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Hawthorne's Hester & Zenobia: Possible Reflections of Nineteenth Century Feminism & the Writings of Margaret Fuller

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1975

HAWTHORNE'S HESTER AND ZENOBIA:
POSSIBLE REFLECTIONS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY FEMINISM
AND THE WRITINGS OF MARGARET FULLER

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

Western Kentucky University

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in

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Carolyn I. Raiser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	
FEMINISM AND MARGARET FULLER	5
CHAPTER II	
HAWTHORNE, HESTER, AND ZENOBIA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MARGARET FULLER	34
CONCLUSION	83
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

HAWTHORNE'S HESTER AND ZENOBIA:
POSSIBLE REFLECTIONS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY FEMINISM
AND THE WRITINGS OF MARGARET FULLER

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Directed by: Nancy Davis

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The thesis focuses upon the possible influences of Margaret Fuller upon Nathaniel Hawthorne's creation of Hester in The Scarlet Letter and Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance. It suggests that Hester and Zenobia are feminists who may owe much of their characterization as developed through their feminist arguments to Margaret Fuller, a nineteenth century feminist and acquaintance of Hawthorne's. Hawthorne and Fuller are placed in historical context within the feminist movement of the nineteenth century by examining some of the leading feminists and their concerns regarding women's rights. Margaret Fuller's writings and ideas are examined, along with her relationship to Hawthorne. An analysis of the characters of Hester and Zenobia follows. The study concludes with a comparison of the striking similarities between Hester's and Zenobia's feminist arguments and those found in the writings of Margaret Fuller. The similarities are strong enough to warrant the possibility that Hawthorne may have used Fuller's printed arguments and modified them slightly for delivery by Hester in The Scarlet Letter and Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance.

INTRODUCTION

The historical approach to the study of literature springs from a realization that artists create within the milieu of their times. They are influenced by contemporary intellectual currents and social issues and the people who embody those ideas and issues. Nathaniel Hawthorne proved no exception. The Romantic and Progressive movements appearing in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century were reflected in his writings. The theme of feminism, an important part of the two movements--but especially Progressivism, found literary form in the characters of Hester in The Scarlet Letter and Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance. It found corporeal form in the person of Margaret Fuller, an acquaintance of Hawthorne's. There is the possibility that Hawthorne drew some of his feminist arguments from her works and that she and her works may have been one link between Hawthorne's fictional portrayal of two feminists and the feminist current in the United States at that time.

Hester and Zenobia are unusual in nineteenth-century American novels. Both are strong female characters formed in the womb of the youthful women's rights movement that started coming of age around 1830 to 1850 along with other sibling reform efforts like abolition, temperance, revivalism, and experiments in utopian

societies. Hester's and Zenobia's appearance in literature is evidence that ideas of the incipient women's rights movement burrowed into Hawthorne's creative mind. Margaret Fuller may have burrowed into that mind also.

Surely Margaret Fuller's life is as interesting as any fictional heroine's life. Over the years many critics have debated her connection with Zenobia and Zenobia's creator. Some suggest that Hawthorne, subconsciously drawn to the woman, selected aspects of her character and molded them with artistic imagination into the beautiful and exotic Zenobia. Others suggest that Priscilla, because of her connection with mesmerism and her frail, mediocre appearance, bears more resemblance to Margaret than the earthy, healthy Zenobia. Which side one chooses in the argument will probably depend greatly upon one's view of Fuller.

Nevertheless, there may be another connection between Fuller and Zenobia and Hester that most critics have overlooked thus far. In their beliefs, in their arguments, in their approach to reform, Hester and Zenobia each typify certain aspects of the women's rights movement. Margaret Fuller helped create that movement. Due to the topics of some of her "conversations," the publication of "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," in The Dial in July of 1843, and the appearance of Woman in the Nineteenth Century in 1845, Margaret was recognized by contemporaries as an advocate of women's rights. Interestingly enough, many of the feminist speeches and thoughts Hawthorne developed for his two

characters are remarkably similar to Fuller's feminist arguments as stated in "The Great Lawsuit" and Woman in the Nineteenth Century, an amplification of the Dial essay.

It is possible that Hawthorne did have aspects of Fuller's personality consciously or subconsciously in mind during the creation of Zenobia. Thus, one might find a link between the personalities of a historical figure and a fictional heroine. If--as this author suspects--there might also be a link to Zenobia and Hester through Fuller's writings, then the woman had a double impact on Hawthorne through her personality and through her writing.

Since some historical background is a necessary foundation for this study, chapter one of the thesis will contain a discussion of relevant issues and arguments that swirled in the current of feminism preceding publication of The Scarlet Letter in 1850 and The Blithedale Romance in 1852. These arguments are most effectively examined by looking briefly at the lives and ideas of outstanding pioneer feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright, the Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton; for it is in the lives of individuals that ideas find expression. General background information on feminism will then funnel into a discussion of Margaret Fuller and two of her works, "The Great Lawsuit" and Woman in the Nineteenth Century.

Chapter two of the thesis will examine, in the context of feminism in the nineteenth century, Nathaniel Hawthorne's awareness

of contemporary social issues, Margaret Fuller's relationship to Hawthorne, the feminist characterizations of Hester and Zenobia, and the similarities between the feminist arguments of Hester and Zenobia and those of Margaret Fuller. The chapter suggests the possibility that many of Hester and Zenobia's statements and thoughts may be modified versions of ideas expressed by Fuller in her writing.

CHAPTER I

FEMINISM AND MARGARET FULLER

The historical approach to literary criticism emphasizes that artists do not create in a vacuum. Authors are influenced by the social and intellectual themes of their times; and they, in turn, weave those themes into the fabric of their stories. Such was the case with Nathaniel Hawthorne and feminism. Hawthorne lived during an era of reform in the United States, and one part of that conglomeration of reform movements was feminism. However, before the reform era of the 1830's through the 1850's could come to fruition, centuries of evolution in thought had to unfold so that intellectual constructs could begin to entertain, first, the idea of the primacy of the individual--assumed to be individual man--and, later, the primacy of the individual--male and female.

The reforming urge, inextricably linked with the idea of progress, had its origins centuries ago in the city states of Italy, the Italy that enchanted Hawthorne. J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, in their sweeping study entitled The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Leonardo to Hegel, suggest that contemporary western culture is firmly rooted in the Renaissance. During the

Renaissance people moved away from blind obedience to church authority in a process of secularization of thought which led to open inquiry.¹

The coauthors note a gradual but definite shift in the way humanity came to view itself. The humanists of the Renaissance passed along to philosophers of the eighteenth century the rich inheritance of an intellectual stance of open-mindedness, probing curiosity, and tolerance.² Such a stance led to the eighteenth-century philosophers' emphasis upon reason and the ability of people to perfect themselves by exercising it. The concept of progress provided the natural counterpoint for this theme. One could progress to perfection through use of reason.

Emphasis upon reason would sooner or later raise the question of whose reason; and, increasingly, the individual appeared as the ultimate private sovereign. One finds in this evolutionary process "the emphasis on the full development of the human personality. The individual is prized for himself. His creative powers are the scope of his being."³ Consequently, by the nineteenth century individualism was a key theme in Western thought.

¹J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Leonardo to Hegel (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 495.

²Bronowski and Mazlish, Western Intellectual Tradition, p. 499.

³Bronowski and Mazlish, Western Intellectual Tradition, p. 499.

Ready to step into that century, French revolutionaries lashed out against entrenched authority, destroying churches, mocking priests, and banishing nobles. Many of the Romantic poets sympathized with the ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity: Wordsworth in his younger years, Byron, Shelley.

In part, Romanticism may have been a reaction against the by-then cold and formal relics of neoclassicism. Yet it owed its birthright to the Age of Reason, which continued the Renaissance attack on external institutions of authority, leaving the authority--rational or emotional--of the individual free to grow.

Incongruous though it may seem, the utopian socialists contributed not only to the idea of progress but also to the idea of individualism and, by extension, to feminism. The utopian socialists such as Saint Simone, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen believed that the perfect society could be created to allow for the full development of human potential. This belief was revolutionary; for it openly insisted that existing societal forms were not God-given, something feminists had a special stake in proving if they were to modify what they regarded as oppressive patriarchal structures. Forms could be changed for the good of the people involved, and the nineteenth-century reformers tended to equate change with progress.

For the purpose of this study, Fourier is the most interesting of the utopian socialists since many of the Brook Farmers (of whom Hawthorne was one for a brief time) accepted and attempted to

practice his social philosophy, which took into consideration his belief that there is a mixture of masculine and feminine in everyone. Fourier thought that society should create satisfactory outlets for human desires. These natural desires would be used for productive ends. The Frenchman maintained that society had been structured in opposition to human nature, which was inherently good. Fairly small, self-contained communities would stress awareness of human resources in order that individuals could realize their potential and release their creativity through work. Ideally, this philosophy applied to women as well as men. People--male and female--would be free to pick the work they wanted to do; and the community would stress craftsmanship so that products would last longer, with the added benefit that ultimately there would be less work.⁴

Hawthorne used Brook Farm as a model for the Blithedale of his romance. Consequently, it is not surprising that at one point in the story Coverdale and Hollingsworth debate the merits of Fourier's philosophy. It is also not surprising that sex role stereotypes were more flexible at the historical Brook Farm and the imaginary Blithedale, perhaps because Fourier himself believed that there was a combination of masculine and feminine in everyone. Margaret Fuller picked up this aspect of Fourier's thought--since

⁴Robert L. Heilbroner, The Worldly Philosophers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 118-24.

it was also a favorite point of hers--and commented on it in Woman in the Nineteenth Century: "A great variety of employments, in manufactures or the care of plants and animals, allows for one third of women as likely to have a taste for masculine pursuits, one third of men for feminine."⁵

Just as European utopian schemes were quickly transplanted to the United States, so, too, were European belief in reason, progress, and individualism. Beginning around 1830 numerous reform issues permeated the atmosphere. Religious revivalism swept the New York area and then moved inland. Also in New England abolitionists mounted opposition to slavery by writing pamphlets, holding meetings, circulating petitions, and boycotting manufacturers who used southern cotton. Temperance groups organized. In the area of politics, people began to equate citizenship with suffrage, an event which Stow Persons cites as "the central innovation of nineteenth-century democratic political theory"⁶ More and more people felt that they should have the right to vote and to seek office, an attitude historians have linked with Jacksonian democracy. It is not surprising that women with any awareness would respond to the social and intellectual currents of their time.

Feminists often cite Mary Wollstonecraft as the source of the modern women's rights movement. Although English, Wollstonecraft

⁵Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), p. 175.

⁶Stow Persons, American Minds: A History of Ideas (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958), p. 149.

deserves brief consideration because she exerted influence on subsequent feminists such as Frances Wright, Margaret Fuller, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

An intelligent woman, Wollstonecraft was born into circumstances unfavorable to the development of her potential. The writings of her later years, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, A Vindication of the Rights of Man, and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, grew out of the personal experiences of a woman thwarted by the conditions of her life. A sensitive girl, Wollstonecraft suffered an unhappy childhood due to conflicts with her parents. Although precocious, she had no financial means of developing her abilities and drifted from a job as companion to one as governess. In 1786 she published Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, which stressed that females should have the same right to be taught to think which males had. Thoughts on the Education of Daughters stands almost alone against books of the time which suggested that the less women thought the fitter companions they would be for men.

After running her own school for two years, Wollstonecraft moved to London, where she attracted the attention of Joseph Johnson, who had published her book on education. Soon she was circulating among some of the most stimulating thinkers of her time: Richard Price, the artist Henry Fuseli, William Blake, William Godwin, and Thomas Paine.

Her initial exposure to being the center of public attention came with her publication of A Vindication of the Rights of Man.

In 1790 Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France appeared. Part of it contained an indictment of Richard Price, who had publicly supported the French Revolution in a sermon. Wollstonecraft flew to her friend's defense with A Vindication of the Rights of Man which, as one of the first political tracts of any significance to be written by a woman, gained her immediate fame.

Wollstonecraft followed her first success with another book that assured her a place in the feminist hall of fame. In 1792 she published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. A Vindication was dedicated to Tallyrand because at the time the French Constitutional Assembly had in its hands a report recommending free education-- but not for women. Needless to say, Wollstonecraft wanted women to receive free education also.

