“An Effect Altogether Unanticipated”: Visual Art and the Importance of Effect in Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Introduction

My focus in this thesis is to demonstrate the way that Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville—artists traditionally associated with romantic thought—subscribe to aesthetic philosophies centered on the creation of effect in an audience. These philosophies are more in line with sentimental ideas of sympathy than with romantic ideologies that prioritize the author. By showing how these romantic artists employ sentimental ideas, I hope to contribute to the on-going reevaluation of mid-nineteenth-century literature. I am picking up the critical movement exemplified by David M. Ball, who calls for the "recognition of a mutually dependent relationship" between traditionally-classified "masculine" romantic literature and "popular feminized sentimentality" (166). I hope to demonstrate an overlap between these two traditionally separated spheres of writers, and in so doing, to suggest the existence of a single literary tradition rather than as formally distinct spheres of thought.

To achieve that, I will be exploring the ways that these three authors write about visual artworks. Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe all show an appreciation for painting (and to a lesser extent sculpture), and that common interest allows for a shared vocabulary. Visual artworks provide the writers with a medium where the role of the artist, the value of the audience, and the possible moral function of art intersect. In exploring how these three writers discuss art, I will show that their portrayals of visual artwork outline an aesthetic philosophy centered around creating a powerful effect on the audience. Oftentimes, this is paired with commentary on the role of the author, or on the ability of art to communicate moral messages, but even these variations offer the same message: that art becomes valuable only when it is able to create an effect.

In her 1982 article "The Other American Renaissance," Jane Tompkins articulates the need to "challenge" conceptions of American literary history, and specifically to challenge the sentimental novel's "exclusion from the canon of American literature" (34-35). Nor was Tompkins the only one pushing in this direction: shortly after her essay, the collection *The American Renaissance Reconsidered* appeared to push for a general "reinterpretation" of the field of American Studies, in the form of a reevaluation of traditionally marginalized literary viewpoints or works.

This removal of boundaries focused primarily on the interaction between sentimental and romantic texts, as well as a reconsideration of national boundaries and the push for a transatlantic conception of literature. This is in addition to a general reappraisal which has uncovered and emphasized the role of non-male, non-white writers in the development of literary and political thought within the nineteenth-century. However, even as these areas of study have garnered more attention, the attention paid to them has contributed to a reinforcing of academic boundaries, even as those boundaries have shifted.

As Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler point out, even as sentimental literature gained exposure and critical acceptance it has traditionally been a separate sphere of intellectual inquiry. Their survey of contemporary criticism observes the way that "[c]ontemporary feminist literary criticism has continued to perpetuate" critical boundaries by effectively separating "popular but critically marginalized texts written for, by, and about women" into "what amounts to an alternative canon" (8). Only in the last decade or so has the push to further reconcile the forms and bridge the divides become more prevalent, and the divisions—built around critical acceptance, gender, aesthetic value, or any number of

qualities—begun to be erased.[1] That growing effort towards reconciliation guides my own writing here: I seek to explore the overlap between sentimental writers and figures considered as romantic from the mid-nineteenth-century. I am looking especially at three primary figures of the "American Renaissance": Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. I hope to demonstrate that each of these writers incorporated aesthetic ideas that stemmed from their exposure to sentimental attitudes in order to contribute to the modern understanding of this literary period as a single, complex intertwining of ideas, rather than as multiple separate traditions developing simultaneously.

Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne developed within a literary climate which saw the interaction of romantic writers and sentimental novelists, and although they are popularly conceived of as being antagonistic toward that tradition, their writing suggests a much more complex relationship. Any attempt at clearly tracing out that relationship depends on an understanding of the concept of "sympathy". Glenn Hendler summarizes the nineteenth-century understanding of sympathy as "a recursive emotional exchange" before drawing on Theodore Parker's definition of the sentimental author's purpose: "feeling, he must make others feel" (3). It is centered on "an emotional response to reading or seeing an expression of another's feeling," and is "at its core an act of identification" (3). That apparent transferal of feeling is important—Janet Todd describes it more clearly as "the communication of common feeling from sufferer or watcher to reader or audience" (4).

Within sentimental writing, this transferal comes with a moral component that rests on both the writer and the audience—the feelings being transferred out from the text must be

[1] David M. Ball's "Toward an Archaeology of American Modernism: Reconsidering Prestige and Popularity in the American Renaissance" and Robert Milder's "A Literature for the Times" identify the difference as being a divide between "aesthetic" vs. "sociological and political" approaches to texts (Milder 8), while Cathy Davidson and Hendler effectively see the critical climate as "recreating a binaric gender division" (Davidson 443).

"moral and proper" (2) and suggestive of refined sensibility, which the reader has a responsibility to receive. However, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe have a more tenuous relationship to the moral core at the heart of that equation. While Hawthorne is comfortable with offering a moral message, Melville and Poe demonstrate some reservations.

Hawthorne's relationship to sentimental literature is the most openly recognizable and also more complex. Hawthorne's personal familiarity with sentimental writing is no secret, though that familiarity is generally framed through his famous 1855 letter in which he damns the "mob of scribbling women" with whose work the "public taste [was] occupied." This animosity generally represents the extent of the critical appraisal of Hawthorne's relationship with sentimental writing: Hawthorne is largely assumed to be genuinely opposed to the employment of sentimental techniques. However, Hawthorne's comments were not entirely critical, as he noted in a letter soon after that he enjoyed Fanny Fern's Ruth Hall "a great deal," and in a letter from 1854 he named Julia Ward Howe's Passion Flowers and Anna Cora Mowett's Autobiography of an Actress as exemplifying some of the finest novels in the nation (Letters 64-65). There is a sense of ambivalence about sentimentality in Hawthorne's personal writings, and they evince some appreciation for the genre.

James Wallace suggests that Hawthorne's ambivalence is deeper, and much more personal, than one reader's opinion on contemporary writers. Instead, he suggests that "Hawthorne's comments on women writers" reflect "his own self-critiques," and that the aspects of sentimental writing that he "condemned" were actually reflective of Hawthorne's "preoccupations of his own art." For Wallace, sentimental writing "came to represent for [Hawthorne] the bodily, the mutable, the mortal that he sought both to purge from and to embrace in his own work" (209). That is, Hawthorne is insecure about his own writing, and

for Wallace, the lashing out at sentimental texts is a way of criticizing his own shortcomings. This lashing out was only amplified by the fact that those women writers were achieving the success that Hawthorne himself couldn't manage. Wallace's exploration underlines areas in which Hawthorne's writing overlaps with the tropes of sentimentalism. Accepting that Hawthorne's writing already exhibits sentimental tendencies in many ways, it is not a stretch to say that his emphasis on affect might be derived from those sentimental attitudes. The way that Hawthorne depicts art as being driven by the creation of effect stems, in some degree, from the general sentimental emphasis on creating emotion.

However, Hawthorne's sentimental tendencies are not the only force that is acting within his depictions of visual arts. There is also Hawthorne's general repudiation of the romantic artist. Several of Hawthorne's stories offer explicit denunciation of the romantic conception of the artist—figured as the solipsistic and frenzied creator—while still others demonstrate such criticisms more subtly. He does not align with the artist-centered romantic school of thought, and yet he is not precisely a sentimental writer, instead falling into a fairly distinct school of aesthetic thought.

Regarding the rightness of feeling itself—that is, the morality that artistic works might present—Hawthorne remains difficult to trace out. Although contemporary writers, including Melville and Poe, both understood him to be making some sort of didactic statement (especially through his use of allegory), Hawthorne's own remarks demonstrate some ambivalence toward overly strong moral messages. In the opening section of The Marble Faun, the author notes that he "proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral" (iii). Additionally, in his preface for The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne writes that "many writers lay very great stress upon some definite moral

purpose at which they profess to aim their works," and that this tendency has inspired him to provide one as well: "Not to be deficient in this particular, the author has provided himself with a moral" (iv). However, he is also aware that being too direct with those morals will backfire. For writing "relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod," would numb its impact, "thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen" (iv-v).

Although Hawthorne recognizes the need for morality, he is likewise aware that it ought to work behind the scenes, to some degree. If the didactic nature of the writing is too central, it will be ineffective. Because of the fact that "when romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtile [sic] process than the ostensible one," that moralizing must be hidden behind some more direct process: namely, the creation of effect. Hawthorne's story "Edward Randolph's Portrait" in particular, demonstrates this fact. Even when striving to create a moral message, the process of doing so remains secondary to the creation of aesthetic effect.

Herman Melville, too, has a relationship with the sentimental streak that has been widely remarked upon. The ideological trajectory for Melville's actual contact with sentimental literature, including an understanding of how Melville might have picked up sentimental tropes, is harder to establish than that of Poe or Hawthorne, but Melville's voracious reading habits suggest that he would have been familiar with both popular writing and serious "hard" literature. The history of critical exploration lends at least some additional support to the idea that Melville was closely familiar with the sentimental tradition. Excluding his three early adventure novels, *Typee, Omoo,* and *Mardi,* critics have detected and explored sentimental attitudes in all of Melville's prose works, including the posthumous

Billy Budd, Sailor.[2] Tara Penry, in her exploration of sympathy in *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, points out a wide range of sentimental tropes, such as the "highly wrought death scene and its associated 'token'" and the "bereaved or abandoned woman" (235, 236). Penry does this work as part of a project to establish that "Melville chooses sentimental masculinity" as the "most sustainable model" of manhood, but her study also touches on the way that Melville's emphasis on, among other traits, "affectional" masculinity serves as a "critique of the 'overextended Romantic self'" and "cement[s] the case for sympathy" as a guiding direction for Melville's writing.

Critics have noted other, similar criticisms of the romantic vision in Melville's writing. John Straud sees *Moby-Dick* as an allegory for the way that romantic emphasis on "the intellect at the expense of human contact and love" manages to "threaten individual identity" (279). Edward Strickland identifies *The Confidence-Man* as "a parody of the visionary Romantic" conception of the artist that presents the "late-Romantic visionary" as "part crackpot, part nobleman, and … part martyr" (41). Meanwhile, a number of critics have seen Melville's short story "Cock-a-Doodle-Doo!" as a satirical rejection of the romantic artist as "pretending" toward aesthetic knowledge (Ardoin 247).[3] There is a strain of anti-romantic ideas evident within Melville's writing that suggests at least some ambivalence toward the romantic idea of the artist.

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[2] For an illustrative, if woefully incomplete, sampling of the critical movement through Melville's bibliography, see Brian Saunders's treatment of *Redburn* in "Melville's Sea Change: From Irving to Emerson"; Jeannine Marie Delombard's "White-Jacket: Telling Who Is—and Ain't—a Slave"; Debra Rosenthal's "The Sentimental Appeal to Salvific Paternity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Moby-Dick*"; Paul Hurh's "The Sound of Incest: Sympathetic Resonance in Melville's *Pierre*"; Mary Jean Northcutt's "Sentimentalism and the Obfuscation of American Reality in Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*"; and Cyndy Hendershot's "Revolution, Femininity, and Sentimentality in *Billy Budd, Sailor*."

[3] For a broader survey of this perception of "Cock-A-Doodle-Doo!" see Arnd Bohm's "Wordsworth in Melville's 'Cock-a-Doodle-Doo!'" Joseph Rosenblum's "A Cock Fight between Melville and Thoreau," and William Bysshe Stein's "Melville Roasts Thoreau's Cock."

Poe, too, operated in between romantic and sentimental ideas of art. Ki Yoon Jang suggests that Edgar Allan Poe, "aware of the impossibility of authors' absolute regulation of texts and readers," sought a separate type of relationship for art. His movement away from the standard romantic school of thought pushed him toward the sentimental focus on creating an emotional effect in readers. Jang explores the way that Poe's writing in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* offers a "substitution" of the "author as fiction" in place of the traditional romantic doctrine of "the author as absolute truth" (361). Commenting on Poe's statement in the preface that Pym should "trust to the shrewdness and common sense of the public," Jang suggests that instead of reading them as gestures "toward tasteless and simple-minded readers, as many interpret," we ought to instead view his remarks as being "about authors' loss of undivided rights to texts in accordance with readers' empowerment to decide the nature and value of texts" (360). There is a legal, property-based concern here, certainly: the quote from *Pym* reflects Poe's anxiety over the fact that, as Jonathon Auerbach describes it, "once the author expresses himself in public, his written identity becomes common property, subject to ceaseless duplication and appropriation" (341). However, there is a more abstract, aesthetic anxiety at work as well, which devalues the author's role within art and requires a reconsideration of what makes art valuable.

