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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND BROOK FARM

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Among the intellectuals in the Boston area who were concerned about the social reform in the early 1830's, Dr. William Ellery Channing stood pre-eminent. They often spoke of him as "The Great Awakener." He looked to the younger divines for the accomplishment of the great ideas they had so often discussed. The present state of society was low and deplorable. He urged upon those young divines "the need of a spiritual revelation in Christendom, of a new bond between man and man, of a new sense of the relation between man and his Creator."[1]

To one of these younger divines, George Ripley, Dr. Channing once confided one of his "dearest ideas." Might it be possible, he wondered, to bring a group of thoughtful, cultivated people together, to make "a society" worthy of the name? He had long wished to see "Labor honored and united with the free development of the intellect and the heart."[2] He expressed this idea a couple of times before George Ripley was seriously considering it.

According to Charles Crowe, William Ellery Channing was the practical philosopher *par excellence* in 1824 and for many

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1 Edith Roelker Curtis, *A Season in Utopia: The Story of Brook Farm* (New York, 1961), p. 21.

2 Quoted by Curtis, p. 22.

years to come. During the two years of 1824 and 1825, the young men were all eagerly reading his every printed word and pursued every opportunity to hear him preach. Soon Ripley began to speak of himself as a "liberal" and "a child of Channing." When Dr. Channing suggested the ideal community, George Ripley was about thirty-five, a Unitarian divine who had been the pastor of the Thirteenth Congregational Church on Purchase Street in Boston for more than ten years. But he did not consider himself a man suited to the profession. After his resignation from the church in 1840, Ripley and his wife left Boston to spend the summer on the farm of a wealthy friend, Charles Ellis, in West Roxbury, nine miles out from Boston. It was an agreeable spot, secluded despite its nearness to the city, with broad meadows stretching down to the Charles River and thick pine woods at no great distance from the house. The house was a simple, comfortable homestead. Its eastern windows overlooked green meadows and a little brook which gave the farm its name.

They had spent two summers on this farm before, this summer the trees and fields and sky delighted them more than ever. As Mrs. George Ripley described in her letter, dated August 1, 1840, to John S. Dwight:

> We are nearly two miles from any creatures, but one or two quiet farmer's families, and do not see so many persons here in a month as we do in one morning at home. Birds and trees, sloping green hills and hay fields as far as the eye can reach—and a brook clear running, at the foot of a green bank covered with shrubbery opposite our window, sings us to our rest with its quiet tune, and chants its morning song to the rising.[3]

They were thinking that here, on the farm, it would be practicable to give a trial to Dr. Channing's theory concerning the union of labor and culture. Hence Ripley's Social Plan.

When Ripley first talked over the subject of an association with Emerson, he thought that $50,000 would be necessary for its equipment; but later on, he had decided that $30,000

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[3] Henry W. Sams, ed., *Autobiography of Brook Farm* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1958), p. 3.

would supply the land and buildings for ten families, and allow a sufficient margin to cover the first year's expenses. This sum he proposed to raise by forming a joint-stock company among those who were friendly to his enterprise, each subscriber to be guaranteed a fixed interest, and the subscriptions to be secured by the real estate. The shares he would place at $500 each, five per cent interest would be guaranteed, and the privilege of withdrawing would be allowed any shareholder who gave three months' notice of his intention.

In the winter of 1840-41, Ripley decided to buy Brook Farm, making himself at first responsible for its management and success. About the first of April, 1841, he, with his wife and sister and some fifteen others took possession of the farm-house, which, with a large barn, was already on the estate. In a letter to Emerson of November ninth, five months before—Ripley had forecast the spirit with which they now went to work:

> Our objects, as you know, are to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists; to combine the thinker and the worker as far as possible in the same individual; to guarantee the highest mental freedom by providing all labor adapted to their tastes and talents, and securing to them the fruits of their industry; to do away with the necessity of menial services by opening the benefits of education and the profits of labor to all; and thus to prepare a society of liberal, intelligent, and cultivated persons, whose relations with each other would permit a more simple and wholesome life than can be led amidst the pressure of our more competitive institutions.[4]

In the last paragraph of this long letter, Ripley summed up his immediate purpose in more concise terms. He aimed to found a community where "thought would preside over the operations of labor, and labor would contribute to the expansion of thought." It was his hope to promote "industry without drudgery, and true-equality without its vulgarity."

