INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
The rhetoric of subjectivity: The written self in the autobiographical writings of Hawthorne, Adams and James

Parkhurst, Joseph Lanius, Ph.D.

The University of Arizona, 1990

Copyright ©1990 by Parkhurst, Joseph Lanius. All rights reserved.
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Joseph Lanius Parkhurst entitled The Rhetoric of Subjectivity: The Written Self in the Autobiographical Writings of Hawthorne, Adams and James.

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director Edgar Dryden
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at The University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under the rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: Joseph P. Bellant
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ABSTRACT

5

## I. INTRODUCTION: THE SELF AND THE 'LIFE'

7
- Gender, Psychoanalysis and Autobiography
- 9
- Reading Autobiography with De Man
- 20
- Why These Three Figures?: A Biographical Essay
- 28
- Constructing Otherness
- 51

## II. 'A' FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

57
- NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND HIS LETTER
- 57
- A/uthor
- 57
- Puritan Logocentrism
- 63
- A/bsent
- 68
- The Writing within Speech
- 73
- The Rhetoric of the Self
- 77
- Readers in/of the Text
- 79
- Body as Text
- 88
- A/utobiography
- 99

## III. 'THE FAULTS OF THE PATCHWORK':

108
- THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS
- 108
- Adams's Autobiographical Project
- 108
- The Prefaces: Masks and Manikins
- 114
- Self-Effacement
- 123
- The Adams Memorial
- 129
- Palimpsest
- 134
- Watermarks
- 137
- 'A Marketable Object'
- 142
- Autobiography and Romance
- 146

## IV. "PAPERS," NOTES AND LETTERS: READING HENRY JAMES

155
- READING IN NOTES OF A SON AND BROTHER
- 155
- The Aspern Papers
- 155
- "Papers" and Notes
- 165
- Origins: The Father in the Text, Part I
- 166
- Deconstructing the Rhetoric of Documentation
- 172
- Writing and Self-Presence
- 179
- Desire and Complementarity
- 182
- Origins: The Father in the Text, Part II
- 190
- The Desire of the Mother
- 196

## APPENDIX A: INDIVIDUAL CHAPTER NOTES

199
ABSTRACT

This study takes the measure to which "self" and "self-representation" do not coincide in autobiography. Each of the writers in this study—Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Adams, and Henry James—writes an autobiography that consciously divides the writing-self from the written-self. Each does this at least in part as a result of his discomfort with the patriarchal culture of nineteenth-century America. Never fitting the normative models of male action in the areas of commerce and politics, each uses his autobiographical writing to construct himself along the model of the "other." This gesture requires presenting the self as a cultural construct, fabricated in a language that is always already alienated from the writing subject. As such, the signifiers of personal and social identity are manipulable in a pervasive rhetoric of subjectivity, a rhetoric supremely adapted to the literary enterprise of autobiography.

In "The Custom-House," Hawthorne insists on the separateness of the sign of the self from the signified. This separateness permits the author a dilatory space which keeps him unreadable even while being read, a gesture he reproduces in The Scarlet Letter, which is read as a fictional extension of the same rhetoric of illegibility that he presents in the autobiographical preface. In The
Education of Henry Adams, Adams presents a self which figuratively corresponds to a text. The "self" is a palimpsest of all the influences that have been inscribed on it, and the job of the autobiographer is to edit that palimpsest into a self/story. Fashioning a self, therefore, is consubstantial with fashioning a book, and the two activities coincide in the autobiography. Notes of a Son and Brother shows James purporting a complementary relationship between reader and writer, whereby a reader lives in and completes the life of a writer. In the memoir, James's commemorative task as reader of the family's letters allows him to appropriate the historical personages through the acquisition of their writing. In this way, autobiography (both the activity and the product) and the self are no longer supplemental to others but originary and self-realizing.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE SELF AND THE "LIFE"

The Rhetoric of Subjectivity: The Written Self in the Autobiographical Writings of Hawthorne, Adams and James. In one way or another each of the terms in this title—rhetoric, subjectivity, writing, self, autobiography, as well as the terms "Hawthorne," "Adams" and "James"—is examined in this study. What is it about autobiographical writing that raises issues of rhetoric in relation to the self? How is the self exposed or veiled in the self-positioning act of writing? How is the written self situated in relation to the historical self? Is "autobiographical writing" a genre and is there a generic connection between Hawthorne's "Custom-House," Adams's Education of Henry Adams and James's Notes of a Son and Brother? Can these autobiographies be discussed through the opposing claims of rhetorical and historical analysis?