Jang proposes that "Pym's confidence in [the author] is undercut by his non-understanding of the increasingly reader-directed mechanism of contemporary literary markets" (360). Working in publication as he did, Poe would have been deeply familiar with general trends in the literary marketplace, including the "culture of sympathy" that reigned at the time. As Paul Christian Jones points out, Poe's work in the industry made him familiar enough with the conventions and ideas of sentimentality that he was effectively able to mimic them in his short story "Hop-Frog." This emphasis on "sympathy" and the creation of

emotional response within the reader would have been at the center of the "reader-oriented" literary climate Jang describes[4].

However, Poe had strong objections to the moral component of sentimental writing. He writes in his "Letter to B—" that Wordsworth's major flaw is that "he seems to think that the end of poetry is, or should be, instruction" (411), and this same emphasis on instruction rests at the core of sentimentality. He levels these same criticisms at Longfellow's "Ballads and Other Poems" and "one or two of the longer pieces of Bryant," with both of which he finds "fault with the too obtrusive nature of their didacticism" (436).

In addition to the sentimental climate these writers are working within, they are also influenced by the romantic writing with which they are traditionally associated. However, the ground on which I am claiming a relationship to sentimental writing, their philosophies about the purpose and value of art, also presents a point of departure from the romantic paradigm. All three of them are de-emphasizing the role of the artist within the aesthetic equation, a viewpoint that is markedly different from many of their romantic contemporaries. The romantic framework, instead, emphasized the role of the artists in the creative process to the near exclusion of audience. The "expressive theory" of art, as M.H. Abrams terms it, is essentially one which views art primarily as the product of the singular genius. The merits of that art, then, are dependent on its ability to reflect that genius. From Wordsworth's conception of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" to Mill's dictum that it is "the poet's [unconscious] feeling confessing itself to itself," romantic thinkers continuously defined art in terms of its expressive value. Art, in both its broadest theoretical

[4] This emphasis is hardly limited to sentimentality. Poe's relationship to the gothic is obvious, but cannot account for the wide range of feeling which his writing touches on. I am focusing here on his relationship to sentimentalism precisely because it is *less* remarked upon, as part of my effort to explore the interaction between the sentimental climate and the romantic paradigm which exists alongside it.

sense and in any serious realized version, serves primarily to "embody the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings," and its value is thereby determined according to the degree to which it is "amenable to the undistorted expression of the feelings or mental powers of the artist" (Abrams 22). Or, as Morris Eaves puts it in his examination of the views of William Blake, "the work of art" becomes "the precise expression of the artist's imagination" (787). Within the romantic tradition, art holds value insofar as it represents the feelings of the individual genius.

This viewpoint is present in writers by American contemporaries, as well. Emerson's imagined "Poet" is perhaps the epitome of this conception of the all-important artist. In his essay on that eponymous subject, he observes that all people "stand in need of expression," and the ability to reproduce their "impressions of nature" is what qualifies them as artists ("The Poet"). Although this is seemingly more democratic than the British romantic thinkers seem to indicate, because every person has that poetic quality within them, it still relies on the accurate expression of the individual poet. He suggests that everyone has the ability to sense the deeper "warblings" of the natural world, to "penetrate into that region where the air is music" and through which the individual can come into contact with unadulterated nature. Poets are differentiated from other, less noteworthy individuals because of their ability to reproduce those original sensations, to "write down these cadences more faithfully." Works of art are important because they represent the primal sensations of the individual writer, and, by engaging with those sensations, readers are able to "arrive at the precise sense of the author" (193).

In his earlier essay "Art," Emerson expresses his thoughts that the artist in the process of creating "will come to value the expression of nature" over the subject that he is

reproducing and will "exalt in his copy, the features that please him" (209). Indeed, Emerson cannot remove the "Genius of the Hour" from his art and the artistic process because that process is nothing more than an attempt to "convey his enlarged sense" of the world "to his fellow-men," so that he can "educate the perception of beauty" (210). The role of the artist is not to offer accurate representation of the world, but rather to filter that representation through the artist's own experience. Emerson argues that, by expressing the world as he experiences it, the artist is providing a social service, but that service is ultimately secondary to, and merely an extension of, his individual ability to appropriately reproduce his subject.

This emphasis on the expression of the individual genius extended even to the dismissal of the audience altogether. As Abrams explains, romantic thought manifested in a strain of critical thought, "which on principle diminished the importance of the audience as a determinant of poetry and poetic value" (26). John Stuart Mill prescribed that, although there is nothing wrong with writing for the sake of printing, such public writings must retain their focus on the artist exclusively. When the poet "addresses himself to another person" and the "expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions," is interspersed with a desire to "make an impression upon another mind," the entire effort "ceases to be poetry" ("Poetry" 71-72). Thomas Carlyle suggested that the individual "Genius has privileges of its own" and could exist outside of considerations of viewers. "If it is indeed a celestial orbit," that is, if the Genius selects a truly lofty purpose, then the audience, "we mere star-gazers," must "cease to cavil at it, and begin to observe it," thus adjusting expectations accordingly (Carlyle 25). Both of these critics are articulating a view of art in which the audience is, at worst, antithetical to the creation of poetry and, at best, required to readjust its standards based on the work of the artist.

These same attitudes were articulated by romantic poets, as well as critics and theorists. In an 1818 letter, John Keats wrote that he viewed his poems' audience "as an Enemy" that he "cannot address without feelings of Hostility" (131). Although this sentiment, that he never paid attention to the audience, does not quite mesh with his later sentiment that he "never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought" (131), the ultimate feeling is clear: for Keats, the audience is little more than a burden which exists outside of poetry. Shelley defines poetry as "the expression of the imagination" and famously uses the metaphor of the Æolian lyre to drive home the conception of poetry as being fundamentally about the influence of the individual genius (2).

Of course, the utter dismissal of the audience is not universal, even among artists who likewise champion the power of the individual genius. Wordsworth was certainly very concerned for his audience on a moral level (a trait which Poe would mock in his "Letter to B—"), and Emerson also believed that the artist was a force who was responsible for educating his audience. However, as these two examples demonstrate, even when the audience services, it primarily exists as secondary to the artist. An artist's works have instructional value, but the artist's ability to instruct, and the message he is sending, still takes precedence over the audience's received instruction from that work. Wordsworth and Emerson are ultimately no less concerned with the artist's ability to express his vision to the audience—they are merely conscious of how that expression might be received.

Returning to the three artists I am focusing on, it is obvious that they are offering a view of art which is at odds with romantic thought. By exploring the portrayals of visual art, and how those portrayals are simultaneously influenced by the sentimental climate in which they are writing (along with other effect-centered aesthetic schools) and critiquing the

romantic paradigm with which they are associated, I hope to demonstrate that these three major figures are moving within and between the critical boundaries with which they are frequently associated. In so doing, I hope to contribute to the broader critical movement underway.

"A Hallowed Work of Genius": Nathaniel Hawthorne's Short Stories and *The Marble Faun*

Hawthorne's portrayal of the visual arts begins early in his career. He demonstrates a developed sense of artistic value from the publication of *Twice-Told Tales*, the first book he put out under his own name. Exemplifying the aesthetic philosophies that also appear in the writings of Poe and Melville, the stories in which Hawthorne discusses visual art present those artworks as being valuable primarily as a result of their ability to create an effect. Additionally, Hawthorne makes a number of negative comments about the artistic process through which he offers criticism of the established romantic paradigm.

In "The Prophetic Pictures," Hawthorne's narrator depicts the process by which a couple, Walter and Elinor Ludlow, have portraits done by a visiting painter. The European painter has become something of a sensation in the states, and the Ludlows are eager to have portraits done on the eve of their wedding. Hawthorne notes that the ultimately unnamed painter has become "an object of general curiosity" primarily because "pictorial skill" is so "rare" in the unrefined new culture (240-241). There is no one in the colonies who can "appreciate the technical merit of his productions," which Hawthorne describes as being exceptional. The painter has "studied the grandeur or beauty of conception, and every touch of the master hand" until finally he is so artistically capable that "there was nothing more for his powerful mind to learn" (240). However, although American audiences are unable to truly appreciate his technical skills, they nonetheless place great value in his abilities. That value comes from "the effect that each picture produced on such untutored beholders" (240). Curiously, this valuation of art comes from both "the opinion of the crowd" as well as the

"refined judgment of the amateur" (241), although Hawthorne notes that there are few experts around to remark with any sort of real authority. However, this description does suggest that it is not merely those who are unfamiliar with artistic skill who place emphasis on the effect the pictures create—even those who have some technical knowledge still consider the paintings "worthy of admiration" because of that quality. The artist, too, "derives profit" from their remarks—a profit which is not monetary, but rather a sense of contentment (241). For the painter to be so pleased with the crowd's acceptance sets him apart from the traditional romantic conception of the artist.

In many ways, Hawthorne's painter *is* the seminal American romantic. After painting the Ludlows' portrait, the artist goes out into the wild, to live among nature and Native Americans, and "enrich himself" with those experiences. He accumulates a number of feelings and thoughts: "the glow of perilous moments; flashes of wild feeling; struggles of fierce power—love, hate, grief, frenzy; in a word, all the worn-out heart of the old earth has been revealed to him under a new form" (253). He turns those experiences into a portfolio of memories, which "his genius would transmute into its own substance, and imbue with immortality." Hawthorne notes that the painter considers this power the "deep wisdom in his art" (253). Practically speaking, the painter embodies Wordsworth's conception of poetry: his art genuinely is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," taking "its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility" (Wordsworth 15). The painter is almost stereotypically romantic, going out into nature to experience the untamed world, and then allowing his own singular genius to turn those experiences into works of art. The variety of elements that he

comes into contact with, including the unrefined Indian characters and the scenes of nature, are iconic reflections of romantic subject matter.[5]

However, Hawthorne wastes no time criticizing that worldview. He notes that "like all other men around whom an engrossing purpose wreathes itself, he was insulated from the mass of human kind," because he has "no aim—no pleasure—no sympathies—but what were ultimately connected with his art" (253). The artist has become so wrapped up in the workings of his own genius that he has effectively lost contact with other people. Because he has lost this interpersonal connection with the world, Hawthorne describes how "he did not possess kindly feelings; his heart was cold; no living creature could be brought near enough to keep him warm," suggesting the negative effects of separating oneself from the world of others. He says so even more plainly a little further on, when he describes the painter walking "through the toilsome street, among people that knew not of his reveries, nor could understand nor care for them" (255). The perspective of the Romantic artist creates an alienating loneliness, and prevents him from adequately sharing his wondrous experiences with others. Hawthorne declares outright: "It is not good for man to cherish a solitary ambition," because "his thoughts, desires, and hopes will become extravagant, and he the semblance, perhaps, the reality, of a madman" (255). By viewing the artist as a sort of frenzied genius who crafts his art in a solitary daze, Hawthorne is suggesting we run the risk of ostracizing the artists by fostering "disorder" and denying the pleasures (and stability) of a broader audience with whom to share.

For that reason, then, it is important for Hawthorne to note the validation that the painter gets from his work and specifically from the way his work interacts with its audience.

[5] These "unrefined" characters are reflective of the general romantic interest in uncultured "simple" pastoral folk, the same interest that drove the popularity of folk poet Robert Burns.

By demonstrating that there is value to be derived from that interaction, Hawthorne is offering a way out of the solipsistic nature of the romantic artist. If the appraisal of art, for both the audience *and* the artist, lies in how that audience receives the product, then the artist is able to create a healthy interaction with that audience and benefit both more readily. This perhaps is why the painter does not quite cut himself off from this outside world altogether, even when he sets out to study his craft in the natural world. Rather, he continues to want to know how his paintings are being received by their audience and stops in again with the Ludlows to see how the paintings are being treated.

