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Psyche and Hester, or Apotheosis and Epitome: Natural Grace, *la Sagésse Naturelle*

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Human interpretation fails, for a turbulent life-situation has arisen that refuses to fit any of the traditional meanings assigned to it. It is a moment of collapse. We sink into a final depth -- Apuleius calls it "a kind of voluntary death." . . . This is the *archetype of meaning*, just as the anima is the *archetype of life itself*.

Carl Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* (1934), p. 66

. . . if it is true that man is capable of everything horrible, it is also true that the horrible always engenders counterforces and that in most epochs of atrocious occurrences the great vital forces of the human soul reveal themselves: love and sacrifice, heroism in the service of conviction, and the ceaseless search for possibilities of a purer existence.

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (1946), p. 59

Somewhere, if not in the New England of his time, Hawthorne unearthed the image of a goddess supreme in beauty and power.

Mark Van Doren, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1949), p. 154

Overview: Striking Isomorphism

A literary creation of profound cultural significance, the courageous and attractive, healthily libidinous young woman of whom I write is rhetorical to a time and artistic milieu earlier than her author's and much earlier than ours. Projected novelistically in a tale of waywardness, epic but sublimated love, suffering, exemplary penance, fortitude and triumph, she appears at the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. She is referred to internally as a "destined prophetess" – externally as the "emergent divinity" of that latter, dawning era, and her forbidden love affair with a divine, fair-haired boy of the conservative, male-dominated religious establishment, her engagement in quite specific disobedience to its strictures, has echoes of other famously fallen, transitional women of incalculable cultural-historical *sentence*. Punishment for the complications arising from her transgression, a *hieros gamos*, is forthcoming, as it is to those other notorious females, but her godly, complicit lover suffers a grievous wound as well. Imbued by Nature, however, with the earthy, miraculous virtues and resilience of organically natural grace, she endures her initiatory ordeal and eventually prevails. Moreover, her recognition as harbinger of the forthcoming awareness, and her adherence to its mandate, elevate her to fulfillment of her own prophecy: hers is an ascension that heralds the decline and final collapse of the consecrated establishment that sanctioned her. In

being doubly mythologized – for ideologically-defined immorality before her ascension and in universal sanctification after, her experience also carries allegorical implications specific to the troubled time of her authorial creation. In addition, her secretive liaison with divinity results in the production of a famous and aptly-named child, a projective symbol of life and fulfillment transcending that superannuating ideology.

This is easily a bare-bones précis of Hester Prynne's fictive experience as related by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter*, but it is also, *mutatis mutandis*, a synopsis touching many oppression-and-assertion plots – and numerous historical scandals -- revolving around greatly harried but ultimately successful female heroes. Their prototype in literature is mythic Psyche, as goddessling and goddess Apuleius' archetypal heroine of *Psyche et Cupido* (var. *Amor et Psyche*), whose initiation narrative conforms to the preceding summation, it might minimally be said, with an undifferentiable exactitude identical to Hester's. But it is more than that: these two allegories of mythologized women share synopses that, abstracted, reveal the startling. In mythographic terms, as natural geniuses of a structuralist Jungian formalism, archetypal *Anima*, are they intimately and essentially united, Hester and Psyche. Viewed through that lens, the female-gendered archetype, both appear as symbolic figures of seeming failure who rely for redemptive transition on a revolutionary, countercultural, antithetical praxis of natural, life-affirming and life-transforming love.

Backstory

In related, parallel duality is mythic Eve in the Abramic tradition remembered not only for her dark role in the logically convoluted, finally paradoxical Edenic theology play, but also as the redeemed *Mother of Mankind* (and even troublesome Pandora in the Pagan version of creation is not without promise for redemption, retaining *hope* itself in her pyxis of supernatural surprises). Elaine Pagels quotes a Gnostic text of the first or second century, *The Secret Book of John*, in which natural Eve is already recognized as “the perfect primal intelligence,” an animated “higher principle” that “calls out to Adam to wake up, recognize her, and so receive spiritual illumination.”¹ Indeed, Eve's name in Hebrew – *Havvah* -- signifies “Life,” “Being,” “Living” or “Becoming” (var. *Hawwah*, *Hayah*, from the *hwh* root, evident in YHWH; its verbal form *'ehyeh* appears in “*'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*,” “I am who I am”; in Europe, South America and Scandinavia, “Eve” is still pronounced “Ahva,” homonymous with the Hebrew; only Anglophones vocalize it monosyllabically, to rhyme with “cleave”). Some embrace Eve's original calumny, “Sinner Number One,” imposed and ideological, as most significant, for it is the “imposed” and “socially structured” that these radical heroines always defy, eventually to overcome. Peter Brown summed up the female defamation-conquered paradigm as embodied by Mary, the *Mother of God*, called “The New Eve” for her originary role in Christian redemption: “The miracles of the Virgin are miracles of divine justice suspended and of unmodified human rigor exposed as mistaken.” By the medieval age, when Mariolatry and *l'amour courtois* swept through Christendom and female-identified, vivifying naturalism (personified allegorically in the goddess *Natura* as *mater generationis*), the “principle of

order and continuity in the sublunary world,” was germinating into Renaissance, an alternative, transcending ideal had been recognized. Engaging intransigent male social structures and orthodoxies from within the invincible *numen* of their transformative fertility, as Nature herself had done in the Medieval Platonism of Alanus ab Insula’s *De planctu naturae* (“The Complaint of Nature,” 12th C.), such assertive heroines as Psyche, Eve, Pandora, Mary and Hester subvert the premise and therefore the legitimacy of any Apollonian, logical-mechanical sanction external to fundamental life, the Eucharistic beneficent Woman bestows. In Hester’s first scene, Hawthorne equates her vitality-essence with “the most sacred quality of human life” -- even though at that juncture, well before her secular beatification, he is contrasting her to the Virgin, seeing her through moralistically normative Puritan eyes, as it were. But modern Biblical and *gestalt* scholarship have come around, perhaps full-circle, to the reason Hawthorne alludes to Mary, to his presentive rationale for viewing Hester aesthetically as a simulacrum of the Virgin Mother. As Marina Warner wrote of Mary, “A myth of such dimensions is not simply a story, or a collection of stories, but a magic mirror...reflecting a people and the beliefs they produce, recount and hold. It presents their history in a certain light and in a way that singles them out.” Thus they function, and as archetypal literary icons produced by that same reflexive mythmaking machinery, cytosural Hester Prynne and Princess Psyche ascend to a comparable cultural visibility while projecting each a timely, alternative normative ethos.²

Initiating by purposeful later arrangement the New Testament, Matthew begins its first Gospel with an account of Jesus’s genealogy through Joseph, his legal father in Jewish society, a recitation of the forty-two generations, in three formally perfect units of fourteen, between Abraham and Jesus. In his millennia-striding enumeration of Joseph’s ancestors, Matthew acknowledges only four women, four socially “irregular” women, as it happens, before getting to Joseph’s wife, Mary: Tamar (of Genesis 38), Rahab, Ruth the Moabite, and Bathsheba – to wit, two prostitutes, a black widow who schemes to (illegally) marry her kinsman,* and an adulteress. Acknowledging Bathsheba’s sins forgiven through her birthing of Solomon, as the pure archetype entails, as well as Dante’s elevation of Rahab, a harlot but the first Old Covenant type redeemed by the New (*Paradiso* 9: 119-20), Jane Schaberg wrote in 1987 that “Mention of these four women is designed to lead Matthew’s reader to expect another, final story of a woman [Mary] who becomes a social misfit in some way; is wronged or thwarted; who is party to a sexual act that places her in great danger; and whose story has an outcome that repairs the social fabric and ensures the birth of a child who is legitimate or legitimated.”³ Because Bathsheba’s redemption is achieved through Solomon, a birth that types (foretells) Mary-Jesus, Schaberg offers essentially the same synopsis of Mary’s experience as that involving Hester and Psyche, a virtually universal plot of seeming failure followed by initiatory ordeal and social deliverance informed by childbirth. Outside specifically Judeo-Christian

* This illegality was yet the ground, several millennia later, upon which Henry VIII in 1533 disposed of Catherine, his wife of twenty-five years who had previously been married to his brother, and legally married Anne Boleyn; it was also the reason John Baptist lost his head: open talk of Herod’s illegal marriage to a former sister-in-law was endangering Herod. Cf. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, (New York: Vintage 1995) p. 80.