It was at about the mid-winter of 1841, when Ripley bought Brook Farm, that Nathaniel Hawthorne became acquainted with him. Precisely when Hawthorne decided to

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[4] O. B. Frothingham, *George Ripley* (Boston, 1882), pp. 307-12.

join Brook Farm remains unrecorded. Hawthorne had lately resigned from the Custom House and was casting about for a permanent situation. He and Sophia had agreed upon the matter by late November, 1840, when he wrote Sophia a bantering letter inquiring about some caricatures which she was supposed to draw—caricatures of him staggering, puffing, and toiling onward to the gate of the farm. When Hawthorne had taken up his duties in the Boston Custom House in January, 1839, he was already in love with Sophia Peabody, the youngest sister of Elizabeth Peabody. Their affair had been developing so gradually, neither of them could date the beginnings of their love. In the present mood, Hawthorne was on the one hand strongly attracted by Ripley's professed aspiration to "insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists; to combine the thinker and the worker, as far as possible, in the same individual." The duties of a customhouse official had not proved agreeable with creative activity; perhaps the labors of a ploughman and a stable-boy would turn out to be more propitious. When Ripley expressed to Sophia some doubt regarding Hawthorne's willingness or ability to do manual labor, "Hawthorne protested his readiness to earn his bread—and Sophia's, too,—by the sweat of his brow."[5] On the other hand he had hoped that Brook Farm would solve his financial problem and make it possible for him to establish a home for Sophia more quickly than he could achieve it in any other way. Hawthorne was now thirty-seven years old and Sophia, twenty-nine; they had been engaged for two years and were anxious to get married.

When Hawthorne, one of the earliest, joined the community on April twelfth of 1841, he invested all his savings in two shares of the joint-stock of the enterprise at $500 a share, in the hope that membership in Brook Farm would provide the means of supporting a wife. At this point, he might be thought not to be moved to this course by any profound at-

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[5] Hubert H. Hoeltje, *Inward Sky: The Mind and Heart of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Durham, N.C., 1962), p. 170.

tachment to the ideals declared by George Ripley. As one of his biographers, Lloyd Morris, pointed out, "Neither his temperament nor his opinions predisposed him to active participation in a regenerative experiment conducted by a group of radical theorists."[6] However, there is in fact ample testimony that Hawthorne had at first genuine faith in the future Brook Farm. His letters to Sophia declare him optimistic in regard to the house he intended to build for her; and his tone, whether in comments on his work and his associates or in speculations about the ultimate achievement, was mainly free of skepticism. This idea has been clearly expressed by Arlin Turner in his book on Hawthorne:

> It is not necessary to believe that Hawthorne was swept along by an irrational enthusiasm. He seems rather to have thought the Brook Farm undertaking a likely solution for at least such members as it would attract. Normally he was not timid in acting on his convictions. In going to Brook Farm he displayed the same independence of thought and action which caused many of his contemporaries to think him an enigma.[7]

The initial enthusiasm and great hope that Hawthorne was possessed of were only gradually lost as his life on the farm finally disappointed him, ideologically and temperamentally. His changing feelings disclosed themselves in all the letters he wrote to Sophia and the entries he recorded in his notebooks during this period. The day after his arrival, Hawthorne wrote Sophia, "Think that I am gone before to prepare a home for my Dove, and will return for her, all in good time."[8] In another letter to his sister Louisa early in May, he wrote,

> This is one of the most beautiful places I ever saw in my life and as secluded as if it were a hundred miles from any city or village. There are woods in which we can ramble all day without meeting anybody or scarcely seeing a house. Our house stands apart from the main road, so that we are not troubled even with passengers looking at us. Once in a

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6 Lloyd Morris, *The Rebellious Puritan: Portrait of Mr. Hawthorne* (New York, 1927), p. 121.

7 Arlin Turner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York, 1961), p. 93.

8 *Autobiography of Brook Farm*, p. 21.

> while we have transcendental visitor, such as Mr. Alcott; but generally we pass whole days without seeing a single face, save those of the brethren. The whole fraternity eat together; and such a delectable way of life has never been seen on earth since the days of the early Christmas. We get up at half-past four, breakfast at half-past six, dine at half-past twelve, and go to bed at nine.[9]

For Hawthorne, this letter is unprecedentedly buoyant and almost youthfully humorous.