On the subject of those paintings themselves, Hawthorne notes the painter's works are famous in part because they are "prophetic," insofar as the events they paint (or, if his subject is a person, the moods they depict) generally come to pass. Within the context of this particular example, that means that the subjects are painted as feeling a particular way, as when Elinor is painted as having a "strangely sad and anxious expression," which at times looks even to be "grief and terror" (131). When it is revealed, however, Walter looks over to see her face, and notes that it "had assumed precisely the expression" in the painting, partially as a *result* of seeing the painting. If we view the expressions on the paintings as being reflective of what the painter wishes to achieve, and the effects as being responses to that, then the story is essentially presenting a realized artistic version of what Poe positioned as the center of art: the intentional creation of a particular effect, which is successful at its job. In this case, the artist, for all his skill, is working according to the effect-centric principles, shared by Hawthorne and Melville, and it is because of this focus on effect that the pictures achieve success.

When the painter returns at the story's end, to check up on the paintings (and, as Hawthorne suggests, how the paintings are being received), Hawthorne makes a point of attributing Walter's increasingly violent actions to his response to the paintings. Walter is described as "abandoning himself to the spell of evil influence that the painter had cast upon the features," suggesting that his action is ultimately in response to the painting. The painter, foreseeing the attacker standing the hallway, wonders if he is the "chief agent of the coming evil," signaling that he has painted the portraits in such a way as to provoke Walter's reaction. Then, once the event is over and the painter intervenes, he sees himself as "a magician, controlling the phantoms he had evoked" (133). Hawthorne's language here further suggests the role of the artist in this process, by pointing toward the way that he is responsible for Walter's actions. The paintings that he created have driven Walter and Elinor to their present states, states marked by vivid emotion: Elinor gives off a "quiet anguish" that stems from her time spent meditating on her portrait, while Walter has flown into a "fierce excitement" that comes from the aforementioned "evil influence" of the paintings.

Throughout the story, Hawthorne is showing the interaction between artist and audience, and ultimately Hawthorne comes to suggest that the emphasis needs to be on interacting with the latter instead of retreating toward the artist as supreme. This necessarily manifests itself as an emphasis on images that effectively provoke feeling—that is, which are able to communicate with their viewer. Although he spends relatively little time exploring the evocation of that feeling in "The Prophetic Pictures," he does take more time with it in two other tales from the volume. "Edward Randolph's Portrait" and the deeply allegorical "Fancy's Picture Box" also offer depictions of visual arts, and both spend more time exploring the effect of the artworks therein.

In “Edward Randolph’s Portrait,” Hawthorne’s narrator offers a framed narrative, presenting a story that he has heard secondhand about a painting that sits upon the wall of a province house in Boston. Deep in that building, there’s an “ancient picture, the frame of which was 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” (30). That painting is indiscernible because “time had thrown an impenetrable veil over it, and left to tradition, and fable, and conjecture, to say what had once been there portrayed” (30). Much like the painting within the Spouter-Inn, this picture cannot be identified, but can only be approached in terms of the impressions it creates. It presents a “mysterious aura” that makes people within the room uncomfortable and even frightens the servants.

Hawthorne does not spend nearly as much time here taking apart the romantic conception of the artist, but he does offer a more subtle comment by making the origin of the painting unknown. Captain Lincoln, one of the central characters of the story and the one in whose office the painting sits, tells his niece Alice that, “as to the painter, I can tell you nothing,” but he does point out that the painting most likely does not come from “one of the great Italian masters” (31). Even when he does not comment on the mindset of the artist, Hawthorne’s narrator is still subtly erasing him as a figure with artistic value. Because the painting has no artist but remains significant, its significance must necessarily derive from a different source, thereby displacing the artist as the center of the aesthetic equation.

Alice wants to restore the picture, so that she can see its content. Although she inquires eagerly, even wanting to implement techniques that “are known in Italy” (33). The Lieutenant-Governor tells her that it is unnecessary: he claims that his “antiquarian researches” have shed some light on the issue. The painting is “the portrait of Edward

Randolph, the founder of this house, a person famous in the history of New England" (33). Randolph is a detestable figure for the characters. Alice recounts how he "obtained the repeal of the first provincial charter, under which our forefathers had enjoyed almost democratic privileges" (33). She denounces him as "the destroyer of our liberties," a figure whose memory is "held in detestation" (33). He cautions Alice that the aforementioned researches have informed him that the painting itself presents "the inward misery" of Randolph, making the portrait "too horrible to be looked upon" (33).

Curious Alice, though, does not take this warning to heart, and instead (although her mechanisms are left untold) manages to refresh the picture. After covering it with a curtain, she reveals the painting to display that there "appeared a visible picture, still dark" of a "half-length figure of a gentleman in a rich, but very old-fashioned dress of embroidered velvet" (35). At the revealing of the painting, Hawthorne notes that "it had the effect of a person looking down from the wall at the astonished and awe-stricken spectators," who are thrown into a tizzy. The lieutenant-governor begins trembling, and the room, full of politicians and local thinkers discussing a political issue, is thrown into disarray. The painting has come to light and exists outside of any technical merit: Hawthorne spends no time remarking on the artistic merits of the painting as an image. Instead, it is marked only by its ability to generate a powerful effect from within its audience.

Moreover, as Alice (and later, the chairman of the Selectman) points out, it is also a moral reminder, "a warning" against "dishonorable action" (334). The expression is manifest most strongly in that character who most vividly *needs* that moral reminder, lieutenant-governor Hutchinson, in a way that suggests that it is deeply intertwined with the creation of effect. The manifestation of a powerful effect within Hutchinson goes deeper than merely

drawing a reaction. Rather, in this case, that effect is necessary for the way it grants the painting the ability to provoke an expression *to serve a moral purpose*, a sort of moralizing that Poe would undoubtedly have disagreed with. Nevertheless, because Hawthorne is implying that such lessons can only be obtained through works which *do* evoke that reaction, the ability to do so remains essential to the artistic process.

Hawthorne returns to this moralizing in "Fancy's Picture Box," an allegory which seeks to illustrate, "by an imaginary example," the idea "the soul may contract" moral guilt "from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon, but which, physically, have never had existence" (307). His way of proving this point, intriguingly, is by presenting a "venerable gentleman, one Mr. Smith, who had long been regarded as a pattern of moral excellence" (308), who is visited by a trio of "friends": Fancy, who arrives with a "box of pictures on her back"; Memory, who carries a pen and "huge manuscript volume"; and Conscience, who hides behind the other two.

Their educational program is established quickly and repeats multiple times covering various incidents. Fancy sets down her box and shows Mr. Smith one of her pictures representing some sort of scene from his earlier life. These pictures include things like him "glancing down" suggestively at the kneeling figure of a wedded female friend or standing over the dead body of a close companion. These scenes are always of things that Mr. Smith is quick to point out never actually came to pass: he cries out in response to each, to announce that such an event never happened. However, they are always based upon actual moments from his life. Although Mr. Smith never murdered his friend, for example, he was part of an incident when a thrown bottle, depicted as the murder weapon in the painting, missed its target, and the two merely laughed things off.

While Fancy is displaying her paintings, Memory steps beside Mr. Smith and reads from her book, leaning down to whisper into his ear. She, however, reads the thoughts which accompanied the moment as it actually happened, announcing "a record merely of sinful thought, which never was embodied in an act" (310). As soon as she finishes reading the record of that moment, Conscience creeps up and stabs Mr. Smith with a dagger. This causes a painful reaction, which is variously described as "extreme," "excruciating," or "monstrous" (310-311).

Although Hawthorne's purpose is apparent and explicit, the manner in which he makes his point is telling. Effectively, Mr. Smith is sitting and looking at paintings, and then being jarred by an intense emotional response. Although Hawthorne never presents the story in terms of aesthetic response, this analogy nonetheless describes the action of the story, and as a result, the tale becomes strongly reminiscent of Poe's writings, albeit with a moral component. Unlike Poe, Hawthorne eagerly makes use of emotional effect in order to make a moral point, although the relationship is less direct than in traditional sentimental writing. However, in this case, the relationship is not quite sympathetic—the character that Mr. Smith is "feeling like" is none other than himself. Moreover, because the role of the conscience is central to Hawthorne's allegory, the need for an emotional effect is imperative. If these paintings did not provide such a response, they would be meaningless for Mr. Smith. It is only because they are able to derive some response from him that they are worthwhile.

Hawthorne returns to the subject of art in the story "Drowne's Wooden Image," published in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. In the story, the narrator relates the carving of a particularly magnificent wooden sculpture by a carver named Drowne. He is approached by the recently returned Captain Hunnewell, who commissions Drowne to carve a new wooden

piece for the prow of his ship, the Cynosure, although Hawthorne's narrator does not disclose what Drowne's subject is. When the two begin to speak, the narrator remarks that "it would be unmannerly to repeat what was evidently intended for the carver's private ear" (40). Instead, he merely gives us details about Drowne's life, before returning to Drowne's declaration that he will "do [his] best to satisfy" the Captain's wishes. Quickly, Hawthorne's narrator portrays Drowne, the artist, acquiescing to the Captain's taste and offering to bend his artistic process to meet the desires of his audience. Instead of being free to create his own piece, he is working according to the demands of his viewer. This small moment shows Hawthorne setting up what follows as being a tale about the relationship between an artistic work and the need to cater to that work's audience.

As the statue is slowly developed, Drowne is visited by the character of John Singleton Copley, "the celebrated painter" who indeed was a real American painter.[6] Copley visits to chat with Drowne about his work and notes that Drowne is "really a remarkable person" (63), even as he puts down sculpture as a medium in general. He calls Drowne's work (and by extension, sculpture in general) excellent except that they lack "one other touch." Drowne picks up on that touch as being "the only one that would be truly valuable," before lamenting that "without it, these works of mine are no better than worthless abortions" (63-64). As the carving comes along, Copley's response signals the sculpture's power. When he visits Drowne near the sculpture's completion, he exclaims, "here is the divine, the life-giving touch" (64). Remarking that Drowne is a "man of genius," Copley praises the work by adding that if he sculpted in marble, not wood, "it would make you famous at once" (66). He stops to correct himself, though: it would not only make a celebrity

[6] As Deanna Fernie points out, introducing Copley as a "celebrated" painter (instead of referring directly to his *artistic* ability), Hawthorne is playing on his popular appeal as a measure of worth, as "the status to which [Drowne] might aspire" (128).

of Drowne, but would "make an era in the art" (67). Drowne's carving is incredible enough that Copley, already a celebrated artistic figure, believes it would set aesthetic trends.

Tellingly, Hawthorne follows Copley's declaration with Drowne's public unveiling of the carving, and we get to see what qualities the prow has which would make it so valuable. And true to form, those qualities revolve around the way that the audience responds to the work. When the carving gets finished, Drowne opens the doors to his workshop and townspeople filter in. When they look at the carved lady, the townspeople don't remark on Drowne's ability or genius. Rather, Hawthorne emphasizes how they respond to the piece, describing how "most persons" were "impelled to remove their hats," overcome by a sense of "reverence" for the piece. For some, that reverence quickly gives way to "a sensation of fear," which causes the beholders to sink back from it (67).

As soon as the carving is revealed to the general audience, the narrator becomes concerned with how the audience reacts. Because of the way Hawthorne structures his story, preceding that revelation with Copley's announcement that the sculpture represents "the very spirit of genius," he is setting up the carving's ability to create an effect in its audience as representing that spirit. It is not Drowne's artistic ability, but the reaction of the prow's viewers, that makes the sculpture transcendent.

The relationship between the work's value and its affective ability becomes even more significant in light of Hawthorne's description of Drowne's creative process. He describes Drowne's method as being akin to a sort of subconscious frenzy. Drowne does not seem to be consciously sculpting, but rather enters a trance-like state of mind and sets about drawing the figure out of the wood. His face changes, and Drowne reflects that he has "wrought it in a kind of dream" (72). Additionally, not only does he work subconsciously,

but he knowingly works outside of the traditional standards of the discipline. Despite the apparent inferiority of sculpture, Drowne "feels himself entitled to transcend all rules" of sculpture and follow his own muse, and this moving away from the lifeless standards of sculpture are what allow this carving to come be exceptional.