Absent from the title but nevertheless involved by implication are the terms "masculine," "white," "patrician" and "American." These suggest importantly that neither the self nor autobiography is the special province of traditionally canonized authors, but that the autobiographical canon, like the selves it inscribes, is a cultural construction. The canon constitutes selfhood in a way that
reflects the very processes by which the canon is formed: the dominant (white male) hegemony in nineteenth-century America inscribes, publishes, and distributes versions of selfhood which reproduce and privilege its own hegemony. The question that arises from these terms, then, is to what extent Hawthorne, Adams and James reproduce the interests of gender, race, class and nationality in their self-portraiture and to what extent they elude the coersions of these cultural constructions and produce an "individual" in their autobiographies?

The question of individuality has a great deal to do with both the literary status of autobiography and the cultural status of the self in America. The terms that seem most reliable in the title, and the terms that seem most to suggest the individuality which forms the premise of autobiography, are the proper names of the three authors. But even these are deliberately destabilized (in ways examined later) by the very authors who sign them to their autobiographies, suggesting the problems of equating self and signature, or the writing-self with the written-self.

The questions raised (or elided) by the terms in the title of this study are unanswerable in any simple way, and so must receive their fullest treatment in the sections on The Scarlet Letter, The Education of Henry Adams and Notes
of a Son and Brother which follow this introduction. The readings given in chapters two, three and four provide descriptions of the self-positioning that takes place in the act of writing autobiographically. But seminal and preliminary to the discussion of those works must be the positioning of this study in relation to the essential breakthroughs in our idea of the self occasioned by twentieth-century psychoanalytic thought and the critical implications this has had on the development of post-structural theories of autobiography.

Gender, Psychoanalysis and Autobiography

Though Freud's discovery of the unconscious was of too late a date to have influenced Hawthorne, Adams and James in their autobiographical projects, it has had undeniable influence on the way we read autobiography. Psychoanalysis has begged the question that necessarily lingers around autobiography: does writing bridge the gap between "self" and "self-representation," between the writing-self and the written-self? One definition of autobiography suggests that it is an effort to know the self through "consciousness."¹ This claim makes many assumptions, not the least of which are that there is such a thing as the "self" and that it is knowable through conscious procedures and that writing can negotiate the relationship between the
"self" and the "consciousness" in autobiography. Whether genuine self-knowledge is possible or not, however, its pursuit constitutes the method that initiates autobiographical writing. But the discovery of the unconscious suggests that self-knowledge will always be elusive, and that the meeting of "writing" and "selfhood" in an autobiography will always be deferred.

The discontinuity between the writing-self and the written-self is one that has complicated (and illuminated) the study of autobiography since that study took a decidedly theoretical tack in 1956 with the publication of Georges Gusdorf's essay, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." The destabilization of identity that has occurred as a result of the "discovery" of the unconscious has, eighty years after Freud, opened up the study of the self to the rhetorical procedures of post-structural theory, and a natural focus of the rhetoric of the self is, of course, autobiography. To unpack this history and see how it leads up to the kind of post-structural treatment I give to the works in this study requires some critical and theoretical reconnaissance.

How is the discontinuity of the writing- and written-selves displayed in autobiography? This question is raised by all three texts taken up in this study, but is not a typical concern of the canonical texts in relation to which
these by Hawthorne, Adams and James situate themselves as autobiographies. The Confessions of Augustine and Rousseau, and the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin or John Stuart Mill, as complex as these may be in terms of narrative rhetoric, do not premise the very nature of their task on the internal disjunctures, rifts and seams in the identity of the author that those by Hawthorne, Adams, and James do. The motive of the earlier works is more to seal up gaps and dislocations, instabilities, hesitations, and blind spots by purporting a linear, cohesive self. Though the consciousness posited behind the narrative "I" may seem to develop and evolve over time and become increasingly aware of the meaning of actions and events, that consciousness (and the "I" it narrates) is actually, in terms of its identity, static and unitary. The act of self-analysis projects a cohesive self in which any loose threads are plucked out or enfolded into a seamless personality. Until the advent of what we now call Modernism, only isolated works put into question the kind of organic, unified self purported by the canonical autobiographies.

