Kumiko Mukai

Hawthorne's Visual Artists and the Pursuit of a Transatlantic Aesthetics

Peter Lang

Chapter I
The Three Studies of Portraiture

Before his marriage, Hawthorne wrote several significant tales about art and artists. Millicent Bell explains that this period is 'when he was most personally concerned with the isolating, perverting effects of his role as a writer' (114). It is not clear whether his premarital sentiment seriously influenced his early art tales, but the three tales of painted portraits I discuss in this chapter, 'The Prophetic Pictures' (1837), 'Sylph Etherege' (1837), and 'Edward Randolph's Portrait' (1838), were written in this period. These tales have not always attracted the attention of Hawthorne scholars, and they have correspondingly not been discussed very much. The reason may be that they do not deeply treat Hawthorne's traditional themes, which are generally listed as isolation, consciousness of sin, baneful influence of the past, and earthly immortality.[1] However, in regard to art and artists, they offer interesting insights into Hawthorne's fiction as well as into nineteenth-century American literature more generally.

Portrait painting had become popular with the middle-class, and as the number of portraits increased, their quality diminished (Flexner, *That Wilder Image* 174). This kind of democratic individualism in art was considered to be rather rude in the eyes of the European aristocracy. Hawthorne lived in a time that was a period of artistic transition with the emphasis in terms of consumption shifting from the privileged class to the general public. Thus, portraits became one of the most popular art forms in nineteenth-century America.

1 Randall Stewart finds four themes in Hawthorne's fiction, which are accepted as 'recurrent themes' by most Hawthorne scholars. These are: (1) the isolation of the individual from his fellows; (2) the consciousness of sin inherited from his Puritan ancestors; (3) the baneful influence of the past as represented by family traditions and by old houses which have been inhabited by one family during successive generations; (4) earthly immortality made possible by the elixir of life. Cf. *The American Notebooks*, lxviii–lxxxix.

The portraits that appear in the three tales are all painted by anonymous painters, and each one separately raises a provocative issue. In 'The Prophetic Pictures', the story concerns the primary mission of the portrait painter, while in 'Sylph Etherege' it concerns the romantic reality of the spectator. In 'Edward Randolph's Portrait', it involves the intrinsic nature of the historical portrait and the issue of the restoration of art.

These tales are thought to be influenced considerably by Hawthorne's favourite romances, Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammamoor* (1819) (Newman 79, 253 and 298). Hawthorne also read Scott's exceptional occult book, *Demonology and Witchcraft* (Warren 487),[2] and had been interested in the unknown world and pseudo-sciences from his younger days. This Gothic imagination may markedly direct and warp his understanding of art objects toward the demonic and terrible (Brumbaugh 400). Importantly, these tales play a significant role in representing Hawthorne's view of art and his unique notion of 'a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet' (I, 36), a territory which enables us to comprehend Gothic taste, occultism, and his unique dualism of 'marble and mud'.[3] These characteristics do not always seem to show his 'warped understanding of art'. Richard Harter Fogle discusses Hawthorne's conflicting idea and states that both are equally important in understanding him (*Hawthorne's Fiction* 192). They show

2 This work is titled *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* by Sir Walter Scott (1830; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1885), and is available at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/moderng/public/ScoDemo.html>.

3 This phrase is a typical representation of Hawthorne's dualism. Cf. '[...] if we look through all the heroic fortunes of mankind, we shall find this same entanglement of something mean and trivial with whatever is noblest in joy or sorrow. Life is made up of marble and mud. And, without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of a sneer, as well as an immitigable frown, on the iron countenance of fate. What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid' (II, 41).

his inclination toward both the artistic reality and romantic imagination in his fiction.

Leland Schubert points out that Hawthorne sought an accurate and faithful imitation of nature in portraiture, and that he seemed to regard true likeness as essential for a painted portrait (94–5). He is also said to have enjoyed representational art such as Dutch painting (Gollin and Idol 5), which is why he preferred painted portraits among the various genres of art. On this point, critics sometimes regard Hawthorne's sense of art as immature, and they have suggested that he could not appreciate art except for portrait and genre painting. Be that as it may, he was very interested in portraits and the art of portraiture, and he had his own portraits manufactured in a plethora of forms: silhouettes, miniatures, oil paintings, etchings, crayon drawings, daguerreotypes, wood engravings, steel engravings, photographs, marble busts, lithographs, stereographs, photo-engravings, statues and even his wife Sophia's pencil sketches. Nevertheless, it is said that he was dismayed by many of his 'likenesses' (Gollin, *Portraits of Hawthorne* 1).[4]

As to the difficulty and complexity of the portraitist's task, William Hazlitt describes it in the following way:

> The human face is not one thing, as the vulgar suppose, nor does it remain always the same. It has infinite varieties [...]. Not only the light and shade upon it do not continue for two minutes the same. [...] The mere setting down what you see in this medley of successive, teasing, contradictory impressions, would never do [...]. There must be a comprehension of the whole, and in truth a *moral sense* (as well as a literal one) to unravel the confusion, and guide you through the labyrinth of shifting muscles and features. You must feel what *this* means, and dive into the hidden soul, in order to know whether *that* is as it ought to be [...]. Portrait-painting is, then, painting from recollection and from a conception of character, with the object before us to assist the memory and understanding (287–8).

The phrase 'dive into the soul' is indubitably true when referring to Hawthorne's definition of painted portraits. The general character-

4 The reason is not clear, but it might be that the images were less beautiful, less realistic, or more superficial than he expected, and that he considered them not to be left to posterity.

istics of American painted portraits from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century are described in the following manner: 'Men were shown as noble and refined, women as gentle, gracious, handsome. They stood before backgrounds indicating taste and opulence. Personality was of secondary importance to social class' (Flexner, *The Light of Distant Skies* 23).

Hawthorne, who was brought up in a modest Puritan family and had been pursuing 'the truth of the human heart' (II, 1) as one of his chief concerns, was not satisfied with such painted portraits. Therefore, he sought the inner world of the sitters and their destinies not only in portraits, but in the works of art in his fiction. The portrait painters whom Hawthorne admired are those who possessed a special ability to grasp the essence of their sitters in a moment. In 'The Prophetic Pictures', the definition of 'the true artist' is one who:

> must look beneath the exterior. It is his gift – his proudest, but often a melancholy one – to see the inmost soul, and, by a power indefinable even to himself, to make it glow or darken upon the canvass, in glances that express the thought and sentiment of years (IX, 175).

Also, portrait painters may be required to express the best moment in one piece of portraiture. Hawthorne thought that portraiture could be appreciated by people with a sensibility for art. The ideal painted portrait should show a part of the sitters' true inner nature to perceptive viewers, and, at the same time, must satisfy the sitters' request.

Rita K. Gollin believes that one of the reasons that Hawthorne repeatedly sat for his portrait was that the idea of 'earthly immortality' fascinated him (*Portraits of Hawthorne* 1). He often stressed the concept of the immortality of portraiture. Certainly one primary purpose of portraiture is to preserve the likeness of men after their death (J. Turner, ed., vol.25, 276). This hints at a supernatural phenomenon and leads to the other world. Ghosts or apparitions appear in Hawthorne's fiction, and, interestingly, painted portraits, mirrors and ghosts seem to share some characteristics. The reflection can express the real, the imaginative, or the supernatural, and it refers to the concept of 'earthly immortality'. The following quotation from 'The Prophetic Pictures' expresses these ideas:

> Nothing, in the whole circle of human vanities, takes stronger hold of the imagination, than this affair of having a portrait painted. [...] But we forget them, only because they vanish. It is the idea of duration – of earthly immortality – that gives such a mysterious interest to our own portraits (IX, 173).

The hope of possessing one's own portrait is regarded in Hawthorne's works as one of the primary human desires. But 'human vanities' sometimes let people become monsters and deviants. Notably, the reflection of 'the polished globes of the andirons' suggests mannerism, and the warped image symbolizes the horrible peculiarity in human nature. In 'the idea of duration', he believed that portraiture connects the past, the present and the future, and condenses them into a single portrait.

The concept of likeness is related to 'substitutive' or 'vicarious' properties (Schneider 26). In Nikolai Gogol's 'The Mysterious Portrait' (1834), Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Oval Portrait' (1842), Honoré de Balzac's 'The Unknown Masterpiece' (1845), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), all of the main characters have their places taken by the figures in the portraits, or, supernaturally, they have their life energy sucked out by the figures within the frames. This situation connects the idea of substitution with occultism. In an early tale, 'Lady Eleanore's Mantle' (1838), a portraitist is juxtaposed with a mirror:

> Would, at least, that either painter or mirror could convey to us some faint idea of a garment, already noticed in this legend – the Lady Eleanore's embroidered mantle – which the gossips whispered was invested with magic properties, so as to lend a new and untried grace to her figure each time that she put it on!' (IX, 277–8).

A dramatic effect and a pictorial description can be found here. Both reflections can be transfigured into something ominous. By the painter's imagination or by the viewer's one, reflected portraiture can emit a Gothic atmosphere. In 'Dr. Heidegger's Experiment' (1837), the image of the main character's fiancée is significant in comprehending Hawthorne's view of portraiture, and is described with other peculiarities as follows:

> The opposite side of the chamber was ornamented with the full length portrait of a young lady, arrayed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a visage as faded as her dress. Above half a century ago, Dr. Heidegger had been on the point of marriage with this young lady; but, being affected with some slight disorder, she had swallowed one of her lover's prescriptions, and died on the bridal evening [...] when a chamber-maid had lifted it [a book of magic], merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet, the picture of the young lady had stepped one foot upon the floor, and several ghastly faces had peeped forth from the mirror; while the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned, and said – 'Forbear!' (IX, 229).