All of this sets Drowne up as an artist in line with Hawthorne's earlier "prophetic" painter, and more broadly, as the archetypal romantic artist. And, as he did with the earlier painter, Hawthorne describes Drowne as succumbing to "lunacy" during the process, and Copley remarks that "he has gone mad" (67). The prophetic painter was able to avoid that trap largely because of his interest in the effects of the audience, and we find that Drowne's sculpture is similarly popular. The story presents an image of Drowne in the midst of a romantic creative revelry, crafting according to the ideal of the time, only to have his sculpture gain worth not because it presents evidence of his genius, but because of how successfully it enthralls its audience.

All of these ideas come into play together in Hawthorne's 1860 novel *The Marble Faun*. Written after a long trip abroad, spent among the galleries and museums of Italy, the novel functions to some degree as Hawthorne's treatise on art. The novel tells the story of four friends living in Italy, three of whom are artists in some capacity. Living in Rome as they do, Hawthorne has multiple opportunities to comment on art and artistry, and he makes the most of them. And, as he presents his scenes and characters, Hawthorne routinely reinforces the idea born out across his short stories: namely, that the value of art derives from its ability to speak to an audience.

At the outset of the story, the quartet of friends heads out to admire some sculptures in a local gallery when they come across the marble faun, holding part of a pipe. They joke

about the faun's similarity to their companion Donatello, but Hawthorne's description of the faun demonstrates exactly what it is that makes this sculpture worthy of standing at the center of his story. He describes the way the statue's mouth, with its "indescribable charm of geniality and humor," imposes upon its viewers to "call forth a responsive smile" (1: 20). Hawthorne describes the way that "it is impossible to gaze long at this stone image without developing" a sense of ease and mirth, and warmth, which he says "comes very close to some of our pleasantest sympathies" (1: 21). Although this may seem to be little more than an enjoyable statue, Hawthorne's description goes beyond mere enjoyment of the sculpture: he is careful to explain the way that this feeling stems involuntarily from a sort of pleasing aura. It is significant that this is the defining characteristic of the statue that Hawthorne saw fit to name his entire novel after. The faun is important to Hawthorne because it epitomizes the way that art creates effect for an audience, and it does so in a way that is similar to the artwork in the stories of Melville and Poe. That effect is actually more impressive given Hawthorne's general portrayal of sculpture. Continuing his general impressions of the medium from "Drowne's Wooden Image," Hawthorne routinely refers to sculpture as being too "severe" or "cold" to properly communicate feeling. By focusing on the marble faun—a sculpture which is so significant because it manages to convey those effects—Hawthorne is making a statement about how valuable the creation of emotional effect is within art. Conversely, then, his repeated insistence on the coldness of sculpture, and his simultaneous focus on its inability to evoke these feelings as lying at the root of statuary's deficiency, speaks just as strongly toward the need for successful art to create an effect.

When Hawthorne begins to differentiate between the characters as individuals, they become delineated by the particular type of art at which they excel. For Miriam, that is painting original conceptions, while Hilda works primarily through reproductions and

Kenyon is a sculptor. When Hawthorne introduces Miriam separate from the group, he describes her as having achieved some sort of success. However, when he notes that she lacks "both the trained skill and the practice that distinguish the works of a true artist" (1:32), it become obvious that her success must be predicated on something else. That something else, of course, is her ability to evoke emotion from the local viewers. "Miriam's pictures met with good acceptance among the patrons of modern art," Hawthorne's narrator tells us, because they offered "a warmth and passionateness… which all the world could feel" (1:33). Instead of dwelling on her technical inabilities, Hawthorne chooses to emphasize Miriam's popular appeal instead. Hawthorne plays up the popular appeal of Miriam's works as being her defining artistic trait, and that popularity stems directly from the paintings' ability to make her audience feel. Her ability to evoke emotion supercedes her technical ability.

Later, when Donatello visits her studio, she hands him a collection of drawings. They are roughly drawn sketches of a series of famous ladies like Jael and Judith, enacting violence upon their oppressors. Although they are rough sketches, they still demonstrate her ability to create an effect on their viewer. Hawthorne notes that although they were merely "rough" sketches, they manage to create "powerful sensations" in Donatello as he looks at them (1: 59). The images are "remarkably powerful," and even manage to dampen the spirits of the seemingly endlessly-joyous Donatello. Given that Hawthorne has heretofore spent the opening section of the book remarking on Donatello's lightness of being, it is striking that these paintings have a "most disagreeable effect on Donatello," and Hawthorne describes how "he shrank back from the table and clasped his hands over his eyes" (1: 61).

When she sees that her drawings have this strong impact upon him, Miriam snatches them away and replaces them with other, more reserved paintings "which indicated a happier

mood of mind" (1: 62). Although the mood is different, these happier paintings are no less powerful in their impact on the viewer. These paintings are powerful enough that Hawthorne describes them as having the ability to "make a mother smile or weep out of the very depths of her heart," or one which causes Donatello to double over in astonishment (1: 62). Regardless of what tone Miriam paints, her paintings are always marked by their ability to create a powerful effect on their audience. Whether that's the popular audience of Rome, or the smaller single viewer in Donatello, Miriam's painting is dependent on its ability to create strong impressions in her viewers.

This second class of images, with its parent-child relationships and morally proper subject matter, is more traditionally sentimental. As such, it is telling that these images are considered generally successful: Donatello is just as moved by them as he was by the earlier images. If this *is* sentimental artwork, Hawthorne's portrayal suggests that he understands it artistic value. However, because of how the scene breaks down, there is an implication that it is somehow inauthentic: Miriam's most sincere efforts, which also create the strong effect which marks proper art, are explicitly separate from the more sentimental efforts. Hawthorne is not disparaging sentimental works, because they are hold value by being affective, but it is clear here that they are merely one of multiple types of effect-driven art which can be valuable.

Hilda, the younger female companion, is also a painter like Miriam. However, Hawthorne is careful to point out that she is primarily a copyist: she spends her time reproducing paintings from the various museums and galleries instead of developing original compositions. In fact, Hawthorne notes that she "had ceased to consider herself as an original artist" (1: 75). However, that lack of originality is no knock against her: despite her work

being exclusively copies, she is still renowned by her peers. She is not merely "pronounced by good judges incomparably the best copyist in Rome," but indeed her copies are "hoarded as among the choicest treasures" available (1: 74).

Hawthorne's narrator actually pauses during his description of Hilda's copying to praise her for taking that route, instead of developing original compositions. He muses that "there is something far higher and nobler" in Hilda's decision not to pursue "the production of works from her own ideas" (1: 76). By Hawthorne's estimation, this is good primarily because that path necessarily leads to her attempting to create paintings to "set up for herself" a popular name, or to gain financial reward. Yet, in Hawthorne's description of how "the beauty and glory of a great picture are confined within itself" it is hard not to read a refutation of the romantic doctrine that the power of art comes from the artist behind it (1: 78).

Hawthorne then follows that with a description of how Hilda's copying brings specific paintings out "from the prince's carefully guarded cabinet," or other similarly secluded and privileged locations. In reproducing a painting for a general audience, she brings it "into daylight, and [gives] all its magic splendor for the enjoyment of the world," a trait which is "admirable" and "generous" (1: 75). Altogether, these passages show Hawthorne rejecting the audience-dismissive paradigm of romantic thought, and relegating the artist to the status of little more than a means for generating art for the masses.

The audience-centric, affective nature of Hilda's art comes out further as Hawthorne's descriptions of her copies proceed along the same lines as his other descriptions of art, suggesting the value of the paintings in their ability to evoke a reaction from their audience. In the first volume, Miriam is looking over a number of Hilda's paintings, and she

is moved with “an unfathomable depth of sorrow” in gazing at Hilda’s painting of a painting by Raphael Guido that springs upon her “by a sort of intuition” (1: 85). This painting, much like the other paintings from Poe and Melville, demands a subconscious and pre-rational emotional response, and its ability to do so is what makes it worthy of Miriam’s compliment that Hilda has “done nothing else so wonderful as this” (1: 85). Indeed, Hawthorne suggests that the “painful sympathy that the picture excited” exists separate from the “great interest and delight” Miriam’s more rational judgment takes from the well-executed painting. Additionally, in an echo of “The Prophetic Pictures,” Miriam’s expression while gazing at the paintings shifts to “become almost exactly that of the portrait” (1: 85). Here, as in the short story earlier discussed, the painting becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: meant to reflect some particular emotion, it manages to be the impetus which gives rise to that feeling instead.

Kenyon, the third member of the party and the only artist who works outside of painting, exclusively creates marble sculptures. As in “Drowne’s Wooden Image,” Hawthorne is critical of sculpture as a medium, describing it as “frozen” and “still” (1: 28), without any of the valuable liveliness of painting. Early in the story, as the group walks through the gallery before reaching the titular faun, they come across a sculpture of a dying gladiator which causes the group to muse about the medium. Miriam faults it for representing “a sort of fossilizing process” instead of a “living scene,” and not allowing for lively sensations.

When Kenyon’s professional life is finally introduced, Miriam goes to visit him in his studio. She looks around at his works, and, although there are not many of them, they still have a special quality that derives from their affective ability. In fact, the narrator notes that

"some of them … had great merit," but clarifies that their "admirable" quality is a result of their ability to "dazzle the judgment into awarding them" high praise. The implication is that whatever quality the paintings might have on a technical level is amplified, and made worthy of merit, because they are able to "dazzle" the viewer.

Curiously, when Kenyon's sculptures are finally described, the effect which makes them remarkable is not one which energizes the viewer's emotions, but one which offers repose. Miriam observes that Kenyon's busts "turn feverish men into cool, quiet marble" and keep them from being overly affective. And yet, that is still noted as an effect which is worth creating—it is not unlike Poe's call for the creation of "repose" in his idealized room. Hawthorne, like Poe, offers an aesthetic ideology which is not dependent on specific types of feeling—the moral rightness of sentimentality, or the terror of the gothic sublime—but rather on the overall ability for art to move its audience *somehow*. Even in this relatively small moment, Hawthorne's interest on how audiences respond sets him apart from traditional romantic thought.

Not all of Kenyon's sculptures create repose, however. Perhaps the most important piece in his studio is a full-scale carving of Cleopatra, dressed "as a daughter of the Ptolemies" and yet still attired in the fashion "best adapted to heighten the magnificence of her charms, and kindle a tropic fire in the cold eyes of Octavius" (1: 160). That is, Kenyon has paid special attention, and designed an outfit that will most effectively provoke a response from viewers. That effort proves successful: the narrator describes how "the spectator felt" the "latent energy and fierceness" of the sculpture—which he then expands, going on to paint the work through terms like "fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment"—and his emphasis on the

spectator's feeling exemplifies the "miraculous success" of the work. When Miriam sees the sculpture she remarks that she is "overcome" and "afraid to touch her," right before she deems it a "great work" (1: 162). As the two discuss it, "so much emotion was stifled rather than expressed" in Miriam's voice, making clear through omission that Miriam is strongly affected by the work. All of this makes clear the equation between evoking feeling and artistic "greatness."

It is worth observing that Hawthorne's writing here mirrors both Melville's, when describing the painting in the Spouter-Inn, and Poe's when he is giving an account of the lover's apartment in "The Assignation." In all cases, the writers are lapsing into long strings of adjectives to attempt to offer the reader a full impression of the emotional power of the work. These moments demonstrate the close relationship between visual artworks and writing by working to blur them even further, and to suggest that the response of audiences is essentially the same to either. For all three writers, this eager description of feeling acts as a sort of aesthetic sympathy, a way to get the reader to identify with the viewer of the art. It's an effort to create like feeling, albeit without necessarily having the strong moral core.

Nearly all of the art in the novel is depicted along these lines, and it would be both excessive and redundant to give an account of each example. After all, Hawthorne's characters come in contact with works of visual arts in nearly every chapter. Instead, I offer just one representative example to stand in for the rest. Near the end of the first volume, the narrator offers a glimpse of Hilda sitting in her studio and reflecting on a reproduction she has just finished of Guido Reni's famous portrait of Beatrice Cenci. When she looks at it, Miriam finds that "its unutterable grief and mysterious shadow of guilt" overwhelms her, and she becomes markedly "uncomfortable" (1: 253). Hilda feels the painting "threw its shadow

over her," and it scares her into "hiding her face in her hands" (1: 253, 254). This reproduction, which is remarkable because it is so overwhelming for Hilda as she views it, is especially noteworthy because part of its supreme quality comes, as the narrator notes, from the fact that "[n]o other such magical effect has ever been wrought by pencil" (1: 252). In this example, as elsewhere in the text, the quality and worth of paintings is directly related to how effectively they can create an impression on their viewers.