Stimulated by all these elements of adventure, Hawthorne threw himself into little community's arduous occupations with all the zeal he had shown at the Custom House. Ripley praised him for industry and testified that Hawthorne "worked like a dragon." He himself boasted of his exertions with playful details:

> Before breakfast–he wrote to Sophia on the second day–I went out to the barn and began to chop hay for the cattle, and with such "righteous vehemence" (as Mr. Ripley says) did I labor, that in the space of ten minutes I broke the machine. Then I brought wood and replenished the fire; and finally sat down to breakfast, and ate up a huge mound of buckwheat cakes. After breakfast, Mr. Ripley put a four-pronged instrument into my hands, which he gave me to understand was called a pitchfork, and he and Mr. Farley being armed with similar weapons, we all three commenced a gallant attack upon a heap of manure.[10]

As time went on, other husbandman's labors engaged him–milking, cutting straw and hay for the cattle, planting potatoes and peas, carting loads of oak–but it was the dungheap that occupied him most steadily. Throughout April and May, in spite of this dull restriction, his spirits remained high and he was able to joke sincerely enough about his "gold mine." "There is nothing so unseemly and disagreeable in this sort of toil as thou wouldst think," he wrote. "It defiles the hands, indeed, but not the soul. This gold ore is a pure and wholesome substance, else our mother Nature would not devour it so readily, and derive so much nourishment from it, and return

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[9] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Passages from the American Notebooks* (Boston, 1868), p. 226.

[10] Ibid., p. 228.

such a rich abundance of good grain and roots in requital of it."[11]

But as the novelty of the experience dimmed, Hawthorne's discontent grew and the days of his application to the dung-heap began to be numbered. So early as the first day of June he confessed to Sophia:

> I have been too busy to write a long letter by this opportunity, for I think this present life of mine gives me an antipathy to pen and ink, even more than my Custom-Hosue experience. . . . In the midst of toil, or after a hard day's work in the goldmine, my soul obstinately refuses to be poured out on paper. That abominable gold-mine! Thank God, we anticipate getting rid of its treasures in the course of two or tree days! Of all hateful places that is the worst, and I shall never comfort myself for having spent so many days of blessed sunshine there. It is my opinion, dearest, that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung-heap, or in a furrow of the field, just as well as under a pile of money.[12]

With that final sentence perhaps went the last flicker of Hawthorne's hope that he might here combine physical and intellectual activity in any alliance; but he did not yet abandon all expectations of settling at Brook Farm, on some terms, if the experiment should flourish. For the next two or three months, indeed, he continued to labor in the woodshed and the bean field and the dungheap, though with growing distaste at their tediousness and squalor. In the second week of August he wrote:

> Belovedest, I'm very well and not at all weary, for yesterday's rain gave us a holiday; and, moreover, the labors of the farm are not so pressing as they have been. And, joyful thought! in a little more than a fortnight thy husband will be free from his bondage,–free to think of his Dove,–free to enjoy Nature,–free to think and feel! I do think that a greater weight will be removed from me than when Christian's burden fell off at the foot of Cross. Even my Custom-House experience was not such a thralldom and weariness; my mind and heart were freer. Oh, belovedest, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionally brutified! Doest thou think it a praiseworthy matter that I have spent five golden months in providing

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[11] Ibid., p. 233.

[12] *Autobiography of Brook Farm*, p. 21.

food for crows and horses? Dearest, it is not so.[13]

The freedom thus joyfully anticipated was not a departure from the farm for good, but a visit of two or three weeks in Salem, made partly in response to appeals from his mother and sisters, partly for the sake of a needed respite. Once he was back in Salem, "how vividly it became clear," wrote Newton Arvin, "that his first enthusiasm for life at Brook Farm was merely illusory!"[14] He had a strong sense of the unreality of his life at Brook Farm and he professed a half-uncertainty whether he had ever milked cows and hoed potatoes and raked hay at West Roxbury at all. "And I take this to be one proof that my life there was an unnatural and unsuitable, and therefore, an unreal one. It already looks like a dream behind me."[15]

When, late in September, Hawthorne returned to the community, it was not even as an occasional laborer in the fields, but as an associate who had invested his capital in the project, and hence had privileges as a boarder—the privilege which he hoped would include the leisure and the solitude for writing. If this hope should be fulfilled, and if the designs of the brethren should prosper, there was still a possibility that he might settle at Brook Farm when he and Sophia were married. But as October wore on, and the life of the community moved before him under this new light,[16] he saw quite clearly that this hope too must be abandoned. The half-dozen of the original Brook Farmers who had been the advance-guard in April were steadily being joined by new adventurers, attracted by one aspect of the enterprise, or

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13 Newton Arvin, ed., *The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals* (Boston, 1929), p. 75.

