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"Phosphoric Glimmers" in Eden: Coverdale's Failed Allegory and Hawthorne's Moral in The Blithedale Romance

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**“Phosphoric glimmers” in Eden: Coverdale’s failed allegory and Hawthorne’s moral in
*The Blithedale Romance***

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: ALLEGORY AND HAWTHORNE	1
COVERDALE'S FAILED ALLEGORY	13
Coverdale's Unreliability	19
Coverdale as Dionysian Poet	22
Zenobia as Fallen Eve	31
Priscilla as Pandora	38
Hollingsworth as Charity and Adam	44
Minor Allegorical Figures	51
CONCLUSION: HAWTHORNE'S ALLEGORY/MORAL	58
WORKS CITED	61

Introduction: Allegory and Hawthorne

“Hawthorne does not give us his pictures or his battles covered by a fog; but there is an unnatural light, now so lurid that we cannot see distinctly by it, and now so glaring that we can scarcely see at all, except to recognize dark shadows, which makes even his smiles ghastly, and his mildest incidents catastrophes.”

(Review. [Charles Hale.] *To-Day: A Boston Literary Journal*. 17 July 1852, ii, 42; Crowley 248).

“A Romance by Nathaniel Hawthorne means no such literal or decipherable interpretation of the real world. It is a step into quite another existence, ghostly, ideal, unsubstantial, where thinly-draped spiritualities float hither and thither in their limbo of vanities.”

(Review. *Literary World*. 24 July 1852, xi, 52-4; Crowley 249).

“Between his characters and the reader falls a gauze-like veil of imagination, on which their shadows flit and move and play strange dramas replete with second-hand life. An air of unreality enshrouds all his creations. They are either dead, or have never lived, and when they pass away they leave behind them an oppressive and unwholesome chill.”

(Review. *American Whig Review*. November 1852, xvi, 417-24; Crowley 267-8).

The above are excerpts of contemporary reviews of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance*. Hawthorne’s novel is told by an unreliable first person narrator, Miles Coverdale. It begins with Coverdale, a poet, arriving home from an exhibition of the Veiled Lady, a spiritual clairvoyant. The following day, he joins the Blithedale commune, whose goal is to reform society. There he is joined by Zenobia, a writer, Silas and Mrs. Foster, who will teach the community to farm, and many others. Arriving late are William Hollingsworth, a blacksmith and philanthropist for prison reform, and Priscilla, an unknown and unexpected addition to the community who expresses a desire to be attached to Zenobia. Coverdale soon suspects both Priscilla and Zenobia of forming romantic attachments to Hollingsworth. In a retreat into the woods Coverdale later attempts to listen in on a conversation between Westervelt, a mysterious visitor, and Zenobia, assuming a history between them. That evening, as part of the community’s entertainment, Zenobia tells the

legend of the Veiled Lady at the end of which she throws a veil over Priscilla, causing her to faint.

The quartet of major characters make a habit of meeting on Sundays at a place called Eliot's pulpit to hear Hollingsworth speak; on one occasion, however, the talk turns into a heated discussion about the rights of women. On the way back, Coverdale thinks he glimpses Zenobia professing her love to Hollingsworth despite their opposing views on women. In the following major scene, Hollingsworth asks Coverdale to join his prison reform scheme and Coverdale refuses; this refusal almost completely destroys the friendship.

Back in Boston, Coverdale spies on and then meets with Zenobia, Priscilla, and Westervelt in Zenobia's apartment, which is just across from Coverdale's hotel room. He suspects some dangerous plot toward Priscilla, but discovers Hollingsworth knows she is there. After the trio leaves, Coverdale tracks down old Moodie, Priscilla's shy father, in order to hear his history. Readers learn that Moodie was once rich and very superficial; Zenobia is revealed to be his daughter, who was raised by her rich uncle after the death of her mother and disappearance of her now destitute father. Moodie's second wife, a poor woman, gave birth to Priscilla and died not long after. Priscilla became a seamstress and eventually became involved with Westervelt.

A few weeks later, Coverdale attends an exhibition of the Veiled Lady; once there he meets up with Hollingsworth. As the show begins, Coverdale recognizes Westervelt as the exhibitor. Hollingsworth climbs up on stage and tells the Veiled Lady to cast off her veil; she does so and runs to him, revealing her identity as Priscilla. Coverdale returns to Blithedale in the midst of a masquerade, two days later. He comes upon Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla at the base of Eliot's Pulpit after some final argument in which

Zenobia has been on trial. It is revealed that Hollingsworth loves Priscilla; they depart, leaving Zenobia and Coverdale behind. Coverdale attempts to console Zenobia. She departs; Coverdale falls asleep and awakes with a horrible impression that Zenobia has committed suicide. His suspicions are confirmed when her rigid body is found in a black pool in the river. The Blithedale community fails not long after her death. In the epilogue, Coverdale confesses his love for Priscilla.

Although the reviewers above express differing opinions on the success of the novel and what faults it may have, all express the sensation of something otherworldly about this book and its characters. The imagery of ghosts, mists, veils, and strange lights supports the idea that Hawthorne may not have been aiming for realism. He does expressly say in his Preface and in several letters that *The Blithedale Romance* is not a portrait of Brook Farm, the utopian commune with which he was briefly associated (Hawthorne, *Blithedale* 1-3; “To G. W. Curtis” 14 July 1852, “To an Unknown Recipient” 16 Oct 1852, *Letters 1843-1853* 569, 610). This claim opens the possibility that the novel is meant to be somewhat otherworldly, that it is, perhaps, allegory. To complicate matters further, the narrator, Miles Coverdale, creates a flawed or failing allegory—the odd light Hale mentions clashes with the reality of the characters. Yet, as FitzPatrick notes in comments on emblems, “Coverdale is Hawthorne’s creature: if Hawthorne has created badly executed emblems, has he done so intentionally, and if so, to what purpose?” (33). The same holds true for the allegory. In *The Blithedale Romance* Hawthorne’s narrator, Miles Coverdale, creates a flawed allegory through which Hawthorne sends the moral that a new Eden is impossible in a fallen world.

Allegory has been a complex and contested concept throughout its continuing history. Madsen notes that “Allegory has come to name both interpretative methods and the abstract

meaning or 'moral' that is generated by those interpretations. So the form and the substance of allegory have become hopelessly confused" (22). Leeming and Drowne define allegory as follows: "The word *allegory* comes from the Greek *allos* meaning 'other' and *agoria* meaning 'speaking.' Allegoria or other-speaking, then, refers originally to a mode of expression in which a secondary ('other') level of meaning takes precedence over the surface level" (Introduction vii). "In a written narrative, allegory involves a continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in a story, so that its persons and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale," Baldick notes ("Allegory" 5). The location of those secondary meanings, however, is debatable. Classical interpreters saw the secondary meaning as extrinsic to the primary text, whereas early Christian interpreters saw it as intrinsic to the primary text (Madsen 7). While the above speak to allegory in ancient times, the history of allegory in America, especially in the nineteenth century, is most important in this analysis.

Madsen traces some of the important changes allegory has gone through in America in her work *Allegory in America*. She notes that the Puritan colonists used allegory to interpret their experiences, trials, and "mission" in the New World, seeing their "mission" as the founding of a "redeemer nation" and any trials and suffering as punishment from God for straying from that mission (2). She argues:

What this meant, within the terms of allegorical rhetoric, was that the manifest sacred destiny of America was to subdue and to redeem the wilderness of the continent: this was the predestined future mapped out for those who would look to the biblical models inscribed by God. This vision of American national identity has since become known as American 'exceptionalism.' (2)

Puritan settlers believed that their exceptional destiny “was a divine mission to establish a perfectly reformed church which would stand as an example to all the nations of the world” (9). However, the “American exceptionalism” mindset was critiqued by Melville and Hawthorne (4). Hawthorne appears to critique “exceptionalism” in *The Blithedale Romance* through allegory by showing how an attempt to “redeem” society fails.

Allegory itself became less stable in the nineteenth century. The roots of this change are found in the post-Reformation Protestants who promoted through Scripture “direct communion with God” which resulted in the loss of a mediating interpretive authority: “The rejection of the Church as an objective arbiter of scriptural meanings meant that responsibility for accuracy in interpretation was placed with the individual and the relationship between that individual and the Holy Spirit” (Madsen 8). This emphasis on subjectivity is repeated in Coleridge’s critique of allegory.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, among the strongest critics of allegory, argues, “Now an Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot” (30). In other words, allegories are abstractions of abstractions which never connect with reality. A symbol, on the other hand, “always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative” (30). Symbols, unlike allegories in Coleridge’s terms, are part of reality as well as signs for more—the “Universal” or “Eternal” (30). In looking at Coleridge’s statements about allegory versus symbol, Madsen notes that, although Coleridge attempted to restore the Bible’s sacred power as a text, his arguments destabilized interpretations by

emphasizing the work of the individual as interpreter (83). “This investment in the subjective experience of the reader explains the attraction held by symbolism for a generation of Romantic writers, but it also explains the rise of indeterminacy and ambiguity in allegorical narratives written in the wake of Romanticism,” she states (83). The role of the individual in interpretation was altered somewhat by Emerson.

In America, Emerson expands upon Coleridge’s ideas about allegory, arguing that only certain people can read the Bible as well as the world around them symbolically; Madsen notes, “Such a capacity is the mark of genius and such a genius as this Emerson names the poet” (83). For Emerson, “The poet is the inspired individual who sees imbued in the corporeal world the operations of a world of spirit; it is the poet who is privileged to receive the dictation communicated by the ‘universal mind’” (83). Emerson argues that the poet is one who can articulate the experience of being in Nature and translate it for others (“The Poet” 188-191). He places the Poet on the same level as God (189). Not all Romantics agreed with Emerson; Hawthorne and Melville expose the fact that “The poet is allowed a prescriptive authority in Emerson’s thinking which assumes that the privileged individual is always benevolent and is always motivated by the desire for truth; Emerson does not allow for the reality of spiritual evil” (Madsen 85). Flawed and fallen individuals, then, take the place of God in interpreting the world around them. Additionally in the subjective viewpoint of Romantics, “Morality becomes a private and personal matter where the individual alone is responsible for deciding between right and wrong, good and evil with no external means of legitimizing any single choice” with the absence of “an objective scriptural authority” such as the Bible (95). Hawthorne uses the poet’s subjective interpretation in his own allegory in the figure of Miles Coverdale.

David Adams Leeming and Kathleen Morgan Drowne in their *Encyclopedia of Allegorical Literature* place Hawthorne's style in a "gray area" between allegory and symbol (Introduction viii). They argue, "There are those who would say that Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* crosses the boundary between symbol and allegory" (viii). Some scholars force Hawthorne into the category of allegorist, "yet Hawthorne should not necessarily be considered a traditional allegorist; while his stories contain numerous historical, religious, psychological, and mythic elements of allegory, they are rarely allegories in the strictest sense" ("Hawthorne, Nathaniel" 128). They conclude that Hawthorne uses the techniques of allegory to enhance his own themes (128-9).

Despite the negative attitude of some of the nineteenth century literary community toward allegory, Hawthorne uses the technique in his own work. In his article, "The Allegory and the Radical Romantic Ethic of *The Blithedale Romance*," Kent Bales argues, "My Hawthorne is an allegorist" (41). He describes the work of allegory thus: "In its explorations and definitions allegory works by contrast, the elements of which are either resolved into parallel expressions of an impulse or truth, or left in conflict (that is, left ambivalent)" (41). Specific to *The Blithedale Romance*, Bales claims, Hawthorne creates an allegory and it is then "projected through Coverdale's history" (42). He also argues that Hawthorne created two simultaneous allegories in the novel (46). The first of these is an allegory of community renewal and the choice that is made between the two ideals of Nature (Zenobia) and the Spirit (Priscilla) where Spirit is ultimately chosen and Nature rejected (42, 44-5, 49). Bales sees all four major characters as failing the community ethic of brotherhood and sisterhood (45). Additionally, the choice the community makes between Zenobia

(Nature) and Priscilla (Spirit) must not be made; they must both be incorporated to facilitate renewal (49).