Most of the descriptions of visual art proceed similarly throughout the novel. However, even the motif produces repetitions that allow the text to comment on related aspects of the artistic process. In one especially interesting moment in the second volume, Kenyon visits the self-exiled Donatello, who has fled from Rome and taken up residence on his family estate. While he is there, Donatello reluctantly agrees to allow Kenyon to sculpt a bust of his head. When Kenyon finally sets out to do so, he finds that Donatello's face presents him with surprising difficulties. Kenyon had "never undertaken a portrait-bust which gave him so much trouble as Donatello's," the narrator notes, because he cannot figure out how to "make this genial and kind type of countenance the index of the mind within" (2: 57).

While he tries to puzzle it out, Kenyon gives up "all preconceptions about the character of his subject, and let his hands work uncontrolled with the clay" (2: 58), thus attempting to engage in the romantic "frenzy" of composition, but this proves unsuccessful. Kenyon calls the resulting sculpture "wretched," while Donatello expresses the "simple truth" that looking at his own bust "is like looking a stranger in the face" (2: 59). More importantly, the sculpture is said to be "without any semblance of intelligent and sympathetic life" (2: 58). When Kenyon sets down to compose in the romantic style, losing himself in a burst of inspiration, the result is a lifeless mess that is neither affecting nor accurate. He

responds by being more direct in his handling of the clay, and concentrating even more intently on it. Slowly but surely, he works at it, capturing snippets of Donatello's essence here and there. At one point in the process, as he is deep into his work, Donatello stops his hand and cries out. When Kenyon steps back, he finds that he has "given the countenance a distorted and violent look combining animal fierceness with intelligent hatred" (2: 60). The work "shocks" Kenyon, and Donatello "grows pale" at the emotions the face reflects. However, it is not just the vivid reactions of Kenyon and Donatello to the sculpture that make the moment stand out—it is Kenyon's response to his reaction. He cries out, "What have I done?" while he observes it, and is "shocked at his own casual production" (2: 59). This moment suggests that the creation of effect exists outside of the author's intent, further distancing the artist from the creative process. Hawthorne is suggesting that feeling is important even apart from whatever effect the artist intends. What is left, then, is feeling alone, in place of the author. At another point in the text, Hilda wonders aloud whether the "striking effect" of a different bust has actually "been brought about by any skill or purpose on the sculptor's part," or whether it is merely "the chance result of the bust being just so far shaped out, in the marble" (2: 186). Hilda's skepticism offers yet another example of the text questioning the role or importance of the artist.

The Marble Faun also offers some commentary on the relationship between aesthetic effect and didactic writing. Hilda, in despair, thinks back on a painting by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, a fresco of Christ bound to a pillar. As she reflects on it, the narrator describes how that "hallowed work of genius shows what pictorial art, devoutly exercised, might effect in behalf of religious truth" (2: 136). Effectively, the fresco works in service of providing a moral message by taking the "deeper mysteries" of religious experience, and using the viewer's response to "bring them closer to man's heart, and [make] him tenderer to be

impressed by them" (2: 137). Because art works to create an emotional response in its viewers, in Hawthorne's philosophy, it is actually more capable of delivering a moral message, because the affected audience is more inclined to receive that message.

In all of these works, Hawthorne's aesthetic philosophies are clear, and his relationship to the sentimental use of affect is clear enough. Although he is frequently thought to be antagonistic toward sentimentality, these portrayals of art demonstrate an aesthetic philosophy which is strongly influenced by that literary style. Furthermore, by combining his emphasis on effect and its use as a didactic tool with his repeated criticisms of the romantic artist, he is distancing himself from romanticism and positioning himself somewhere between the two schools of literary thought. This particular reading of Hawthorne allows for him to be considered as a figure operating in both traditions simultaneously, and prompts further reconsideration of how and why critical understandings of romantic and sentimental are delineated.

"A Sort of Unimaginable Sublimity": Herman Melville's *Redburn* and *Moby-Dick*

In contrast with Hawthorne, Melville is less open about making use of specifically sentimental traits. In particular, he lacks Hawthorne's interest in using stories to share a moral purpose. He lacks Poe's stated disinterest in didactic literature, but does not offer them as openly as Hawthorne. When he presents instances where morality comes into play, like *Redburn*'s "Palace of Aladdin," he downplays its moral role and instead focuses on the aesthetic qualities of those works. Nevertheless, Melville's writing is in line with Hawthorne's by offering an aesthetic philosophy which aligns the value of an artwork with its ability to create an emotional response in its audience.

Although Melville was a fan of arts, spending his later life giving a lecture tour about Roman sculpture, that enthusiasm did not develop until later in his life, after his seafaring days were over, and this late blooming is reflected in his writing. *Redburn* signals the first time that Melville makes a substantial attempt at any sort of ekphrastic writing. Melville's earlier novels, namely *Typee, Omoo,* and *Mardi*, were far more straightforward adventure tales, and did not concern themselves with art to any notable degree. Precisely where this increase in artistic depictions comes from is hard to pin down: Christopher Sten suggests that it is the result of a growing appreciation of the visual arts that Melville began to display in the mid-1840s (6). Douglass Robillard, meanwhile, suggests in his treatment of the novel that it might be secondary, a result of the shift toward a more introverted narrator and away from the outgoing adventurer types of his previous works (121). At any rate, *Redburn* demonstrates Melville's earliest serious discussion of the visual arts within his writing.

Within *Redburn,* these depictions of art begin early as the narrator, Wellingborough Redburn, thinks back on a number of paintings and pictures which are kept in his house. These paintings are not especially moving, certainly not to the degree of Poe's tales, but Redburn's narration does offer telling hints of the impact that the paintings have on him. One of them is a representation of "three old-fashioned French men-of-war with high castles" sailing along a blue sea, "and they must have been going very fast," which Redburn notes makes him "fearful" to contemplate (26). He describes two "large green French portfolios of coloured prints," the perusal of which brought Redburn and his siblings "never-failing delight" (27). Even when Redburn does not specifically note the responses he had to the pieces, there is nevertheless a sense that he "is excited by" the various drawings and paintings, which "are prominent stimuli for his visual imagination" (Robillard 50). There is a sense of energy surrounding Redburn's recollections of the paintings, which comes not from the quality of their representation, nor any suggestion of "Genius" that they evince, but solely for the emotional impressions they make.

One of the more nontraditional visual pieces that Redburn contemplates is a "copy of D'Alembert in French," which he loves to peruse. He gazes at the volume, which he cannot read, "with wonder" and a sense of "incredulity" (27). Because he cannot read it, the book becomes little more than an artistic object, and yet it is an indecipherable one that cannot possibly be interpreted. Moreover, because Redburn mentions D'Alembert's name offhand and nonchalantly, we can assume that he is also not particularly concerned with the individual talent behind the artwork. All there is for Redburn is the effect. This image, of the affective-but-indiscernible artwork, recurs through both *Redburn* and *Moby-Dick,* and speaks keenly to Melville's driving artistic principle: namely, that effect is the ultimate guiding force for art.

However, the central piece of artwork that draws viewers into the Redburn home is an old-fashioned glass ship in a bottle, brought back from France by Redburn's father. The ship is eighteen inches long, and "every bit of it was glass" (28). As soon as it comes into the house, it becomes "the wonder and delight of all the people of the village where we now resided," to the point where many of them "used to call upon my mother, for no other purpose than to see the ship" (28). Redburn recalls their "delight" at the ship, which sat always in his father's room. For these friends to come solely to observe the ship for the sake of having that positive reaction speaks loudly to the way that the book is valuing art.

That positive effect is not the only reaction that the ship provokes, though. Although for the visiting neighbors the ship is a source of joy, the narrator has a more negative reaction. He remembers how the statue creates an impulse to "pry open the hull and break the glass all to pieces" (28). He is still having a reaction to the ship, and in this case it corresponds somewhat to the traditional reaction of Poe's narrators: the ship "dizzies" him, and he flies into a monomaniacal "temporary madness" fixated on breaking the ship. The "insane desire" that comes over him is so intense, and so vivid, that he startles his sisters, who "ran to my mother in a great clamour" (29).[7] The ship, which indeed is the most valuable artistic object within the household, is marked primarily by its ability to draw such reactions from the people who see it, a poignant example of the necessity for art to create effect.

Interestingly, Melville's portrayal is more democratic than Poe's and Hawthorne's, as he attempts to show a range of emotional reactions to the same products through the

[7] Robillard suggests that the ship "does for Redburn what a work of art should do: it pleases his sense of order and beauty" (51), and although the ship's intricately detailed design undoubtedly reflects those traits, the "madness" into which young Redburn is thrown suggests a less serene reaction, and a larger emphasis on the intensity of effect which it creates.

portrayal of multiple audiences. Nevertheless, although they're demonstrating this in different ways, Melville does represent the same school of effect-prioritizing thought. Moreover, the wide-ranging audience that Melville is depicting serves to further align him with Poe's implicit blurring of "ideal" and "popular" audiences by implying that the effects of art are significant in how they affect *all* viewers, not merely select ones. This expansion of the audience in Melville (and to a lesser degree in Poe and Hawthorne) and the emphasis on its inclusivity reflect the distancing of these writers from the romantic framework from which they are writing. Unlike those artists, whose audience—if it is existed at all—was a select group of likeminded intellectuals, the artistic audiences which Melville writes into his stories are much less artistically inclined. They are neighbors outside of *Redburn*'s house, heathens in the "Palace of Aladdin," or sailors and seamen in *Moby-Dick*—common people. By representing these audiences as such, Melville is setting up an audience more akin to that of sentimental novels. This is the audience that determines the worth of a work.

The presentation of literal art objects slows down for a while, as Redburn heads out to sea.[8] It is not until later in the novel, after making port in Liverpool, that Redburn actually gets a chance to experience more art. After leaving the ship, he buys a guidebook and sets about Liverpool, retracing his father's steps from years prior. One of the first stops he makes is at a "group of statuary in bronze" depicting Horatio Nelson "expiring in the arms of Victory," while "Death, under the similitude of a hideous skeleton, is insinuating his bony hand under the hero's robe and groping after his heart." The "very striking" statue moves and repulses Redburn, who cannot "look at Death without a shudder," but who also describes the way that he "had much ado to keep from tears" (181). To really drive home the affective

[8] As Robillard notes, "Redburn observes most things as if they were art objects," describing things in "his usual painterly fashion" (61) and working to "accentuate effect" for the reader.

power of this moment, he observes that "how this group of statuary affected me may be inferred from the fact that I never went through Chapel Street without going through the little arch to look at it again," and that each time he found the scene as potent as ever (182).

During the six weeks in which Redburn rests in Liverpool, he meets his companion (and eventual shipmate) Henry Bolton. The two pal around for a bit, before taking off for London with Henry as their guide. While there, they do not spend much time moving around the city, instead heading fairly quickly for a shady, "semi-public place of opulent entertainment" (258), suggested to be a gambling den, where Bolton quickly runs off and leaves Redburn alone to contemplate the building. As Peter Bellis notes, this scene conveys a subtlety derived from the way that "the older Redburn, as narrator of the adventure, is aware" of the impressions that the house is having on young Redburn, even as the younger narrator experiencing the palace is too overwhelmed to articulate them (86).

The walls of the building are painted "so as to deceive the eye with interminable colonnades," while the "resplendent fresco ceiling, arched like a bower, [was] thickly clustering with mimic grapes" (259). As Robillard observes, the painted colonnades and false marble "deceive the eye," and prevent the young Redburn from finding a sense of balance within the building (63). This, combined with the "dazzling" colors of the walls and the "brilliant" doorway, contribute to a sense of unfamiliarity and bewilderment. Redburn describes how the scene "overwhelmed" him, and how his "head was almost dizzy with the strangeness of the sight" (259). Melville's concern with depicting art continues here as it has elsewhere through the novel, and he remains focused on the ability of art to sway its observer.