sources is the oriental Great Goddess Isis, wife and sister of a lost then (in her hands) resurrected vegetation god, who it was said worked as a prostitute in Tyre for ten years; and deep within them is initially unspectacular St. Mary the Magdalene, whose sanctity *increased* inversely to the degree her reputation was despoiled. So determinedly is mythogenesis animated toward this transformative archetype that “the need for such a female heroine in Christian mythology,” in Marina Warner’s words, “constantly shaped the understanding of the passages that might concern [Mary Magdalene], just as the need for the virgin birth influenced the reading of the infancy narratives. A close scrutiny of the Gospels refuses to yield Mary Magdalene’s identity, and challenges the traditional assumption that she was a woman of great beauty and amorousness, indeed a prostitute, who repented of her evil life after she encountered Jesus.” Among her defamed but animated sisters in this archetype is St. Mary of Egypt (“*Maria Aegyptiaca*”), “swarthy-faced, . . . in a mediaeval *Book of the Saints* . . . is recorded to have worked her passage to the Holy Land, where she was to live for years as a desert anchorite, by offering herself as a prostitute to the whole crew of the only vessel sailing there, so, once in Heaven, she showed particular indulgence to carnal sins.”⁴ Before regeneration and reintegration, however, such crucially *animated* women as Eve, the Marys, Hester and Psyche are immediately perceived as ideologically (mythically) adversative to, respectively, God the Father, ancient Hebrew law (“Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily” until he is spoken to by the Holy Ghost [Matt. 1:19-20]), the male-led Newly Chosen People in the “Kingdom of God in Massachusetts,” and Arcadia’s male-dominated but invisible polytheistic pantheon on Olympus. Modern stigmatizations for such *unruly* female behavior in literature and history are not unknown. Among myriad variations, Elizabeth Tudor of England, for example, must be mentioned in this context. Their gender placed her and her mother, Anne Boleyn, in great, mortal disfavor. Thus alienated, Elizabeth spent her youth and early adulthood evading the headsman’s ax – a blood-sport of her ancestral English monarchy at which her mother was not so successful -- but survived to become a great and so-called Virgin Queen among scores of mere English kings and, wed only to her reign, brought forth the English Renaissance. Joan of Lorraine, *La Pucelle*, another virgin successfully married solely to a cause, didn’t survive her mythologically-oriented ideological ordeal – she was ultimately tried and executed for *heresy* among other supernatural crimes -- but ended a mythical saint for it.^{*} As to her benefice, Jeanne d’Arc enabled by her martyrdom a full century of life-preserving toleration for problematical women, for no charge of sorcery was brought against one in high-Inquisitional France until after Francois I died, in 1547. Such historic variations serve to heighten our cognizance of Hester’s signal archetypal purity in Psyche. To sum, nothing in Apollonian male-defined legalism, whenever it aspires to permanence but is always acknowledged as at best a temporary construct, is commensurate historically with Woman’s numinous, transmissible and seemingly imperishable metamorphic gift, visible symbolically for example in the way Queen Elizabeth birthed new concepts of regnancy and culture; indeed, it is likely that the patriarchate’s creation of male-centered religions and social

* And even Anna Nicole Smith’s unfortunate pop-culture myth has been made into a redemption-themed opera.

organization is the result of attempts at constructing commensurate tribal value that dominant males could perpetuate and control. Alone such a hypothesis adequately explains historical, politically necessary misogyny coeval with those masculine theurgic hierarchies. Such is the donnée of Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae* (1990) and an idea certainly familiar if not truistic and immanent by the time of Johan Bachofen's *Mutterreich*, 1861.⁵

Virtually no alterations to the early twelfth-century historical love tragedy of Peter Abélard and his illustrious pupil Héloïse are required to illustrate its conformity with the Hester-Psyche paradigm. Indeed, the writings of Héloïse and Abélard – both their correspondence and his *Historia calamitatum*, every word in Latin -- may have provided Hawthorne, a Latin scholar out of Bowdoin College, with a *specific* instance upon which to base his *Scarlet Letter* plot, down to its rigid triangle scenario in religious context, its H and A initials, its protagonists' prolonged heroic penance and enduring but sublimated love, A's injury, H's submissive capitulation without conversion, and her older male relation who makes her lover's life a living hell -- just as Psyche, also in Latin, provided Hawthorne in archetype an ideal *form*. Indeed, Psyche's sublimated sexual love, in the sense of "made divine," is an essential topos, though sublimated only topically, in the other two women. These homologies, however improbably coincidental, yield to near-verbatim quotes that eradicate any doubt that Hawthorne knew the A-H story: Abélard's "It is in your strength . . . that I place my hope, so as to obtain through your prayer what I cannot obtain through my own" (Gilson 83) and Arthur's "Be thou strong for me . . . Advise me what to do" (Ch. 17). In detail, world-renowned ecclesiastical dialectician and philosopher Peter Abélard, Director of the Schools of Paris and credited with having founded the University of Paris, was during his early life spoken of in the same breath with Seneca, St. Jerome and St. Peter's papal throne in Rome, but he had an irresistible affair with a brilliant late-teen linguistic prodigy, Héloïse, whose violent uncle Fulbert happened to be a Canon at *Notre Dame de Paris*, where Abélard was teaching. Embodying "that perfect harmony of spiritualism and naturalism that is the hallmark of medieval love literature at its best, and the condition for all truly great love between man and woman: body and soul in unison without quarrel," Héloïse soon became pregnant. With Abélard's high-visibility career uppermost in her mind (she said) and against her stated wishes, Héloïse reluctantly agreed to marry Abélard, though in a semi-secret ceremony. Unsatisfied, her uncle had Abélard's genitals forcibly removed -- not a castration, but a mutilation: "I was punished in the part of my body with which I had sinned," he wrote in his *Historia calamitatum* (Gilson 67). Héloïse delivered a son, Astrolabe, and thrived as Abbess first at Argenteuil and then at the Paraclete convent near Troyes, positions engineered by Abélard who, meanwhile, psychically and physically altered, had not mysteriously withdrawn in shame. Héloïse, Aldo Scaglione wrote, "eventually came to divest herself of the most tenacious prejudices of her age and practically became a heroic rebel to the unnatural features of the prevailing ethics. She thus became one of the purest embodiments of feminine humanity . . . of authenticity . . . [and] adherence to the literary representation of the experience of life. . . . [S]he kept moving in a cultural and psychological climate alien and hostile to Abélard's final goals, until they ended up by

speaking two different, reciprocally uncommunicable languages.” In her new role, Héloïse flourished without vocation, exchanged plangently stunning, provocative and wit-matching letters with Abélard, and outlived him by a generation. He died an ascetic monk and priest at Saint-Marcel, but Héloïse had his remains re-interred at the Paraclete, where hers later joined his – just as Hester finally joins Arthur, Mary ascends to unify with God-Father-Husband-Son, and immortal, deified Psyche spends eternity with Cupido. Étienne Gilson wrote that Héloïse embodied “the perfection of human love,” that she was “an incarnation of the pure essence of love to the exclusion of everything else.” Defining her dedication to Abélard as “perfect love,” he noted that its effects on Abélard altered his existence. Further to the transcendent ideal, he gushed, “Neither art nor thought has a modern equivalent, only Héloïse . . . unites the ages,” and even reckoned her revealed self-awareness an adumbration of characteristic Renaissance consciousness, calling her “the first modern woman.” Héloïse does not join Psyche and Hester in anticipating and projecting a future: she *is* them in embodying one.