The second allegory Bales analyzes is a psychological one in which the four major characters represent the parts of a single consciousness “so that ‘getting together’ in the Blithedale community successfully is analogous to ‘getting together’ the individual self” (46). Representing virtues which in the extreme have become faults, the major characters represent “ordering will” (Hollingsworth), the “will...[of] self-reliant freedom” (Zenobia), “Spirit” (Priscilla) and “taste” (Coverdale) (50). Like the first allegory, the second also depicts a failure of cohesion: “Metaphorically, and in fact, polygamy is required, a complex marriage of the four that would complete each and to which all would contribute ...Throughout hints at this solution emerge from the *leitmotiv* of knots” (52). Bales concludes that there is no hope for the characters or Blithedale without this solution (52).

Brian M. Britt’s “The Veil of Allegory in Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance*” also argues for the novel as an allegory; however, he proposes Coverdale rather than Hawthorne as the author of this unsuccessful allegory (44-5). Britt argues that the novel contains a biblical allegory in which “Coverdale personifies Adam (but also Sisera and Job) and Zenobia is Eve” (44). In his configuration Westervelt and Hollingsworth are both devils, Moodie and Priscilla are ghosts with Priscilla also in the role of the Veiled Lady, and Zenobia is not just Eve; she is “a fallen Eve persecuted as a witch who considers becoming a nun” (45). Britt looks at Walter Benjamin’s work on allegory and concludes that “Coverdale’s failure at allegory therefore comments on allegory in general” in that it tries but cannot incorporate other voices such as feminism (46, 53). He finds that rather than having

the focus and purpose of the novel on an attempted Biblical model, Hawthorne creates a book that is “about allegory” and its failure to adequately represent the world (48, 53).

Dennis Grunes agrees with Britt that Hawthorne uses allegory to critique allegory in his article, “Allegory Versus Allegory in Hawthorne.” He argues Hawthorne is “something of an anti-allegorist” in that he uses “elements of allegory and fable...not to promote moralistic postures but to question them and the kind of perception—individual, social and political—which produces them” (14). Characters and readers, in this view, think allegorically with “the rigid interpretive patterns ensuing from moralistic predilections reinforced by more or less paranoid self-defensiveness, into which we force experience, especially human confrontations of one kind or another, the better to deal with it” (14). Hawthorne aims to show readers how destructive the reduction of complex reality into black and white spiritual allegory can be (14). Grunes takes “Young Goodman Brown” as his main example of a character who reads his complex world allegorically and in the process destroys his life (15-17). Grunes’s explanations of Hawthorne’s critiques of the form of allegory through allegory will contribute to my reading of Coverdale’s attempts to render Blithedale as an allegory and Hawthorne’s resulting moral.

Beverly Haviland in “The Sin of Synecdoche: Hawthorne’s Allegory against Symbolism in ‘Rapaccini’s Daughter’” calls Hawthorne “America’s greatest allegorist” (279). She agrees with Grunes to the extent that Hawthorne uses allegory to critique modes of thinking and writing. She argues, “Hawthorne used allegory to attack the American version of romantic symbolism, transcendentalism, because he saw how vicious idealism could be in practice” (279). His main target for his critique of those who would confuse whole and part egotistically was Emerson (280-1). She notes, “The danger was not Emerson

himself, but how others used his rhetoric to justify their own selfish ends under the guise of idealism” (289). Hawthorne frustrates his readers, Haviland argues, because “Hawthorne made allegory do... what none of his illustrious predecessors had done when he valorized the real world, ambivalent about it as he might have been. Thus he irritated many of his readers because they recognized allegory, but could not make sense of it according to the tradition in which the ideal was by definition a better world” (280). The ideal rather than the real is flawed in Hawthorne’s allegories. Additionally, she argues when looking at “Rapaccini’s Daughter” that Hawthorne brings up parallels allegorically through allusion but nothing quite matches completely—all must be present at once (284-287; 293). This type of reading is demanding on the reader: “Allegory is not just in the writing, but in the reading” (282).

In her work, Madsen includes Hawthorne as one of “the most prominent of allegorists during this Romantic period” (85). She picks some of his shorter tales as examples of allegory presenting his skepticism of subjectivity in interpretation (12, 33-36). She also connects with the multiplicity of meanings that Haviland mentions, arguing, “Hawthorne tends in his allegorical narratives to place in close juxtaposition many individual interpretations in order to undermine the practical validity of subjective approaches to objective truth” (88). Within this multiplicity, “All authority is vested in the reader, but a privileged stance from which to discriminate among interpretations is denied” leading to the ambiguity of allegory in American Romanticism (102). Two types of allegories of meaning exist—typology and ironic allegory which “pursues the idealistic formula for allegory only to subvert and critique the idealistic assumptions in which the allegorical structure is grounded” (105). This is in some sense what the allegory in *The Blithedale Romance* is; Coverdale attempts to create an allegory about Eden but Hawthorne cuts it out from under him to send

the message that a journey to a prelapsarian world through reform is impossible, a critique which calls to mind “American exceptionalism.” In a somewhat “settled” America, reformers look to “redeem” and tame society rather than the land.

Martin FitzPatrick’s work with Hawthorne’s emblems applies to the way in which Hawthorne may be using allegory in *The Blithedale Romance*. Hawthorne’s style often uses “complexity and indirectness” in varying ways but especially in emblems that “are so vital and immediate as to border on the obvious, but so delicately realized that to restate or name their effect is difficult, continually clumsy, and inadequate” (FitzPatrick 28). FitzPatrick points to Hawthorne’s explanation of his own style in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (30-1). Here Hawthorne states:

The Author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod—or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude. A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skillfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first. (2-3)

In *The Blithedale Romance*, Coverdale fails at Hawthorne’s style, “sticking a pin through [the] butterfly” of every emblem he tries to create (FitzPatrick 27-33). This discrepancy in styles allows Hawthorne’s own style to shine and to produce a form of irony (27-8). Both Hawthorne’s statements about too direct an approach and FitzPatrick’s about Coverdale’s botched attempts at Hawthorne’s style apply to allegory as well as emblems. Approaching an allegory too obviously may be part of the above critiques of allegory; allegories have lost

any subtlety they had. Coverdale's mistakes allow Hawthorne's moral of the novel to peek through; *Blithedale's* moral, as FitzPatrick discovers, is not the one stated in the text (43). In being subtle and ambiguous, Hawthorne demands much from his readers; as Haviland and Madsen have noted above, readers face the task of sifting through multiple meanings in an attempt to make sense of Hawthorne's allegories. I argue that for *The Blithedale Romance* Hawthorne and Coverdale provide hints to the allegory but demand that the reader expend substantial interpretive effort. In essence, then, Hawthorne's style of allegory occupies the border between allegory and allegoresis. The result is a failed allegory created by the narrator which allows Hawthorne's moral of the impossibility of a new Eden to shine through.

Coverdale's Failed Allegory

Hawthorne's narrator, Coverdale, is the author of an attempted allegory in the novel. Two major signs indicate Coverdale's involvement in the creation of this allegory: hints to the readers in the form of ghostly or otherworldly descriptions, and allusions to mythical and biblical personages. Throughout his narrative, Coverdale uses otherworldly language which breaks down into three categories: ghosts or spirits, dead bodies, and creatures like goblins, sprites, and devils. What initially sets the stage for his later allegory is the use of this language in descriptions of the setting.

Coverdale's depictions of the landscape and memories of the events signal readers that the narrative to follow may not be entirely what it seems on the surface. The first of these descriptions comes at the beginning of Chapter Two as Coverdale begins the description of Blithedale with the fire awaiting the arrival of the community members (Hawthorne 9). He describes the way in which he must stir up the fire in his memory:

The staunch oaken-logs were long ago burnt out. Their genial glow must be represented, if at all, by the merest phosphoric glimmer, like that which exudes, rather than shines, from damp fragments of decayed trees, deluding the benighted wanderer through a forest. Around such chill mockery of a fire, some few of us might sit on the withered leaves, spreading out each a palm towards the imaginary warmth, and talk over our exploded scheme for beginning the life of Paradise anew. (9)

Blithedale and the memories of it become like a will o' the wisp, a strange ghostly light deceiving those who follow it. Coverdale already hints at the downfall of the commune. He also already hints at something beyond the surface of appearances, as the "phosphoric glimmer" is a "mockery of a fire" (9). The next image of the Blithedale community as

otherworldly comes on the first evening of the venture. In the midst of a snowstorm and the failing light of day, Coverdale remarks “It [the storm] seemed to have arisen for our especial behoof; a symbol of the cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the boundaries of ordinary life” (18). Here the weather becomes symbolic of “distrustful phantoms” that, like the fire above, suggest something unseen about the commune’s venture (18). Once again, Coverdale implies the experimental society was not what it seemed and was in fact more dangerous than it seemed; it has an otherworldly cast.

Coverdale also seeks to separate Blithedale from its historical time and place. He notes upon his return to Boston that his time at Blithedale could be considered just another summer “But, considered in a profounder relation, it was part of another age, a different state of society, a segment of an existence peculiar in its aims and methods, a leaf of some mysterious volume, interpolated into the current history which Time was writing off” (146). He also has trouble discerning which is real—Boston or Blithedale: “The next instant, Blithedale looked vague, as if it were at a distance both in time and space, and so shadowy, that a question might be raised whether the whole affair had been anything more than the thoughts of a speculative man” (146). He distances Blithedale from everyday existence and makes the reader question whether any of it is more than Coverdale’s own imagination. What Coverdale may be doing with these references is making Blithedale not entirely immediate, therefore making it a likely setting for allegory.

This otherworldly or ghostly language is not confined to the setting, however; Coverdale glosses the four central characters as well as the minor ones with the same “phosphoric glimmer” (Hawthorne 9). From early in the narrative Zenobia is described in

this language. The first evening of the Blithedale experiment Coverdale remarks, “I was taking note of Zenobia’s aspect; and it impressed itself on me so distinctly, that I can now summon her up like a ghost, a little wanner than the life, but otherwise identical with it” (15). The irony here is that Zenobia is dead at the time Coverdale writes the narrative.

Additionally, Coverdale describes Zenobia as a witch (48), as one of the “goblins of flesh and blood” (157), “as pale, in her rich attire, as if a shroud were round her”—a dead body (167), as deathly pale (223), and as deathly cold (227). Shortly before her suicide, after she has left Coverdale for the last time, he states, “But, whether it was the strong impression of the foregoing scene, or whatever else the cause, I was affected with a fantasy that Zenobia had not actually gone, but was still hovering about the spot, and haunting it” (228). As above mentioned, Zenobia is dead at the time of the narrative which could explain why Coverdale describes her in this ghostly language; however, this fact does not explain why the rest of the characters receive the same treatment.

Priscilla, for instance, is described with more of these terms than the other characters. Some of the ghostly language is accounted for in her role as the mysterious Veiled Lady. However, as in Zenobia’s situation, this does not adequately explain Coverdale’s use of it outside those situations. For example, Priscilla’s arrival at Blithedale produces a set of descriptions as to her otherworldly aspect. Coverdale himself notes, “The fantasy occurred to me, that she was some desolate kind of a creature, doomed to wander about in snow-storms, and that, though the ruddiness of our window-panes had tempted her into a human dwelling, she would not remain long enough to melt the icicles out of her hair” (27). Silas Foster notes that Priscilla should stay, eat, and work hard “and, in a week or two, she’ll begin to look like a creature of this world!” (31). She is also repeatedly called shadowy:

“shadowlike girl” (77), “I almost imagined her a shadow, fading gradually into the dimness of the wood” (125), and “shadowy grace, and those mysterious qualities which make her seem diaphanous with spiritual light” (129). Both Zenobia and Priscilla have connections to the spiritual realm—Zenobia through her death and Priscilla through her work as the Veiled Lady.