Psychoanalysis no longer permits the reader to be naive about a writer's claim of authority. Today we see that, even in the most cohesive autobiographies, what begins as ostensibly unambiguous self-presentation ends in
the creation of a fictional self that covers over the premises of its construction. While Georges Gusdorf makes the traditional (and slightly naive) assertions that autobiography "is the mirror in which the individual reflects his own image," and that in this mirror "the artist and model coincide," he adds that autobiographical selves are constructed of writing and therefore cannot reproduce exactly the selves who lived.2 He thereby suggests what for us today is the most important feature of autobiographical theory: the measure to which "self" and "self-representation" might not coincide, can never coincide in language. By inference, then, (and this is specifically the case with the three autobiographical works examined in this study), autobiographers can actually exploit the difference between the self that writes and the self that is constituted in writing. Their writing hesitates between truth and fiction, where the "seams" between internal and external influences and identities overlap. Hawthorne straddles such a seam in his autobiographical sketch, "The Custom- House," when he situates his writing between the actual and the imaginary. The seams of Adams's identity are sardonically worn in his Education as though they were the garments on a tailor's manikin, "to show the faults of the patchwork."3 And James's seams in Notes of a Son and Brother occur
graphically in the alternation of the texts of his letter-writers with his own text.

The model of selfhood that Gusdorf purports for autobiography thirty-four years ago is admittedly Eurocentric and individualistic. In "Conditions and Limitations of Autobiography," Gusdorf writes that "autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist." The "metaphysical condition" for autobiography, he argues, is individualism, a "conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life." Autobiography does not develop, he says, where "lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being." His emphasis on the individual's uniqueness (and consequent isolation) as a precondition for autobiography is shared by James Olney, for whom the autobiographer is "surrounded and isolated by his own consciousness, an awareness grown out of a unique heredity and unique experience."

Susan Stanford Friedman argues that the model of separate and unique selfhood establishes a critical bias that leads to a totalization of white male experience and the misreading and marginalization of texts by women and non-whites, whose models of selfhood are complicated by
culturally imposed identities. She writes:

The fundamental inapplicability of individualistic models of the self is twofold. First, the emphasis on individualism does not take into account the importance of a culturally imposed group identity for women and minorities. Second, the emphasis on separateness ignores the differences in socialization in the construction of male and female gender identity.6

Without changing or altering Friedman's valuable correction of Gusdorf's andro- and Eurocentrism, one might add that by the same social mechanisms with which women and minorities are constructed by the dominant white male hegemony in Western societies, so too are white males constructed by the very same hegemony which privileges them. Being constructed in a privileged position does not involve anything like the societal oppression which women and minorities have historically suffered. However, there is evidence in the three autobiographies under consideration that culture has a parallel effect in the male sense of self. And unlike women and minorities, who, according to Friedman, compensate for their neglected individualism with "collective and relational identities,"7 this constructedness in the white male results in an exaggerated sense of alienation and isolation.
One could hardly choose three other figures who better illustrate the alienated, isolated, white, male patrician in America: all three exiled, estranged or otherwise in retreat from a "philistine" republic—Hawthorne in his haunted garret, Adams in his restless travel and failed careers, and James in celibacy and expatriation; all three cut off by profession and sensibility from the patriarchy of which they are putative members. The identity of separateness troubles and complicates the self in the autobiographies of all three. For them, language becomes the defense that circumscribes the self. Though language represents the very laws of culturally imposed identity to which the writing subject is subjected, it can also be appropriated by the writing subject.

In the sense of the writing subject's separateness, psychoanalytic models of the self provide a useful vocabulary because in those models the ego is defined in terms of its ability to separate itself from others. In Freudian theory, ego development moves from identification to separation. The self develops as it comes to realize its difference first from the mother and after her from the other objects in the world. Freud writes that "an infant at the breast does not yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him." But this early lack of boundary between self
and other yields to the "reality principle" through which
the child learns to "separate off the external world from
itself."  