14 Newton Arvin, *Hawthorne* (Boston, 1929), p. 124.

15 *The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals*, p. 77.

16 The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education was by then formally set up; the household and schools were firmly established. Shortly after Hawthorne's return to the farm, he was elected a trustee of the estate and Chairman of the Committee Finance. This office required him to undertake supervisions of the financial affairs of the Farm.

another. Half-literate farmers from Vermont, printers, disillusioned clergymen, religious melancholiacs, rich young men from Rhode Island, recent graduates of Harvard, idealistic widows, music teachers and an increasing body of children flocked through the rooms of the Brook Farm house. Of all this hilarious group life Hawthorne could not make himself a part. Nor could he find the detachment to resume writing itself. And soon he decided not to stay through the winter.

It might be assumed, at this point, that impatience, even disgust, with the unenlightened drudgery of the fields; disappointment at his inability to settle down, in the midst of so much bustle, to literary work; restlessness induced by the delay of his marriage with Sophia—these were reasons enough for him to abandon an experiment in which he had initially invested so much hope. Yet there were more deep-seated reasons than these, sufficient as they were, reasons which Hawthorne himself had never fully stated before, but to which, in the record he made from the vantage point of some years perspective, he gave an explicit clue. This is his skepticism about the whole idea of social reform. Although he had less sympathy for the Brook Farm community after it had been reorganized in 1845 according to the Fourieristic pattern, and although he recovered only part of his investment, Hawthorne looked back on his months at Brook Farm without bitterness. This was "certainly the most romantic episode of his life," he said, and seemed to offer itself for literary use. The Brook Farm materials proved usable in *The Blithedale Romance.* He had gone to Brook Farm with an open mind and a great hope, yet he had abandoned Roxbury community a few months later with his thoughts on idealistic reform crystalized.

Hawthorne's skeptical attitude toward social reform developed slowly and reached maturity between 1840 and 1843—years which took him to Brook Farm and back and consummated his courtship. When he resumed his writing at Concord in 1843, his mild doubts had changed to stubborn skepticism. His stories and sketches of the following years reflected

most of the current schemes for achieving the better life: stories, such as "The New Adam and Eve" (1843), "The Procession of Life" (1843), and "Earth's Holocaust" (1844), were built around the idea of human progress. While Brook Farm was being transformed into a Fourieristic community and its leaders were issuing such manifestoes as such the divine order is closer "than is generally supposed" and "that humanity . . . is at length prepared to enter into that universal order toward which it has perpetually moved,"[17] Hawthorne was writing the above stories and "The Christmas Banquet." In "Earth's Holocaust," Hawthorne marshalled practically all of the items then engaging the efforts of reformers, and he set down the convictions he had been approaching–that man's efforts to improve society will continue to accomplish nothing until the heart is purified. What passes as progress achieved through human efforts is sheer delusion–the evil resulting from any reform accomplished balances the good, and mankind is no better off, however sincere and diligent the efforts.

Hawthorne was the kind of writer, as often described by his critics and biographers, who "took no interest in reform, and held himself aloof and from every practical question of social life and activity except when forced to it by the necessity of a livelihood."[18] In fact, "his writings are ample proof that, in spite of his relatively secluded life and his habitual delving into early New England history, he brought his mind to critically on the current agitation for peace, temperance, woman's rights, prison reform, the abolition of capital punishment, the abolition of slavery, and the equalization of wealth."[19] In 1852 his broadest and past severe indictment of the whole concept of reform came in *The Blithedale Romance* and *Life of Franklin Pierce*. The essays entitled "Chiefly

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[17] *George Ripley*, p. 172.

[18] Theodore T. Munger, "Notes on *The Scarlet Letter*," *Atlantic Monthly*, XCIII (April, 1904), 523.

[19] Arlin Turner, "Hawthorne and Reform," *New England Quarterly*, 15 (1942), 701-02.

About War Master," together with most of his letters that have been preserved, are testimony that after still another ten years he could see no hope for man to achieve the millennium through his own efforts.