One of the main themes of the book deals with women's need to be economically independent and able to choose from a variety of professions. Constantly threatened by poverty herself, Wollstonecraft personally felt the limitations imposed upon women when the careers open to them were those of companion, wife, governess, or prostitute. She suggested that they might be doctors as well as nurses, that they might be politicians or business women.⁷ Independence of character, an important trait in her opinion,

⁷Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 221-22.

resulted partially from a woman's ability to be financially independent.⁸

A product of her age, she emphasized reason and its benefits. She would extol the female's ability to reason as well as the male's:

I love man as my fellow; but his sceptre, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operation of its own reason.⁹

The exercise of reason would lead to virtuous living. Ideally, education would help develop the capacity to reason, would "strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent."¹⁰

Wollstonecraft was not ahead of her time. She, like her contemporaries, emphasized reason and education and believed in the idea of progress. The only unusual part of her story is that she demanded for women what men were seeking for themselves.¹¹

Frances Wright, another native of the British Isles, became the embodied link between the feminism of the Old World and the New. Born in 1795 in Scotland, she arrived in the United States for the

⁸Wollstonecraft, A Vindication, p. 92.

⁹Wollstonecraft, A Vindication, p. 72.

¹⁰Wollstonecraft, A Vindication, p. 52.

¹¹Biographical information is from Eleanor Flexner, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1972).

first time in 1818. During her adolescence she had become interested in the materialistic school of philosophy as expounded at Glasgow College. She discussed her conversion to that philosophy in A Few Days in Athens, patterned after Plato's Dialogues. This bit of writing was followed by a more ambitious project. John Kemble's performance as Coriolanus so inspired her that she wrote in a few days a three-act drama in Shakespearean blank verse. Altorf was performed in New York and gained her some notoriety because of one of its love scenes.

Her visit to the United States resulted in Views of Society and Manners in America in a Series of Letters from that Country during the Years 1818, 1819, and 1820, by an Englishwoman. The book, pro-American and anti-English, brought her to the attention of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who referred to her as "The strongest sweetest mind that ever cased in a human body."¹² Lafayette, also impressed by the book, invited her to visit him. A close friendship developed which led to Wright's accompanying him on a trip to the United States in 1824.

Frances Wright viewed slavery as the ugliest blot on her beloved America, and it is clear from her comments that she regarded marriage as a form of slavery for women. Not only did her utopian plantation, Nashoba, in Tennessee, provide for the gradual freeing

¹²A. J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Frances Wright, Free Enquirer (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, Inc., 1972), p. 60.

of slaves, it also allowed for untraditional relationships between men and women. (At least, such relationships did not have genteel society's approval.) When the cohabitation of a white overseer and a woman of Indian and Negro background became public knowledge, Wright published a pamphlet in defense of the Nashoba system:

The marriage law existing without the pale of the institution (Nashoba) is of no force within that pale. No woman can forfeit her individual rights or independent existence, and no man assert over her any rights or power whatsoever beyond what he may exercise over her free and voluntary affection

Let us correct our views of right and wrong, correct our moral lessons, and so correct the practice of rising generations! Let us not teach, that virtue consists in the crucifying of the affections and appetites, but in their judicious government! Let us not attach ideas of purity to monastic chastity, impossible to man or woman without consequences fraught with evil, nor ideas of vice to connexions formed under the auspices of kind feeling!¹³

With that pamphlet Wright publicly supported amalgamation, made strong statements about women's rights and responsibilities in relationship to men, and criticized prevalent views about marriage and sexual relationships. She did not advocate a hedonistic life of sexual exploitation. Rather, she suggested that traditional marriage might be a form of exploitation.

About 1828 Wright moved to New York and began lecturing to counter the revivalism spreading in the East. She viewed religion as the foe of humanity, based as it was on emotion and ignorance in her opinion. In keeping with the materialistic philosophy which attracted her in her youth, she emphasized factual knowledge,

¹³Perkins, Frances Wright, pp. 193-94.

that which could be gained and verified directly through the senses. Wright claimed that people were not victims of supernatural forces; they were free moral agents. For her efforts she encountered the wrath of the clergy, who named her the "Priestess of Beelzebub." Undeterred, the woman lectured around the country, appearing in Boston on some of her tours. One historian has noted that "despite the fury she aroused, Frances Wright set a precedent for a woman's right to speak on morality and politics in public."¹⁴

Wright's life also illustrates the eighteenth century belief in education as the tool of progress with which to fashion the perfect society. She insisted that women, as well as men, ought to be educated in order to bring about the best possible living conditions. Many of her lectures either directly or indirectly stressed the importance of education and the need for women to assume more responsibility in society at large:

However novel it may appear, I shall venture the assertion, that, until women assume the place in society which good sense and good feeling alike assign to them, human improvement must advance but feebly. It is in vain that we would circumscribe the power of one half of our race, and that half by far the most important and influential. If they exert it not for good, they will for evil; if they advance not knowledge, they will perpetuate ignorance. Let women stand where they may in the scale of improvement, their position decides that of the race.¹⁵

¹⁴Andrew Sinclair, The Emancipation of the American Woman (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 36.

¹⁵Frances Wright, "Of Free Enquiry," in The Feminist Papers, ed. by Alice Rossi (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 109.

Although she may have been thought eccentric by many, if not most, Americans, she helped prepare the way for the women's rights movement of the nineteenth-century United States, as did Mary Wollstonecraft. To Wright, marriage and slavery were almost equally binding and dehumanizing. She was suspicious of religion, which she thought reinforced superstitious and ignorant attitudes to the detriment of the progress of humanity. Wright was convinced that free inquiry, on the other hand, would help boys and girls become good people--respectable, virtuous, independent, inner directed, useful members of society.

There seems to be no indication that either Margaret Fuller or Nathaniel Hawthorne knew or heard Wright. However, she did lecture widely (including appearances in Boston); and news of the notorious lady may have seeped into the worlds of Hawthorne and Fuller. According to Eleanor Flexner, women's historian, "No woman in the first half of the nineteenth century who challenged tradition escaped the effect of Frances Wright's leavening thought"16 If nothing else, in her flamboyant, outspoken way she added more fuel to the combustible mixture which would explode in Seneca Falls in 1848.

Although the more widely known advocates of educational and professional opportunities for women, Wollstonecraft and Wright were not the only ones. Advanced education facilities for women

¹⁶Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 27-28.

were practically nonexistent at the turn of the century. Emma Willard persevered until she was able to establish Troy Female Seminary at Troy, New York, in 1821, the first institution endowed for the education of females.¹⁷ One of Mrs. Willard's more illustrious pupils was Elizabeth Cady, who became a leading figure in the organized women's rights movement.

Catherine Beecher was one of the prime movers in upgrading the teaching profession. Beecher had gained a reputation for being against women's rights because she argued heatedly with abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimke over the right of women to petition Congress with antislavery statements. The Grimke sisters maintained that since women did not have the vote, the process of petitioning was the only political means available to them for expressing their opinions. Catherine Beecher argued that women should not participate in the political process. However, she was a feminist insofar as she felt that women should operate professionally as teachers or homemakers. She insisted that if women were going to do something, they should do it well. As able-bodied men moved westward with the opening of the frontier, women occupied more and more of the teaching positions in New England. Countless numbers of them benefitted from Beecher's approach to teaching as an important profession for which people should be thoroughly trained. She built a modern school with the newest equipment. Her students took rigid examinations and majored

¹⁷Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 26.

in two or three subjects instead of twenty. In keeping with her belief that women be educated for homemaking, Beecher and her younger sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote a home economics book, one of the most comprehensive of the day.¹⁸

Mary Lyon, aware of women's need for college education, set about procuring money for Mount Holyoke, which opened in 1837. It was one of the first colleges that existed specifically for the education of women.¹⁹

In addition to the issues of education and professional opportunities for women, abolition was another reform issue which attracted large numbers of women and ultimately led them into feminism. Sarah and Angelina Grimke gained notoriety for their New England public lectures against slavery in the 1830's. The two sisters were born and raised in South Carolina, but they left their home state when they could no longer tolerate slavery. They moved to Philadelphia and became Quakers. A letter written to William Lloyd Garrison by Angelina was published in the Liberator without her consent. When her more orthodox Quaker friends urged her to renounce the opinions stated in the letter, Angelina refused to do so. Upon her refusal, the Quaker faction with whom the sisters were associated rejected them.

However, the sisters had come to the attention of New York abolitionists, who invited them to New York to give parlor talks.

¹⁸Flexnor, Century of Struggle, pp. 30-31.

¹⁹Gerda Lerner, The Woman in American History (Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1971), p. 45.

The parlor talks proved so effective that the abolitionists arranged for lectures in public halls and churches.

At that point in their careers, the sisters incurred the ridicule of the press and the wrath of the clergy. Reporters called them old maids and hinted that since they could not find white husbands they were preaching amalgamation in order to pave the way for taking black husbands. The clergy attacked them for speaking from the pulpits of churches and circulated a Pastoral Letter condemning any women "who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers."²⁰

The sisters found that in order to defend their right to speak out against slavery, they also had to defend their right to speak publicly as women, thus linking the cause of abolition and women's rights. Sarah Grimke wrote the terse, pointed Letters on the Equality of the Sexes which, among other things, assailed the position to which women had been unjustly relegated by religious institutions and deplored the practice of employers' paying women less than men for the same work. Angelina Grimke wrote in a letter to Catherine Beecher:

Now, I believe it is woman's right to have a voice in all the laws and regulations by which she is to be governed, whether in Church or State; and that the present arrangements of society, on these points, are a violation of human rights,

²⁰"From a Pastoral Letter, 'The General Association of Massachusetts (Orthodox) to the Churches Under Their Care.' 1837," in The Feminist Papers, p. 306.

a rank usurpation of power, a violent seizure and confiscation of what is sacredly and inalienably hers--thus inflicting upon woman outrageous wrongs, working mischief incalculable in the social circle, and in its influence on the world producing only evil, and that continually. If Ecclesiastical and Civil governments are ordained of God, then I contend that woman has just as much right to sit in solemn counsel in Conventions, Conferences, Associations and General Assemblies, as man--just as much right to sit upon the throne of England, or in the Presidential chair of the United States.²¹

In 1838 Angelina became the first woman to address a state legislature when she spoke in Boston.²²

At the same time the sisters were defending women's right to speak in public, another pioneer was making a name for herself. Lucretia Coffin Mott had been born on the island of Nantucket. Nantucket women were used to long periods of faring for themselves while their men were at sea. Many of them took over businesses during their husbands' extended absences. Some ran their own stores to supplement the family income. They traveled to Boston, did the buying, and transacted necessary business. Lucretia's experience proved to her that women were capable in many fields; and she drew on the knowledge gained in childhood for use in later years when she, too, emerged as a spokeswoman for women's rights.

Mott, a Hicksite Quaker, became well known for her liberal views about religion (She would have made a good Unitarian.); for her ready, piercing wit used skillfully against opponents; and for

²¹Angelina Grimke, Letters to Catherine E. Beecher (Boston: Isaak Knapp, 1838), p. 119.

²²Biographical information is from Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

her calm, dignified demeanor. She concentrated her abilities on a number of reform issues, such as temperance, education, prostitution, and slavery.

In 1840 Mott was one of a few women duly elected to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Although her credentials were in order, the Convention refused to seat women delegates. Consequently, she spent the remainder of the Convention sitting in the balcony with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and forming a friendship that lasted many years. The two women lamented the Convention's treatment of female delegates and discussed the need for a women's rights convention.²³

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), the daughter of a judge, observed legal discrimination against women early in life. In her Reminiscences she describes how many women came to her father pleading for his assistance when laws left them in precarious positions at their husbands' deaths. She noted that although he was sorry for them he could do nothing.

With a brilliant mind attuned to the intellectual climate of her time, Elizabeth moved in the reform circles of her cousin, Garret Smith. At his home she met Henry Stanton, who became her husband in 1840. For their honeymoon, the abolitionist took his bride to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London.

