Carnival Morality: The Freedom of Hawthorne's "The Marble Faun"

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CARNIVAL MORALITY:  
THE FREEDOM OF HAWTHORNE'S THE MARBLE FAUN

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Stephen Clawson Robertson
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Marble Faun. In The Marble Faun, the carnival scene in chapters XLVIII & XLIX serves as a crucible for the conflict between the two cultures of America and Italy that is at the heart of the work.

As the final significant scene of the work, the carnival serves to not only contrast the cultures but also reconcile them. One of the functions of the carnival is to allow the characters a certain freedom from the normal strictures of their cultures. This paper addresses that freedom and how it helps the characters reconcile the disparate views of life that they represent.

This paper includes an analysis of a European perspective of the carnival to aid in understanding not only the history of the carnival and its social functions, but also how the carnival suits Faun's narrative needs. Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* and Johann Goethe's *Italian Travels* provide a contrast to the narrator's American perspective on the carnival.

This paper argues that Hawthorne uses the powerful aspects of the carnival to achieve a fusion of cultures in the last scene. The carnival represents the temporary overthrow of the normal bounds of society, and as such it can, and does, function to juxtapose the disparate elements and characters of the work. The various influences, especially the two religious views of Catholicism and Puritanism, have such a wide gulf between them that only something as extraordinary as the carnival can symbolically bring them together.
CARNIVAL MORALITY: 
THE FREEDOM OF HAWTHORNE'S THE MARBLE FAUN

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, the carnival scene in chapters XLVIII & XLIX serves as a crucible for the conflict between the two cultures of America and Italy that is at the heart of the work. An integral part of the differences between the two cultures is the disparity in their religious views. The strong puritanical bent of Hilda, and to some extent of Kenyon, is contrasted with the fallen, but forgiving, Catholic nature of life in Italy—represented by the main characters Donatello and Miriam, but more emphatically by anonymous Italians.

As the final significant scene of the work, the carnival serves to not only contrast the cultures but also reconcile them. One of the functions of the carnival is to allow the characters a certain freedom from the normal strictures of their cultures. This paper will address that freedom and how it helps the characters reconcile the disparate views of life that they represent.

The carnival scene commences with the staid Kenyon struggling through the festival's crowd. His dour demeanor and appearance sharply contrast with the crowd's hilarity. He is serious, the crowd is anything but, and he suffers for his seriousness when some of the carnival's participants make him
the object of ridicule. Soon, when he is reunited with Hilda, Kenyon will cease to notice the carnival, but until Hilda’s reappearance he is its starkest foil.

In the midst of the carnival Kenyon meets Donatello and Miriam for the last time. “Kenyon knew intuitively that these once familiar friends were parting with him, now” (448). And despite Hilda’s physical absence, Hawthorne suggests that through the carnival she, too, participates in the reunion with her Italian friends. Hilda is, in the context of the carnival, “a portion of the scene” (453). And as such she represents the final equilibrium of Italian and American cultures that the carnival makes possible.

The carnival also is the medium through which Donatello and Miriam make choices that illustrate their new relationships to others. Miriam is no longer overwhelmed by the ambiguous guilt that previously has plagued her. And Donatello acknowledges his membership in society when he submits to the civil authorities, admitting that he no longer retains the spiritual simplicity that separated him from humanity. At the moment Donatello and Miriam give themselves up in a “bustle” (450) with the authorities, Hilda hits Kenyon with a rosebud missile. It is in this instant that the synthetic nature of the carnival is most evident. As Miriam
and Donatello fade into the carnival, Hilda emerges from it. Her appearance and attitude reflect the softening changes that the carnival and Italy have brought about in her. And her ability to "melt...into the wild frolic of the Carnival" (451) symbolizes these changes. This new, more complete Hilda fills the space left by Donatello and Miriam.

Despite Hawthorne's use of the carnival to highlight the changes in Hilda and the others, one should note that his use of the carnival as a literary device is often at odds with the narrator's comments on it. The narrator frequently asserts that the carnival is all show and no substance, yet Hawthorne uses the carnival to resolve many of the conflicts that are at the core of the work. This paper includes an analysis of a European perspective of the carnival to aid in understanding not only the history of the carnival and its social functions, but also how the carnival suits Faun's narrative needs. Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* and Johann Goethe's *Italian Travels* provide a contrast to the narrator's American perspective on the carnival. The narrator's depiction of the carnival mostly conflicts with the depictions of these two Europeans. He represents the carnival as superficial, while the Europeans look to the powerful cathartic social aspects of the festival.
This paper will argue that Hawthorne uses these powerful aspects of the carnival to achieve a fusion of cultures in the last scene. Without the carnival as a binding component, any final reunion of the characters would have seemed forced and unlikely (or more forced and unlikely). The carnival represents the temporary overthrow of the normal bounds of society, and as such it can, and does, function to juxtapose the disparate elements and characters of the work. The various influences, especially the two religious views of Catholicism and Puritanism, have such a wide gulf between them that only something as extraordinary as the carnival can symbolically bring them together.

Without this use of the carnival the work may have failed to achieve any sense of cohesion. Hilda and Kenyon still could have been reunited and married. And Miriam and Donatello could have made their separate peace with the civil and religious authorities. But that the group has come together in the context of the carnival once more before being parted forever suggests that each culture has benefited from some understanding of the other, rather than simply bumping against one another to rebound with only mutual repulsion.

For Hawthorne uses the carnival to bring the characters together not only physically, but also spiritually. As Hilda
moves away from her rigidity towards the more forgiving sense of life that Italy engenders, Donatello and Miriam move toward Hilda's conception of morality by drawing strict correlations between their actions and the responsibility they must take for them.

Hilda is Hawthorne's main focus in this cultural mesh. This paper will similarly focus on Hilda as the representative of the naive New Englander who, through contact with sin, becomes more human. Hilda's changes are not attributable solely to the carnival; her contact with the Catholic church plays the largest role in her changes. But the carnival emphasizes the changes in Hilda that the church begins to make possible. And the carnival allows the ultimate freedom for her to act on those changes.

