, though equally engaging, promise of mastery. Here, too, instead of telling tales, she listens to several other story-tellers, romancers who,

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though they do not lie, also do not reveal much in the way of truth. The first, and most important, is Bessie, the pretty, short-tempered nursemaid with her own "remarkable knack of narrative" [4:24] who befriends Jane as a child and witnesses her emergence into adulthood. Bessie's fairy-tales furnish Jane with an image to describe her first impression of Rochester and a topic for their first conversation, which establishes their imaginative rapport: Rochester continues to call Jane a fairy throughout the novel. Also with a "turn for narrative" [9:68] is Mary Ann Wilson, the inferior but entertaining friend who gossips with Jane in the absence of the sick, high-minded Helen Burns (who reads Dr. Johnson and Virgil -- no silly romances for her).

By the time she gets to Thornfield, however, she finds that Mrs. Fairfax has "no notion of sketching a character" [11:92] and is similarly disappointed in Sophie, Adèle's French maid[9]. Instead Rochester tells all the stories, calling her a born audience. "Know," he says, "that in the course of your future life you will often find yourself elected the involuntary confidant of your acquaintances' secrets: people will instinctively find out, as I have done, that it is not your forte to tell of yourself, but to listen while others talk of themselves" [14:119] But the stories that Rochester tells of his past are all incomplete or misleading, failing to catch up to present reality or resolve themselves into truth. This shift from feminine to masculine story-telling -- from romance or gossip to deception and evasion, if you like -- also entails for Jane another shift, from safe sequestration to the risk of exposure. For though he claims her as his confidant, Rochester is in fact doing whatever he can to expose Jane, spying on her movements, interrogating her, first compelling her honesty though his own bluntness and his intelligence, and later attempting to trick her into self-betrayal by assuming the guise of a Gypsy woman.

In their first interview he warns her that he is an expert in the language of the eye, and peering at her portfolio, he discovers that Jane is an artist -- of profoundly Romantic imagination and resources, as the watercolors she shows him suggest. These are all visionary subjects, freighted with Miltonic and Romantic allusions, most of

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which Rochester identifies ("Where did you see Latmos?" [13:111]) though Jane herself identifies the figure in the last of them as "the shape which shape had none" from Book 2 of *Paradise Lost*. These images[10] are the locus of Jane's missing adolescence, and enact her fundamental transformation from vision to visibility. Where her private visions and dreams have been communicated to us, these images make Jane's imaginative and erotic power available to Rochester, and so establish her maturity as a sexual being. This is why, though Jane has plenty of dreams and visions at Thornfield, she makes no more visionary watercolors. Instead her subsequent pictures are all portraits, personal images which, unlike either the benign landscapes of childhood aspiration or the stark visions of her adolescence, engage directly with matters of identity and recognition. And it is just here that the forces of Gothic revelation -- in the shape of the suppressed figure of Bertha Mason Rochester -- threaten most to take over the story.

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In their account of Jane's pilgrimage Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that once she reaches Thornfield the women Jane encounters -- Bertha and Blanche Ingram, Grace Poole to Adèle -- are all species of double, monitory figures who figure possible selves, sets of terms on which a woman can operate in the world, which Jane's own identity must claim or revise, or defy.[11] I would observe however that it is to the reader, and not Jane herself, that these possibilities speak; when we read her descriptions of minor characters (the other ladies at the house party, Mrs. Fairfax, and Leah) it becomes clear that far from needing to be warned or instructed in the courses of feminine existence, Jane is quite aware that deviation from feminine norms is both the essence of her character, and a risky proposition. While her assessments of others bring Jane's character into focus for *us*, her own vision requires a different sort of training, which has less to do with the substance of her judgements than with the establishment of a coherent position from which to make them -- the position, indeed, of the very narrator who presents us this whole experience in the first place. Within

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the narrative, it is the sequence of portraits, deliberate, controlled re-presentations of personality, that document Jane's gradual adjustment to a world which does not afford the protection of invisibility.

The sequence begins in chapter 16, while Rochester is away at the Ingrams'. When Mrs. Fairfax tells her about Blanche, she makes a pair of portraits: a crayon drawing of herself[12], and a delicately painted miniature of the rival whom she has never seen. She sets herself the task as a "sentence," to rebuke and check what she has recognized as her dangerous longings for Rochester. The pastel self-portrait is to be scrupulously honest: "omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity." The miniature is a piece of fantasy, derived from Mrs. Fairfax's description: "remember the raven ringlets, the oriental eye;--what! you revert to Mr. Rochester as a model! Order! No snivel!--no sentiment!--no regret!" The pictures are an attempt to impose a disciplined realism (for we know the banal Mrs. Fairfax to be incapable of romancing) on Jane's overactive imagination, when she actually sees Blanche in action, a peculiar reversal takes place: the vulgarity, and more important, the ineptitude of the "accomplished lady of rank" entirely undermines her romantic impact as a candidate for Rochester's love -- though Jane takes it for granted that he will marry her anyway, "for family, perhaps political reasons" [18:163].[13] The paired portraits embody her ambivalence about the relative status of private and public vision, but in so doing they also raise questions about mimetic honesty. The true self-portrait is nameless and generic: "Portrait of a governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" -- while the idealized miniature is given the name of the real woman who inspired it: "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank". [16:141] The titles seem to invert the relative status of harsh, demotic reality and genteel, romantic fiction.

The classical feminist reading of the sequence of Jane's alter-egos culminates in the figure, not of Blanche but of Bertha, whose terrifying and repressed rage both reveals and displaces Jane's own defiance of expectation.[14] Bertha makes two appearances which bracket the episode involving Blanche, a juxtaposition which

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suggests an identity between the sham, show wife and the hidden, real one. Both are roles that Jane will eventually assume herself: she plays the former part during Rochester's ostentatious courtship and the aborted wedding that follows; the latter at Ferndean, when she comes, invisibly, to claim her husband. Viewed in this light the paired portraits anticipate the apparition of Bertha in Jane's rooms the night before her wedding [ch. 25]. Here the link between the two Mrs. Rochesters is directly embodied in the silk wedding veil, which Bertha tears in two, a violent split which, like the lightening-struck tree that Jane muses on, figures the cognitive rupture of Gothic resolution. By contrast, Jane's juxtaposition of the finely painted lady and the roughly sketched self, while they still indicate a conflict, point to a therapeutic rather than cathartic model of revelation, an alignment of internal and external forces deriving from patient labor, rather than violent cataclysm. The role played by words is an important element in the distinction. In the case of the veil language follows spectacle: having witnessed the incident, Jane reports it to Rochester, who skillfully finds ways to turn the experience into a nightmare generated by her own anxiety.

Immediately after Jane's encounter with Blanche Jane goes back to Gateshead, where she encounters the grimly ascetic Eliza and bathetically voluptuous Georgiana, grotesque caricatures of the earlier images who present no significant challenge to her powers of representation. Instead she draws a fancy head in black pencil, and finds herself overtaken once again by the forces of desire, giving into and finally emphasizing its inevitable likeness to Rochester. Romance is on the ascent again, this time under cover, for when questioned about the drawing Jane denies the likeness, disavowing the role of her own feelings in her work. At the same time, though, her drawing puts her onto speaking terms with her cousins, who have hitherto had nothing to say to her.

Jane sees who she is, and what others are; she has yet to call those images by their proper names, to reconcile the realist's honesty and clarity of vision with the Romantic's reliance on feeling to compel the imagination. Rochester cannot help her

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here: in recognizing and naming the inspiration for her pictures, he appears to authorize her vision; but the (marital) authority he offers her is a lie, and his courtship is fraught with distortions and deceptions executed in the name of emotional authenticity. Distorted too is the boundary of gender, Rochester having assumed the prerogatives of both masculine assertiveness and feminine concealment. His house, with its gold-diggers, hidden maniacs and bastard children, is no place for a fiercely unconventional heroine to integrate the contending forces in her character. Closing the doors of Thornfield behind her for good, she recovers herself in the company of the impoverished but refined young women at Moor House, potential sisters and surrogate selves, who (like the DeLaceys in *Frankenstein*) teach her a new language and offer her a glimpse of what gratified desire actually looks like.

Hitherto Jane has acknowledged feminine beauty only in the grotesque forms of childish coquetry (Adèle), shallow selfishness (Blanche), voluptuary decadence (Georgiana) and bestial debauchery (Bertha). The good looks of her new companions -- especially Diana Rivers's long curls, robust size and "remarkable countenance...instinct both with power and with goodness" are a revelation. "I had nowhere seen such faces as theirs; and yet, as I gazed on them, I seemed intimate with every lineament"[28:292]. It is suggestive that despite repeated allusions to their refined good looks she makes no portraits of her new friends. Instead she gives Mary, the paler version of the two girls, drawing lessons, in exchange for learning German from Diana. The barter of artistic for linguistic skill is a good omen, and also underscores the democratizing factor in her relations with the Riverses; her gifts are a contribution to the community, rather than a fee for acceptance.

In providing Jane with superior and sympathetic models of womanhood, the new domestic setting marks a new phase of representation, beyond the definition and transgression of Gothic boundaries and on to problems of integration, perspective, and autonomy. Instead of being surrounded by mysterious or grotesque women, at Moor House Jane herself becomes a mystery, whose identity, like Bertha's, must at

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length be revealed by (masculine) forces from outside. But instead of inducing rupture and cataclysm (Bertha is setting fire to Thornfield even as Jane is setting up her school for poor girls in the valley), Jane exercises her veiled but by no means stifled powers of visual representation to reunite, and reorganize, a dispersed family [33:341-2].

It is in this final process of self-revelation, the achievement of her social and financial estate, that Jane is once again aided by a portrait. Its subject is the patron of her new school, Rosamond Oliver, the beautiful young heiress for whom St. John has kept his passion locked up in his own emotional attic. Rosamond is important exception among the rich beauties who have plagued Jane since childhood -- the Reed girls, the Brocklehurst girls, and finally Terrible Blanche. Rosamond is a being of pure pleasure, whom Jane tellingly compares not with these tormentors nor even with the more benign society ladies of Rochester's party, but to the childish and dependent Adèle, whose "French defects" are eventually rooted out under Jane's control. The association suggests that for the first time Jane is able to encounter a rich, pretty girl without losing her own sense of self-command.

Jane's relations with Rosamond add a professional dimension to the class dynamic of patronage. Where she paints Blanche as a form of therapy, and her female companions as a pastime, she paints Rosamond on a proper commission, [15] the wealthy Mr. Oliver having insisted that a full-scale portrait be made from Jane's sketch. His invitation to visit Vale Hall brings Jane for the first time into a grand house as a proper guest, rather than a dependent or a stranger. The Oliver money is, moreover, new, so that the grandeur of the house is uninfected by the aristocratic contempt for trade. This is perhaps why it rankles Jane when Rosamond remarks -- by way of praise -- that she is fit to be a governess in a great house [32:325]. The subject abruptly changes to St. John, whom she rightly suspects both Rosamond and her father of favoring. The suddenness of the transition -- which is effected in Jane's narration, rather than in the scene itself, suggests a kind of wistful substitution: as an

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unpropertied woman she can only aspire to be a governess, while St John, though equally poor, can command the respect she deserves and craves.

Most significantly, however, painting Rosamond's portrait gives Jane the opportunity to expose someone else for the first time in her adult life, and the truth she reveals is not about the subject of her picture, but the spectator.[16] Jane has divined St. John's feelings for Rosamond, and when he finds her at work on Rosamond's portrait she uses it to compel him discuss his feelings openly.

> "Is this portrait like?" I asked bluntly
> "Like! Like whom? I did not observe it closely."
> "You did, Mr. Rivers." [32:327]

Here she is adopts the same gambit used by Rochester in their first conversation at Thornfield ("You examine me, Miss Eyre....Do you think me handsome?" [14:115]) At that point Rochester has already seen her watercolors, and follows up the advantage of what he has seen there. Here Jane is far more in control of what St. John sees in her picture -- she is sure of having snared him with it when she offers to make him a copy to take with him on his missionary travels "provided you admit that the gift would be acceptable to you. I don't wish to throw away my time and trouble on an offering you would deem worthless." If the portrait represents Jane's social (and potentially economic) autonomy as an artist, her proposal to copy the picture for St John indicates her readiness to confront him as an emotional equal, a relation for which, she notes with some satisfaction, he is entirely unprepared. "He had not imagined that a woman would dare to speak so to a man" [32:330]. The artist's proposition thus becomes a surrogate proposal for Rosamond.

Jerome Beaty notes how precisely the words St. John uses to explain his renunciation of Rosamond recall Jane's own meditations on leaving Rochester, with the implication that their sacrifices have been the same.[17] She speaks of a "silken snare", he of a "yoke of flowers"; both allude to eventual bitterness in a poisoned cup. The equivalence suggested by their similar expressions is precisely what makes her unsuited to him: St. John clearly has no use for equals. Just as the echo of Blanche's

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portrait recalls a *false* rivalry, a mistaken valuation of true and false attachment, so St John's echoes of Jane's language of renunciation rings in an entirely different key. Where her sacrifice is compelled by adherence to the law, on the principle that respect for law represents, even embodies, respect for oneself, St. John, on the contrary, is entirely free to claim his beloved by any common code of humanity. His refusal is based solely on his own disinclination to place any value on personal or sexual feeling. As Jane sees it, it is merely his perversity to rate spiritual stirrings over sexual ones, and she frankly thinks him a fool to throw away his opportunity. Later she will change her verdict regarding St John's vocation, but only after she has discovered that his true weakness is not after all a susceptibility to wealthy, shallow blondes, but rather a patriarchal lust for dominion over others, especially female others.

In painting Rosamond's portrait, then, Jane finally asserts herself as a detached artist, instead of a self-exposing one; having divested the feminine image of any emotional stake of her own she is free to hold it up as a mirror of St John's own romance of self-denial. But she has also to some extent identified herself with St. John, and in exposing him does in fact betray herself -- though by a means neither she nor we expect; for the power of identification is finally displaced from the authorizing image to the word. It is Jane's signature -- her true name, hitherto a secret -- which she has idly doodled on a piece of paper, that discloses her identity to St. John, who subsequently informs her of her fortune. This signature sheet of paper is neither a random scrap nor a proper text: it is part of Jane's painting paraphernalia, used to protect the miniature from smudging as she works on it. The signature thus links her public identity with the private activity of painting, even as it covers the image she produces. Having made his discovery St. John surreptitiously tears off the name and carries it away to verify the facts, which he reveals the next evening in an elaborately *narrative* form. "[S]ince yesterday I have experienced the excitement of a person to whom a tale has been half-told, and who is impatient to hear the sequel....on reflection I find the matter will be better managed by my assuming the narrator's part,

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and converting you to into a listener" [33:332]. Recounting the entire circumstances of Jane's life and parentage, he informs her of her inheritance, and reluctantly reveals their kinship.

This scene is a kind of condensed replay of her earlier dealings with Rochester -- except that this time the story that is told is true and complete, and the proposal made is absolutely egalitarian: having insisted on knowing the truth of their kinship, Jane makes him promise to be her brother, and to accept his share of the legacy. Here too we find the mimetic emphasis has reconfigured the relation between the truth of images and the truth of words, so that instead of the false reality embodied in the ideal image of Blanche, Rosamond's portrait represents a true fantasy: St. John's repressed, but perfectly obvious sexual desire. The nameless self-portrait, on the other hand, is supplanted by the scrawled signature. This new configuration of image and word, self and other, precipitate the emotional confidence and the financial independence which equip Jane to make her way back to Rochester.

First, however, she must face the challenge of St. John's courtship, the consequences of her momentary identification with Rosamond. Like Rochester's, St. John's wooing distorts the principle of equality in the service of a patriarchal arrangement. Here, however, no human feeling is permitted: language threatens to overpower the eye entirely, and the only mimetic image is the marble statue always implied by St. John's beauty. Compelled to study Hindostani with him, the confidence she wins from him by means of Rosamond's portrait all but evaporates in the new atmosphere of his tutelage. Though his coldness and arrogance repel her, she remains susceptible to his religious eloquence, and nearly gives in to it. Only another, truer word -- again her own name, called by the rival voice of the remote Rochester, finally penetrates and dissipates his influence.[18]

I have said that Jane wishes to become invisible; but she does not want to be disembodied. Like her talent for drawing, her appreciation for the beauty of others is as crucial to her physical nature as her defensive plainness. If Jane's portraits have

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served as a controlled environment for mediating between visible truth and verbal manipulation, they have also been a kind of synecdoche for her own body: a region of erotic self-discovery at Thornfield; a source of shared pleasure at Moor House; and, as a passport to Vale Hall, a substitute for the stature and beauty that might otherwise advance her socially. St. John's classical good looks, on the other hand, communicate the perfection of form, rather than the delight or enrichment of the senses. His genius for oratory suggests the powerful influence of poetry -- he gives her a copy of *Marmion* when he comes to see her at school. Rejecting his chilly sublimity for Rochester's marred body, Jane achieves a different relation to the Word -- a mode of truth-telling tempered by domestic vulgarity and physical imperfection, by the idiosyncrasies of personal experience. [19]

Once settled with Rochester, she puts down her pencil for good, taking up her pen at last, to transmit the visible world through words -- first to her blind husband, and then of course, to us. Assuming at last the role of narrator, containing her husband's story in her own, Jane neutralizes the forces of masculine privilege, and thus redeems the madness of the woman in the attic, and all she stands for. But the beautiful, unforgiving face of St. John remains, like Eve's lost reflection, equivocally beyond her grasp: Jane's book concludes not with the writing of her life or the birth of her child but with the immanent death of the missionary, whose final words -- written, not uttered -- coincide with those of his namesake: "Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev.22:20) The audacious piety of this allusion to the conclusion of the Book of Life claims as much for Jane's own narrative as it does for St John's career, yet she must stand a little to one side to make it. Her story may hold its own against his, but in the end cannot entirely frame it.

§ *Pierre*: The Untold Story

Narratively speaking, *Pierre*'s use of the portrait trope alludes both to the suppression or evasion of an explanatory narrative, a phenomenon we have seen in

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Melmoth, and the suppression of visual evidence, as in "The Prophetic Pictures", where the explanatory narrative *is* a picture. In *Pierre* the revelatory conjunction of picture and story is subject to such excesses of rhetorical distortion that their relationship breaks down, and they become, like Poe's doubles, indistinguishable. Here too the interplay between pictorial and linguistic modes of representation is undermined by a set of falsely limiting gender associations. The process of disintegration begins when the preposterous idyll of Pierre's mother-dominated youth, his betrothal to Lucy Tartan, is subtly invaded by the mysterious presence of Isabel, who soon declares herself to be his illegitimate half-sister. The sequence moves from the image of Isabel's face, which haunts Pierre from the beginning, to the letter in which she reveals her relationship to him and asks vaguely for his help.

The subsequent chapter (book 4, called "Retrospective") supplies the background for Pierre's reception of Isabel's letter. Aside from recollecting his father's delirious mention of a daughter on his deathbed, Pierre's broodings on the subject are fixated almost entirely on a small portrait of his father in youth, seated in profile with his arm over the back of a chair, which Pierre keeps hidden in a closet in his room.

> Had this painting hung in any annual public exhibition, and in its turn been described in print by the casual glancing critics, they would probably have described it thus, and truthfully: "An impromptu portrait of a fine-looking, gay-hearted, youthful gentleman.... He seems as if just dropped in for a visit upon some familiar acquaintance. Altogether, the painting is exceedingly clever and cheerful; with a fine, off-handed expression about it. Undoubtedly a portrait, and no fancy-piece; and, to hazard a vague conjecture, by an amateur." [4.3:97][20]

Before arriving at the actual story behind this image, we learn that Pierre's formidable mother dislikes this picture, claiming that "it is not he" and that she prefers the larger, later, and far more formal portrait of Glendinning Senior, executed at her commission, which hangs in the drawing room. Much is made of the suggestive contrast between these images of manhood. The drawing-room portrait depicts

> a middle-aged, married man, and seemed to possess the nameless and slightly portly tranquillities, incident to that condition when a felicitous one; the smaller portrait painted a brisk, unentangled, young bachelor,

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> gayly [sic] ranging up and down in the world; light-hearted, and a very little bladish perhaps; and charged to the lips with the first uncloying morning fullness and freshness of life. [4.3:98]

According to Pierre's aunt, the "chair portrait" was painted by a cousin at a time when Pierre's father was visiting and aiding a group of French refugees, among them a beautiful, mysterious young woman. Aunt Dorothea assures Pierre that "I, for my part, never credited that he would do so unwise a thing as marry the young lady" but Cousin Ralph, believing in the romance, paints Pierre's father on the sly "as a wooer", talking about his French charges in the painter's studio. A dramatic scene ensues in which Pierre's father, suspecting the secret, insists that the picture, if it exists, must never be shown -- all the while "the very picture itself was placed face down on a table and cousin Ralph fixing a cord to it." The painter, cryptically defending himself, keeps the secret of the picture, and eventually passes it on to the spinster sister, who presents it to young Pierre shortly after his father's death.

The sequence is tricked out with self-conscious, often parodic, allusions to the portrait/text relation: when, for example, Aunt Dorothea (a figure worthy of Hepzibah Pyncheon) fumbles in her pocket before beginning her story little Pierre exclaims "Why Aunt, the story of the picture is not in any little book, is it, that you are going to take out and read to me?" "My handkerchief, my child," she replies calmly. [4.4:99] At the end of her tale she reports Cousin Ralph to have speculated on the role of a book found in Pierre's father's room -- a work on Physiognomy "in which the strangest and shadowiest rules were laid down for detecting peoples' innermost secrets by studying their faces" [4.4:104] -- in influencing Pierre's father's desire to keep the portrait a secret. The initial description of the painting masquerades as a quotation from another imaginary text, the exhibition catalogue. Each allusion makes a different kind of knowing reference to prevailing cultural conventions -- sentimental fiction, Victorian faith in morality-science, and the professionalistic detachment of art-expertise -- which all find more expansive treatments in the book.[21]

Meanwhile the familiar pattern of portrait-framed narrative entails a more

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involved and recursive relation between story and picture than we have seen before. The flashback to Aunt Dorothea's story brings both of the narrative back still further into Pierre's own past: when "little Pierre" asks his aunt why his mother dislikes the portrait, she somewhat evasively tells him it must be because she has a "finer, bigger one of her own".

> And the face of the picture still looked at them frankly, and cheerfully, as if there was nothing kept concealed; and yet again a little ambiguously and mockingly, *as if slyly winking to some other picture*, to mark what a very foolish old sister, and what a very silly little son, were growing so mysteriously grave and speculative about a huge white-figured neckcloth, a buff vest, and a very gentlemanlike and amiable countenance. [4.4:106, emphasis added]

This conceit of the portrait glancing knowingly at another picture is incorporated into Pierre's own consciousness when the narrative returns to the mature, but still pre-Isabel Pierre, who now imagines the picture *speaking* unsettlingly to him about its counterpart in the drawing-room: "Believe not the drawing-room painting; it is not thy father; or at least, that is not *all* thy father....Consider in thy mind, Pierre, whether we two paintings may not make only one." [4.5:109]

Like Jane's paired portraits of the lady and the Governess, the ironic juxtaposition with the more conventional likeness preferred by his mother serves as an independent, objective conduit for enhancing both Pierre's and the reader's growing consciousness of duality: the chair portrait, hidden, closeted, not spoken of between mother and son, is inaccessible and mysterious, though cheerful and attractive; it represents Pierre's father in a condition closer to Pierre's own than the drawing room portrait, which in its turn embodies not only the public, socially sanctioned version of the man, but also the familiar and protective image of Pierre's own childhood memory. Most importantly, however, the Chair portrait is an emblem of Romanticism itself -- a work of art, not family history, invoking revolutionary zeal, youth, sexual passion, and, in the story of the stolen likeness and the face-down canvas, creative risk. Winkingly, it challenges Pierre to recover and integrate its aspect of Romance

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with the domesticity of the picture in the drawing room.