Soon after his marriage to Sophia, and as if referring to the effects of Héloïse’s heroic devotion to Abélard, Hawthorne wrote in his notebooks of love’s transformative power, of the “eternal beauty” of the animated psyche, “. . . we are but shadows; we are not endowed with real life, all that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream, -- till the heart be touched. That touch creates us, -- then we begin to be -- thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity.” We call it “spirit,” “nature” and, in Hester’s words, “heart,” but all are transcendently opposed to restrictive ideology and, as in ancient *Psyche* and *The Scarlet Letter*, always about to burst forth. “The profound challenge of Héloïse’s story,” according to Scaglione, is “the breaking of the . . . restraining ties of . . . medieval mores and mental attitudes.” He points to her history’s “paramount importance for the interest of later humanistic circles in the dramatic lesson it had to offer . . . as [a] difficult triumph of woman’s deep, unfettered nature without and against the medieval God.” Psyche, as every mythic god before and after, emerged from the psychological self-shapes of anthropomorphism, in her case specifically from legends and folklore of spunky, glorious females; in Arthur and Hester, Abélard and Héloïse we have one historically-based fictive representation of Psyche’s transformative archetype and one historic. And in the *Adama* (“Clay”) and *Havvah* (“Being-Becoming”) genesis we have a normative poetic allegory. The identical organic and puissant psychic principle that animated Hester and Héloïse* literally inspired mythic Psyche, an instantiation of

* “. . . the medieval consciousness constantly swings like a pendulum between two opposed yet complementary views of womanhood: the religious-monastic (woman is sin, crime, error, folly, wickedness, in brief, the eternal Pandora) and the courtly (woman as the embodiment of all the best in life and the world). The one is the result of a realistic approach, the other of an idealistic one, but they are in actuality both abstractions, or, to put it differently, the realism of the former view is the way of looking at reality of one who searches for an ideal perfection irreconcilable with any given reality; while the 'idealism' of the latter view is the hypostasis of a good that one recognizes in reality but projects upon a screen of perfection without which that limited good would not seem satisfactory. Boccaccio’s naturalism is, in its coherence, something different and new. He takes reality and woman as they are, in all their polyvalence. His women characters are both, and even simultaneously, interested and disinterested, loving in order to give and loving in order to take, safe and dangerous, self-centered and generous, in brief 'good' and 'bad.' They are real according to nature, not to a superimposed schema of man-made, mentally construed and idolized, supraworldly, suprahuman, and supernatural perfection. From them can come happiness . . . or extreme suffering . . . for they can behave . . . according to the situation. They are not all of one mold, and the same woman may vary according to circumstances.” Aldo D.

the archetype and substantiation of natural, perfect female psychic form. At the beginning of European Romanticism, Rousseau wrote in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, “La force de l’âme qui produit toutes les vertus tient à la pureté qui les nourrit toutes” (The power of the soul [psyche] which produces all the virtues is the purity that nourishes them). In the words a generation later of Hawthorne’s Transcendental contemporary, Emerson, “This power is in the image because this power is in nature.” (Emerson also equated them in a Hegelian sense: “Nature is the symbol of spirit.”) Or even more forcefully, as post-Jungian Roland Barthes wrote in *Mythologies* (1972), “We reach . . . the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature” (129). As transcendently formal simulacra and now literary figures, Psyche, Eve, Mary, Héloïse and Hester emerged organically from “natural facts” as Emerson named them, or as transformed from history “into nature” in Barthes’ realized mythological re-creation. In both we re-enter with Hawthorne the milieu of personification allegory, as Psyche began it, soon the realm of goddess *Natura*, “whose function partially involves the activity of . . . world-soul, which had been identified with the third person of the Trinity, . . . [now] for the first time the unique cosmic goddess of medieval allegory.” It should be mentioned that Abélard was, in an age of blossoming Mariolatry, an original champion of the Magdalene’s political redemption, an age when “the deity of Venus never shone more brightly than in the ascetic-minded Middle Ages, when her triumph was carried on with a challenging smile, since her naturalistic campaign was fought as a direct attack on religion, ethics, and society” (Scaglione 33). Figurations of and connections within these natural structural homomorphisms revealed, their subsequent iterations manifest as mere syllogistic fairy tales.⁶

Folklore’s pure and familiar Medieval figurations as *Märchen*, a genre whose literary phase began with the naturalism of Giovanni Boccaccio (a favorite of Hawthorne and a devotee of Apuleius, witnessed by a manuscript of *The Golden Ass* written in Boccaccio’s hand found at the Laurentian Library), usually features a stereotypically sympathetic Princess, Virgin, Beautiful Daughter, Abducted Bride,[†] Distressed Damsel or Maiden – all perfects and potentialities of natural anima – who is uncommonly lucid with special empathetic powers or innate knowledge even while surrounded liminally by grotesque characters and situations equally ordinary to these tales: ogres, dragons and other mythological beasts, wicked witches or obsessed older women, idealistically agitated knights, dwarves and fairies, talismanic amulets and magic spells, charms and curses, talking and compassionate animals or insects, crazed divinities or sovereigns, surreal transmutations, the interpenetration of apparitional realms with reality, threatened kingdoms, guarded treasures – or Knowledge -- and weird sisters. As the tale’s cynosure for being its earthly anchor and *hope*, Heroine is the one who must kiss the frog in order to undo a spell, let down her hair in defiance of a deranged stepmother, trick an

Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages*, pp. 55, 28, 32.

[†] One such is Charitë, Psyche’s double and the *Golden Ass*’s only other young bride. Her captivity, ameliorated by Psyche’s tale, is the pretext for its telling. It simply strains the possibilities of coincidence that Hester’s double, besides Hester *The Scarlet Letter*’s only child-bearing young woman, who receives Hester’s artful ministrations in death, is brought forth at precisely that same narrative juncture: each of our heroines’ unique doubles is introduced when she is, benefits from her presence in some way and dies before novel’s conclusion.

enraged dwarf into saying his name, marry the old man, not look into a locked room even though she has been given its irresistible key (known to scholars of folklore as “The Forbidden,” a prohibited thing, word, plant, fruit, room, box, act, etc., upon the breach of which the romance turns), bear the spirit child – either a god's or a devil's, as in the case of Merlin's mother who, *la belle innocente au bois dormans*, was impregnated by a forest daemon* in the dark hope of delivering the Antichrist but who instead brought forth the shape-shifting Arthurian wizard; it is she who is captured or fed the poisoned apple, she who must weave or spin the golden thread, separate tons of mixed seeds and grains, wear the charmed brooch or ring, remain in the tower, castle-keep or donjon until a puzzle is solved or a riddle undone, or live in a tiny house in the dark and thorny but spiritualized forest (or at a “remote seaside cottage” on Cape Cod Bay). Such performatives are required to restore a semblance of social harmony: it is she, finally, who must endure or surmount stereotypically three tests or ordeals (or appear three times on the scaffold of the pillory in Puritan Boston, or allow her evil sisters to visit her enchanted love-nest three times even though she has been warned against them by Cupid). Such delicious narrative trials are necessary preliminary steps toward regenerating equilibrium when the maid is rescued, the frog redeemed as a prince, the mystery unlocked, kingdom saved, talisman returned, etc. Princess Psyche, for example, is enclosed in a fairy-tale rapture of precisely these kinds of storied anomalies. Her father, King of his small kingdom, is willing to sacrifice to a prophesied omnipotent monster – which turns out to be *merely* Love -- the loveliest daughter ever born, all for the sake of preserving peace and propitiating the mad Apollonian gods. Psyche's older sisters are grotesques of greed and jealousy who entered Märchendom as the prototypes which became stereotypes (a process that equals “literary archetypes”) bearing those symptomatic personality peculiarities. Worse than Psyche's supposedly salutary human relations are the Pagan gods who rule her macrocosm: they are monstrous grotesques of the human distortions already fantastic. Manic, flying, lying, conniving, hiding and, above all, interfering. In apposition to pure Psyche (who does manifest Pandoran curiosity) is Venus's dual female nature revealed, being at once irresistibly seductive (she dropped her kit and won the beauty contest that caused the Trojan War) as well as viciously jealous of female rivals, as was Hera in losing that beauty contest. Hester Prynne's surroundings are no less antic with the unreal: all “Wonders of the Invisible World,” all Providences, whether Divine, Illustrious, Memorable, Wonder-Working, Remarkable or even More Remarkable, are interventions signifying the same level of supernatural interpenetration with sensible reality characteristic of and associated with medieval ontology. On the individual level,

* Unmatched in mythology is the ingenuity by which women were said to become pregnant, from Zeus's inseminating presence as a golden rain (Danaë), lightning (Semele), a swan (Leda), an impersonated husband (Alkmene), to an invisible nighttime lover (Psyche), the Holy Spirit (Mary and her mother Anne both), and the mysteriously impalpable intercourse that must have occurred before the twentieth century, including that of Hester and all other gravid literary heroines. (Women are even now said to be fertilized by spermy swimming pools.) Critics have failed to realize that only Eve could have reported her ophidian interlocutor's subtlety, that Mary was the sole witness to Gabriel's angelic salutation (“Hail, Mary, full of grace . . .”), or generally that knowledge of how she was impregnated was historically probably the original “leverage” that a woman wielded and was, in most cases, as in Hester's, crucial and probative. Cf. Monika M. Elbert, “Hester's Maternity: Stigma or Weapon?” *ESQ*, Vol. 36, Issue 3 (3rd Quarter, 1990) pp. 175-207, esp. 179.