Inextricably mixed with the ideas of contrasting cultures and religions in Faun is the concept of Americans abroad, specifically American artists. The artistic sensibilities of Hawthorne's characters greatly influence their moral understanding of the world around them. While these artistic themes are not explicitly the focus of the carnival scene, they greatly influence the characters' morality. These themes are accordingly central to the work.
II

Hawthorne carefully chooses the artistic vocation of his protagonists in _Faun_. Throughout the work he stresses that the characteristics that make artists artists are the same ones that make them adept at observing not only humans but also human nature.

Of the two main American characters, both of whom are artists, Hilda is the one whom Italy most changes; and it is she who is the less artistic. Hilda’s lack of artistic foundation points up a related lack of moral foundation. Hilda’s calling as a copyist is significant in the context of her changes. She forms art from art; similarly she must have, first, someone else’s interpretation of life before she can form her own.

Kenyon, the other American artist, is much more grounded in his art and sure of his understanding, and consequently the moral upheavals that Hilda experiences to some extent pass him by. He changes very little in the course of the work, while Hilda changes greatly. And Kenyon possesses just the originality that Hilda lacks. It is he who forms art from clay. And this artistic ability is linked with a superior moral sense. A depiction of one of Kenyon’s sculptures highlights his ability to see deeper than the surface, but it
also suggests a "spirituality" that connects art and religion:

In another style, there was a grand, calm head of Milton, not copied from any one bust or picture, yet more authentic than any of them, because all known representations of the poet had been profoundly studied, and solved in the artist's mind. The bust over the tomb in Grey Friars Church, the original miniatures and pictures, wherever to be found, had mingled each its special truth in this one work; wherein, likewise, by long perusal and deep love of the Paradise Lost, the Comus, the Lycidas, and L'Allegro, the sculptor had succeeded...in spiritualizing his marble with the poet's mighty genius. (117-8)

The artistic ability which Kenyon displays in pulling all of the disparate representations of Milton into one "more authentic than any of them" implies that the sculptor has a similar facility with living humans. Frequently Kenyon understands what is happening within his circle of friends despite the fact that he does not know the specifics:

Kenyon (not without an unshaped suspicion of the definite fact) knew that [Donatello's] condition must have resulted from the weight and gloom of
life, now first, through the agency of a secret
trouble, making themselves felt on a character that
had heretofore breathed only an atmosphere of joy.
(262)
This ability to see into events that have not been explained
to him characterizes Kenyon throughout the work (with the one
exception of his inability to understand Hilda—an exception
the narrator would have us believe is attributable to love,
but one which may be the result of Hilda’s ambiguous
attraction to Catholicism and Kenyon’s detestation of it).

Kenyon’s presiding over the marriage-like ceremony under
the bronze Pontiff in Perugia offers another example of his
grasp of moral implications. He guides Donatello and Miriam
in their understanding of the circumstances that have bound
them to one another, despite the fact that he does not know of
those circumstances. He counsels them:

Yet, possibly, as a by-stander, though a deeply
interested one, I may discern somewhat of truth
that is hidden from you both—may, at least,
interpret or suggest some ideas which you might not
so readily convey to each other. (321)

And the passage that follows seems, in its context, to take
into account all of the strange circumstances that have
brought Miriam and Donatello together, thus suggesting that Kenyon's insight is deep.

A further illustration of Kenyon's capacity comes to light when he is sculpting Donatello, after the crime. Robert Byer notes that when Kenyon catches Donatello's expression just as it was at the time of the murder,

the compressed, elongated, widened, and lumpy features are seen as constituting a plastic language of formal inflection that somehow has the capacity to make fully and instantaneously manifest the very process of Donatello's inner moral transfiguration. (Byer 177)

Again, Kenyon sees this moral transfiguration without knowing of the events that precipitated it.

Kenyon's gifts of understanding highlight Hilda's weaknesses. In Hilda's youth, collectors admired her works which depicted "scenes delicately imagined, lacking, perhaps, the reality which comes only from a close acquaintance with life" (47). This failure to recognize the complexity of life dilutes her power as an artist (and in a related sense as a human). Nevertheless, she embodies enough of the artistic understanding to be an unsurpassed copyist, often bringing the finest points of the Masters' works into a sharper focus. For
Hilda, however, it will take more than art to bring life into focus; it will take an explicit confrontation with evil.

The other main artist, Miriam, has already confronted the problem that will most trouble Hilda—the existence of evil. Miriam's mysterious past is haunted by "an odour of guilt, and a scent of blood" (97). And Hawthorne suggests that Miriam's relationship to the model is akin to Beatrice Cenci's to her father. Miriam draws the parallel herself:

If I could but clasp Beatrice Cenci's ghost, and draw it into myself! I would give my life to know whether she thought herself innocent, or the one great criminal since time began! (66-7)

Some critics, focusing on the painting of Beatrice Cenci, have suggested that Miriam is more the moral focus of the work than Donatello\(^1\). Miriam, unlike Hilda, has the ability to express herself in original art, especially as her understanding relates to women who carry a burden of guilt. The narrator says,

It was, indeed, very singular to see how the artist's imagination seemed to run on these stories of bloodshed, in which woman's hand was crimsoned

\(^1\) In this context, Stacey Vallas argues that a strong anti-patriarchal theme dominates Faun, not only through Miriam's painting, but also through Hilda's frequent references to her Puritan forefathers and her subservient relationship with the Masters.
by the stain; and how, too—in one form or another, grotesque, or sternly sad—she failed not to bring out the moral, that woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive that impelled her. (44)

Miriam's understanding of life, expressed through her art, highlights her belief that life is not the simple affair that Hilda imagines it to be. And, further, her obsession with bloodstained guilt presages her complicity in the murder of the model.