However, it is not only the women who receive the spirit-like treatment. Hollingsworth, Westervelt, old Moodie, Foster and even Coverdale himself are characterized by these otherworldly descriptors. Hollingsworth’s philanthropic schemes make him a ghost of the future: “Unlike all other ghosts, his spirit haunted an edifice which, instead of being time-worn, and full of storied love, and joy, and sorrow, had never yet come into existence” (56). He is also called “a dragon” (71) and one of the “goblins of flesh and blood” (157). Coverdale describes their parting before Coverdale leaves for the city as the meeting of two corpses: “Being dead henceforth to him, and he to me, there could be no propriety in our chilling one another with the touch of two corpse-like hands, or playing at looks of courtesy with eyes that were impenetrable beneath the glaze and the film” (143). Coverdale’s additional descriptions of himself include, “I betook myself away, and wandered up and down, like an exorcised spirit that had been driven from its old haunts, after a mighty struggle” (194) and as a spirit drifting through the woods (207). Westervelt is delineated as having “almost the effect of an apparition” (91), as inhabited by the Devil (94), “a wizened little elf, gray and decrepit, with nothing genuine about him, save the wicked expression of his grin” (95), “a goblin” (127), and as the Devil’s servant (158). Old Moodie’s sidling aspect makes him ripe for descriptions as a ghost (82-3), “a spirit, assuming visibility close to your elbow” (179), and “the wretchedest old ghost in the world” (179). Even the farmer Silas

Foster is glossed with this vocabulary. On the first evening of Blithedale, for example, “The steam arose from his soaked garments, so that the stout yeoman looked vaporous and spectre-like” (18). Such a pervading otherworldly vocabulary leads me to believe that it serves a purpose beyond decoration. Coverdale covers all the named characters but one, Mrs. Foster, in these terms. He sets an otherworldly tone for the novel, prompting readers to suspect the characters are not exactly what they seem. There is, perhaps, a transparency to them, or they are flesh and blood people hinting at something beyond their material existence. Their actions and attitudes signify a greater meaning than the interactions of members of a small commune. Coverdale challenges his readers, then, to probe a little deeper, to discover who or what these characters represent.

Coverdale also employs allusion in an attempt to get his readers to look beyond the surface toward allegory. Throughout the work, he incorporates allusions into the descriptions of the characters. In discussing Cicero’s treatment of allegory, Madsen notes, “The technique by which the allegorical text prescribes its own interpretation is allusion” (14). Coverdale uses this technique to direct readers toward his allegory. However, he makes things more challenging by making multiple allusions for some of the characters. Zenobia is alluded to as Pride (Hawthorne 14), Eve (16-17), Nature (101), Queen Zenobia (213), Eros (Miller 369), the head witch at a Witches’ Sabbath (Cary 42), biblical Jael (Britt 50), a pilgrim (Britt 45), the Veiled Lady (Lewis 76), and Flora (Bales 44). Miller connects Zenobia to several people from Hawthorne’s life: Martha Hunt, a school teacher who committed suicide much as Zenobia does (367), Mary Silsbee, a wealthy young woman who pursued Hawthorne (145-7), his wife Sophia who joined him in private, lavish masquerades (223), and Margaret Fuller (235, 367). Cary also notes the similarities between Fuller and

Zenobia, claiming, “In essence, Hawthorne’s portrait of Fuller as Zenobia is fictionalized biography” (32). The other main woman in the story, Priscilla, receives fewer allusions. The allusions to who or what she may represent include a May Queen (Hawthorne 61), pilgrim (Britt 45), and Spirituality or Spirit (Hawthorne 142-3). Once again, there may be a biographical influence. In his notebook from his time at Brook Farm, Hawthorne records the brief stay of a young seamstress, although she was a little more lively and outgoing than Priscilla (*American Notebooks* “Saturday, October 9, [1841]” 209-10). The note to this passage states that Hawthorne “drew on this paragraph for his depiction of Priscilla” (Simpson 606 n209.7-8).

The men in the story are also attached to several allusions. Hollingsworth presents a figure of a philanthropist or Charity (Hawthorne 21-2), a Titan (136), a Puritan Judge (214), John Eliot, Apostle to the American Indians (118), and Bluebeard (226). Allusions for Westervelt include the Devil (94), the Western World (Bales 48), worldly society (Hawthorne 101), James Nathan, who was in a relationship with Fuller at one point (Cary 39; Cargill 186), and Earthliness or Sin (Hawthorne 241). Coverdale uses allusions for himself, including Lust in his admiration of Zenobia’s body (14-17), Job (40), Sisera (38), Christian from *Pilgrim’s Progress* (61), a Greek Chorus (97), Adam (Britt 44) October (Hawthorne 99), Bacchus or Dionysus (99, 208), a pilgrim (Britt 45), Oracle or prophet (Hawthorne 101, 139, 143), and Destiny (154). Berlant and Britt, among other critics, point to a possible historical namesake, Miles Coverdale, “the first person to publish a complete English translation of the Bible” (Britt 44; Berlant 33); Berlant also argues, “he [Coverdale] may also be the namesake of Miles Standish, whose military and amorous mediations between Native American and colonial culture are legend,” a relationship revealed for her by Kraus (33, 57

n5). Britt further comments, “Blithedale also signifies the American Eden of the Massachusetts Bay Colony” as well as the biblical Eden (48). Coverdale does allude to Paradise or Eden in his thoughts of stirring up the memory of the community (9). The problem with these allusions for the characters is that there are so many of them; Coverdale leaves it to his readers to discover which one or ones apply to any given character in his narrative. Coverdale’s allegory tells the story of Eve and, possibly, Pandora competing for Adam/Charity. Both women are involved with the Devil and have Pride, who has become Shame, as a father. Adam/Charity chooses Pandora over Eve; Eve commits suicide, and the community falls apart. All of the action is watched by Dionysus/Transcendental poet who draws the moral of the corruption of Charity. The allegory as a whole, with its Edenic slant, calls to mind “American exceptionalism” and the drive to start anew and renew the world. The allegory’s failure implies a critique of that exceptionalism stance.

Coverdale’s Unreliability

The difficulty with Coverdale’s account of the events of the Blithedale commune is his unreliability. Many critics, including Bales (42), Bumás (133) and FitzPatrick (31), recognize this quality in him. Reviews in Hawthorne’s time recognized it as well. Hale writes, “The story upon which the series of pictures and conversations is centered is shrouded with doubt, by being told by one who is a spectator, and not an actor; and a sort of supernatural glow is given to its results, by the ignorance in which the reader had been kept by the supposed ignorance of the narrator” (248). McElroy and McDonald argue that because Coverdale is a participant as well as the narrator “There is...an unusual potential for ambiguity in this Hawthorne novel” (1). Cary calls him “transparently unreliable” (33). FitzPatrick, like McElroy and McDonald, argues that Coverdale’s claim to be like a Greek

“Chorus” exposes some unreliability: “While we may be unsure whether to consider this self-delusion or manipulation of the reader, clearly Coverdale is inconsistent, unreliable, untrustworthy” (32). Temple argues, “[Coverdale’s] propensity to embellish observations with poetic ‘fancy’ reveals that events may not have happened even remotely as he has described them” (303). Coverdale, as is evident from the critical agreement above, is plainly unreliable.

Examples of Coverdale’s unreliable behavior toward readers is evident throughout the narrative. He admits to exaggerating Hollingsworth’s faults in painting a portrait of him (Hawthorne 71). In his hermitage, he does not overhear Zenobia and Westervelt’s conversation; yet he imagines what the relationship between the two characters may be (102-3) and remarks, “What I seem to remember, I yet suspect may have been patched together by my fancy, in brooding over the matter, afterwards” before reporting part of the conversation (104). As another example, he admits his unreliability immediately before reporting old Moodie’s background. He tells readers, “having once got the clue, my subsequent researches acquainted me with the main facts of the following narrative; although, in writing it out, my pen has perhaps allowed itself a trifle of romantic and legendary license, worthier of a small poet than of a grave biographer” (181). Coverdale’s allusions to himself as Job “and the comparison of a head cold with Job’s suffering illustrates Coverdale’s tendency to distort truth through allegory,” argues Britt (52). In his admissions of unreliability “Coverdale is a candid narrator. However, his self-conscious candor includes a suggestion of repressed truth” (Mills 1). What that truth is or what Coverdale’s motivations are for being unreliable prompts a variety of answers from critics.

Coverdale's reasons for embellishing or distorting the truth of the story puzzle readers and critics alike. Hume agrees to some extent with McElroy and McDonald in their assertion that Coverdale has murdered Zenobia and that the holes in the text are part of the evidence (387-8). Hume is not as firm as McElroy and McDonald in her arguments; she states, "The question is not whether he literally murders Zenobia...but whether Hawthorne, in his manipulation of Coverdale, has created a murderous narrator who, like one of Poe's more ambivalently murderous narrators, attempts to use his narration to justify and conceal his darker nature" (393). Mills also has a negative if not as violent theory on Coverdale's motives. She believes Coverdale choreographs the conflict between the two women in order to prevent a bond that would threaten male supremacy (117). Tanner sees Zenobia as a threat to Coverdale, but in the capacity of an intelligent female artist who sees through his attempts to fill in the gaps with his own fancy (par. 1, 51, 16-19). Bales believes that the unreliability comes from Hawthorne's projection of an allegory through Coverdale. He argues, "Since Coverdale is unaware of his allegory, it becomes confused or silly if one adopts his stance—as most readers have done" (42-3). I disagree; Coverdale is very aware of the allegory as it is his attempted overarching allegory. His inconsistencies come from this attempt. As Bumás notes, Coverdale "would like to be omniscient but [his] authority is questioned by both the other characters and attentive readers who pick up the contradictions in his story" (138). Coverdale does want God-like omniscience and his place as a human participant without omniscience in the narrative renders his tale incomplete. His attempts at placing an allegory on the events at Blithedale fail partly due to this very reason.

Coverdale as Dionysian Poet

Coverdale places himself in a dual allegorical role; he represents both Dionysus and an Emerson-style Poet. Coverdale's hermitage closely connects him to the classical deity of Dionysus. He tells readers:

I counted the innumerable clusters of my vine, and forereckoned the abundance of my vintage. It gladdened me to anticipate the surprise of the Community, when, like an allegorical figure of rich October, I should make my appearance, with shoulders bent beneath the burthen of ripe grapes, and some of the crushed ones crimsoning my brow as with a blood-stain. (99)

Although Coverdale refers to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Penguin 255 n58), he also evokes images of Dionysus, the god of wine (Price and Kearns, "Dionysus" 169). What strengthens this image is Coverdale's later pairing of the grapes in the hermitage with Dionysus: "Methought a wine might be pressed out of them, possessing a passionate zest, and endowed with a new kind of intoxicating quality, attended with such *bacchanalian ecstasies* as the tamer grapes of Madeira, France, and the Rhine, are inadequate to produce" (Hawthorne 208 emphasis mine). He sees himself as presiding over a harvest of grapes that will produce the sort of "ritual madness or ecstasy (*mania*)" Dionysus or Bacchus was associated with (Price and Kearns "Dionysus" 169).

Coverdale forges a stronger connection between himself and Dionysus through the province of theatre. Dionysus was not only the god of wine but also the god of "the mask, impersonation, and the fictional world of the theatre" ("Dionysus" 169). Two ancient festivals to the god were "The Rural Dionysia" and "The City Dionysia," both of which involved theatrical performances or competitions of tragedies and comedies ("Dionysia"

168). Lewis notes the pervasiveness of the language of theatre in the novel (80). He cites the following passage as an example: “There now needed only Hollingsworth and old Moodie to complete the knot of characters, whom a real intricacy of events, greatly assisted by my method of insulating them from other relations, had kept so long upon my mental stage, as actors in a drama” (Hawthorne 156; Lewis 80). Lewis identifies three types of theatricality in the novel:

These may be broadly defined as, one, the theatre of concealment and manipulative control; two, theatricality as an effort to remould society and to redefine one’s destiny in the world; and lastly, a theatricality which attempts to break through to an absolute authenticity, to penetrate not only the masquerade of society, but also the veils of nature itself, to lay bare the mysteries of life and death. (75)

He notes theatrical allusions in the text to Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, and *Hamlet* as well as to Milton’s *Comus* (76-78). Lewis notes of Zenobia’s Legend that “It is a play, yet it is also a play within a play, and both are ultimately enclosed within the ‘private theatre’ of Coverdale’s memory and imagination” (79). Coverdale seems to feel a sense of entitlement to be the spectator for all the dramatic events at Blithedale and in Boston.