Treatment of women delegates at the Convention, combined with inclinations developed in childhood, pricked Elizabeth's feminist

²³Biographical information is from Otelia Cromwell, Lucretia Mott (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1958).

tendencies. They incubated for eight more years and hatched one day amidst depression and boredom when she, Lucretia Mott, and a few other friends decided it was time for a women's rights convention. Elizabeth wrote:

The general discontent I felt with woman's portion as wife, mother, housekeeper, physician, and spiritual guide, the chaotic conditions in which everything fell without her constant supervision, and the wearied, anxious look of the majority of women impressed me with a strong feeling that some active measures should be taken to remedy the wrongs of society in general, and of women in particular. My experience at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, all I had read of the legal status of women, and the oppression I saw everywhere, together swept across my soul, intensified now by many personal experiences. It seemed as if all the elements had conspired to impel me to some onward step. I could not see what to do or where to begin--my only thought was a public meeting for protest and discussion.²⁴

The meeting was a spur-of-the-moment thing, dated so that the women had only five days to plan. They evidently approached it rather innocently, unaware that the convention would have such noisy repercussions. Stanton prepared the Declaration of Sentiments, patterned after the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration emphasized that "all men and women are created equal" It went on to enumerate the political, legal, economic, educational, religious, and social wrongs perpetrated against women and offered resolutions designed for redress.²⁵

²⁴Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897 (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 317-18.

²⁵"Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," in Up From the Pedestal, ed. by Aileen S. Kraditor (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 183-88.

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 marked a turning point in the women's rights movement. Previously, women like Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, and Margaret Fuller had spoken as individuals. Beginning in 1848 and increasingly throughout the 1850's feminists presented their grievances as a group. Outstanding people like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony spearheaded the broad drive for women's rights and took their turns as "stump orators;" but the era of maverick feminists disappeared about 1850, the year of Margaret Fuller's death.

In Century of Struggle Eleanor Flexner spoke of Margaret Fuller and her tremendous impact upon the beginning of the movement: "Most influential of all was Margaret Fuller, whose book Woman in the Nineteenth Century became a beacon to generations of women."²⁶

Margaret Fuller, born in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, in 1810, came under her father's control early in life. Timothy Fuller undertook direction of his first child and set for her a rigorous scholastic schedule which she followed with no little evidence of genius. She learned Latin, Greek, French, and German and had in-depth exposure to the classics and philosophy. Margaret was strongly attracted to Goethe and his works, becoming one of the

²⁶Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 66.

few American supporters of the German, whom most New Englanders regarded as immoral.²⁷

In 1835 Margaret's father died, leaving her head of the family. At a time when few occupations were open to women, Margaret had little choice. She taught school, first in Bronson Alcott's progressive school in Boston, and then in Providence, Rhode Island. Following her stint as a teacher, Margaret held "Conversations" in Boston and assumed editorship of The Dial.

A trip west followed, which resulted in publication of her book, Summer on the Lakes. Horace Greeley, enthusiast of the West, was impressed by the little volume and invited her to New York as literary critic and journalist for the Tribune. Before leaving Boston and the rarified atmosphere of the Transcendental Club, Margaret rewrote an article which had originally appeared in The Dial in 1843 as "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women." The revision appeared in book form in 1845 as Woman in Nineteenth Century America. Other than the example of her life, the "Conversations," "The Great Lawsuit," and Woman are Margaret's

²⁷In the introduction to Margaret Fuller, American Romantic: A Selection From Her Writings and Correspondence (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 47, Perry Miller commented about her fascination for Goethe: "For her the supreme genius was Goethe, a man who had lived as flagrant a life as Byron in the eyes of staid New England. It required audacity for a New England virgin to propose writing a 'life' of him. She had constantly to beseech her male companions to overcome their shyness and tell her about Goethe's mistresses. Considering the uninhibited range of her reading and her later experiences of love, we can judge in retrospect that although she was incarcerated in the code of her time, Margaret had an intuitive knowledge of sexual passion which none of these boys would ever attain."

most markedly feminist contributions to the United States. She also made valuable contributions as a literary critic, journalist, and foreign correspondent.²⁸

In 1846 Margaret sailed for England. Encounters with people like Marriet Martineau, Thomas Carlyle, George Sand, and the Italian patriot Mazzini were recorded in letters, journals, and columns for the Tribune.²⁹ The dream of a lifetime became reality when she arrived in Italy in 1847. There Margaret found a lover, married, and gave birth to a son--all against the backdrop of the Italian revolution, which she fervently supported. The family left Italy in 1850, anxious about how they would be received upon their arrival in the United States. Margaret never had the chance to find out, for the Ossoli family drowned in a shipwreck within sight of the New York coast.³⁰

²⁸Arthur W. Brown, in his biography of Margaret Fuller entitled Margaret Fuller (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), speaks highly of her ability as a critic.

²⁹Miller, in Fuller, American Romantic, noted: "Horace Greeley agreed to give Margaret Fuller a 'leave of absence' from the Tribune on condition that she act as a correspondent abroad for his paper. (As a result, Greeley got in the next three years the most superb reports from scenes of action that any American paper could then exhibit,)" p. 250.

³⁰Biographies of Margaret Fuller consulted in this paper include Katherine Anthony, Margaret Fuller: A Psychological Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), Arthur Brown's Margaret Fuller, Perry Miller's introductory essay in Fuller, American Romantic and Madeleine B. Stern, The Life of Margaret Fuller (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1942).

During her life Margaret interacted with some of the most brilliant people in the United States and Europe. She was an heiress to the writings of the great eighteenth century philosophers and spiritual sister to Mary Wollstonecraft, but the eighteenth-century emphasis upon reason had been modified by the Romanticism of the nineteenth century. Perry Miller viewed her as the archetype of the Romantic heroine, the only one New England could boast. He put her on the same intellectual plane with Madame de Stael and George Sand and suggested that she was the only person among her contemporaries (and Miller included the giants of transcendentalism) who could have conversed as an equal with Rousseau and Goethe.³¹ He described Margaret's conversational ability as dazzling and compared her to de Stael's Corinne.³²

Katherine Anthony, another biographer, also noted the link with Madame de Stael and observed that Margaret, looking for a profession other than school teaching, decided to become a "'paid Corinne.'" Stated Anthony, "She was one of the best impromptu

³¹Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, pp. xii-xiii.

³²Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, p. 47.

talkers of her time, and it was an era of great talkers."³³

Fuller's good friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, saw the resemblance that later biographers have emphasized:

Emerson had been warned before he met Margaret that she was a "sneering and critical dame." "What," he exclaimed in retrospect, she was nothing of the sort: she "was this new Corinne." And he sketched out what a Corinne-figure comprised: tenderness, counsel, one before whom every mean thing is ashamed--"more variously gifted, wise, sportive, eloquent, who seems to have learned all languages, Heaven knows when or how,--I should think she was born to them--magnificent, prophetic, reading my life at her will, and puzzling me with riddles"34

Margaret refused to be strictured by the narrow definition of a woman's place which her society offered. In a letter written before 1833 she gave a description of herself that would mark her not only as an unusual woman but as a heroine in the best Romantic style:

. . . from a very early age I have felt that I was not born to the common womanly lot. I knew I should never find a being who could keep the key of my character; that there would be none on whom I could always lean,

³³Anthony, Fuller: A Psychological Biography, p. 61.

³⁴Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, p. xix. William Henry Channing likened her to a "Yankee Corinna" (p. xix). "'Would she,' /Henry/ James asked, posing the central question, 'with her appetite for ideas and her genius for conversation, have struck us but as a somewhat formidable bore, one of the worst kind, a culture-seeker without a sense of proportion, or, on the contrary, have affected us as a really attaching, a possibly picturesque New England Corinne?'" (p. xxvii). Miller pointed out that "passages linking New England's Margaret Fuller with the heroine of Madame de Stael's romance of 1807 abound in the literature concerning her." (p. xx).

from whom I could always learn; that I should be a pilgrim and sojourner on earth, and that the birds and foxes would be surer of a place to lay the head than I. You understand me, of course; such beings can only find their homes in hearts. All material luxuries, all arrangements of society, are mere conveniences to them.

This thought, all whose bearing I did not, indeed, understand, affected me sometimes with sadness, sometimes with pride. I mourned that I never should have a thorough experience of life, never know the full riches of my being; I was proud that I was to test myself, to be my own priest, pupil, parent, child, husband, and wife. All this I did not understand as I do not; but this destiny of the thinker, and (shall I dare say it?) of the poetic priestess, sibylline, dwelling in the cave or amid the Lybian sands, lay yet enfolded in my mind. Accordingly, I did not look on any of the persons, brought into relation with me, with common womanly eyes.³⁵

As a Romantic Margaret fashioned her "Conversations" around the theme of the sovereignty of the individual--male or female. She was a libertarian in her belief that people should be free to make their own moral decisions, and she firmly held to the idea that individuals have a sense of moral responsibility which will guide them in making such decisions.³⁶

As a feminist she designed her "Conversations" to benefit women, hoping, in her words, to

supply a point of union to well-educated and thinking women, in a city, which, with great pretensions to mental refinement, boasts, at present, nothing of the kind . . . to systematize thought and give a precision and clearness in which our sex are so deficient, chiefly, I think, because they have so few inducements to test and

³⁵Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, pp. 29-30.

³⁶Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 55.

classify what they receive. To ascertain what pursuits are best suited to us, in our time and state of society, and how we may make best use of our means for building up the life of thought upon the life of action.³⁷

The Romantic and the feminist combined in Margaret Fuller to push her towards a libertarian distrust of society as it existed and of society as envisioned by utopianists. Although she visited Brook Farm, which began about the same time as her "Conversations," she had little faith in the utopian experiment based upon Fourier's social philosophy. She would have agreed with Fourier that society was evil,³⁸ but she had no hope that utopian experiments of her day would succeed.³⁹ She was Hegelian enough to believe in an organic evolution of society, and in her opinion society had not evolved to the point of approaching perfection.⁴⁰

In that one major respect Margaret was quite different from the reformers of the 1830's and '40's. She, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, had a basic skepticism about reform movements and utopian experiments at that point in her life, though her skepticism seemed

³⁷Anthony, Fuller: A Psychological Biography, p. 62.

³⁸Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 41.

³⁹Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 60.

⁴⁰Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 67.

more rooted in distrust of efforts to rush what should be a naturally unfolding process rather than doubts about the essential goodness of the human heart. Margaret believed in the sovereignty of the individual, and for her progress came from encouraging individual development rather than submerging the individual in the mass.⁴¹ Margaret picked up the theme of self-reliance in "The Great Lawsuit" and expanded it in Woman in the Nineteenth Century. Woman contains the plea that women should have available to them the same opportunities which men enjoyed. The argument grows out of a perception stated early in the book. One's ability to attain a full life is based upon one's ability to define it:

Thus is man still a stranger to his inheritance, still a pleader, still a pilgrim. Yet his happiness is secure in the end. And now, no more a glimmering consciousness, but assurance begins to be felt and spoken, the highest ideal man can form of his own powers is that which he is destined to attain */Italics mine/*.⁴²

With that as the basic assumption Margaret advocated the need to be self-reliant, inner directed.⁴³ Recognition of her own identity and her own powers was a necessity if woman was to have equality; and equality was an important concept for Margaret; equality in marriage, in family life, under the law, in politics, in society, in religion, in education, and in pursuit of vocation.

⁴¹Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 67.

⁴²Fuller, Woman, p. 19.

⁴³Fuller, Woman, pp. 33.

The book also contains hints of how galling life could be for a woman aware of her own vast powers, for Woman certainly illustrates Margaret's learning. She discussed with contempt the position to which women are relegated through the use of such phrases as "Tell that to women and children" and "You cannot reason with a woman."⁴⁴

In addition, she noted the price paid by women who deviated from society's definition of a woman's place:

Mary Wollstonecraft, like Madame Dudevant (commonly known as George Sand) in our day, was a woman whose existence better proved the need of some new interpretation of Woman's Rights than anything she wrote. Such beings of these, rich in genius, of most tender sympathies, capable of high virtue and a chastened harmony, ought not to find themselves, by birth, in a place so narrow, that, in breaking bonds, they become outlaws.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Fuller, Woman, pp. 33, 36.

⁴⁵Fuller, Woman, p. 75. Margaret wrote a description of George Sand which recalls her description of herself quoted above. The passage suggests that perhaps Fuller felt a strong affinity for the woman and may have seen her own life reflected in Sand's: "She has that purity in her soul, for she knows well how to love and prize its beauty; but she herself is quite another sort of person. She needs no defense, but only to be understood, for she has bravely acted out her nature, and always with good intentions. She might have loved one man permanently, if she could have found one contemporary with her who could interest and command her throughout her range; but there was hardly a possibility of that, for such a person. Thus she has naturally changed the objects of her affection, and several times. Also, there may have been something of the Bacchante in her life, and of the love of night and storm, and the free raptures amid which roamed on the mountaintops the followers of Cybele, the great goddess, the great mother. But she was never coarse, never gross, and I am sure her generous heart has not failed to draw some rich drops from every kind of wine-press." Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, p. 264.