Vallas also recognizes this important aspect of *Faun*, noting that "Hawthorne's attention to characters making art and becoming art is inseparable from relations of power which inform the novel's moral conundrums..." (89). These artistic themes that pervade *Faun* are tied to the motif of non-verbal communication. John Idol notes that these non-verbal communications include not only art, but also Miriam's eyes telling Donatello to commit the crime, the bronze Pontiff's outstretched hands, Hilda's hands keeping Miriam at a distance, and Miriam's hands doing the same in the Pantheon near the end of the work. The artwork within *Faun* is, of course, non-verbal, and its ability to portray aspects of the characters' natures that words cannot express is significant.
Yet art is but one avenue by which Hawthorne explores life. As Margaret Morris notes, "For all the emphasis on art in the book, aesthetic experience becomes a process that leads one ideally to integration with society" (217). Hawthorne explicitly interweaves religion and morality with social as well as artistic themes. And he contrasts the two cultures of Italy and the United States in these moral and religious lights; frequently he uses the outer working of Italian society to show how it affects the inner human—for instance the church’s idea of forgiveness and how that leads to what the narrator considers a lapsed morality in the Italian people, who, he suggests, think nothing of sinning because they know that they will be forgiven:

Here was a population, high and low, that had no genuine belief in virtue; and if they recognized any act as criminal, they might throw off all care, remorse, and memory of it, by kneeling a little while at the confessional, and rising unburthened, active, elastic, and incited by fresh appetite for the next ensuing sin. (411-2)

III

But even when the narrator is addressing mostly religious themes in Faun, he frequently returns to artistic
ideas that intertwine with the religious. This mesh of religion and art that characterizes Italy is conspicuously absent in the art of Hilda because of her ignorance of sin—an important element of much of the religious art of Italy.

In contrast to the importance of Italian art in Faun is the nearly total absence of any American art; and the artists' being in Italy to study indicates that America is at least in some ways deficient. Yet the religious aspects of America play an important role in the work; the characters often mention their Puritan influences—especially Hilda.

Yes, they are artists who have come to Italy to study and practice art, but the religious nature of almost all of the art, with the notable exception of the faun's statue, implies that their artistic search is at least partially also a religious or moral search. The boundaries of this search, however, are further obscured by the close bond between the Catholic church and the renaissance art that the Americans study.

As the novel progresses, Hilda's conceptions of morality change, and so do her perceptions of art. After the murder of the model, for instance, Hilda no longer sees the beauty in many of the paintings she used to love. The narrator says,
In these gloomy days that had befallen her, it was a great additional calamity that she felt conscious of the present dimness of an insight, which she once possessed in more than ordinary measure. She had lost—and she trembled lest it should have departed forever—the faculty of appreciating those great works of art, which heretofore had made so large a portion of her happiness. (335)

Speaking of Hilda’s relationship with art, Robert Byer notes that

Unable to revise, remake, or reinterpret these works whose paternal authority and virtue she trusts unquestioningly—notably, unable finally to accept Kenyon’s sculptural reimaging of Donatello—she is prey to the abyss of numbed perception which, in her lonely isolation in art galleries, finds visual artworks to be only deceitful illusions. (184)

This failure to reinterpret the great works coincides with the beginning of Hilda’s moral growth. Accordingly, as she becomes “more closely acquainted with life” she begins to recognize the Masters’ works as false representations of life. This theme is best illustrated by Miriam and Hilda’s debate
about Guido’s Archangel. Miriam, with her superior understanding of sin, recognizes that the angel’s depiction is facile: “as Guido represents him[,] he never could have looked the Demon in the face” (139). Hilda’s early admiration for this painting shows that before she can understand the strength needed to fight sin, she will first have to understand the strength of sin.

This melding of art and religion highlights Hawthorne’s perception of the two being inextricably mixed in Italy. And the interdependence of art and religion in Italy starkly contrasts with Hilda’s Puritan upbringing, the severity of that church, and its separation from most other human endeavors. The Puritans, eschewing icons of any kind in the church, would never bring art into the realm of religion. Yet Hawthorne suggests that that kind of rigidity is just the reason that Hilda fails to understand not only the complexity and interconnectedness of life but also the humans living it. It is explicitly the existence of both good and bad in Miriam that so confuses the young Puritan girl.

In contrasting the Catholic Church with Hilda’s Puritan background, Hawthorne suggests that the difference between Catholics and Protestants is that the Catholics acknowledge that humans are imperfect. Hilda, who terms herself "a
daughter of puritans," (46) is the character who least recognizes and accepts this imperfection. And, consequently, she is the character most devastated by Miriam's and Donatello's crime. Tellingly, Miriam addresses Hilda with these words:

You have no sin, nor any conception of what it is; and therefore you are so terribly severe! As an angel, you are not amiss; but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you. (209)

Hawthorne depicts Hilda's traits as not only personal, but also of New England. Her frequent assertions that she is the "daughter of the Puritans" suggests that her strongest traits are, indeed, a cultural inheritance. And the characteristics she most needs, despite the narrator's frequent harangues of the Italian people, are the traits that are engendered by the Catholic Church, and by the people who follow its creeds. These traits are the recognition of evil, and forgiveness.

The early Hilda was quite severe. And her copies reflect this severity. As Robert Brooke argues, Hilda in some ways paints a self-portrait in her depiction of Beatrice Cenci, and he suggests that Hilda wishes to maintain her
innocence while at the same time becoming a fallen angel. In a direct comparison with Beatrice, Hilda sees both Beatrice and herself in the mirror:

Now, opposite the easel, hung a looking-glass, in which Beatrice's face and Hilda's were both reflected. In one of her weary, nerveless changes of position, Hilda happened to throw her eyes on the glass, and took in both these images at one unpremeditated glance. She fancied—nor was it without horror—that Beatrice's expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face likewise, and flitted from it as timorously. (205)

Yet Hilda continues to see herself as sinless, and this view of herself further isolates her not only from her friends and society, but also from herself. She has physically isolated herself in the tower of the Virgin, and her subsequent emotional isolation from her friends is but another step in the same direction. And with her severe understanding of morality, Hilda has put herself in the position of inevitably being disappointed.