for example, primary among Calvin's five tenets in his new creed of Puritanism is doctrinal, universal, innate human depravity, a condition to be acknowledged individually as the ground from which Puritans might grow to salvation and prove justification, yet Hester's lover Arthur Dimmesdale, a high minister of that faith, bizarrely cannot take Calvinism's basic step -- to accept his own inchoate, essentially human failings. He would rather die in self-sacrifice than deal with them, in fact. Death is the way out of conflict for Arthur, as it is for Psyche's father. These two most important men in the lives of Hester and Psyche in their "maiden" phase choose to end life rather than embrace it. Before leaving the topic of grotesque perversity/insanity, however, Chillingworth must be recognized (Roger!). But he, an alchemist-scientist, at least concedes his psychic deformation, admitting to being a fiend who "once had a human heart." Governor Bellingham, closely identified with Dimmesdale and appearing every time Dimmesdale does, follows closely, a "Christian" ruler who owns a seven-year bond-servant and lives in a sumptuous mansion where he displays his polished, parablellum sword and exoskeletal armor. Even Pearl, the too-arch child, over-dramatizes childhood mischief and prodigality. In these realms -- Psyche in her fanciful Pagan universe and "Mother-of-Pearl" Hester in a Puritan purgatory of such warped reality that its adherents try purposefully to lose touch with the actual one -- spirited Psyche and sagacious, grounded and nurturing Hester seem by contrast *compos mentis*. Real. Animated with desired human qualities. Full of natural life and Hawthorne's "eternal beauty," they are personifications of anima who are, despite their tribulations, expected to heal and reunite. Pierre Lévêque identified the anima-archetype as the "myth of femininity in action, . . . the mystery that brings about reconciliation in the world."⁷

Through disproportionate female ordeals, auditors of these tales are because of sympathetic identification ingeniously brought around to their heroines' points of view. By the time pregnant and forsaken Psyche falls into the clutches of and bears a slapdown from "evil-mother-in-law" Venus, she has our unbridled empathy. When put-upon but prevailing Hester returns to Boston proudly bearing her hard-earned letter, we hear her thoughts and would stand in harm's way for her. Even Héloïse in her lifelong love for Abélard, and the New Testament Marys who suffered with Jesus: their ordeals and any success arising from them have through their eyes become humanly ours. We imagine their world, now made sensible to us through mythological legend. Crucially, it is via *Märchen* and myth, especially as they were intimately and originally related to women's personal accounts of their fecundation, as with Merddyn's mother, above, that the narratological female point of view may initially have been broached. By allowing entry to her thoughts, Hawthorne brings us subtly to support "felonious" Hester using the techniques employed originally in folktales. He revered naturalistic Boccaccio, who loved and emulated Apuleius, whom Jung worshiped for his realization of Psyche, archetype of natural female success and the form upon which Jung built his fame.

Analysis

Modern feminism's unique and dedicated terminology seldom addresses Jungian

archetypes as such, or contextualizes them historically, as herein, but Lauren Berlant nevertheless reached a congruent conclusion:

For Prynne, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth, magical thinking takes on new forms of unreason: the state of law is a state of madness, in which juridical transfigurations of the body and the mind induce species of insanity. Moreover, their derangement emerges *precisely* at the moment at which the apparatus of the state displays itself to its public and to the reader of the novel. Unreason, in *The Scarlet Letter*, occupies the crucial moment of the installation of proto-national consciousness in America.

The proto-national consciousness immanent in Berlant's remark posits an animated, therapeutic, politicized and recognizable transpersonal manifestation of gendered types, her "Female Symbolic," an applied "interpenetration of surplus sexual and political desire," to be incorporated into Hawthorne's projected pluralist future in America.⁸ He personified it in Hester, an independent, self-reliant, secular female individualist.

From these integrating perspectives generated by anima's ecumenical powers to create coherence, it is possible to unify seeming ambiguities and respond satisfactorily to some remaining questions. When, for example, Sacvan Bercovitch writes in *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* of the novel's "twin epiphanies -- our revelation of Hester in the forest and Hester's revelation of pure womanhood at the end," he attributes to "narrative cohesion" Hawthorne's encompassing what seem to be two aspects of Hester's character or her developmental signposts (124). Taken as attributable to the life-force, however, Hester's actions manifest not as a double epiphany or evidence of *Bildung*, but as single and singular, integrative and identifying. In precisely the same sense is "narrative cohesion" not imposed but innate, exposed by Hester's full participation in the natural anima-archetype as we perceive it. In "*The Scarlet Letter: A Twice-Told Tale*," Bercovitch doesn't understand the "obviously symbolic" but "obviously impossible to explicate" reference to a wild rose bush that has sprung up next to Boston's prison seemingly in the footsteps of the "sainted Anne Hutchinson" (15)*. In the anima-scenario, Anne's roses signify the redemptive female life-and-love force. Hawthorne named his second daughter, born in 1851, "Rose"; moreover, roses were sacred to Venus, and in the Christian tradition came to symbolize self-sacrifice.[†] Perforce, anima's potentially redeeming social force as

* Anne, "sainted" by history, was tried twice before male courts (as was the finally, literally "sainted" Joan of Arc four times - the final two times posthumously, for rehabilitation and canonization). How strange, this complete miss by Americanist Bercovitch: the foregoing description of Mrs. Hutchinson is Bercovitch's overarching thesis for Hester in *The Office of The Scarlet Letter*, while individualism and self-reliance are themes central to his critical oeuvre, especially in his analyses of Puritanism and its aftermath. Other male criticism, viewing Hester scientifically and isolated from her sisters, acknowledges "the generative power of imagination [to be] feminine throughout *The Scarlet Letter*," and "the [irreducibly feminine] gesture which inspires the novel-writing project, thinly disguised through projection into the past, is an act of female identification, . . . [but] should be understood as socially constituted, and not as any Jungian anima" [sic]: Scott Derrick, "Prometheus Ashamed: *The Scarlet Letter* and the Masculinity of Art," p. 124 in Harold Bloom, ed., *Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers 1986), pp. 121-127.

† Lilies represent Mary, laurel Daphne, periwinkle Aphrodite; flowering hawthorn was sanctified to the goddess Cardaea and later to Flora herself, willow to Artemis Callisto, holly to Creiddylad, whence "Cordelia," etc. Noted is that Sleeping Beauty, well-known as a folkloric incarnation of Psyche, was by name "Little Briar-Rose," and that Apuleius's hero, ass-

an integral energy was rightly attributed in Hawthorne exclusively to women, coursing through both radically self-possessed and individualistic Anne Hutchinson – “sainted” because of her martyrdom to impending American self-reliance, which Emerson christened as “sacred” to developmental America -- and through graceful, caring Hester. When Hawthorne mediumistically points to these connections, whether he or we make them or not -- “Certainly there was some deep meaning in it,” his narrator says of the Hester’s faded-like-blood red “rag” found in Salem’s Custom House, for example, “most worthy of interpretation, and which, as it were, streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind” -- it is almost as though, in precisely the way Hawthorne’s contemporary, beauty-worshiping Romantics believed natural genius to be inspired, he were toward their ritual observance taking dictation from some cosmic female Demiurge. His sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody recognized such a “double action” in Hawthorne, his “animating principle” a willingness to see “the appearance of the moment in the light of the *great whole* . . . [a] thinking in eternity and time *at once*.” In his 1849 notebook, he describes his firstborn, Una, as “life itself.”⁹ We call this ontology structuralist or Jungian because it is informed by universality.