The tragic, morbid, weird, and sinister elements stand in contrast to those of the beautiful, gorgeous, majestic, and intelligent. The sitter, Dr Heidegger's fiancée, had to die, but it is an 'ordinary' thing in the artist tales of Hawthorne. Almost all of the fiancés and wives in his fiction end up dead. Among Hawthorne's artist characters, art is incompatible with love. In the quotation, we also find a horrific element. The image in which the sitter steps from the frame of the portrait like a ghost is also presented. This pattern of expression is repeated in another early tale in 'Howe's Masquerade' (1838).[5]

In this chapter I suggest that the three 'study' tales of painted portraits represent Hawthorne's early view of art. I also investigate a few somewhat stereotypical aspects of art in nineteenth-century America. Examining these tales will also help us in our understanding of the major romances and the later tales, because the essential antitheses in Hawthorne's fiction are laid out, and humanity and art, reality and imagination, love and loneliness, mortality and immortality, ideal and earthliness, perfection and imperfection, evanescence and eternity, good and evil, sanity and insanity, and other elements, are intertwined throughout. In his fiction, indeed, we can detect that he comprehensively accepts both sides of life, and that he acknowledges artists as they are and views their faults and humanity with empathy.

5 In this tale, 'The brilliantly lighted apartments were thronged with figures that seemed to have stepped from the dark canvas of historic portraits, or to have flitted forth from the magic pages of romance, or at least to have flown hither from one of the London theatres, without a change of garments' (IX, 243).

> This story was suggested by an anecdote of Stuart, related in Dunlap’s History of the Arts of Design – a most entertaining book to the general reader, and a deeply interesting one, we should think, to the artist (IX, 166).

This note by Hawthorne suggests that this tale’s implied reader was the artist as well as the general reader. In the anecdote, the portrait painter sees insanity in the sitter’s face; later in the story, the sitter, General Phipps, commits suicide (Millicent Bell 115).

Hawthorne had two models in mind for the painter: Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) and John Smibert (1688–1751) (Newman 252).[6] These transatlantic artists were part of Hawthorne’s inspiration in writing this tale. Also, the word ‘pictures’ in the title hints that this tale covers not only the ideas of ‘portraits’ but a range of sketched images. Portrait painting gives a static, finished and formal impression, while sketches have more active, emotional, rough images and include the first idea of the artists. Therefore, in this tale, these two kinds of art forms are suggested to the two implied readers, which gives this tale its unique complexity.

However, in regard to the nameless painter in this tale, negative opinions are more common than positive ones. Nancy Bunge says: ‘He is cold, arrogant, manipulative, and cultivates drama to give himself the illusion of vitality’ (41). Darrel Abel argues that the painter misuses his power of professional observation and insight (223). F.O. Matthiessen concludes that:

> Hawthorne was not wholly sympathetic with his artists: he looked at the obverse side as well, pointing out that the painter was interested only in probing

6 Stuart was a famous American portraitist who had studied in Scotland. Smibert was born in Edinburgh, studied painting in Italy, succeeded as a portraitist in London, and then settled in New England when he was forty-two (Murray 492–3 and 509).

> the hidden traits of his sitters, and was unconcerned by their fates, even when his eye could detect that one of them was headed towards insanity (223).

Neal Frank Doubleday states that: 'The painter in "The Prophetic Pictures" is rather more sinister, and since his art is esoteric and nearly magical, he is allied to the Gothic devotee of mysterious arts' (57). Others even see the painter and his prophetic ability as evil or devilish (Levin, *Power of Blackness* 55, Stein 74–5).

Regarding the painter's ability, Millicent Bell points out that 'art is shown to be an instrument of evil, the egoistical fruit of cold curiosity' (84). Nevertheless, Arne Axelsson interprets the painter as 'much more a man to be pitied than hated or feared. Through his total dedication to his art, he does not only become isolated, but that isolation in its turn aggravates his imbalanced state, and the painter's mental condition gets ever close to monomania' (149). Axelsson indicates that the passionate and isolated artist often becomes morbid, self-centred, and abnormal. That is to say, he thinks that 'the painter failed to see the disorder of his own' (IX, 180).

When Hawthorne was a Bowdoin college student, he took a course in psychopathology given by Dr Thomas Upham, who was professor of mental and moral philosophy, and published widely in religion, philosophy and psychology (A. Turner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* 36). Hawthorne learned the interconnection between mind and body, and the relation between mental disorder and outer appearance.[7] He recognized this concept as one where 'the whole mind and character were brought out on the countenance' (IX, 170).

In early nineteenth-century America, the visual arts were not readily available to the general public, and Hawthorne often felt that: 'America was too poor to afford other temptations to an artist of eminence, though many of the colonial gentry, on the painter's arrival, had expressed a wish to transmit their lineaments to posterity by means of his skill' (IX, 168). Hawthorne mentions several significant

7 Hawthorne took Professor Upham's courses titled 'Mental and Moral Philosophy' in Bowdoin College. The contents of his lectures were published afterwards as *Mental Action* (1843) and *Mental Philosophy* (1869).

details of the painter who 'had been born and educated in Europe' and experienced a kind of Grand Tour, and then:

> Art could add nothing to its lessons, but Nature might. He had therefore visited a world, whither none of his professional brethren had preceded him, to feast his eyes on visible images, that were noble and picturesque, yet had never been transferred to canvass (IX, 168).

This accounts for the painter's situational predicament, where he wanted to create his own original art but the artistic situation had not ripened. The words 'the grandeur or beauty of conception' may imply the concept of the sublime as formulated by Edmund Burke, or that of admiration of the wonders of Natural glorified by the Hudson River School. The painter already mastered the European technique of painting, and he might have acquired the technique of sketching related to the sublime and the picturesque.[8]

Artistically innocent people in New England might interpret his excellent painted portrait as 'an offence against the Mosaic law, and even a presumptuous mockery of the Creator, to bring into existence such lively images of his creatures' (IX, 169). William Stein writes:

> Hawthorne focuses on still another inadequacy of Puritan morality. He condemns his forefathers' intolerance of art, their fear that it encroached upon God's prerogatives; and indirectly he deplores their suspicion of the beautiful in painting, the only ideal that momentarily exalts man to the status of a god (75).

Or, the people, 'frightened at the art which could raise phantoms at will, and keep the form of the dead among the living, were inclined to consider the painter as a magician, or perhaps the famous Black Man of old witch-times, plotting mischief in a new guise' (IX, 169).

The use of the words 'Black Man' and 'old witch times' seems to imply prejudice, preconceptions, hallucinations, and fixed ideas. All of this is connected with the image of the painter's ability. The painter is introduced as if he were almighty and all-knowing. The patron,

8 In the eighteenth century, the cult of the Picturesque, especially as fostered by William Gilpin, led to appreciation of the sketch because if its spontaneous and 'unfinished' character, which stimulated the play of imagination (Osborne, ed. 1068).

Walter Ludlow, tells his fiancée, Elinor, that: 'He not only excels in his peculiar art, but possesses vast acquirements in all other learning and science' and: '[H]e paints not merely a man's features, but his mind and heart. He catches the secret sentiments and passions, and throws them upon the canvass, like sunshine – or perhaps, in the portraits of dark-souled men, like a gleam of infernal fire. It is an awful gift [...] I shall be almost afraid to sit to him' (IX, 166–7). Though aware of this awesome power, he still tries to sit for the painter. He is akin to a kind of masochist who enjoys the sensation of something horrible and tragic. The words 'a gleam of infernal fire' suggest that the power of this painter is unfathomable.

Later, Walter even suggests that Elinor have their first family portrait painted by the painter. Elinor becomes afraid and asks, 'Are you telling me of a painter, or a wizard?' (IX, 167). She is acutely sensitive, aware of the signs of danger, and recognizes that this painter has an extraordinary ability and may be a kind of necromancer. Taylor Stoehr states that he makes a prediction by the divinatory power of physiognomy (78), but it is not certain whether the painter's art is supernatural or simply artistically gifted. Elinor has a kind of premonition, as she cannot find a reason to decline Walter's idea of having the portrait done, and so unwillingly accepts it. But she was oscillating with 'a sad and anxious look':

> A look! [...] No wonder that it startled him, if it expressed what I sometimes feel. I know, by my own experience, how frightful a look may be. But it was all fancy. I thought nothing of it at the time – I have seen nothing of it since – I did but dream it (IX, 167).

The 'look' Elinor mentions is suggestive. The sitter herself perceives something miserable; that is to say, she penetrates the tragic outcome latent in her own 'look', and, by doing, so, foresees her future. She then tries to put aside and forget her gloomy feelings, and 'she busied herself about the embroidery of a ruff, in which she meant that her portrait should be taken' (IX, 167). Embroidery and needlework are symbolic in Hawthorne's fiction. When he mentions them, he may

remember his mother's image.[9] Frederick C. Crews remarks on the connection between frustrated sexuality and art, and touches on Hester Prynne's artistic embroidery (157). Elinor's embroidery, however, is different from Hester's needlework, and it seems to give Elinor relief. If Walter silently observed such a desperate attitude as hers, he may have been sadistic as well as masochistic.