When she witnesses the murder of the model, her isolation comes to the fore. Immediately after the murder,
she seeks shelter in her tower, but when she no longer sees herself as fit to live in the virginal tower, she is torn away from the image of "ideal womanhood" that she has created for herself. This conflict within herself is similar to the half-innocent, half-guilty Beatrice who was innocent in being raped, but perhaps guilty in killing her father. Yet Miriam points out that Beatrice's situation left little room for choice:

Beatrice's sin may not have been so great; perhaps it was no sin at all, but the best virtue possible in the circumstances. If she viewed it as a sin, it may have been because her nature was too feeble for the fate imposed upon her. (66)

In this scene, when the two friends, Miriam and Hilda, are discussing the painting of Beatrice, Hawthorne highlights their disparate understandings of guilt and innocence. Miriam mentions the guilt that Beatrice seems to bear in the painting, and she professes that Beatrice's moral state is "not so plain to me" (55). This is in sharp contrast with Hilda, who, when reminded of Beatrice's history, states that Beatrice's "doom is just" (55). In a very telling reply, Miriam says: "Oh, Hilda, your innocence is like a sharp steel sword! Your judgments are often terribly severe, though you
seem all made up of gentleness and mercy" (55). After the murder of the model, Hilda sees herself in a similarly severe light, but it is a light with shadows; she still sees herself as innocent, but, paradoxically, she sees herself as stained (albeit by someone else's sin). Speaking of her confession to the priest, she says: "It was the sin of others that drove me thither; not my own, though it almost seemed so" (367).

Some critics suggest that Hilda's rigidity is her only defense against the fallen world. Sacvan Bercovitch argues that "From this perspective, Hilda's [forsaking Miriam] becomes at least morally intelligible. She recognizes her frailty and dares not jeopardize the little grace granted to a poor, lonely girl" (81). Emily Schiller rebuts this argument, noting that "A good daughter of the Puritans would have to know and accept the necessity for introspection that must, due to man's fallen nature, turn up depravity" (382).

Hilda is not, however, one-dimensionally rigid. She is, in many scenes, a person of remarkable sensitivity and worthy judgment. The narrator lauds Hilda's ability to understand the paintings of the masters: "She was endowed with a deep and sensitive faculty of appreciation; she had the gift of discerning and worshipping excellence in a most unusual measure" (48). As an artist and as a person she is often
complex.

Her religious complexity is best illustrated by the fact that despite her foundation of Puritanism, she is directly associated with the Virgin Mary—she even lives in the Virgin's tower. She also maintains the light that burns constantly in honor of Mary. Significantly, at one point Hilda fails to keep this light burning (this the first failure in 400 years); but the narrator suggests that Miriam and others are as much to blame for the flame's going out as is Hilda. This failure to keep the light burning happens after Hilda has witnessed the murder, and it carries with it the idea that Hilda no longer sees herself as fit to minister to the Virgin's shrine.

Hilda's relationship with the shrine of the Virgin makes her religion much more complex than if she were guided solely by the Puritan values of her New England heritage. There is more than just a hint of the Catholic about her; even the Italians in the building adjoining the tower call her "worthy to be a Catholic" (405). And Miriam's mention of Hilda's Catholic tendencies makes Hilda defensively hark back to her Puritan forebears, calling herself "the daughter of Puritans." But her cultural genesis does not negate the fact that she is drawn not only to the cult of the Virgin, but also toward the
church itself. Even before her desperate attempt to free herself of "the terrible secret" by confiding in the priest, Hilda is drawn to the church through the works of the Masters with whom she has such an affinity. The church is almost impossible to separate from the works of the Masters since those works are often housed in churches, and, even more often, depict religious scenes. Significantly, these paintings often incorporate the idea of sin.

Despite these ties to the Catholic church, Hilda still tries to maintain her religious independence from an organized church. The priest from New England points out this contradiction between her attraction to Catholicism and her refusal to belong to it when he insists that he is not bound to keep her confession in confidence, since she has refused to acknowledge the church. The priest's speech is more practical than sincere, because his following words indicate that his speaking with the authorities would be pointless. He says,

> However, to set your heart at rest, there is no probable need for me to reveal the matter. What you have told, if I mistake not, and perhaps more, is already known in the quarter which it most concerns. (361)

Thus, the purpose of his words must be to try to show Hilda
the inconsistencies in her reasoning.

The scene in which she confesses the sins of another is the logical extension of her copying the paintings of others. She has still failed to accept her own place in the world as a fallen person. Even the strict Calvinistic beliefs of her Puritan forefathers acknowledge the fallen state of all humans. But the Puritan insistence upon living an outwardly pure life has merged with Hilda's belief in the "idea of Divine Womanhood" (54) to create an amalgam that is neither woman nor goddess. Consequently, her reactions in the aftermath of the crime are contradictory because she cannot decide between Puritanism and Catholicism.

In the culminating carnival scene, Hilda is able to temporarily establish herself at the confluence of the two religions. While Miriam and Donatello were arranging Hilda's reunion with Kenyon, she has presumably been in the hands of the priest. Thus she seems to have finally accepted some formal connection to the Catholic church at the very moment she prepares to leave it forever—Kenyon is zealously anti-Catholic, and their reunion will predictably lead to their marriage and return to the United States.

But in the carnival scene, the morality of the Catholic church and that of Puritan America converge. Within the
context of the carnival, the central characters find solutions to some of their predicaments. And these solutions suggest a compromise between the two opposing moralities that are at the heart of the work. By means of their arrest, Donatello and Miriam have begun their journey to repentance. And by means of the reunion of Kenyon and Hilda, she is “coming down from her old tower...And now...life ha[s] so much promise in it” (330).