In terms of the female-gendered archetype, Hester’s “revelation” in the forest is a reversion to *type* through a shucking of what she is not. She *unclasps* and “casts away” society’s stigma, releases her flowing, gorgeously feminine hair from its Puritan-style restraint, and is authentically Woman unfettered by male trappings; even Arthur Dimmesdale notices, and is driven by her startling natural Dionysian presence to temporary insanity or, in the familiar terms of anima scholarship¹⁰ a male mutability within which he synthesizes, in conjunction with this vision, his greatest sermon. This lethally abortive culmination, questionably for him “better than what we dreamed of in the forest?” (179), is as near as “A.D.” comes to transformation: it is as effective in its way and as ineffectual in its result as any purely intellectual effort can be. Roy R. Male interpreted Dimmesdale’s shortfall and described its source in *Hawthorne’s Tragic Vision*: “Transformation occurs only when action and passion, head and heart are fused in the fiery crucible. Hawthorne pictures the vessels of purification -- the elixir, the woman, the heart, and the fire -- as . . . agents of destruction and creation. The heart is a foul cavern; but for the man it is the source of life, the great converter” (16). Therein Dimmesdale fails. Male hews even closer to my thesis in his Introduction’s summation: “We need to keep these universal conditions of moral growth in mind to prevent confusion in reading Hawthorne. Any reader who approaches his work with the vague notion that [it is] simply concerned with the effects of sin, as the clich e goes, will never fully appreciate Hawthorne’s art. . . . He complicated and intensified the[se] problems of conversion by every means at his command” (18, 19). Hawthorne’s “complications” may have arisen from his literary attempts to change, along with countless progressives and visionaries active in the revolutionary environment immediately preceding and following the tumultuous year 1848, the world’s almost entirely male perspective on reality. In *Blithedale* he has Holgrave

Lucius, regains human form by eating a bouquet of roses at the direction of Isis. One of Mary’s many appellations is the “Rose of Heaven”: lilies signify purity, roses *blood*.

exclaim, “A Dead Man sits on all our judgement-seats; and living judges do but seek out and repeat all his decisions. We read in Dead Men’s books! We laugh at Dead Men’s jokes, and cry at Dead Men’s pathos! We are sick of Dead Men’s diseases, physical and moral . . .” “[M]oral conversion,” Male wrote, “which is the only kind that really matters, cannot be achieved through intellectual schemes, incessant industry, or technological progress” (139). Or, as Hawthorne framed it in his *Life of Franklin Pierce*, “There is no instance in all history of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end” (XII, 417). *Before your eyes is an ongoing, alternative process, a different but justifiable and legitimate viewpoint*, he seems to reiterate in every story and romance in which a female character figures prominently – in other words, in almost all of them. Hester Prynne, the “emergent divinity”¹¹ of *The Scarlet Letter*, epitomizes those immanent, unconventional options. As the first human to accede meritoriously to Olympus, *Psyche* provided Hawthorne with a pure archetypal gloss for revolutionary female behavior. An avalanche of textual evidence indicates that Hawthorne, by training a Latin classicist, found his goddess in *Psyche*, via Apuleius. His use of Mary Tighe’s English-language, versified *Psyche* (1805) for an epigraph to his *Fanshawe* (1828) is but a touchstone. Hester’s perfect fit to the *Psyche* archetype, her Platonic dimensionality in it, is a Romantic ideal.

So conceived, natural female power provides critical leverage. In “Hawthorne’s A-Morality of Compromise,” Bercovitch admits that for him and in conventional criticism Hester’s return to her former seaside cottage, her resumption of the Letter, “remains entirely unexplained” and represents “a compromise”; he says “we never learn the process of her conversion to the A,” that she is “defeated” at that point (1). And while “the overwhelming sense among twentieth-century critics” might have been that Hester’s resumption of the Letter is “a lapse” on Hawthorne’s part, even a “glaring aesthetic mistake” (!),¹² missing is the sensibility that “some crucial energy in the novel has been suppressed, coerced, disciplined, thwarted, silenced, or disallowed.” Considering the life-force to be all-animating and personified in Hester not only allows contradiction of those avowals but also parts the exegetical waters for Hester’s triumphant, victoriously bullet-proof acceptance of her final position -- despite the Letter, which she at that point flaunts to the community. “The ‘public,’” Lauren Berlant wrote, “is the first entity to register that the state has, after seven years, lost control over the A’s and Hester’s meanings, and therefore over collective memory and identity” (137). The stigma has lost its intended contemporary social force, but the ironic fact that Hester has emasculated it has ultimate meaning to her and a (possibly reformed) future; in the end, she flouts its “office” by wearing it ornamentally, like the shrunken head of a defeated adversary. “Its originary meaning has been transmuted into its opposite: the adulterer’s A assumes the sacred aura of the cross on a ‘nun’s bosom,’ and it organizes the translation of hatred into love, marking no internal condition of ambiguity or ambivalence in the process” (Berlant 136). Hester’s radical female symbolism has outlasted and overcome both it *and* its office (“. . . not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it” at that juncture). A polysemous hieroglyphic, the letter has been brought to bear in three incarnations: in its first Custom-House appearance as the touchstone for Hester Prynne’s remarkable story,

in retrospect -- narrative as signifier of Puritan law and Hester's sin and, looking forward to America's inclusive and tolerant future, as Hester's badge of individualistic female honor. When she returns to Massachusetts, it is thus Hester who owns the scarlet letter, pinning it again on her bosom, not her Puritan scourges. She has become a wisdom figure, a woman elder or *Magna Mater*, an icon of strength, a mentor to the non-doctrinal, organic community of troubled females who seek her advice as an experienced, exceptional guide among them. Her *impresa* is now an emblem of female authority, the captured enemy flag from a battle she has won. In that moment, little or no talk remains of the Puritans, of Arthur, Roger, Winthrop, Bellingham, Wilson, or even the bond-servant at the Governor's mansion: in fact, all the men in *The Scarlet Letter* have disappeared. Berlant called this erasure "the novel's fantasy of the exhaustion of the masculine sexual animus" (154) or, equivalently in the positive sense, its displacement by the female-gendered psyche. So thoroughly have they been expunged that not even Arthur Dimmesdale's own grave bears his name. In the end, his is only the grave next to Hester's. On this point Paglia refers metaphorically to Goethe: "Hawthorne's Gretchen has expanded in power, while Faust has shrunk" (581). It is She who remains: Hester, the Life-and-Love Force and the type of Hawthorne's prospective-projective hope for a transfigured, forthcoming American citizenship -- Berlant's Female Symbolic, "the national elevation of the woman as the privileged source and future of culture" (34).

One notices in Hawthorne's other romances how his leading men orbit tentatively his female protagonists, especially the artist-mesmerist Holgrave, who converts to the bourgeoisie to be with the anima-sprite Phoebe (Hawthorne's pet-name for Sophia); and Coverdale, dazzled by and impotent before magnificent and exotic, primal earth-woman Zenobia,* then grasping along with Westervelt and Hollingsworth at even the weakest and least tangible female straw, the "Veiled Woman" of psychic fantasy, Priscilla; or Donatello, a primordially faun-like Adam figure committing murder on a glance from fallen Miriam; even Kenyon, the supposed but belatedly-revealed narrator of *The Marble Faun*, who necessarily to the plot understands utterly nothing of the Hilda-Miriam, virgin/not-virgin twinning, but who is made to try to explain duality in a lame epilogue; and finally Arthur Dimmesdale, a personification of *automachia*, all of whose vitality is self-destructively deployed as *animus*,[†] his perverted, typically masculine intellect-only response to engagement with ideally female Hester, she who loves and remains faithful to him unto her own demise. In his death sermon, delivered at the height of his homiletic powers after being re-eroticized by Hester in the forest, Arthur addresses the future -- Hester's, not his and the Puritans', which are integrated rhetorically, fused in their morbidity. Embodying that future is Pearl, an entirely adequate symbol of its potential in

* Zenobia's even more explicitly primal likeness to Eve was excised from MS; the original passage:

"As for the garb of Eden' added she, shivering playfully, 'I shall not assume it till after Mayday!"

"Assuredly, Zenobia could not have intended it, -- the fault must have been entirely in my imagination. But these last words, together with something in her manner, irresistibly brought up a picture of that fine, perfectly developed figure, in Eve's earliest garment. I almost fancied myself actually beholding it."

From Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* MS archived at the Morgan Library in New York City. Noted in Mathiessen, *American Renaissance*, 297

and through Hester: the highly animated, elfin female child dances among the graves “like a creature that [has] nothing in common with a by-gone and buried generation, nor own[s] herself akin to it.” Bercovitch spoke in *The Office* of the Ambiguity of Hester’s letter and its many interpretations. Here I speak of another A-word of momentous and unifying significance. *Anima*’s consideration resolves ambiguities and answers almost all questions regarding Hester Prynne and her *imago*, Psyche-Soul.