Throughout the novel, Coverdale expresses his sense of duty and entitlement to watch the other characters play out the drama of their lives. This feeling connects to his self-placement as a Dionysian figure in the text; as the god of theatre he is entitled to view all of the plays put on for his own enjoyment. He tells readers, “He [Hollingsworth]—and Zenobia and Priscilla, both for their own sakes and as connected with him—were separated from the rest of the Community, to my imagination, and stood forth as the indices of a problem which it was my business to solve” (Hawthorne 69). Additionally, he notes, “these three characters

figured so largely on my private theatre” (70). Later, when he makes his “Chorus” remarks, he states that Destiny usually places a person to play the part of audience to the drama of others, placing himself in the role of audience (97). Coverdale takes his role as audience seriously. After spying on Zenobia and Priscilla in Boston, he notes, “As for me, I would look on, as it seemed my part to do, understandingly, if my intellect could fathom the meaning and the moral, and, at all events reverently and sadly” (157). These statements reinforce his connection to Dionysus; he presides over the theatre of Blithedale and feels it is his duty to extract the meaning from it.

The sense that Coverdale expresses above of finding “the meaning and the moral” of the events he sees relates to a more contemporary figure, one that Coverdale more closely embodies in his own allegory, the Transcendental poet (157). As Madsen notes above, for Emerson, “The poet is the inspired individual who sees imbued in the corporeal world the operations of a world of spirit; it is the poet who is privileged to receive the dictation communicated by the ‘universal mind’” (83). Emerson, in his essay “The Poet,” argues that the poet is one who can articulate the experience of being in Nature and translate it for non-poets (188-191). He equates the poet with God: “The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the center. For the world is not painted or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive potentate, but is emperor in his own right” (189). Additionally, he seems to imbue the poet with foresight: “The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold” (190). However, “The path of things is silent...A spy they will not suffer; a lover, a

poet, is the transcendency of their own nature,—him they will suffer” (198). Coverdale places himself in this role in his own allegory.

Coverdale’s actions throughout the narrative reveal this allegorical role. To begin, he is a poet. Readers recognize this fact from the beginning of the novel when Zenobia, upon meeting him, declares, “I have long wished to know you, Mr. Coverdale, and to thank you for your beautiful poetry, some of which I have learned by heart;—or, rather, it has stolen into my memory, without my exercising any choice or volition about the matter” (14). Coverdale himself expresses the desire that being at Blithedale will allow his poetry to elevate further until it is “something that shall have the notes of wild-birds twittering though it, or a strain like the wind-anthems in the woods” (14). This sounds remarkably like the translation of the experience of nature into poetry which Emerson describes (188-191). What is even more important for this analysis is the assumption that the Emersonian poet is the one to receive and translate the secrets of the universe and is entitled to this role much in the way Dionysus is privileged to see the theatrics (Madsen 83). Coverdale repeatedly expresses this inclination through his spying and prying.

Coverdale relentlessly spies on his fellow Blithedalers in order to learn their secrets. Early in the novel, he tells Zenobia he is trying to figure out “the mystery of your life” (Hawthorne 47). He regrets getting angry at Westervelt later in the novel, thinking he could have used him to obtain information regarding Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla (96). He spies on Zenobia, Priscilla and Westervelt through the windows of Zenobia’s apartment (155-9). After this moment, Coverdale makes a speech which reveals his perception of his role in the narrative:

For, was mine a mere vulgar curiosity? Zenobia should have known me better than to suppose it. She should have been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart, which impelled me (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in other lives, and to endeavor by generous sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned me—to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves. Of all possible observers, methought, a woman, like Zenobia, and a man, like Hollingsworth, should have selected me. (160)

He also describes how he would have helped mediate any punishment and would have tempered it with love (161). Coverdale wholeheartedly believes that it is his duty as an Emersonian poet to perceive things beyond his companions' knowledge and translate the overall purpose or design that they cannot perceive. He believes himself to be the one capable of distilling a moral, of comprehending the broad sweep of events and people and knowing what it portends (157).

Another factor which makes Coverdale more of a Transcendental poet figure is his desire to be prophetically omniscient. The first night at Blithedale, Coverdale is filled with feverish visions: "Had I made a record of that night's half-waking dreams, it is my belief that it would have anticipated several of the chief incidents of this narrative, including a dim shadow of its catastrophe" (Hawthorne 38). He simultaneously foreshadows the end of Zenobia and begins his trend of seeing himself as prophet. Hume, on the other hand, argues that Coverdale's visions during and after his illness are part of his makeup as a "mad" narrator (391). Given Coverdale's consistent self portrayal as a Transcendental poet, I argue

that although readers may doubt whether he had these impressions during or after the commune, they would not see this as evidence of insanity. Toward the end of his illness, he notes, “Zenobia’s sphere, I imagine, impressed itself powerfully on mine and transformed me, during this period of my weakness, into something like a mesmeric clairvoyant” (47). This comment precedes his prying into Zenobia’s sexual past.

An additional prophetic reference occurs in Boston; Coverdale, upon leaving the commune, notes that his “deep heart” knows the pain of what has happened between him and the other three main characters but he has not listened. He notes, “Were my life to be spent over again, I would invariably lend my ear to this Cassandra of the inward depths, however clamorous the music and the merriment of a more superficial region” (139). The classical Cassandra was blessed by the gift of prophecy from Apollo, but upon refusing his advances, he cursed her so that she would always foretell the truth but no one would believe her. Coverdale acknowledges that his “Cassandra” of a heart was telling the truth but he refused to believe it, following the pattern of the mythical prophetic woman. All these examples reinforce Coverdale’s place in his own allegory as the god-like poet, one who sees all, sees beyond the surface into secret depths and even the future, and will translate what he finds for the rest of the community. This sense of translation may connect to his possible namesake of Miles Coverdale who translated the Bible. One problem with this sense of psychic or prophetic ability, however, is that Coverdale is writing his narrative years after everything has happened. Any sense of a tragedy to come are coming from a writer aware that a tragedy did occur, leading back into his unreliability as a narrator and as an allegorist. Any professed prophetic impulse may be just pretense, placed in the text by hindsight.

The figure of the poet or Dionysus, Coverdale, fails to embody his allegorical counterpart due partly to selfishness, partly to his own fallen human nature. Temple, who sees the novel filled with the problems of consumerism, argues of Coverdale's confession that his time at Blithedale was just a romantic vacation; he was never truly invested in the social project. Bales also examines Coverdale's confession and finds him extremely narcissistic: "In short, he confesses his love for Priscilla with his own mirror image bright in his mind's eye, perhaps even literally in his eye" (53). Indeed, from the start Coverdale expresses more interest in himself than in any other person or the Blithedale community as a whole. When asked by Moodie to do him a favor, Coverdale responds:

‘A very great one!’ repeated I, in a tone that must have expressed but little alacrity of beneficence, although I was ready to do the old man any amount of kindness *involving no special trouble to myself*. (Hawthorne 7 emphasis mine)

Although he later professes interest, Coverdale's first instincts are to himself and his separate individuality. He also expresses the desire to remove himself from the community; "Unless renewed by a yet farther withdrawal towards the inner circle of self-communion, I lost the better part of my individuality," he states (89). Coverdale "protects his privacy and celibacy" in the hermitage (Miller 371-2). Bales's argument applies to Coverdale as well as to the sisters: "The sisters' failure to fulfill their allegorical roles does not invalidate the roles, however; the roles set the standard (impossibly high, to be sure), state the ideal. The allegory shows us these ideals; the novel shows us persons failing to fulfill them" (44-5).

Paradoxically, Coverdale's involvement in the plot renders his allegorical figure of the poet ineffectual; he is too interested and involved to play the part of poet, watching everything from an unbiased distance. He is instead more of an interested spy, something

which the universe will not tolerate as an observer (Emerson 198). One reason why Coverdale fails to be the poet/observer of his allegory is his love/lust interest in the other characters, specifically Zenobia. The first night at Blithedale, his comments indicate his sexual attraction to her: “She was dressed as simply as possible, in an American print,...but with a silken kerchief, between which and her gown there was one glimpse of a white shoulder. It struck me as a great piece of good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse” (Hawthorne 15). Later that night, he imagines her naked or nearly so “in Eve’s earliest garment” (17). Berlant argues that “Both in his eyes and his imagination, and even in his translations, Coverdale undresses the woman at Blithedale: Zenobia—or should I say Zenobia’s body—is the main recipient of the narrative gaze of heterosexual desire” (35). Coverdale does indeed stare at Zenobia’s body; “I know not well how to express, that the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust...compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her,” he states (Hawthorne 44). He does qualify this seeming squeamishness at Zenobia’s sexuality by blaming it on his illness (44). Temple believes that Coverdale is attracted to Zenobia but that “her frank sexuality...poses a threat, both to himself and to the hopes of the Blithedale community” (293). That threat comes from her lack of virginity; she is not coming to the project “fresh and virginal” (294). Berlant agrees; “Paradoxically, he [Coverdale] disempowers Zenobia by fully sexualizing her” and, upon this “discovery” of her loss of virginity, he loses interest in her (35). Both his interest and his sense of injury from her create an ambivalent attitude (Hume 387), and yet Coverdale still shows signs of interest and perhaps love for Zenobia later in the novel. McElroy and McDonald convincingly argue that Coverdale loves Zenobia: “Before they

[Hollingsworth, Foster, and Coverdale] have even determined whether Zenobia is dead, and before they have taken up the question of mourning, Coverdale is collecting his share of this love-martyr's relics" (40). This is a good point; if Coverdale's confession is true, then why does he keep Zenobia's shoe? McElroy and McDonald also make the point that if Coverdale is truly in love with Priscilla then "why, during his last interview with her, years after their acquaintance at Blithedale, did Zenobia's memory so entirely dominate his behavior?" (2). Coverdale's love for Zenobia, then, appears to last longer than the social experiment.

A second major love interest that critics have pointed to for Coverdale's involvement in Blithedale is Hollingsworth. The two men do forge a strong bond during Coverdale's illness, Coverdale even going so far as to wish he would die because he has found a true friend who will go to the end with him (Hawthorne 41-2). Miller sees biographical connections once again: "Coverdale is in main outlines a self-portrait of Hawthorne's seeming weaknesses and effeminacy as artist and chilled, detached observer, and Hollingsworth embodies Melville's aggression and need of a 'brother' as well as the monomania and fanaticism" (357). Berlant sees the men's relationship as pivotal, as well, arguing, "The erotic relationship between Coverdale and Hollingsworth suggests that Coverdale's real 'secret,' the one that 'possibly may have had something to do with these inactive years of meridian manhood, with my bachelorship' is that he—himself—was in love—with—Hollingsworth" (36). Coverdale does, however, admit twice to having "loved" Hollingsworth; once after making his "microscope speech" about Hollingsworth's character ("Had I loved him less, I might have used him better" [69]) and the second time shortly afterwards ("I loved Hollingsworth, as has already been enough expressed" [70]). Coverdale is not shy about using the word "love" to characterize his relationship with Hollingsworth,

which makes me doubt that it is his big secret; additionally, this love may be part of the “sibling rhetoric” of the commune or the love between friends (Mills 98). Either way, Coverdale’s involvement in the narrative partly explains the failure of his allegory; he is not the aloof poetic observer, but one of the participants, scrambling for control.