As previously noted, Margaret believed that there was masculine and feminine in every person. She agreed with Fourier's opinion that work should be divided on the basis of interest rather than sex. Like modern feminists she would insist that the freer one is to explore and define herself according to her own needs and abilities rather than according to sex role stereotypes, the freer she is to become a more nearly complete person.

Trying to establish cause and effect may be a very hazardous undertaking, especially in the history of ideas. One probably cannot definitely trace how certain people, events, and books influenced the life and thought of Margaret Fuller any more than one can definitely trace the influence of her life and thought upon others. About the most which can be said is that Margaret was a part of her time and helped create her time. She was a Romantic; she was a feminist. Some of her thought bore remarkable similarity to that of people like Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright, and Sarah and Angelina Grimke. One can find many of her themes repeated in later essays by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She was an heiress to the pioneers who preceded her, and she bequeathed her contribution to advocates of women's rights who were her contemporaries or who came after her.

Alice Rossi, in her introduction to The Feminist Papers, links Wollstonecraft, Wright, and Fuller together as libertarians and free inquirers and notes resemblances. They were among the

advanced intellectual thinkers of their times; they were cosmopolitan; they lived in urban areas; and they all wrote to support themselves. In short, they had certain kinds of life experiences which may have contributed to their feminism.⁴⁶

The concepts of Romanticism and Progressivism with which these women were familiar helped give birth to nineteenth-century feminism; and it, in turn, was reflected in some of the literary works of that era. M. F. Heiser maintains that it was only natural for women to emerge as writers of sentimental novels in the nineteenth century. Richardson and his associates may have focused on the heroine of virtue, but as authors they did not have the perspective which women themselves had. Consequently, the door was opened to women novelists, whose number increased rapidly. The increasing number of women writers was paralleled by a growing audience of women readers. Therefore, women became important as creators and readers of novels. Heiser states: "It is no accident, I think, that even in the novels of Hawthorne, who went beyond the sentimental and the romance, our attention is focused on Hester, Hepzibah, Miriam, and Zenobia."⁴⁷

⁴⁶Rossi, The Feminist Papers, p. 5.

⁴⁷M. F. Heiser, "The Decline in Neoclassicism, 1801-1848," in Transitions in American Literary Criticism, ed. by Harry Hayden Clark (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1953), p. 131.

CHAPTER II

HAWTHORNE, HESTER, AND ZENOBIA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MARGARET FULLER

Under consideration are four major components of the Hawthorne-Hester/Zenobia-Margaret Fuller relationship as it relates to feminism in the nineteenth-century United States. The first is Hawthorne's awareness of contemporary social issues, particularly feminism. The second is the nature of his relationship with Margaret Fuller. The third is his intentional creation of Hester and Zenobia as feminists. The fourth is similarities which may exist between passages from Fuller's writings and feminist statements contained in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance.

For many years biographers pictured Nathaniel Hawthorne as a recluse brooding in isolation over the mysteries of the human heart. Lately, critics have attempted to shatter that portrait. F. O. Matthiessen stressed that

It is important to correct the prevailing conception of him as the re-creator of a dim past, primarily because such a view usually carried with it the belief that he thus failed to fulfill the major obligation of the artist, the obligation to confront actual life and to

make his art "an act of possession," in Andre Malraux's phrase, and not one of oblique evasion.¹

Matthiessen tried to make Hawthorne fit his definition of an artist, which meant that since for Matthiessen an artist must be interested in "actual life," then Hawthorne, too, must have been interested in "actual life."

Other critics also argued that Hawthorne was interested in the life and social issues of his time. However, they turned to the writer's novels instead of trying to prove his interest by definition. Lawrence Sargent Hall argued in Hawthorne: Critic of Society that Hawthorne was attuned to the movements of his time; he was a Jacksonian democrat and egalitarian who possessed a pinch of snobbery.² Although Hall pointed out a number of reform issues which caught Hawthorne's attention, he did not include in his study the one of women's rights.

Other biographers corrected the omission. In his book, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation, Arlin Turner observed: "Hawthorne's writings are proof that . . . he brought his mind to bear critically on the current agitation

¹F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 192.

²Lawrence Sargent Hall, Hawthorne: Critic of Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

for peace, temperance, woman's rights."³ A. N. Kaul noted that not only did Hawthorne deal with women's rights, he took the matter seriously:

For instance, he does not debunk the issue of the equality of the sexes His attitude toward it is ambiguous in the sense that he accords to it the dignity of a serious though not one-sided argument While Zenobia's side of the case is presented as unquestionably superior to Hollingsworth's Nietzschean bombast, the whole issue of feminist reform is seen as a secondary question--an unfortunate consequence of the general distortion of human relations in society.⁴

The distortion of human relations in society causes the dissonance of maladjusted individuals, who make the essence of classical tragedy if they are of large enough character. Hall believed that Hawthorne's characters were of such stature:

It has been truly said that Hawthorne wrote tragedy of a genuine classical type. And the creation of tragedy . . . requires that a writer have insight into the social order and the moral forces at work there. For the tragic theme consists of the maladjustment of the individual to the behavior patterns regulating his relations with fellow individuals.⁵

³Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 90.

⁴A. N. Kaul, ed., Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays (Prentice-Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), p. 156.

⁵Hall, Hawthorne: Critic of Society, p. x.

Even though Hawthorne may be viewed as a writer of tragedy, few have concentrated upon the tragedy of his feminist characters like Hester and Zenobia, who possess too much talent, intelligence, and vitality to adjust to the character traits prescribed for women in the nineteenth century. Barbara Welter described those traits in "The Cult of True Womanhood":

Submission was perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women [of the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity]. Men were supposed to be religious, although they rarely had time for it, and supposed to be pure, although it came awfully hard to them, but men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, submissive responders.⁶

Clearly, Hester and Zenobia's unsuitability for the mold caused them tragic grief and suffering.

Neal Doubleday picked up the theme of maladjustment and applied it specifically to Hester and Zenobia. He stated that in spite of the feminist movement being contemporary with Hawthorne's life, he believed the feminist arguments of the two women were not the author's own opinions. Offering a rather brash diagnosis of what constitutes mental health, Doubleday probably correctly commented that "In both [Hester and Zenobia] feminism is the product of abnormal adjustment."⁷ Doubleday implied that if Hester and Zenobia had adapted to their "true" place as women,

⁶Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer, 1966), 158-59.

⁷Neal Frank Doubleday, "Hawthorne's Hester and Feminism," PMLA, LIV (1939), 827.

they would not have been maladjusted. Feminists of that day argued that the "true" place did not allow women to become human in the best sense of the word. For them it was not failure to adjust to right roles which caused maladjustment; it was the recognition that something was wrong with the roles. Consequently, one might redefine the feminist's tragedy as the grief and suffering of a rather healthy, vital woman who refuses to adjust to the abnormal patterns of behavior society expects of women.

While one may disagree with Doubleday's analysis of the cause of Hester and Zenobia's dilemma, he possibly made a better point than he knew when he suggested that the feminists' arguments were not Hawthorne's. Some of them may have been Margaret Fuller's.

The nature of Hawthorne's feelings about Fuller has stirred considerable debate. Hawthorne's Italian notebooks contain a scathing comment:

. . . she had not the charm of womanhood. But she was a person anxious to try all things, and fill up her experience in all direction, she had a strong and coarse nature, which she had done her utmost to refine, with infinite pains; but of course it could only be superficially changed She was a great humbug--of course with much talent and much moral reality, or else she could never have been so great a humbug. But she had stuck herself full of borrowed qualities which she chose to provide herself with, but which had no root in her It was such an awful joke, that she should have resolved--in all sincerity, no doubt--to make herself the greatest, wisest, best woman of the age. And to that end she set to work on her strong, heavy, unpliant, and, in many respects, defective and evil nature, and adorned it with a mosaic of admirable qualities, such as she chose to possess putting in here a splendid talent and there moral excellence, and polishing each separate piece, and the whole together, till it seemed to shine afar and dazzle all who

saw it. She took credit for herself for having been her own Redeemer, if not her own Creator; and indeed, she was far more a work of art than any of Mozier's statues, /sic/ But she was not working on an inanimate substance, like marble or clay; there was something within her that she could not possibly come at, to recreate or refine it; and, by and by, this rude old potency bestirred itself, and undid all her labor in the twinkling of an eye. On the whole, I do not know but I like her the better for it; because she proved herself a very woman after all, and fell as the weakest of her sisters might.⁸

One would assume from such comments that Hawthorne did not like Margaret at the time he wrote those words and perhaps had never liked her. The latter assumption may be debatable, however; and since the two novels were written before the journal entry, it might be worthwhile to attempt to pinpoint what Hawthorne's earlier attitude towards Fuller may have been.

Many critics refuse to take Hawthorne's indictment, written after Margaret Fuller's death, at face value. In "Nemesis and Nathaniel Hawthorne" Oscar Cargill argued that Hawthorne had not always harbored such antagonism towards Fuller. He stated that Hawthorne seemed to enjoy her company and frequently entertained her at the Old Manse.⁹ Arthur Brown also expressed wonder at the author's apparently drastic shift in attitude.¹⁰

⁸Quoted in Frederick Fuller, "Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller Ossoli," Literary World, XVI (1885), 11-12.

⁹Oscar Cargill, "Nemesis and Nathaniel Hawthorne," PMLA, LII (1937), 852.

¹⁰Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 65.

Frederick Fuller suggested that Hawthorne knew Margaret fairly well and liked her. As partial evidence he cited Sophia Peabody's letter to Margaret informing her of their engagement:

"Dear, most noble Margaret," she calls her; and writes that the decision was not made till the previous evening, and that she is entitled through "our love and profound regard for you," to be told directly; and she signs herself "Your very true and loving friend, Sophia."¹¹

Frederick Fuller presented further evidence for his opinion:

"In a letter to Margaret, dated August 28, 1842, and printed in the memoirs now under consideration, Hawthorne himself says: 'There is nobody to whom I would more willingly speak my mind, because I can be certain of being thoroughly understood; . . .'"¹²

Robert Cantwell discussed the meeting of Hawthorne and Fuller in the woods, as recorded in Hawthorne's journal:

The hollow was perhaps four or five hundred feet in diameter, a shallow space scooped out in the woods, pretty nearly circular, the sunshine penetrating evenly along the pathway. There Hawthorne met Margaret Fuller, reclining near the path.

"She said that she had been there all afternoon, reading or meditating. Nobody had broken her solitude"

Hawthorne and Margaret talked about autumn--about the pleasure of getting lost in the woods--about the crows, whose voices Margaret had heard--about the sight of mountains

¹¹Frederick Fuller, "Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller," p. 12.

¹²Frederick Fuller, "Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller," p. 12.

from a distance, and the view from their summits-- and other matters of high and low philosophy. A voice called out to Margaret. Emerson stepped out of the shadows

It was now nearly six o'clock, and they separated. The incident made a powerful impression on Hawthorne. He used it almost intact in The Blithedale Romance, making it the climax of the novel.¹³

The passage Cantwell analyzes certainly lacks the vituperative tone present in the Italian notebook entry. Rather, one has the impression of a languid, enjoyable afternoon spent with pleasant company.

Whatever Hawthorne's feeling for Margaret Fuller may have been--and this author believes there is enough evidence to support the argument that at one point they may have been quite amiable--it is clear that he had some extended interaction with her.¹⁴

It is also clear from the many references in his journal to The Dial that Hawthorne read the publication.¹⁵ One can only

¹³Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 359.

¹⁴His American notebooks indicate at least four talks with the woman: Sept. 28, 1841; Aug. 16, 1842; Sept. 4, 1842; and April 8, 1843. See Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, ed. and with an introduction by Randall Stewart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), pp. 78, 160, 169, 176. In his Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 66, Randall Stewart would hasten to add, "Hawthorne could enjoy Margaret's company and her ideas without feeling, as some moderns have supposed, a sexual interest: such a supposition is incompatible with his marital happiness."