The Female Symbolic

By the time, in the mid-second century of Rome’s Empire, the familiar and well-regarded *Psyche* myth was finally recorded by Apuleius -- like his contemporaries Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria (pseudonymously), Valentinus and later Minutius Felix, Lactantius and Augustine -- a Roman North African* (a Madauran, i.e., as was the very early heliocentrist Martianus Capella), and the princess Psyche allowed to ascend, *immortelle*, to Olympus, the Golden Age of Paganism was just about over, its Great God Pan just about completely dead. *The Golden Ass* may well be the literary swan song for Olympus and its named characters Venus, Iuppiter, Juno, Vulcan, Mercury, Minerva, Ceres and Cupid. New or newly revived eastern mystical cults, as Mithraism and the Oriental Isiac, worship of the Great Nature Goddess Isis and her brother/husband, resurrecting plant god Osiris, were arising or being revived partially in reaction to the collapse of classical Paganism, but more pointedly as a “counterblast to the meteoric spread of Christianity” (Walsh xxxvii) and in response to the impending metamorphosis of Rome from religious *Imperium* to imperial *Ecclesium*. More than two hundred years later, Augustine was in reaction yet trying to refute Apuleius personally, with twenty-six direct references and arguments in his *De civitate Dei*, though he incorporated in it Apuleius’ idea that service to God is the only true freedom, seen particularly in Apuleius’ life-homage to Isis. Apuleius, as far as *The Golden Ass* can be received as autobiographical, was a priest of Isis (*The Golden Ass* became an authoritative source for her rites and in so doing for blossoming Roman North African culture as well) and a self-confessed devotee of female love who projected in his masterwork a recursive allegory of personal redemption through three levels: Apuleius represents his hero Lucius as a figural ass who overhears the fable of Psyche related by an old woman to encourage a young, kidnapped bride. It’s moral for the maiden: Psyche or Soul will be transfigured through immortal Love, its physical adoration ennobled by transcendent spirituality. At the novel’s climax, ass-hero Lucius will too be transfigured through worship of the Great Goddess Isis. Glowing and throbbing venously in that deep narrative textuality, *Psyche* seems to lose all contact with man-controlled external reality, taking on instead the profundity of a pure allegory of pure redemptive love, the highest virtue of the human soul, or psyche. By the end of the classical era, self-aware World-Soul and its ideal *equanimity*, as the Emperor

* Bachofen attributes to Rome’s political antipathy toward vestigial or overt Goddess worship its dedicated eradication of Etruria, Phoenician Carthage and Aphroditean Corinth, “one stronghold of Orientalism after another . . . all for the benefit of mankind, whose rise to a purer stage of life required annihilation of the older sensualistic civilizations.” “The Myth of Tanaquil,” *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, p. 231. Apuleius was born at Madaura, near modern Morocco, but claimed “allegorical” descent from Corinth (Graves xix).

Antoninus Pius whispered with his dying breath, was being recognized and exalted, even over Courage, especially by emperor Marcus Aurelius, slave Epictetus, aristocrat Seneca and other of Apuleius' contemporary Stoic philosophers. At the bottom of everything, its Natural first cause, Apuleius intimates allegorically, pulses our pure and mystical life-force, the same that every woman incarnates and transmits. Equally salient is the idea that out of human psyche came Olympus itself and all other cultural artifacts of our species. The character Psyche's metaphoric, metamorphic ascent is only a self-recognition, withal, but a seismic one. It encompasses the entire cosmos or, equivalently in the anthropocentric terminology of our psyche, human comprehension of it. Her enlightened ascent is the first female elevation to the male paradise of perfect forms.*

Of the late-classical rhetorical transformation, and the equally relevant linguistic conversion in the West from Greek to Latin, by which mere personification, as in Arcadia's gods and goddesses, became allegory, wherein symbols interact predicatively with moral or didactic purpose the way *Psyche* does, C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Allegory of Love*, "Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature" (4). Vivid symbolism and allegory, H. Moss noted in *The Birth of the Middle Ages: 395-814*, were "the characteristic mental processes of the period" (273).† For examples, either author might have referred explicitly to the culturally synchronic invention of parity between Good and Evil as a structural contribution to allegory -- a form usually arising from anxiety -- or to the equally unsettling, innovative concepts of salvation and damnation. Satan, for instance, is not ontological to the Pentateuch. In Amos, written circa the eighth century B.C., the Lord is seen as the author of all exigencies, good and evil: ". . . shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?"; in Deutero-Isaiah (sixth century B.C.), Jahve says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things"; a hundred years later in Job 1:7, probably because evil was felt to be incompatible with the Creator's divine persona, in *prosopopoeia* as Jahve's assistant Satan speaks his introductory line; by the time of 1 Chronicles 21:1 (as a metaphoric "adversary," "impediment" or "stumbling block"), for the first time the name "Satan" appears as a proper noun without a qualifying article. At that point he is operating autonomously, all responsibility for tempting David having eventually been transferred to him. Revelation offers a different cosmos: Satan is a fully-realized and active personification, an archfiend at the head of organized evil dueling allegorically in parity with God.* (Satan would not for centuries be identified with *l'antico serpente*, the clever and subtle-talking snake of Eden, though that back-formation was hinted at in *I Enoch*, a first- or second-century B.C. text of Jewish Apocrypha.) Representation in the New Testament, finally, is thus developmentally of a rhetorical species more figurational than the supposed literal-historical accounts in the Old. In his

* Other female deities on Olympus were products of deistic male imagination, not elevations. Cf. Aphrodite's sea-birth from her father's gonads tossed into the ocean, Athene's brain-parturition from Zeus's head, et al.

† Corresponding is a parallel finding from iconography, the contemporary loss among worshippers of the distinction between prototype and image: Ernst Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 8 (1954) pp. 83-150, esp. pp. 101, 123, 136, 140 ([jstor.org/stable/1291064](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1291064)).

* Milton's Satan and his psychological first cousin, Shakespeare's Hamlet, are prototypes for modern literature's anguished, introspective protagonists.

famous “Figura” essay, Erich Auerbach distinguished between the *historia* represented in the original Jewish testament and the *allegoria* of the following Christian testament -- in both its extant self and its internal especially Paulist tropes (48). So forceful was this drive toward personification (allegory) that depictions of Satan’s varied incarnations are the only images to have survived undefaced the Reformation’s sweeping iconoclasm. Of equal importance to developmental interpretive metafiguration is, in the generation following Apuleius, the Patristic invention by Clement and his students Origen and Hippolytus of the Christian concept of Trinity, which doesn’t appear in the New Testament, and typological Biblical exegesis, which ingeniously reconciled all of western history with Christian redemption. Applied number symbolism as embodied in the Trinity and the Number of the Beast, e.g. was only one aspect of this explosive inflorescence of new rhetorical tools and figures of which Lewis spoke with awe and by which *rhetor* Apuleius and Early Church fathers prospered. Of those patriarchs, Augustine was one who recognized as potentially false or misleading the uses of such rhetorical constructs, writing that the appeasements offered by Mani’s teachings, for example, “served up to me as I hungered and thirsted dishes of glowing phantasies than which better were it to love this very sun . . . than those illusions which deceive the mind through the eye.” And by Hester’s time in Puritan New England, rhetorical figuration as a tool essential to addressing issues of the invisible church of the soul had become deployed so pervasively that it was obliterating all distinction between metaphor and language as normally understood. But that was precisely its mission: English Puritan Divine Thomas Hooker, who spent the last years of his life in America during Hester’s imaginary sinning years, advised parishioners eager for understanding to “. . . conceive two women, the one sicke . . . desires the Physitian, to bee healed by him, the other desires him not so much to be healed, but shee is desirous to be married to him. So it is with the soule that is carried in a kind of love and affection to godlinesse, hee would not have Christ only to heale him, but he would be married to Christ.”¹³ The dividing line that separates, if it could, any profit from being healed in Christ and the glorious state of grace itself has been sacrificed, in the same way that the Puritans in their zeal surrendered the ability to distinguish between the letter of the law and its spirit. Through figuration, language’s traditional association with logic had thus been subverted; had such a transformation been wrought for aesthetic ends, we would call its achievement Art. Here in Hester’s Puritan New England it was pointed to an artful, invisible ideology created out of whole cloth and aimed at the problem of eternity.