The two visions of masculinity are endorsed by two different notions of feminine devotion: the doting, sentimental aunt Dorothea, who weakly but persistently worships the youthful idol in secret, and the proud, demanding mother Mary, who denies any aspect of the man other than that which she has codified. The crisis comes not with any simple displacement of one painted image by the other, but rather with Pierre's consciousness of their meaning for him. At one level his course seems fairly clear: in departing for the city, taking up literature, and casting off his estate to take care of Isabel, Pierre assumes the role of the younger version of his father, reflecting both his Romantic attachment to a mysterious foreign beauty and his desire to suppress the evidence of that attachment. But his father never saw his own portrait, and the failure of self-recognition is also part of the legacy. Pierre's attempt to simulate his father's original course fails largely because it presumes too much about its relation to the feminine forces which both uphold and conceal it.

Isabel's emergence onto the scene makes the Chair portrait a Gothic point of entry into a past which, in Pierre's convention-laden cosmos, requires an explanatory text. In the first shock of hearing from Isabel Pierre hotly dismisses Isabel's claim as "a forgery"; but taking her letter in light of the memories recalled by the portrait, which have by themselves produced doubt, convinces him of its truth.

> And now...all that had been inexplicably mysterious to him in the portrait, and all that had been inexplicably familiar in the face, most magically these now coincided;...by some ineffable correlativeness, they reciprocally identified each other, and, as it were, melted into each other, and thus interpenetratingly uniting, presented lineaments of an added supernaturalness. [4.5:111]

Isabel's own narrative, which should properly explain her relationship with Pierre, he finds only impressionistic descriptions of otherwise ordinary phenomena: she speaks of "tall things like pine trees" and "drooping floors" to recall a voyage on a ship, for example. Once he has heard her speak he becomes convinced of her inability to tell a full coherent story. Though her narrative is vague and inconclusive, it does provide

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the basis for a visual proof of the relationship she claims. She has inhabited many houses, probably come from abroad; she has memories of a visitor, a gentleman referred to as her father, about whom she has an Eve-like epiphany: "One day, looking into the smooth water behind the house, I saw the likeness--something strangely like, yet unlike, the likeness of his face" [6.5:152] Having actually seen the man she calls their mutual father, Isabel might make what is now called a positive identification, but this possibility never enters Pierre's mind. Instead, he burns the portrait without showing it to her "the one great, condemning, unsuborned proof" of his father's tarnished memory, unbearable to look at". Having destroyed any hope of verifying her memory of the man himself, what confirms his faith in Isabel's claim on him is just what shouldn't: an overwhelming sexual attraction, which is the very essence of Romantic subversion: passionate, incestuous, destructive to family relations. Intent on both assuming his father's role and keeping his illicit deed hidden, he decides to tell the world that she is his wife -- thus forfeiting his inheritance, defying his mother, and betraying the innocent Lucy at one blow. He then departs to the city, with Isabel and a castaway servant girl.

Here, halfway through the book, two important elements of Pierre's past surface for the first time: the first is his cousin, Glendinning Stanly, an intermittently intimate alter-ego who to whom Pierre now appeals for assistance. The second is Pierre's literary background, and his decision to support his menage by writing. Having published some pleasing, popular verses, he now undertakes to write a semi-mythic autobiographical novel. Both undertakings -- solidarity with Glen, and virility in literature -- end in failure: Glen rejects Pierre's request for help and eventually emerges as his rival and nemesis, succeeding to Pierre's forfeited patrimony on his mother's death; and Pierre's novel is a botched bastard of a work, not only unfinished but open to the charge of forgery.

The implicit association of between literature and masculine prerogative is further reinforced by the emergence of a new verbal obsession in Pierre's cosmos: in the

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coach on the way to New York he happens upon a fragment of a bizarre pseudo-Kantian pamphlet, titled "Chronometricals and Horologicals", which he reads and puzzles over. When the author of this cryptic work, one Plotinus Plinlimmon, turns up in a group of philosophers who live in his lodgings, Pierre becomes obsessed with making sense out of what he has read, but though he can see Plinlimmon's face through upper-story windows, and actually bumps into him, he avoids meeting the master, preferring instead to agonize over his abstruse words. [21.3] In providing cryptic access to a shadowy (and rather shady) source of wisdom, the pamphlet substitutes for the destroyed portrait of Pierre's father.

This displacement of the visual puzzle by the verbal one codifies the split between word and image that characterizes the cosmic shift from Saddle Meadows to New York. Meanwhile the problem of Isabel's relationship is left unsolved by the repression of images. Instead, confronted by Isabel's sketchy story, Pierre concludes that the very possibility of coherence is illusory.

> In her life there was an unraveled plot; and he felt that unraveled it would eternally remain to him...Pierre had conned his novel-lessons; ... but their false, inverted attempts at systematizing eternally usystematizable elements; their audacious, intermeddling impotency, in trying to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more thin than gossamer threads which make up the complex web of life; *these things over Pierre had now power now.* [7.8:170;emphasis added]

Though he claims to repudiate the easy solutions of fiction Pierre undertaken his own plot, inventing a new relationship to Isabel which, like his novel, ends in disaster. His illusory immunity to narrative is a piece of self-deception, and serves primarily as a rationale for his sexual desire for his would-be sister. Unwilling either to plunge into incest or disentangle himself from the risk of committing it, he insists on making Isabel's sexuality as the source of his ruin.[22] In the end however it is Lucy's defection from the outraged family, now headed by Glen Stanly, that brings about Pierre's ultimate collapse into murder and suicide. Having refused to be passed on to Glen with the rest of the property, she joins Pierre and Isabel in the city, preceded by her easel

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and an "artless, angelical" letter, professing her undying faith in Pierre and her desire to participate in his new arrangements.

Like Aunt Dorothea and Mary Glendinning, fair Lucy and dark Isabel represent two opposing types of social and sexual femininity -- virgin and whore, self-sacrificing saint and all-consuming demon -- who in Pierre's revision of his father's story change places (almost) as wife and sister. If Pierre's masculine literary potency is "suffocated in the feminine sensibility" (379), as Ann Douglas has it,[23] it is because he himself has imagined it that way. His attraction to Isabel makes him see the initial challenge of the Romantic Chair-portrait into a conflict between authentic masculine potency and convention-bound feminine will; in pursuing that authenticity Pierre falls into the trap of convention that he believes himself to be escaping, by confusing social and imaginative autonomy. Thus he maintains that Isabel's influence *must* be incoherent and corrupting because she is dark and sexy -- even though what she seeks is the patriarchal protection of Pierre's respectability. Similarly Lucy *must* be innocent and noble because she is blonde and virginal -- even though she runs off to the city alone to be an artist in a bohemian menage a trois.

More importantly, however, they figure opposite sorts of poetic or imaginative muse: Wordsworthian Lucy is lucid and grounded, a domestic place holder, fragile but constant, ready always to serve. The Coleridgean Isabel is a chaotic, liminal catalyst, erratic but robust, an object of desire. As practitioners of art themselves, the girls provide Pierre with an opportunity for declaring this categorical distinction between them. After her arrival in New York Lucy proposes to sketch portraits for her keep, and consults with Pierre about what price to charge. He reasons that since she has been disowned, her only market can be "the Apostles" -- the poor scholars who live in their boarding house, and thus expects to derive little income from her efforts, but agrees to solicit sitters if possible. Here Isabel, to whom it has never occurred to earn money, jealously insists that Pierre seek out music pupils for her before finding sitters for Lucy, a proposal Pierre rejects outright, on the ground that Isabel's gifts with the

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guitar are too intuitive and unsystematic to transmit:"...what thou hast canst not be taught. Ah, thy sweet ignorance is all transporting to me!" [25.1:375] The importance of the distinction is not social or political (he patronizes both girls equally) but aesthetic: to Pierre, the art Lucy represents is humble craft, reliable and industrious, but unambitious and unenriching. Isabel's passionate, inspired mode of expression has no discipline, and can sustain anything other than intoxicating pleasure. His art is foiled because of the configuration he insists on their assuming.[24]

Pierre figures a romanticism beleaguered by its own compulsion to project itself back onto feminine figures. Like Victor Frankenstein, he rejects a good sister for a dangerous obsession. Where Victor's act precipitates a crisis and a radical reversal, what emerges from Pierre's venture into self-authorship is simply that this kind of self-projection no longer functions as expected. Pierre's muses fail him partly because nice, blonde American girls who ought to sit still and be muses insist instead on crowding the literary marketplace with domestic pap; but the novel makes it clear that the dark, foreign siren of Romantic inspiration is equally unsustainable, because modern sensibility can no longer tolerate the connection between the sublime transports of fatal knowledge and the cheap thrills of illicit sex.

In attempting to be a novelist Pierre rejects Lucy, who makes clear pictures, for Isabel, who makes mystic music; though he is susceptible to the claims of both when both are with him, he stands by his choice, based on a lie -- but lucid Lucy will not leave him. This division is underscored in the remarkable penultimate sequence, when Pierre and Isabel and Lucy are all in a picture gallery, where they have stopped on their way to take a day trip in a pleasure-boat on the river.

> All the walls of the world seemed thickly hung with the empty and impotent scope of pictures, grandly outlined, but miserably filled. The smaller and humbler pictures, representing little familiar things were by far the best executed; but these though touching him not unpleasingly, in one restricted sense, awoke no dormant majesties in his soul, and therefore, on the whole, were contemptibly inadequate and unsatisfying. [26.1:392]

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Part of the force of this very obvious allusion to Pierre's own countercultural impulses is that it formalizes the very opposition embodied in the two girls: Isabel as vague and compelling but inarticulate and unrealized art; Lucy as clear, domesticated familiarity, firmly executed and pleasing, but small and unambitious. The distinction also literally establishes the setting for a scene in which Pierre's affairs are momentarily but comprehensively translated into art, that very process which his derivative, unfinished book fails to effect.

Amid all these bad pictures are two which command serious attention. One is portrait whose title he has spotted in the catalogue: "*--No. 99. A stranger's head, by an unknown hand*" -- amid a profusion of bogus attributions to old masters. Pierre and Isabel each see in the "dark, comely, youthful man's head, portentously looking out of a dark, shaded ground, and ambiguously smiling" a remarkable and uncanny resemblance to their lost and possibly mutual father. The portrait, which *he* recognizes as resembling his father's portrait and *she* recognizes as resembling herself and the man called her father, seems to confirm their kinship, by serve as visible evidence for their connection to a common experience, if not a concrete entity. But the narration is at great pains to indicate that what unites their vision actually keeps their thinking apart: they are looking at the same image and having the same reaction, but each exclamation has a totally different referent, a secret that each has failed fully to disclose to the other. The moment of mutual recognition that *might* have been established by the destroyed chair-portrait is displaced by this moment of what can only be called shared solipsism.

While Pierre and Isabel are absorbed in the portrait of the stranger, Lucy contemplates "a very tolerable copy" of the famous image then known as Guido Reni's Beatrice Cenci[25] which hangs directly across from the Stranger portrait on the opposite side of the room. In a truly deranged passage, in which the very notion of resemblance becomes hopelessly entangled, the power of "that sweetest, most touching, but most awful of all feminine heads--" is described as deriving from "a striking, suggested

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contrast, half-identical with and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one...namely, soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, veiled by funereally jetty hair..." for though the figure is entirely blonde, she is "double hooded, as it were, by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity--incest and parricide"[26.1:393]

Thus glossed so as to contain -- and of course also to parody -- the feminine types which enthrall Pierre -- fairness and darkness, virtue and vice, lucidity and mystification the Cenci portrait is juxtaposed with the unknown, untraceable portrait of "the stranger." The two portraits are facing each other, "so that in secret they seemed pantomimically talking over and across the heads of the living spectators below." [26.1:393] The configuration is pointed, recalling the implied colloquy of the chair portrait and its phantom fellow in the earlier sequence, and inviting a number of other associations at once: the channel that runs between the two portraits (which are "hung at a good elevation from one of the upper tiers") figures Pierre's imaginative rut, raising it to a level of art. On the other it suggests a modulation from the dual paternal images of masculinity -- one supported by the weak female and the other by the stronger one -- into dual image of the murderess/victim, the conflation of dark, damning mistress and fair, frail angel.

The conjunction eludes Pierre, but affects him nonetheless, for he once again projects a fantasy of disillusionment onto its object. Setting aside the "blurredly conjoining narrations" of Aunt Dorothea and Isabel, his father's death-bed allusion to a daughter, and "all his own manifold and inter-enfolding mystic and transcendental persuasions,-- originally born, as he now seemed to feel, purely of an intense procreative enthusiasm..." -- having in short dispensed with all non-visual evidence of their kinship, he considers Isabel's story in a new light:

> By some strange arts Isabel wonderful story might have been, in some way, forged for her, in her childhood, and craftily impressed upon her youthful mind; which so---like a slight mark on a young tree -- and now enlargingly grown with her growth, till it had become this immense

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staring marvel [26.2:396]

Note how the word "forged" pivots from meaning fabricated in the manner of a falsely attributed painting to meaning shaped in iron, while the artful story "craftily impressed" on the child mind is itself naturalized into the image of a growing tree; the general scope of the idea thus seems to move organically from falsehood to childhood, like his own gradual assimilation of the chair portrait's ambiguous message. Once again he has allowed the opportunity for clarity and verification to be swallowed up in the impulse to project his own imaginative processes onto Isabel.

In the chiastic transition of Isabel's odyssey from a "wonderful story" to a "staring marvel," from a linguistic wonder to a visual one, the passage from masculine to feminine iconography fuses with the pattern of ambiguous language giving way to organic image, and reminds us again that Pierre's central problem of verification is that he doesn't trust his susceptible eye, insisting instead that Isabel seduce him into further mystification. As he invests more in the male word -- his cousin's endorsement, his publisher's support- it fails him the more utterly. But it is still more important that his stake in the commercial power and legal authority of words is a function of suppressing visual means to truth: he burns the suggestive portrait and insists on understanding Plinlimmon's mystical pamphlet; he devalues Lucy's portraits and circumscribes their market; and he continues to use verbal doubts to undermine visual convictions.

That he allows his vision to become more and more the province of feminine dependence guarantees that his failure to assimilate eye and word will bring the girls down with him, yet in the larger scheme of the novel pictures do offer and sustain a possibility for coherence where words do not. The configuration of the two portrait pairs crystallizes a whole system of the novel's salient ambiguities -- the confrontation of the familiar security with romantic mystery, the inaccessibility of the past through anything but vague or derivative representations, the ambiguous benefits of conventional value --by transposing them into art, aided and annotated by the

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polarized feminine imagery. That the art is unoriginal, unauthorized, even counterfeit, does not in any way vitiate its power to unsettle, but it does express the novel's general ambivalence about the authority of integral, visual experience. Where in Pierre's novel the possibility of literary expression is foiled by its own tendency to self-reference (the delusions of originality, the inevitability of parody) here we find that the deployment of pictures and persons can at least momentarily contain the unresolved ambiguities opened up by the febrile literary imagination.

But for Pierre the pictorial moment of clarity passes without full recognition, and a final, unfinished image confirms both the process of Pierre's feminization and his alienation from it. As he is about to pass out of their lodgings for his final two-pistoled rampage he passes the two girls, each figured as a work of plastic, but immutable art: Isabel "sat petrified to her chair, as one embalmed and glazed in icy varnish." As for Lucy -

> The marble girl sat before her easel...the charcoal-pencil suspended in two fingers, while with the same hand, holding a crust of bread, she was lightly brushing the portrait-paper, to efface some ill-considered stroke. The floor was scattered with the bread-crumbs and charcoal dust; he looked behind the easel, and saw his own portrait, in the skeleton. [26.5:400]

The image "behind the easel" suggests that Pierre sees himself not just in the outline of Lucy's sketch, but the spectacle of the artist herself, attempting to efface the ill considered strokes of his own decisions. He projects his own moribund aspirations onto her work:

> "Dead embers of departed fires lie by thee, thou pale girl; with dead embers thou seekest to relume the flame of all extinguished love! Waste not so that bread; eat it--in bitterness!"

But the dead embers also recall the burnt portrait of his father, from which Pierre has attempted to fashion a fresh self-image. Lucy's assumption of that work is a function of his own failure in it, which has proceeded from his very inability fully to acknowledge and accept the burden of imitation.

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Although self-referentiality about the process of writing is very old, its projection onto the process of making pictorial art is a particularly Romantic phenomenon. In each of these novels we find a different portrait convention being radically revised as a function of its protagonist's development as an author, and more specifically as an artist. In *Jane Eyre* the self-identified portrait of Romantic fiction, charged with the dual burden of disclosure and concealment, actually becomes a means for fashioning a new kind of authorial voice, which blends visionary romanticism with prosaic domesticity. *Pierre* pursues Melmoth deep into the Gothic gap between apparition and explanation, and remains caught there, saturated in a kind of formalizing hysteria, persistently eliciting the complexities of art, but constantly eluding its resolutions. What they share is the consciousness of a Romantic heritage, and the pressure to displace or revise its paradigms to cope with the exigencies of a new idiom.

Gender is a crucial aspect of this heritage, especially that mode of gender-projection that appropriates the figure of an Other for assuming certain crucial creative functions, enabling or disabling as the case may be. Both stories conclude with an ambivalent reconfiguration of the sexes. Pierre leaves his female companions, going off to confront his masculine pursuers with twin weapons drawn from "his two breasts"; the girls in turn pursue him to prison and fall upon him, and the sequence ends in a collapse of gender difference, his death sandwiched between theirs. His final attempt to cast them off ("Pierre is neuter now!") suggests at once castration and hermaphroditism, an unresolved dissolution of gender that mirrors the failure of artistic resolution. Something of *Pierre*'s agonized final note can be discerned in the spirit of St. John Rivers, hovering about Jane Eyre's successful integration with Rochester. Uttering the novel's disembodied last words, St. John is clearly also "neuter now", having cast off the useless, alluring mistress and the plain, stalwart wife-sister-cousin he would have chosen, if not preferred. His presence unsettles Jane's marriage of visual and authorial faculties for different reasons, of course, but St. John's failure to mate, to enjoin an Other in his project, resonates momentarily

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with Pierre's (with Frankenstein's, with Feathertop's) in registering the failure of the old romantic model, whereby poetic redemption or damnation could be embodied in a feminine Other, without effort, without any further reference to the common realities Others, no less than Selves, must experience. In the next chapter we will see how literary treatments of portraits in the ensuing decades increasingly incorporated a new model for gendered transformation, in which that common reality figured with increasing importance.

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NOTES

[1] For an astute discussion of the crudeness of Helen's relation to art in comparison to Jane's see Margaret Mary Berg, "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: Anne Brontë's *Jane Eyre*" *Victorian Newsletter* 71 (1987): 10-15, esp. 14-15.

[2] See Eagleton's discussion of Jane's conflicted sense of her social position in *Myths of Power: a Marxist Study of the Brontës*. London: Macmillan, 1975

[3] See Sacvan Bercovitch, "*Pierre*, or the Ambiguities of American Literary History" in *Rites of Assent* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 246-306. In particular Bercovitch notes how Pierre's literary career is excessively charged with narrative regression -- "Melville writing about an author (or authors), writing about Pierre, writing about Vivia, writing about himself, the apparent 'author-hero' of Pierre's fictional autobiography" (262).

[4] See Adrienne Rich, "*Jane Eyre*: the Temptations of a Motherless Woman" *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-78 (*New York: W.W. Norton, 1979: 89-106). The phrase appears on p. 90.

[5] All page citations refer to the Second Norton Critical Edition of *Jane Eyre* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987).

[6] Verbal and visual forces in the novel have come to be recognized as central to the novel, though in different ways. Peter Bellis observes the importance of Jane's visual imagination as a means of resistence to the masculine gaze. Randall Craig on the other hand treats Jane's portrait-making as a mode of narrative, and as such one of the novel's many forms of rhetorical evasion or incompleteness. See Peter Bellis, "In the Window-seat: Vision and Power in *Jane Eyre*" *ELH* 54:2 (1987) 639-653; and Randall Craig, "Logophobia in *Jane Eyre*" *Journal of Narrative Technique* 23 (1993): 92-113.

[7] This in fact is her first lesson at Lowood, when Brocklehurst's accusations force her to speak on her own behalf to Miss Temple. [8:61-2]

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[8] Throughout the novel one notices a minor but distinctive association between drawing and French. Jane goes out of her way to liken the very English Rosamond Oliver, her other portrait subject, to Adèle. [32:324]

[7] in the case of the latter Brontë's strange chauvinism also plays a part: "With Sophie I used to talk French, and sometimes I used to ask her about her native country; but she was not of a descriptive or narrative turn, and generally gave such vapid and confused answers as were calculated rather to check than encourage inquiry." [12:96]

[10] The variety of interpetations of the symbolism in these watercolors in the era of psychoanalytic criticism was remarkable, but all tend to agree that they foreshadow Jane's own experiences of temptation and despair. For the complete set of Miltonic references in Jane's descriptions of these works, see Bacon, "Jane Eyre's Paintings and Milton's *Paradise Lost*." *Notes and Queries* n.s. 13 (1984): 64-65

[11] See Gilbert and Gubar 349-50.

[12] "Crayon" means either colored pencil or chalk, i.e., a dry medium.

[13] Margaret Goscilo discusses the two types represented by both images in contemporary art of the period. See "Jane Eyre and Pictorial Representation" *Approaches to Teaching Jane Eyre*. Ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Beth Lau. New York: MLA, 1993: 97-103 , esp. 101.

[14] In *Jane Eyre*, insofar as patriarchy is a repressive force, it is a catalytic one, in that it activates -- indeed compels -- feminine resistance or rebellion. The violent outbreaks of Bertha Mason are specifically directed to, and aggravated by the presence of her husband and brother. The most impressive example of this inversion of the effects of patriarchal repression is the unpopularity of Brocklehurst, who liberates Jane from Gateshead (albeit with some help from his alter-ego, the kind Mr. Lloyd), even as he appears to immure her at Lowood. Helen Burns, whose clear-eyed charity has insisted on mitigating the cruelty and coarseness of various women towards both herself and Jane, nevertheless assures her that "Mr. Brocklehurst is not a god: nor is he even a great or admired man: he is little liked here....Had he treated you as an especial favourite, you would have found enemies...all around you: as it is, the greater number would offer you sympathy if they dared." [8:60] Later Rochester is rather disconcerted to learn that cloistered, unworldly charity-girls could be so critical of their reverend headmaster. [13:108]

[15] Jane has painted in exchange for patronage before: Out of gratitude, she gives a landscape to the superintendent at Lowood who has interceded on her behalf to secure testimonials from its board of trustees. [11:80]

[16] "It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors" - Oscar Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

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[17] Beaty rather oddly adduces the link between Blanche's portrait and Rosamond's to support St. John's impression that Jane is a good match for him: "When we learn St John has rejected Rosamond because one part of him knows that she will not make him a good wife...just as, for other reasons, Blanche would not have made Rochester a good wife, it is difficult not to recognize that Jane *would* make him, as she would have made Rochester, a good wife (regardless of whether we believe St John, or either man, would make Jane a good husband.)" See Jerome Beaty, *Misreading Jane Eyre: a Postformalist Paradigm* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), 187.