In Jacques Lacan's theory, the child's separation from
the mother is followed by the "mirror stage," in which the
child recognizes himself as a separate object by seeing his
whole shape in the mirror and identifying that image with a
sense of a distinct and unified self. The mirror, however,
serves up a false image of the child's unified "self." The
unity is external (it occurs only in the illusion of a
mirror) and is, as Ellie Ragland-Sullivan says,
"asymmetrical, fictional, and artificial." She postulates
that the "mirror stage must, therefore, be understood as a
metaphor for the vision of harmony of a subject essentially
in discord." Since the self can only identify itself as
what is composed in the mirror, its drive toward cohesion
suppresses the fragmentation and discord at the center of
its experience and views itself as whole. After the mirror
stage, the child enters the Symbolic, where he continues
the process of self-construction through the acquisition of
symbolizing abilities, i.e., language. Where in the
earlier phase the mirror was the site in which selfhood
coalesced, so now in the Symbolic, language becomes the
site in which the self is constructed, and like the mirror,
language serves up a false image of unity, reflecting back
identities that are preformulated and therefore alien to him.

Language, therefore, according to Lacan, irremediably divides the subject and makes the "self" an alienated construction. "Even one's native tongue," says Jane Gallop reading Lacan, "is already an alien chain of signification to which one is subjected as an infant and which one never really masters." Because of this alienation, everyone, Lacan suggests, regardless of his or her sex, is "castrated." Gallop explains that "castration for Lacan is not only sexual; more important, it is also linguistic: we are inevitably bereft of any masterful understanding of language, and can only signify ourselves in a symbolic system that we do not command, that, rather, commands us."

Lacan's suggestion that the subject is castrated in language provides the foundation for the post-structural theory with which these autobiographies are read. The Lacanian and post-structural "self" is a fictive entity constituted in images or words that cannot refer back to the "real" self because of the non-referential nature of all signs. Influenced by the Lacanian model, Jeffery Mehlman speaks for the post-structuralists when he says that all autobiography is "necessarily fictive," for it creates a self whose apparent coherence is a sign of its
falseness and alienation, much as the child's image in the mirror gives a false impression of coherent, unitary selfhood. 12

The inference I wish to draw in citing Gusdorf and Friedman, Freud and Lacan is that the "mirror" of language and culture (even when that language and culture are patriarchal) does not reflect back a unique or coherent individual when a white, male, patrician, stands before it any more than it does for women or minorities for whom the language and culture are alienating by being the domaine of the white man. What he sees when he stands before the mirror is WHITE, MALE, PATRICIAN—all culturally prescriptive formulations of identity which impose impersonal assumptions on him, all as alienating for a man of the dominant group as for a woman or minority at the margins of the culture. The difference is that a white man in America has traditionally had the luxury of forgetting his color and sex, but this does not change the basic relationship of self to other that he has to negotiate. Therefore, Gusdorf's description of "isolate being" as a condition of autobiography is as inapplicable to the male subject as Friedman says it is to the female subject.

And in Hawthorne, Adams and James we see three white, male, patrician Americans negotiate, evade, and ultimately exploit these and other culturally prescriptive categories
of identification. These (false) categories of selfhood become mere signs in a language that is always already alienated from the subject, and as such, they are manipulable in a pervasive rhetoric of subjectivity, a rhetoric supremely adapted to the language enterprise of autobiography. The alienation they feel toward the cultural signifiers which reflect their "identity" is then reproduced in the alienated language they use to construct an autobiographical self.

Intersecting in each of the autobiographies under consideration is the life of an individual alienated from his specific cultural circumstances as well as the artifact of a writing subject alienated in language. A fork in the path of this introductory chapter is now inevitable. One branch follows the alienation of the writing subject in the language of autobiography. For this I will examine Paul de Man's theoretical model as a way of approaching autobiography. In the other branch I will pursue a biographical argument suggesting that the three figures in this study correspond in the ways they deal with the alienating conditions of their cultural milieu.

Reading Autobiography with De Man

From the imaginary identification of the self as a unified whole in a mirror, Lacan goes on to posit the
symbolic construction of the subject in language. This gesture suggests an opening for deconstruction in the reading of autobiography, a practice which unravels the constructedness of the rhetoric around the autobiographical self. Paul de Man shows the way in such a deconstructive reading because he has theorized the particular assumptions operating in the rhetoric of autobiographical writing in his essay "Autobiography as De-facement" (1979).

For de Man, a rhetorical reading of a text looks at its construction in rhetorical tropes. When de Man refers to rhetoric and tropes he refers not to stylistics or logic but to what Rudolfe Gasche terms a "nonphenomenal reading." "Phenomenality for de Man denotes accessibility to the senses," Gasche suggests, so that "[f]igures and tropes are phenomenal in that they appeal to the senses, and privilege a certain mode of cognition: that of the experience of the phenomenal world." Metaphors, metonymy, metalepsis, prosopopeia, and other tropes, then, are phenomenal in that they image something. A nonphenomenal reading centers not on the images purported by tropes (and therefore not on the "content" of the book, which occurs within the images and tropes on the surface level of reading) but in what de Man calls the "literariness" (as opposed to the literalness) of figures and tropes.