The Blithedale Romance contains so much realism of character, incident, setting, and circumstantial detail, in fact, that Henry James and William Dean Howells, champions of the new realism in a later generation, placed it above his other works. In his preface Hawthorne acknowledges that he had drawn on his experiences of Brook Farm "in the hope of giving a more lifelike tint to the fancy sketch in the following pages." He "ventured to make free use with his old and affectionately remembered home at Brook Farm, as being certainly the most romantic episode of his own life,—essentially a daydream, and yet a fact, and thus offering an available foothold between fiction and reality." His intention and his attitude are further illustrated in a notebook entry of September 28, 1841. After describing the scene and the masqueraders at a picnic party held in the woods at Brook Farm, he added, "It has left a fantastic impression on my memory, this intermingling of wild and fabulous characters with real and homely ones."[20]

With slight change in phrasing, the report of this picnic was moved to the chapter "The Masqueraders" in *The Blithedale Romance*. Other episodes of the romance lifted from the author's Brook Farm observations—directly from his notebooks in some instances—are Coverdale's arrival in a snowstorm and his illness, his farewell to the pigs, Priscilla's riding the ox and her upsetting the load of the hay. Among the smaller matters brought over from Brook Farm are various kinds of work done on the farm, the walls in the woods, the gathering of the wild flowers, the horn blown at rising time each morning, and the attendance at the theater during a visit to the city. In like manner such elements of setting as the houses at the farm, Eliot's pulpit and Coverdale's hermitage in the gravevine belong to both Brook Farm and Blithedale.

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20 *Passages from the American Notebooks*, p. 261.

With no less exactness Hawthorne drew in observations he made outside his residence at Brook Farm. Two passages in his notebook for the year 1838 and entry in 1850 furnished details for Coverdale's visit to the city, and similarly a notebook account dated May 5, 1850 supplied almost every detail of Coverdale's visit to the saloon in search of old Moodie and also the essential details for the portrait of old Moodie. Still more literally than in any of these instances, the episode of recovering Zenbia's body originated in the author's observations on July 9, 1845, when he helped search for Martha Hunt, who had drowned herself in the Concord River.

While acknowledging in his preface that he had used something from the scene and the happenings at Brook Farm, Hawthorne declared that the characters were "entirely fictitious" and "might have been looked for at Brook Farm, but by some accident, never made their appearance there." This assertion is correct, of course, but also misleading, for though no one of the characters can be supposed to have had a full-scale original, some of them were derived in part from associates of the author at West Roxbury. In drawing a young woman with Zenbia's gifts in both writing and speaking and also her devotion to the cause of woman's rights, Hawthorne could not have kept Margaret Fuller out of his mind. Coverdale can be equated with Hawthorne in several ways. Both are bachelors and minor authors. They are reclusive, smoke cigars and drink wine occasionally, read Carlyle and Fourier, and have special fondness for fireplaces. Their routine activities are identical, and each first expects to live permanently in the community, but loses faith in its future and at times looks sardonically back on his earlier hopefulness.

Blithedale is Brook Farm in obvious ways, and the author used his own experiences for details of scene, incident, and character. So there can be no doubt that *The Blithedale Romance* is a book about Brook Farm and its socialist community. It basically expresses Hawthorne's skepticism about social reform. The socialist community of Blithedale was composed of persons like Zenbia and Hollingsworth. They were

gifted and benevolent projectors of great schemes of human improvement, but they could not manage even their own private lives happily and usefully. This hopeful brotherhood, like the situation on Brook Farm, was recruited from the eccentrics and failures of society. "On the whole, it was a society such as has seldom met together, nor perhaps, could it reasonably be expected to hold together long. . . . Crooked sticks . . . are not exactly the easiest to bind up into a fagot." They did not agree among themselves on any point except their hostility to the old order of things: "As regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility, rather than new brotherhood."

> Our bond, it seems to me, was not affirmative, but negative. We had individually found one thing or another to quarrel with in our past life, and were pretty well agreed as to the inexpediency of lumbering along with the old system any further. As to what should be substituted, there was much less unanimity.[21]

Hawthorne had recorded in his notebooks an identical judgment of the Brook Farm experiment, which accords fully with that of Charles Lane, a contemporary English observer sympathetic to the enterprise. Lane had said of Brook Farm: "It is not a community; it is not truly an association; it . . . lacks . . . oneness of spirit."[22] The various sketchily indicated objects of the Blithedale community were all shown to be failures in the romance: the attempt to harmonize labor and thought was unsuccessful. There was no true equality of persons. The endeavor to increase the material welfare and individual happiness of members by putting them in intimate association with each other in a unit larger than the family ended in tragedy.