This new life full of promise is also complex. And the complexity highlights an overarching issue in the novel: the Fortunate Fall. Kenyon questions whether “sin...like sorrow [is] merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained” (460). Hyatt Waggoner notes that,

Depending on which aspect of it we look at, the plot either supports or does not support the rejection by Hilda and Kenyon of the idea of the Fortunate Fall. Though Donatello has been matured and humanized by his suffering, he must go to prison. Though Miriam has been ennobled by love, she ends in sad penitence, without hope of happiness with Donatello. Kenyon and Hilda decide to leave Rome, thus in effect putting the problem
behind them. The plot gives no clear answer to the largest question explicitly posed by the novel.

(214)

That the plot gives no explicit answer to this question does not, of course, detract from the question’s significance. What it does do, however, is transfer the onus of this question to the reader. Without having the characters explicitly choose one side of this argument, Hawthorne still requires a sensitive reader to address it. Hilda’s ability to see “sunlight” at the end of the novel at least suggests that she has internalized the Fortunate Fall argument even if on the surface she refuses to admit that her trials have led her to do so.

IV

The “human promise” that Hilda is able to recognize at the end of the work may relate to the Fortunate Fall, but at the very least it relates to the connections with other humans that she has begun to make. And these connections are, in fact, emphasized within the carnival and by its ability to transcend the normal rules of society and time--highlighting Hilda’s previous failure to make these everyday contacts.

Hilda’s conceptions of morality frequently parallel the narrator’s. But one must be careful not to conflate the
narrator and the author. There are, of course, opposing
schools of interpretation on this issue. Milton Stern, on one
hand, argues that Hawthorne and the narrator are
indistinguishable. Speaking of Hilda, Stern says:

Because of her representational function (she is
innocence: respectable Protestant, young America),
it was difficult, if not impossible, for Hawthorne
to do other than support her straight and narrow
antithematic refusal to illustrate or endorse the
utopian closure toward which the entire book moves.

This view of Hilda's characterization paints Hawthorne as a
captive of his own work, seemingly without a voice of his own
or the ability to separate himself from the narrator or the
work.

In contrast with this view of Hawthorne as a captive is
Emily Schiller's argument. Also using Hilda as an
illustration, Schiller argues that Hilda is more complex than
most critics admit; this argument suggests that Hawthorne's
depiction of her is more detached than Stern believes. She
points out that

most critics...conflate Puritan with purity. But
surely this is a problem, for central to the
beliefs and practices of all real Puritans is the concept of depravity: All men, women, and children, without exception, are fallen... (380)

This paper takes the view that Hawthorne and the narrator are separate, and that the narrator does not speak for the author.

The narrator suggests that the carnival survives only to entertain "the hordes of Anglo-Saxons" (437), and that it has lost all of the power and significance it once had as a cultural ritual. However, Hawthorne uses it as a fictional device to perform just the ritual duties that the narrator suggests it no longer can carry out. In the scene on the Corso, the carnival serves to bring together the disparate characters and themes of the work under one roof that covers all: Protestants, Catholics, Fauns, Priests, Americans, Italians.

The characters reach this equilibrium at the carnival only after other means of trying have failed— the prelapsarian, paradisal atmosphere of Monte Beni; the sacred atmosphere of the monastery where Hilda seeks refuge, or where she is taken for refuge; the bucolic valley where Donatello and Kenyon travel; these all fail to bring about the balance that results from the carnival.

It is to Monte Beni that Donatello flees when the weight
of his crime becomes too much for him. But his reaction to the natural setting in which he used to be so at home only makes his separation from his former naturalistic life even more obvious. In the woods and fields where he once ran as a wild and free young man, he now wanders in despondency. Even the pool where he once imagined that he communicated with the wood nymph leaves him feeling sad and isolated:

He grovelled beside the fountain, in a fit of such passionate sobbing and weeping, that it seemed as if His heart had broken, and spilt its wild sorrows upon the ground...’They shun me! All nature shrinks from me, and shudders at me!’ (249)

And the valley where Donatello and Kenyon travel has a similar effect upon the young man. At every chance Donatello stops to pray at the roadside shrines and to give alms to the beggars. They had haunted the two travelers at every stage of their journey. From village to village, ragged boys and girls kept almost under the horses’ feet; hoary grandsires and grandams caught glimpses of their approach, and hobbled to intercept them at some point of vantage. (306)

These beggars seem to represent for the narrator a kind of
moral bankruptcy that underlies the entire Italian system. And this failure of morality seems, for the time of Donatello's travels in the valley, to add to his despondency.

In Perugia, however, Donatello finally finds some measure of comfort, under "the Bronze Pontiff's benediction." But this comfort that he shares with Miriam is a different kind of equilibrium from the one achieved at the carnival. He rejoins Miriam in Perugia, but he does not yet come to terms with the murder of the model; he only realizes that he and Miriam share responsibility for it. Kenyon's words underline this state of awareness, when he admonishes them to

Take heed; for you love one another, and yet your bond is twined with such black threads, that you must never look upon it as identical with the ties that unite other loving souls. (322)

Hilda, similarly, reaches a different level of understanding while she is staying at the monastery. She comes to see life in less black and white terms. But, like Donatello's, her new understanding is one that will be augmented by the freedom of the carnival. The carnival will allow her, especially, an unfamiliar freedom; her Puritan rigidity has previously kept her emotions reined in. In the monastery, under the auspices of the church, she comes to see
her actions toward Miriam in a new light, but it is the boundlessness of the festival that allows her to reunite with Miriam one last time under the umbrella of the carnival.

This is not a physical reunion, but a spiritual one. Hilda had begun to believe that she had treated Miriam poorly: "'Miriam loved me well,' thought Hilda, remorsefully, 'and I failed her at her sorest need!'" (386). Yet the narrator intimates that the two women, together, planned Hilda's reappearance during the carnival:

We can only account for it, by supposing that the fitful and fantastic imagination of a Woman...had arranged this incident, and made it the condition of a step which her conscience, or the conscience of another, required her to take. (456)

And after the carnival, Hilda's relationship with Miriam is further cemented, despite their separation, when, in the Pantheon, Miriam "extended her hands with a gesture of benediction" (461). Despite the fact that they do not speak, Miriam and Hilda are reconciled. Miriam's gift of her ring to Hilda symbolizes this spiritual reunion.