Zenobia as Fallen Eve

Blithedale’s narrator also creates allegorical counterparts of the other main characters. Coverdale places Zenobia in the allegorical role of Eve. In their first encounter at Blithedale, Coverdale notices Zenobia’s beauty and intellect, and upon the mention of their commune as Paradise he pictures her “in Eve’s earliest garment” (17). He continues, recognizing she has something other women do not:

We seldom meet with women, now-a-days, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all; their sex fades away and goes for nothing, in ordinary intercourse. Not so with Zenobia. One felt an influence breathing out of her, such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying—‘Behold, here is a woman!’ Not that I would convey the idea of especial gentleness, grace, modesty, and shyness, but of a certain warm and rich characteristic, which seems, for the most part, to have been refined away out of the feminine system. (17)

Zenobia is Eve, newly created, a complete woman, not what fallen women have become. She has qualities that “have been refined away out of the feminine system,” and although “refined” might indicate a distaste for Zenobia’s qualities, Coverdale uses it to express his appreciation for her uniqueness. As such, “Zenobia’s obvious sexuality and natural independence are threatening... but reflect a real, fully developed womanhood” (Mills 107).

She views herself as equal to men—Eve as equal to Adam. This stance is evident in her feminism.

However, Zenobia, throughout the allegory, shows herself to be the fallen rather than pristine Eve. Her flower, for instance, is a symbol of both positions. Coverdale's first description of it notes that "it was more indicative of the pride and pomp, which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character, than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair" (15). In looking at Zenobia's flower Britt argues that it points to Eden and that "Zenobia thus combines the qualities of a warrior queen...with those of the sinful first mother" (50). Zenobia later calls the flower "the one relic of my more brilliant, my happier days!" which may be taken as a reference to the Garden of Eden (45). But as Zenobia notes, those days are gone. If we are to believe Coverdale's retelling and embellishing of Moodie's past, then Zenobia grew up without a mother and, in reference to her character, "There was good in it, and evil" (189). Growing up without parents adds to the feel of Zenobia as Eve. Additionally, and again, if Coverdale is trustworthy at this point, Zenobia was rumored to have been attached to someone (presumably Westervelt) and "so great was her native power and influence, and such seemed the careless purity of her nature, that whatever Zenobia did was generally acknowledged as right for her to do" (189-90). Although she is not censured at this point in her life, she is critiqued by Coverdale and others at Blithedale for this association with Westervelt, the Devil.

Zenobia's interaction with Westervelt both adds to and detracts from her role as Eve in Coverdale's narrative. In prying into her sexuality, Coverdale "discovers" or imputes that Zenobia is "not exactly maidenlike" and that "Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!" (47).

McElroy and McDonald remark that “Coverdale seems to hold to an idea of Zenobia as having been a fallen woman—somewhat loose, though not promiscuous, and surely discreet and queenly—possibly driven by an odious marriage to Westervelt to seek carnal satisfaction outside wedlock” (16 n5). Coverdale’s comments while watching Zenobia and Westervelt’s meeting point to a past relationship, but not necessarily the kind described by McElroy and McDonald: “No passion, save of the senses; no holy tenderness, nor the delicacy that results from this. Externally, they [men like Westervelt] bear a close resemblance to other men, and have perhaps all save the finest grace; but when a woman wrecks herself on such a being, she ultimately finds that the real womanhood, within her, has no corresponding part in him” (Hawthorne 103). Coverdale suggests that Zenobia has been seduced by Westervelt sometime in the past. Hume argues, “With the entrance of Westervelt, Coverdale comes to believe that Zenobia is or has been involved in a sinister sexual mystery (which he cannot solve)” (395). While there are unanswered questions in regard to Zenobia and Westervelt’s relationship, the answers are not necessarily what are important; what is important is that Coverdale conveys the sense that Zenobia has somehow fallen through her association with Westervelt. In the allegory Eve being seduced to fall by the Devil fits, yet this all happens before she arrives at Blithedale/Eden and meets Adam/Charity (Hollingsworth) which skews the timeline of the biblical reference.

Like Coverdale, Zenobia has a love interest that determines her actions. Zenobia is in love with Hollingsworth (Eve is in love with Adam/Charity) a fact which explains much of her behavior toward him. Before Hollingsworth appears on the scene, readers are given clues of Zenobia’s love for or interest in Hollingsworth. When asked by Coverdale if she knows Hollingsworth, Zenobia replies, “only as an auditor—auditress, I mean—of some of his

lectures” (Hawthorne 21). Mills accounts for this correction by remarking, “Zenobia’s sense of her gender identity has become confused: she rethinks her original impulse to use a masculine or nongendered noun to refer to herself and substitutes a more clearly feminized and socially acceptable term” (104). If one keeps reading the text, however, more clues are given as to her reasons for correction. Zenobia continues after the above remark, saying, “Yet not so much an intellectual man, I should say, as a great heart; at least, he moved me more deeply than I think myself capable of being moved, except by the stroke of a true, strong heart against my own” (21). These words show her feelings for Hollingsworth. Therefore, her correction above may have been made because, having heard him speak, Zenobia might be aware of his feelings toward women and remembering this, she corrects herself. Hollingsworth’s and Zenobia’s relationship continues to grow and “the gossip of the Community set them down as a pair of lovers” (79). This bond is appropriate in the context of allegory—Adam and Eve are a couple.

However, Zenobia and Hollingsworth’s debate about women’s rights reveals how fallen they are. During the heated debate, “[Zenobia] 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” (120). Coverdale scathingly notes, “What amused and puzzled me, was the fact, that women, however intellectually superior, so seldom disquiet themselves about the rights or wrongs of their sex, unless their own individual affections chance to lie in idleness, or to be ill at ease” (120-1). “Notice the introduction of a motive for Zenobia’s feminism: she has trouble getting and keeping a man, so she becomes a spokesperson for women’s rights. The construction is less than charitable,” argues Cary (41). However harsh

Coverdale is here, he seems to be right; although she is known to be a feminist by some of the others at Blithedale, Zenobia has not declared herself adamantly on the subject of women's rights before this point in the novel. Zenobia holds these feminist views, but her motivation at this point may be exactly what Coverdale intuits. Zenobia's "humbled" response (Hawthorne 123) to Hollingsworth's callous and misogynistic words comes as a surprise to Coverdale and possibly to readers as well, as she states, "I, at least, have deep cause to think you right. Let man be but manly and godlike, and woman is only too ready to become to him what you say!" (124). Tanner believes this to be an instance of Coverdale's distortion of events (par. 43). Miller claims, "She surrenders meekly to Hollingsworth despite his disdain of the emancipated woman, attracted perhaps by his physical and patriarchal authority. Her posturings as an actress and exponent of women's rights hide the inner emptiness and dependency" (370). "Women are weak in Coverdale's *Romance*," Mills asserts, since "advocacy for reform for women is depicted as mere feint, a façade to mask the disappointment of traditionalist female hopes for husband, children, and home" (115). Zenobia's comments coupled with her silent declaration of love to Hollingsworth upon leaving the scene are part of Coverdale's allegory. Zenobia as fallen Eve is subject to Eve's curse: "Thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3.16b). Zenobia's actions correspond to her allegorical role as Eve; however much she may disagree with Hollingsworth's views, her love for him overpowers that, and coupled with the curse, makes her try to be the woman Hollingsworth will desire in return.

As a result of this strong attraction, Hollingsworth's ultimate rejection of Zenobia and his choice of Priscilla lead to Zenobia's suicide. Upon his entrance after the final confrontation among Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla, Coverdale states, "If their

[Zenobia and Hollingsworth] heart-strings were ever intertwined, the knot had been adjudged an entanglement, and was now violently broken” (216). Earlier, Zenobia argues about men’s judgments of women that “This same secret tribunal chances to be the only judgment-seat that a true woman stands in awe of, and that any verdict short of acquittal is equivalent to a death-sentence!” (215). Hollingsworth’s judgment on her is the only one that matters, because she loves him. The strength of her love is evident in her violent response to Coverdale’s comments on Hollingsworth’s coldness after she has been rejected: “Presume not to estimate a man like Hollingsworth! It was my fault, all along, and none of his” (225). Realizing her love for him was one-sided (225), she leaves Eliot’s Pulpit and commits suicide.

Critics hotly debate why Zenobia commits suicide. Tanner argues that Coverdale’s comments early in the novel about the need for a cemetery create the necessity of Zenobia’s death (par. 51). I believe it is Coverdale’s allegory and not his “distortions” that leads to Zenobia’s death as “necessary” in the plot structure; however, her death also disrupts the allegory. Hollingsworth as Adam/Charity has chosen Pandora (Priscilla) rather than Eve (Zenobia) as the first woman and companion figure; after this choice there is no room for two first woman figures and so one must pass away. Mills argues, “For whatever Coverdale’s claims, Zenobia resorts to the pond because of her betrayal and loss of sisterhood, real and symbolic” (113). This is true in one sense; Zenobia has been passed over and her sister-first-woman has taken over her place. “Through a plot reversal as obvious as a morality play, Zenobia is led to suicide and Priscilla is rescued and rewarded,” argues Britt, who sees Zenobia’s “strictly earthly” attractions as contributions to the reversal (50). Lewis claims Zenobia acts out a character in her death (wife of Bluebeard, “representative of womankind,”

queen, Cleopatra, Ophelia [76-7; Rees 84-5]), most notably Ophelia (Lewis 76-79). Cary argues, “The seeds of Zenobia’s destruction, her intellectual pride and her evil (that is, sexual) nature, are there from the beginning. In the Greek tradition, character and destiny are inseparable, and Zenobia’s flaws are destined to be fatal” (44). Zenobia’s pride and knowledgeable sexuality do form part of her fallen nature; however, it is Hollingsworth’s choice of Priscilla, not her flaws, that sends her over the edge. Zenobia’s removal of her flower indicates her death in the allegory (FitzPatrick 38). After this act, Coverdale kisses Zenobia’s proffered hand, remarking at how cold and “deathlike” it is (Hawthorne 227). Zenobia responds, “The extremities die first, they say” (227). FitzPatrick argues, “Symbolically, the death scene has already occurred: the flower is passed on (life is relinquished); she is cold, like snow, like death; she has been murdered and will haunt Hollingsworth” (38). Zenobia began to die when Hollingsworth chose Priscilla; now she acknowledges that choice by removing her flower, her first-woman status, so to speak.

While Zenobia compellingly fills the allegorical role of Eve, she also fails in this role. For example, the biblical Eve does not commit suicide, so while her death makes sense in the allegory, it also detracts from it. Although Zenobia is Eve in the allegory, the possibility that she is a fictional representation of Margaret Fuller is also quite strong. Cary notes such connections between the two such as a flower in their hair, large stature and a drowning death (33). As a point of departure she notes Zenobia’s beauty versus Fuller’s plainness (36). Miller remarks, “Zenobia’s erotic presence recalled Fuller as well as Mary Silsbee Sparks; her involvement in mesmerism is probably traceable to Elizabeth Peabody’s attempt to have Una play medium; and her death reenacts an episode that took place on July 9, 1845, the

third anniversary of the Hawthornes' marriage" (367). This mix of influences interferes somewhat with the allegorical level that Coverdale creates.

Zenobia fails as Eve in a more significant way, in her lack of commitment to the Blithedale commune. When Coverdale asks, in Boston, whether she will return to Blithedale, Zenobia responds, "Why should we be content with our homely life of a few months past, to the exclusion of all other modes? It was good; but there are other lives as good or better. Not, you will understand, that I condemn those who give themselves up to it more entirely than I, for myself, should deem it wise to do" (165) Zenobia is not wholeheartedly interested in the reformation of society at Blithedale; it is merely one of her projects. Readers learn earlier that this is not Zenobia's first trip away from the commune. Coverdale tells readers, "Zenobia, as I well knew, had retained an establishment in town, and had not unfrequently withdrawn herself from Blithedale, during brief intervals, on one of which occasions she had taken Priscilla along with her" (156-7). Zenobia has not been fully committed to Blithedale. She has been away, perhaps living another mode of life such as she mentions above. She is not a committed Eve.