¹⁵Hawthorne, American Notebooks, pp. 167, 174-77, 313, 316, 320, 322.

speculate about whether or not he read "The Great Lawsuit."
 The same is true for Woman in the Nineteenth Century. Morton Cronin provides information that Sophia Peabody Hawthorne had read the book; but, again, one cannot prove Hawthorne also read it.¹⁶ One can assume on the basis of his writings that Hawthorne was aware of the feminist issues, examine how he treated those issues in the persons of Hester and Zenobia, and analyze the similarities between some of his statements and statements by Margaret Fuller--all the while keeping in mind that Fuller may have been the only outstanding flesh-and-blood feminist with whom Hawthorne had contact.

As critics have already noted, Hester and Zenobia strongly resemble each other. Hester is tall and well-built, with rich, dark hair. Hawthorne gives the impression that Zenobia is also tall: "Her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have, or than they could afford to have, though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of Zenobia's entire development."¹⁷ She, too, has rich, dark hair.

¹⁶Morton Cronin, "Hawthorne on Romantic Love and the Status of Woman," PMLA, LXIX (1954), 92, n. 7.

¹⁷Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. by William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Claude M. Simpson, Vol. III: The Blithedale Romance and Fanshawe (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 15.

Both also possess keen intellects. In short, they are a remarkable combination of beauty and intelligence.

Randall Stewart, discussing character types in Hawthorne, commented that Hester, Zenobia, Miriam, and Beatrice stand alone in his works as women of rare beauty and intelligence, "the only women of marked intellectual ability in Hawthorne's stories"18 Although many of the leading feminists of the nineteenth century were not what one might call beautiful, most of them were, like Hester and Zenobia, very intelligent. (Consider the keen intellectual ability of Frances Wright, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and, of course, Margaret Fuller.)

Stewart also noted that Hawthorne linked sin with "these women of exotic beauty and speculative mind."19 Here, one finds Stewart obliquely getting at an expanded version of the myth of Eve and the Fall. A fairly standard telling of the myth has it that seductive Eve tempted Adam in some physical manner. Hawthorne looked at another possibility. The beautiful Eve-Hester-Zenobia tempted her mate not only through her physical beauty but also through the proclivity of her keen, speculative intelligence

18Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, p. ix.

19Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, p. ix.

to explore dangerous paths.²⁰ By doing so, Eve managed the expulsion from Paradise of both her and her mate.

Linda Pratt, in a paper entitled "The Abuse of Eve by the New World Adam," analyzed the nineteenth-century American novel as allegory and looked at the Eve-Adam-Eden symbolism. Hester and Zenobia fit into her category of post-lapsarian Eve, and Dimmesdale and Hollingsworth into the category of the innocent Adam. (Although some would argue that Dimmesdale does fall insofar as he had a sexual relationship with Hester, he ultimately rejects her and the knowledge which she has.)

The pre-lapsarian Eve is necessarily a static and abstract companion to the unfallen Adam. The post-lapsarian Eve has been humanized by the experience of evil, but she is rejected by the Adamic hero who must protect his innocence. She is further ostracized by a society absorbed in its own Edenic illusions. Woman, in this circumstance, is damned if she doesn't and damned if she does, since the unfallen Adam can have no use for her except as he constantly reaffirms his own static and abstract nature through a perpetual rejection of her knowledge.²¹

²⁰Philip Rahr, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Partisan Review, VIII (1941), 369, commented upon the implications for men of the existence of these beautiful, intelligent, curious women: ". . . the dark lady of Salem displays mental powers that are the counterpart of her physical vitality. Invariably she dominates, or seeks to dominate, the men she loves, and her intellectual range equals and at times exceeds theirs. She not only acts but thinks passionately, solving the problem of the relation between the sexes in a radical fashion and subverting established values and standards."

²¹Linda Ray Pratt, "The Abuse of Eve by the New World Adam," (Mimeographed paper presented at the Midwest Modern Language Association Meeting, St. Louis, Missouri, October, 1972), p. 2.

Indeed Hester and Zenobia are perfect examples of the post-lapsarian Eve. Hawthorne makes it clear that their lovers reject them because of a kind of knowledge about life which the women gained through experience. In The Scarlet Letter Hester's boldness and openmindedness stand in living contrast to Dimmesdale's constricted, squeezed life:

Arthur Dimmesdale gazed into Hester's face with a look in which hope and joy shone out, indeed, but with fear betwixt them, and a kind of horror at her boldness, . . .

The minister . . . had never gone through an experience calculated to lead him beyond the scope of generally received laws; although, in a single instance, he had so fearfully transgressed one of the most sacred of them. But this had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose At the head of the social system, as the clergymen of that day stood, he was only the more trammelled by its regulations, its principles, and even its prejudices. As a priest, the framework of his order inevitably hemmed him in. As a man who had once sinned, but who kept his conscience all alive and painfully sensitive by the fretting of an unhealed wound, he might have been supposed safer within the line of virtue than if he had never sinned at all.²²

Hester, with her willingness to speculate and turn her back on those regulations, principles, and prejudices contrasts with the innocently Adamic Dimmesdale. For a moment only Dimmesdale holds the possibility of stepping into the world that lies all before them, but he returns to his ordered, regulated abstractions.

²²Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. by William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Claude M. Simpson, Vol. I: The Scarlet Letter (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1962), pp. 199-200.

They are less threatening than a full-force encounter with life as represented by Hester.

Hawthorne likewise has Coverdale pronounce as the greatest and yet most fascinating indictment of Zenobia the fact that she has lived.²³ Zenobia recognizes the futility of her life, being a woman who wants what women are not supposed to want and yet desiring male companionship. Hawthorne adds a few rhetorical strokes, but Zenobia comes close to giving a feminist declaration of position and desires when she confronts Hollingsworth's coldness with all of her fire and passion:

Now God judge between us . . . which of us two has most mortally offended! At least, I am a woman, with every fault, it may be, that a woman ever had . . . but still I am a woman! A creature whom only a little change of earthly fortune, a little kinder smile of Him who sent me hither, and one true heart to encourage and direct me, might have made all that a woman can be! But how is it with you? Are you a man? No, but a monster! A cold, heartless, self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism!²⁴

Zenobia names it rightly; she wants to be all a woman can be, and she wants someone as strong as herself with whom to share. Unfortunately, she can not find a male as venturesome as she. Hollingsworth shrinks from her knowledge like some timidly innocent

²³Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 47.

²⁴Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, pp. 217-18.

Adam and chooses instead the "girl" Priscilla.²⁵ One aspect of Hester and Zenobia's tragedy as feminists is that they can find no male equals.

Another aspects of their tragedy is their willingness to explore and challenge. They and nineteenth-century feminists, like the post-lapsarian Eve, set out on dangerous pathways when they asked probing questions about what people had assumed to be the natural order of male-female relationships. The feminists speculated about existing relationships with which society had grown comfortable; and for their speculation they, too, were condemned. Their questions threatened the superficial order and serenity of a transplanted, new-world Eden.

Hester hits most directly at the cornerstone of that order when she willingly chooses to love Dimmesdale. In effect, she is denying the ultimate sacredness of institutional marriage and affirming a relationship which has its own sacredness--one superior in her eyes to legalistic marriage. By entering into a sexual love relationship with Dimmesdale she rejects any concept that she is Chillingworth's property.²⁶ She has a will of her own and exercises it against the traditional dictates of society.

²⁵Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 217.

²⁶By the nineteenth century, when Hawthorne was writing, many American lawyers leaned heavily upon Blackstone's Commentaries, especially with respect to rights of husbands and wives within marriage. Blackstone maintained that women should be completely subject to their husbands. See Mary Beard, Woman as Force in History (New York: Collier Books, 1946), pp. 119-124.

She seeks personal fulfillment in a loving relationship with another individual.

As a consequence of her act, Hester becomes an isolate. The Edenic community tolerates her existence in its vicinity, but it flows all around her without touching her. Hawthorne discusses her isolation and estrangement in two passages. The first occurs a little over half way through the book:

Standing alone in the world,--alone, as to any dependence on society, and with little Pearl to be guided and protected,--alone, and hopeless of retrieving her position, even had she not scorned to consider it desirable,--she cast away the fragments of a broken chain. The world's law was no law for her mind. It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated, had taken a more active and a wider range than for many centuries before. Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings. Men bolder than these had overthrown and rearranged--not actually, but within the sphere of theory, which was their most real abode--the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle. Hester Prynne imbibed this spirit. She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter.²⁷

Three things are remarkable about this passage, and they reflect a feminist stance. First, Hester--a woman--is alone in the world, a unique position for a woman, who was usually either married or living with relatives in colonial and nineteenth-century America.

²⁷Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 164.

Hawthorne stressed that not only is Hester alone but she is alone by choice. She does not wish to retrieve her position.

Second, she is independent of society. However, her independence is more intellectual than economic; for although she receives no charity from the community, she relies upon it to support her and Pearl by buying her needlework. The main thrust of the independence is that she has come of age intellectually. Her suffering has changed her, made of her a new person who can look at society as one standing apart from it. Her suffering has humanized her and led her to speculate. And that is the third remarkable thing.

At a time when women are supposed to be intellectually inferior and incapable of much thinking, Hawthorne produced a woman who thought, speculated, questioned. Hester undergoes her own renaissance, moving from unthinking acceptance of authority (be it God or community) to challenge of that authority and to reliance upon herself. That is the kind of pattern which broke the strangle hold of some forms of external authority during the Renaissance; and if the town fathers knew her thoughts, they would have reason to consider her a criminal in a theocratic state.²⁸

Hester's isolation allows her to view society and its institutions from a different perspective. She has become a libertarian:

²⁸We must believe that Hester has changed because Hawthorne implies that she has. The reader never knows the earlier Hester, only the later Hester who no longer subscribes to community standards.

She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest, ... Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free.²⁹

Hawthorne takes pains to emphasize Hester's wildly free existence. It should be noted, however, that her freedom is not the freedom to become a complete person which can be offered within a loving, supporting community. Rather, it is a negative freedom, a freedom imposed upon her by isolation from the community. Her home is on the edge of the town: "It stood on the shore, looking across a basin of the sea at the forest-covered hills, towards the west."³⁰ Appropriately, her home looks west toward the forest where she and Dimmesdale have their secret encounter. Hawthorne consistently associates her with the forest, a symbol of freedom for him but also a symbol of danger. The sea, another symbol of freedom, lies close to the cottage. (When Hester suggests escape, she mentions the forest or the sea.)

In addition, Hester mocks the community's law and judgment. She converts her symbol of shame into an intricate, beautiful badge:

²⁹Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 199.

³⁰Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 81.

On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore³¹

And when Governor Bellingham's servant informs her that she may not see the Governor because he has with him two ministers and a leech, she refuses to be put off, declaring "'Nevertheless, I will enter."³² She does not seem to recognize others as being socially superior because of a particular position they may occupy.

It is true that Hawthorne says of her at one point, "She never battled with the public, but submitted, uncomplainingly, to its worst usage" ³³ But there are at least two sides to Hester. One is the side she shows to the public--the quiet, withdrawn woman who lives alone, does needlework, and nurses the sick. The other is the private woman who occasionally breaks through--the one who mocks the community with her luxuriant "A," the one who will not heed society's polite rules, the one who openly acknowledges to herself her hatred of Chillingworth. The community would have been shocked to learn that Hester considers her worst sin to be ever consenting to act the part

³¹Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 53.

³²Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 104.

³³Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 160.

of Chillingworth's wife, and not to be sharing a loving, physical relationship with Dimmesdale.³⁴

However, the ultimate statement of her speculative tendency and disregard for the community comes in the chapter entitled "The Paster and His Parishioner" when she urges Dimmesdale to flee to life, either by going into the forest toward the heart of the New World or across the sea to the Old World. In essence, she pleads with him to follow her course: "And what hast thou to do with all these iron men, and their opinions? They have kept thy better part in bondage too long already!"³⁵ Hester dangles before Dimmesdale all that he might be and do if he can break free.

Zenobia, too, shares Hester's libertarian mind-set: "She made no scruple of oversetting all human institutions, and scattering them as with a breeze from her fan."³⁶ In defiance of nineteenth-century convention concerning appearance and demeanor, Zenobia shows her fine intellect. She is more healthy than most American women of her day would admit to being,³⁷ and she has an

³⁴Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 176.