Walter visits the painter's studio and views paintings of the following religious figures and dignitaries in the Puritan community: Governor Burnet, Mr Cooke, the ancient lady of Sir William Phips, John Winslow, two old bearded Saints, a pale but unfaded Madonna (IX, 169–70). He says, 'How singular a thought [...] that this beautiful face has been beautiful for above two hundred years! Oh, if all beauty would endure so well! Do you not envy her, Elinor?' (IX, 170). Thus, the immortality of painting moves Walter profoundly. On the other hand, Elinor's sense of beauty is quite different, and she replies, 'If Earth were Heaven [...] where all things fade, how miserable to be the one that could not fade!' (IX, 170). Predictably she demonstrates magnanimity and accepts faults, imperfection, and ugliness in human beings. That is why she loved Walter and agreed to his plan. In this conversation, their crucial divergence of values can be recognized.

Nevertheless, Walter feels slightly uneasy about being painted by the painter and may be anxious about Elinor's disquiet. Therefore, he stands in front of their minister's portrait and says, 'He gazes at me, as if he were about to utter a word of paternal advice' (IX, 171). Walter realizes his sense of guilt about his behaviour in the past, and suspects that the portrait's figure knows this. The painter's virtue may recall Walter's guilty consciousness: 'And at me', said Walter, 'as if he were about to shake his head and rebuke me, for some suspected iniquity. But so does the original. I shall never feel quite comfortable under his eye, till we stand before him to be married' (IX, 171). Walter speaks as if he had betrayed her, and believes that the sin will be erased when they marry.

9 I will discuss the image of mother in the later chapter on Hester Prynne, Hawthorne's mother was reclusive and unsociable, and she kept to her chamber, and she continued reading, doing needlework, and other household jobs. Mellow 3–4 and 185–6.

A kind of foreshadowing episode is narrated. When Walter and Elinor are to decide the details of their portrait, the painter proposes expressing both their portraits into one picture, but '[the plan] was necessarily rejected, because so large a space of canvass would have been unfit for the room which it was intended to decorate'. Two half-length portraits were therefore fixed upon. After they had taken leave, Walter Ludlow asked Elinor, with a smile, whether she knew what an influence over their fates the painter was about to acquire (IX, 171–2). Walter prioritizes the decoration of the room over the portraiture of him and Elinor.

When a portrait is commissioned, artist and sitter must agree on the size, pose, and price of the finished work (J. Turner, ed., vol.25, 280). It is quite natural that the painter obeys the patron's request, and he agrees that they are to be painted separately, as Walter says, even though he might foresee the tragic ending of their marriage at this time. Elinor believes the painter's ability to predict is moderated by his conscience and tries to rationalize, thinking 'he will use it [a terrible prophetic ability] well' (IX, 172). The painter does not compromise toward art, or he does not paint for money: 'If he beheld only a sleek and comfortable visage, though there were a gold-laced coat to adorn the picture, and golden guineas to pay for it, he civilly rejected the task and the reward' (IX, 168). Thus, he, who is very honest and obstinate, does not make use of art for some other purpose.

Walter and Elinor are impressed with the painting's realism, but the preliminary crayon sketch gives a more significant suggestion:

> [T]hough the likeness promised to be perfect, they were not quite satisfied with the expression; it seemed more vague than in most of the painter's works. [...] During their sittings, he engaged them in conversation, and kindled up their faces with characteristic traits, which, though continually varying, it was his purpose to combine and fix (IX, 172).

The painter may hesitate to paint their tragic future completely, and he leaves it 'vague'. He roughly draws the sitters and secretly grasps their essence. The sketch shows the crude but true prophecy of their tragic fate. Even after their portraits had been completed, the painter continues to sketch their figures. Finally, the painter suggests that he alter

their portraits for them and he tries to warn them of their future with the sketch he has made:

> He directed her notice to the sketch. A thrill ran through Elinor's frame; a shriek was upon her lips; but she stifled it, with the self-command that becomes habitual to all, who hide thoughts of fear and anguish within their bosoms. Turning from the table, she perceived that Walter had advanced near enough to have seen the sketch, though she could not determine whether it had caught his eye (IX, 176).

The painter's act of showing the terrible sketch obviously suggests that the painted portraits are different from the sketches, and signals his intent to inform Elinor about her tragic future with Walter. He further proposes to alter their portraits as she likes, but Elinor adheres to the original. She knows that she cannot part from Walter, even though she suspects a tragic outcome. She does not recognize that her future may be altered by the power of art, and so does not have their pictures altered by the painter. Then, he says, 'Be it so [...]. May your griefs be such fanciful ones, that only your picture may mourn for them! For your joys – may they be true and deep, and paint themselves upon this lovely face, till it quite belie my art!' (IX, 176).

The painter utters words that show wishful thinking and pretends to be optimistic, but it is clear that he is seriously anxious about Elinor's future, and he may be aware that she won't change her life even if he may persuade her to avoid the coming tragedy. And even after the completion of the portraits, the painter, who travels to the northern parts of New England for sketching Nature, is still worried about the subjects of the portraits, Walter and Elinor, as can be interpreted from the words: 'amid stern or lovely nature, in the perils of the forest, or its overwhelming peacefulness, still there had been two phantoms, the companions of his way' (IX, 178). Therefore, he comes to visit Walter and Elinor to observe how his portraits have changed, how much closer to the sketches they have become, and how the sitters are.

The painter is one of the sympathetic characters who modestly remembers and reflects on his past conduct. When he comes back to New England, he has a conscience and a consideration for his sitters, though it may be imperceptible. When we consider that the painter

warns Elinor and she ignores that warning, we cannot regard the painter as a sinner who has violated the human mind and heart, as was explained at the beginning of this tale. He is the complete artist, and has devoted himself to painting excellent portraits, to being 'insulated from the mass of human kind' (IX, 178). It would be permitted for the painter to paint the outward figures and to make them appear better than they really are. Painting is the prophetic portraitist's livelihood, and he is not to blame for painting in a manner that makes his patrons happy. The painter is described:

> He had no aim – no pleasure – no sympathies – but what were ultimately connected with his art. Though gentle in manner, and upright in intent and action, he did not possess kindly feelings; his heart was cold. [...] For these two beings, however, he had felt, in its greatest intensity, the sort of interest which always allied him to the subjects of his pencil. He had pryed into their souls with his keenest insight, and pictured the result upon their features, with his utmost skill. [...] He had caught from the duskiness of the future – at least, so he fancied – a fearful secret, and had obscurely revealed it on the portraits (IX, 178–9).

It is most glorious for the painter to create art true to himself. Though he is cold and aloof and he has painted self-centeredly, his passion was noble, virtuous, and genuine. He had a strong interest in Walter and Elinor, and painting their portraits might awake some part of his own human nature.

Finally the painter comes into confrontation with Walter and Elinor over his own painting. The painter's prophecy comes true. Walter has changed greatly, and his optimistic way of thinking and his childlike curiosity have completely disappeared. The painter comes to think: 'Was not his own the form in which that destiny had embodied itself, and he a chief agent of the coming evil which he had foreshadowed?' (IX, 181), and begins to regret painting as he did. The following is the moment which reconciles the prophecy of the sketches, with the evolving prophecy of the painted portraits, and with reality:

> ‘Our fate is upon us!’ howled Walter. ‘Die!’
> Drawing a knife, he sustained her, as she was sinking to the ground, and aimed it at her bosom. In the action, and in the look and attitude of each, the painter beheld the figures of his sketch. The picture, with all its tremendous coloring, was finished (IX, 181).

While it is not clear whether the painter had the ‘sense of power to regulate their [the sitters’] destiny’ (IX, 181–2), his prophecy nonetheless came true. ‘The picture’, which includes the concept of both portraits and sketches, represents the realization of the painter’s prophecy. The prophecy is a warning for his sitters, but it is not heeded by them. They did not respond to the artist’s suggestion in the sketches and the portraits. In the end, even sensitive Elinor did not listen to the painter’s warning, and dull Walter simply was oblivious to the painter’s message. Although the painter admonishes her, she just replies: ‘But – I loved him!’ (IX, 182).

Then, the ‘deep moral’ of this tale is offered that ‘Could the result of one, or all our deeds, be shadowed forth and set before us – some would call it Fate, and hurry onward – others be swept along by their passionate desires – and none be turned aside by the PROPHETIC PICTURES’ (IX, 182). The painter’s prophecy, which may have elements of insolence, excessive self-reliance, and misunderstanding of human beings, could not defeat her love. This underlines the point that love does not always lead people to happiness in Hawthorne’s works. Even if they accept the artist’s warning, they do not necessarily live happily ever after.

Terence Martin says, ‘Hawthorne dealt with both the power and the plight of the artist’ (59), and pertinently continues: ‘The explicit moral of the tale is that despite clear warnings people pay no real attention to what fate has in store for them but live up to and deserve their destiny; grafted onto that moral is the theme of the solitary, cold-hearted painter. The two themes are not effectively integrated, and the story suffers accordingly’ (59–60). While pointing out the structural flaws of this tale, he recognizes not only the painter’s cold heart but also the ignorance of the sitters.