In Hilda's case, the carnival also allows her the personal freedom that she had not felt before; and this freedom permits her to show her feeling toward Kenyon. The
carnival, therefore, is important to the characters' final understanding of the events that have led them down the challenging moral path that Faun traces.

Thus the narrator's assertions about the ineffectual and false nature of the carnival must be understood in the context of a narrator who occasionally contradicts himself—or at least offers up paradoxes. One striking instance that highlights these paradoxes is the setting of the scene in chapter XXXVI when he derides Rome for nearly two pages, listing the various reasons why one would be glad to get away from Rome, only in the end to admit that some unknown and inexplicable force pulls one toward Rome despite the list of horrors that he has just compiled:

When we have once known Rome, and left her where she lies, like a long decaying corpse, retaining a trace of the noble shape it was, but with accumulated dust and a fungous growth overspreading all its more admirable features;—left her in utter weariness, no doubt, of her narrow, crooked, intricate streets...moreover so cold, so alley-like...left her tired of the sight of those immense, seven-storied, yellow-washed hovels, or call them palaces, where all that is dreary in
domestic life seems magnified and multiplied...left her, worn out with shivering at the cheerless and smoky fireside...left her, sick at heart of Italian trickery, which has uprooted whatever faith in man's integrity had endured till now...left her, disguised with the pretense of Holiness and the reality of Nastiness...left her, in short, hating her with all our might...when we have left Rome in such mood as this, we are astonished by the discovery, by-and-by, that our heart-strings have mysteriously attached themselves to the Eternal City, and are drawing us thitherward again. (326)

Similar to the opposing depictions of Rome as vile, yet enchanting, Hawthorne offers opposing depictions of the carnival. Yet the opposing views of the carnival are more subtle. The narrator describes the festival as having lost all of its original power while at the same time Hawthorne uses it as a powerful literary device—one that unites important themes of the work.

This two-fold depiction of the carnival could be an attempt to disguise its thematic function. However, the narrator's depictions of the carnival seem to undermine Hawthorne's final use of it, and so one might surmise that
Hawthorne addresses the carnival on two levels without recognizing that he does so. Richard Brodhead, in an introduction to *Faun*, notes that many of the descriptive passages in the work were directly adapted from Hawthorne's notebooks (xxv). Hawthorne may have accepted at face value his own first impression of the carnival without later reassessing his idea of it as its power within the work grew.

Brodhead notes that despite Hawthorne's fairly long stay in Italy, his attitude was always that of a tourist:

When he moved to Italy in 1858 Hawthorne at fifty-four became something quite new to him,...a tourist. Hawthorne's experience of Italy perfectly demonstrates the meaning of this term. From the evidence of his notebooks Hawthorne had no intention to 'become' an Italian in Italy, no temptation to reacculturate himself in its exotic style of life. Italy as he engaged it was, in fact, scarcely an affair of living Italian people.

(xi)

And his narrator depicts the carnival in these touristic terms:

It is, not actual. If decrepit and melancholy Rome smiles, and laughs broadly, indeed, at Carnival—
time, it is not in the old simplicity of real mirth, but with a half-conscious effort, like our self-deceptive pretense of jollity at a threadbare joke...Nor, even within its own limits, does it affect the mass of spectators, but only a comparatively few, in street and balcony, who carry on the warfare of nosegays and counterfeit sugar-plums. The populace look on with staid composure; the nobility and priesthood take little or no part in the matter; and but for the hordes of Anglo-Saxons, who annually take up the flagging mirth, the Carnival might long ago have been swept away.

(437)

This is not, however, a fair depiction of the carnival as it functions thematically in Faun.

To understand how Hawthorne uses the carnival as a fictional device, it is helpful to address how it functions as an actual social phenomenon. Johann Goethe, and Mikhail Bakhtin examine the carnival more explicitly than Hawthorne. And their assessment of the carnival highlights Hawthorne’s use of it. Goethe spent extended periods of time in Rome as a tourist in the late 1780’s, and his consideration of the carnival shows significant agreement with Hawthorne’s. And
Bakhtin, the most influential author to consider the carnival recently, also frequently agrees with Hawthorne. Bakhtin addresses the carnival as a social construct in *Rabelais and his World*. In this work he focuses on Rabelais's writing, but he also frequently widens the scope of his discussion by speaking not only to the specifics of Rabelais's work, but also to the underlying structure of Renaissance culture which informed that work.

Bakhtin paints a carnival that is both silly and serious; and the serious side of the carnival as a social-pressure release-valve dominates his depiction. Bakhtin's explains that the carnival is a kind of "of the people for the people" affair:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its
participants. It was most clearly expressed and experienced in the Roman Saturnalias, perceived as a true and full, though temporary, return of Saturn's golden age upon the earth. (8)

Thus Bakhtin addresses the phenomenon from a nearly opposite point of view from Faun's narrator. He sees the entire affair as one that benefits the populace and the populace only.

Much like Bakhtin, Goethe describes the effects of the carnival on the common people. However, in separate writings, Goethe has two distinct opinions about the carnival. His first impression is similar to the narrator's depiction. Goethe writes, "The most unpleasant feeling about it is, that real internal joy is wanting...In the last days there was an incredible tumult, but no heartfelt joy" (166). He later notes that "on [a] foreigner who sees it for the first time, the Roman Carnival cannot make an altogether agreeable impression; it will neither please his eye nor appeal to his emotions" (445). This parallels the narrator's assessment of the carnival as "a pretense of jollity."