Priscilla as Pandora

Zenobia/Eve's rival in all of this is Priscilla, who may allegorically represent Pandora. Priscilla is never alluded to as Pandora, but the part she plays in the narrative, along with some minor details, lead me to propose that she is Pandora in Coverdale's allegory. This is a moment where the balance between allegory and allegoresis shifts slightly toward the latter. Coverdale's allegory seems to fail more completely with Priscilla than with the other characters because an allegorical figure may not have been ascribed to her. Nevertheless, for pieces of the narrative, a plausible possibility is the figure of Pandora.

Priscilla is brought to Blithedale by a blacksmith (Hawthorne 26); Pandora is made by the blacksmith-god Hephaestus (Mercantante and Dow, "Pandora" 678). According to Mike Campbell's website, *Behind the Name: the Etymology and History of First Names*, Priscilla was "popular with the Puritans," but Blithedale's Priscilla is not necessarily Christian. Her role as the clairvoyant Veiled Lady in exhibitions does not correspond to any biblical parallel; additionally, "The Veiled Lady, even by allegorical standards, would be idolatrous and anti-Christian because she is occult/magical" (Britt 52). Furthermore, information about Priscilla's name in the text is somewhat suspect. In Coverdale's first conversation with Westervelt, Westervelt asks about a young woman saying, "She goes among you by the name of Priscilla" (Hawthorne 96). This statement recalls the point earlier in the conversation in which Westervelt remarks about Zenobia that "You call her, I think, Zenobia" which is recognized as her pen name (92). Westervelt's similar pattern in stating Priscilla's name lends the impression that Priscilla may not be her real name. Additionally, when Priscilla first arrives at Blithedale, she reveals only her first name (29). In arguing that Moodie fashions Priscilla as Zenobia's downfall, Mills states:

The riddle of Priscilla's entire role may be reduced to a question about her silence over her paternity... Priscilla's reticence represents either an act of collusion with her father or a betrayal by omission... That the question of Priscilla's motivation rests on her silence, on what she does not say, is in itself suggestive of a lack of agency. She is likely more a pawn than plotter in Zenobia's downfall. (112-3)

True, Priscilla does not seem to be orchestrating Zenobia's defeat and death. In this respect, she is not like the classical Pandora, but, as will be discussed further below, her presence and

actions at Blithedale do lead to Zenobia's downfall and the end of the main characters' stay at Blithedale.

Priscilla does present an otherworldly quality. At several points in the novel, Priscilla stops whatever she is doing to listen to something no one else can hear (Hawthorne 60, 75, 158). The purpose of this act is not clear. Neither Coverdale nor Hawthorne gives any reason for it. Perhaps she is listening to the voice of God, or perhaps gods. Some of the characters at the commune believe that Priscilla is very spiritual because of this trait and her paleness. Coverdale at one point remarks that he thinks "that you, Priscilla, are a little prophetess; or, at least, that you have spiritual intimations respecting matters which are dark to us grosser people" (142). Bales argues her allegorical role is that of Spirit (44). He does concede that like Zenobia "Neither does Priscilla fulfill the role of Spirit: she is retarded in development for, as Zenobia points out, she has 'been stifled with the heat of a salamander-stove, in a small close room, and has drunk coffee, and fed upon dough-nuts, raisins, candy, and all such trash, till she is scarcely half-alive'" (44). Westervelt tells Coverdale that in light of Priscilla's weakness "some philosophers choose to glorify this habit of body by terming it spiritual; but, in my opinion, it is rather the effect of unwholesome food, bad air, lack of out-door exercise, and neglect of bathing, on the part of these damsels and their female progenitors: all resulting in a kind of hereditary dyspepsia" (Hawthorne 95). Priscilla's odd behavior stems from malnutrition, not spirituality. Therefore, the more time Priscilla spends at Blithedale the less seemingly spiritual she will become; Westervelt's words counteract Bales's assumptions.

Although Priscilla is not necessarily an active agent in the demise of Zenobia or the group at Blithedale, in some important ways she does cause it. Priscilla's presence at the

commune creates tension and competition between herself and Zenobia for the love of Hollingsworth. Given Zenobia's earlier words concerning Hollingsworth, Priscilla's unexpected entrance with him might explain why her greeting of Priscilla is so cold (27-9). It is only Hollingsworth's "stern and reproachful" glance that prompts Zenobia to be kind to Priscilla (28-9). Zenobia feels their rivalry begins immediately. Coverdale notices their competition, stating, "for a girl like Priscilla, and a woman like Zenobia, to jostle one another in their love of a man like Hollingsworth, was likely to be no child's play" (72). Priscilla seems almost as aware of the competition as Zenobia. After the scene at Eliot's Pulpit involving the debate over women's rights, Coverdale remarks that Priscilla "never did... seem so happy as that afternoon. She skipped, and could not help it, from the very playfulness of her heart" (124). Priscilla appears to know that she is much higher in Hollingsworth's esteem than Zenobia at the moment; her celebration is cut short when Zenobia declares her love for Hollingsworth (124-5). At this point Coverdale notes, "I saw her droop" and imagines that she almost fades to disappearance (125). Zenobia's allegorical position as Eve and her competition with Priscilla may indicate that Priscilla is Pandora who, like Eve, is a first woman (Hansen 257). There cannot be two first women in the new Eden of Blithedale, especially when there only seems to be one Adam-like figure, hence the competition between the two women. Mills argues that "Sisterhood crumbles in *The Blithedale Romance* under the weight of feminine heterosexual desire—under the compulsions of competition for the attention of a man" which she finds has been prompted by Coverdale, Hollingsworth and Moodie (100). What Mills fails to realize is that the competition between these two women for a man is not just a matter of the surface level. These are two first-women figures competing for the first-man figure.

Priscilla's role as the Veiled Lady and her attempted escape and then return also show this struggle. Indeed, the purpose of "Zenobia's Legend" seems to be to warn Priscilla that Zenobia knows who she is and may be able to hand her back over to Westervelt, removing her from the sphere of Hollingsworth. What is puzzling, however, about that very act later in the novel is Zenobia's statement to Hollingsworth that "You were ready to sacrifice this girl, whom, if God ever visibly showed a purpose, He put into your charge, and through whom He was striving to redeem you!" (218). Presumably, Hollingsworth went along with the plan to return Priscilla to Westervelt and her role as the Veiled Lady. When Coverdale encounters Zenobia and Priscilla in Boston, Priscilla tells him that "[Hollingsworth] bade me come" (171). Hollingsworth's reaction to Coverdale's question "What have you done with Priscilla?" may be the reaction of a man realizing what he had just done to someone and not a question of where she may be (200). Perhaps Hollingsworth was willing to turn Priscilla back into the Veiled Lady because of his philanthropic schemes; perhaps he reconsiders because of the idea of the money she may be heir to. Either way, Coverdale and Hawthorne leave readers with no inkling of what Hollingsworth's reasons may have been. Nevertheless, Hollingsworth's actions in the rest of the scene seem to create a twist on the Pandora myth. By coming on stage and telling her to come to him, he gives her the motivation to throw off her veil (202-3). I propose that this unveiling is the equivalent of opening Pandora's box; after this point in the narrative, Zenobia's pathway leads to death and the remainder of the main characters are changed—even Blithedale fails not long after (246). Hume's conclusions are similar: Priscilla "'innocently' poisons (says Coverdale) everyone her life touches: Zenobia is destroyed, Hollingsworth is fated to be tortured by his memory of Zenobia's senseless death, and Coverdale himself says that his life has come to an 'idle pass,'

largely because of his love for Priscilla” (396). Priscilla does negatively affect the lives of those with whom she interacts. Mills chooses different imagery to the same effect, arguing that Priscilla is a parasite on Zenobia: “Sickly Priscilla... seems to be capable of raising herself only by attaching herself to her sister, parasitically draining away Zenobia’s strengths—her wealth, self-assurance, Hollingsworth’s esteem—so she can live the peculiar fairytale she has been taught to covet” (113). Priscilla does usurp Zenobia’s place in Eden, and yet I do not think that she is consciously being parasitic as Mills implies.

Like the other characters, Priscilla fails to embody her allegorical figure. According to Hansen, who looks at Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, “Hephaistos made a maiden from earth, Athena dressed her, the Graces and Peitho (Persuasion) ornamented her with necklaces, the Hours placed a garland of flowers on her head, and Hermes put lies and deceit in her breast, gave her a voice, and named her Pandora (All-Gift), since all the gods had gifted her” (257). He also implies that Pandora was told to open the jar containing evils (257). Conversely, Mercantante and Dow state “Pandora was given a jar (or box) that contained all of the evils of the world and was told not to open it. She did open it and let loose all evils” (“Pandora” 678). Both accounts agree that Pandora was made to punish human men (Mercantante and Dow “Pandora” 678; Hansen 257). Priscilla, as mentioned above, does not seem to be as conscious of her evil role as her mythical counterpart; Coverdale’s allegory fails in this regard. Mills, on the other hand, believes Moodie fashioned Priscilla to be the type of young woman she is, dominated by patriarchy—the “kind of femininity desired by men” (111). She argues that “resources are available to Moodie for the taking, but he chooses not to approach Zenobia or challenge her for many years” (112). She even goes so far as to say “Moodie has shaped her as a nemesis for Zenobia” and that the stories of Zenobia that Moodie told

Priscilla created jealousy, not admiration (112, 114). What Mills argues would certainly fit in with Coverdale's possible allegory in regard to Priscilla; however, unless Priscilla is an expert at hiding her motives, she does not show jealousy toward Zenobia.

Priscilla's actions, though in conflict with Zenobia over Hollingsworth, show her interest in forging a bond with her half-sister. When she arrives at Blithedale she says that what she wants from her sister is "Only that she will shelter me...Only that she will let me be always near her!" (29). The final scene between these two women repeats the same type of gestures as their first meeting. This time Priscilla states, "We are sisters!" and Coverdale "understood the word and action; it meant the offering of herself, and all she had, to be at Zenobia's disposal" (219). Even Zenobia does not blame Priscilla for consciously destroying her life: "You have been my evil fate; but there never was a babe with less strength or will to do an injury" (220). Priscilla fulfills the allegorical role of Pandora possibly set for her by Coverdale in that her presence and actions lead to the downfall of all the main characters and even, perhaps the Blithedale community itself; however, she fails to be the fully classical Pandora in that she has not consciously set out to destroy mankind. While some of the other characters in Coverdale's allegory fail to embody the role assigned to them because they do not live up to the purity of the allegorical figure, Priscilla fails because she does not live up to the conscious evil of the character. Once again, Coverdale's allegory both does and does not work within the framework of the novel.

Hollingsworth as Charity and Adam

No one appears to blame Priscilla for the results of her presence at Blithedale; all place the blame on another character, the one who makes the choice between the two women—Hollingsworth. Coverdale portrays Hollingsworth as a figure of both Charity and

Adam in his allegory. By emphasizing his obsession with philanthropy, Coverdale establishes Hollingsworth as a figure of Charity. Hollingsworth's defining characteristic is his devotion to or obsession with philanthropy. Before he arrives at Blithedale, Coverdale and Zenobia discuss his philanthropic aims; Zenobia remarks, "It is a sad pity that he should have devoted his glorious powers to such a grimy, unbeautiful, and positively hopeless object as this reformation of criminals, about which he makes himself and his wretchedly small audiences so very miserable" (22). She continues in the same vein, doubting whether he will be able to commit himself to the commune and "wish[ing] he would let the bad people alone, and try to benefit those who are not already past his help" (22). The doubts about Hollingsworth's commitment to Blithedale continue to grow as the narrative progresses. Coverdale tells of Hollingsworth's obsession with his charitable ideas: "He had taught his benevolence to pour its warm tide exclusively through one channel; so that there was nothing to spare for other great manifestations of love to man, nor scarcely for the nutriment of individual attachments, unless they could minister, in some way, to the terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God" (55). Readers discover Hollingsworth's specific plan a few pages later; Coverdale notes, "His specific object...was to obtain funds for the construction of an edifice, with a sort of collegiate endowment. On this foundation, he purposed to devote himself and a few disciples to the reform and mental culture of our criminal brethren" (56). Coverdale's fears come to life when Hollingsworth tells him that he can only have friends who are as committed to his prison scheme as he is (57). Westervelt reveals more of Hollingsworth's commitment to his own ideas rather than the ideas of the commune when he tells Coverdale, "Yet, so far has this honest fellow succeeded with one lady, whom we wot of, that he anticipates, from her abundant resources, the necessary funds

for realizing his plan in brick and mortar!” (94). Hollingsworth’s interest in the women is purely monetary. He is so dedicated to his idea that Coverdale calls him “completely immolated” by it (166). Zenobia, however, defends him: “Blind enthusiasm, absorption in one idea, I grant, is generally ridiculous, and must be fatal to the respectability of an ordinary man; it requires a very high and powerful character, to make it otherwise. But a great man—as, perhaps, you do not know—attains his normal condition only through the inspiration of one great idea” (166). In her eyes, Hollingsworth has not been led astray by his ideas. This obsession with philanthropy and charity work makes the leap from Hollingsworth to his allegorical figure Charity quite smooth. However Charity is corrupt and hypocritical.