The painter clearly warns her by his sketch, and she is aware of her fiancé’s future transformation. They respectively cannot accept

nor change their ways of living, even if a cruel destiny is waiting for them. Both parties seem to lack objectivity.

Stoehr points out that the painter must assume a considerable degree of responsibility for his creation (80). Hawthorne does not consider that the artwork should attach to the artist.[10] Mary Dichmann analyses the ambivalence of Hawthorne's attitude towards the artist, and states that the artist exists on two levels: the human level and the absolute level (200). She leaves her analysis without a definite conclusion: 'The ambiguity of Hawthorne's artist in society is unresolved at the end of 'The Prophetic Pictures' and seems to be unresolvable' (Dichmann 202). Artists may live in the 'neutral territory', between 'the human level' and 'the absolute level'.

Intrinsically, art is not a tool of scheming. Axelsson's view, 'The only way in which the painter can approach human beings is through his art' (149), is actually correct, but Hawthorne tried to reserve a part of human nature especially in the artist's sketches. In this tale, the sketches open a window into the painter's hidden heart, while the portraits are rather formal. From a background of a strict Puritan society, John McWilliams, Jr. insinuates that this tragedy represents 'long-standing regional hostility to art' (94). Bunge notes: Although art cannot predict the future, it does present perspectives people can acknowledge and learn from, but regarding artists as prophets makes 'their creations potentially dangerous as well as potentially educative' (43).

The painter may not actually be warm hearted, but there may still be room for the justification of his art. Art is not a product of optimism, decency and entertainment. Early nineteenth-century art certainly respected formality, respectability and vanity. In this tale, viewing sketches as well as portraits reveals the truth and the essence of the sitters. We can understand that the prophetic painter painted as the sitters hoped, and the tragic outcome might be inevitable.

10 In 'The Artist of the Beautiful', Hawthorne writes: 'as for Owen Warland, he looked placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which yet was no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this' (X, 475).

‘The Sylph Etherege’: Tough and Immutable Owner Heroine

Miniature portraits do not often appear in Hawthorne’s fiction. The American miniature school, typified by Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) and Edward Green Malbone (1777–1807), derived its style from the example of England rather than from the continent (J. Turner, ed., vol.21, 644). Therefore, its characteristics and the artistic duties are aligned to British ones. Miniature portraits are usually thought to ‘convey a more intimate interpretation of character than the more formal and public presentation proper to a large-scale oil painting’ (J. Turner, ed., vol.21, 638). It is further supposed that miniature portraits reflect an interpretation of the sitters’ personality, preserving privacy. In addition, they also have been treated as a literary tool. They were first used by Shakespeare as a symbol of intimacy and possession, and later they were employed in order to describe subtle meanings of love and fidelity in works by British authors of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Jane Austen, and Charlotte Brontë (Coombs 114).

When Hawthorne first had his miniature portrait painted in 1836, he seemed to like the work and kept the image in mind (Gollin, *Portraits of Hawthorne* 17). Before leaving for Brook Farm, he sent a message to his fiancée, Sophia, ‘I would thou hadst my miniature to wear in thy bosom’ (VIII, 662). Also, he noted ‘a singular resemblance’ between a wood engraving based on the oil portrait of Cephas G. Thompson and ‘a miniature of my father’ (E. Miller 24). Clearly, the use of the miniature portrait is a way of expressing love, affection, and intimacy. From the very nature of the art, privately, or sometimes secretly, they were manufactured and exchanged between intimates, and ideas shared can be grasped exclusively in them (Coombs 34). Therefore, the details about the painters, the sitters and the intended owners were often veiled. Among painted portraits, miniature portraits in particular met the main demand for small

likenesses, which we seek in *carte-de-visite* today (G. Reynolds, 6).[11] Accordingly, after the rise of photography, they quickly disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century (J. Turner, ed., vol.21, 645).

'Sylph Etherege' is the only tale of Hawthorne's that treats a miniature portrait as a significant motif. The miniature is deeply involved in the characterization of the main characters, especially, the heroine, Sylvia Etherege. This tale has been little discussed, probably because there are many vague elements in the plot, the characters, and, above all, the moral outcome. Like his other art tales, Hawthorne seems to be trying to create a mysterious atmosphere by using a miniature portrait, such as it is seen in familiar Gothic romances, such as Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The characters that appear in 'Sylph Etherege' closely resemble those in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: the heroine is a delicate maiden of acute sensibility who becomes the ward of a distantly related older woman and an ominous yet attractive villain. Furthermore, a miniature plays a key role in that story's development (Newman 297).

Generally, 'Sylph Etherege' is considered a description of 'the importance of the Platonic ideal' (Newman 298), or a 'romantic approach to art as an embodiment of ideal truth' (Gollin, *Portraits of Hawthorne* 6). Bunge thinks that this tale is a 'calculating approach to reality and an idealistic, imaginative one' (66). Actually, Sylvia's fantastic mentality is the vital point of this tale. The painter of the miniature in this tale is not characterized at all in the story, nor is his existence even recognized. However, judging from the way Sylvia is intensely absorbed in the portrait, the miniature emits a magical and unfathomable power to her. She feels extraordinary sympathy toward the portrait. Therefore, in this artist-absent tale, the miniature portrait itself plays a key role as art, and it significantly influences the characters' views of life.

The special features of the miniature portrait are not made known to the reader.[12] The only information provided is that the portrait is

11 *carte-de-visite*: small photograph (5.7 x 9.5 cm) used also as a type of name card.

12 In *The House of the Seven Gables*, a miniature portrait is used to describe Clifford, surfaces and painting techniques improved greatly.

painted on ivory. Ivory is naturally oily, un-absorbent, and difficult to paint, but after the later eighteenth century ivory became easier to treat, like enamel and vellum (Coombs 85; G. Reynolds 4). Miniature portraits on ivory became popular in America as an intimate art 'in little' (Wehle 11). The image of ivory indicates that the miniature portrait in the story is valuable and expensive like jewellery, and it implies purity and resistance (de Vries 272). Popular shapes included oval or rectangular ones (J. Turner, ed., vol.21, 643), because they can fit into a locket. The miniature portrait in this tale is presumed to be oval.

The main characters, Sylvia Etherege, her fiancé Edgar Vaughan, and her ward Mrs Grosvenor, are all rather mysterious figures. Edgar is often described as one of Hawthorne's villains (Stewart, *American Notebooks* xlix), a typical 'gloating villain of Gothic romance' (Gollin, *Truth of Dreams* 91). His character seems dark, warped and egotistical, and he pretends to be a close friend under the false name of Edward Hamilton. Unreflective and unthoughtful, he tries to educate Sylvia to be his ideal wife. He is introduced as follows:

> The dark-browed Edward Hamilton, like the villain of a tale, would often glide through the romance wherein poor Sylvia walked. Sometimes, at the most blissful moment of her ecstasy, when the features of the miniature were pictured brightest in the air, they would suddenly change, and darken, and be transformed into his visage. And always, when such change occurred, the intrusive visage wore that peculiar smile, with which Hamilton had glanced at Sylvia (XI, 116).

Edward's changes in appearance are used to seemingly demonstrate Edgar's duplicity. Edgar appears thoughtful and compassionate toward his fiancée, but at the same time is scheming and pursuing his own designs.

From childhood, Edgar never disobeyed his father nor his family's roles or customs. At the direction of his parents, he went to Europe, completed his studies in France, and was about to marry

Sylvia without any question even though he did not love her. It is a typical marriage of convenience.[13]

It is quite natural that Edgar does not know Sylvia's personality. He regards her as too naïve and innocent, and it occurs to him that he could reform her as he likes. Their actual relationship has only been epistolary. At the outset, Sylvia is handed Edgar's miniature portrait by Edward, who is actually Edgar himself. When she actually meets Edgar, she is unable to identify him by the miniature portrait, and doesn't even suspect that he was the model. There are elements of a farce in that Sylvia makes no attempt to know the true nature of her fiancé. Unconsciously, she has an unpleasant reaction toward Edgar/ Edward, but she devotes herself to contemplating the ideal figure in the miniature portrait.

Edgar partly understands the 'sensitiveness of her disposition, the delicate peculiarity of her manners, and the ethereal beauty both of her mind and person' (XI, 113), but it is not enough. His ultimate purpose is 'curing Sylvia of her romantic notions, and reconciling her to the truths and realities of life' (XI, 118).

As to Edgar's plans, Edward Wagenknecht states that this tale is 'one more illustration of [Hawthorne's] horror at the idea of any human being attempting to establish dominance over the being of another' (*The Man, His Tales and Romances* 210). Edgar's design, the 'dominance' over Sylvia, may represent an egotistical male control over a female, but pure idealism in him may also be at the root. Axelsson calls Edgar's malignity 'materialistic blindness' (61), and Wagenknecht uses the word of 'sardonic' in order to explain Edgar's intention of reforming his fiancée (*The Man, His Tales and Romances* 210).