After some time spent waiting for Harry to attend to out-of-sight business, he returns and the two move to another, even more opulent location. Here, as before, Redburn finds himself surrounded by eclectic and flashy décor by which he is instantly affected. In this case, his gaze moves from the "Turkey rugs" and "Persian carpeting," up to the walls, "covered with a sort of tartan-French paper, variegated with bars of velvet," all of which is covered by "mythological oil-paintings, suspended by tasseled cords of twisted silver and blue" (260-261). These pictures themselves, Melville leaves largely undescribed, only making reference to them through an imagined context in a lengthy line of allusion, calling them for instance, "such pictures as the pontiff of the sun strove to hide from Cortez, when, sword in hand, he burst open the sanctorum of the pyramid-fane at Cholula," or, shortly thereafter, "such pictures as are delineated on the bronze medals, to this day dug up on the ancient island of Capreæ" (261).

These, of course, overpower the young Redburn, whom Harry observes as being "frightened" by the paintings on the wall. Redburn himself proclaims his "amazement" at the bust of a "bald-headed old man" upon the mantelpiece. Simultaneously, Redburn observes that these same paintings cause him to feel "ill" and create a "dismal" undercurrent of feeling. Melville, as before, is careful to suggest that these artistic objects serve a wide range of effects, by demonstrating the ways that Redburn is conflicted in their presence (to say nothing of how Harry is utterly unamused and unaffected). In addition to these emotional responses, Melville gives an indication of Redburn's physical state through Harry's reaction to him. Along with trying to calm him down ("don't be frightened, we are at home" [262]), Harry's multiple requests that Redburn take a seat suggest that he has spent several minutes standing transfixed and staring at the paintings. Although Melville does not render it directly,

he still manages to convey the way that the various paintings affect Redburn and throw him into a stunned silence.

The lack of actual description or context for those pictures is as telling as Redburn's astonished response. Although William F. Gilman suggests the lack of detail is a result of Melville's own relative lack of knowledge, which he notes was "not deep" (223), this explanation seems insufficient. After all, Melville had no problems supplying visuals for the earlier paintings, both in Redburn's house and in the first site the pair visits. Rather, the lack of depiction in this case seems designed specifically to highlight those things he does describe: namely, the reaction of the audience looking on it. As, indeed, the final example of artwork to appear in the text, Melville uses this opportunity to bring all of his previous descriptions to a point. By constructing this "Palace of Aladdin" to be, as Robillard puts it, "an epitome of sensuous immorality" (65), and loading the building with perhaps the most vivid pieces that Redburn encounters, and then leaving out all description of the paintings themselves, Melville is reasserting which aspects of art are ultimately important.

Melville's decision to render only the effect of the paintings speaks volumes. He is literally removing all mention of content or the artist from the discussion of the paintings—there is no possible way of approaching the works except through their effect. It is not merely that he is ignoring them—he is completely erasing them from his portrayal. He is also echoing Poe's treatise on design by suggesting that there is no *rightness* of feeling which ought to be presented. Melville is actively suggesting that the paintings will evoke morally questionable feelings and reinforce the location's status as a sort of taboo pleasure den. He, like Poe, is emphasizing the role of effect outside of its moral component.

Melville more-or-less leaves behind these sorts of visual moments in his 1850 novel *White-Jacket*, which represents in many ways a return to the traditional adventure novels of his early career. However, they return in full force in *Moby-Dick*. Perhaps taking a cue from Hawthorne, whose writing spurred Melville's gushing "Hawthorne and His Mosses" in the interim between the works, Melville not only resumes his writing about art, but offers vivid in-text depictions of his effect-centered aesthetic philosophy.

The first, and perhaps ultimately most powerful expression of this aesthetic viewpoint within *Moby-Dick* comes in the opening chapters, during Ishmael's stay at the Spouter-Inn. Immediately upon entering the building, he is struck by the appearance of a painting that hangs in the entry. An old and well-worn painting, Ishmael notes that its subject is unclear: he describes it as "a long, limber, portentous, black mass on something hovering in the center of the picture over three blue, dim, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast" (13). Immediately, Melville conveys that this painting, strictly speaking, does not manage to portray its subject accurately. On a representational level, the painting only manages to capture its subject in the vaguest of terms. In a move that harkens back to Melville's writing from *Redburn*, and the vague explanation of the paintings which line the "Palace of Aladdin," Ishmael's description is so vague as to be almost useless. Ishmael follows his account of the painting's indecipherability with a number of theories about what the painting might be trying to present to the viewer. He spends an entire paragraph laying out a number of possibilities for what the painting depicts ("It's the unnatural combat of the four primal elements.—It's a blasted heath.—It's a Hyperborean winter scene"), before eventually committing himself to the interpretation that it is "a Cape-Horner in a great hurricane… and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads" (14). Even when he offers his conclusion,

Ishmael is careful to maintain that his description is little more than a guess, "based upon the aggregated opinions of many aged persons with whom I conversed upon the subject" (14).

That the subject of the painting is indiscernible offers up another example of this image within Melville (which will eventually recur within Poe), but Melville offers a hint as to why that lack of recognizable subject is significant. By emphasizing the process through which Ishmael interprets the painting, Melville is calling attention to the importance of the audience, and making clear that the value of the work is based on how its audience responds. Again, he is separating himself from the romantic tradition, and shading toward the sentimental focus on communicating with an audience. In this case, the painting's meaning is created from without and is based on the responses of those who see it. Not only is Melville avoiding ascribing any significance to the work deriving from its content or artist, he actually presents the artist's loss of power. Having already removed the artist from any questions of the painting's *value*, Melville is demonstrating the artist's displacement even from determining the *content* of the work. Whatever the painter intended to represent is lost and is replaced by what the audience recognizes within it. Everything about this painting, from its value (as determined by its affective ability) to its content, rests in the hands of its viewers.

However, the conclusion he reaches is ultimately inconsequential: what is truly significant about the painting is not its subject, but the series of impressions it creates within Ishmael. His description of the painting emphasizes these feelings, as he explains how the painting captures a sense of "chaos bewitched" (13), while also attributing to it "a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity," (13), with both phrases presenting the painting's ability to evoke feeling as its primary feature. Additionally, Ishmael's account of the painting itself is marked by stringing multiple adjectives together before vague nouns—

the painting is presented as a "long, limber, portentous, black *mass*" of "three blue, dim, perpendicular *lines,*" (13)—which points to the way that the painting prioritizes the creation of a *feeling* over the recreation of a subject.[9]

Curiously, by this point Melville has moved entirely away from depicting the audience of the artworks which he is describing. Even the scant references to viewers *Redburn* offers are gone. Melville's distinct style of depicting art comes through in Ishmael's description of the painting. Unlike the first-person narrators of Poe, Ishmael is not describing his *own* reaction. The scene does not portray Ishmael stepping back or becoming overwhelmed. Nor is he offering scenes of secondary characters reacting, as Hawthorne does (and as Melville himself does in *Redburn*). Rather, he presents the sublimity as a sort of passive quality of the painting, expressed not by showing someone responding to it, but rather as a concrete description. The affective qualities of the artwork exist entirely within the body of the work itself, independent of an audience.

This is, perhaps, the most extreme version of the aesthetic thought my project is pursuing—it is an audience-centric view of art which effectively removes the audience as well—but it is all the more purely expressed for that. Rather than erasing the audience, by putting the affective qualities into the work itself, Melville is abstracting a painting's viewers to such a degree that they cease to have real-world traits. Even a broad portrayal of an audience necessarily implicitly bounds them, even if Melville's boundaries more inclusive than the standard romantic thinker. However, for him to move those qualities outside of any

[9] Critic Newton Arvin suggests that Melville uses adjectives similarly throughout the text, lending *Moby-Dick* "its particular uncomfortable character" (163). In that case, Melville's prose itself works to make the novel an example of the sort of expressive text which Ishmael celebrates, and which for Melville is ultimately the purpose of art.

audience at all, but into the work (where those qualities will necessarily be connected with *any* viewers) makes them truly universal. The paintings are *affecting*, regardless of audience.

The artist-centered romantic viewpoint is nowhere to be found: the creator of the piece is only ever referred to as "the artist," and Ishmael spends no time even imagining what he or she might have been like. Nor can the painting be considered a success because it presents a significant image: it barely represents anything at all. But as an artifact eliciting an effect from its audience, which in this particular case is the *only* quality the painting has, it is a resounding success. That this particular painting is of worth becomes even more notable if we contemplate the situation of the painting. As Douglas Robillard points out, "the picture is almost certainly a poor one; we could hardly expect the entryway of the cheapest inn in New Bedford… to be graced by a marine masterpiece" (72). Despite being a poor picture in the general sense of the word, it is nevertheless a profoundly successful *artwork* because it is so affecting.

When Ishmael stops in at the Whaleman's Chapel a few chapters later, he settles in to watch the Sunday sermon. As he looks around the pulpit, he sees "a large painting representing a gallant ship beating against a terrible storm off a lee coast of black rocks and snowy breakers," while in the sky "there floated a little isle of sunlight, from which beamed forth an angel's face" (44-45). This painting is not treated with the same exuberance as the Spouter-Inn painting, being referred to only as a "strange feature," merely contributing to an overall scene "full of meaning" (45). However, the piece's position behind the pulpit, and as the background for Father Mapple, does allow Melville to slyly present a picture of this artwork as the center of an emotional outburst.

When the Father begins his sermon, he opens with a hymn pertaining to the story of Jonah, and "burst[s] forth with a pealing exultation and joy," causing "nearly all" the people to join in and their singing to "swell high above the howling of the storm" (47). Although they are responding to Father Mapple and the hymn, the positioning of the scene is such that Father Mapple acts as something of a moderator between the audience and the painting. Because "every eye [is] on the preacher," and because that painting rests immediately behind him, the scene is one in which an entire audience is looking upward at this painting and is being pushed toward a strong emotional reaction. Additionally, the correspondence between Father Mapple looking down on the congregation, the painted angel looking down upon the ship in the scene, and the watchful presence of God in the sermon about Jonah, establish a tripartite relationship which helps to further conflate Mapple and the painting.

Melville, through Ishmael, continues to demonstrate the aesthetic prioritization of artistic effect in a trio of chapters later in the text, where he explores a history of attempts to portray the whale in art and sculpture. In chapter 55, "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales," Ishmael calls out a number of paintings, drawings, and other artistic representations that qualify as mimetic failures, unable to capture their subject with any sort of accuracy or faithfulness. For the most part, these are paintings or drawings that are anatomically incorrect, a particular fault in "scientific drawings" (288), which are meant to be especially illustrative and educational. Ishmael takes to task, among others, John Harris's "prodigious blunder ... of representing the whale with perpendicular flukes" (287) and an outline by "one Captain Colnett" that depicts a whale with "an eye which applied, according to the accompanying scale, to a full grown sperm whale, would make the eye of that whale a bow-window some five feet long" (287). Some of them are so flawed that Ishmael deems them mockeries of reproduction: "several pictures of the different species of the Leviathan"

published by Bernard Germain, Count de Lacépède, "are not only incorrect," but one of them is so bad that Ishmael offers William Scoresby's declaration that it must "not have its counterpart in nature" (288). The portraits of whales, which are little more than failures, are emotionally lifeless and stir no feelings within the narrator except for occasional mockery.

Part of the reason these pictures are so monstrous might be that they prioritize the reproduction of the whale over the creation of effect in their audience. In the eyes of Ishmael, these paintings are nothing more than the sort of lifeless "simulations of nature" (36) that Coleridge decries in "On Poesy or Art." They are striving for likeness, but without a mind toward maintaining the essential aspect of art, and, because they are merely "copying," they can only produce subjects that are "learned and dead; the tones of which, being unfamiliar, leave the common spectator cold and unimpressed" (289).

Curiously, Ishmael's meditation on the reasons behind this failure recall Samuel Taylor Coleridge's writings on the nature of painting. In his essay, Coleridge prescribes that "the subjects chosen for works of art, whether in sculpture or painting, should be such as really are capable of being expressed and conveyed within the limits of those arts" (36). When Ishmael ultimately declares, then, that "you must needs conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very considerable degree of exactness" (288), he is reproducing Coleridge's logic in such cases.