[15] Jane's return to Rochester thus inverts the scheme of Eve's submission to Adam in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*; for though Rochester's preternatural call from Ferndean suggests the voice that calls Eve away from sterile self-absorption in the beauty of her reflected image, her earthbound, homely alliance with him, united in a single vision, evokes the resumption of Eve's disrupted communion with her own likeness, which she secretly still longs for.

[19] Like the marble beauty of the poetic, misogynistic St John, Rochester's blindness is an allusion to Milton himself, which evokes his dependence on his daughters, rather than his transcendence of domesticity in literature.

[20] Page citations refer to *Pierre or, the Ambiguities* (New York: NAL/Penguin, 1964).

[21] On Melville's self-education in the arts during this period, see Douglas Robillard "Melville's Reading in the Visual Arts" in *Savage Eye: Melville and the Visual Arts*, ed. Christopher Sten (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991): 40-54; also Sten's introduction to that volume. For Melville's use of Lavater's *Physiognomy*, which he learned via Goethe, see William B. Dillingham, *Melville's Later Novels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986): 147-173.

[22] Isabel's sexuality is figured as both imperative to art and inimical to concreteness. As Tony Tanner puts it, "Isabel draws Pierre towards serious literature at the same time as she reveals to him the invalidity of the whole naming process -- she represents 'vital realness' as opposed to 'empty nominalness'. She is that which must, and cannot, be uttered." See Tony Tanner, "Problems and Roles of the American Artist" *Proceedings of the British Academy* XLVII (1971) :158-179. The passage quoted is on p. 167.

[23] Douglas argues that Pierre's failure is Melville's way of punishing the American literary world for becoming too feminized, arguing that Pierre was understood by his audiences to represent a failure *of* literature, rather than an identifiable person who fails *at* it. See *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977) 355-7. For other perspectives on the novel's harsh indictment of popular taste for novels written by women, see also Bercovitch, and Poirier, "The Monster in the Milk Bowl" *London Review of Books*. 3 October 1996: 19-22.

[24] Allegorically speaking, rhetoric, especially when devoted to the self, might be better off married to unambitious clarity, remaining only on fraternal terms with vague euphony, rather than the other way around.

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[25] It is well known now that the "original" image is neither of Beatrice nor by Guido, a fact which, as Bercovitch points out, Melville would have embraced. (Bercovitch 262-3) That the copy will turn out to have been made by Hilda in *The Marble Faun*, published eight years later, is perhaps the most spectacular vindication of the mechanism of narrative precipitation by fictional pictures.

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Chapter 4 - Plausible Mephistopheles: The Art of Realism

In fiction of the 1850's and 60's a new sort of portrait scene emerged, in which the surrounding aesthetic context is as significantly charged as the image itself. Like the portrait's frame, the artistic setting generates a kind of protected space, reserved for transmutation of character or alteration of perspective, now more specifically defined and animated by the boundary of art, that same boundary that demarcates the space of the fictional world itself. The action-stopping, story-generating portrait gives way to a more complicated revisionary scene, which dramatizes the interaction of different aspects of representation. Where confrontations with portraits in earlier works were generally confined to a single spectator or maker, the gallery allowed for a group of spectators to exchange views, while the studio setting allowed the different players in the act of representation -- artist, model, patron, or critic -- to assert their positions.

We have seen how Jane Eyre's pictures, painted in increasingly public spaces, move progressively from the depths of her private imagination outward to the concerns of the practical world: in the end her most effective picture, her portrait of Rosamond Oliver, is also the one available both to commerce and to disinterested appreciation. Similarly, the sequence of pictures in *Pierre* moves out into to the open, beginning from the sequestered place where Pierre contemplates his father's possible liaison, and ending in the crowded public gallery in New York, where family ties are finally sublimated into art. The uncannily subversive effect of Pierre's father's portrait derives in no small measure from its artistic atmosphere: the buried story behind the portrait is about nothing more than a visit to a studio. In both novels the scene of revelation is a scene of art, not just in a poetic or imaginative sense, but in a professional and social one as well.

The studio is a space in which a picture can be made and viewed, and which can

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be inhabited by a variety of perspectives at the same time. The gallery, public or private, was similarly a space devoted to viewing and making pictures (for the copyist's easel was a far commoner sight in art galleries during the nineteenth century than it is now). There, the elements of Romantic discourse -- originality, expression, poetry, truth, could be discussed, questioned, parodied, or otherwise treated with both ironizing distance and appropriate intimacy. Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelite fable "Hand and Soul" (1850) juxtaposes the two settings to trace the course of artistic immortality from the inmost regions of a painter's soul to the outermost surfaces of public exhibition. Set in the thirteenth century, it describes an ambitious young painter who, agitated by the clamor of patronage and political favor and despairing of success, is visited by a vision of his embodied soul, a luminous beauty who directs him to paint her and forget the world. The story is framed by a brief modern account of the resulting portrait, which opens on a scholarly note and ends with an anecdote that includes the ironic, polyglot commentary of a group of art students in the Pitti Gallery. Although, like the vitality of Poe's "Oval Portrait", the intensity of the picture's impact is the prime mover of the tale -- the framing narrator remarks that "the most absorbing wonder of it was its literality" -- the multiple layers of artistic perspective complicate the form of its essentially Romantic message. The pitch-perfect mock scholarship and the canny, characteristic observations of the pragmatic French, earthy Italian, and reserved English spectators lend a naturalistic air to the narrative; they also represent the *principle* of naturalism that was as central to the Pre-Raphaelite creed as the spiritual authenticity expounded in the parable.[1]

The process whereby portraits went public coincided with the emerging prominence of art in Victorian culture, and reflected many of its developments. Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites explained their own pictorial philosophies in a kind of poetic art history, in which Romantic tropes of inspiration and unity of purpose vindicate the passion for detailed veracity and intense color. The huge influence of Ruskin moved moralists like Eliot and Hawthorne to sort out the virtues and vices of

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different kinds of aesthetic experience. Browning's poems used the personae of connoisseurs and patrons as well as artists of different stripes to explore the limits of self-representation in language; there was also, by mid-century, the influence of French literature, in which painting was frequently enjoined to promote a variety of aesthetic ideologies which were meant -- in theory at least -- to apply equally to visual and narrative representation.

These developments were only very gradually superimposed on a much older English reticence about the visual arts, which were tainted in the English mind by a long-standing association with Catholic Europe. Protestant Germany continued to be the seat of brainy, metaphysical Romanticism, but until the final years of the nineteenth century, English readers associated fine art first and foremost with Italy, and so with its nested connotations of popish corruption, Latin mendacity, and decay on the one hand -- and sublime landscape, venerable antiquity, and renaissance humanism on the other. The study of art, meantime, was connected to France, which embodied amoral rationalism, worldly pragmatism, and unabashed carnality. *Villette* is a particularly virulent, but otherwise not atypical example of the English prejudice, but even the more sympathetically drawn French characters in Thackeray[2], for instance, are rooted in a sensualist, self-interested ethos, politically canny, morally neutral, and utterly, if sometimes hypocritically, secular. To the English novelist, Paris stood less for the sensibilities fine art than the bohemian life of art students: easy generosity, good fellowship, and moral susceptibility.[3] The effects of these various English prejudices eventually overlapped and coalesced into that subtle, amoral aestheticism which became an important feature of the fictional artist toward the end of the century, an ironic commentator on the very English bourgeois pieties of his moment.

Where English fictions used foreign artists to embody the less socially assimilable aspects of creative work American writers deliberately using the continental setting as

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a source of contrast for defining their own national, cultural, and moral identity. The American artist -- usually found in Rome -- was a staple topos of this literary self-exploration. Unlike the American poet, whose claim to an American identity was defiantly aimed at English heritage, the American artist was an avid explorer of the frontiers of the past, adapting the materials of the old world to the spirit of the new. The American poet stayed home, the American artist went abroad: West, Allston, Copely, Greenough, were the vanguard of a continuous influx of American painters to the old world, and especially to Italy, where they found centuries of tradition and experiment to react to, to mythologize, to imitate in their own fashion. The American novelist went abroad too. Irving and Cooper, Hawthorne, Howells, and a lot of lesser writers streamed to Italy after the artists, and used the latter's experiences as the basis for their own subjects.

American artists were so utterly dependent on European academies for training and collections that their attitudes were paradoxically more and less cosmopolitan than some of their English counterparts. American writers had their own special investment in Italy as a fountainhead of plastic art and industrial civilization. Where the English traveler in Italy felt the pulse of the great dynastic and ecclesiastic engines of the Renaissance, the American was more likely to be aware of the antique foundations of the Republic, or the residual legacy of a defeated Empire which, unlike England or France or Spain, was untainted by American memories of colonial dominion. Culturally, Italy was the Holy Land for young America, the warehouse of ancient sculpture and architecture, the root of modern painting and commerce, a place sufficiently Other to reinforce an American sense of autonomy, but also sufficiently prior to challenge it. It was, in effect, a massive art gallery, where a great range of moral and aesthetic insight become available to temperaments eager to be acted upon. [4]

Nevertheless, during the mid-Victorian period the figure of the painter began to

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gain ground in English fiction, not so much as an author-identified protagonist or a professor of aesthetic theory but as a representative of a certain aspect of modern experience -- an impulse to romance tempered by a very pointed dependence on material success. Before about 1850 the painter in English fiction was virtually invisible; by the end of the century he had evolved into an emblematic personage, a professional whose place in the social fabric was taken as much for granted as that of a banker or a lawyer, but whose Romantic leanings might, like Basil Hallward's in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or Dick Heldar's in *The Light That Failed*, get him into serious trouble of a very specialized sort.

Many factors contributed to this evolving image of the artist. One was the professional painter's ambiguous social status: the portrait painter in particular had entree into society that his class otherwise might not allow. On the other hand, painting was both a trade and a gentleman's hobby; it might also allow a gentleman to consort with members of the lower strata of society without impeaching his honor. Art was one of the few occupations in which the different standards of social and professional status carried equal and sometimes conflicting weight, a situation explored by Thackeray in *The Newcomes* (1853-5). In this remarkable survey of the economic, aesthetic and political upheavals that destabilized and so defined the foundations of Victorian society, the doting but old-fashioned Colonel Newcome allows his son Clive to become a painter out of fatherly indulgence, rather than respect for art, which he thinks of as a respectable trade only for the lower classes.[5] He also bankrolls the training of Clive's friend J.J. Ridley, but will not socialize with his protégé because he is the son of a butler. In the latter part of the book Thackeray rebukes these obsolete notions not only by compelling the ruined colonel to live off the hack work Clive is reduced to doing, but by having Ridley become a highly successful and influential Academician:

> Not a little touching was it...to see them in their changed positions. It was Ridley, whose genius and industry put him in the rank of a patron--Ridley, the good and industrious apprentice, who had won the prize of

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his art... [II.36:723][6]

Thackeray's portrayal of artists over the course of a twenty-year period is instructive, because it documents a shift in the character and status of painters, both in society and in the literary portrayal of that society. In "A Shabby Genteel Story", published in 1840, Thackeray offers the semi-grotesque figure of Andrea Fitch, a clownishly earnest suitor for the heroine's hand who loses out to the handsome, aristocratic-looking scoundrel. Though pointedly guilty of all kinds of Romantic folly, Fitch is nevertheless is allowed to be not only good-natured but genuinely talented. Ten years later, Fitch's cockney Romanticism was the basis for the character of Gandish, the art professor in *The Newcomes*, whose broad canvases of ancient "British 'Istr'y" have never been accepted by the academy, but whose virtues as a teacher and a critic are supposed to be taken seriously. Both of these works are set in the 1830's, and are at pains to represent the Romanticism of the period as an object of mingled ridicule, affection, and reverence. *The Adventures of Philip* (1861-2), which takes up the fortunes of the characters in "A Shabby Genteel Story" twenty years later (i.e., in the fifties) Fitch returns with the other principal characters, but only for long enough to provide a circumstantial link between the two plots: he then gracefully dies, and is succeeded in his role as representative artist by Ridley, now a relatively suave professional whose well-conducted dinner parties in no way corrupt his authenticity.

Mid-Victorian fiction thus saw the promotion of the painter from a kind of official Fool of Romanticism -- the lighter, sillier, more benign side of the Byronic poet -- to a quintessentially modern figure, a person whose social milieu might shift from the bottom to the top strata of society at any moment, and whose moral code was based on authenticity rather than honor.[7] In a world where the status of a person's parentage and source of income were subject to intense scrutiny and constant moral calibration, the artist stood on the edge of society's circle, facing its center: although he participated in the currents of social mobility and financial change, he was in certain respects immune from its standards of respectability. The artist could of course

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embody virtues, especially if he was hardworking and his subjects were unpretentious. If the purity of his motives made him oblivious to the depredations of material or social concerns, he was nonetheless rewarded in the social and material world, and thus implicated in its compromises. The relation between artistic genius and professional success is complicated by the proliferation of industrial commerce, and its impact on standards of moral and social value.

These developments had aesthetic consequences as well. Though still gifted with insight, this new, canny sort of painter was less a Byronic magician or sensitive plant than a talented trickster, whose powers are directed to persuasive illusion rather than defiant or transcendent creation. The name of his game is not poesis but mimesis, the representation of a familiar world. Unlike the poet, the painter is always a member of a profession. He participates dually in a private world of romantic creativity and a public world of commercial transactions, social barriers and the chimeras of fame. Just as a portrait conflates different identities or temporal modes, surface and depth, the painter in fiction is always at risk of conflating Romantic and pragmatic aspirations, of confusing his desires with his successes, of losing track of the boundary between moral imagination and effective action.

There are, consequently, plenty of sellout artists in Victorian fiction -- from Andrew Smee, the toadying portrait painter in *The Newcomes*, to Gloriani, the pragmatic professional in *Roderick Hudson*. Browning's explorations of the interior of this figure were particularly keen. Both the speaker of "Pictor Ignotus" and Andrea del Sarto are fake geniuses who acknowledge their failures by attempting to deflect them onto the constraints of reality. Pictor Ignotus blames his patrons, Andrea blames his model. Fra Lippo Lippi's sensualism, on the other hand, though equally indicative of the corruptions and hypocrisies of society, is not aesthetically corrupt: the difference is in their degree of honesty, not about what they paint, but why. Mimetic talent is an asset which Andrea del Sarto barters away; if Fra Lippi does not, it is only because he has no social ambition. His worldliness is purely sensual, and thus his artistic

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authenticity is untainted, despite the sham of his celibacy.

Browning is especially alive to the slippery collaborations between aesthetic and spiritual absorption, and shares George Eliot's Victorian attentiveness to the impact of social convention on the moral and imaginative development of individuals. For Browning, however, the questions of honesty raised by mimetic skill are more epistemological than moral: what is the nature of mimetic honesty, or honesty at all? Formally, too, the force of Browning's investigations derives from the very fact that though they are fictions, they are also poems. In each monologue the egoistic voice of the speaker forms a hermetic world, its own version of the portrait frame or the studio walls. Because the transformations of portrait presence or studio space are thus compressed into the confines of a single voice, the quality of pivotal or bivalent presence that swings between two narrative or imaginative arenas, which depends on the fixity of the boundaries to be penetrated, is missing.

The interactive gallery and studio scenes of Victorian fiction produced a more complex, because more concrete, scheme of potential ambiguities than earlier private portrait confrontations, by establishing within a narrative a self-contained but permeable precinct of art, in which external interests of society and commerce might be represented as inevitable, more or less alien visitors. The amplified space allowed for a sense of the increasing distances between the material concerns and spiritual imperatives attendant on the work of representation; the narrative context into which it appears provides yet another layer of interaction which yields further ambiguities and nuances of its own. These gaps between social and aesthetic vision, passivity and agency, like the distance between temporal frames in the Gothic, must be traversed in the unfolding of the narrative itself, the range of nuance is further extended: the very circumstance of mimetic narrative gains a new richness. As the the century advanced the passage between studio and gallery would be used to plot a variety of artistic trajectories.

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§ Vague details and clear suggestions: *The Marble Faun*

The new artistic dimension complicated and diversified the ways in which portraits scenes could figure in fiction. Though they retained their essential function of narrative and imaginative revelation, their direct impact was enhanced by, and to some extent displaced onto, other designated inhabitants of the artistic space: artist, model, patron, critic. The interaction of several people in front of a single image made it possible to address the competing claims of art and society, Romance and Realism, hiding and showing, in a way that was at once more dialectical than the Gothic moment of viewing, and more discrete from other aspects of the narrative than Romantic artistic dramas. While the configurations of person and picture -- cross identifications, narrative manipulations, etc. could still be used to explore the kind of mimetic problem faced by Jane Eyre or Monaldi, the artistic space also made it possible for characters themselves to theorize about art, thus enriching the possibilities for moral complication and ironic reversal, which could apply not only to the narrative sequence or the character of a protagonist but to the very mimetic principles in which realistic representation is grounded.

Despite their differences in approaching the figure of the artist, American writers and English novelists both relied on the bivalent offices of portraiture to reveal or conceal aspects of their own art. One of the most important works of this period was Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1859), which established an extraordinary range of possibilities for how images may interact with people in fiction. In spite of Hawthorne's stoutly Romantic agenda this work, completed in England and published on both sides of the Atlantic, was extremely influential in the development of the portrait as a trope of the realistic mode. Hawthorne had already explored the revelatory potential of portraits at length in *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), which expounds on the Gothic relation between a present image and a suppressed past. Though portraits are made, as well as viewed, in that novel, the medium is not

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painting but the more suggestively magical art of daguerreotypy, and the rendering of hidden truths in mimetic forms serves emblem for the narrative work of recollection and retribution. *The Marble Faun*, by contrast, consists almost entirely of scenes in studios or galleries, and the aesthetic processes of representation and spiritual processes of sin and atonement are intricately aligned.

As in "The Prophetic Pictures", the central action of the story is an impulsive murder which implicates an unseen witness; the substance of the novel builds on the impact this murder has on its four main characters and their relationships. Three young artists have come to Rome: Hilda, a virginal blonde from New England, and Miriam, a dark, restless beauty of obscure antecedents, are painters; Kenyon is an American sculptor. A young Italian aristocrat named Donatello falls in love with Miriam and joins their circle. Miriam, burdened by an obscure and painful secret, is dogged by a mysterious older man, whom she says is her model, but who evidently has her in his power. Her secret is never revealed, but its damaging influence on her soul is made explicit when this sinister figure accosts her and her suitor at the precipice of the Tarpeian rock and Donatello, signaled by a look from Miriam, hurls him to his death. Hilda, the witness, breaks off her relations with Miriam, and suffers from her secret knowledge; Donatello withdraws to his family estate, transformed from a cheerful pagan to a brooding sinner; Miriam tags behind him in agonized penitence, hoping to regain his love. The three are alienated from each other for some time, but Kenyon, who surmises but does not know the whole story, maintains contact, and a sort of semi-confidence, with all of them, persuading and arranging for the lovers to reconcile and the criminal to repent, and eventually taking Hilda back to America to be his wife.

One of the overarching themes of the novel, and the primary aspect of its connection between art and literature, is explicitness. The central act of murder is carefully depicted, but the practical details of its sources and its aftermath are rendered both tantalizingly complex (at one point Hilda is sequestered by what seems

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to be a secret cabal attendant on Miriam) and persistently obscure. Instead, the configuration of secret knowledge, crime, and confession, with the mute power of concrete images, generates a scheme in which visual suggestiveness is opposed to -- and generally valued above -- narrative explicitness, the faculty that makes novels possible. The aesthetic suggestiveness of images, especially the stillness of sculpture, becomes a trope of moral insight and sympathy, while direct explanation and confession are, like the ineluctable crime of murder, the attributes of the fallen, sinful state. The art-saturated Roman setting is used almost in lieu of a plot; not only are the temperaments and transformation of its four central figures are established by means of their responses to the works of art they make and encounter; but the iconography of images actually conveys the narrative direction of the book more clearly and forcefully than the sequence of events it recounts.

Each character embodies a different aesthetic, figured as a particular kind of mimetic relationship with or treatment of reality. Mysterious Miriam, with her shadowy model in tow, represents a violent Gothic mode, whose mainspring is ambivalent self-exposure. In addition to an explicit self-portrait, which she shows to Donatello early in the novel, her paintings, to which we are introduced long before the murder, are of two kinds: expressionistic depictions of ferocious, wronged heroines avenging themselves on their tormentors; and muted, tender domestic scenes haunted by her own restless, shadowy image. Like the prophetic painter in Hawthorne's earlier story, these pictures anticipate the crime in both of its aspects: the violent passion of the avenger and the anguish of the victim. Here however the link between her fanciful figures and her own actions -- the murder of her shadowy model and her veiled, penitential shadowing of Donatello thereafter -- is unmediated by the self-conscious displacements observed in the earlier stories.

In contrast to Miriam's dark, half-exposing vision is the spiritual Romanticism embodied in Hilda's perfectly empathetic copies of old masters. Where Miriam's pictures hint at dark truths about herself, Hilda's artistic strength is the divination and

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the retrieval of the original impulses of others. Her pictures elevate rather than copy, precisely because her spiritual penetration is so selfless. With the murder, however, this faculty arrives at its limit: her trust in Miriam is broken, and she cannot extend her self to pity the author of the sin she has witnessed. The burden of knowledge is so great that against her Puritan instincts and training she is compelled by the taint of Miriam's sin to relieve her own soul in the Catholic confessional, thus enacting Miriam's deepest impulse in her stead. Hilda's faith is of course too pure to be harmed by this temporary abandonment of her native creed, but the fact that she is compelled to articulate sin and guilt shifts the orientation of her moral and aesthetic axis somewhat: losing her faith in the holiness of all mimetic acts, which her innocence had sanctified indiscriminately, she eventually begins to question her own moral censoriousness in abandoning Miriam.

The peculiar link forged between the two girls is figured most remarkably in Hilda's copy of the same famous portrait of Beatrice Cenci invoked at the end of *Pierre*.[8] Early in the story, the burden of Miriam's secret past makes her exclaim her wish to penetrate the secret of Beatrice's own conscience of having murdered her tormentor, "whether she thought herself innocent, or the one great criminal since time began." As she speaks Hilda notices that "her friend's expression had become almost exactly that of the portrait. "[7:55] After the murder, struggling with the knowledge of what she has witnessed, Hilda catches the portrait's resemblance to her own face in the mirror in an expression now glossed as the sorrowful consciousness of another's sin. Because each instance of likeness suggests a different narrative moment in the life of the portrait's subject, the portrait establishes the narrative scope of the relationship between the two girls. The guilt of one is linked to the knowledge of the other not simply by Miriam's action but by an implied identity, a substitution that is played out in Hilda's subsequent confession of Miriam's sin, and her eventual errand at the Palazzo Cenci in Miriam's behalf.