Edgar mistakenly believes that he can manipulate her to his satisfaction. His strong curiosity and selfish affection make him realize the design: 'Well, my conscience is clear. I did but look into

13 'Their future union had been projected, as the means of uniting two rich estates, and was rendered highly expedient, if not indispensable, by the testamentary dispositions of the parents on both sides. Edgar Vaughan, the promised bridegroom, had been bred from infancy in Europe, and had never seen the beautiful girl, whose heart he was to claim as his inheritance' (XI, 112).

this delicate creature's heart; and with the pure fantasies that I found there, I made what seemed a man, – and the delusive shadow has wiled her away to Shadowland, and vanished there!' (XI, 118). In Hawthorne's fiction, looking into the heart – that is, prying into others' heart – is often the Unpardonable Sin itself. But Edgar exposes himself to be a fool rather than a sinner and his designs seem to arise from a kind of voyeurism and egoism rather than evil.

Mrs Grosvenor is also an inscrutable character. She is introduced to the reader only as one of Sylvia's distant relatives and plays a very equivocal role. From her conversation with Edgar, it is possible to presume that she is aware of his duplicity, hypocrisy and impudence, and that she is already conscious of his puerile and immature nature. At first, Mrs Grosvenor agrees to Edgar's egotistical design, because she also wonders how Sylvia, being too pure and inexperienced, will be able to live in the real world.

In the first scene of this tale, Mrs Grosvenor and Edgar 'stood among the shrubbery of a garden, stealthily watching a young girl [Sylvia]' (XI, 111). This scene suggests Sylvia was performing mono-drama on the stage, and Mrs Grosvenor and Edgar were spectators. While Edgar was watching, he 'seemed to regard her as a creature completely within the scope of his influence' (XI, 111). Mrs Grosvenor hears Edgar's enticing words, 'The charm works!' (XI, 111).

This 'charm' can be interpreted as something akin to hypnosis. Edgar tries to manipulate Sylvia by wielding the miniature portrait like a remote control. Mrs Grosvenor warns: '[A]re you not ruining your own chance, by putting forward this shadow [Edward] of a rival?' (XI, 111). This utterance defines her role. Edgar replies, '[W]ill he not vanish into thin air, at my bidding? [...] Let the charm work!' (XI, 111).

But the reality soon becomes more complicated. He cannot defeat the shadow, nor does it vanish; on the contrary, the shadow takes on an independent existence in Sylvia's mind. She ignores not only Edward but Edgar himself, and she becomes completely en-grossed in the figure in the miniature portrait. This can be interpreted that Edgar failed to control 'the charm' on Sylvia. In other words, he misjudges her personality and cannot carry out his design.

Sylvia is generally considered to be one of Hawthorne's typical fair ladies. Randall Stewart classifies her as 'the frail, sylph-like creature, easily swayed by a stronger personality' (*American Notebooks* LV), and mentions that '[b]eing too pure and spiritual for the earth, she was translated to the spirit world and thereby escaped her diabolical antagonist' (*American Notebooks* lviii).

Sylvia corresponds with Phoebe and Alice Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hilda in *The Marble Faun*, Beatrice in 'Rappaccini's Daughter', Georgiana in 'The Birth-mark', Alice Vane in 'Edward Randolph's Portrait', and Lilias Fay in 'The Lily's Quest'.[14] As to her similarity with Priscilla, Axelsson points out that 'they both nourish a naturally romantic fancy through inward musings and daydreaming about an idealized person whom they have never met or even seen' (102).

According to Abel, Hawthorne uses Sylvia to parody his over-etherealized heroines, and is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the too 'purely feminine' woman (167). In the popular view, she is considered passive, delicate, ethereal and pure (McPherson 238). While her essential character is unclear, it seems as if she were an actress using a miniature portrait as a prop.

Like several other heroines, Sylvia is an orphan. She lives isolated from society, and her nature is that of a 'slender and sylph-like figure, tinged with radiance from the sunset clouds, and overhung with the rich drapery of the silken curtains, and set within the deep frame of the window' (XI, 111–12). As an airy, exquisite and fragile fairy, it is as if she would vanish into the scenery around her. Since Sylvia received her fiancé's miniature portrait, her fantastic and imaginary world, which may be called her 'stage', arises from it. She forgets the real world and falls in love with the ideal figure, and she is 'left to seek associates and friends for herself, in the haunts of imagination, and to converse with them, sometimes in the language of

14 Stewart classifies Hawthorne's heroines into three types: (1) the wholesome New England girl, bright, sensible, and self-reliant; (2) the same type as Sylvia; (3) a woman with an exotic richness in her nature. Cf. Stewart, 'The Development of Character Types in Hawthorne's Fiction' (*American Notebooks* xliv–lxvii).

dead poets, oftener in the poetry of her own mind' (XI, 112–13). And then:

> She made a vision of Edgar Vaughan, and tinted it with stronger hues than a mere fancy-picture, yet graced it with so many bright and delicate perfections, that her cousin could nowhere have encountered so dangerous a rival. To this shadow she cherished a romantic fidelity. With its airy presence sitting by her side, or gliding along her favorite paths, the loneliness of her young life was blissful; her heart was satisfied with love, while yet its virgin purity was untainted by the earthliness that the touch of a real lover would have left there (XI, 113).

This quotation shows the dualistic elements in Sylvia: love and loneliness, light and shadow, purity and earthliness, and reality and fantasy. She lives in two worlds. The miniature portrait carries something enigmatic, and becomes an icon to her. While she gazes at it, she obtains power from it and gains tenacity and a will by virtue of it. Sylvia and the model come to possess common characteristics in many respects. If this situation is analysed from a different angle, she may have lost her sanity. She hallucinates and sees illusions of the ideal figure that she has made – a shadow. The use of the word 'shadow' insinuates a kind of psychological mood or hypnotic skill, but it is hard to believe that the practical-minded Edgar would depend on such a device. Rather, it is more believable that she herself has created her own imaginary world and was intoxicated with her monodrama.

Strictly speaking, there are two kinds of shadows, which Edgar and Sylvia respectively create as they wish. Both shadows indicate the same person – that is, Edgar the fiancé –, but they are essentially different in origin and nature. Edgar's preferred shadow means his other self, Edward, which is utilized for carrying out his own scheme of self-satisfaction. His image is the sitter in the miniature portrait as well as the imaginary fiancé whom Sylvia has never met. Sylvia's shadow indicates her own ideal as expressed in the miniature portrait. At first, she devotes herself solely to studying the figure, and she humbles herself by believing that 'such a being would be too refined and delicate to love a simple girl like her' (XI, 115). However, her consciousness gradually changes, and she becomes deeply involved in

the fantastic world inside the miniature portrait. It is a free domain beyond the boundaries of this world. Therefore, her imagination grows, and she becomes more romantic and even delusional.

The shadow, which appears to be her illusion, gives her real happiness:

> Clasping the miniature to her heart, she could summon forth, from that haunted cell of pure and blissful fantasies, the life-like shadow, to roam with her in the moonlight garden. [...] The effect upon her mind was hardly less powerful, than if she had actually listened to, and reciprocated, the vows of Edgar Vaughan; for, though the illusion never quite deceived her, yet the remembrance was as distinct as of a remembered interview. Those heavenly eyes gazed for ever into her soul, which drank at them as at a fountain, and was disquieted if reality threw a momentary cloud between. She heard the melody of a voice breathing sentiments with which her own chimed in like music (XI, 115).

She feels a sense of familiarity with the image in the miniature and comes to accept it as an intimate existence or a soul mate. Her excessive passion for the miniature portrait may be regarded as fetishistic. Her shadow becomes ‘a brighter semblance of reality’ (XI, 115), and provides an indescribable energy to her, which may be derived from a kind of fetishism. Moreover, she comes to possess a unique toughness along with her fragile sensitivity. This toughness seems to be supported by imagining ‘fantastic nonsense’ (XI, 111) or ‘day-dreams’ (XI, 115), though ‘Sylph may need curing of the ‘fantastic nonsense’ of mistaking the ‘fanciful’ for the imperfections of the real and the true, of mistaking illusions for reality’ (H. Clark 258).

Sylvia’s mental state may be said to be unstable and dangerous, but she therefore possesses an ability to transcend the real world and ‘to flit with the airy creature into the realm of fantasy and moonlight, where dwelt his dreamy kindred’ (XI, 116). Sylvia’s spirit goes straight forward only to the ‘shadow’ of her own making, which is now indispensable to her life. Then, ‘she cherished a romantic fidelity’ (XI, 113) with the ‘shadow’. Edgar and Mrs Grosvenor probably consider Sylvia’s behaviour to be abnormal.

Sylvia has been obedient to these guardians, but with the appearance of the ideal soul mate, she regains the ability to endure a

feeling of loneliness and to replace it with pleasant musings. Sylvia now will not follow others' guidance, and she may 'neither be reasoned with, nor persuaded' (XI, 114) by anyone in the world. Her secluded life allows her to assimilate her ideal figure. She gradually loses the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality, and skilfully lives two lives: one in the real world and one in the fantastic world. Staying with the ideal figure she has created, she realizes a pure and romantic happiness balancing reality and fantasy in her inner world. She lives in this world no longer.