Because the artists are prioritizing their presentation of the truth, but the subject which they are trying to copy is inherently uncopiable, those artworks are not just bad: they are fundamentally useless. Moreover, Ishmael shows no real respect for these painters or artists outside of these particular instances, and never makes reference to their artistic vision

(or comparable romantic concept). However, by undercutting this function of art, as Melville has repeatedly shown he is willing to do, and focusing instead of art for the sake of *effect*, he is able to recover some potential value from art. This indeed seems to be how Ishmael moves forward, as art's ability to create aesthetic effect serves as the basis for Ishmael's praise of other "less erroneous pictures" in the next chapter, "Of the Less Monstrous Pictures of Whales, and the True Pictures of Whaling Scenes."

There, Ishmael divides his examinations between four artists who he believes have created more successful pictures, and his reflections on the images he examines strongly reinforce the idea that the most valuable quality for art is audience response. He begins with Thomas Beale's drawings, particularly the frontispiece of his *A Few Observations on the Natural History of the Sperm Whale*, which displays "boats attacking Sperm Whales" (29). Ishmael seems almost resigned to admit that the drawing, "though no doubt calculated to excite the civil skepticism of some parlor men, is admirably correct and life-like in its general effect" (290). Although he concedes that there's some value in the painting's mimetic success, the recovery from "monstrous" begins only when the pictures becomes able to excite the viewer.

Tellingly, Ishmael turns to Scoresby's pictures only to declare that "the best outline pictures" available of the Right Whale still suffer from the "sad deficiency" of being "drawn on too small a scale to convey a desirable impression" (290). That the "best" pictures available can still be considered unsuccessful because of their inability to create an impression on the reader is one of Ishmael's most explicit declarations of Melville's overall prioritization of expression.

He finishes the chapter by looking at two French engravings by Ambroise Garnery, pronouncing them to be "by far the finest, though in some details not the most correct, presentations of whales and whaling scenes to be anywhere found" (290). The first exploration, of Garnery's depiction a whale lifting a ship into the air, offers more of the same description that Ishmael offered earlier in the chapter. He emphasizes the way that "the action of the whole thing is wonderfully good and true," with the whale "depicted in full majesty of might" (291). Ishmael in fact spends the entire paragraph describing the *scene*, as indeed his chapter title suggests he will do, concerning himself almost entirely with the action and emotions of the moment. He relates the feelings of "majesty" and "profundity" (291) captured by the image, as well as the "expressions of affright" within, and states that he admires the "action" of the piece. However, when he must reflect on the text's representational virtues, Ishmael relegates his impressions of Garnery's actual depiction of the whale to the final sentence of the paragraph, where he can only concede that "serious fault might be found with the anatomical details of this whale, but let that pass; since, for the life of me, I could not draw so good a one" (291). The painting's value is drawn directly from its effect, so these reproductive failures are ultimately unimportant.

In the second engraving by Garnery, the ability to create effect is again the primary marker of quality. Ishmael never comments on the representational quality of the engraving, concerning himself entirely with the quality of artistic expression in the scene: "the foreground is all raging commotion; but behind, in admirable artistic contrast, is the glassy level of a sea becalmed, the drooping unstarched sails of the powerless ship, and the inert mass of a dead whale, a conquered fortress" (291). The piece is artistically admirable because of how Garnery is able to relate the feelings of the scene. In addition, Ishmael follows by reflecting on French artists, declaring the French "the lads for painting action" before

encouraging readers to go and see the gallery at Versailles, described as “a gallery of living and breathing commotion on canvas” (292). There is no mistaking that he is placing extreme emphasis on the creation of aesthetic mood.

Melville, like Hawthorne, emerges somewhere between romanticism and sentimentalism. He is apart from the romantic artist-centered doctrine with which he is frequently associated. Instead, he is advocating an aesthetic philosophy which is centered around communicating feeling outward to an audience. It is not that Melville is writing sentimental novels, but rather, like Hawthorne, that his outward interest stems from the same aesthetic impulses as those texts. Although Melville is not didactic like Hawthorne, his earlier-mentioned use of sentimental tropes suggests that Melville’s familiarity with sentimentality has contributed to his thoughts on art.

"Painting an Idea": The Short Stories of Edgar Allan Poe

Of the three writers I am exploring, Poe's relationship with sentimental writing is perhaps the most contentious. He makes use of sentimental tropes, and was very familiar with popular writing at the time. Although he is writing in the midst of the sentimental literary climate, his dislike of didactic literature positions him apart from the moral core of the genre. In effect, Poe found a workable middle ground, in which he demonstrates the audience-directed aesthetic of sentiment, which seeks to emotionally effect the reader.[10] However, he leaves out the moral core, however, and ultimately formulates an artistic worldview which is *entirely* concerned with the creation of those audience emotions.

Perhaps the most vivid description of visual artwork in Edgar Allan Poe's writing comes in his short story "The Oval Portrait," in which an unnamed narrator describes a night spent in a room decorated with various pieces of art. Poe is not forthcoming with details: we are never given any indication of why or where the story is taking place. Regardless, the narrator does describe how the small room's walls "were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies, together with an unusually great number of very spirited modern paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque" (172), all of which combine to create a "commingled gloom and grandeur" (171), and to immerse the narrator within a thick and heavy atmosphere of feeling. Indeed, these various works of art complement the narrator's own "incipient delirium," to create "deep interest" in the paintings. The room itself becomes the center of the tale since Poe never offers any substantial effort toward characterizing the narrator. Because this is the case, it is telling that

[10] Poe's relationship to the literary gothic is widely remarked upon, and I am not attempting to demonstrate that Poe's interests are completely related to sentimentality. Rather, I am looking at the way that

the room's primary feature is the paintings and various artwork on the walls, and by extension the mood they create.

One of the paintings in particular stands out to the narrator. He has the windows drawn shut, so that he can "resign himself… to the contemplation of these pictures, and the perusal of a small volume which had been found upon the pillow, which purported to criticize and describe them." As he moves his candle around, he is suddenly struck by "the portrait of a young girl ripening into womanhood," which immediately "produces an effect altogether unanticipated" (172). The narrator is struck by the painting and then "hurriedly" shuts his eyes to block it out. The painting is Poe's idea of art, masterfully executed: it throws him into an uncontrollable emotional response so intense it forces an "impulsive movement" that the narrator has to use to "calm and subdue" himself. The painting wakes him up, throwing off "the dreamy stupor which was stealing over [his] senses," and "startling [him] at once into waking life" (172). In case Poe has not clearly established this painting as the epitome of his aesthetic philosophy, he goes on to explicitly state that "as a work of art nothing could have been more admirable than the painting itself" (173).

Furthermore, that effect is one which exists beyond rational contemplation. The narrator tries to justify his excited response as an attempt to "gain time for thought" and to gain "a more sober and more certain gaze" (172) to allow himself the tranquility of reflecting on the painting. However, that Poe feels the need to have his narrator rationalize this idea only emphasizes the way in which art operates beyond the rational level, not as an appeal to the intellect but an appeal to taste. This reading of the narrator's response as being subconscious is reinforced by the fact that the narrator attempts to reflect on the piece, to analyze why it appeals so deeply to him, but finds that the effect is never quite gone. Even

after he contents himself with having found “the true secret of its effect” (173)—although he never conveys to the reader what conclusions he comes to on that account—he never quite manages to overcome that effect. Even then, he is “confounded, subdued, and appalled” by the painting, which he continues to regard with “deep and reverent awe” (173).

The story’s structure is set up to offer additional commentary on art. After recovering from seeing the oval portrait for the first time, Poe turns to the volume he was reading to learn more about the nature of that painting. That text concerns itself primarily with the author, who “took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he would not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him” (173). Interestingly, this description sounds particularly relevant to the romantic artist, conceived as a figure who likewise gets figured as a “passionate, and wild, and moody” creator who becomes “lost in reveries” (173). And, insofar as this exegetical text can be seen as offering up an image of the romantic artist, it ends tellingly: just after finishing up, the artist “stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved:—She was dead!” (174). His intense focus on the artist’s relationship to his artwork has come to a tragic end.

This tragic ending suggests an anxiety about the closeness between the artist and his art. The monomaniacal focus of the artist, which shuts out the concerns of the outside world, leads him to disconnect too fully from his existence. This remove effectively severs his connection to his beloved wife, and isolates the painter as a tragic figure. It is a depiction

which prefigures Nathaniel Hawthorne's warning that "it is not good for man to cherish a solitary ambition" because such isolating behaviors might prevent artists from "see[ing] the disorder of" their hearts. It represents another way for Poe to distance himself from the romantic conception of the artist, by suggesting the ultimately destructive nature of reclusive composition.

Additionally, the ultimate proclamation of the painting's success, that it presents "life itself," does not stem from the painter's artistic process: he does not make such announcements during the painting of the portrait, but only once there is a finished product (that is, once the *process* is finished). Nor does he say it as a comment on his own genius—it is directed outward, rather than back toward himself. Rather, that statement follows immediately after he is able to feel the effect that the painting has wrought: it is only proclaimed after he steps back and stands "entranced before the work which he had wrought." Gazing at the painting eventually causes him to become "tremulous and very pallid, and aghast" (174). The painting has an inner life that is derived not from the artist's skill (per the romantic paradigm) nor from the subject (who, after all, is declared "dead" at the same moment the painting achieves life). Instead, its value is directly related to its ability to create emotion in the viewer.

Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" retains this close focus on particular single artworks, while also providing broader contemplation of more abstract art. In that tale, the narrator recounts a visit to see his friend Roderick Usher, who has written seeking his company. That letter speaks of "acute bodily illness" and generally gives "evidence of nervous agitation" (96). Poe sets the scene as being particularly moody and affecting, speaking not only of Roderick's emotional volatility but also of the general gloom that

surrounds his estate, of the "iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime" (95).

As he approaches the house, the "vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me," continue. He describes sensations of "terror," which he describes as having "reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued. (97). Poe is masterfully setting the general mood of the scene: these descriptions are particularly important to understanding his language later on, when the narrator finally enters the house. As he does, he takes note of the "Gothic archway of the hall" as well as the items that line the entryway: "the carvings of the ceilings, the somber tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies" (98). These, which line the opening hallway of the house, we might presume to be the "many works of exalted art," for which our narrator notes the Usher family is so widely renowned. However, although these objects are "familiar" to him, they still, as he reports, "contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken" —namely, the oppressive sense of terror which permeates the area. All of the emotional discomfort that follows the narrator into the house serves also to set-up this particular depiction, by allowing quick reference to the range of emotional responses that they elicit. Poe's ekphrastic descriptions of these items serve to emphasize the affective value of those artworks and thereby work in unison with the larger aesthetic ideas at play.

Poe's language likewise serves to support his emphasis on those affective traits. Because these works are "exalted," but serve primarily to "stir up" unfamiliar thoughts and to

exacerbate the narrator's feelings, there is an implicit link being drawn *between* their exalted status and their ability to do so. The family's connection to the arts has made them a people of note: because those arts are centered on feeling, Poe is subtly suggesting the existence of popular, common audiences appraising artworks according to their affective ability.

During the days that Poe's narrator stays there, providing company and comfort for the ailing Roderick, the two pass the time by engaging in various artistic pursuits: reading, painting, and playing music. Roderick's deteriorating mental health is reflected in everything he does, and this is especially true of the paintings he creates. The narrator notes that looking at the paintings that Roderick hangs on the walls makes him "shudder the more thrillingly, because [he] shuddered knowing not why" (102), quickly establishing their ability to draw an emotional response from their viewer. The paintings are powerful not because they reflect Roderick's internal mind (although they certainly do): Poe's narrator spends very little time appreciating the pieces as *reflections* of Roderick. Only once does he refer to Roderick's role in the paintings, suggesting that "if ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher" (102). Instead, he describes them almost entirely in terms of the effect which they have on him. He fixes his gaze on the way that the paintings "arrested and overawed attention" and remarks on the paintings' "intensity of intolerable awe" (102). Here, again, Poe's description of visual arts is perfectly in line with the broader effect-driven aesthetic paradigm.