The characteristic errors of socialist reformers, represented by Hawthorne in *The Blithedale Romance*, can be summarized as follows:

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21 Ibid., p. 275.
22 Charles Lane, "Brook Farm," *Dial*, 4 (1844), 351-57.

(1) Excessive reliance upon changing the external patterns of society as a means of securing greater justice and happiness to men.
(2) Visionary and impractical theories about what is possible and desirable in human association, theories not actually based upon the reality and variety of human nature and human wants.
(3) Exaggerated notions of human wisdom and force, which too little submission to the slow workings of providence.
(4) Destructive irreverence for old institutions and traditions accommodated to mankind through long ages.

(1) In 1843, Hawthorne wrote the short story "The Birthmark." Besides all the other interpretations the story may invite, it is a story which explicitly demonstrates Hawthorne's criticism on a 19th-century reformer's desire of making an external exchange so as to achieve greater happiness. In the story, Aylmer has devoted himself unreservedly to science. One day shortly after his marriage, Aylmer tells his wife, Georgiana, that her birthmark, a tiny hand on her left cheek, shocks him because it renders her imperfect. Georgiana is offended but gradually begins to hate the birthmark, which is really only a flaw of the sort by which "Nature reminds everyone of his ineluctable imperfection and mortality."[23] After Aylmer talks in his sleep of operating on it with the aid of his laboratory assistant, she agrees to let him try to remove it, even though she fears that the process may result in deformity or even death. However, she did die in her operation.

Like Aylmer, a 19th-century reformer was typically a person who expected to make men happier by inducing them to conform their lives to some millennial pattern. He fondly contemplated substituting some heart's-desired scheme of his own devising for the scheme of the things which had evolved through the long past. However, the failure of such schemes as those of Robert Owen, Frances Wright, and the Brook Farmers convinced these projectors that man's state could not be improved merely by tinkering with the social framework in which he lived. Nor could Alymer desire to achieve a happier

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[23] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Birthmark," in *Hawthorne's Short Stories*, ed. Newton Arvin (New York, 1964), p. 179.

life for his wife without sacrificing her life.

It became apparent early that Brook Farm was a failure. In 1844, Margaret Fuller confessed her disillusionment with such utopian projects: "The author, beginning like the many in assault upon bad institutions, and external ills . . . sees at least that the only efficient remedy must come from individual character."[24] In the same year Emerson likewise declared that mere reform of institutions accomplished nothing: "The criticism and attack on institutions, which we have witnessed, has made one thing plain, that society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him."[25] Therefore, he was from the beginning a skeptical, though benevolent, observer of the Brook Farm enterprise: "He never refers to Brook Farm," wrote Lindsay Swift, the historian of Brook Farm, "without conveying to the finest sense the assurance that some one is laughing behind the shrubbery."[26]

As an active member of the Brook Farm Association, Hawthorne had decided before the termination of his stay that the project was impractical and unsatisfactory. *The Blithedale Romance*, although written a decade after he left the colony, is an accurate expression of his fresh, immediate judgment.

(2) Institutional reform tries to adapt men to theories, Hawthorne thought, instead of trying to adapt theories to men. He could not approve of schemes of reform that contemplated the restraint of individuals in order to bring about hypothetical general good. Such projects were too inflexible to suit the infinitely various material and emotional needs of real persons: "What has been established as an element of good to one being may prove absolute mischief to another."[27] This is exactly the situation of Hawthorne's story "Rappaccini's

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24 Quoted by Arlin Turner, "Hawthorne and Reform," 707.

25 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Man the Reformer," *Dial*, I (April, 1841), 534.

26 Lindsay Swift, *Brook Farm: Its Members, Scholars, and Visitors* (New York, 1900), p. 229.

27 *Passages from American Notebooks*, p. 325.