For a long time, Sylvia is like a princess waiting for her Prince Charming to rescue her from the vulgar earthly world, and she wants him to take her to a fantastic world. The word 'Sylph', which is used in the title, symbolizes a being in between material and immaterial existence, but mainly a spirit in the air (de Vries 454):

> Yet, even while her spirit drooped with that apprehension, the picture was but the masculine counterpart of Sylph Etherege's sylph-like beauty. There was that resemblance between her own face and the miniature, which is said often to exist between lovers whom Heaven has destined for each other, and which, in this instance, might be owing to the kindred blood of the two parties. Sylvia felt, indeed, that there was something familiar in the countenance, so like a friend did the eyes smile upon her, and seem to imply a knowledge of her thoughts. She could account for this impression only by supposing, that, in some of her day-dreams, imagination had conjured up the true similitude of her distant and unseen lover (XI, 115).

Probably Sylvia values mental congeniality and feels it only in the presence of the ideal figure of the miniature portrait. Through this congeniality she can sympathize with and assimilate the figure.

The denouement of this tale is very ambiguous and it is difficult to distinctly judge if it is tragic or not, though Sylvia loses her life in the end. She may be a victim of Edgar's designs or of her own delusions. When Edgar discloses his identity to Sylvia, she suddenly loses her fiancé, her future husband, her ideal figure, and her soul mate all at the same time. The following scene immediately follows the disclosure:

> Sylvia shuddered, but had not power to turn away her white face from his [Edgar's] gaze. The miniature, which she had been holding in her hand, fell

> down upon the floor, where Hamilton, or Vaughan, set his foot upon it, and crushed the ivory counterfeit to fragments (XI, 117).

Her ideal figure was shattered by Edgar, and Sylvia was shut out from both worlds. She became unable to come and go between the real world and the fantastic world as she had before. The expression 'Hamilton, or Vaughan' suggests that neither are important to her nor do they have a role in her denouement. Her life is influenced only by the ideal figure she had created.

Until the destruction of the miniature portrait, she was able to live alone, to make her own decisions, and to perform in her monodrama, even though she seemed frail, weak and passive. She rejected living in the real world through her own free will. Her refusal of Edgar may represent the female intuition over male designs, or, in another sense, romanticism over realism. Moreover, it may be deduced that her refusal symbolizes Hawthorne's own insecurities about the Old World, Europe and America's feelings of inferiority. Some have asserted that Sylvia 'refuses to exchange her phantom love for the iconoclastic Edgar when he tries to jolt her back into reality' (Gollin and Idol 45). She willingly chooses the ideal world within the miniature portrait. Her death may imply that recognition of reality, imagination, and fantasy is essential to human beings.

Thus, the miniature portrait suggests the most important concept of this tale; it influences the lives of the characters, and becomes a catalyst. Her obstinacy regarding the miniature portrait may be a parallel to those of Hawthorne's male characters with 'a solitary ambition' (IX, 180). Examples would include Ethan Brand, Richard Digby in 'The Man of Adamant' (1837), Mr Hooper in 'The Minister's Black Veil' (1836), as well as others.

Millicent Bell mentions the perilous, prophetic and magical role of the miniature portrait (87–8), and regards the ending of this tale pessimistically: 'the artist's pursuit of the ideal of art has resulted in the death of the human element' (81), and she adds that the work of art 'created a reality powerful enough both to compel love and cause death' (88). That is to say, it seems that 'there is no reconciliation between the dream world and reality' (Gollin, *Truth of Dreams* 90).

Harry Clark regards this tale as a description of 'the tragic fate of the over-imaginative Sylph Etherege', and it warned the reader 'against the "dangerous tendencies of the imagination" when unbalanced by understanding of the realities of life' (259). Regarding Dugald Stewart's psychological perspective on this tale, Gollin mentions the significance and the necessity of imagination in this story: 'an individual might conceive an impossible idea of perfection; love might then take root only in his imagination' (*Truth of Dreams* 25).

Bunge believes that this story 'juxtaposes the intellectual, materialistic, arrogant bias Hawthorne again and again associates with his age and with science to a gentler, more imaginative attitude resembling that of the transcendentalists' (65). His dualism and the philosophical dilemma are pointed out in this tale as well. Usually the main artist character in Hawthorne's fiction takes the double role of artist and main character. But this tale is thought to be a rare example in which the female main character, the male character, and the artist character (whose existence is only represented by the miniature portrait) exist separately. Each plays a role within his or her bounds. Thus, the antipodal elements in this tale, such as idealism and materialism, intellect and sympathy, realism and imagination, perfection and imperfection, are never really compatible.

Although this should not be regarded as an entirely negative phenomenon, and, indeed, an artist might be able to view it positively in some respects, the limitations of human beings, artists and art are distinctly suggested in this tale. One of the characteristics of Hawthorne's aesthetics is a comprehension of such contrary ideas, and he is fully aware of factors like human sorrow, vulnerability, foolishness, obstinacy and evanescence.

‘Edward Randolph’s Portrait’: The Artist Medium

This tale was written as one of the ‘Legends of the Province-House’ reflecting the historical backgrounds of early New England. In the first part, the story is declared to be ‘as correct a version of the fact as the reader would be likely to obtain from any other source’ (IX, 258). Although the author thus calls this tale ‘the fact’, many critics regard it as a Gothic romance.[15] In considering ‘Edward Randolph’s Portrait’ as an art tale, one of the most significant topics is the care given to the preservation of the portrait, especially its cleaning. This art technique, while itself practical, is interpreted as something like magic. This can be regarded as the same type of story as those that include an unfolding ‘momentary miracle’ in Hawthorne’s fiction.[16]

When he was very young, Hawthorne saw a ghost, and he wrote about the psychic experience in ‘The Ghost of Doctor Harris’ (XXIII, 382–9),[17] proving that he did not deny the supernatural or an afterlife.

15 Nina Baym argues that it focuses on a quasi-supernatural event and presents an interaction of fancy and fact to create an imaginative version of history (*The Shape of Hawthorne’s Career* 76). Mark Van Doren states that this tale ‘touches upon the mystery which it was a gothic convention to find in works of art’ (84). Like ‘The Prophetic Pictures’, the portrait painting is ‘a stock property in Gothic fiction’ (Wagenknecht, *The Man, His Tales and Romances* 34), and it includes ‘the well known Gothic device of the mysterious painting’ and the prophetic warning (Ringe 153). And George Woodberry relates it to the incident of the portrait of old Lord Ravenswood at the marriage ball in Sir Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (136).

16 The main characters in ‘The Artist of the Beautiful’, ‘Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment’, ‘The Birth-mark’ (1843), ‘The Snow-Image’ (1850) and ‘Rappaccini’s Daughter’ (1844) succeed in achieving their ideal momentarily, but their unbelievable happiness does not last for long, and it perishes disappointingly. Almost all of these tales result in a tragic end, implying their dualistic values and morality. The main characters in these tales shatter or they lose one of their dearest intimates in this world. But this death, destruction, or return to the former state from a momentary miracle in each tale does not necessarily denote despair, defeat, or evil in Hawthorne’s moral sense.

17 This essay was written in 1856, and was recently published in *Miscellaneous Prose and Verse*. Hawthorne mentioned his ghost-seeing experience, and at the time explained: ‘A good many year ago (it must be as many as fifteen, perhaps

Hawthorne is considered to be the first writer of note to make serious literary use of spiritualism, mesmerism, prophecy and other kinds of supernatural phenomena (Kerr 56). Therefore, it is important to consider the mysterious and occult arts and sciences, and it is essential to reflect upon the relationships between arts, pseudo-sciences, mental philosophy, and occultism in the thought of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America.

Alice Vane, niece of Thomas Hutchinson[18] and artist heroine, is assigned the role of picture-restorer in the story. Hawthorne's wife Sophia may have served as a model for Alice (Newman 77; Wagenknecht, *The Man, His Tales and Romances* 34; Cantwell 255; Axelsson 162; and Valenti, 'Sophia Peabody' 10). Julian, Hawthorne's eldest son, relates his mother's comments during this parents' courtship: 'He [Hawthorne] said he had imagined a story, of which the principal incident is my [Sophia's] cleaning that picture of Fernandez' (J. Hawthorne, vol.1, 185). Therefore, Alice had the knowledge of the art of cleaning, which is principally the removal of dirt, but it requires ethical considerations as well. There is a possibility that cleaning may remove the historical significance of the subject or change the original conception of the artist.[19] So it must be very carefully done so that the work of art is not marred in the process of restoration.

Hawthorne consistently makes much of moral value in any domain. Alice hears the dismal legend of Edward Randolph's portrait, and she realizes that the model is an infamous person in the history of New England, 'whose memory is still held in detestation, as the destroyer of our liberties' (IX, 262), and that his appearance reveals the evil of his inner nature, in regard to which: 'the inward misery of that curse worked itself outward, and was visible on the wretched man's countenance, making it too horrible to be looked upon' (IX,

more, and while I was still a bachelor)' (XXIII, 383). Presumably the experience is at the time or just after period he was writing this tale.

18 Thomas Hutchinson (1711–1780) attempted to unite all the American English colonies except Georgia and Nova Scotia, and proposed the amendments of the 'Plan of the Union' of the colonies presented by Benjamin Franklin under a president general who would be named by the British government.

19 Cf. Andrew Oddy's, 'Processes and Ethical Considerations' (J. Turner, ed. Vol.5, 727–31).

262). She considers: 'It would be almost worth while to wipe away the black surface of the canvass, since the original picture can hardly be so formidable as those which fancy paints instead of it' (IX, 261). She replies to her uncle's inquiry of the possibility of restoration: 'Such arts are known in Italy' (IX, 261). At this time, she thought that she could restore the portrait. In this episode, it is possible to find Hawthorne's moral device and deduce the following hypothesis: even if the surface dirt of the portrait can be removed perfectly, the past sin of the model cannot be wiped away.