Another example of this complex mode of suggestiveness is Donatello's uncanny

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resemblance to the Marble Faun of Praxiteles, which gives the novel its title. In the mimetic scheme the resemblance figures literal, point-for-point correspondence which is associated with the cheerful but soulless vitality and organic closeness to nature which characterize him in the first part of the story. Hawthorne construes the priority of his resemblance to the Faun ambiguously, using the hint of supernatural agency to suggest at once the animation of marble into flesh, and the conversely the spiritual petrifaction and material beauties of paganism. Donatello's earthy literalness is wrought upon by Miriam's dark passions: devotedly following her every move, he literally falls for her, and at the critical moment her look activates his crime. In murdering her more sinister shadow he loses his own grounding in pre-Christian models, and must instead enter into the moral scheme of guilt and penance; the transformation registers in the mutation of his own looks, which Kenyon later sculpts in clay. At different phases of its creation this bust registers multiple aspects of Donatello's spiritual transformation. Its final appearance, half-carved in marble, registers in Hilda's empathetic eye as a perfect expression of an emergent soul, and stands as the single, precipitating image of the whole narrative: "It was this imperfect portrait of Donatello that originally interested us in his history, and compelled us to elicit from Kenyon what he knew of his friend's adventures." [41:275]

Kenyon is the only artist in the group who makes images of any of his companions. In addition to sculpting Donatello's bust he expresses his undeclared love for Hilda in a delicate carving of her hand, taken from memory and kept sequestered, a stone synecdoche both for her body and for the asexual purity that has made him reluctant to claim it. That Kenyon stands for the composing sensibility, the literary consciousness, is clear from the fact that, of the four protagonists only the sculptor is never directly likened to a work of art,[9] nor is his work associated with one particular mode or style. Instead his affinities are expressed parabolically through a variety of different modes and styles embodied in his work. When Miriam visits his studio in Chapter 13 we are exposed to a variety of works, which taken together

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represent the aspirations of a young, ambitious, and rather literary-minded artist, a maker of fictions and metaphors. It includes marble heads of "illustrious Americans" whose achievements (the narrator sighs) are too ephemeral for their memorials; a genre study of a pearl-fisher caught in his own net, which suggests both dangerous curiosity and the prudence to moralize about it;[10] and Hilda's hand. One of Kenyon's best works is a bust of Milton, a composite "not copied from any one bust or picture, yet more authentic than any of them," because it comprehends the sculptor's literary appreciation as well as his assimilating eye.

The immortalized Milton serves as a foil for Kenyon's more prominent masterpiece: the magnificent clay model of Cleopatra, yet to be carved in stone, which Miriam has come to see. The "epoch of her history" represented by the statue is, we are told, the moment after the doomed queen's failed appeal to Octavius. Miriam praises its perfect expression of "womanhood .... thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements" and is prompted by Kenyon's implied insight into the complexities of feminine experience to consider confiding her own secret in him. Finding his response to her overtures tinged with reluctance, however, she gives up the attempt.[11] By thus aligning Kenyon's reluctance with Octavius' coldness and her own needs with Cleopatra's smoldering frustration, Miriam has allowed Kenyon's art to write her story, in spite of the sculptor's refusal to hear it.

The scheme of narrative reluctance, and Kenyon's role as an authorial stand-in, is confirmed by a complementary image, which appears near the novel's end. Responding to a mysterious summons that takes him to the outskirts of the city, Kenyon finds and reassembles a fragmentary statue of a Venus Pudica, in the style of the Venus de Medici.[12] Upon its completion Miriam appears, to tell, finally, the story of her antecedents (English, Jewish, and Italian) and the background, though not the explicit nature, of her crime. But what would seem to be the Gothic resolution of narrative suspense -- the heroine's untold story, finally made plain by her own lips -- is hidden behind the veil of indirect discourse which hints at the details of the story

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rather than telling us what they are. At the end of this evasive revelation Miriam recalls her own suppressed confidence in front of the Cleopatra, "Had I obeyed my first impulse, all would have turned out differently" [46:310]. Her evasions reflect a reluctance which Hawthorne himself repeatedly justifies throughout the novel, and explicitly in its coda: the authorial voice resists telling the whole story as strongly and subtly as Kenyon resists being the repository of Miriam's secret.

The figure of the fragmentary Venus and the unfinished Cleopatra map the transformations of the story more clearly and satisfyingly than the vague evasions they elicit. Most directly, they annotate Miriam's development: just as the malleable, clay Cleopatra embodies both her frustrated resolve to save herself and her susceptibility to further mutation, the broken, reconstructed Venus figures the rehabilitation of her damaged conscience. Thus paired, the figures also pay homage to the qualified erotic dominion of Miriam's sexuality and Hilda's virginity: fierce Cleopatra is clothed and defiant; the exposed, vulnerable Venus covers herself in modesty. Finally, the reconstituted fragments of Venus' decomposed body reflects the novel's own configuration of its four central characters in a richly suggestive, but precarious grouping. In its complex moral and mimetic relations the novel rehearses many permutations and reconfigurations of that grouping, even as its narrative drive disintegrates under the pressure of the profusion of suggestive images, into an indistinct and unfinishable mystery, achieving a closure as provisional as the assemblage of a fragmented emblem of womanhood.

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We have seen how portraits could be made serve as mechanisms for invoking or sustaining a certain kind of Romantic self-consciousness, both in reading and in process of making, under the pressures of a conflicting aesthetic. One of the most important themes figured by pictorial art in fiction during this period was the confrontation between the transfiguring impulse of Romantic imagination and hard, often merciless resistance of material facts which it was novelist's mimetic duty to

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address. Much of what motivated mid-century narrative was need to create fictional arrangements for exploring the conflict and ultimately configuring the balance, between these forces. The plot of *The Marble Faun* is an elaborate failure in this respect -- the direct, material facts of Miriam's past and Hilda's sequestration are somehow too much of a threat to the Romanticizing sensibilities of the novel to be made explicit. It succeeds instead in codifying the relation between spectator and picture as an emblematic site of this aesthetic struggle between empty matter and redemptive meaning. This dialectical conflict is rendered most succinctly in Chapter 37, when Hilda, seeking refreshment in the picture galleries, finds that the consequence of her participation in Miriam's sin affects her reverence for the mimetic act as a whole.

> Heretofore, her sympathy went deeply into a picture, yet seemed to leave a depth which it was inadequate to sound; now, on the contrary, her perceptive faculty penetrated like a steel probe, and found but a crust of paint over an emptiness. [37:246]

Lurking in this sense of superficial rendering is a more specific spiritual menace, which is articulated in a passage describing what Hawthorne calls the "icy demon of weariness that haunts the picture galleries":

> He is a plausible Mephistopheles, and possesses the magic that is the destruction of all other magic. He annihilates color, warmth, and more especially sentiment and passion at a touch. If he spare anything, it will be some matter as an earthen pipkin, or a bunch of herrings by Teniers; a brass kettle, in which you can see your face, by Gerard Douw; a furred robe, or the silken texture of a mantle, or a straw hat, by Van Mieris; or a long-stalked wineglass, transparent and full of shifting reflection, or a bit of bread and cheese, or an overripe peach, with a fly upon it, truer than reality itself, by the school of Dutch conjurers. These men, and a few Flemings, whispers the wicked demon, were the only painters. The mighty Italian masters, as you deem them, were not human, nor addressed their work to human sympathies, but to a false intellectual taste, which they themselves were the first to create. Well might they call their doings "art" for they substituted art instead of nature. Their fashion is past, and ought, indeed to have been buried along with them. [37:243]

At issue here is the same problem invoked in the gallery scene in *Pierre*, when images that are "grandly outlined, but miserably filled" are compared with smaller,

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more realistic productions, and the latter are found wanting.

> The smaller and humbler pictures, representing little familiar things were by far the best executed; but these though touching him not unpleasingly, in one restricted sense, awoke no dormant majesties in his soul, and therefore, on the whole, were contemptibly inadequate and unsatisfying. [26.1:392]

Both passages take mimetic precision to be kind of imaginative (and therefore spiritual) compromise; but where Melville makes the straightforward Romantic argument that mimetic excellence of itself fails to satisfy the appetite for transcendence, sublimity being a matter of scope and subject as well as treatment, Hawthorne suggests more radically that the very power of realistic execution lies in its rebuke -- or its threat -- to the promising totality of idealized form. Like many 19th century English novelists, Hawthorne loved the specificity of Dutch realism, and had a much harder time learning to appreciate the more abstractly motivated designs of Italian art.[13] This extraordinary transition, whereby the minutiae of still life, figured first as too humble for the demon to bother with, become the very apples of realistic temptation, expresses an intense ambivalence about the soul of mimesis which inflects the moment of spiritual crisis.

This ambivalence was shared by many Victorian novelists, though not all necessarily associated specificity with damnation. Unlike Hawthorne, whose moral and aesthetic universe is curiously void of ordinary worldly considerations, Victorian fiction had always to grapple with economic and social aspects of material life. In the gallery scene in Chapter 19 of *Villette* (1854) Charlotte Brontë figures a similar collision between the uncompromising reality of small details and comprehensive sweep of abstract ideals, though the values are somewhat differently construed. Here too the wider arena of conflict is the more familiar Victorian ground of gender types and societal norms. Here Lucy Snowe describes her inability to tolerate the company of others when looking at pictures, the pressure to concur with other people's opinions, or to defer to their knowledge, being too great for her unschooled but opinionated

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tastes, which seem at first to consist of a doctrinaire Romantic preference for Nature over artifice. A more complicated attitude is revealed in her description of a fervid (presumably baroque) rendering of *Cleopatra*, which she describes with withering disgust and elaborate detail:

> She was, indeed, extremely well-fed: very much butcher's meat -- to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids -- must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh...she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks;...she had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments;...Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans -- perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets -- were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them...While some of the details -- as roses, gold cups, jewels, &c. -- were very prettily painted, it was on the whole an enormous piece of claptrap...[19:275-76]

When M. Paul finds her resting on a bench she appears to be staring at this image, but she is in fact finding "refreshment" in "some exquisite little pictures of still life" reminiscent of the images the young Jane Eyre fantasizes about making at Lowood: "wild-flowers, wild-fruit, mossy wood-nests, casketing eggs that look like pearls seen through clear green sea-water; all hung modestly beneath that coarse and preposterous canvas" [19:276]. As in Hawthorne's passage, the preference for the delicate veracity of still-life represents a kind of perverse skepticism, but in this case we are meant to endorse it as natural and unaffected, rather than soulless and desperate. Nevertheless, Lucy must hides her preference from M. Paul in order to defend her autonomy against his Gallic prudery, which is appalled at the idea of her even looking at the eroticized Cleopatra. Despite her protests he directs her to contemplate a set of pictures of "la vie d'une femme", a group of painted types of Womanhood, all equally sentimental, and all equally distasteful. Lucy finds these pious caricatures of domesticity just as contemptible and paltry as the lush rendering of Cleopatra's sexuality. "What women to live with! Insincere, ill-humored, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent Gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers." [19:278]

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M. Paul's own opinion of the Cleopatra appears to be guided not by sensual or aesthetic delight but by a moral standard based more on his own instincts than on the conventions he claims to endorse: though he finds the figure "*superbe*" he would not want such a woman "*ni pour femme, ni pour fille, ni pour soeur.*" In their ensuing conversation, he makes further pronouncements, about the virtues of feminine self-sacrifice. In thus revealing his idiosyncrasies he becomes paradoxically more congenial to the recalcitrant Lucy than he has been heretofore. During their sparring match she spots two more men she knows -- M. de Hamal, and Graham Bretton, contemplating the Cleopatra, and their reactions, like Paul's, establish the nature and scope of their erotic susceptibilities. Hamal's tittering absorption immediately condemns him as a shallow sensualist. Graham regards it with what Lucy, still half in love with him, hopes is refined distaste, but at the end of the chapter he indicates an equally faulty susceptibility by scoffing at the inferiority of "that mulatto" to Ginevra Fanshawe. With each masculine response indicates a different kind of disjunction between moral principles and erotic (ie aesthetic) preferences; these in turn each reveal a different aspect of Lucy's own inclinations with respect to the men themselves. Here as in Chapter 32 of *Jane Eyre*, the process whereby a real woman regards a real man regarding a painted woman suggests both growing autonomy and a self-protective deflecting of masculine attention.

The feminine stereotypes M. Paul commends to Lucy's attention recall the caricatured figures of the adult Reed sisters. Where Jane's aversion to extremes suggests moderation and sanity, Lucy's fierce revulsion from these images derives from something rather more than less radical than what they depict -- a kind of fanatical refusal to be drawn into any comprehensive vision of femininity. (This same resistance to imaginative reconstruction has made her insist on wearing her skirts when she assumes a man's role in the play put on at the school in chapter 14, another moment of truth for her and M. Paul.) Lucy, like Jane, is engaged in a struggle to preserve both the autonomy and the invisibility of authorship by means of an

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unflinching honesty about appearances; but the literary context in which these struggles take place is very different. Where Jane seeks to extricate Romantic sensuality from Gothic excess, Lucy's more brittle imagination collides with typically Victorian obstacles: petty worldliness, thoughtless egoism, sexual prurience, mindless acquiescence in social norms.

Lucy's problem is not to assert her self but merely to escape from others, to release her resistant nature from the confinement of its own capacity for fear and disgust. The task is practical and emotional, not imaginative. Where Jane uses her own skill at portraiture to dismantle the imaginative dungeon of feminine types, Lucy confronts the gulf between depicted ideals and experienced reality full on, as a spectator, not an artist. The idealized images of childhood, maidenhood, motherhood and widowhood are rebuked by ineluctable reality of the female figures Lucy actually encounters: the capricious child Polly, the worldly, vulgar Ginevra, the calculating Madame Beck, and the fiercely bereaved spinster Miss Marchmont. A few chapters later, the facile voluptuousness of the Cleopatra is similarly belied by the electrifying Vashti, whose erotic presence is so concentrated and so devastating that she seems to set fire to the theater in which she performs. Extreme though they may be, these women remain as intractably real as Lucy's own encompassing persona, in that they resist the normative, repressive, or conciliating impositions represented in such masculine forces as Graham Bretton's Romantic infatuations or Paul Emmanuel's patriarchal moralizing.

Like Hilda's struggle with the plausible Mephistopheles and the ambiguous figure of Beatrice Cenci, Lucy's ruthless naturalism and the intractable falseness of conventional images of womanhood all indicate the emergence of a new kind of fictional terrain for the portrait scene to map out, in which painting, and in particular the portrait image, figures both ambivalence about literal representation and ambivalence about feminine sexuality.

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§ Painting and The Scary Woman

In her study of the Victorian iconography of the Perseus and Andromeda myth Adrienne Munich notes that the etymological link between the names Andromeda and Medusa indicates dominion over men, proposing among other possibilities that "Andromeda herself could be regarded as the good sister of this monstrous female....[She] can be domesticated into an acceptable wife, yet she bears traces of her threat in her name."[14] In Munich's gloss the response to this threat of female sexuality finds reciprocal expression in the bestial aggressiveness of Medusa and the fetters that bind Andromeda, so that Andromeda's rescue is inflected with the rape of Medusa's power. The paradigm also lends itself to their identification in terms of a specifically visual potency, whose dual aspect is found in the correlation of Medusa's petrifying countenance with Andromeda's compelling, enchained beauty.[15] Sustained in her lifeless head, beyond life, action, or speech, Medusa's power to paralyze and silence becomes emblematic not only of sexuality but of the reductive absoluteness of physical objects, their resistance to the mutations of imaginative language. The unyielding rock to which Andromeda is fettered offers the same resistance, presents the same obstacle in another form. Figuring beauty in bondage to material fact, Andromeda chained is like Galatea unawakened: not a victim, but a prize and a challenge, a spur to action. Before the hero can enjoy her beauty he must disengage it from the immobilizing forces that hold it captive.

In fiction of the 1850's and 60's the problematic aspects of literal representation and material life found a particularly important emblem in the association of painting with an amalgam of Medusa and Andromeda whom I call the Scary Woman, a Victorian species of sinister beauty whose sexual fatality is markedly worldly and the concrete. Unlike the glittering femme fatale of Romanticism, who seduces poetic souls into regions beyond mortal endurance, the Scary Woman's demonism consists precisely of her rootedness in this world, her commitment to material aims. La Belle Dame Sans Merci is a sensual ghost who carries her victims *out* of the world, but dangerous belles

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like Ginevra Fanshawe and Rosamond Vincy are temptresses of another sort: they embody spiritual death in destructive literalness, which paradoxically makes shallowness a serious matter indeed. What makes this figure truly scary, rather than merely despicable, is her inexorable opacity -- her steadfast, impassive resistance to the transforming possibilities of the imagination.

In the fluent storytelling of Victorian realistic fiction the narrative difficulty which registered in post Gothic fiction as the need to sustain the catastrophic collapse of temporal, spatial and moral boundaries, and in post-Gothic as the need to contain and neutralize grotesque extremes, registers as a problem of incorporating the painful, heartless realities of a materialistic society into a coherent, benign moral order. The Scary Woman is a perfect embodiment of the intransigence of material facts, and the challenge they pose to such an order. Sexy, vulgar, and strong, often criminal, always materialistic, she is above all spiritually and morally impermeable by other minds. As such she figures the ineluctable elements of reality which, though they may appall and paralyze the poetic Romantic, the modern maker of fictions must grapple with and reconfigure.

The mystery of the Scary woman is a particularly productive challenge for realist fiction not because she encourages flights of fancy, but because in defying them she compels a new mode of imaginative resolution. The whole elaborate narrative apparatus of *Bleak House* (1853) for example, can be said to proceed from the impassivity of Lady Dedlock, which hides the Romantic secret at its source. The secret is revealed by Lady Dedlock's own portrait, which Mr. Guppy recognizes by its likeness to Esther Summerson in Chapter 7, and as the plot unfolds the scary opacity falls away from the figure of Lady Dedlock and displaced onto the chilling realism of Tulkinghorn and the French maid who does him in.[16] The recalcitrant opacity of worldly mechanisms embodied in these figures constitutes both a warning and a challenge to the mimetic principle that semblance is revelatory, that mimetic honesty, not poetic audacity, is the way to reveal spiritual truth. Because opacity is often achieved

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through duplicity, the Scary Woman is sometimes an actress, whose dual aspect is implicit in her ability to deceive. [17] But both fallenness and mimicry suggest mutation, and in her purest form the Scary Woman is an immutable personage, endowed with the Medusan fixity of a painted image, her there-ness is a kind of outgrowth of Hawthorne's "icy Demon" who honors the specificities of Gerard Douw over the grand designs of Raphael.

Like Medusa, the demon of specificity tempts the eye; defense against it must come from the Word. Equipped with winged sandals, a cloak of invisibility, and a mirroring shield Perseus seems particularly adapted to the work of verbal mimesis: his gifts bring the mobility, insight, and detachment that a novelist would need to rescue the prize of beauty (or truth) from menace of a facticity that reduces everything to mere matter. That Perseus's task is to separate Medusa's head from her body and Andromeda's body from her rock, and so to reconfigure their power on different terms, further suggests a heroic mode based on manipulation, rather than conquest: his mission is to rearrange the paralyzing and galvanizing elements of his situation, and so to impose order on them.

§ Facing Realism: *The Lifted Veil*

A remarkably lucid example of the literary challenge embodied by the Scary Woman is *The Lifted Veil* (1859) George Eliot's odd, early tale of ESP and mesmerism. The story is narrated by a morbid, sickly clairvoyant named Latimer, whose ability to see into the minds of other people and occasionally into the future is pitted in a kind of metaphysical duel against the opacity of his brother's fiancee, a Medusa-like villainess, tellingly named Bertha.

> She was keen, sarcastic, unimaginative, prematurely cynical, unmoved by the most impressive scenes, inclined to dissect my favorite poems, especially the German lyrics that were my pet literature at the time. [22]

Yet the very blatancy of her anti-romantic presence is a source of passion and

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mystery. She is the only person whose thoughts he cannot read, and Latimer, wearied by what he calls his "diseased participation in other people's consciousness," adores her, though he knows her to be false. Bertha encourages his devotion, and when the brother's sudden death throws them into marriage, his ability to read her thoughts is gradually awakened, their relationship deteriorates, and she eventually undertakes to poison him, gradually robbing him of his powers.

Replete with aesthetic as well as supernatural allusions, Eliot's lurid story of failed marriage is a blatant allegory for a kind of cognitive dueling between insight and surface, coarse activity and refined inertia. Latimer is a typically Gothic narrator who, much like Washington Irving's Young Italian, characterizes his own Romantic lassitude as a fit subject for painting:

> I believe I was held to have a sort of half-womanish half-ghostly beauty; for the portrait-painters, who are as thick as weeds in Geneva, had often asked me to sit to them, and I had been the model of a dying minstrel in a fancy picture. But I thoroughly disliked my own *physique*, and nothing but the belief that it was a condition of poetic genius would have reconciled me to it." [20]

The reference to the dying minstrel in particular indicates that Latimer's poetical gifts are obsolete, and ripe to be supplanted by Bertha, a demon of realism, who scoffs at German lyric, baffles Latimer's penetrating vision, and is irritated above all at his failure to produce effective closure to his misery by killing himself. That Bertha is enraged by his passivity reinforces her affinity with the imperatives not only of worldly interest but of narrative agency.

What alerts us to this narrative dimension is the way that portraiture shifts its significance and associations to reflect the disputed imaginative territory. At first Latimer uses it to establish his Romantic credentials, but he meets Bertha painting loses its Romantic associations, and becomes instead emblematic of the relentless pressure of reality on the sensitive writer's consciousness. In this description of a gallery visit, it is figured in unmistakably Medusan terms;

> I could never look at many pictures in succession; for pictures, when

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> they are at all powerful, affect me so strongly that one or two exhaust all my capability of contemplation. This morning I had been looking at Giorgione's picture of the cruel-eyed woman, said to be a likeness of Lucrezia Borgia. I had stood long alone before it, fascinated by the terrible reality of that cunning, relentless face, till I felt a strange poisoned sensation, as if I had long been inhaling a fatal odour, and was just beginning to be conscious of its effects." [28]

Like the putative Beatrice Cenci, the portrait evokes an ancient parricide; the literalizing effect of the image of the poisoner prefigures the crime to come as a subversion of patriarchy. This quasi-physical process, in which 'terrible reality" acts as a poison on his hyperaesthetic sensibilities, actually precipitates Latimer's first experience of being able to penetrate Bertha's horrid opacity. Immediately upon leaving the gallery he has a premonition of his marriage to Bertha, and an ability to read her contempt for him which at present he doesn't have.