Daughter," written in 1844. First Dr. Rappaccini tries to adapt his daughter to his scientific experiment—"infernal experiment." Rappaccini is the man who "cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiments."[28] What has been established as his daughter's "sister," the deadly poisonous flower, proves absolutely fatal to her emotional needs—her young lover, Giovanni. When the daughter realized her poisoned body so much different from and fatal to those of other human beings, the realization proves unbearable to her. Her final death can be readily predicted. Of course, institutional reform would not usually bring about such unfortunate disaster, but it would undoubtedly encroach upon an individual's free life; and scientific achievements, for Hawthorne, are too often fraught with disaster for the scientist, like Rappaccini, and for others, like his daughter and the young man, Giovanni.

Emerson echoed this idea, too. He expressed that the members of a socialistic community must be "fractions of men, because each finds that he cannot enter it without some compromise." His final estimate of the reform movement of his times reiterates his conclusion that such schemes attempt to impose an intolerably arbitrary pattern upon desirable human life:

> We could not exempt Fourierism from the criticism which we apply to so many of the projects with which the brain of the age teems. Our feeling was that Fourier had skipped no fact but one, namely life. He treats man as a plastic thing . . . skips the faculty of life, which spawns and scorns systems and system-makers; which eludes all conditions; which makes or supplants a thousand phalanxes and New Harmonies with each pulsation.[29]

(3) The confidence of philanthropists, like Hollingsworth, that they could remake the world out of hand betrayed their ignorance of their own limitations, and their lack of trust in

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[28] *Hawthorne's Short Stories*, p. 211.

[29] Ralph W. Emerson, "Fourierism and the Socialists," *Dial*, III (July, 1842), 91.

the workings of Providence: "Man's best directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is sole worker of realities."

> I have never been in the habit of feeling that I could sufficiently comprehend any particular conjunction of circumstances with human character, to justify me in thrusting in my awkward agency among the intricate and unintelligible machinery of Providence. I have always hated to give advice, especially when there is any prospect of its being taken. It is only one-eyed people who love to advise, or have any spontaneous promptitude of action. When a man opens both his eyes, he generally sees about as many reasons for acting in one way as in any other, and quite as many for acting in neither, and is therefore likely to . . . remain quiet . . . till necessity shall prick him onward. Nevertheless, the world and individuals flourish upon a constant succession of blunders.[30]

Hawthorne explained this flourishing upon a succession of blunders by his theory that there was design in the world including human society, but not design comprehended and directed by men, however wise and benevolent they might individually be. He could never have echoed without strong reservations Emerson's injunction *Trust Thyself*; it was too likely to encourage men to become, with the most benevolent of intentions, pernicious tinkerers with "the intricate and unintelligible machinery of Providence."

> It behooves men . . . to consider well what they are about, and, before acting on their philanthropic purposes, to be quite sure that they comprehend the nature and all the relations of the business in hand.[31]

It was Hawthorne's conviction of this kind that made Coverdale finally doubt that he and his fellow-utopians were proceeding intelligently toward a better society; he felt that he needed to return to the world to restore his sense of reality:

> I was beginning to lose the sense of what kind of world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might or ought to be. . . . No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity, if he lives exclusively among reformers and progressive people, without periodically returning into the

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30 *The Blithedale Romance* (New York, 1958), p. 158.

31 Ibid., p. 131.

> settled system of things, to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint.[32]

It was this skepticism about human wisdom and capability which led Hawthorne to stand aloof from the specific reforming enthusiasms of his time. He disapproved of abolitionist agitation, not because he condoned the institution of slavery, but because he looked upon such agitaton as an attempt to hurry Providence. He felt sympathy for the Negro, and looked with sorrow on "the cotton field where God's image becomes a beast of burden," but he declared himself "rather more of an abolitionist in feeling than in principle."[33] His fullest expression of his views upon the subject occurs in his biography of Franklin Pierce, in which he says that slavery is

> one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivance, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream. There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.[34]

This is not merely campaign rhetoric; he confirmed the opinion in a private letter to Horatio Bridge, his closest friend. He thought that the right mode—that is, the only certainly efficacious one—of doing good in the world was to bestow kindness and benefit on men individually. Such a project as that of Hollingsworth was unpromising because it was merely an attempt to carry out a theory: "charity, to be truly efficient, should have a personal feeling; for if it embraces too many objects, it will probably become meagre and unsubstantial."[35] And even in the bestowal of charity, the direct personal beneficence which was the only sort of philanthropy

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[32] Ibid., p. 204

[33] *Passages from American Notebooks*, p. 403.