But Goethe's perspective on, and understanding of, the carnival changes significantly upon his second viewing. "The Roman Carnival," he writes," is a festival which, in point of fact, is not given to the people, but which the people give
themselves" (486). And as he continues, his view could not be in less agreement with Hawthorne's narrator's depiction. He paints not a picture of foreign elements holding up an otherwise moribund festival, but instead an organic growth of the Italian culture itself:

The Carnival, as we may soon more particularly observe, is, in fact, but a continuation or rather the climax of the usual Sunday and festival-day recreations; it is nothing eccentric, nothing foreign, nothing unique, but attaches itself quite naturally to the general Roman style of living. (488)

Goethe's depiction of the carnival is mostly a cultural report, and as such we may expect it to be more straightforward than Hawthorne's fictional depiction. Nevertheless, the comparison between Hawthorne's narrator and Goethe's views of the carnival offers not only surface, but also functional differences.

Goethe, like Bakhtin after him, clearly sees the carnival as a social tool whose function is to allow for the temporary dismissal of authority within the bounds of a controlled freedom. These two writers understand the temporary easing of normal rules as a means of releasing the pressures
that build up in the feudal and semi-feudal societies in which such pressures are so prevalent. Faun's narrator, on the other hand, seems to depict the carnival in different terms--terms that undermine the important function of a social-pressure release-valve.

Despite this depiction, however, the carnival as an artistic device in Faun is quite effective. It allows the various characters to approach one another outside of the bounds of normal propriety. There is, however, an irony in the narrator's insistence that the carnival is a hollow shell of its former self, while its importance as it relates to the novel's plot continues to expand.

Despite the many differences in the depiction and discussion of the carnival by Hawthorne and the narrator on one side and by Goethe and Bakhtin on the other, their depictions frequently match. Bakhtin's main discussion centers on three aspects of the carnival. The carnival erases time, it changes the participants' understanding of life and death, and it suspends the normal rules of law and order (that is within certain understood boundaries).

Bakhtin argues that the carnival functions to temporarily erase time in the minds of its participants, that it is outside of the bounds of the temporal; but in connection
with that, he also suggests that the carnival has an aspect to it that revives the idea of eternity. He notes,

Carnival with all its images, indecencies, and curses affirms the people's immortal, indestructible character. In the world of carnival the awareness of the people's immortality is combined with the realization that established authority and truth are relative. Popular-festive forms look into the future. They present the victory of this future, of the golden age, over the past...The victory of the future is ensured by the people's immortality. (256)

Thus this year's carnival is attached to last year's, and this year's is attached to next year's, bringing about a kind of simultaneous dismissal and reassignment of time's importance. He suggests that in this time warp, there exists a utopian conception of how time functions and what the carnival's place in it is. The place of carnival in this circumstance is to suspend the crush of everyday life for the participants and consequently suspend the consideration of time as an enemy.

Hawthorne's use of the carnival fits this conception well. He uses the carnival to suspend the time that is crushing Donatello and Miriam. To underline the importance of
time, or the importance of its absence, the narrator uses "time" words in eighteen instances in the first twenty lines of chapter XLVIII ("appointed," "hour," "earlier," "time," "ancient," etc. to name a few):

Besides these hereditary forms, at which a hundred generations have laughed, there were others of modern date, the humorous effluence of the day that was now passing. It is a day, however, and an age, that appears to be remarkably barren, when compared with the prolific originality of former times...

(436)

This frequent use of time-specific words here shows that Hawthorne was well aware of the time-suspension aspect of the carnival; and he uses it, like the other aspects of the carnival, to his benefit. The idea that the carnival will be Miriam's and Donatello's last "time" together begins with chapter XLVII when Miriam pleads "Ah, Donatello, let us live a little longer the life of these last few days!" (428). And later, during the festival itself, Miriam upbraids Kenyon, reminding him that hers and Donatello's time is limited. "You are yourself unkind...to come between us at this hour. There may be a sacred hour, even in Carnival-time" (448). This statement takes on greater weight when Miriam and Donatello
are soon parted, with Donatello's giving himself up to the civil authorities. Miriam's statement suggests that the "time" of everyday life is, indeed, suspended in the carnival because she and Donatello are able to experience a "sacred hour" despite their heavy burden of guilt for the killing of the model.

This idea of a "sacred hour" for Donatello and Miriam is anticipated in the time leading up to the carnival. In their meeting on the campagna, Miriam, Donatello, and Kenyon address this idea. Miriam remarks that Donatello

\[
\text{seems[s] to have found, both for yourself and me,}
\]

\[
\text{the life that belonged to you in early youth...Our}
\]

\[
\text{stern and black reality will come upon us speedily enough. But, first, a brief time more of the}
\]

\[
\text{strange happiness.} \quad (428)
\]

Donatello replies: "I dare to be so happy as you have seen me, only because I have felt the time to be so brief" (428). Thus they have experienced a "sacred hour" within the understanding that their paths are leading to the carnival where they will establish a moral equilibrium. Arnold Goldman notes that at this juncture, "Donatello has laid hands on some resolution and in the light of it his burden of sin and grief has been lifted" (390).
In contrast to Donatello and Miriam's hope to suspend time, Kenyon's exaggerated reliance on time serves to further focus the importance of the carnival's dismissal of time's primacy. He is the character least threatened by time, yet it is he who constantly checks his watch in obeisance to it.

Linked to this idea of the changing importance of time within the carnival is Bakhtin's assertion that the participants' conceptions of life and death also undergo changes within the structure of the carnival. "The death of the old is linked with regeneration; all the images are connected with the contradictory oneness of the dying and reborn world" (217).