> I felt myself sitting in my father's leather chair in the library at home.... Intense and hopeless misery was pressing on my soul; the light became stronger, for Bertha was entering with a candle in her hand--Bertha, my wife--with cruel eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress; every hateful thought within her present to me...."Madman, idiot! why don't you kill yourself, then?" It was a moment of hell. [29]

Aside from the heightened awareness of Bertha's sentiments the moment prefigured in this vision turns out to be rather ordinary one in which she announces that she is hiring a new maid, Archer, who will eventually become Bertha's accomplice in poisoning him. While Latimer's vision shows him a specific moment when the circumstances of the projected murder first begin to coalesce, the portrait offers an equally direct and, for the reader, literal insight into what will actually happen. The image of Lucrezia and the vision of Bertha thus offer distinct modes of prefiguration.

The portrait's poisonous effect also prefigures his disillusionment with Bertha's bewitching opacity, which as yet he still responds to. The resulting duality of Latimer's perception resembles Poe's dual streams of allegorical and literal meaning, which Poe himself figured in a variety of feminine forms -- the dual aspects of Berenice and Ligeia, and in a more comic vein, of the beloved lady in "Spectacles", who proves to be

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an old hag. But here the mechanisms of narrative are more specifically aligned with the comprehension of time -- the insights of art with the magic of prophesy.

> Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth--with her barren selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you able to give me your sympathy--you who read this? Are you able to imagine the double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? [31-32]

According to Gillian Beer, this passage "hideously figures forth and parallels the trials of the novelist; his powers express the determinism and solipsism latent in the act of writing fiction." (97)[18] In the twin images of Bertha it also presents the double face of Andromeda and Medusa, the mask of innocence that stimulates action, and the revealed opacity that stultifies and paralyzes.

Eliot returned to the theme of the clairvoyant artistry in *Romola* (1862-3), where Piero de Cosimo's portrait of Tito Melema serves a premonitory function similar to that of the Borgia portrait. There, however, the configuration is very different: artistic penetration lies carefully outside the sphere of moral susceptibility, and is furthermore uninflected by gender -- that is to say, it is male. The hermit-like Piero is virtually sexless, and disinterested (though he eventually reveals a chaste and rather soggy devotion to Romola). Although Tito's unscrupulous charm is clearly as dangerous as Bertha's fell sexuality, the painter's mimetic powers are in no way threatened by it. Instead, Piero's penetration into Tito's character stands in for the author's own detachment, serving as a kind of internal armature for the eventual revelations of the plot. Here, however, Latimer's insight has no utility other than to spur him on to perverse marriage, and portraiture underscores the pattern of unconscious confrontation, not just with an enemy, but with a displacing double. in Bertha's beauty Latimer's insight meets its match and its mirror -- the one surface that can literally throw the projections of his mind's eye back at him. In the event, her efforts

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to obliterate him are foiled: the two principals live apart, and Latimer's tale ends with the onset of his long-foreseen death in isolation from society. Although the result of the conflict is finally a stalemate, the intervening portrait establishes the new set of terms on which the problem of mimetic integration must be undertaken.

Where once the mutability of likeness had allowed narrative passage from Gothic romance to domestic fiction, it now presided over the more problematic range of imaginative interactions between romance and fact, high-minded ideals and pragmatic self-interest, enervated passivity and aggressive energy, refined sensibility and coarse sensualism. In a succeeding wave of realistic fictions, the paralyzing and enabling effects of Romantic and prosaic or materialistic sensibilities became more effectively articulated in the relations between reluctant, sensitive men and the challenging, vulnerable women who resist their scrutiny and compel them to act. Marriage was of course the basic element of configuration in these fictions, but the portrait was an important emblem of the balance of social and aesthetic forces that fictional marriages must reconcile.

§ Aesthetic Pronouncements: Lady Audley's portrait

Other developments in the literary representation of the arts begin to infiltrate the existing fictional structure of looking at a revealing portrait, and subtly redirect the convention. With the huge commercial and social fluctuations of mid-Victorian England, the status conferred by portraits was as strangely multivalent as the portrait identities in Gothic narrative, pointing in different directions depending on the standing of the people involved. On one hand, securing a commission from a peer could make a painter's career (in chapter 19 of *the Newcomes* Smee and Gandish vie for a portrait commission from Lord Kew, who must fend them off) but sitting for portrait could also socially elevate a new-moneyed patron, especially if the painter were a member of the Academy. As an object not only of artistic effort but of commercial exchange and social ratification, a portrait could act as a social portal as

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well as a narrative one.

At the same time, portraits continue to serve as residual tokens of the Gothic aesthetic of preternatural vision and deferred identification. Throughout the nineteenth century detective and horror fiction deploy the different mechanisms of portrait semblance: the traversal of long periods of time, the unsuspected doubling of an individual identity or temperament, the overtones of death and resurrection, and the implication of the reader's own presence as witness to a larger scope of events that what is currently being reported. While it continued to serve as a monitory window onto the untold story -- the forgotten past, the unrevealed self -- the painted portrait also became an object of art, and thus an explicit pretext for making aesthetic pronouncements, often incorporating the influences of Ruskin, Emerson, Mrs. Jameson, the Pre-Raphaelites, and in some circles, Balzac and Baudelaire. Conversations conducted in front of portraits took on the privileged, expository function previously fulfilled by the portrait likeness, revealing social and aesthetic truths about the participants, and eventually dramatizing the relationships between societal and artistic standards.

An excellent example of this interweaving of aesthetic discourse and social ratification with narrative concerns can be found in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). Here as in *The Lifted Veil*, a portrait reveals the hidden wickedness of a scary women, and configures the conflicting forces of romance and realism in terms of gender, but because it is also a detective story on the order of *Bleak House*, the likeness engages the narrative dimension much more actively: instead of reiterating supernatural intimations of the future, the portrait straightforwardly confirms to the reader an identity which must nevertheless be proven by the characters. At the same time, the scene reflects Braddon's familiarity with the glib criticisms of the Modern, French-influenced aesthetic which her own early translations of Flaubert helped to establish.

The picture appears in Chapter 8, when Robert Audley brings his bereaved friend

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George Talboys to his uncle's estate on a visit. During a tour of the castle, Robert's cousin Alicia insists on their viewing the collection of portraits locked away in her absent stepmother's boudoir. The reader has been alerted to the probability that on seeing Lady Audley Talboys will recognize the likeness of the wife he'd presumed dead, and with it her treachery and deceit, but in the event he mentions nothing of it to his companions, who are nevertheless struck by the scariness of her image.

> Yes; the painter must have been a pre-Raphaelite. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets, with every glimmer of gold and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid brightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait....The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring, were there; but it seemed as if the painter had copied mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had the aspect of a beautiful fiend. [8:71] [19]

Here is Allston's appalling beauty again: the faithless wife of Monaldi's mad imaginings is rendered with the unbearable specificity of a Holman Hunt[20]. The drama of the scene is thus displaced from the crucial confirmation of identity to the confirmation of character. In the opening chapter the future Lady Audley is presented as mysterious, and probably fallen, but whether she is to be redeemed, and at what point on the trajectory of her possible redemption we have found her, remains deliberately unclear. We do not know whether she is more dangerous to others or in danger herself. The appearance of her portrait confirms her duplicity absolutely, first by allusion to the pre-Raphaelite femme fatale, and then more prosaically by the behavior of George Talboys, who recognizes in her portrait the wife he had believed to be dead. Instead of revealing his discovery he stares blankly at the canvas, "without uttering a word". The portrait thus serves the plot just as it does in *Bleak House*, connecting not only past and present, but two separate story lines, whose mysterious relation is suppressed even as it is confirmed. [21]

Having performed this Gothic duty, however, the scariness of the portrait takes on

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a very different dimension, also becomes the pretext for a miniature debate between Robert and Alicia about the possibilities of mimetic art. Up till now, Alicia has been averse to her stepmother, distrusting her for no definite reason. The art of painting allows her to rationalize her antipathy in quasi-supernatural terms:

> I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and is able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes. *We* have never seen my lady look as she does in that picture: but I think that she *could* look so. [8:71-2]

Robert, who is attracted to Lady Audley, rebukes his cousin's excessive Romanticism: "Don't be German, Alicia.... The picture is--the picture; and my lady is--my lady. That's my way of taking things, and I'm not metaphysical; don't unsettle me." [8:72] The exchange sets forth Romantic and prosaic perspectives on the representation of truth. Alicia's view favors spiritual truth in representation, "seeing through the normal expression" -- i.e., by means of and behind and behind -- the available surface. Robert insists that the opacity of things remain intact: the representation remains distinct from the woman, and any suggestiveness of the one cannot be attributed to the other. As it turns out the link between the image and the woman lies with the other man, Talboys, for whom the distinction between literal and figurative aspect of the image doesn't exist. But Talboys doesn't speak, and shortly after this scene he disappears, initiating the detective work that takes up the remainder of the novel.

In the course of this investigation the cousins' aesthetic dispute will turn out to have moral implications as well, demarcating a crucial boundary between factual and emotional evidence. Though ensuing events eventually prove Alicia right about her stepmother, her "German" notions are rebuked by the very real disaster that ensues from Lady Audley's exposure. Alicia is also convinced that she herself is languishing with unrequited love for her cousin, and the same crisis reconciles her to marrying the good-natured country squire who has been faithfully wooing her. The literal Robert on

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the other hand, boasting that he "is troubled with none of the epidemics whose outward signs are turn-down collars and Byronic neckties," [13:120] is deluded in adopting an *un*romantic posture. His correction eventually comes in the form of beautiful Clara Talboys, the sister of the vanished man. Falling in love with her, being convinced of her nobility of character, compels him to find out the facts, and thereby reveal the truth.

The unfolding of the plot thus asserts an equal commitment to the recalcitrant opacity of facts and to the revelatory momentum of feeling, in a balance that seems to be reinforced by the prerogatives of gender: the practical man must be inspired by an emotional woman to pursue facts, which will in their turn add sobering weight to the unfounded -- though not incorrect -- fancies of yet another woman. Yet these shifts reverse the gendered scheme of the story's inception; the two opening scenes distinguish very sharply between the Romantic excesses of men and the hard pragmatism of women. The first shows an elderly Sir Michael Audley ardently wooing his neighbor's governess so naively that she must explain to him how impossible it is to ignore the advantages of his money and position. "[Y]ou can never guess what is endured by genteel paupers. Do not ask too much of me..."[1:11] The second introduces Talboys, who after three years unexplained absence is returning home, confident of his wife's unchanging devotion. We find him in a shipboard conversation with a faded spinster who is returning to England to claim a fiancee of fifteen years' standing, and who like Lady Audley speaks out of an awareness of the uncompromising realities of ordinary life.

> The person I go to meet may have changed in his feelings... or he may retain all the old feeling until the moment of seeing me, and lose it in a breath at sight of my poor old faded face...[2:16]

Miss Morely never appears again, but her pessimistic prophesy is in a sense fulfilled when Talboys experiences precisely this absolute change of heart at the sight of Lady Audley's portrait. In another sense, the revivification of the dead wife inverts the earlier image of a youthful love killed by the sight of age.

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By invoking marriages threatened by distance -- gaps of geography or time or class, both of these scenes underscore a duality of gender and imaginative mode, which must be reconfigured in the course of the plot. The sins of the original pair are thus remarkably similar: both desert hearth and home in pursuit of fortune but where the man errs in excessive romanticism, the woman is guilty of excessive worldliness. Atonement for these sins entails not redemption but realignment. Thus solving the mystery of George Talboys' disappearance becomes coextensive with proving Lady Audley's identity. Meanwhile the burden of reconfiguration is assumed by the cousins, so that the practical but languid Robert is galvanized by his sympathy with Talboys' bereavement, while Alicia's ardent but shallow nature is deepened by her suspicions of Lady Audley's duplicity. The story ends with two new harmonious marriages -- Robert's to his sequestered Romantic spinster and Alicia's to her prosaic Victorian gentleman -- which balance the excesses of the outmoded types, and thus close the gaps.

In this schematic view of the novel, then, the portrait scene serves its familiar pivotal function, but here the joint in the imaginative structure is effected as much by the commentary on the image as by the direct impact of the spectacle itself. At the same time, the portrait is overtly charged with cultural freight, which annotates and enhances the significance of each participant's reaction. The references to Pre-Raphaelitism and "German" metaphysics are realistic details, in that they inject a kind of journalistic note of cultural savvy into the narrative, which also help to confirm Braddon's aesthetic credentials as a proponent of Modern literary values in the French vein. Yet the morality with which she inflects pictorial realism is unassailably English, based on the typological linkage of sinister femininity with mimetic fidelity. In the end it is this association that morally authenticates the imaginative investigations of the story.

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§ Art and Sex: Alcott's women

For all this newfound sophistication, the new artistic milieu still recalled certain kinds of confrontation between authenticity and artifice, past traditions and future possibilities, which had already been associated with portraiture. Even Trollope experimented with a studio sequence in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1863), in which a young painter is commissioned by his fashionable, married patroness to paint a portrait of someone else in order to instigate his courtship of the model. Though the episode is hardly concerned with aesthetic matters, it illustrates how readily the promptings of genuine feeling mingle with shallow and self-serving manipulations, and how character may be tried in such situations. For impassioned students of Ruskin like Eliot and Browning, the artistic milieu was charged with the responsibility of revealing new knowledge of or a new perspective on experience. At the same time, a heightened awareness of form and feeling always runs the risk of moral distortion and self-deception. This tension between poetic truth and guile rhymed particularly well with English ambivalence about European thought and manners, and lay at the heart of Victorian uneasiness about the arts.

For mid-century Americans, however, the dangerous element linked with Europe and the arts was not mendacity but sexuality. As artists, both Pierre and Kenyon side-step the truth; they are more driven -- and more threatened -- by erotic desire. Louisa May Alcott's use of visual art as an emblem and accoutrement of sexuality is particularly unambiguous, and remarkably varied. In 1862 she wrote a story similar to *The Lifted Veil* called "A Pair of Eyes" in which a painter finds himself in the thrall of his wife's mesmeric powers. Here too the failure of a marriage is coextensive with a loss of vision, but where Eliot's story is about art and perception, Alcott's emphasis is on the sexual politics of the marriage -- the loss of vision is simply one aspect of the exchange of power. Where Eliot uses erotic overtones as a way to amplify imaginative gestures, Alcott enters the imaginative realm of the studio primarily to exploit its erotically charged atmosphere.

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Inexorable confrontation between the sexes was a central theme of Alcott's work. Her favorite heroine is a scary woman whose manipulation of her own image exploits, even as it belies, the ideals of perfect womanhood. Jean Muir, the self-serving governess of "Behind a Mask" transposes the desperate duplicity of Lady Audley into a still more subversive key, allowing her complete and unqualified success in securing marriage to the head of the household. A more peculiar example is Cecil, the girl in "A Marble Woman or, the Mysterious Model" (1865). The ward and pupil of a misanthropic sculptor, she molds herself to his vision as she matures, draining herself of all vitality and emotion, an inverse Galatea; at length the girl's marble self-control is revealed to be the result of an opium addiction, acquired in a desperate attempt to obey her beloved guardian's injunction that she express no feeling for him. Later, when the two are bound in a sexless marriage, she is haunted by the mysterious model of the title who, having pretended to be her unrequited lover, reveals himself at the point of death to be her father, and thus releases her husband from the same suspicion. Here, as in *the Marble Faun*, feminine opacity swings both ways: Miriam's haunted anguish and Hilda's impenetrable innocence are combined in Cecil's contorted relations to the men in her life, and both are equally destructive. Alcott's resolution of gender relations depends largely on this kind of freezing of erotic possibilities.

Though her sensational tales of morbid art and repressed sexuality are revealing, they do not fully engage those issues of money and social reform that give Alcott's fiction its most distinctive ring. In her most successful realistic work, the scary woman is neither a jaded mesmerist nor a stoic virgin, but a spoiled child. Amy March, the artistic sister in *Little Women* (1868-69), is a formidable combination of hard worldliness and beauty, whose childhood incarnation is made to seem as monstrous as any green-eyed demoness, though here she clashes not with a man but with her tomboy sister.[22]

Amy's intractable worldliness and Jo's implacable temper are in fact the monstrous aspects of creative talents which drive both girls outside the domestic circle

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and into a realm of revisionary possibility. Literary Jo goes off to New York, where she enacts her own distinctly Americanized version of the Romance of the Governess: instead of altering her station in an aristocratic mansion, she goes to a boarding house and eventually marries a fellow pensioner as poor as herself. Amy takes on the story of the American Girl Abroad, where she is humbled by the greatness of her predecessors; instead of consecrating herself to the preservation of older masterpieces as a copyist, like Hilda, or marrying into a jaded aristocracy, like James' early heroines, she marries a rich American and becomes a patroness of the arts, anticipating Isabel Archer by more than a decade.

In her sensational works Alcott tends to imply that a devotion to high art, while indicative of spiritual refinement, must always entail something forbidden or dangerous. Her artistic geniuses, whatever their chosen medium, are always enmeshed in fiendish arrangements, and though they are never entirely condemned as evil, they are always *vulnerable*. What puts them at especially high risk of spiritual temptations, where soldiers and businessmen, who deal only in violence and money, are not, is not particularly a matter of mimetic specificity but the sensuality of art as a whole. Although Alcott's sexually hostile world makes it especially suspect, partakes of that Emersonian prejudice, so strangely and incompletely satirized in *Pierre,* and hinted at in *The Marble Faun*, which suspects high art as a form of vain idolatry, but respects low art as selfless industry. Where *The Marble Faun* uses fine art to grapple with the morality implied by different mimetic modes, *Little Women* sets up an opposition between writing and the fine arts to deal with more general conflicts about the fundamental value of artistic seriousness, and what role it is to play in the bourgeois puritan morality. [23]

Here Alcott associates visual art with Amy's sexual ease and power, and literature with Jo's resistant asexuality; the contrast is further parsed in terms of political and economic attitudes, which are likewise construed in terms of art. Thus Jo, who scorns social and gender conventions, writes for money and fame and independence, while

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conventional, feminine Amy is a true disciple of art, never thinking about its professional aspect, who wants "to be great or nothing. I won't be a commonplace dauber" [39:361][24]. In their childhood fantasies, Amy wants to be "the best artist in the whole world" while Jo dreams of a "magic inkstand" which will make her work *sell*. Her work, regardless of its quality, is a ticket to financial independence and thereby to moral freedom. Amy's politics are on the contrary conservative and pragmatic, and based on the economics of patronage. When at one point they argue about ethics and riches, Amy makes the Edith Whartonish point that since the moral principles of poor and obscure women are useless without power's endorsement, they can accomplish more good by securing the sponsorship of the rich than by judging them. When Jo remonstrates that to absolve the rich from deserved censure is immoral, Amy replies "I only know that it's the way of the world...I don't like reformers" [29:266]. The wealthy, musical, half-Italian Laurie becomes a kind of litmus test for each girl's relation to art, sexuality, and money.

Two episodes involving portraits reinforce the contrast between the two different modes of heroism the two sisters represent. Early on, in Chapter 5, Jo visits Laurie and has an accidental encounter with Mr. Laurence. Left alone in the library, she muses aloud on a portrait of Laurie's reputedly frightening grandfather. Thinking that Laurie has returned, she expresses her approval of the old man's looks in terms of that sentimentality that serves Jo throughout the novel in place of erotic interest:

> "I'm sure now that I shouldn't be afraid of him, for he's got kind eyes, though his mouth is grim, and he looks as if he had a tremendous will of his own, He isn't as handsome as *my* grandfather, but I like him." [5:48]

Her listener turns out to be old Mr. Laurence himself, who interrogates her harshly on her remarks before breaking into a laugh and confirming her original impression of his good nature. In debunking the Gothic cliché of a menacing portrait, the episode is suggestive in several ways: the substitution of the old man for the young one indicates that Jo's virginal chumminess is more readily unseated by genial patriarchs than by

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dashing young heroes.[25] The library setting, reminiscent of Judge Pyncheon's death scene in Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*, also establishes the passing and overturning over the kind of social order that would allow an old New England plutocrat like Mr. Laurence to be terrifying. The story of which radical Jo is the heroine is defined, like Hawthorne's, by the revisionary power of youth and industry over the entrenched traditions of age and privilege.

Amy's story, which takes her back to the old world, engages in another, equally American convention whereby a character faces spiritual crisis and resolution surrounded by centuries of European art, a setting more conducive to the realignment of aspiration and identity. Here as in *The Marble Faun* we find the work of marking limits or boundaries of character linked directly to the work of making images. This scene is set in artistic Italy, where Amy rebukes his laziness and neglect of his family, and challenges the self-indulgence of his posture as Jo's rejected lover. During her scolding she sketches him as he reclines on the grass; when she shows him the result, she appears to be interrupting her lecture, but she in fact uses the image as a silent means of driving home her point. "As you are: this is as you were," is all she says, as she lays it alongside an older, rougher sketch of him taming a horse, looking active and fulfilled.

> Laurie said nothing; but, as his eye went form one to the other, Amy saw him flush up and fold his lips together as if he read and accepted the little lesson she had given him .... "Don't you remember the day you played Rarey with Puck, and we all looked on? Meg and Beth were frightened, but Jo clapped her hands, and I sat on the fence and drew you...." [39:367]

Once again we have a pair of portraits serving as markers for the progress of character, but in this case the images charting the progress of both subject and maker: Amy's talent has refined, while Laurie's animating energy has declined. The confrontation forms the key conflict that reinforces their eventual union, for it is during this same scene that Amy declares she will give up her artistic ambitions ("Rome has taken all the vanity out of me") and try to succeed in the marriage market instead.

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Romantic Laurie mopes and mourns, Amy is all too prepared to cast off both her artistic ambitions and her high puritan standards in the name of seeing things as they are. In the end of course he redeems her from complete mercenary perdition by marrying her himself, but in the process he too must give up serious artistic passion.

Despite its lowbrow Yankee aesthetics *Little Women* enacts a synthesis of Romantic and Realistic approaches to fiction similar to *Lady Audley's Secret*, with its artsy allusions to contemporary painting and aesthetic theory. The fortunes of Amy and Jo offer a double version of the Victorian resolution whereby the redistribution of wealth, property, and status cover for a more imaginative reconfiguration of potentially unruly forces. Just as Alice and Robert have their sensibilities realigned in the rational re-telling of a Romantic mystery, Amy's sensual selfishness and Jo's violent asexuality are tamed and normalized in the process of maturation. Each of these very different works uses different aspect of scary womanhood -- that affinity with material fact which belies the mask of innocence -- as a crucial element in the reconfiguration of Romantic and Pragmatic motives. In both cases the portrait presence is used to emphasize the normative processes of fiction which affirm and vindicate individual character, even as they assimilate and neutralize potential subversion. The disturbing potentialities of a portrait subject form a significant subtext for more overt dramatic tensions over which they preside.

Both fictions also partake of the familiar Victorian pattern whereby the passivity of a genial but self-centered dreamer is eventually prodded into firm, practical, public-spirited action, a process which paradoxically renders his heroism more Romantic than he could at first have supposed. Thus in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Robert Audley's reluctant assumption of the role of detective entails the discovery of repressed Romantic susceptibility; in *Little Women*, Laurie renounces his useless infatuations with both music and Jo to release Amy from the rock of hopeless worldliness. In both cases Romanticism's reluctance to face up to the realistic dispensation mutates into a

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new, galvanizing force, which in the final decades of the century is eventually incorporated into the education of the artist.