³⁵Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 197.

³⁶Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 44.

³⁷Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, pp. 15-16. For a discussion of widespread invalidism among United States women in the nineteenth century see Page Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), pp. 131-39.

"almost broad laugh . . .," a distinctly unfeminine trait.³⁸
 Coverdale comments on "the freedom of her deportment" ³⁹
 If it is true, as some psychologists maintain, that carriage
 reflects one's emotional state, Zenobia at the beginning of the
Romance appears to be a free spirit.

As in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne generally tells readers
 more about his characters than he shows them. Thus, one finds
 him telling about Hester's state of mind. Likewise, in The
Blithedale Romance readers learn mainly about Zenobia through
 Coverdale's observations and conclusions. However, Hawthorne
 occasionally permits readers to observe Zenobia directly through
 her own words as recorded by Coverdale; and those words reinforce
 the image of her as a feminist and libertarian. At one point
 she expresses dissatisfaction with the narrow limits assigned
 to women:

Did you ever see a happy woman in your life? Of
 course, I do not mean a girl, like Priscilla, and a
 thousand others . . . but a grown woman. How can she
 be happy, after discovering that fate has assigned to her
 but one single event, which she must contrive to make
 the substance of her whole life? A man has his choice
 of innumerable events.⁴⁰

³⁸Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 16.

³⁹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 47.

⁴⁰Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 60.

Zenobia thinks that women can do more than play the interlocking wife-mother roles which engulf them upon marrying. In the scene at Eliot's Pulpit she also lashes out against society for unjustly restricting women. Upon leaving Blithedale for the first time she observes that women have no rights and gives some indication of the uncharted journey she undertook when she chose to cut herself loose from conventional laws and morality:

If I choose a counsellor, in the present aspect of my affairs, it must be either an angel or a madman; and I rather apprehend that the latter would be likeliest of the two to speak the fitting word. It needs a wild steersman when we voyage through chaos!⁴¹

Yet Zenobia chooses the voyage and chaos as superior to tranquil moorings, and the choice marks her as libertarian.

As with Hester, Zenobia feels isolated because of the path she has picked. After Hollingsworth chooses Priscilla, Zenobia laments:

. . . 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.⁴²

Also like Hester, Zenobia feels her rejection keenly, but she has no Pearl on whom to concentrate her attention as does Hester after Dimmesdale's death. Consequently, Zenobia suffers bitter disillusionment:

⁴¹ Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 142.

⁴² Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 224.

But I am weary of this place, and sick to death of playing at philanthropy and progress. Of all varieties of mock-life, we have surely blundered into the very emptiest mockery in our effort to establish the one true system.⁴³

The disillusionment comes not only from being rejected by Hollingsworth but also from a feeling of hopelessness because of what she has come to perceive as the mockery of life which exists at Blithedale. Her words imply the falsity of the position that there could ever be a "true system," and she aches because of the emptiness in her life caused by the existing system.

Some critics might argue that Hester and Zenobia are not feminists at all. It is true that both love passionately, and the story plots spring from their connection with men. They both seek to share with men of their choice. In addition, they both perform such feminine functions as nursing the sick. Hester even supports herself and Pearl on the income from the feminine vocation of needlework. However, nursing and needlework are superficial functions. Hester had few options from which to choose when it comes to earning a living. At least the beautiful, intricate needlework allows some outlet for her creativity. That both nurse the sick indicates a kind of compassion becoming to a man as well as a woman. (Hollingsworth also nurses Coverdale, although there is the implication that he does so to make a convert out of the writer.)

⁴³Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 227.

What of the contention that Hester and Zenobia are not feminists because they love men and seek some fulfillment in male-female relationships? Feminists need not be man-haters, for many realize that love between the sexes can be an enriching part of life. Hester and Zenobia want to love and be loved. Yet neither is satisfied with the passive, weak role assigned to women. They would support their men from a position of strength, not weakness. It is Hester's strength which draws Dimmesdale when he pleads, "'Be thou strong for me! . . . Advise me what to do.'"⁴⁴ It is Zenobia's strength which draws forth Hollingsworth's tirade about a woman's place. Immediately afterwards Coverdale comments on Priscilla as the embodiment of Hollingsworth's ideas about women: "The very woman whom he pictured--the gentle parasite, the soft reflection of a more powerful existence--sat there at his feet."⁴⁵ Hawthorne's men must take the lead. They must march at the head of the procession alone--as does Dimmesdale, finally, or they must stand alone with women at their feet. Women enter the picture only as props, and Hester and Zenobia have too much potential to be props.

Zenobia understands that. She upbraids Hollingsworth's choice of Priscilla: "'For will he never, in many an hour of

⁴⁴Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 196.

⁴⁵Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 123.

darkness, need that proud intellectual sympathy which he might have had from me?--the sympathy that would flash light along his course, and guide as well as cheer him?"⁴⁶ She knows Hollingsworth has settled for an inferior kind of companionship, and he is the microcosm of the macrocosm. He and Priscilla are types which must cease to dominate if the feminist typified by Zenobia is to have life.

Speaking of Priscilla, Zenobia comments, "'Poor child! . . . She is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it. He is never content, unless he can degrade himself by stooping towards what he loves.'" And in the same passage she indicates what such stereotypes do to men: "'In denying us our rights, he betrays even more blindness to his own interests than profligate disregard of ours!"⁴⁷ Zenobia presents the feminist argument that if women are liberated to become full, complete human beings, men will also be liberated to become complete human beings.

Dimmesdale, like Hollingsworth, has the opportunity to choose companionship with an unusual woman. At one point he almost does: "'There is not the strength or courage left me to venture into the wide world alone!"⁴⁸ Hester offers Dimmesdale companionship

⁴⁶Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 225.

⁴⁷Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 122.

⁴⁸Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 198.

when she reassures him, "'Thou shalt not go alone!'"⁴⁹ Yet ultimately the males, Hollingsworth and Dimmesdale, wish to be alone. (Priscilla offers so little in the way of a separate personality that in picking her Hollingsworth picks a mirror in which to see himself.) Both Hester and Zenobia will go anywhere side by side with their men, but they cannot sit at anyone's feet. Unfortunately, there is no other room for them. The knowledge causes Hester to leave with Pearl, perhaps to seek a home more suitable for the "wild, rich nature" of the child.⁵⁰

When Hester's responsibility to Pearl is fulfilled, the mother chooses a kind of suicide by returning to New England. She is like one dead and reborn when she glides into--or through--the cottage door upon her return. She counsels with others, mainly women. The scarlet letter still identifies her, but she has been cleansed in the eyes of some in the community and stands as a transcendent kind of being who, even then, mocks the authorities of the community. For it is to her that people bring their problems, not to the ministers of formal religion.

Zenobia, on the other hand, has nothing to hold her to this world; and she despairs of ever finding happiness in it. Coverdale perceives her plight when he offers the following comment after her death:

⁴⁹Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 198.

⁵⁰Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 262.

It is nonsense, and a miserable wrong,--the result, like so many others, of masculine egotism,--that the success or failure of woman's existence should be made to depend wholly on the affections, and on one species of affection, while man has such a multitude of other chances, that this seems but an incident.⁵¹

Zenobia, like most women of her time, is well enough socialized to think of finding ultimate happiness in companionship with a man; yet she is too much of a feminist to accept the--in her eyes--inferior position she would have to occupy in order to gain that companionship. Seeing no way to resolve the dilemma which tortures her, she kills herself.

Several critics have commented on Hester and Zenobia as types: Faustian heroines, Romantic heroines, revolutionary heroines, tragic heroines, transcendental heroines. Leslie Fiedler offered a general description of the Faustian man in Hawthorne which could also apply to Hester and Zenobia.

Fiedler viewed the Faustian man--or woman--as one who does not deny the definitions of right and wrong offered by the community; rather, he or she chooses not to live by those definitions because they restrict that individual's pursuit of knowledge, experience, or happiness. Being attuned to the needs, desires, and impulses of the self and electing to try to satisfy them, the Faustian hero or heroine becomes alienated from society, which is structured on the basis of law or the codes of religion.

⁵¹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 241.

In effect, the Faustian man or woman becomes an anarchist and suffers separation from society and loneliness as a result.⁵²

Hester and Zenobia are Faustian heroines insofar as they heed their own needs and desires rather than the dictates of society. Hester chooses a loving, sexual relationship with Dimmesdale and reaffirms that choice years later: "'What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so!'"⁵³ Alone and alienated, Hester relies upon herself to determine right and wrong; she is "little accustomed, in her long seclusion from society, to measure her ideas of right and wrong by any standard external to herself" ⁵⁴ As mentioned above, Zenobia also has no scruples about upsetting the institutions of society with a wave of her fan.

Stuart B. James and Frederic Carpenter, discussing the Romantic view of Hester, emphasized that the individual, not tradition or history, is the best touchstone for determining proper human behavior. Carpenter made comments applicable to Zenobia also when he stated that civilization is anathema for the Romantic heroine. Civilization, with its strict moral codes, suffocates the life impulses and natural instincts of the individual.

⁵²Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 516.

⁵³Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 195.

⁵⁴Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 159.

Hester (and Zenobia) is the ideal woman whose life instincts are defeated by civilization: "The Scarlet Letter, therefore, becomes the tragedy of perfection, in which the ideal woman is doomed to defeat by an inflexible moral tradition."⁵⁵

Carpenter would probably argue that just as the Puritans defeat Hester so, too, the tradition of the male-dominated society which is embodied in Hollingsworth defeats Zenobia. Hester is isolated from the community because she chooses life and love. The community labels the choice as illicit; and because her lover is bound more than she by the dictates of the community, she cannot pursue life and love in the form most appropriate to her. Consequently, civilization as symbolized by the community does triumph if the drama is viewed from one perspective. Likewise, Zenobia does kill herself after the final scene with Hollingsworth and Priscilla; and her suicide would appear to be a kind of triumph for Hollingsworth and the civilization he represents.

However, A. H. Kaul provides a different perspective. He found in Hester a revolutionary heroine. Picking up on Chillingworth's comment that much had been wasted in Hester's nature, Kaul referred to Hester's life as a tragic waste on a lower level. Yet he observed that it also contained a triumph of great significance, for "It shows the protagonist judging and, at the

⁵⁵James Stuart, "The Politics of Personal Salvation: The American Literary Record," Denver Quarterly, IV (1969), 22. Frederic I. Carpenter, "Scarlet A Minus," College English, V (January, 1944), 175-76.

same time, rising above the dark and confusing world of tragedy"⁵⁶ Coverdale states that women become most passionate about reform issues when they fancy themselves personally wronged. In the very structuring of The Scarlet Letter and Blithedale Romance Hawthorne legitimizes Coverdale's words, as Kaul astutely noticed in his tracing of Hester's movement as a revolutionary:

From her personal predicament to the situation of her daughter, from Pearl's position to the social position of women in general, and so finally to the fundamental organization of society--this is how Hester learnt to reason.⁵⁷

Hester as revolutionary realizes that her relationship with Dimmesdale is right personally however society may view it. Because she knows it is right and because she trusts her own feelings and judgments, she begins questioning society's laws and judgments. The position to which she comes does not alleviate the pain and suffering, for she is still a product of that society even in her separateness, and it remains a part of her after she rejects its laws. Yet her position allows her to transcend the laws and limitations of her society. Others testify to her transcendence by coming to her with their problems instead of to society's representatives. They recognize in her a greater strength and wisdom as a result of immersion in life's experiences.

⁵⁶A. N. Kaul, "Character and Motive in The Scarlet Letter," Critical Quarterly, X (1968), 380-81.

⁵⁷Kaul, "Character and Motive," p. 381.

Zenobia, on the other hand, chooses another solution. Hers is equally revolutionary. She will not submit to the dictates of society, but she sees no way of escaping them in life. Rather than be beaten down continuously, she elects to die. From one perspective her suicide can be viewed as an act of honor and fidelity to herself. Nina Baym read Zenobia's death symbolically as a suggestion of what may happen to such women when they are denied a place of their own choosing in the world:

Acting under a confluence of forces, Hollingsworth takes on his core identity as Puritan judge and condemns Zenobia. His action signifies, on all levels of her meaning, her death. As the life force, she has been put down; as woman, she has been denied a place in a world administered by men. She kills herself, as she must.⁵⁸

Morton Cronin and Mark Van Doren called Hawthorne's women tragic heroines because they dared to oppose their societies' dictates about morality and, one might add, the proper place of women.⁵⁹ They were beautiful, strong, intelligent figures struggling against engulfing forces:

Hester, whose solitary thought takes her far beyond the confines of the /Puritan/ code, is nevertheless respectful of the strength in it that could kill her were she not even stronger. She is not the subject of a sermon;

⁵⁸Nina Baym, "The Blithedale Romance: A Radical Reading," Journal of English and German Philology, LXVII (October, 1968), 567-68.