Alice's appearance is emphasized and typified as a mysterious, frail and white image. In Hawthorne's fiction, the outward appearances are the mirrors of inner nature, and although Alice partly resembles Elinor and Sylvia, she is neither a sitter nor a viewer. She is an artist with a supernatural power. As Schubert also points out (104–5), her whiteness has a dramatic colour contrast with the blackness of the portrait:

> She was clad entirely in white, a pale, ethereal creature, who, though a native of New England, had been educated abroad, and seemed not merely a stranger from another clime, but almost a being from another world. For several years, until left an orphan, she had dwelt with her father in sunny Italy, and there had acquired a taste and enthusiasm for sculpture and painting, which she found few opportunities of gratifying in the undecorated dwellings of the colonial gentry. It was said that the early productions of her own pencil exhibited no inferior genius, though, perhaps, the rude atmosphere of New England had cramped her hand, and dimmed the glowing colors of her fancy (IX, 259).

The colour white symbolizes innocence, purity, holiness, spiritual ecstasy and energy, the unconscious, and intuition (de Vries 499). Therefore, Alice becomes mysticized by her appearance and acts as a medium between this world and the spiritual world, between New England and Europe, and between reality and legend. Her white image, like an angel, contrasts with the dark and evil figure of the portrait. Her experience as an orphan is implied to have left her lonely, as with Hawthorne's other artists. She studied art in Europe, especially in Italy, and cultivated an eye for art while she was there. She is highly polished for an American woman of that time, just like Hawthorne's wife Sophia. However, she no longer creates her own works of art,

because ‘she found few opportunities of gratifying [her taste for art] in the undecorated dwellings of the colonial gentry’. This sentence may express Hawthorne’s melancholy and distress as an artist of that time.

Hawthorne also uses suggestive words to describe Alice; she was ‘almost a being from another world’. Alice seems to appear here as a kind of a psychic or a sybil. Stoehr states that her surprising ability derives from a physiognomic character reading like the painter in ‘The Prophetic Pictures’ (77). Robert Fossum remarks that Hawthorne is asking whether the evil that art revivifies might not better be left hidden and, ultimately, whether guiltless choices are ever possible (39–40).

Supposedly, spiritualism, psychokinesis and psychometry are partially related to her supernatural art of restoration or are even a kind of shamanism. Hawthorne was well aware of these religious mysteries, and they are intensely developed in the later major romances. Spiritualism, phrenology, mesmerism, hydropathy, homoeopathy, and other pseudo-sciences were popular in nineteenth-century America (Wrobel, ed., 1), and occultism had evolved especially with the arrival of mesmerism in the 1830s.

During the alternating triumphs of evangelical Protestantism and positive science, successive occult movements and mysterious phenomena appeared (Kerr and Crow, eds, 2). Spiritualism developed obscurely alongside native American religions and shamanism, and was regarded as a mediator between faith and science (Wrobel, ed., 10). Through the art of spiritualism, people tried to listen to the dead or to God’s words through a medium.

Hawthorne might have obtained his shamanic knowledge by way of native Americans. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the enigmatic art is suggested with regard to Roger Chillingworth’s medical treatment:

> [T]he man of skill, during his Indian captivity, had enlarged his medical attainments by joining in the incantations of the savage priests, who were universally acknowledged to be powerful enchanters, often performing seemingly miraculous cures by their skill in the black art (I, 127).

It is thought that Alice heard the non-existent’s words and tried to leave a message to her uncle in order to not cause the same tragedy

again. Her role as a medium is signified by the Captain of Castle William's fancy: her air and mien are one of those 'creatures of a more antique mythology, who sometimes mingled their agency with mortal affairs, half in caprice, yet with a sensibility to human weal or wo' (IX, 263–4).

In Hawthorne's art tales, the artists, the viewers, and the models all have a strong spiritual attachment to works of art, which may be interpreted as a fetishistic passion. The painter in 'The Prophetic Pictures' devotes himself to his subjects in the portraits, and in 'Sylph Etherege' Sylvia's attachment to the miniature is exactly what we would call fetishism. Alice can be described as having a fetishistic passion for the restoration of Edward Randolph's portrait. The portrait in question is introduced to the reader as follows:

> [T]he frame of which was as black as ebony, and the canvass itself so dark with age, damp, and smoke, that not a touch of the painter's art could be discerned. Time had thrown an impenetrable veil over it, and left to tradition, and fable, and conjecture, to say what had once been there portrayed (IX, 258).

Judging from this condition, the portrait can probably be restored without serious considerations. Generally, oil paintings require cleaning and re-touching as the main part of their restoration, and the varnish which blackens the surface of the portrait is removed (Osborne, ed., 272–4). This portrait is described as 'black as ebony', and 'dark with age, damp, and smoke'.

The image of Edward Randolph seems obscure in the dark overlay of the portrait, but his existence itself has been kept alive for many years by a separate narrative tradition. So Alice becomes interested in the person of Edward Randolph as well as in the portraitist. The Captain of Castle William guesses that Edward Randolph's portrait would be extremely fine were it to be restored. The portrait's history is recounted as a series of 'fables and fantasies' in the first part of this tale:

> One of the wildest, and at the same time the best accredited accounts, stated it to be an original and authentic portrait of the Evil One, taken at a witch meeting near Salem; and that its strong and terrible resemblance had been confirmed by several of the confessing wizards and witches, at their trial, in open court. It

> was likewise affirmed that a familiar spirit, or demon, abode behind the blackness of the picture, and had shown himself, at seasons of public calamity, to more than one of the royal governors. [...] Many of the servants of the Province-House had caught glimpses of a visage frowning down upon them, at morning or evening twilight, – or in the depths of night, while raking up the fire that glimmered on the hearth beneath; although, if any were bold enough to hold a torch before the picture, it would appear as black and undistinguishable as ever (IX, 260).

In the above, 'Evil', 'witch', 'wizards and witches', 'demon', and 'blackness' hint at necromancy and esotericism. The portrait may be excellent in itself, but it is 'the most singular part of the affair, that so many of the pompous governors of Massachusetts had allowed the obliterated picture to remain in the state-chamber of the Province-House' (IX, 261). Therefore, she cannot help but to restore the portrait out of curiosity, and her act of restoration, before it is actually done, is justified in the text as follows:

> if the visage of this portrait be so dreadful, it is not without a cause that it has hung so long in a chamber of the Province House. When the rulers feel themselves irresponsible, it were well that they should be reminded of the awful weight of a People's curse (IX, 262).

The moral that Alice points out here mentions the effect of admonition, that is to say that miseries should never be repeated. People believed that viewers would be cursed should they look into the eyes of Edward in the portrait, so they avoided looking at them. When her uncle and Alice talk about this tragic matter concerning this portrait, he realizes 'that Alice, in spite of her foreign education, retained the native sympathies of a New England girl' (IX, 263).

Frederick Newberry explains of her nature: 'for the moral or spiritual aspect of the restoration, she has all the inherent qualities she needs' (81). Newberry thinks that the restoration requires a qualified technician not only in art but also in morality. Certainly, the conservator needs 'ethical considerations', and Hawthorne, brought up in a Puritan community, would have thought in precisely this way. Like a sybil, Alice theatrically cried: 'Come forth, dark and evil Shape! [...] It is thine hour!' (IX, 264). Newberry interprets this as a 'satanic and gothic influence that Puritan epistemology could summon' (81). This

utterance implies her significant characteristic: She is curious about everything, and that curiosity is much stronger than fear; she is essentially voyeuristic and self-confident, and likes to show off her achievements.

There is another example where Alice is represented as if she were a medium or a sibyl. Just before showing the results of the cleaning, she appears in a ceremonious costume of 'the white drapery of a lady's robe' (IX, 264), and, in addition, 'there was something so child-like, so wayward, in her singular character, so apart from ordinary rules, that her presence did not surprise the few who noticed it' (IX, 264). When Hawthorne first saw Sophia, she was dressed all in white just like Alice (Hoeltje 150). So Hawthorne may have been trying to express her divinity, purity, and some kind of affinity through this white image.

Alice self-assuredly presents the authorities of Boston with the portrait restored by her own hand. The subsequent scene is as dramatic as if she performed a conjuring trick like Pauline of *The Winter's Tale*:[20]

> No sooner had he [Hutchinson] spoken than Alice Vane glided from her station, and pressing one hand across her eyes, with the other snatched away the sable curtain that concealed the portrait. An exclamation of surprise burst from every beholder; but the Lieutenant-Governor's voice had a tone of horror (IX, 266).

The figure of Edward Randolph clearly appears in the portrait, and horrors spread as if some kind of witchcraft had been practised by Alice. Then, an objective opinion of the portrait is uttered by the aged Selectman: 'For some wise end [...] hath Providence scattered away the mist of years that had so long hid this dreadful effigy' (IX, 267). He does not think that the portrait was revived by Alice's art of cleaning, and he seems to regard it as God's work.