This regenerative idea is, he argues, highlighted by the importance of birth in the skits that often accompany the carnival. One skit that is present not only in Bakhtin and Goethe's accounts, but also in Hawthorne's text is the skit of a pregnant woman. In Rabelais's work the birth of the central character, Gargantua, results because his mother eats too much tripe, and the stress caused by a fight leads her to give birth; Gargantua is born from her ear:

The child, leaping through the breach and entering the hollow vein, ascended through her diaphragm to a point above her shoulders...to issue, finally, through the left ear. (225-6)
In Goethe's description of the carnival there is a similar event: there is a false fight which leads to a very pregnant woman (really a man in a dress) giving birth in the street. In Hawthorne's scene on the Corso there is also a vast pregnant woman:

There came along a gigantic female figure, seven feet high, at least, and taking up a third of the street's breadth with the preposterously swelling sphere of her crinoline skirts. (445-6)

It is this woman who pelts Kenyon with the blast from a fake gun. In Faun the woman does not give birth on the street, but her condition ensures that that will occur soon.

The pregnant woman does suggest rebirth even if the birth itself is not enacted. In the light of the significance of rebirth as it relates to Faun, one sees a rebirth of all of the main characters within the bounds of the carnival. Miriam and Donatello address their guilt by taking responsibility for the death of the model. The narrator notes that

Donatello's still gnawing remorse had brought him thitherward, in spite of Miriam's entreaties, and kept him lingering in the neighborhood of Rome, with the ultimate purpose of delivering himself up to justice. (466)
The timing of their surrender to the authorities signifies Donatello’s ultimate submission to the rule of law, because at that time especially he could have continued to avoid the civil repercussions of his act; he chooses to surrender at the time that the law is at its weakest to highlight the fact that his conscience makes him turn himself in, and not a fear of the law.

Similarly, Kenyon and Hilda start a new life together within the context of the swirling carnival. Hilda hits Kenyon with a “single rosebud, so fresh that it seemed that moment gathered” (451). And at the moment she throws the rosebud she also discards her rigid ideas of virginal purity; she is “full of tender joy” (451).

The pregnant woman who assaults Kenyon in the street may be the harbinger of his marriage to Hilda and her subsequent pregnancy, which can be seen as her acceptance that life will indeed sully her, and that she will not return to God in the same “white robes” that he sent her in. “Hilda was coming down from her old tower, to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband’s fireside” (461). Hilda’s new attitude toward Kenyon and their subsequent marriage make it clear that she is drastically changed at the end of the work.
These personal rebirths, while somewhat less grave than the rebirth process that Bakhtin describes, parallel Bakhtin's claim that carnival is regenerative. And even the less happy fate of Donatello and Miriam suggests a starting over. Thus Hawthorne incorporates in Faun the time and rebirth aspects of the carnival that Bakhtin finds so important. As Wall and Thomson note, Bakhtin believes that "Carnival provides a much-needed means of joining isolated individuals and of renewing their everyday existence by offering it an outsidedness" (63). And this is also Hawthorne's use of the carnival despite his narrator's statements to the contrary. Hilda is joined to Kenyon, and on a grander scale, to all of humanity. And Donatello too, joins humanity; he submits to the rules that regulate all others.

Bakhtin's third focus is the suspension of rules. He suggests that the suspension of rules that goes along with carnival highlights both the status quo, and its temporary irrelevance. He underlines this idea by relating an episode in Rabelais in which a marriage ceremony is staged so that the "catchpoles" can be beaten (264-77). These "catchpoles" are servants of the leaders of the feudal system, and in this episode, Bakhtin argues, the inhabitants of the house challenge the status quo by using the freedom that the
carnival allows. This aspect of Bakhtin's argument is, while couched in seemingly silly circumstances, more serious than Faun's narrator's depiction of the carnival. The catchpoles who are "cuffed" at the wedding represent the establishment, and their abuse presages a fall from power of the leaders of the feudal system.

Some critics argue that Hawthorne uses Italy explicitly because the recent civil war there parallels the upcoming turmoil in America. Nancy Bentley suggests that one can "trace the relations between the Italian themes and what they signify in an American context on the eve on the Civil War" (902). The overthrow of power theme fits well into such a context. Carnival is, in a sense, temporary war, and even if Hawthorne's use of it was not intentionally representative of the looming American Civil War, its applicability is obvious.

The temporary overthrow of rules in general is, however, relevant to Hawthorne's use of the carnival to bring together the characters who would otherwise be separated not only by religion, but also by culture. The spectacle of the Italian priest sharing the balcony with the English family highlights the temporary lack of laws which maintain boundaries. Accordingly, Hawthorne uses this moment to effect a confluence of the two religious views that have been pitted against each
other for the entire work.

V

The antagonistic relationship between Puritanism and Catholicism is not, of course, completely worked out in the fleeting moments of the carnival. But the carnival does function to bring together one last time the characters who represent these oppositions. And in doing so it allows the characters—and they reflect their religions and cultures—to display their reactions to one another.

Hilda, most explicitly, has been changing, especially since her confession at St. Peter’s. Catholicism has softened her, and while, by the end of the work, she has outgrown her conception of ideal womanhood so closely associated with the Catholic cult of the Virgin, the novel suggests that some of the effects of the Catholic church on her will be long-lasting. Even concerning the sin of Miriam and Donatello, Hilda is able to see “sunlight on the mountaintops” (330).

The presence of Hilda, Kenyon, Donatello, and Miriam together one last time at the carnival suggests that while their separation will cause them to start new lives, they have brought to a close the relationships that first created the moral upheaval in Faun. If they had not been reunited at the carnival the reader would be left with doubt as to whether
Hilda, especially, had finally reconciled her separatist views on good and evil. Hilda's ability to see "the sunlight" concerning Miriam's situation, however, suggests that Hilda has started to accept the presence of both good and evil in people.

Hawthorne's final fusion of religions and cultures at the carnival underlines not only the differences, but also the similarities in the characters. They all must now make their own ways within the context of their own cultures, but all have been influenced by the others. And explicitly both Hilda and Donatello are much more human than when we first met them. Donatello has been introduced to evil, and he risen from the level of a wild animal to the level of a human; and Hilda has been introduced to evil and she has fallen from the level of angel to the level where she belongs, also the level of a human.
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