Hawthorne’s offer in 1850 is not less radical, but more *socially* forward-looking. His authorial timeframe was further removed temporally from Hester’s than ours is from his, just as Apuleius was transcribing circa 150 A.D. a mythopoeic fairy tale at least half a millennium old.* Hawthorne’s antebellum era in the North had seen agriculture’s

* *Ψυχή* appears in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and Bronze-Age Greek sculpture had often depicted the perfect maiden with a butterfly, her name’s literal translation and the eponymous symbol of beatific, metamorphic soul. Achaea’s parent culture, the Minoan centered at Knossos, had in its monotheistic Goddess cult a thousand years before Pericles delineated the symbols of rebirth – a belief that in Greek culture became the central mystery of vestigial Goddess worship at Eleusis – in the form of chrysalis and butterfly, and further represented by the shape of the Cretan double-ax, used for moon-horned bull sacrifice. “Archetype” is cotemporal with Plato.

economic zenith attained and surpassed by manufacturing, while burgeoning industrialization and economic “take-off” brought with them in reaction probably America’s most reform-minded half century ever, peaking in the 1840s. Knowing what had become of Puritanism and the importance to post-Revolutionary America of Romantic individualism, pioneering self-reliance and gender awareness, as he brought them forth in Hester, of course, could not prepare him or his generation for what was impending in the war-years following 1861. Reform, as truth and law always are, was to be a casualty of War. Women, previously led forward by Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, the Brontës, Amandine Dupin (“George Sand”), Mary W. Shelley, Margaret Fuller and others, relinquished temporarily -- to the needs of Abolition and Union -- their hopes for an egalitarian society, the one dreamed of by Hester Prynne two hundred years and three rhetorical levels down in Hawthorne. “I am willing that the Negro,” Juliet Ward Howe declared, “shall get the ballot before me. I cannot see how anyone can pretend that there is the same urgency in giving the ballot to women as there is to the Negro.” Probably related to Margaret Fuller’s philosophy, in one of Hester’s final moments is her famous, hopeful musing that “the angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman . . . wise . . . through . . . the ethereal medium of joy.”[†] These sentiments had been expressed by Hawthorne friend and contemporary Fuller in her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* of 1844: “Since the sliding and backsliding men of the world, no less than the mystics, declare that, as through Woman Man was lost, so through Woman must Man be redeemed, the time must be at hand..We would have every path laid open to Woman as freely as to Man. Were this done, ...divine energy would pervade nature, ...a ravishing harmony of the spheres would ensue.” To his credit, Hawthorne’s offer of female humanity in *The Scarlet Letter*, particularly its spiritual *caritas*, was then and is now a reasonable alternative to blowing people to smithereens, lynching or torturing them, as his ancestors had done. Notwithstanding Coverdale’s confessing prayer that “I have never found it possible to suffer a bearded priest so near my heart and conscience as to do me any spiritual good. I blush at the very thought! Oh, in the better order of things, Heaven grant that the ministry of souls may be left in charge of women! . . . The task belongs to woman. God meant it for her. He has endowed her with the religious sentiment in its utmost depth and purity, refined from that gross, intellectual alloy with which every masculine theologian -- save only One -- has been prone to mingle it” --notwithstanding that, women’s participation particularly in government was yet mythologically viewed in

[†] “Joy,” not so coincidentally, is one of Psyche’s twins as renascent in Milton’s *Comus* (1634), the other being “Youth”; in *Paradise Lost*, it is Joy and Bliss which will be the fruits awaiting successful survivors of Armageddon. Apuleius has Psyche bear a single daughter named *Voluptas*, an appellation virtually impossible to translate, witnessed by Milton’s two attempts. Humans in their cultural production implicitly acknowledge that the libidinous desire for sublime beauty is psychologically and therefore linguistically nonconvergent. The French did not proffer *Plaisir*, as almost all *Psyche*’s English translators invariably did with “Pleasure” or, variously, “Delight” and “Bliss”; instead they sang “Hedonè” for *Voluptas*. The English and French substantive cognates, “Volupt” and “Volupte,” applied to a female child probably associate too-dark a connotation of “sexual wanton.” For example, in the early fifteenth century personification allegory *The Castle of Perseverance*, the character *Voluptas* is translated into English as “Lust-liking.”

nineteenth century America as apocalyptic.*

“To official, juridical definitions of the nation,” Berlant wrote of the competing myths, “Hawthorne’s women emerge as uncanny, paradoxical, politically unintelligible as fantasy projections of patriarchal fear about the imminent end of male hegemony within the political public sphere, as occasions for the serious critique of that same patriarchal culture, and as eroticized subjects who speculate that other forms of collective life might be imaginable, even within America.”¹⁴ It may be mere coincidence that Apuleius was, as well, deploying an allegorical mode that had yet to reach its zenith. Of Roman officer and pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus, Auerbach averred that in the late fourth century his “manner of presentation signified the complete coming of age of something in the making since the time of Seneca and Tacitus -- that is a highly rhetorical style in which the gruesomely sensory has gained a large place; a somber and highly rhetorical realism which is totally alien to classical antiquity.”¹⁰ Temporally, Apuleius was halfway to that culmination, as Hawthorne was to America’s in the 1840s, almost eighty years after the birth of first-wave modern feminism, which occurred somewhere between Richardson’s *Pamela* and Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and the same interval in advance of full acceptance of the idea of women’s rights, at least of voting rights, in the United States.

The Cult of Isis, into which Apuleius is believed to have been initiated a priest, was as effective at countering Christianity in late Roman antiquity as were the transcendental, communitarian Fourierist experiments at solving socio-economic problems in antebellum America. But both were nonetheless as conversional as their ideological opponents, Christianity and (economically) progressive American pre-war politics. Putative recalcitrants, Apuleius came out of Isis with a purposefully moralistic, picaresque romance, as essentially apolitical Hawthorne did several times from the foliage of his murderous family tree and his brief sojourn at Brook Farm, which America’s leading reformist and abolitionist intellectuals, including Fuller, Channing, Alcott and Emerson had visited. In effect, both authors appealed to the transformative goddess-aspect in woman in attempts at rescuing for social purposes the archetypal Great Goddess, mankind’s original deity and -- in Hawthorne’s contemporary, J.J. Bachofen’s words in *Mutterreich*, “those ἀρχαία φίλα γυναικῶν (primordial race of women) with whom all peace vanished from the earth” (81) -- from her depredations at the hands of males who had captained civilization’s hieratic city states and then steered straight to slavery, slaughter and impending dystopian collapse. (In Apuleius’ generation, Christians were yet being blamed for Rome’s disintegration.) Both also recognized that women like Psyche, Eve, Pandora, Héloïse, Priscilla, Miriam, Zenobia and Hester (and Mistress Hibbins, a witch) were not unidimensional, not entirely immune to self-harm as they navigated male-dominated existence. In *The Golden Ass*, women are agentive in their roles as

*A pastoral letter from the leader of Massachusetts’ Congregations recording the *Zeitgeist*: “We can not . . . but regret the mistaken conduct of those who encourage females to bear an obtrusive and ostentatious part in measures of reform, and countenance any of that sex who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers.” Cited in Cullen Murphy, *The World According to Eve* (Boston 1998), p. 25

gamines, witches and misogynistically burlesqued sexual wantons (but not outside the bounds of classical characterization: cf. Pasiphaë, e.g., mother of Crete's Minotaur, the result of her lust for a holy bull) – and all seemingly incomprehensible and otherworldly to Apuleius. In Hawthorne, and probably modeled on Margaret Fuller's shocking and tragic drowning, Zenobia's contemporary *Blithedale* defeat is a dark, ominously prescient countercurrent to hope for anima-inspired reform. In Zenobia's view, it is the hidebound male social structure that is responsible for her downfall after she is coldly rejected by Hollingsworth: "The whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common cause against the woman who swerves one hair's breadth, out of the beaten track. Yes; and add (for I may as well own it, now) that, with that one hair's-breadth goes all astray, and never sees the world in its true aspect afterwards." From her internal viewpoint, Zenobia's apparent overreaction may be Hawthorne's comment on headstrong Fuller, for all we know, but the social symbolism of type is palpable. Hawthorne in his notebooks recorded the possibility of female autonomy. It contains, for better or worse, unmitigated capitulation to darker forces, which Zenobia dramatizes; after Fuller's drowning he wrote of her as having "something within her she could not possibly have come at, to recreate and refine . . . a rude old potency [that] . . . undid all her laboring in the twinkling of an eye. On the whole," he noted, "I do not know but I like her the better for it – the better, because she proved herself a very woman, after all, and fell as the weakest of her sisters might."* Progress as given in Hawthorne's psychological understanding of female self-generated vulnerability, an awareness that may have originated in having been raised and nurtured exclusively among women until he was in his mid-thirties, is intensified by contrast with the Romantic perspective: Lord Byron's Haidée crushed in her father's embrace, which allegorized society's suffocating effect on unfettered love, and Poe's deceasing women, the "disintegration of the psyche" mirroring the failure of the Life-Force generally -- which Poe and his narrators justifiably but solipsistically took personally (Male 41). From their needy male view, without love, men like Hollingsworth and Dimmesdale and Jaffrey Pyncheon (and Roderick Usher) had been made to demonstrate, anything can happen. With responsible nurturative female caritas, Hawthorne was shouting in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* – and which, personified in Psyche, Apuleius personally found with Isis as symbolized novelistically at the end of a long and crazy, female-engendered transformation and retransformation -- anything is possible, even personal, secular-social redemption. In Hawthorne's other two major romances, where dark and light female personalities are in balance, unsatisfying stalemate results. His novelistic tone is always conditioned by and readable in his females' disposition, in those characters who, according to Mathiessen, "are certainly more thoroughly imagined than any of [his] men." His recent biographer James R. Mellow concluded that "It is women of all ages who exercise a fascination for Hawthorne"; he was raised among extraordinary Hawthorne women and married into another family of them, the Peabodys. Camille Paglia even believed the *w* he inserted into