Hollingsworth’s philanthropic goal leads him to become a corrupted version of his allegorical figure, Charity. Once Coverdale realizes that Hollingsworth is after the land of Blithedale, he tries to persuade Hollingsworth to talk outright to the members of the community about his plans and put it to a vote. Hollingsworth replies, “It does not suit me...Nor is it my duty to do so” (133). He has just become what Coverdale feared about philanthropists a few lines earlier: “His sense of honor ceases to be the sense of other honorable men. At some point of his course—I know not exactly when nor where—he is tempted to palter with the right, and can scarcely forbear persuading himself that the importance of his public ends renders it allowable to throw aside his private conscience” (132). Hollingsworth operates here under the idea that ends justify means, even if that requires becoming more like scheming Greed than benevolent Charity. Coverdale’s exaggerated indictment of Hollingsworth earlier in the novel also speaks to this. He tells readers about philanthropists: “It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and

finally converts them into little else save that one principle” (70). In other words, Hollingsworth becomes little else than the allegorical figure of Charity. Bales goes so far as to claim that Hollingsworth’s position in the Blithedale allegory is that of “active” egotism (45). Agreeing with Coverdale to an extent that Hollingsworth has a massive ego, Bumás remarks, “Hollingsworth’s hubris, perhaps, lies in his belief that deviants can be made into sinless individuals by observing and living with him” (132). Hollingsworth’s downfall is not so much that he is consumed by his philanthropy but that his plan for achieving his goal rests on the belief that he himself is sinless. Charity—work for others—literally becomes Egotism—work for self.

Hollingsworth’s treatment of women also highlights his corruption in the role of Charity. In the Eliot’s Pulpit debate Hollingsworth declares, “if there were a chance of their [women] attaining the end which these petticoated monstrosities have in view, I would call upon my own sex to use its physical force, that unmistakable evidence of sovereignty, to scourge them back within their proper bounds!” (123). Some of Hollingsworth’s statements show the same “alarm” that men historically were showing to the women’s movement (Mills 107). And yet, readers have learned that his plan for reforming criminals involves some sort of higher education (Hawthorne 56). Therefore, Hollingsworth shows more compassion and leeway to criminals than he does to women, especially feminists like Zenobia.

Hollingsworth so dislikes women having any sort of rights that he rejects Fourier because “The necessary precondition of such an egalitarian society would be the leveling of social distinctions between men and women” (Temple 296). Hollingsworth is a corrupt Charity, giving help only to those who agree with his view. Hollingsworth’s obsession with his version of social change adds to the critique of “American exceptionalism.” Redeeming the

nation and the world is difficult when reformers cannot agree on a plan of action and seek to undermine each other.

Coverdale assigns Hollingsworth the dual allegorical role of Charity and Adam. What connects him to the first man, Adam, is his relationship with the two women. In this way, his role as Adam comes somewhat by default. To have any sort of coherence to an allegory about the Garden of Eden, there must be someone to pair with a first-woman. Coverdale notes the attraction of the two women to Hollingsworth, remarking that they have been converted to his schemes (68). At several points in the novel Coverdale tells readers of the competition between the two women for Hollingsworth and his fears that it will destroy either one or the other. Part of Hollingsworth's role as Adam involves his choice of a first-woman for a companion. The differences between the two women partially lead Hollingsworth in his choice of Priscilla: "I used to see, or fancy, indications that he was not altogether obtuse to Zenobia's influence as a woman. No doubt, however, he had a still more exquisite enjoyment of Priscilla's silent sympathy with his purposes, so unalloyed with criticism, and therefore more grateful than any intellectual approbation" (78-9). As Coverdale hints, Hollingsworth is more interested in a sycophantic woman than one who is her own being. Temple claims that "Coverdale and Hollingsworth love Priscilla because they can 'stoop to her,' but in the process they depreciate themselves, for such idolatry makes their efforts at reform seem absurd" (305). This disparity is heightened in the debate over women's rights. Zenobia thinks and acts for herself, although, as was shown above, in love with Hollingsworth; Priscilla, on the other hand, agrees wholeheartedly with Hollingsworth's views (119-124).

The second, and perhaps more prominent, factor in Hollingsworth's choice of Priscilla is money. As Westervelt mentioned to Coverdale, Hollingsworth needs money for his philanthropic project and Zenobia is ready to provide it (Hawthorne 94). If we trust Coverdale's account during the "Fauntleroy" chapter, Moodie decided to let Zenobia keep her Uncle's fortune provided she treats Priscilla as a sister (192). Priscilla appears as the Veiled Lady shortly after this chapter, an act that seems contrary to Moodie's wishes. Sometime between Priscilla's last Veiled Lady exhibition and Coverdale's return to Blithedale, Zenobia's wealth has been transferred to Priscilla. In their last confrontation Zenobia tells Hollingsworth "It is only three days since I knew the strange fact that threatens to make me poor; and your own acquaintance with it, I suspect is of at least as old a date. I fancied myself affluent. You are aware, too, of the disposition which I purposed making of the larger portion of my imaginary opulence;—nay, were it all, I had not hesitated" (216). Although she says that Priscilla as her sister "threatens to make me poor," implying that Zenobia is still rich, the rest of her discussion of her wealth is in the past tense, leading readers to assume that Priscilla now has Moodie's brother's money. Zenobia also implies that Hollingsworth's change of affections and choice of Priscilla result from that transfer of wealth. She questions whether he loves her, and Hollingsworth responds that he felt like a brother to Priscilla and only a short time ago his emotions switched to love; this response indicates that his affections follow money (217). Again, Hollingsworth chooses what will benefit his philanthropy without considering the consequences. "Zenobia's education [and] intelligence" work against her in Hollingsworth's estimation of a "proper" woman (Mills 108). Hollingsworth does not seem to realize how important his choice between the two women is until it is too late.

Hollingsworth falls as a result of his obsession with philanthropy and his choice of Priscilla. Miller pinpoints the visible beginning of Hollingsworth's fall to the final confrontation among Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla; he argues, "In a rage of love and rejection Zenobia targets with keen insight Hollingsworth's greatest vulnerability; the intellectual defenses with which he has surrounded himself to create an illusion of authority and strength" and that "Zenobia shatters the illusion and his manhood" (372). What Zenobia seems to "shatter" more than Hollingsworth's manhood is his belief that he can do no wrong while pursuing his philanthropic goals; she reveals to him that "It is all self!" (218). After this speech Hollingsworth "grow[s] deadly pale" (Hawthorne 218). Zenobia's death deals a further final blow to Hollingsworth's conception of himself as charitable and good. In Coverdale's final visit to Hollingsworth and Priscilla "His [Hollingsworth's] monomaniacal impulse for reform is gone—a tragedy for the fallen hero, the narrative implies" (Temple 307). Hollingsworth's marriage to Priscilla "means that in living daily with Priscilla he will be reminded of the part he played in Zenobia's death" (127). This punishment was "added late to the manuscript" (Bumas 127-8; Simpson *Letters 1843-53* 537 n 2). With this additional scene, Hollingsworth has learned the truth of Coverdale's moral:

The moral which presents itself to my reflections, as drawn from Hollingsworth's character and errors, is simply this:—that, admitting what is called Philanthropy, when adopted as a profession, to be often useful by its energetic impulse to society at large, it is perilous to the individual, whose ruling passion, in one exclusive channel, it thus becomes...I see in Hollingsworth an exemplification of the most awful truth in Bunyan's book of such;—from the very gate of Heaven, there is a by-way to the pit!

(243)

Coverdale's allegory fits his moral inasmuch as the center of it is Hollingsworth—Adam/Charity whose corrupted choice between two first-women characters brings destruction on all. Miller, for example, notes that the original title before publication was “Hollingsworth” (376).

Minor Allegorical Figures

Westervelt and Moodie, though minor characters, do have roles in Coverdale's allegory. Westervelt is the Devil in the allegory. When encountering Westervelt for the first time in the woods of Blithedale, Coverdale remarks, “So unexpectedly had the stranger made me sensible of his presence, that he had almost the effect of an apparition” (91). Although some of Westervelt's suddenness can be attributed to Coverdale's “absor[ption] in [his] reflections,” Coverdale's remarks set the stage for later allegorical surmises. Westervelt's attire includes “a stick with a wooden head, carved in vivid imitation of that of a serpent”—a connection, perhaps, to the Devil's serpent role in the Garden of Eden(92). Later in the scene Coverdale says, “His black eyes sparkled at me, whether with fun or malice I knew not, but certainly as if the Devil were peeping out of them” (94). When he laughs again, Coverdale notices the “gold band around the upper part of his teeth” and suspects that Westervelt's whole appearance is false, a disguise (95). Coverdale later professes, “Every human being, when given over to the Devil, is sure to have the wizard mark upon him, in one form or another. I fancied that this smile, with its peculiar revelation, was the Devil's signet on the Professor” (158). In this moment, Westervelt moves from the Devil himself to the Devil's servant. Heightening this disguise imagery in the woods scene is Westervelt's transformation into a professor by donning a pair of glasses; additionally, his attire must be a good disguise as Coverdale does not recognize him from the Veiled Lady exhibition at the

beginning of the novel (96). Berlant asserts that Westervelt and Coverdale are “under great suspicion because their beauty, like women’s beauty, hides their ‘ugly characteristics’” (37). Shortly after this meeting, Coverdale “recognized, as chiefly due to this man’s influence, the skeptical and sneering view which, just now, had filled my mental vision in regard to all life’s better purposes” (101). Coverdale attributes his skepticism to the influence of the Devil. Bales argues, “[Westervelt] mixes skepticism that reform is possible or necessary with a cynicism that establishes his relationship to the whole affair of the apple. (As Old Nick in modern dress he represents the possibility of original sin—or, more appropriately, the paralyzing *belief* in original sin)” (49-50). Coverdale also links Westervelt to “worldly society at large,” another tie that strengthens the devil imagery as the Devil is associated with worldly pursuits (101). His skin crawls when he meets Westervelt in Boston: “At that moment, it amounted to nothing less than a creeping of the flesh, as when, feeling about in a dark place, one touches something cold and slimy, and questions what the secret hatefulness may be” (172). Westervelt’s appearance and Coverdale’s reaction to him push him from unlikable man to the Devil himself in the allegory.

Westervelt’s actions in the narrative lend credence to his role as the Devil. His connection to Zenobia (Eve) leads to Coverdale’s idea that Zenobia is somehow fallen. His exhibitions of Priscilla as the Veiled Lady mix the occult (Britt 52) and worldly pursuits. Bales argues, “Representative of the Western World, as the name he bears elsewhere in the romance tells us, Westervelt’s stylish appearance and good looks put a new face on the old enterprise of Western Civilization” (48). He claims, “Priscilla is his slave, a spiritual prostitute—for Western Civilization has nothing better to do with Spirit than convert it to gold” (48). Mills asserts, “Westervelt’s ‘evil,’ then, is comprised primarily of opportunism,

of profiting from the further victimization of an already victimized womanhood” (107).