⁵⁹See Cronin, "Hawthorne on Romantic Love," p. 89, and Mark Van Doren, "The Scarlet Letter," Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), pp. 143-166.

she is the heroine of a tragedy, and she understands the tragedy.⁶⁰

Hester's probing intellect has awarded her the prize of understanding, and the same is true for Zenobia.

However, some critics view that understanding as carrying the heroines one step beyond the elements of unresolved tragedy. Frederic Carpenter, for example, postulated that Hester was a transcendental heroine, for she transcended the inadequate moral law to a higher law: "Unlike her lover, she had explicitly been led 'beyond the scope of generally received laws.' She had consciously wished to become 'the prophetess' of a more liberal morality."⁶¹

Regardless of which label one chooses to accept as the "correct" type for purposes of categorizing, they all have a common element; the type is isolated from society at large. The isolation generally arises as a discovery of self that is separate from community and at odds with community standards. A. N. Kaul encapsulated the problem with words when he discussed the double conflict arising within the self and between self and community:

It is the conflict that must arise in an individual, and between an individual and his society, when the individual makes the passionate discovery of a value to which the

⁶⁰Van Doren, "The Scarlet Letter," p. 152.

⁶¹Carpenter, "Scarlet A Minus," p. 176.

society is hostile. It is the conflict between allegiance to a public ideology and a new personal commitment.⁶²

In her radical reading of The Blithedale Romance Nina Baym treated Zenobia as a different kind of type--the archetype of woman as creative life force. As a result, Baym's discussion revolved around Coverdale the artist and Zenobia's relationship to him. Baym contended that Coverdale's true aim is "to tap the soul's reservoir of energy, to make contact with its passionate, creative, active principle." This energy is the wellspring for all creative activity with its initial impulsiveness and passion. Baym viewed Zenobia as the perfect symbol of this life force because she "unites in her person sex, art, and nature" Sex and art are the creative manifestations of an elemental life which springs from nature. Baym also observed that Zenobia is politically radical, as she must be if she is to symbolize the life force:

Though the life-principle is not inherently or originally political, it inevitably comes in conflict with society because it is continually asserting the primacy of self and activity over institutions and stability. Society, whose necessary goals are permanence and control, forces this romantic energy into the mold of rebellion. Zenobia, from society's point of view, is morally suspect, as is the energetic and passionate principle she represents.⁶³

⁶²Kaul, "Character and Motive," pp. 377-78.

⁶³Baym, "The Blithedale Romance: A Radical Reading," pp. 552-53.

Society, represented by Hollingsworth, tries to force Zenobia into a mold in order to achieve serenity and stability. (Recall Hollingsworth's tirade at Eliot's Pulpit about the proper sphere for woman.) Society--and Hawthorne's men--want to be in control. Consequently, Hollingsworth picks Priscilla, whom he can control, rather than Zenobia, who is uncontrollable. Yet with that choice, Hollingsworth's dream dies. Much to his discredit as an artist, Coverdale also picks Priscilla and thereby betrays the artist in himself: "As for poetry, I have given it up"64 He lacks a purpose and zest for life, which is symbolized by his turn towards Priscilla and away from Zenobia, the creative life force.

R. W. B. Lewis viewed Hester in much the same way as Baym viewed Zenobia. Although he believed that Hawthorne had invested the Puritan society with a great deal of power and authority which gave it a valid, defensible position, he interpreted Hester's actions as an affirmation of life:

And her sin is the source of life; she incarnates those rights of personality that society is inclined to trample upon. The action of the novel springs from the enormous but improbable suggestion that the society's estimate of the moral structure of the universe may be tested and found inaccurate.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 246.

⁶⁵R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 112.

Critics like Lewis, Carpenter, and Kaul correctly observe that Hester and Zenobia call into question the basic traditions and laws of society. However, they ignore or fail to understand the fact that as feminists the two women call into question the core assumptions giving rise to those laws and traditions. They question the whole theme of male dominance and female submissiveness. They may represent the life force; but their fiery, passionate love would lead men to life only after descent into Hell. They probe, question, experience intensely.

The feminist seeks her own knowledge through the exercise of her intellect and through experience. Society cannot tolerate such a woman. Secure with static roles, society rejects the dynamic quest and the women who undertake it. Positions of power in society are controlled by males; and Hawthorne's males are egotists, somewhat exaggerated but fitting representatives of the male power structure. Nor surprisingly, feminists like Hester and Zenobia threaten that egoism and must be rejected; for such women challenge the supremely egotistical belief that the world is indeed a man's world.

Hester and Zenobia live in times when there are no adequate outlets for women of their creative and intellectual ability. Hester must resort to intricate needlework; Zenobia to pamphleteering. Their circumstances and frustrations, combined with unusual sensitivity and intelligence, cause them to view their situations in broader perspective; and they become political. They begin to

think not of themselves as isolated women but of woman's role in general, a role which they find inadequate. However, Hawthorne must keep Hester in historical setting; and as a consequence her speculations are private. Zenobia, on the other hand, fits into a time when she can write and speak about women's rights. In that respect Zenobia and Margaret Fuller are closely connected.⁶⁶

Hawthorne places Zenobia's most passionate statement about women's rights in the middle of his romance during the scene at Eliot's Pulpit. The setting is an appropriate one, since so many feminists of the early nineteenth century looked upon religion as one of the social institutions responsible for the subjugation of women:

. . . she declaimed with great earnestness and passion, nothing short of anger, on the injustice which the world did to women, and equally to itself, by not allowing them, in freedom and honor, and with the fullest welcome, their natural utterance in public.

"It shall not always be so!" cried she. "If I live another year, I will lift up my own voice in behalf of woman's wider liberty!"

.....
 "It is my belief--yes, and my prophecy, should I die before it happens--that, when my sex shall achieve its rights, there will be ten eloquent women where there is now one

⁶⁶Several critics have commented on the similarities between Zenobia and Margaret Fuller. See, for example, Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, p. xxiv; Randall Stewart's comments in Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, p. ix; Austin Warren, "Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, and 'Nemesis,'" PMLA, LIV (1939), 617.

eloquent man. Thus far, no woman in the world has ever once spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind. The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttles us, as with two gigantic hands at our throats! We mumble a few weak words, and leave a thousand better ones unsaid. You let us write a little, it is true, on a limited range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and immediate. It is with the living voice alone that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart."⁶⁷

One thinks of Margaret Fuller, whose natural element was conversation rather than writing.⁶⁸

Hawthorne's description of Zenobia's character is reminiscent of his journal entry about Margaret. He implied Margaret was a crude, self-made person with admirable qualities studding a somewhat defective and evil nature. He has Coverdale say of Zenobia, "I recognized no severe culture in Zenobia; her mind was full of weeds." And Coverdale goes on to add a comment indicating his mixed reaction:

. . . her character was left to shape itself. There was good in it, and evil. Passionate, self-willed and imperious, she had a warm and generous nature; showing the richness of the soil, however, chiefly by the weeds that flourished in it, and choked up the herbs of grace.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 120.

⁶⁸Arthur Brown, Margaret Fuller, p. 25. "By now, Margaret was convinced that conversation was her natural element. Despite efforts to write poetry and romances, she knew that her writing was 'mighty dead.'"

⁶⁹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 189.

Another connection between Margaret, Zenobia, and Hester is the fact that, ultimately, they all symbolized the heart. Perry Miller noted about Margaret, "She stood for the heart, even though so terribly endowed with brains."⁷⁰ Hollingsworth flings the following accusation at Zenobia, "'This is a woman's view, . . . a woman's, whose whole sphere of action is in the heart, and who can conceive of no higher nor wider one!'"⁷¹ Seymour L. Gross also viewed Hester as standing for the heart, with any guilt for her actions arising from the pain of her lover.⁷² However, if they stand for the heart, it is a restless one. They push against the suffocating society in search of outlets for their intellects, regardless of what Hollingsworth may say in an attempt to limit women to the sphere of the heart.

As feminists, the fictional characters and Margaret Fuller have the same dream. A. N. Kaul pinpointed it when he spoke of Hester's hopeful struggle: "The strength resides in the heroine's great challenge, her effort to find a new harmony in place of the one that is broken, her striving towards a new unity of man and a new society."⁷³ Fuller also hoped for a new

⁷⁰Miller, Fuller, American Romantic, p. xxii.

⁷¹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 218.

⁷²Seymour L. Gross, "'Solitude, and Love, and Anguish,' The Tragic Design of The Scarlet Letter," CLA Journal, III (March, 1960), 158-65.

⁷³Kaul, "Character and Motive," p. 384.

relationship between men and women based upon equality; for such a relationship would allow women such as herself, Hester, and Zenobia the room they need to grow, develop, and participate in society in ways that are fulfilling to them.

Hester, Zenobia, and Margaret all develop quite similar arguments pertaining to that dream, so similar that one wonders if Hawthorne may not have been influenced by Fuller's writings.⁷⁴ For example, in talking about the changes which must occur before women can find new positions in society, Margaret Fuller writes, "We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to woman as freely as to man."⁷⁵ Hawthorne has Hester speculating, "As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew."⁷⁶ Coverdale comments about Zenobia having no scruples in "oversetting all human institutions."⁷⁷ In each passage the stress is upon

⁷⁴In "Margaret Fuller as a Model for Hester Prynne," Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien, IX-X (1965), 191-97, Francis E. Kearns noted not only the similarities between events in the lives of Fuller and Hester but also similarities in their arguments. However, she does not extend her comments to deal with Zenobia.

⁷⁵Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," The Dial, IV (July, 1843), 14.

⁷⁶Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 165.

⁷⁷Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 44.

getting rid of the arbitrary barriers of society, which would result in a new freedom for men and women; and two of the passages come close to using the same vocabulary. Fuller wrote about having "every arbitrary barrier thrown down," and Hester would have "the whole system of society . . . torn down."

Margaret Fuller made extended comments about the social conditioning of men and women and the changes which must take place in that conditioning:

This self-dependence, which was honored in me, is deprecated as a fault in most women. They are taught to learn their rule from without, not to unfold it from within.

This is the fault of man, who is still vain, and wishes to be more important to woman than by right he should be.

Men have not shown this disposition towards you, I said.

No, because the position I early was enabled to take, was one of self-reliance. And were all women as sure of their wants as I was, the result would be the same. The difficulty is to get them to the point where they shall naturally develop self-respect, the question how it is to be done.⁷⁸

In viewing the magnitude of the task ahead, Hester observes: "Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated,

⁷⁸Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 16.

woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change"79

The scene at Eliot's Pulpit contains in dramatic form the same themes. Hollingsworth vehemently deprecates independence in woman: "'Her place is at man's side.'"80 He is the perfect embodiment of the man who would be "more important to woman than by right he should be," for he contends,

Her office, that of the sympathizer, the unreserved, unquestioning believer; . . . All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be, false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities, void of every good effect, and productive of intolerable mischiefs!81

Commenting upon what he interprets as Zenobia's acquiescence to Hollingsworth, Coverdale says, "'Women almost invariably behave thus,' thought I. 'What does the fact mean? Is it their nature? Or is it, at last, the result of ages of compelled degradation? And in either case, will it be possible ever to redeem them?'"82

⁷⁹Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 165.

⁸⁰Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 122.

⁸¹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 122.

⁸²Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 124.

In all of the passages there is either an explicit statement and similarity of argument or dramatization of the same theme. The passages deal with the inferior position of women--Fuller by drawing attention to the fact that society views independence as a fault in most women, Hester by noting that women do not occupy a fair and suitable position, Hollingsworth by serving as an embodiment of society's views about women, and Coverdale by pondering whether it is nature or compelled degradation that makes women act subservient to men.