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NOTES

[1] In his introduction to the 1901 facsimile edition of *The Germ*, William Michael Rossetti points to the importance of this tension between realism and romanticism in the tale, noting its counterpoint of "individual" and "ideal", "figment" and "fact" and historical knowledge and "ignorance, voluntary or involuntary" of authentic details. His gloss of its "art-dogma" hints at the mechanism, observing that the importance of painting "from your own perceptions and emotions...was the core of the 'preraphaelite' creed; with the adjunct (which hardly came within the scope of Rossetti's tale, and yet may be partly traced there) that the artist cannot attain to adequate self-expression save through a stern study and realization of natural appearances." From W.M. Rossetti's introduction to *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art, Being a Facsimile Reprint of the Literary Organ of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Published in 1850*, excerpted and adapted for *The Germ: a Pre-Raphaelite Little Magazine*, ed. Robert Stahr Hosman. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970). The passages quoted appear on pp. 250-251.

[2] A remarkable example is Mme. de Smolensk, the housekeeper in *The Adventures of Philip*, whom Thackeray elaborately characterizes in Chapter 19 as one who must suppress natural generosity and present a hard exterior to the world, to cope with the exigencies of a hand-to mouth existence. The French family in the *Newcomes* are similarly presented as hard-headed and self-seeking more out of necessity than bad character.

[3] According to Bo Jeffares, English attitudes toward the art student life and its associations with France, were hugely influenced by the publication of Murger's *La vie Bohème* in 1850, which almost single-handedly established the stereotype of the carefree impoverished art student in Paris. See his Introduction to *The Artist in Nineteenth-century English Fiction.* (Gerrards Cross: C. Smyth, 1979).

[4] See Nathalia Wright, *American Novelists in Italy* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), especially the Introduction. According to Wright, the profusion of artifacts was useful for artists, but symbolic for writers -- It "bore out the hypothesis, nowhere else so convincing, that the creative imagination was the course of a life independent of society and even of time--an inner life, entailing danger as well as delight" (33). Tony Tanner sees the American writer as more troubled by problems of authorization, both in terms of his own undertakings and of national style, than the painter. See "Problems and Roles of the American Artist As Portrayed by the American Novelist" *Proceedings of the British Academy* LVII (1971): 159-79.

[5] Valentine Blyth, the generous hero of Wilkie Collins's early novel *Hide and Seek*, is placed in a similar position by his father, who offers him the choice of either entering the family business and being backed in his apprenticeship or subsisting

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as an artist on the interest on his inheritance. Unlike Clive, Valentine has no talent to speak of.

[6] Page citation refers to *The Newcomes* Everyman Edition (London: J.M. Dent: 1994).

[7] Bo Jeffares's detailed catalogue of nineteenth century works featuring artists indicates a fairly uniform trend of generous but loose morality in fictional artists, and discusses the broader themes of the artist's association with Romanticism and the continent. See *The Artist in Nineteenth-Century English Fiction.*

[8] This image, along with Raphael's Madonna, was on of the most celebrated icons of established Victorian taste. For discussions of its role in the formulation of Victorian aesthetics see Hugh Witmeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Rita Gollin, *Prophetic Pictures: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Knowledge and Uses of the Visual Arts* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); and Barnett, "American Novelists and the 'Portrait of Beatrice Cenci'" *New England Quarterly* 53 (1980): 168-183.

[9] His head is briefly described as being potentially fit for sculpture "when time had done a little more with it" [13:90]

[10] Tony Tanner recognizes how the reticence conveyed in this image annotates the scene that follows, but he reads it as emblematic of virginal, rather than authorial, resistence to the entanglements of sensual experience. See "Problems and Roles of the American Artist as Portrayed by the American Novelist" 170.

[11] Abigail Rischin discusses the details of this scene, and the novel's aesthetic agenda of suggestiveness, in the context of the novel's contemporary reception as a guide to Rome's art treasures. She points out that the figure of the Cleopatra served as a kind of preview for the debut of a contemporary American work -- William Wetmore Story's Cleopatra. See "Speaking Looks" Varieties of Ekphrastic Experience in Nineteenth-Century Literature" Yale Dissertation 1995, Chapter 4.

[12] For an analysis of this work in the context of Dark/Fair lady gender typing of the novel, see Leland S. Person, Jr. *Aesthetic Headaches: Women and Masculine Poetics in Poe, Melville and Hawthorne.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988) 160-176.

[13] For a detailed discussion of Hawthorne's artistic tastes and his efforts to re-educate them see Gollin, especially Chapter 2. That Hawthorne's natural pictorial taste should run so counter to his avowed -- and eventually cultivated -- tendency to sacrifice specific detail to allegorical conception, and moreover that this perverse characterization of his own inclination does not surprise us, is a testament to the profundity of the cracks into which attempts to align verbal and visual arts usually fall.

[14] Munich, *Andromeda's Chains: Gender and Interpretation in Victorian Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 31-32.

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[15] As an attribute of preternatural chastity, mythical beauty is often granted the power to protect its owner from unauthorized glances by means of violent and revealing transfigurations of the gazer. c.f. Diana and Actaeon, Susanna and the Elders, etc.

[16] The other crucial identity in *Bleak House* is confirmed in the handwriting of the dead man that Lady Dedlock recognizes in Chapter 2, an emblematic juxtaposition of manuscript and painted likeness which, like the title, honors the novel's Gothic antecedents.

[17] One example is Magdalene, the heroine of Wilkie Collins' *No Name*, who begins as a passionate, romantically minded actress and emerges as an entirely opaque genius of disguise. Another is Jean Muir, the brilliant deceiver of Louisa May Alcott's thriller "Behind a Mask."

[18] Gillian Beer, "Myth and the Single Consciousness: *Middlemarch* and *The Lifted Veil*" in Adam, *This Particular Web: Essays on Middlemarch* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975): 91-115. Beer cites Eliot's letter to her publishers on the tale ("There are many things in it which I would willingly say over again, and I shall never put them in any other form. But we must wait a little"), and notes in these words both a "deeper sense of the story's significance" and a sense that "gives expression to emotional and artistic problems barely under her control" (95).

[19] Page citations refer to *Lady Audley's Secret* World's Classics edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[20] Braddon emphasizes the quality again when describing the actual lady some chapters later: "If Mr. Holman Hunt could have peeped into the pretty boudoir, I think the picture would have been photographed upon his brain to be reproduced by-and-by on a Bishop's half-length for the glorification of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood" [13:294-5] Nina Auerbach notes Braddon's "seemingly perverse selection of [Holman Hunt] as the most demonic of the pre-Raphaelites" as an ironic indication of the link between sacred and secular typology. See *Woman and the Demon: the Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) 78.

[21] Earlier in the tour Alicia shows Audley and Talboys particular spot on the Lime Walk with which an unrecounted "old legend" is connected. Sure enough, significant and unpleasant things happen in that same spot later on in the novel, but having never learned the original story these later events do not bring us back to the past: in the belated Gothic convention of mystery novels the mere existence of a previous story marks the significance of the place without unduly burdening the narrative to recapitulate it. [7:56]

[22] In one of their fiercest confrontations, Amy burns the only manuscript copy of a collection of Jo's stories, a crime against literature and sisterhood for which few modern readers have forgiven her.

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[23] Although we usually substitute the word "elitism" for idolatry, but the sentiment has been the same in the 20th century, and still very much with us. The artist as a cottage industry, as entrepreneur, is a figure of American reverence; but the serious aesthete is contemptible, unless he may also be regarded as unfortunate. With its call for compassion and acceptance, AIDS has in this sense done as much for the arts as the arts have done for AIDS: the mortal, debilitating disease humbles the ambitious body, destroys its beauty; the burden of disease thus paradoxically neutralizes the threat -- or the charge -- of selfish hedonism that all Americans feel lurking in a dedication to art.

[24] Page citations refer to the Everyman edition of *Little Women* (London: J.M. Dent, 1992).

[25] The implication of a portrait also faintly foreshadows a moment of reversal in Chapter 43 when Professor Bhaer, having reappeared in her life, goes back to his hotel room and kisses Jo's portrait in the dark.

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Chapter 5 - Preparations for Metamorphosis: *Middlemarch*

Middlemarch constitutes something of an apotheosis of the narrative exploitation of pictorial likeness, offering a comprehensive range of narrative and introspective uses to which the portrait and the studio may be put. It is an especially important example because of the ways it actually links a consciousness-expanding portrait, used as a pivotal narrative structure, with an aestheticizing episode in which the transactions between artists and models are used to establish the relationships and potential conflicts among a group of characters. Here, as in *Pierre*, the traditional theme of growing moral self-consciousness represented by a portrait crosses paths with the more modern problem of an unsettling, eroticizing impulse which takes the form of an art-identified female figure; like *The Marble Faun* it offers a range of relationships between persons and likenesses which dramatize not only their relationships to each other but the conflicting impulses of the very mimetic form in which they are represented. All these works connect the revelations of the mirroring or ghostly portrait with the revelations of the artistic setting, with its exotic and morally unsettling associations of deception and license; unlike these earlier American romances, however, *Middlemarch* integrates the elements of both moral and narrative transformation into a mimetic universe not only grounded in but dedicated to the details of commonplace existence.

The portrait is a miniature of Mr. Casaubon's disinherited aunt Julia, Will Ladislaw's grandmother, whom he resembles. It is first introduced in Chapter 9, shortly after Dorothea's betrothal, and reappears three times in the course of the novel: first in Chapter 28, immediately after the Casaubons' return from their honeymoon in Rome; next in Chapter 37, after Will has decided to edit Mr. Brooke's newspaper and tells Dorothea about his family history; in Chapters 54-5, right after Casaubon's death, when Will takes his leave of Dorothea for what they both think will

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be the last time. Establishing Will's likeness and relationship to Casaubon's aunt at the outset, the portrait becomes as a point of reference for tracking the development of Dorothea's attachment to Will, but only for so long as she is married. During the final phase of Will's and Dorothea's story, when their affairs are tied up not with Casaubon but with the Lydgates, the portrait does not figure at all.

The aesthetic episode occurs in Rome, where Dorothea and Casaubon are on their honeymoon, and Ladislaw meets them by accident. Two scenes, one in the Vatican Museum and one in the studio of Adolf Naumann, Will's artist-mentor, focus on the likenesses between works of art and people: In chapter 19, Will and Naumann observe Dorothea lost in thought standing near the famous Hellenistic sculpture of the sleeping Ariadne "then known as Cleopatra", in the Belvedere Gallery of the Vatican Museum. In Chapter 22 Will brings the Casaubons to Naumann's studio, and the painter sketches Mr. Casaubon for a portrait as Thomas Aquinas while surreptitiously attaining his true end of using Dorothea as a model.

One important feature of all these likenesses, the portrait miniature, the sculpted woman, and the Aquinas picture, is they each entail a mistake: a false conception of the relationship between the image and the model which to one extent or another misleads the participating characters, and of which the reader is aware: Dorothea does not know how aunt Julia's disinheritance has affected Will's life; Will and Naumann do not know that the Cleopatra is an Ariadne, and Casaubon does not know that Naumann only wants to paint his portrait so that he can gain access to Dorothea as a model. In each case the reader's understanding of the error both fulfills an acute narrative function, and in doing so actually contributes to a process of transformation in the consciousness of the participating characters.

The remoteness of Rome from Lowick Manor suggests that we ought to regard these sequences as parallel to but separate from each other, and to understand that the kind of aesthetic consciousness derived from the artistic encounters in gallery and studio as distinct from the moral and social consciousness that develops in relation to

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the family portrait. On closer reading however, it appears that the likenesses between people and works of art addressed and revisited in these scenes coalesce into a complex but definable sequence, in which we can discern the aesthetic process by which not only a weak marriage collapses under the pressure of a developing attraction, but a great effort of literary mimesis incorporates and exploits its own mythologies of visual art.

At the beginning of Chapter 19 we are reminded that in the early eighteen-thirties

> Romanticism, which has helped to fill some dull blanks with love and knowledge, had not yet penetrated the times with its leaven and entered in to everybody's food; it was fermenting still as a distinguishable vigorous enthusiasm in certain long-haired German artists at Rome, and the youth of other nations who worked or idled near them were sometimes caught in the spreading movement. [19:219]

Eliot is setting period here, but her invocation of Romanticism also explains what the aesthetically overcharged air of the ancient continental capital has to contribute to with a story line otherwise committed to the petty medium of English country society, the social institutions of marriage and inheritance, with their peculiar negotiations of law, mores, and money.[1] The "spreading movement" infiltrates Eliot's famous web, not just in its effects on the development of the characters, but also its effects on the way that development registers, both for us and for them.

The primary effect of *Middlemarch*'s shift of setting is to invert the advantages in the antagonism between Ladislaw and Casaubon, which derives equally from Will's discomfort at having a benefactor that he doesn't respect, and Casaubon's disapproval of his cousin's continental course of study. At Lowick, the family seat, Will is a stranger -- virtually a foreigner, an interloper and a potential threat. In Rome, it is Casaubon who is out of place, painfully and even laughably insensitive to the historical and aesthetic treasures of antiquity, and hopelessly inadequate to instruct his young wife in their value. It is here that Will begins to recognize a claim that will usurp Casaubon's proprietorship - not of the family fortune, but of the far more precious asset of Dorothea's esteem and confidence, which Casaubon undervalues with the rest.

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Among the masterpieces in the Vatican Museum the essential disposition of the Dorothea/Will/Casaubon triangle is established[2], not in terms of disputed estates and family estrangements, but in terms of aesthetic rivalries and dilemmas that expose the underlying sexual tensions of the situation, and at the same time transpose them into a more elevated key. As we will see, these relationships are revealed most acutely in Naumann's studio, where the artist's appropriation of Dorothea's beauty underscores both her husband's egoism and her lover's ineffectualness, and prefigures the later conflicts between them. The significance of all this for Dorothea does not emerge until her return to Middlemarch, where her private contemplation of Aunt Julia's portrait serves to harmonize her Romantic aspirations with the realities of own desire; as an emblem of Will's lost legacy it also provides a key to the relationship between him and Casaubon in which she finds herself compelled to participate.

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The portrait miniature first appears in Chapter 9, when Miss Brooke, with her family, is being taken through the house of her intended husband. After paying her respects to a portrait of Mr. Casaubon's mother, whose boudoir will soon become hers, she notices another picture in the same group of miniatures, which Mr. Casaubon explains portrays his mother's elder sister, and that there were no other siblings. Celia remarks that she is pretty[3], but Dorothea's initial reaction is only puzzled curiosity:

> "It is a peculiar face," said Dorothea, looking closely. "Those deep grey eyes rather near together--and the delicate irregular nose with a sort of ripple in it---and all the powdered curls hanging backward. Altogether it seems to me peculiar rather than pretty. There is not even a family likeness between her and your mother."
> "No. And they were not alike in their lot."
> "You did not mention her to me," said Dorothea.
> "My aunt made an unfortunate marriage. I never saw her."
> Dorothea wondered a little, but felt that it would be indelicate just then to ask for any information which Mr. Casaubon did not proffer, and she turned to admire the view. [9:101]

This suppressed inclination to find the story behind the portrait is a very nice example of how realistic conventions both sustain and counteract the narrative formula of the Gothic image. The small note at the end characterizes both the immediate situation,

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and the projected marriage in a perfectly plausible exchange which nevertheless recalls the whole tradition of framed narratives. The portrait, fortuitously discovered at the pregnant moment before a marriage, suggests a story, and Mr. Casaubon confirms that there is one to be told, but the telling is deferred for a long time. In fact the story - at least part of it- has already been told, by the Rector, Mr. Cadwallader, to Sir James in the previous chapter, and makes it clear that the portrait represents a claim on the estate. "His mother's sister made a bad match - a Pole, I think - lost herself - at any rate was disowned by her family. If it had not been for that, Casaubon would not have had so much money by half. I believe he went himself to find out his cousins, and see what he could do for them." [8:94] In learning that Casaubon's aunt Julia was his mother's older sister and only sibling, then, Dorothea has received a great deal more information than she can yet recognize.

Immediately after this exchange Celia looks out the window and spots a young man walking on the grounds; when they go downstairs and into the garden Casaubon identifies the stranger as his second cousin[4], "the grandson, in fact," he adds, "of the lady whose portrait you have been noticing, my aunt Julia."

> The cousin was so close now, that, when he lifted his hat, Dorothea could see a pair of grey eyes rather near together, a delicate irregular nose with a little ripple in it, and hair falling backward; but there was a mouth and chin of a more prominent, threatening aspect than belonged to the type of the grandmother's miniature. [9:104]

The "threatening aspect" strikes a Gothic note, and indeed Will turns to be not only the semblance of the portrait but the teller of the tale behind it.

In chapter 37 he visits Dorothea at Lowick to tell her of his plan to work for Mr. Brooke's newspaper, *The Pioneer*. In the course of their conversation Will explains about his grandmother, and exactly what Casaubon has done for him: " there was nothing to be said against her husband except that he was a Polish refugee who gave lessons for his bread.... They both died rather early....my father made himself known to Mr. Casaubon, and that was my last hungry day." [37:401] Thus Dorothea hears for the first time the story we have already heard. But here we discover the one detail of

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Mr. Cadwallader's version that turns out to have been incorrect: Casaubon never sought out his disinherited cousins. Will himself is struck by the implications of what he has said:

> In his inmost soul Will was conscious of wishing to tell Dorothea what was rather new even in his own construction of things - namely, that Mr. Casaubon had never done more than pay a debt towards him. [37:401]

Dorothea meanwhile "did not feel that her husband's conduct was depreciated; but this notion of what justice had required in his relations with Will Ladislaw took strong hold of her mind." Though they do not declare it directly to each other, they each have shared with the reader, a change of heart about their relations with Casaubon. After this scene Dorothea will carry her new knowledge back to her boudoir, where the portrait miniature will "concentrate her feelings" and thus assist her assimilation of the news into a resolution to persuade her husband to redistribute some of her own share of his wealth to Will. [37:406-8] The portrait thus marks an important shift in the direction of Dorothea's consciousness which we will return to later; here I want to observe that the association between the story behind the portrait with Dorothea's and Will's revised relations is reinforced by the reader's own understanding of the story having been enhanced and corrected: we are both prepared for Dorothea's shift of perspective on Will's relationship to Casaubon, and uniquely sympathetic to Will's, although they themselves are not yet in accord.

In the Vatican Museum scene, where Will has his first impression of Dorothea as a work of art, we find a very different use of the same kind of narrative irony based on the reader's awareness of a story associated with an image, in this context not a personal story but a mythical one. Having "just turned his back on the Belvedere Torso" Will encounters Naumann, who beckons him to come quickly and look at someone. A passage teeming with mythological reference describes how they

> ...pass lightly by the Meleager toward the hall were the reclining Ariadne, then called Cleopatra, lies in the marble voluptuousness of her beauty, the drapery folding around her with petal-like ease and tenderness. They were just in time to see another figure standing

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> against a pedestal near the reclining marble: a breathing blooming girl, whose form, not shamed by the Ariadne, was clad in Quakerish grey drapery; her long cloak, fastened at the neck, was thrown backward from her arms, and one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek, pushing somewhat backward the white beaver bonnet which made a sort of halo to her face around the simply braided dark-brown hair. [19:219-20]

The spectacle gives both the long-haired German and the youth of the other nations the opportunity to flex their Romantic theory muscles, though not without some resistance on the latter's part. Naumann, who doesn't know Dorothea, calls the juxtaposition a "fine bit of antithesis" and much to Will's consternation fantasizes about painting her. "I would dress her as a nun in my picture. However, she is married....Only think! he is perhaps rich, and would like to have her portrait taken" Objecting, Will explains his relationship with the Casaubons, and the artist urges him to help secure a sitting. When Will resists, troubled by this casual breach of good manners ("I'm not as brazen as you") Naumann teases him, calling his scruples "dilettantish and amateurish. If you were an artist, you would think of Mistress Second-Cousin as antique form animated by Christian sentiment--a sort of Christian Antigone--sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion." Thus rebuked, Will inflects his respectability with a whiff of chauvinism: "English ladies are not at everybody's service as models." But he is sufficiently mollified to abandon his earlier irritability and play his friend's game, assuming now the stance of a confident aesthete in a rival medium:

> And what is a portrait of a woman? Your painting and Plastik are poor stuff after all....Language gives the fuller image, which is all the better for being vague. After all, true seeing is within; and painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection. I feel that especially about representation of women. As if a woman were a mere coloured superfices! You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing: they change from moment to moment. [19:222]

Here Will inverts the literary association of the Scary Woman with painting: instead of divining an opaque woman's true character from revealing painted image, he blames painting for reducing the image of a woman to its opaque elements, and claims greater depth for literary representation. But when, having thus reached Lessing's

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finest heights, Will plummets into the absurdity of challenging the painter to reproduce her voice, Naumann immediately understands Will's motives, and abandons all aesthetic pretenses, though not his easy-tempered mockery, and parries Lessing with Schiller: "I see, I see, you are jealous. No man must presume to think that he can paint your ideal. This is serious, my fiend! 'Der Neffe als Onkel' in a tragic sense--*ungeheuer!*" The chapter ends with Will's own discomfited recognition that the artist is right:

> He was conscious of being irritated by ridiculously small causes, which were half of his own creation. Why was he making any fuss about Mrs. Casaubon? And yet he felt as if something had happened to him with regard to her. There are characters which are continually creating collisions and nodes for themselves in dramas which nobody is prepared to act with them. Their susceptibilities will clash against objects that remain innocently quiet. [19:223]

The final lines underscore the moral, rather than aesthetic, dimension of Will's aroused impression of Dorothea, yet indicate at the same time that the relation between the two is still unresolved: the "innocently quiet" object against which his sensibilities clash is still an oblique amalgam of the English lady, the voluptuous Cleopatra, the projected image of a Christian Antigone.