* Fuller's view of these inner female workings may be inferred from her March 23, 1845 letter to James Nathan, in which she speaks of Psyche, "but a mortal woman, yet as the bride of Love, she became the daughter of the gods too. But had she learned in any other way this secret of herself, all had been lost, the plant and flower and fruit." In Perry Miller, ed., *Margaret Fuller: American Romantic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP 1963), pp. 202-204

the family name, Hathorne, signifies *women*. Being “attracted to women’s essential otherness,” as Mellow verbalized it, his successful heroines show that he practically worshiped anima, a natural otherness, as a Platonic, formalized female essence.¹⁵ At its most explicit articulation in his works, Hawthorne’s capitulation to anima’s demonstrably overwhelming power is unequivocal. In *Blithedale*: “[Zenobia’s] presence caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia, in which we grown-up men and women were making a play-day of the years that were given us to live in” (21). Anima as embodied in disturbingly female Zenobia makes merely theatrical the generative ideals and desires (personified by Hollingsworth) and everyday events at heterocosmic Blithedale, and of course by metaphoric extension to man-ruled society -- just as the reality of Hester’s enduring female contribution, her “transfiguration of sexual difference into a vehicle for revealing the intricacies of patriarchal power in the utopian state,”¹⁶ withers the temporary iron ideology wrought and wielded by her Puritan scourges, and as Psyche’s metamorphic, all-encompassing existence threatens, engulfs, and then extinguishes Olympus itself. Hawthorne and the industrialized West -- particularly its countercultural Romantics -- found anima personified and exalted in Psyche; for him it was ready and waiting to be poured molten hot into his universal spiritualized female vessel, Hester Prynne, inarguably his most effective, affecting characterization.

All who read *Amor et Psyche* are struck by its evocatively ethereal beauty. Its appearance in the *Metamorphoses*, one of the strangest but most consequential of all literary efforts, was remarked in *Apuleius and His Influence* by Elizabeth Hazleton Haight in 1927: “The gem of the whole book is the story of Cupid and Psyche, a creation of such delicate lustre that it shines like a pearl amid the multi-colored bits of glass in the mosaic of the other tales” (50). In precisely that light, emanating sweetly and sadly from Hester’s tombstone, we feel the same order of protective pathos and reverence for Hester as that which Psyche originally evoked in western consciousness. We are no less enthralled with the Platonic ideas that every young woman is through love an ascendant Psyche and every soul immortal than Hawthorne’s narrator is to touch the faded yet scalding artifact, a tattered, once blood-red “rag” at that point, embroidered with her own adept fingers, that heaved to the breath and vibrated to the heartbeat in Hester’s sacred bosom. Hawthorne preaches that we are all, every one of us born of Woman, in thrall to Anima, to its incarnations and its characterizations ancient, archetypal, folkloric, Romantic, or historical. He maximized that use monumentally in Hester Prynne, America’s foremost and most sympathetic heroine. Her centuries-long, continued primacy of position in that role has depended purely and perfectly on her participation in Psyche’s transcendence.

† As if describing the Apollonian Arthur Dimmesdale, Jung wrote that “animus is obstinate, harping on principles, laying down the law, dogmatic and domineering. . . [he] lets himself be taken in by second-rate thinking.” Carl C. Jung, *Four Archetypes*, p. 58

Notes

¹ Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, p. 67, n.44 (163)

² Peter Brown, "Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change," p. 146; "nontranscendent": George D. Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, p. 10; Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, p. xxiii.

³ Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*, p. 33.

⁴ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. 226; "She [Magdalene] fits into the theme of the harlot, like Gomer, the faithless wife of Hosea, who prefigured Israel's stormy union with Yahweh (Hosea 1:2-3); like Jezebel, who was eaten by dogs (2Kings 9:30-7); and like Rahab (Joshua 2 passim), who appears in Matthew's genealogy as an ancestress of Christ (Matthew 1:5). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Rahab is cited as someone saved by faith (Hebrews 11:31); and in the Epistle of James as justified by works (James 2:25)," p. 223; "Aegyptiaca": Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 394-5

⁵ Cf. Joseph Campbell's Introduction to Bachofen's *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, particularly pp. 1-11. In Bachofen's Introduction to *Mutterreich*, ". . . all political development is contingent on the defeat of heterism" [pre-patriarchal female sexual libertinage], p. 99 in *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*. George Boas' Preface to *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* bolsters the probability of Bachofen's theory being a truism by 1861: he cites Edward Westermarck's effort in 1891 to discredit it based on contemporary "nonliterate exemplars," whereas Bachofen, "the principal sponsor of the thesis," relied on legend, "which preserves collective memory," p. xvii

⁶ Aldo D. Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages*, p. 32; Hawthorne's notebook quote in Mathiessen, *American Renaissance*, p. 255; Étienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, pp. 70, 87, 88; the Rousseau quotation is from *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, ed. D. Mornet (Paris, 1925), Part 6, Letter 6, p. 221, quoted in Scaglione, *Nature and Love*, p. 18 n. 15 (160); Emerson: *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson, *Nature*, Book IV, "Language," pp. 14-16; Natura: George D. Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, p. 63.

⁷ Pierre Lévêque, *Colère, sex, rire. Le Japon des mythes anciens*, pp. 110-111.

⁸ Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life*, pp. 100, 48.

⁹ William Blake was the "extreme claimant" for poetic automatism. About the writing of *Milton* (1803) he said, "I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at time, without Premeditation and even against my Will; the Time it has taken in writing was thus render'd Non Existent, and an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a Long life, all produc'd without Labour or Study." M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, quoting Blakes's letter to Thomas Butts, 25 April 1803, p. 215, n.80 (371); Elizabeth Peabody, letter to Horatio Bridge June 4, 1887, "animating principle" and "life itself": James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Time*, p. 116 (note p. 615) and *Notebook* entry of July 29, 1849, p. 298.

¹⁰ Erich Neumann: Anima is “. . . the vehicle par excellence of the transformative character. It is the mover, the instigator of change, whose fascination drives, lures and encourages the male to take all the adventure of the soul and spirit, of action and creation in the inner and the outward world.” *The Great Mother: An Analysis of The Archetype*, p. 33; Bachofen follows Aristotle in stating, “All warlike peoples . . . serve the woman . . . : to defy danger, to seek out adventure, and to serve beauty – these virtues betoken the fullness of a nation’s youth.” *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* p. 84; Aristotle is cited from *Politics* (Bk. II, Ch. 9, §1269^b): “The old mythologer would seem to have been right in uniting Ares and Aphrodite, for all warlike races are prone to the love either of men or women. This was exemplified among the Spartans in the days of their greatness; many things were managed by their women.” *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House 1941) p. 1165. Joseph Campbell translates the Sanskrit *Shakti* to connote “female spiritual power in general, as manifest . . . in the radiance of beauty, or on the elemental level in the sheer power of the female sex to work effects on the male. It is operative in the power of the womb to transform seed into fruit, to enclose, protect, and give birth. Analogously, on the psychological plane, it is the power of a woman to bring a man to his senses, to let him see himself as in a mirror, to lure him to his realization – or destruction: for it is the power also to bewilder and destroy.” He cites Goethe’s concluding lines, *Das Ewig-Weiblicher / Zieht uns hinan* (The Eternal Feminine / Draws us onward.), from *Faust*. Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p. 217

¹¹ Charles Feidelson, “*The Scarlet Letter*,” *Critical Approaches to American Literature*, Volume 1, Ray B. Browne & Martin Light eds., p. 182

¹² Sandra Tome, “A Change of Art: Hester, Hawthorne, and the Service of Love,” p. 26

¹³ In Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, p. 55; Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p. 582

¹⁴ Juliet Ward Howe: Alma Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian*, p. 163; Margaret Fuller: *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 37, 156, 176; Berlant, *Anatomy of National Fantasy*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Times*, p. 397; F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, p. 296; Fuller: Hawthorne, *French and Italian Notebooks* (Ohio State UP Centenary Edition 1980 Vol XIV), p. 157.

¹⁶ Berlant, *Anatomy of National Fantasy*, p. 61

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