[34] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Life of Franklin Pierce* (Boston, 1852), pp. 113-14.

[35] *The Blithedale Romance*, p. 97.

Hawthorne approved, the bestower was more certainly doing good to himself, by exercising the better sentiments of his nature, than to the recipient.

(4) In "Earth's Holocaust," the people of the earth decide to build a gigantic bonfire on the western prairie and in it destroy all the worn-out trumpery imaginable. First the crowd hurls all heraldic signs of aristocratic background into the blaze, in spite of a stately old man's objections. Then come robes of royalty and crown jewels, then barrels of liquor. Minor items are tossed in next: an empty purse, counterfeit money, age-old letters, and the like. Some ladies even throw in their attire and determine hereafter to wear only manly garb. All the implements of war are wheeled up and hurled into the consuming flames, which leaves more work for the world's armorers. Now various instruments of capital punishment are burned: axes, guillotines, and the gallows. Excited now, the people toss in marriage certificates, ledgers, titles to property, and even gold coins. Now come books and pamphlets. Why should the weight of dead men's thoughts oppress the living? "The works of Voltaire scatter brilliant sparks, German tales smell of brimstone, Milton glows powerfully, Shakespeare gushes marvelous flames, Mother Goose and pages of ballads burn longer than any popular works of the last century, even longer than epics."[36] Fresh fuel next comes in the form of surplices, church crosses, and even humble New England communion-tables and pulpits. When the Bible is added to the fire, certain marginal notes are consumed in a twinkling but not a line of text is blackened. While the last hangman, thief, murderer, and drunkard mutter gloomily to each other, a red-eyed stranger begins to talk, saying that the world will be the old world yet, so long as no one hits upon a way of reforming that foul cavern, the human heart.

As has been pointed out, Hawthorne was strongly convinced that man's efforts to improve society would gain nothing until the heart was purified. Old institutions and tradi-

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36 *Hawthorne's Short Stories*, pp. 319-30.

tions provided conditions favorable to the evolution of a better society. But the social reformers, who were overanxious to see the social progress achieved in a short period of time, could not look upon the "worn-out trumpery" as anything of value.

Though Hawthorne perhaps never systematized his thought, yet his skepticism about social reform was unreservedly exposed in his stories, letters, and other writings of the 1840's and the next decade. Before going to Brook Farm, however pressing may have been his wish to provide a home for Sophia, he could not have committed himself to the Brook Farm experiment if he had possessed in 1841 the positive skepticism he evidenced later on. But, at Brook Farm, his disillusion was complete. And the chagrin he felt as he abandoned the community suggested to him the idea of *The Blithedale Romance*. Can't the following remark made by Coverdale be taken as that of Hawthorne's own? "Whatever else I may repent of .... let it be reckoned neither among may sins nor follies that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny—yes!—and to do what in me lay for their accomplishment."[37]

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[37] *The Blithedale Romance*, p. 87.

霍桑與布魯克農莊

田維新

摘　要

本文主要在討論霍桑與布魯克農莊的關係，及對他以後創作的一些影響。

布魯克農莊距離波士頓九英哩。一八四一年前後，以喬治・雷普利（George Ripley）爲首的幾位知識份子，其中多爲超越主義者（Transcendentalists），熱心於社會改革，就建立了布魯克農莊，以實現他們的理想：建立一大家庭的社區，使勞力與思想結合，並共食共居，自食其力。雖然霍桑不是超越主義圈內的人，但是在他加入這個社區的初期，對這個社區的建立宗旨充滿了信心。這可從他寄給未婚妻蘇菲亞的信中看出。

然而好景不長，兩個多月之後（霍桑於一八四一年四月加入），他逐漸發現，每天勞累之後，他根本沒有精力從事創作。不論從理論上，還是從他自己的個性上來看，他都無法在布魯克農莊定居下來。雖然半年之後，又從各處來了許多新的伙伴，但在霍桑加入此農莊七個月之後，他就決定離開了布魯克農莊。他不但對這農莊失去了興趣，對整個社會改革的觀念也產生了懷疑。

霍桑將他在布魯克農莊的生活經驗及對社會改革的感想，均表現在他一八五二年出版的**歡樂谷**（*The Blithedale Romance*）。這本小說同時也深入探討社會改革的問題。本論文的後半部對這一小說作較詳盡的分析。