For all the subtleties of this parting note, the implications of associating Dorothea with the sculpture are plainly sexual: Will is embarrassed and offended by Naumann's offhand apprehension of Dorothea's qualities as a sexual being, because his own consciousness has been awakened to it. Yet the pointed ambiguity of the misidentified Cleopatra suggests that neither Naumann nor Will knows what they are seeing - that the impact of the statue *on them* is more crudely erotic than it can or should be to the reader.[5] It is not simply that we can consciously register the myth of abandonment (and potential rescue) where they can't, but that in doing so we see Dorothea in a precisely opposite relation to the statue to what they have seen: as an abandoned wife she *resembles* Ariadne; as a "Christian Antigone" she *contrasts* with Cleopatra.[6]

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Here a good case might be made for Eliot's favoring language over image, on the ground that such an effect could only be produced verbally, but I would rather observe the parallel between the corrected attribution behind (literally, beneath) the sculpture and the corrected story of Casaubon's financial relationship to Will behind the portrait. Both corrections reveal the powerful interplay *between* the endurance of visual impressions and the ephemeralness of verbal formations that is so central to this mode of narrative ekphrasis--and so *opposed* to the paragonal contrasts established by Lessing and invoked by Will. This mode or is distinct from the ekphrastic device of the epigraph of the chapter, which invokes Dante in connection with the same pose.[7] In that case the text operates outside the story, and thus annotates our experience and Will's the same way - whereas the Ariadne attribution gives the reader a more immediate responsibility of understanding more than he does in the narrative moment. We are prepared for the course that their relationship may follow, but he has to catch up with us: for unlike Dorothea and Casaubon, who merely assume the roles of Ariadne and Theseus unwittingly, Will will slowly become conscious of his Bacchic role in the rescue of Dorothea. This gradual integration of a depicted character with a presiding myth resembles the Hawthornian process whereby the narrative unfolds the experience and implications of an emblematic connection that is literally and superficially acknowledged at the outset. Here the allegory goes underground, so to speak, into the reader's consciousness, enabling it to surface later in the character's[8]

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The competitive banter between Will and Naumann is a small parable about the unsettlement caused by artistic perspective, its power to generate unexpected interest, to alter relationships, through the disinterested aesthetic exercise of catching beauty and noticing contrasts. The erotic element of this consciousness, uneasily registered by Will and coolly identified by Naumann, marks the boundary between detached, passive aestheticism and active moral involvement, which in his discomfort Will redraws in terms of the *paragone*. As it turns out, the competition between

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word and image will provide an integrating paradigm for the transformation undergone by Will in the course of his relations with the Casaubons. Having sailed onto the Lowick scene in full Romantic rig, complete with sketchbook, brown curls and displaced circumstances, Will eventually finds a career in letters as an earnest, prosaic Victorian, documenting and promoting the Reform Bill of 1832, living in London, and eventually standing for Parliament, an "ardent, public man," uplifted by the leaven of Romanticism but matured beyond its vague artistic ambitions.

Will's insistence on the superiority of Language to Plastik, is thus generally assumed to be shared by his creator, but although his later career does dignify his preference, here his perorations in favor of literature indicate not so much a higher plane of aesthetic sensibility as a loss of emotional control, in part because of how they are linked to erotic disturbance. In Will's abrupt segue from hot bourgeois embarrassment to the paragone we see literature rather awkwardly allied with philistinism; and that very capacity for unsettlement reveals a subtler relation between language and vision than either combatant as yet can register. When he subsequently avers that "Language is a finer medium", and Naumann interrupts "Yes, for those who can't paint....I did not recommend you to paint, my friend," Eliot underlines this disruption of Will's argument even as she steers him over it: "The amiable artist carried his sting, but Ladislaw did not choose to appear stung. He went on as if he hadn't heard." [19:222] The sting is aimed not simply at the meagerness of Will's own artistic talent, but also at the futility of the paragonal competition which is always, to a committed practitioner like Naumann, quite beside the point. What their exchanges suggest is not that literature is more or less creditable or effective than painting, but that it is somehow posterior to it, that it somehow relies more on the possibility of a comparative relationship between them. Thus for Will, who does not paint, the paragonal configuration retains its significance not as an aesthetic theory so much as a paradigm for the vocational battles he has yet to fight. It is a matter of Will's consciousness, rather than Eliot's prejudice, that the rivalry between

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art and literature later becomes linked to a more pertinent conflict between his own rootless aestheticism and a committed course of conduct.

While the ekphrastic moment clearly initiates Will's attraction to and interest in Dorothea, it later becomes clear that Will's consciousness has been agitated not simply by her juxtaposition with the sculpture but also by the aestheticizing disposition of the artist who calls attention to it. Ideologically speaking, Naumann represents one standard of Romanticism - the Nazarene movement, with its non-Ruskinian precepts[9], just as Mrs. Cadwallader represents the standard of genteel intrigue and the prejudices of the high-born in Middlemarch. But in dramatic terms Naumann functions to establish certain key contrasts -- first with Will's character, and later with Casaubon's -- which highlight the need both for effective action and relaxed sexuality in art. In casting a responsive eye on Dorothea, Naumann stimulates Will's imagination; but where Will is paralyzed by Dorothea's image, Naumann is moved -- not only to imagine a picture but to take immediate steps to secure the opportunity to paint it. ("Ah! it is no use looking after her--there she goes! Let's follow her home!") As an artist, he is both immune to the constraints of respectable morality, and particularly bent on doing something with, rather than simply watching, Dorothea. The linking of creative and professional opportunism with sexual pursuit implied by "following her home" upsets Will, but it is clearly central to his enhanced consciousness of her effect on him.[10] While his Victorian earnestness has been fired up by the latent sexuality of Dorothea's artistic affinities, his aesthetic mawkishness is equally brought to heel by Naumann's matter-of-fact readiness to exploit whatever sanctities fall under his hand. Naumann's opaque, dispassionate model-artist is in this senses one of the most modern figures in the book.

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What has been stimulated by Will's awestruck encounter with Dorothea in the Gallery is a condition of watchful passivity, from which a clearer sense of his own path has yet to emerge. In the ensuing chapters, Will has two encounters with Dorothea in

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her hotel. In the first, he is tongue-tied with embarrassed desire and she is only just recovering from the aesthetic shell-shock so famously described in Chapter 21. Although they begin by speaking of Dorothea's ignorance of art, the primary emphasis of this interview is Will's yet-to-be-chosen career. Here he confides his recent decision not to be a painter, clearly "It is too one-sided a life....I should not like to get into their way of looking at the world entirely from the studio point of view." Having hinted at Will's artistic listlessness, Dorothea goes on to extol her husband's industry, and the irritated Will takes his own jab at Casaubon's ignorance of German language and research. He is moved by Dorothea's distress at the thought of being unable to help her husband, and so registers the aestheticizing impulse in a manner far less irritating to Will's English reticence than the bare-breasted marble of the earlier sequence:

> Whatever else she might be, she was not disagreeable. She was not coldly clever and indirectly satirical, but adorably simple and full of feeling. She was an angel beguiled. It would be a unique delight to wait and watch for the melodious fragments in which her heart and soul came forth so directly and ingenuously.

A modern reader will discern the resonances of Wilde's Lord Henry Wotton rubbing his hands together at the sight of the perfectly innocent Dorian Gray and be reminded that this type of aestheticizing impulse, however infused with moral uplift it may be here, is still passive. Unlike the painter Will wants to watch, not to make, things happen to Dorothea.

It is evidently in this quasi-Paterian spirit[11] that Will, dining with the Casaubons two days later, casually suggests that they visit some studios, and thus secures an opportunity for Naumann to take Dorothea's portrait. Having disparaged Casaubon's scholarship also renews Will's appetite for aesthetic rivalry, and en route to his friend's studio he takes to mocking Naumann's excessively allegorical tendencies, but here paragonal competition from the earlier scene us inverted, so that Will speaks as a painter:

> "...But this time I mean to outdo him in breadth of intention. I take Tamburlaine in his chariot for the tremendous course of the world's physical history lashing on the harnessed dynasties...

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> "What a difficult kind of shorthand!" said Dorothea, smiling and looking toward her husband. "It would require all your knowledge to be able to read it."

In her first encounter with Will at Lowick, Dorothea professes her ignorance of art in terms of language, and in doing so alludes to Casaubon's wider knowledge, in which she still has firm faith: "they are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel--just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me." [9:105] Here, however, her mild jesting about her husband's knowledge being exhausted by Will's projected canvas indicates that Casaubon's very verbal exertions are beginning to lose ground to Will's fanciful, pictorial ones, a shift of balance not lost on the scholar, who "blinked furtively at Will. He had a suspicion that he was being laughed at. But it was not possible to include Dorothea in the suspicion." [22:246]

The seeds of rivalry have thus been sown before reaching the studio, where Dorothea's uneducated eye, more sensitive than her puritan enthusiasms would seem to imply, is instructed in the rudiments of iconography .

> The painter in his confident English gave little dissertations on his finished and unfinished subjects...; and Dorothea felt that she was getting quite new notions as to the significance Madonnas seated under inexplicable canopied thrones with the simple country as a background, and of saints with architectural models in their hands, or knives accidentally wedged into their skulls. Some things which had seemed monstrous to her were gathering intelligibility and even a natural meaning, but all this was apparently a branch of knowledge in which Mr. Casaubon had not interested himself. [22:246][12]

Where Naumann's earlier sparring stimulated aesthetic consciousness in Will, here the implicit comparison between Naumann's iconographic bent and Casaubon's scholarship registers aesthetically for Dorothea, who remarks to Will that Naumann's concrete images are easier to understand than "yours with the very wide meanings." Having so successfully inveigled his prey, Naumann is not above a little Paragone-mongering himself, especially when it ingratiates a potential patron:

> "Oh, he does not mean it seriously with painting. His walk must be *belle-lettres*. That is wi-ide." Naumann's pronunciation of the vowel

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> seemed to stretch the word satirically. Will did not half like it, but managed to laugh; and Mr. Casaubon, while he felt some disgust at the artist's German accent, began to entertain a little respect for his judicious severity. [22:247]

Following up on this advantage, Naumann cleverly asks Casaubon to pose for the figure of St. Thomas Aquinas in a picture he has been working on. Completing a first sketch, the clever painter cajoles Casaubon into sitting again after a half-hour interval, to allow it to settle, and proposes that Dorothea fill up the time by allowing him to sketch *her*. He is careful to ask the favor from her husband, who graciously puts her at the painter's disposal.

> ...and Dorothea said, at once, "Where shall I put myself?"
> Naumann was all apologies in asking her to stand, and allow him to adjust her attitude, to which she submitted without any of the affected airs and laughs frequently thought necessary on such occasions... [22:248-9]

The painter sets her up in what is clearly a recapitulation of her unconscious pose in the Vatican Museum--"leaning so, with your cheek against you hand--so--looking at the stool, please, so!"

This literal enactment of what has been suggested in the earlier scenes is too much for Will, who at this point starts oscillating between indignant outrage and interested collusion in the deception. When, after the Casaubons having departed, Naumann crows over the vanity of the husband and the beauty of the wife, Will curtly insists once again that "Mrs. Casaubon is not to be talked of as if she were a model." Yet it is precisely as a model that Dorothea is naturally gifted. She is entirely at ease with that aestheticizing gaze, which Will himself has reluctantly come to exercise. Here her ripeness to be painted is perfectly balanced by her invulnerable virtue, enacting that blend spiritual passion and sensual force which Naumann has recognized in the earlier scene. Impervious to any hint of desecration or betrayal, this new, conscious modelhood suggests a good deal more than mere passive availability to vision. Her unconscious pose in the Vatican may be regarded as having innocently (or passively) been subjected to desecration (or appropriation) by the aestheticizing (or

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male) gaze, her readiness to be placed in a similar attitude in the atelier, signals a responsive participation in the aesthetic project.

> ... he had been allured by the gratification of his pride in being the person who could grant Naumann such an opportunity of studying her loveliness--or rather her divineness, for the ordinary phrases which might apply to mere bodily prettiness were not applicable to her. (Certainly all Tipton and its neighbourhood, as well as Dorothea herself, would have been surprised at her beauty being made so much of. In that part of the world Miss Brooke had only been a "fine young woman".) [22:250]

In the leap of one word Will reverses his earlier claim of the inadequacy of Plastik -- now it is language that fails to do her justice. The oddly parenthetical aside that follows suggests another, broader distinction, not simply between image and word, or sacred and profane appreciation, but between different cognitive universes: it is not just Middlemarchers, but Middlemarch itself, that is unable to cope with Dorothea's singular, and signally important beauty (the subject of the novel's opening sentence), so that any serious consideration of the effects of Dorothea's beauty - not just for Will, but Dorothea herself, requires an alien setting.

In the Belvedere Gallery scene the genuine Ariadne underlying the speciously identified Cleopatra, and the availability of Lessing's arguments, have been allowed to amplify the terms for viewing Dorothea's beauty, Each provided a gloss - the Ariadne myth to the reader, the paragone to Will - for the imminent competition between Will's and Casaubon's claims on her. In the private space of the studio, however, these mythic and intellectual resonances, though not exactly lost, are configured in the more elemental terms of seduction, deception, and adultery, an effect largely due to the grotesque joke of an aestheticized Casaubon, whose vain impersonation of the great scholar renders him more innocuous than anywhere else in the book. Will's verbal attacks have already interpreted his diligence as impotence, his scholarly humility as pretension; but it is under Naumann's eye that Casaubon's authority as a patron and husband is effectively undermined without his victim's even being aware of it. Under these circumstances Will is doubly identified with Naumann the aesthetic seducer and Casaubon the deceived husband.

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After another day's sitting, Casaubon agrees to buy the completed painting of himself as Aquinas, but Naumann retains the sketch of Dorothea, refusing to commit himself to a completed picture [22:249]. That this is the last we hear of the Santa Clara might suggest equally that Naumann has, so to speak, had his way with her, or, conversely, that his efforts have so utterly failed to grasp her that they are never again permitted to surface, but in the end the distinction hardly matters: the portrait need not appear because it is Dorothea's potentiality for being imaged that matters most, her sexuality simultaneously evoked and suppressed in tension between the Medusan moment of bafflement into the Andromedan scenario of rescue.

Thus it is Casaubon's, portrait, not Dorothea's, which carries narrative freight back to the precincts of Middlemarch. In Chapter 29 Casaubon news of Will's intention to return to Lowick precipitates an argument between husband and wife, which leads to Casaubon's collapse in the library. [29:315-7] Here again is small but tellingly inverted example of deferred explanation: we only learn that Will intends to bring the portrait back when Dorothea reads the letter herself, after Lydgate has informed her that Casaubon's condition is terminal. For us, then, as for her, the portrait appears as a harbinger - or perhaps a guarantor - of its subject's death [30:324-5]Mr. Brooke also alludes to the portrait, immediately on the Casaubons' return, in connection with Casaubon's sickly looks: "A little English beef and mutton will soon make a difference. It was all very well to look pale, sitting for the portrait of Aquinas, you know...But Aquinas, now--he was a little too subtle, wasn't he? Does anybody read Aquinas?" [28:309] In light of this pointed allusion, Casaubon's painted image is conspicuously absent from the exegesis that appears just a few pages later, when it is observed that "no sonneteer had insisted on Mr. Casaubon's leaving a copy of himself; moreover, he had not succeeded in issuing copies of his mythological key." [29:312] This suppression even of an ironic allusion to the portrait in this instance is still more pointed when we consider that Dorothea's capacity to inspire a picture and Will's resemblance to the portrait have been signs of their emotional and imaginative

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fecundity. [13] Casaubon's sterility undercuts any immortality that might be incurred in preserving his likeness. The emblematic connection between representation and reproduction is thus a function of the personality of the subject, rather than an index of it.

It is this fertile possibility, too, that distinguishes Will's Romantic uselessness from Casaubon's scholastic impotence. Though Will is initially paralyzed by the spectacle of Dorothea, upon leaving the studio he is inspired to do precisely what Casaubon's literal image cannot manage: to leave behind a copy of himself in the eyes of someone else.

> All Will's hope and contrivance were now concentrated on seeing Dorothea when she was alone. He only wanted her to take more emphatic notice of him; he only wanted to be something more special in her remembrance than he could yet believe himself likely to be [22:250]

This desire to direct his conduct by how he will appear in Dorothea's eyes remains his motive to the end of the novel, a reversal of and antidote to the paralyzing awe and ambivalence triggered by looking at *her*. Will's faith in the power of Language to do justice to the loveliness of a woman is never actually tested, but it serves as a kind of talisman for the effectiveness of this inversion of seeing and being seen. When he returns to the hotel to talk to her again, he is full of confident resolve; he is no longer moved to attack Casaubon - it is only when Dorothea asks him about it that he reiterates his earlier criticism - he instead argues his creed of pleasure against what he calls Dorothea's "fanaticism of sympathy". Having asked him in their earlier interview if he plans to be an artist, here she suggests the alternative of poetry, and Will again invokes a favorite Romantic sage, this time the more reliable Goethe:

> "To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern that no shade of quality escapes it and so quick to feel, that the discernment is but a hand playing with finely-ordered variety on the chords of emotion--a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge. One may have that condition by fits only."
>
> "But you leave out the poems,...I think they are wanted to complete the poet. I understand what you mean about knowledge passing into

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> feeling, for that seems to be just what I experience. But I am sure I could never produce a poem."
>
> "You *are* a poem--and that is to be the best part of a poet--what makes up the poet's consciousness and his best moods," said Will, showing such originality as we all share with the morning and the spring-time and other endless renewals.[22:256]

In the gallery Will has claimed that visual art is inadequate to Woman out of sheer terror at falling love with her. By the time he calls her a poem, it is clear that falling in love with Dorothea constitutes an epoch in the development of his character. As usual Eliot chuckles indulgently at Will's breathlessness, but the point is clearly made that however callow Will's passion for Dorothea may be at this point, it is committed, and no longer troubled by any paralyzing associations between her figure and scary Plastik. He is on firmly Poetic ground now, and thus imaginatively ready to fulfil his role as Dorothea's rescuer. Although, lacking practical employment, he may still "leave out the poems" (he never does manage any poetic homage to her), he is sufficiently inspired to pursue a career in journalism on his return to Middlemarch.

What has happened to Dorothea, on the other hand, is far less clear. She too has learned to appreciate the effectiveness of art that it is better to do things in an inferior but more concrete medium than merely to aspire to them in a finer, vaguer one. For her the main conflict has been between aesthetic (represented always as visual) pleasure and duty to one's fellow human beings. She finds so much that is "low and brutal, and sometimes even ridiculous" in the art around that she can find no guidance in it toward the life of active good she wants to lead. In the gallery, she has been eroticized in her relation to the statue, though by the effect of contrast rather than similarity. In the studio, she has responded to the aesthetic energy of Naumann, and her encounters with Will suggests an openness to aesthetic pleasure for its own sake, unburdened of obligation or self-sacrifice. (We hear no word of Dorothea's pleasure in being helpful to Naumann's work.) She has not reconciled the gratification of Self with the gratification of Other, and in one sense her problem with art is an extension of, a metaphor, for this dilemma. [22:252]

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In the Vatican Museum the possibility of sexual competition--with its arty corollary, the paragone--is established; in the studio scene these competitive themes become associated with the marriage triangle that is the real business of the story. At the apex of this marital triangle, Dorothea's visual sensibilities reveal a potentially erotic consciousness, but they will register in plane of their own, removed from the theoretical jousting between Will and Naumann, beyond the reach of the shabby conjectures that lurk in the margins of the studio. Once the action has returned to Middlemarch, the paragonal relation between words and images remains an important vehicle for the masculine element of the triangle, but the domain shifts from the realm of art to the realm of feeling: it is only when Casaubon's dry, binding words obstruct her attachment to Will that Dorothea discovers it, grounded in visual sensations evoked by the image of the other woman who joins and alienates them.

Returned home from Rome, Dorothea is again in her boudoir, her hopes that her husband's needs would sustain her capacity for dedication quite crushed. Chilled by her sense of imprisonment among meaningless objects, she looks around the room which had been the scene of her earlier marital aspirations. In a passage that in some ways recalls the famous description of aesthetic overload she has felt in Rome, we follow Dorothea through a remarkable sequence of transformations occasioned by the portrait:

> All existence seemed to beat with a lower pulse than her own, and her religious faith was a solitary cry, the struggle out of a nightmare in which every object was withering and shrinking away from her. Each remembered thing in the room was disenchanted, was deadened as an unlit transparency, till her wandering gaze came on the group of miniatures, and there at last she saw something which had gathered new breath and meaning: it was the miniature of Mr. Casaubon's aunt Julia, who had made the unfortunate marriage--of Will Ladislaw's grandmother. Dorothea could fancy that it was alive now--the delicate woman's face which yet had a headstrong look, a peculiarity difficult to interpret. Was it only her friends who thought her marriage unfortunate? or did she herself find it out to be a mistake, and taste the salt bitterness of her tears in the merciful silence of the night? What breadths of experience Dorothea seemed to have passed over since she first looked at this miniature! She felt a new companionship with it, as if it had an ear for her and could see how she was looking at it. Here was a woman who had known some difficulty about marriage. [28:308]

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The sense of time, that revelation of "movement and tone" which Will Ladislaw has indicated is so crucial to the contemplation of a woman, and which he rather fatuously declares makes portraiture useless--are here activated by and in the portrait. The face whose oddness struck Dorothea before is now an occasion for empathy. Dorothea for the first time knowingly projects her own feelings onto something outside herself without illusion or rationalization. She has found a clearly defined and responsive object toward which to direct her feelings, with which she can naturally and directly identify. But further movements are now in store. The passage continues without a break:

> Nay the colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and eyes seemed to be sending out light, the face was masculine and beamed on her with that full gaze which tells her on whom it falls that she is too interesting for the slightest movement of her eyelid to pass unnoticed and interpreted.

Here is a sort of reverse recapitulation of her initial experience, in which she has identified Will by his resemblance to the portrait, which we can see would constitute a resolution to the earlier mystery of aunt Julia's failure to resemble Casaubon's family. In bringing the resemblance around the other way, Dorothea registers her developing love for Will - which makes his face not only dominate over that of Casaubon's aunt, but makes the difference between those faces - the larger mouth and chin -- also register as pleasant and flattering rather than having, as it had before, a "threatening aspect".

But again, this phase lasts only for a moment, and transformation continues:

> The vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea: she felt herself smiling, and turning from the miniature she sat down and looked up as if she were again talking to a figure in front of her. But the smile disappeared as she went on meditating, and at last she said aloud--
> "Oh, it was cruel to speak so! How sad--how dreadful!"

With this final modulation from a visual fantasy to an aural, and specifically verbal, one, Dorothea's encounter with the portrait becomes an inversion of Will's experience of Dorothea in Rome, whereby the identification of Dorothea's looks with a work of art

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is transmuted from the unsettlingly erotic and profane associations of Naumann's *Plastik* into the "finer medium" of literature, making Dorothea a poem instead of the Madonna that Naumann has seen her as. Here, on the contrary, the transformation of Dorothea's visual hallucination of Will into an imagined (or remembered) conversation with him makes it turn for the worse. We can only assume that the cruel speech remembered in her reverie is Will's disparagement of Casaubon's work, especially since it prompts her immediately to go - impulsively -- in search of her husband, "to inquire if there was anything she could do for him....she felt as if all her morning's gloom would vanish if she could see her husband glad because of her presence." [28:309] Note that what Dorothea seeks is *visual* reassurance of her value to her husband in the form of his gladdened face. What she actually discovers, in finding him with her uncle downstairs, is that Casaubon's looks are worse than she herself has been able to see at close quarters: he is ill, and within a few chapters will suffer a heart-attack.

Dorothea has quite evidently assimilated the lessons learned in Naumann's studio, whereby the grotesque images can come to seem natural: the once "peculiar" image of aunt Julia becomes empathetic; and then, in a transformation that might otherwise sound grotesque and horrifying, the adoring face of her lover. More directly, the transformation itself recalls a moment in Rome when Will's Apollonian good looks are compared to those of the "dimmer, more faded" Casaubon:

> The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness, which added to the uncertainty of his changing expression. Surely, his very features changed their form; his jaw looked sometimes large and sometimes small; and the little ripple in his nose was a preparation for metamorphosis. [21:203]

It is Will's image, more than his talk, that helps her to compose the oppressive aesthetic chaos and fragmentation she has experienced in the great clutter of artifacts in Rome. While his words have had the unsettling tendency to make her doubt her husband, his radiant looks and quick responsiveness - always identified as a single attribute - tend to be a source of comfort. Just as the image of the Vatican statue

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amalgamated with Dorothea has triggered Will's erotic interest in her, the portrait's recollection of Will's beauty here opens up Dorothea's eyes to both the possibility of empathy and the gratification of the senses.