All of the passages also consider the relationship between men and women, Fuller and Hester suggesting that a change in men's positions and attitudes would affect women and vice versa. If men cease wishing to be more important to women than they ought to be, women will have the freedom to grow and develop. If, as Coverdale speculates, women assume subservient positions because of compelled degradation, their positions will change when men no longer want to compel them to degradation. On the other hand, Hollingsworth represents the epitome of an insecure male threatening to resist with force any attempt by women to achieve the social situation which some of them advocate.

In addition, the passages illustrate the need of women to change themselves. According to Fuller, women must know what they want and they must respect themselves in order to create their own new lives. In other words, they must change their view of themselves; they must participate in consciousness raising.

Hester says basically the same thing when she observes that before women can take advantage of any reforms they must change themselves. Coverdale simply poses the question, "Will it be possible . . . to redeem them?" Lacking the quite similar wording present in other passages in Fuller and Hawthorne, these passages nevertheless present strikingly similar themes in very nearly the same order of appearance.

Margaret Fuller also discussed the unhappy situation of the dependent woman who possessed few, if any, rights:

It is not surprising that it should be the Anti-Slavery party that pleads for woman, when we consider merely that she does not hold property on equal terms with men; so that, if a husband dies without a will, the wife, instead of stepping at once into his place as head of the family, inherits only a part of his fortune, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner.

We will not speak of the unnumerable instances, in which profligate or idle men live upon the earnings of industrious wives; or if the wives leave them and take with them the children, to perform the double duty of mother and father, follow from place to place, and threaten to rob them of the children, if deprived of the rights of a husband⁸³

Condensing the catalog of grievances with artistic simplicity, Hawthorne has Zenobia announce, "'Women possess no rights, . . . or, at all events, only little girls and grandmothers would have the force to exercise them.'"⁸⁴ Both passages emphasize women's lack of legal rights.

⁸³Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 11.

⁸⁴Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 141.

Fuller implies that women were not altogether happy with their lot: "Many women are considering within themselves what they need that they have not, and what they can have, if they find they need it."⁸⁵ Zenobia laments that she has never seen a happy woman, for a woman realizes that she must make "one single event . . . the substance of her whole life."⁸⁶ Hester also queries:

Indeed, the same dark question often rose into her mind, with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them? As concerned her own individual existence, she had long ago decided in the negative, and dismissed the point as settled.⁸⁷

Fuller hints at a state of unhappiness. She suggests that many women are not happy because they feel they are lacking something. Zenobia and Hester comment more dramatically on the unhappiness of women and offer a reason for that unhappiness which Fuller hints at elsewhere. Women have discovered the cell-like dimensions of their lives. They exist for one event. Fuller agrees with Zenobia that women should have more than one choice: "Nor, in societies where her choice is left free, would she be perverted, by the current of opinion that seizes her, into the belief that she must marry"⁸⁸ And again:

⁸⁵ Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 10-11.

⁸⁶ Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 60.

⁸⁷ Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 165.

⁸⁸ Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 27.

So much is said of women being better educated that they may be better companions and mothers of men! They should be fit for such companionship Earth knows no fairer, holier relation than that of a mother. But a being of infinite scope must not be treated with an exclusive view to any one relation.⁸⁹

The passages raise questions about the nature and meaning of a woman's existence.

The occupations of writing and lecturing drew Margaret's attention since they were her occupations:

As to the use of the pen, there was quite as much opposition to woman's possessing herself of that help to free-agency as there is now to her seizing on the rostrum of the desk; and she is likely to draw, from a permission to plead her cause that way, opposite inferences to what might be wished by those who now grant it.

As to the possibility of her filling, with grace and dignity, any such position, we should think those who had seen the great actresses, and heard the Quaker preachers of modern times, would not doubt, that woman can express publicly the fulness of thought and emotion, without losing any of the peculiar beauty of her sex.⁹⁰

Zenobia would have agreed that public speaking allowed for the fullest expression of thought and emotion. She declaims about the eloquence of women and laments that society has muffled them. Through oratory a woman "can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart."⁹¹ Both passages deal with the right of women to express themselves publicly, through writing or speaking; and both touch upon the eloquence of

⁸⁹Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 35.

⁹⁰Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 12-13.

⁹¹Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 120.

women speakers. Fuller talks of expressing "the fulness of thought and emotion," Zenobia of "her intellect and the depth of her heart." Again, similar ideas are expressed in somewhat the same language and in almost exactly the same order.

On the fringe of conventional society, Fuller had a great deal of empathy for the outlaws who defied narrow definitions of a woman's place:

Mary Wollstonecraft, like Madame Dudevant (commonly known as George Sand) in our day, was a woman whose existence better proved the need of some new interpretation of woman's rights, than anything she wrote. Such women as these, rich in genius, of most tender sympathies, and capable of high virtue and a chastened harmony, ought not to find themselves by birth in a place so narrow, that in breaking bonds they become outlaws. Were there as much room in the world for such, as in Spenser's poem for Britomart, they would not run their heads so wildly against its laws.⁹²

Hester is described as a woman " . . . not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society" ⁹³ In the Preface of The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne speaks of Zenobia as " . . . the high-spirited Woman, bruising herself against the narrow limitations of her sex" ⁹⁴ Towards the end of the romance Zenobia bitterly observes, ". . . the whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common

⁹²Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," pp. 29-30.

⁹³Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 199.

⁹⁴Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 2.

cause against the woman who swerves one hair's breadth out of the beaten track."⁹⁵ Again in these passages wording is quite similar. Fuller uses the term outlaws; Hawthorne speaks of Hester as outlawed. Fuller writes of women being in a "place so narrow;" Hawthorne writes of "narrow limitations." Fuller's women "run their heads wildly against its laws;" Hawthorne's bruise themselves against limitations imposed by society.

Although she and many other women were victimized by nineteenth century society, Fuller holds out hope for a new age: "That an era approaches which shall approximate nearer to such a temper than any has yet done, there are many tokens, indeed so many that only a few of the most prominent can here be enumerated."⁹⁶ She writes, "And will she not soon appear? The woman who shall vindicate their birthright for all women; who shall teach them what to claim, and how to use what they attain?"⁹⁷ Hester also shares such a hope:

She assured them [women who came to her for counsel], too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness. Earlier in life, Hester had vainly imagined that she herself might be the

⁹⁵Hawthorne, Blithedale Romance, p. 224.

⁹⁶Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 24.

⁹⁷Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 47.

destined prophetess, but had long since recognized the impossibility that any mission of divine and mysterious truth should be confided to a woman stained with sin, bowed down with shame, or even burdened with a life-long sorrow. The angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman, indeed, but lofty, pure, and beautiful; . . .⁹⁸

Margaret believed that the prophetess would teach women how to be whole so that their relations with others would be full and complete:

It is therefore that I would have woman lay aside all thought, such as she habitually cherishes, of being taught and led by men I would have her free from compromise, from complaisance, from helplessness, because I would have her good enough and strong enough to love one and all beings, from the fulness, not the poverty of being.⁹⁹

Fuller's "new era" corresponds to Hester's "brighter period." Fuller writes of the women who will show others how to claim and use their birthrights; Hester thinks of a new prophetess--a woman--who will reveal a higher truth about the relationship between men and women. Fuller fleshes out what the relationship might be. Women are to be strong and independent, coming to love relationships not from a position of weakness but one of strength. Then men and women will meet and love as equals.

Critics like Austin Warren have suggested that Hawthorne did not particularly like feminists.¹⁰⁰ Several cite as evidence

⁹⁸Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, p. 263.

⁹⁹Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," p. 45.

¹⁰⁰Austin Warren, "Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, and 'Nemesis,'" p. 616.

the unhappy fate of his dark women, among them Hester and Zenobia. The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance do contain a great deal of ambiguity. While both women suffer intensely because of their natures, it is clear that they held a certain fascination for Hawthorne. Nina Baym offered a penetrating comment when she noted that perhaps in spite of himself the author was attracted to the kind of women Zenobia and Hester represent:

. . . she [Zenobia] is also, most impressively and concretely, a woman, and Hawthorne outperforms the feminists in the decisive way in which he links the liberation and fulfillment of the male to his understanding of and relation to woman She is a depiction of the eternal feminine as earthy, maternal, domestic, natural, sensual, brilliant, loving, and demanding, and is described mainly in images of softness, radiance, warmth, and health, none of which are even slightly ambivalent or ambiguous in their emotional import.¹⁰¹

In other words, Hawthorne succeeded in painting portraits of women who are fully human rather than anemic representations of ideal womanhood.

Even so, Hollingsworth rejects Zenobia and Dimmesdale rejects Hester. Hawthorne's men cannot cope with the full-blooded dark women. Although Margaret Fuller in no way resembled Hester and Zenobia as far as physical beauty, one finds the same ambivalence expressed by Hawthorne towards Fuller that the

¹⁰¹Baym, "The Blithedale Romance: A Radical Reading," p. 553.

Hawthornian male expressed towards the Hawthornian feminists.
There seemed to be a mixture of admiration or fascination for
and dislike and rejection of these feminists.

CONCLUSION

Feminism was one of the major reform movements of the nineteenth century. Along with other movements it, too, grew partially out of the Romantic concern with the individual and the correlative concerns about the individual's social and political rights. In a time when more men were demanding more rights, there should be little surprise that some women surveyed their situation and decided that they were also entitled to the same rights, responsibilities, and freedoms.

Feminists made social and political gains during that century. They attained the right to express themselves publicly through writing or speaking. Colleges and universities were opened to them. They began trickling into the professions. They gained legal rights: the right to hold their own property, to conduct their own business transactions, to sue and be sued, to act as guardians of their children, to vote in some of the western states, to hold political office.

Yet although in actuality feminists did make observable gains, Hawthorne's feminists lose--on the surface at least. Perhaps it is a fortunate loss just as their fall is fortunate insofar as they penetrate more deeply into an awareness

of life. Such an awareness cannot be measured in any kind of objective terms; the gain is too personal, too subjective. One can only breathe a sigh of relief that Hester did not marry Dimmesdale and Zenobia Hollingsworth. Both deserve better; and their dark fates may have brought them, through an ironic twist, their salvation.

Nevertheless, since Hawthorne seems to have been saying that his feminists lost and since with that surface loss he displays less than wholehearted enthusiasm for the feminist cause, one may well question whether or not Hawthorne himself could have or would have formulated the feminist arguments used in the two books. Margaret Fuller's writings did predate his. Her personality seems to have had some impact upon his artistic imagination insofar as the character of Zenobia is concerned. It might also be possible that an artist not wholly capable of sympathetically formulating arguments for a cause which he did not necessarily favor would turn to the writings and conversations of a feminist whom he knew personally, draw upon her arguments, and modify them to suit his own purposes. Such a possibility is certainly suggested by the fact that for every feminist argument found in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance one might find a quite similar argument in "The Great Lawsuit," to which Hawthorne undoubtedly had access as a subscriber of The Dial, and Woman in the Nineteenth Century, which he may or may not have read.

Not only do Margaret Fuller and Zenobia have striking similarities in their personalities and interests--the self-shaping of their own strong characters, their speaking abilities, their writing of tracts about women's rights--they and Hester are concerned about the same things regarding women. They want a new society which will allow them to relate with men out of a completeness and independence of character. They would not separate themselves from the other sex, but neither are they satisfied with the dwarfing and twisting of people that comes when women must be the weaker ones and men the stronger. Nor are they willing to accept customs and laws which treat women as incompetents. Further, Hester, Zenobia, and Fuller want for women the opportunity to be more than wife and mother. Men are not restricted to one calling and women should not be since they, as well as men, possess infinite variety and talents. Like feminists of the nineteenth and twentieth century they believe that the women's rights movement is humanizing for men as well as women. When members of one sex have the freedom to find their places in society based upon their interests and abilities rather than upon their sex, members of the other sex might be free to do likewise. These common arguments espoused by Hester, Zenobia, and Margaret Fuller strongly suggest that the latter may have been the model, in part, for the two fictional heroines.

Much of the outpouring from feminists in the early part of the nineteenth century had been funneled into Margaret Fuller by the time she wrote the Dial essay in 1843. She was an heiress to their thoughts and actions and as such reflected the historical tenor of her time. Hawthorne, too, was aware of the social issues of the day; but his contact with feminism may have come more powerfully through direct contact with Margaret Fuller rather than through a general, ephemeral awareness. More than might be supposed, she could have functioned as a link between the outer world of historical movements and events and the inner world of artistic creation.

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