Westervelt does not adequately fulfill his part in Coverdale’s allegory, then.

Indeed, Westervelt, like the other characters in Coverdale’s allegory, does not always fit the mold of the Devil set out for him, although he is much closer than many of the other characters. He is not necessarily evil; he just exploits the evil that is already there for his own ends (Mills 107). Cary marks a biographical reference; in reference to *The Elizabeth*, the ship Fuller was on before she drowned; she notes, “Hawthorne must have noted that one of the names on the passenger list was the unusual one of Westervelt” (43, 47n7). While Hawthorne may indeed have picked up the name there, he seemed to look odd places for the names of his characters. Miller remarks, “The tombstone of William Hollingsworth no doubt suggested the name of the blacksmith-reformer Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*” (18).

What appears to be the strongest moment of evidence of Westervelt failing to be the Devil in Coverdale’s allegory is his remarks at Zenobia’s funeral. Westervelt comments, “It was an idle thing—a foolish thing—for Zenobia to do!...She was the last woman in the world to whom death could have been necessary” (Hawthorne 239). In his opinion, Zenobia was too full of life and possibility to drown herself. He has not, then, tried to bring her down or orchestrated this larger fall, hardly the conduct of the Devil. Coverdale attempts to reestablish his allegory over Westervelt at this point. He responds to the above statements by calling Westervelt “Zenobia’s evil fate,” and he secretly hopes that Heaven will “annihilate him” (240, 241). Westervelt may have been involved with Zenobia in a way that made her initially fall, but here, in his last speech he fails at the continuing allegorical role of Devil in which Coverdale has placed him.

The character of Moodie also gets a role in Coverdale's allegory, two in fact,—the dual role of Pride and Shame. Coverdale creates Moodie as an allegorical figure of Pride in the "Fauntleroy" chapter. Trusting Coverdale's accuracy for this character is not quite as important as with the others; because Coverdale is creating this allegory, any exaggerations about Moodie's past are part of his formation of that allegory. In "Fauntleroy," readers learn that Moodie, or Fauntleroy, was once rich and famous (182). He was also extremely superficial and prideful; Coverdale notes, "His whole being seemed to have crystallized itself into an external splendor, wherewith he glittered in the eyes of the world, and had no other life than upon this gaudy surface" (182). This superficiality extended even to his wife and child (Zenobia): "He did not so truly keep this noble creature [his first wife] in his heart, as wear her beauty for the most brilliant ornament of his outward state" (182). Additionally, "There was born to him a child, a beautiful daughter, whom he took from the beneficent hand of God with no just sense of her immortal value, but as a man, already rich in gems, would receive another jewel. If he loved her, it was because she shone" (182). In his youth, Moodie presents the perfect picture of self-centered Pride/Vanity.

In the present of the narrative, Moodie has fallen from Pride to Shame. The key to this change appears in a section of "Fauntleroy" that Coverdale admits to fabricating ("It may be, after Zenobia withdrew, Fauntleroy paced his gloomy chamber, and communed with himself, as follows:—or, at all events, it is the only solution, which I can offer, of the enigma presented in his character" [192]). In those musings, Moodie says to himself:

In Zenobia, I live again! Beholding her so beautiful—so fit to be adorned with all imaginable splendor of outward state—the cursed vanity, which, half-a-lifetime since, dropt off like tatters of once gaudy apparel from my debased and ruined person, is all

renewed for her sake! Were I to re-appear, my shame would go with me from darkness into daylight. Zenobia has the splendor, and not the shame. Let the world admire her, and be dazzled by her, the brilliant child of my prosperity! It is Fauntleroy that still shines through her! (192)

Coverdale, through Moodie, depicts the passing of the torch of Pride from father to daughter but without the later fall and shame that comes with it, at least not yet. In this picture, Zenobia's relationship with Westervelt may not be the only thing that makes her a fallen Eve—she has inherited Pride, the Original Sin, from her father, who began as nothing but Pride and Vanity. Yet Moodie does not remain here, he falls into Shame.

Moodie's actions in the present of the narrative correspond to his allegorical nature of fallen Pride or Shame. Throughout the story, Coverdale remarks on Moodie's habit of sneaking up on people sidelong to avoid being the object of attention. Coverdale describes him in the pub: "You hardly ever saw him advancing towards you, but became aware of his proximity without being able to guess how he had come thither. He glided about like a spirit" (178-9). When he comes to visit Blithedale he even sits behind a bush while conversing with Hollingsworth and Coverdale: "The visitor made a grateful little murmur of acquiescence, and sat down in a spot somewhat removed; so that, glancing round, I could see his gray pantaloons and dusty shoes, while his upper part was mostly hidden behind the shrubbery" (83). Moodie is extremely shy as a result of his shame.

Despite the strong likenesses to Pride and Shame that Coverdale weaves in his allegory of Moodie, he, like the others, does not quite live up to them. Some of his actions are those of a concerned father trying to get his two long-lost daughters to become the sisters they are. His visit to Blithedale is to determine whether his youngest is happy; he stays to

view the relationship between the sisters only at Hollingsworth's insistence (85-8). The question of inheritance, however, hinges on this relationship. Mills argues that Moodie is an essentially evil character, pulling the strings on the two women "orchestrat[ing] their fate" (109). She does make a good point in that "He purports to submit Zenobia to a test of sisterly love and fealty towards Priscilla—a test about which Zenobia knows nothing" (109).

However, this may be Priscilla's fault and not Moodie's; as is mentioned above, Priscilla stays silent about the half-sister connection she has to Zenobia. Mills pushes her argument too far when she claims, "His [Moodie's] procrastination is important: he has knowingly denied Priscilla the commonest advantages during her short lifetime in order that he may strip Zenobia of her wealth and station just as she has completed 'her triumphant progress towards womanhood'" (109). Moodie, in my estimation, is not that calculating and evil. He does transfer the wealth from Zenobia to Priscilla, but it seems to have to do more with a lack of sisterly love than the revenge motivation Mills implies. Bales sees Moodie operating under the same allegorical principles as the rest of the Blithedale's that Nature (Zenobia) and Spirit (Priscilla) cannot share the stage (48); while my interpretation of the allegory is slightly different, the formulation stays the same—Eve and Pandora cannot both be the first woman.

Coverdale's allegory as a whole fails because, besides the individual failures of his characters, he is only human. Additionally, his moral on philanthropy does not cover the entire novel. Coverdale is unreliable because he is not omniscient, however much he wants to be. He is not present at many important moments for the other characters, such as the final confrontation among Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla (Hawthorne 212, 214). Britt remarks that "Like Coverdale the translator, who sought to uncover the 'dark places of

scripture' without knowing the biblical tongues, Coverdale the narrator tries to uncover the dark secrets of his companions without knowing their circumstances or even his own motivations" (53). Indeed, Coverdale's motives may not be the pure transcendentalist ones of the allegorical poet figure, but earthly motives of love and selfishness. His lack of omniscience, however, affects more than himself—it causes his allegory as a whole to fail. Because Coverdale does not see or hear or know everything about his characters, his allegory suffers. Without this information Coverdale's creations are built on rickety events that do not encapsulate the whole. He even admits to embellishing the narrative in places, perhaps to move it toward allegory.

Conclusion: Hawthorne's Allegory/Moral

Hawthorne's Preface to *The Blithedale Romance* indicates that he might have intended the work as an allegory. Hawthorne writes, "Among ourselves...there is as yet no such Faery Land, so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own. This atmosphere is what the American romancer needs" (2). He continues, "In its absence, the beings of imagination are compelled to show themselves in the same category as actually living mortals; a necessity that generally renders the paint and pasteboard of their composition but too painfully discernible" (2). Perhaps he is responding to the criticisms that allegory is too stiff and tired by noting that it is supposed to be seen through a veil of enchantment rather than compared with flesh and blood people. According to Baldick, "Later prose romances differ from novels in their preference for allegory and psychological exploration rather than realistic social observation, especially in American works like Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*" ("Romance" 192). Hawthorne seems to want readers to look beyond the surface of the novel, perhaps into the realm of allegory.

The failure of Coverdale's moral to adequately cover his allegory indicates that there must be more than meets the eye in this novel. Britt believes that "Coverdale's failure is the failure of allegory itself, a 'faint and not very faithful shadowing' of a pluralistic world" (53). FitzPatrick argues in looking at the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* that "This notion, that an offered 'moral of the story' is beside the point, is extended in *The Blithedale Romance* to the offering of a 'moral' that is decidedly *not* to the point, glaringly and ostentatiously insufficient, as Coverdale reconsiders his presentation" (43). He believes

“That genuine moral resides, latently, in the zone of discrepancy, the distance opened by intonational quotation marks between truth and articulation, where it is immune from false articulation, and enabled to retain its mystery, undiminished” (43). FitzPatrick does not articulate a moral but other critics do. Berlant believes the key is love: “ultimately the novel questions the language of love itself, exposing love’s inability truly to mediate, to merge, to illuminate, to provide a clarifying model of anything, whether utopian or tragic, with which it comes in contact” (33). McElroy and McDonald claim, “the idea that we judge others as we have unconsciously judged ourselves” is the moral of the novel (15). Mills believes that “[Coverdale] constructs a moral for the tale that chastises a woman for transgressing gendered boundaries” (115). So what *is* the moral of Blithedale’s allegory?

Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of the entire novel (narrator and all) pushes through Coverdale’s failed allegory to provide his own unstated moral—a new Eden is impossible in a fallen world. Grunes feels that Hawthorne uses allegory to critique people’s allegorical way of thinking about complex issues (14). I would shift his argument to say that in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne may be using allegory to critique “American exceptionalism” through allegory. Madsen notes the power of typology in America in the concept of “the redeemer nation,” a place, perhaps, for a fresh start, a new Eden (2). This view of the New World falters in the same way Hollingsworth falters—by placing too much emphasis on untainted, spotless motives. What “American exceptionalism” fails to account for is that the settlers are fallen and the New World is as fallen as the Old. People still follow selfish and destructive motives rather than being pure contributors to the whole. As Miller argues, “Romance allows everything to be in and out of focus, the lenses at the service of the needs and whims of the magician-artist who builds illusion upon illusion and then abruptly

destroys the illusion” (108). This is precisely what Hawthorne does throughout *The Blithedale Romance*. Hawthorne shows Coverdale’s allegory does not quite fit, which destroys the image that it was trying to create—a new Eden.

No one fulfills their Paradisiacal role on either side. The evidence for this is the failure of each character to fulfill the allegorical role set for them by Coverdale. Zenobia is too full of pride and her somewhat shady past makes her an imperfect and fallen Eve. Hollingsworth, whose constant hammering on the idea of philanthropy makes him a seemingly perfect figure of Charity, is corrupt in his nature—he has no room for actual human beings, only his ideas. Additionally, he fails at being Adam, the role he attains by default because of the attraction of the two first-woman characters; his choice between them is monetarily based, and his ultimate choice of Pandora instead of Eve leads to the downfall of the group of main characters and eventually the Blithedale commune itself. Coverdale’s attempts to be Dionysus and an Emerson-like poet fail in the face of his bias and lack of transcendental omniscience. Priscilla does not quite live up to the conscious evil of her possible role as Pandora, although she does bring about destruction. Westervelt is still a man, frustrated by Zenobia, not the Devil rejoicing in her downfall. Moodie, sliding from Pride to Shame, still shows a fatherly interest in his daughters’ welfare. As Miller notes, “The utopian dream of communal life in *The Blithedale Romance* falls apart because individuals fail to subordinate ego to collective existence” (328). All of the characters’ failures imply that Hawthorne may have intended to critique “American exceptionalism.” Hawthorne seems to state that sacred time cannot be reversed. In a fallen world with fallen people more interested in themselves than others a new truly Edenic paradise cannot be formed.

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