The final shift in the portrait passage from delightful love to discomfiting verbal conflict prefigures the tensions which ensue upon Will's arrival in Middlemarch and come to a head in Chapter 37, when Will's editorship becomes a pivotal element in the relation between Will and Casaubon. Here Will informs Dorothea of his intention to work for Mr. Brooke, incidentally apprising her of his grandmother's disinheritance. Sensing Casaubon's jealousy, Will wants to keep the news from Casaubon, who in turn has divined that Will does indeed want to stay in the neighborhood to be close to Dorothea. The chapter deals mostly with the complications of motive on either side, Dorothea's role in aggravating their more deeply rooted antagonisms is underlined by the fact that it is she who transmits the news of Will's employment to Casaubon after Will leaves. An exchange of letters ensues in which Casaubon forbids Will to come to Lowick if he pursues the editorship and Will refuses to back down. Dorothea, however, remains ignorant of the dispute, and her own complications develop in relation, not to Will's journalistic career, but to the implications of his family history, which she puzzles out in the company of the images she sees in the solitude of her boudoir, with their inevitable focus:

> She had been so used to struggle for and to find resolve in looking along the avenue towards the arch of western light that the vision itself had gained a communicating power. Even the pale stag seemed to have reminding glances and to mean mutely, "yes, we know." And the group of delicately-touched miniatures had made an audience as of beings no longer disturbed about their own earthly lot, but still humanly interested. Especially the mysterious "aunt Julia" about whom Dorothea had never found it easy to question her husband.
>
> And now, since her conversation with Will, many fresh images had gathered round that aunt Julia who was Will's grandmother; the presence of that delicate miniature, so like a living face that she knew, helping to concentrate her feelings. [37:406-7]

Now that she is in possession of Will's story, the image propels Dorothea into the realm of law and word. Brooding on aunt Julia's wrongs and the principles of

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primogeniture, she conceives her plan to ask Casaubon to revise his will in Ladislaw's favor, thus sealing her husband's hostility toward his cousin.

Remarkably, once her thoughts have shifted from the claims of the Ladislaws to the burden of the Casaubon fortune, Dorothea's visual susceptibility turns on its ear, so to speak, and becomes, in the ironic voice of the narrator, blindness:

> She was blind, you see, to many things obvious to others--likely to tread in the wrong places, as Celia had warned her; yet her blindness to whatever did not lie in her own pure purpose carried her safely by the side of precipices where vision would have been perilous with fear. [37:408]

This reference to Celia's earlier warnings is an allusion to Dorothea's myopia -- an affliction never mentioned in conjunction with art or images, but always invoked metaphorically, as here, with reference to moral or practical vision, and quite absent from any but the earliest scenes in the novel. Here indeed the physical element of Dorothea's blindness, long since been entirely submerged in its moral gloss, is meant to be understood in contrast to the moment of emotional "vision" that Dorothea has just experienced in conjunction with the portrait. The ad-hoc nature of Dorothea's myopia serves to demarcate the crucial, but often neglected distinction between two of the many kinds of visual trope explored in the novel: the language of moral insight, whose dominant metaphor is the light of understanding, and that of aesthetic, and finally erotic susceptibility, whose chief metaphor is the contemplated likeness between real and depicted person.[14] Both are enlisted in the novel to illustrate the constant synthesizing of different perspectives necessary to grasp reality; the metaphors of perceptual and imaginative vision represent aspects of understanding which, though they must balance each other, are by no means interchangeable.

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The portrait makes its last appearance after Casaubon's death, when Will takes leave of Dorothea before he has learned of the nasty codicil to Casaubon's will which cuts Dorothea off from his fortune if she marries him. The word, unread and unspoken, still stands between them, and the two have a tense scene, full of

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undeclared emotion, which is eventually abruptly ended by the physical intrusion of Sir James. The visually-evoked sympathy that motivates Dorothea's attachment to Will is thwarted by the entanglements of words, the words that bind legal documents, that convey facts and intentions, which must be both uttered and interpreted in order to communicate properly. Here we find the portrait, mentioned and offered in speech but not actually looked at, itself functioning as a misinterpreted sign: when Dorothea somewhat lamely offers it to Will, she is thinking of the inheritance she has no power to restore to him, Will is chafing under the supposition that Dorothea is entirely aware of how much he loves her, and doesn't care enough to keep his image:

> "I wonder if you would like to have that miniature which hangs up-stairs--I mean that beautiful miniature of your grandmother. I think it is not right for me to keep it, if you would wish to have it. It is wonderfully like you."
> "You are very good," said Will irritably. "No; I don't mind about it. It is not very consoling to have one's own likeness. It would be more consoling if others wanted to have it." [54:588]

Here Will expresses the same kind of readiness to be a model indicated by Dorothea's easy compliance in Naumann's studio, a clear signal of his erotic availability. After his departure, she returns to her boudoir to luxuriate in what she believes to be the inevitable and tragic finality of his parting from her by cradling the portrait in her palm against her cheek, as a cherished reminder of him.

> For the first time she took down the miniature from the wall and kept it before her, liking to blend the woman who had been too hardly judged with the grandson whom her own heart and judgement defended. Can anyone who has rejoiced in woman's tenderness think it a reproach to her that she took the little oval picture in her palm and made a bed for it there, and leaned her cheek upon it, as if that would soothe the creatures who had suffered unjust condemnation? [55:591-2]

This description of the cheek-in-palm attitude recalls her memorable pose in the Belvedere Gallery, There, Will's amorous feelings toward Dorothea were stimulated by the juxtaposition of Dorothea with an image which resembled but did not represent her; here the same posture now incorporates a similarly unlike likeness of Will.[15] Once the portrait is fully charged with eros, however, it paradoxically loses all its force as

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an object of vision: coming down from the wall, it becomes exclusively one of emotion and touch -- and of course of literature too, evoking the very myth once dismissed by her late husband "the romantic invention of a literary period"

> She did not know then that it was Love who had come to her briefly, as in a dream before waking, with the hues of the morning on his wings-- that it was Love to whom she was sobbing her farewell as his image was banished by the blameless rigour of the irresistible day. She only felt that there was something irrevocably amiss and lost in her lot....[55:592]

In the earlier scenes with the portrait Dorothea's desire is made luminous and beatific by pity, and the sense of justice; here the transmutation of imaged likeness to tactile object has the reverse effect of making Dorothea's tender feelings for Will look genuinely voluptuous for the first time. The sympathies associated with the contemplating the image are here eroticized not only by touch, but by the doubly objectified (and transgendered) figure that results from the gesture.

Appropriately, this conflation of Dorothea's pose in the Gallery with the androgynous image of the portrait is the last reference in the book to these images which have been so central to the story of Dorothea's marriage. In the drama that ensues, the identification of Will and Dorothea with works of art has become more or less internalized. Though they turn to marble looking at each other several times, and the pretext of Will's sketches remains a device for bringing them into the same room in their eventual love scene, the need for art is past, because the work of uniting the lovers entails something other than recognition of their own feelings. Instead they must sort out the claims of family and community and society - "what everything costs": Will must endure the revelation of the secret of yet another runaway grandmother, and the unprecedented ordeal of *looking bad*; Dorothea a pang of jealousy and doubt incurred by the nonaesthetic spectacle of Will in (interestingly musical) dalliance with another woman - and the renunciation of her husband's legacy (and the benefits she could confer on others) - in order to claim her own happiness.

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Regarded as models for existing works of visual art, the lovers mutate in each others' vision, but each mutation itself reflects the larger transitions implied by setting. Linked to the image of the stunning Cleopatra (and the stranded Ariadne), Dorothea appears to Will in Rome in a Medusan guise, a feminine image that paralyzes and transfixes. By calling her a poem, Will becomes Perseus/Bacchus, translating her from erotic baffler into sublime inspiration, and so from an object of vision and observation into a monitor, someone to whose vision and observation he is subject, and in whose eyes he wishes to shine. The desire in turn transforms him, from a passionate, critical, but ineffectual Romantic into a responsible and active Victorian. In Dorothea's eyes, however, Will functions on the contrary as Romantic muse, whose shape-shifting and transitional image tracks the metamorphosis of her own knowledge and feeling once she has returned to her ordinary life. Inspired by the image which she identifies with both Self and Other, husband and lover, personal pleasure and social duty, past wrongs and future reparations, Dorothea's sensibilities go to work on themselves, encouraging her to act in a manner increasingly disciplined by attentiveness to the powers and limitations of concrete, material things like art and sex and scholarship and money, things which cannot be defined or rationalized as good or unworthy in themselves but which must rather be enjoined to good or bad effect.

The inversion functions in terms of looks and language. Where Will suppresses the profane artistic association in favor of finer, more reverent and manageable literary mode, Dorothea on the contrary discovers her own destiny as Realistic heroine through abandoning her linguistic idolatry in favor of a more sensually and emotionally attuned visual element, through which she registers not only her love for Will and her desire for fulfillment but also a fuller comprehension of worldly impositions and obligations, of the institutional mechanisms of marriage and inheritance, which will eventually allow her to help Lydgate and Farebrother. That this newly activated sensibility in Dorothea undermines itself, strengthening her husband's enmity and resistance, and consequently her own guilt at having betrayed him, is one of the

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book's many thematic ironies, and participates in the larger circumstances of Dorothea's submersion into oblivion. But it also indicates some very rich ambivalences regarding the power of aesthetic experience, in a manner very much in keeping with the novel's overarching theme of the uneasy encroachments of Modernity.

More remarkable, however, is how the productive tension between the separate spheres or frames of reference is generated to ensure both a continuity of texture and a distinctness of atmosphere that has characterized all of the mimetic transformations examined in this study. The Roman sequence, with its presiding artistic Daemon in the form of Naumann, tells us how to see the characters in relation to each other, but those types have to sustain further development in more domesticated circumstance, something amenable both to Victorian life and the realistic narrative that goes with it. Will's unmanageable Romantic excesses, which are helpless in Rome to accomplish anything better than swinging between equally self-absorbed expressions of ardor and savage jealousy, are shaped on domestic ground into the career of political action and private honor which can reveal both the heroic stuff Will is made of and the compromises that reality, at its Victorian best, imposes. As an object of vision Dorothea's sexuality is established in relation to the voluptuous antiquities in the Vatican and quaint Christian allegories of Naumann's studio; but it is in her native and cherished community that it can emerge and prove itself in suitably restrained ways, her own blurry but generous vision serving as a channel for the admixture of sensuality and sympathy that her exposure to Will has released. And it is among the compromises and restraints that Casaubon's desiccated intelligence, so effectively and thoroughly mocked in the execution of the Aquinas portrait, becomes a force to be reckoned with, as much a catalyst to Will and Dorothea's affinity as an obstacle to their union.

Although I have emphasized the importance of concrete pictures as agents or sites of pivotal transformation in both the story and the narrative movements of the novel,

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it is also important to retain a sense of how the fixity of visual art maintains its resistance to narrative rationale. In *Middlemarch* the relation between the Roman sequence and the subsequent developments back in England is partly sustained by the transmutation of art-connected images: Dorothea's pose, Will's rippled nose, and Casaubon's painted image each expand in significance as they are invoked on different sides of the Channel, but the implications of the artistic association for the development of the narrative as a whole remain unresolved. One could argue on one hand that Romantic Italy and the canny observations of the imperturbable Naumann in offer the novelist the freedom to dramatize the erotic dynamics of the situation, to activate those elements of Dorothea's character that enable her later on to steady and motivate the mercurial, literary Will. On the other hand the rubrics of art and the continent, by imposing such primitive schemes on the motivations of complicated people, might also be felt as exerting a rather coarse and brutal pressure on the narrative itself, that on the contrary it is the atmosphere of Middlemarch -provincial, Protestant, and irreducibly English, that allows the novelist to develop the subtleties of her web.[16] What I have tried to emphasize is how the balance between the two realms is effected in the treatment of visual art as the locus, both of erotic consciousness and, by extension, of the processes of imaginative synthesis which allow ordinary narrated events to become meaningful fictions. In the blue-green boudoir the metamorphic ripple-nosed image can arouse through the eye all the passions and possibilities denied or suppressed by the word; in Eliot's scheme the canny, instantaneous assessments of art, risking profanity at every turn, enhance, but never undermine the slow, semi-deluded assimilation of knowledge and understanding effected by the slow accumulations of narrative language. The domesticated portrait can sustain the effects of directness and sensual responsiveness evoked by the arts, and yet remain untrammeled by the amoral aesthetic materialism that would otherwise disturb our faith in the interactive, morally engaged effectiveness of language or the authenticity of referential, sequential expression.

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NOTES

[1] Abigail S. Rischin has called attention to the ways in which the statue in the Vatican Museum scene establishes both a recognizably erotic aspect for Dorothea and a specific paradigm, in the Ariadne myth, for the ensuing romance plot. See "Beside the Reclining Statue: Ekphrasis, Narrative, and Desire in *Middlemarch*." *PMLA* 111(1996): 1121-1132. My argument is greatly indebted to this essay.

[2] The Roman sequence is frequently adduced in critical discussions of Eliot's own aesthetic theory, and to some extent in the broader historical context of the vast intellectual net that the novel casts over the period it describes. Seldom however is the sequence examined in terms of its function in the dramatic structure of the Dorothea/Casaubon/Ladislaw plot. Joseph Wiesenfarth does observe links between the portrait and the Roman scenes as reinforcing what he calls Middlemarch's own aesthetic theory, embodied primarily in the story of Dorothea, "A puritan with the right moral impulse who is cut off from the deeper truths of nature and history and culture because she does not know the language of art." (363) In teaching it to her, Ladislaw enables her to become a true Ruskinian aesthete, with a proper disdain for Brooke's false, exploitative connoisseurship. Wiesenfarth thus sees GE as making art the tool of a certain kind of humanism, and the shield against aesthetic decadence, and so plants her squarely with Ruskin - but reckons I think without Ruskin's own fierce ambivalence toward the sensuality of his eye. Hugh Witemeyer, citing Eliot's conventional tastes and conscientious cultivation, makes her a more solid Victorian realist, committed to advancing the pictorialist possibilities of fiction and largely unsophisticated about any but pictorial aspects of visual art. In his view the Roman episode expresses Eliot's ambivalence about the idealizations of history painting and classical form, and a desire to integrate "ideal" and "real" aspects of characterization in literature as in painting. In more general readings of Eliot's work, the aesthetic themes are treated as elements of cognition in a broader sense: Barbara Hardy for example takes Will's and Naumann's aesthetic theorizing, and Dorothea's bafflement, as different expressions of an impulse to find connections and continuities in history, while acknowledging its contingencies. For all their differences of approach, these readings share a tendency to consider the novel's treatment of the arts in terms of a theoretical or ideological questions, rather than considering the ways art participate in the development of the narrative itself. See Joseph Wiesenfarth, *Middlemarch*: the Language of Art" *PMLA* 97 (1982): 363-377; Hugh Witemeyer *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* 73-104; and Barbara Hardy. *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982) chapter 6.

[3] Eliot's aside here offers a preliminary note of expansion: "It was a new opening to Celia's imagination, that [Mr. Casaubon] came from a family who had all been young in their time..."

[4] In modern American usage they would be called first cousins once removed, since they do in fact belong to different generations.

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[5] Rischin observes that "[i]n evoking the mythic narrative of Ariadne, the sculpture emblematizes Dorothea's situation at this juncture in the novel and embodies the contours of the romance plot that Will's aesthetic experience serves to advance" ("Beside the Reclining Statue" 1126) Wiesenfarth also sees Chapter 19 as establishing a pattern of mythological associations for Will and Dorothea and Casaubon both the Theseus/Bacchus/Ariadne triangle and the identification of Dorothea with Antigone which he sees as pervading the novel. See his extended discussion in *George Eliot's Mythmaking* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter 1977) 189-201.

[6] Eliot's use of the misattribution here is a very sophisticated example of what James A.W. Heffernan has called "representational friction...which occurs wherever the dynamic pressure of verbal narrative meets the fixed forms of visual representation and acknowledges them as such" or "when the poet's language registers the difference between the medium of visual representation and its referent". (*Museum of Words* 19) Here the more obvious differences between the impact of verbal and visual impressions are complicated by the difference between historical epochs, in which seeing and naming are entirely intertwined. That Will and Naumann *see* the sculpture as Cleopatra is made all the more acute by what (thanks to popular engraving) Eliot could rely on to be the reader's own visual impression of Ariadne.

[7] The epigraph is from the *Purgatorio* VII: 107-8 describing Henry of Navarre in the same posture: *L'altro bedete ch'ha fatto alla guancia/della sua palma, sospirando, letto.* An early nineteenth-century translation reads: "the other ye behold, who for his cheek/Makes of one hand a couch, with frequent sighs" - Eliot silently changes the gender of *altro* in the epigraph so it would apply to Dorothea. For a discussion of the quotation's significance in other parts of the novel, see Wiesenfarth, *George Eliot's Mythmaking*, 194-5)

[8] Eliot explores the contingency of this kind of ekphrastic relation very fully in *Romola*, where the same myth is used to provide an ironic gloss for the heroine's marriage to Tito Melema, who presents her with an ornamental casket decorated with the rescue of Ariadne. Here however the transformation is reversed: initially offering himself to Romola as a rescuing Bacchus, Tito proves later to be a treacherous Theseus after all. *Romola* juxtaposes several different kinds of narrative relation between mythic text and image: One example is when Piero di Cosimo, the perspicacious painter from whom Tito commissions the deceptive Bacchus and Ariadne, demands as payment that Tito secure Romola's promise that she and her father sit for him in the truer roles of Oedipus and Antigone, suggesting a more complex and collusive relation between moral truth and self-serving fantasy. These representational dilemmas ultimately come to a head in the best remembered picture in *Romola*, Piero's portrait of Tito as a mask of cowardice. There is no text for this image - not even the conventional text of formal portraiture: it is a piece of fancy, inspired purely by Piero's rather unconventional insights into character type. Completed by the insertion of Baldassare's image, the earlier, fanciful sketch of Tito as a *type* of cowardice becomes at once an authentic, specific representation of Tito's own life and an illustration for *Romola*.

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[9] For a discussion of source figures for Naumann and Eliot's complex attitudes toward the idealizations of the Nazarene movement see Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* 78-87.

[10] It will also of course become a major preoccupation for James's high-minded young men, who indeed will struggle much more profoundly with ineffectualness than Will does. The brilliant but dangerous volatility of Roderick Hudson is sacrificed to the ongoing moral worriting of Rowland Mallet, and the forces they represent don't fully reconcile themselves again till *The Tragic Muse.*

[11] Noting Gordon Haight's brief allusion to the whiff of new Hedonism in Will's remarks, Wiesenfarth insists Eliot's aversion to Pater, and insists on her detachment from anything that might be construed as aestheticist. See "The Language of Art" 375 n.9; Gordon S. Haight "George Eliot's 'Eminent Failure', Will Ladislaw" *This Particular Web*: 22-42, esp. 27.

[12] This is an allusion to Lessing's notion of the "natural signs" used by painting, as opposed to the "arbitrary signs" of language. Dorothea's subsequent remarks represent in naive form the conventional (and here, I think, unchallenged) wisdom of Lessing's prescriptions about the different criteria in choosing subject matter to be used by painters and poets. See *Laokoon* IV. Wiesenfarth also adduces the last part of this passage, but implies that Dorothea's new insights are exclusively the result of Will's tutelage, not Naumann's instruction, ("Language of Art" 366) although it is clear that Will's role in this lesson is more annotative than authoritative: "Will burst in here and there with ardent words of praise, marking out particular merits in his friend's work" [22:208] Witemeyer gives Naumann credit for Dorothea's instruction, but he finds "Naumann's Christianizing aestheticism" to be "one of the many modes of human intellection tested and found wanting in *Middlemarch.* Idealizing portraiture provides no coherent vision in this novel of incomplete insights. Ultimately Dorothea eludes all of the analogies that attempt to characterize her.." (*George Eliot and the Visual Arts* 87) It should be clear that I see Naumann's authority as more executive than interpretive, and that what he makes of Dorothea is of less importance than that he can make anything of her at all.

[13] Quite apart from these pivotal images, Dorothea and Will are repeatedly likened to pictures throughout the novel. A few examples:

> After three months Freshitt had become oppressive: to sit like a model for Saint Catherine looking rapturously at Celia's baby would not do for many hours of the day..[54:523]
>
> But he stood with his hat and gloves in the other hand, and might have done for the portrait of a Royalist. [83:798]
>
> "After all, he is a pretty sprig" said Mrs. Cadwallader..."He is like the fine old Crichley portraits before the idiots came in." [84:808]

Their gentle irony aside, these genuinely evocative likenesses are of a different order from Dorothea's naive comparison of Casaubon to "the portrait of Locke" [2:42]

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which Witemeyer notes as an example of the failure of historical idealizations (*George Eliot and the Visual Arts* 87).

[14] There are of course abundant examples of still other forms of visual conceit in Middlemarch, most importantly that of scientific knowledge, whose primary metaphor would be the lens - or rather the range of optical devices which would include both the lens of Lydgate's microscope and the famous scratched pier-glass. In her study of the novel Sophia Andres finds links between the light-based metaphors of imaginative understanding and the biologically-based metaphors of analytic examination. Citing Lydgate's conviction that "there must be a systole and diastole in all inquiry....a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object-glass" [63:690] she observes that "In *Middlemarch*, perceptual and imaginative seeing are two halves of the whole--when one is missing, vision is dim or blurred. The interplay of perception and imagination is as vital to a clear perspective as the systole/diastole rhythm is to the human heart." See Sophia Andres, "The Germ and the Picture in *Middlemarch*." *ELH* 55 (1988): 853-868. The passage cited appears on 861. For the most authoritative discussion of the range and depth of optical metaphor in the novel, see J. Hillis Miller, "Optic and Semiotic in Middlemarch." In *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975: 125-45.

[15] In his treatment of the Vatican Museum scene, Wiesenfarth astutely notes that Dorothea's cheek-cradling posture is recalled here, but he mistakes the occasion on which she does so for the earlier scene in which she contemplates Will's wrongs, and thus creates a false association for the pose: "The gesture defines Ladislaw as a victim of injustice, as one who has suffered no less from Casaubon than she. Appropriately, Dorothea stands before the *Sleeping Ariadne*, cheek in hand, suffering because Casaubon has recently been unjust to her." ("The Language of Art" 372). In fact, Dorothea is once again feeling sorry herself, and indeed with a kind of voluptuary regret.

[16] This conflict will of course come to inform the Jamesian view, not of Europe, but of Europeans; the refining moral subtlety, rather than being exercised in the home atmosphere of the provinces, comes to be embodied in the figure of the sensitive but provincial mind set loose among the sophisticated brutalities of the Old World. Unlike Dorothea, James displaced provincials seldom get to go home; it is in remaining, whether they survive or not, that they yield up the possibilities for fiction.

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