It is certain that the restoration was a phenomenal success. The reason may be that Alice rightly understood Providence and restored the portrait. And she mutters as if a medium or a sibyl would speak for God in a low voice, 'Be warned, then! [...] He trampled on a people's

20 *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare, V, iii. Hawthorne wrote down several words from this drama in his notebooks (VIII, 393).

rights. Behold his punishment – and avoid a crime like his!' (IX, 268). This seems stern and theatrical. She seems to speak as if she is possessed by the oppressor of the past. This tale requires many conjectures, and the historical facts and imaginative fancies seem to intertwine harmoniously. Stoehr asserts that 'Hutchinson is not doomed to the "People's curse" endured by Randolph; rather he is willing to risk it' (78). If Alice's ability of restoration includes something magical and prophesies the dire incident, then Hutchinson, if he was not aware of her distinct gift, was at fault. It is quite probable that he willingly took certain risks. Furthermore, note the specific description of the transient miracle and the cursed portrait in the following passage:

> Within the antique frame, which so recently had enclosed a sable waste of canvass, now appeared a visible picture, still dark, indeed, in its hues and shadings, but thrown forward in strong relief. It was a half-length figure of a gentleman in a rich, but very old-fashioned dress of embroidered velvet, with a broad ruff and a beard, and wearing a hat, the brim of which overshadowed his forehead. Beneath this cloud the eyes had a peculiar glare, which was almost life-like. The whole portrait started so distinctly out of the back- ground, that it had the effect of a person looking down from the wall at the astonished and awe-stricken spectators. [...] The torture of the soul had come forth upon the countenance. It seemed as if the picture, while hidden behind the cloud of immemorial years, had been all the time acquiring an intenser depth and darkness of expression, till now it gloomed forth again, and threw its evil omen over the present hour. Such, if the wild legend may be credited, was the portrait of Edward Randolph, as he appeared when a people's curse had wrought its influence upon his nature (IX, 267).

The 'almost life-like' portrait is one of the typical characteristics of a portrait that has been kept from generation to generation, and then presented for the emulation of the virtue (J. Turner, ed., vol.25, 278). However, Hawthorne describes it here as if it were present for the emulation of evil. The inner truth appears outwardly once more, and the 'torture of the soul had come forth upon the countenance'. A 'people's curse' changes the feature of Edward Randolph in the portrait, and the transformation reflects 'its evil omen'. People may need a supernatural or psychic way to resolve the problem.

Generally, clairvoyant and divinatory practices, such as diagnosing disease, foretelling the future, and finding lost objects, partly overlap with Alice's ability. She is regarded as a medium to clear up 'the obliterated picture' (IX, 261) by her supernatural gift, and tries to save her uncle from a tragic fate. But Governor Hutchinson will not listen to her. Indeed, he criticizes her art education in Italy as follows: 'Girl!' cried he, laughing bitterly, as he turned to Alice, 'have you brought hither your painter's art – your Italian spirit of intrigue – your tricks of stage-effect – and think to influence the councils of rulers and the affairs of nations, by such shallow contrivances?' (IX, 268).

It seems that Hutchinson does not accept her art of cleaning nor does he understand art itself. A kind of antipathy toward European art, Italian characteristics especially, can be detected here. She sadly and gently says 'like the voice of a good spirit flitting away' (IX, 268), as if she spoke on behalf of God: 'May Heaven forgive the deed' (IX, 268). Spiritualism and occultism share the characteristic that the person with the powers of the medium can hear the words of those in the spirit world and try to give messages to specific people for specific purposes. Alice's ability is similar to such power. In cultivating the artistic imagination, she is able to mediate between this world and the world beyond.

Alice's act of restoration is treated in the same way as evanescent miracles in Hawthorne's artist tales. The end of this episode is conveyed with the following depiction that 'the dark, mysterious picture had started from the wall, and spoken face to face with Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson' and except 'the impenetrable cloud':

> If the figure had, indeed, stepped forth, it had fled back, spirit-like, at the day-dawn, and hidden itself behind a century's obscurity. The truth probably was, that Alice Vane's secret for restoring the hues of the picture had merely effected a temporary renovation (IX, 269).

The meaning of her 'secret' may be interpreted as Hawthorne's usual device of morality and implicit jealousy toward European art, as well as the failure of reconciliation between the Old World and the New World. But in the end, Hutchinson's death is described in the following melodramatic terms:

> he gasped for breath, and complained that he was choking with the blood of the Boston Massacre; and Francis Lincoln, the former Captain of Castle William, who was standing at his bedside, perceived a likeness in his frenzied look to that of Edward Randolph' (IX, 269).[21]

This shows the typical hideous portraiture of the Gothic curse in Hawthorne's fiction, and it anticipates the depiction of the infamous Judge Pyncheon's portrait in *The House of the Seven Gables*. The stereotypical villain and the conventional morality are severely criticized by Doubleday as follows:

> It is as if Hawthorne were somehow impelled to an ironic recognition of how worn and conventional the whole matter of the portrait is, and impelled to deprecate its combination with a historical action that deserved a better treatment. The impression of a touch of contemptuous irony is made stronger by the extravagance of the concluding sentences of the tale, in which it is reported that Hutchinson complained on his death bed that 'he was choking with the blood of the Boston Massacre', and that he had the frenzied look of Edward Randolph (128).

It is true that the theatrical phrase at the end can be regarded as exhibiting an ironic and extravagant tone, but I do not deprecate Hawthorne's intention of connecting the subject of the portrait with historical matters. Consequently, his ancestor's deeds of witch trials influenced his view of the past. However, it should be affirmatively recognized that a style of expressing art in the historical frame, the way of creating the legendary qualities of art with non-fictional elements, and the mode of associating the two worlds with a dual value are harmonized elaborately. Ultimately these seem to originate from the basic concept of the 'neutral territory'.

It cannot be asserted that Edward Randolph's portrait was restored merely through Alice's art techniques because puzzling elements still remain in this miraculous incident. She performed the role

21 The Boston Massacre was a riot in Boston, 5 March 1770, provoked by the British regiments quartered there. Five colonists were killed when British troops fired on a mob of men and boys who had been taunting them and throwing stones. In the end, two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter. Opinions differ with respect to the massacre: some regard it as a lawless affair and others as the first act of the revolution (Carruth 64 and 78).

of a medium and tried to send a significant message by performing a supernatural kind of art, although her manner was a little theatrical and contrived. Otherwise, the portrait itself indeed possessed a hideous power, and its curse was triggered by Alice's actions. In any case, Alice is a rare character in Hawthorne's early tales. She was female, an artist, and provided a profound influence on Hawthorne's subsequent artist characters, against the backgrounds of New England history and the Puritan community.

It is already well recognized by scholars that Hawthorne was fascinated with the art of portraiture (Huet 163), and painted portraits were to him a kind of mirror to the characters' inner nature, and their reflected images implied or revealed their morality and hidden truths. The portraiture in Hawthorne's fiction is considered 'an occult art of visionary penetration' (Brodhead, *School of Hawthorne* 125), and it can be said that to have one's portrait painted is to invite a curse – or, at the very least, a prophecy – to be fulfilled by one's descendants or oneself (Stoehr 79).

Therefore, human portraiture has some aspects that are not always beautiful or venerable, and is sometimes even horrible and astonishing. However, this is the very reason why Hawthorne was so fascinated by human portraiture. It is indispensable for him to comprehend not only art, but also the artist, the sitter, the patron, the intended owner, and the inner truths of each. Consequently, 'it required him to 'study' people as though they were objects to be manipulated on his fictional canvas' (Waggoner, *Presence of Hawthorne* 10). The eventual outcome of each tale often brings a cruel fate to the main character.

In Hawthorne, there is a tendency to attack what he values most (Way 18), and it holds true for the tales of painted portraits. In the nineteenth century, it was not rare for artists to destroy their own works if they perceived something offensive (Kris and Kurz 111–12). American artists of that time had no option but to create agreeable works of art as they were under the great sway of the obsolescence and modernism of art, culture, science, and history. The prevalence of pseudo-sciences and occultism influenced Hawthorne's transatlantic view, and art and artists in his fiction were viewed through this unique view. In his artists, ideal perfection cannot exist or, at least, it vanishes

immediately if it is achieved. This is a notion that can be observed in all of his art tales.

In 'The Prophetic Pictures', the artist, though he is not a particularly moral man, paints remarkable portraits in compliance with his patron's wishes, but the works of art emit a prophecy that disturbs the sitters. In 'Sylph Etherege', the heroine devotes herself to the miniature portrait, and her fantastic and melodramatic imagination makes her misperceive the world around her. In 'Edward Randolph's Portrait', an autocratic character is given an opportunity by the artist cum medium to review his deeds and to reform society, but he fails to take advantage of it and meets with a catastrophic fate. The portrait symbolizes terrible sins of the past in the history of New England. On the other hand, Hawthorne regarded portrait painting as significant, as expressed in the following:

> The dead live again. Thou recallest them to their old scenes, and givest their gray shadows the lustre of a better life, at once earthly and immortal. Thou snatchest back the fleeting moments of History. With thee, there is no Past; for, at thy touch, all that is great becomes forever present; and illustrious men live through long ages, in the visible performance of the very deeds, which made them what they are (IX, 179).

Art could do nothing to change society, although art may permit the occurrence of a miraculous incident that provides an opportunity for moral enlightenment. The characters related to portraiture in these tales are all pure, and, in a sense, they lived in the past; however, their morality, aesthetics and imagination continue to live in the present.