For the most part, the content of the paintings is left unknown, presented merely as abstractions that are merely gestured toward. However, one of Roderick's paintings is "not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction" (102). This piece, a "small picture" that shows "the interior of a long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls," is not as urgent in its

evocation of feeling as the less concrete pieces. There is no involuntary shuddering or moving away from the canvas. However, Poe manages to retain the sense of energy that drives his other descriptions. This painting is described as giving off "a flood of intense rays," even though the painting itself depicts "no outlet" and there is "no torch or other artificial source of light." The "intensity" of those rays speaks not to a lighted effect, but is more likely referring to an energy given off by the painting. In describing how those rays "bathe the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor" (102), we can see that the narrator is connecting that emotional energy to the earlier emotional effects that the other paintings have as well as the broader environment of the manor. Because Poe's narrator has put so much emphasis on the deeply affective nature of the house, and particularly on the way the estate creates subconscious impressions, this connection serves to reinforce the affective ability of those paintings.

The paintings reflect Poe's aesthetic philosophy in other intriguing ways, as well. As Barbara Cantalupo notes, "the strong source of light is… 'otherworldly' and empty of human effect" (57). By removing any human sources of light from the paintings, Poe is effectively removing any indication of human presence from the painting altogether, metaphorically eliminating the artist as well. The absence of Roderick is more absolute here, as even the single mention he received earlier is gone. There is no trace of artistic intellect or ingenuity within or about the painting, which further prioritizes its emotional power as the root of its meaning.

We see Poe combining the description of specific pieces and larger groups of artwork again in "The Assignation." Poe presents a once-again-unnamed narrator who meets and becomes friends with the secret lover of the Marchesa di Mentoni, after he saves a drowning

child. After offering the man a gondola ride home, the narrator is invited back the next morning, just after sunrise. When he visits, he is initially overwhelmed by the opulence and sensations of the many various art pieces that the young man has. He suggests that "the evident design" in the choice of architecture and accessories "had been to dazzle and astound," and this effect is absolutely achieved. Indeed, the Marchesa's lover has been so successful that the narrator is struck by the powerful effect of his apartment before he can even enter. After being "shown up a broad winding staircase of mosaics," the narrator is struck by an "unparalleled splendor" that comes bursting through the door into the walkway, "making [him] blind and dizzy with luxuriousness" (73). The aesthetic power of the room is so strong that the narrator cannot even get to it before he begins to be overwhelmed.

Once he finally makes it inside, that responsive energy continues in the narrator's description of how "the eye wandered from object to object, and rested upon none" (74). The room is decorated with a vast array of artistic objects, none of which give the viewer an opportunity to take a breath: "neither the *grotesques* of the Greek painters, nor the sculptures of the best Italian days, nor the huge carvings of untutored Egypt," nor even the "rich draperies in every part of the room" afford him the opportunity that the earlier narrator of "The Oval Portrait" had, to pause and collect himself (74).

Poe returns to the metaphor he used with Roderick Usher's paintings by using light as a symbol for effect. The narrator enters the apartment right as the sun is rising so that "the rays of the newly risen sun poured in upon the whole," throwing out "a thousand reflections, from curtains which rolled from their cornices like cataracts of molten silver." The narrator describes how the sunlight, like "beams of natural glory," mingled with the interior decorations (74). The pieces in the apartment are described variously as "burning" and

"blazing," and the narrator refers to the "strange convolute censers" hanging from the ceiling as shining like "flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire" (74). In case the imagery were not vivid enough for the reader, our narrator comments specifically on the way that the room "oppresses" the senses by overwhelming them. As in "Usher," the speaker is overcome by "the overpowering sense of splendor" (75), although interestingly, that splendor is identified specifically with the visual arts here, as Poe contrasts it against the non-visual "perfume and music," which are also present.[11]

We can see that Poe is clearly using his description of visual artworks to reflect the need for effect within art. But, lest those overwhelming feelings seem to be a negative trait, he is careful to have both the young lover and the narrator point out the quality of that decorating. The narrator, who is too overwhelmed to actually respond, nonetheless notes his "appreciation" for the room. The young proprietor of the apartment is pleased by the narrator's reaction and breaks into laughter before remarking that "Europe cannot produce anything so fine as this, my little regal cabinet" (75). Poe counters any potential concern about art's ability to "overwhelm" its viewers by suggesting that this is actually a positive trait.

After the two discuss Venice for a bit, and the narrator has had some time to collect himself, he is brought to one final, previously-concealed painting, a "full length portrait of the Marchesa Aphrodite" (78). Beginning with his immediate reaction that "human art could have done no more in the delineation of her superhuman beauty" (78), Poe offers a description of the sculpture before turning to the "brilliant atmosphere which seemed to

[11] Curiously, this effect not only manages to create comparable effects on Poe's reader, it follows the sympathetic route of attempting to get the reader to feel *as the character is feeling*. Poe does not merely want to create effect—he is creating sympathy.

encircle and enshrine her loveliness" (79). The upswelling of emotion created by the sculpture leads to the response that Poe has rendered so frequently, ultimately forcing the narrator to look away and causing his lips to "quiver instinctively" as he utters some lines from George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*. This final painting represents more than a simple continuation of the earlier artwork: it is the culmination of the scene, as the writing becomes more clearly focused on visuals (with the "perfume and music" of the opening scene fading into the narrative background) as well as more specifically "beautiful." This final painting, which is ultimately described using religious terms (the "enshrinement" forces the narrator to imagine an angelic pair of wings), offers the most direct and powerful single effect. It exceeds "dazzling" and forces him to look away.

Intriguingly, Poe's use of the plastic arts in the story goes beyond the moments in which he is actively describing artwork. When the pair enters the young lover's apartment, the lover comments on the narrator's sudden disorientation by explicitly mentioning the narrator's "astonishment" at the "statues—my pictures—my originality of conception in architecture and upholstery!" (74). The phrase "originality of conception" is telling, particularly alongside the fact that unlike Roderick Usher, this friend is not the artist behind the images. The young lover is not an artist figure in any sense. Rather, he is little more than a critic and curator, one who is responsible for setting the pieces up so perfectly that they achieve their intended effect and, therefore, "so utterly astonish" their viewers. He is directing an artistic experience explicitly based around creating impressions for an audience, in this manner providing a keen metaphor for Poe's aesthetic philosophy. Because of Poe's negative remarks about the construction that is the romantic artist, the lover-as-curator is effectively as valuable in the creator of the artworks themselves, because he is the one responsible for delivering that experience to his audience. In fact, he may be even more

effective, because he is able to stand apart from the artworks themselves, to focus on the specific mechanisms by which the viewer's experiences are conducted.

Additionally, he notes at one point that he has assembled "paintings from the Greeks to Cimabue, and from Cimebue to the present hour," but has chosen them based solely on their aesthetic merits, "with little deference to the opinions of Virtû" (75). As Barbara Cantalupo points out, the fact that he is "more concerned with the allure of the works than moral censure" contributes to the broader sense in which the story "embodies Poe's visual aesthetics, which are expressed in his art criticism" (77). This contributes to Poe's construction of the young lover as being akin to the ideal artist, as described in Poe's critical writings.

Moreover, although the painters and sculptors of the various artworks are never kept secret *per se*, the entire framework of the story puts not their creators but their audience at the center of the relationship. The artists of the pieces are mentioned only sporadically, with many of them being altogether unknown: the narrator refers to "some *chefs d'oeuvre* of the unknown great—and here some unfinished designs by men, celebrated in their day, whose very names the perspicacity of the academies has left to silence" (75). When specific artists are recognized, it is only in comparison to others, set up in such a way that they are not being directly highlighted but rather merely compared against other, similar artists. The young lover refers to Antonia Canova by name, for instance, not because there is inherent virtue in his creation but only to contrast his work with the (less admired) Venus de Medici. Poe is not merely commenting on the positive philosophy of effect; rather he is continually diminishing the role of the artist within the artistic process.

Poe also has a few smaller stories worth exploring in which he takes the time to remark on painting and sculpture, albeit in a less complex manner than the stories already explored. For example, "Landor's Cottage" is ostensibly an account of the estate of the Mr. Landor during a lengthy walk. Although much of the piece concerns itself with the narrator's description of the landscape, and particularly the landscape gardens of the estate, he does ultimately come to the residence.[12] Inside, he comes across three lithographs "fastened to the wall without frames" (61). One of them is "a scene of Oriental luxury, or rather voluptuousness, about which the writer makes no further remarks. The second is a "carnival piece," which the narrator notes is "spirited beyond compare," language that speaks to its vibrancy and excitement. The third, depicting "a Greek female head" finally offers the narrator the chance to comment. He calls the picture's subject "divinely beautiful, and yet of an expression so provokingly indeterminate," that it "arrested my attention" (61). Here is that traditional description that Poe returns to so frequently: the picture has such an effect on him that it causes him to pause for a bit and contemplate its beauty. Although the story does not concern itself with traditional artworks, what few pieces do appear fit in line with Poe's typical writing.

Curiously, Poe's semi-satirical essay on design and aesthetics, "The Philosophy of Furniture," suggests that a "tastefully" and "properly" decorated room will have paintings largely the opposite of any of those his stories present. In designing a hypothetical room, he notes that there should be many paintings up, to "relieve the expanse of paper." Poe is very clear that "the tone of each picture ought to be warm, but dark. There are no 'brilliant

[12] For a more thorough treatment of Poe's consideration of landscape gardening as an artform, see Barbara Cantalupo's treatment of Poe's "The Landscape Garden" within *Poe and the Visual Arts*, as well as Burton Pollin's "Edgar Allan Poe and John G. Chapman: Their Treatment of the Dismal Swamp and the Wissahickon."

effects.' Repose speaks in all" (234). Although it seems strange that Poe's ideally decorated house contains none of the paintings that epitomize his aesthetic philosophy, a great deal of emphasis rests on the word "brilliant" in this particular case. Because the ideal effect of the room in question is one of relaxation and repose, the paintings are selected based on their ability to suit that particular purpose. As he has before, Poe is suggesting that the all-important *effect* is not valued based on which feelings are being generated, but rather, on the work's general affective ability.

Closing Remarks: Areas for Further Exploration

My exploration of these depictions of visual art, and the aesthetic philosophies behind them, is hardly exhaustive. Remaining within the scope of this paper, there are portrayals of a number of aesthetic objects (such as landscape gardens, or architecture) which I was unable to address. A fuller accounting which keeps these areas in mind might allow for a wider and more nuanced understanding of the aesthetic ideas at work. Barbara Cantalupo's exploration of landscape gardens in Poe, and the work of scholars like Sanford Marovitz and Bryan Short[13], offer avenues by which to begin these further examinations.

Additionally, I acknowledge that the scope of this project is ultimately rather narrow. By exploring this relationship exclusively within the context of visual arts, I am not addressing areas of overlap which exist elsewhere in the writings of Poe, Melville, or Hawthorne. As I pointed out in my introduction, all three authors' relationships with sentimentalism is deep and complicated. The critical literature surrounding these authors makes it clear that there is a much broader range of ideas connecting to both sentimental writing and romantic aesthetics at play in this trio of writers, and expanding my scope to incorporate more aspects of their writing would provide greater insight into this vibrant period of American literature.

Conversely, there is the question of comparable subject matter among other contemporary artists. In addition to exploring a fairly narrow *subject*, I understand that I am dealing with a particularly small group of closely-related writers. By applying my own readings to other British or other transnational romantic writers, or to sentimental writers of any nationality, I think I could provide a broader survey which might uncover more,

[13] I am referring specifically to Marovitz's "Melville's Temples" and Short's "'Like Bed of Asparagus': Melville and Architecture."

interesting nineteenth century aesthetic ideas. Although I have spent time articulating the general feelings of romantic thinkers, there is enough variation among them that a fuller survey of romantic descriptions or depictions of art might present a more nuanced and complex portrayal.

Furthermore, although I have traced out a broad aesthetic theory within these writers, I have not sufficiently explored the *means* of effect within these writers, or the tradition. It is one thing to say that these three writers are placing an emphasis on aesthetic effect—it is another thing altogether to attempt to trace out any sort of semi-unified theory of the most effective (or aesthetically proper) means of *creating* that effect. Poe's critical writings provide some idea of the mechanics behind the creation of effect, while Hawthorne and Melville are more opaque. Continued close reading of these authors, as well as a broader survey of mid-nineteenth-century literature, may well offer greater insight into the aesthetic principles at play.

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