A nonphenomenal reading, therefore, erases the
difference between fictional and nonfictional prose and subsumes these "naive oppositions" to their commonalities as texts. Such a reading renders moot the conflicting claims of history and rhetoric placed on autobiography because the distinction between imaginary and factual content merely diverts attention from the "literariness" with which all texts are constructed. In thus subjecting autobiographical texts to a reading they had previously been deprived of, namely, reading them as literature rather than as history, de Man revokes the facile division of fiction and nonfiction which has sidetracked autobiography studies. A nonphenomenal reading of autobiography, such as de Man's, demonstrates that the division between fiction and nonfiction cannot be made, that opposites remain undecidable and levels blend into one another so that all texts "shade into incompatible genres."

To reach below the surface distinction between fiction and nonfiction, a nonphenomenal reading must necessarily transcend the literal meaning of the autobiographical text as well as its canonized interpretations. Ironically, however, in reading these autobiographies as literature instead of as history, I am, in effect, following the lead of the canonical biographers. Ernest Samuels, Henry Adams's biographer, asserts that the Education was useless to him as a biographical source, so little factual history
(or even reliable gossip) does it contain. Leon Edel, in his biography of Henry James, cites James's memoirs far more often for what they omit from the life than for what they contribute to the Life. And Randall Stewart, whose volume Nathaniel Hawthorne assumes the place of the standard biography, does not draw any historical material from the autobiographical "Custom-House," but instead addresses the controversy the sketch caused in Salem after it was published. 17

None of the autobiographies provides reliable biographical information, though each purports to be nonfiction. De Man's manner of reading autobiographical texts obviates this critical impasse by approaching the text before it starts to signify, so that what it signifies is no longer the focus of debate, but rather how it signifies, and, more importantly, how its system of signification controls assumptions about the author.

Situated between fiction and history, autobiography is troubled by the instability of its references to a putative historical self. The question all three biographers raise about the reliability of autobiography as a source points to the fundamentally deceptive gesture that takes place when the self ("auto") claims to represent the life ("bio") in writing ("graphe"). As de Man implies, the three terms that define the genre can become functionally
interchangeable:

are we so certain that autobiography depends on reference, as a photograph depends on its subject or a (realistic) picture on its model? We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and is thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?

(AD 920)

When the writing precedes and determines the life, it calls into question the origination of the self that supposedly precedes and predicates the autobiographical subject.

"Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading," de Man suggests (AD 921). Since autobiography is neither fiction nor history and both at once, how its references are read determines whether it is an autobiography. If the way a text is read determines the truth status of its references, the reader co-writes the text when he or she reads it as autobiographical. For de Man, this "specular structure" informs autobiography because the same mutually constituting subject/object
relationship between the reader and the text "is internalized in a text in which the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding" (AD 921). The author's act of reading an earlier version of himself (the "specular moment") is also an act of producing a historicized subject. "The specular moment," de Man explains, "is not primarily a situation or an event that can be located in history, but . . . the manifestation, on the level of the referent, of a linguistic structure" (AD 922). The author of the text and the author in the text form a "specular pair," the illusion of the two as one. In the special case of autobiography, "[t]his specular pair has been replaced by the signature of a single subject" (AD 923). The signature supports the illusion of resolution and closure between the author of the text and the author in the text, the illusion that they are really the same self.

"Prosopopeia is the trope of autobiography," de Man says, because it purports closure between the specular pair (AD 926). Identified as "the fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the-grave," (AD 927) prosopopeia is associated with the epitaphic and the autobiographic because it gives the power of speech (and therefore self-presence) to "an absent, deceased or voiceless entity" like a gravestone or a printed page. "Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally
face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*). Prosopopeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name . . . is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" (AD 926). In giving a face to writing, prosopopeia pretends closure between author and text, making the author "present" in the writing.

De Man's proto-reading of autobiography is "Essays on Epitaphs." In it Wordsworth claims for the epitaphic that prosopopeia "unites the two worlds of the living and the dead" (quoted by de Man, AD 927). The epitaphic and the autobiographic correspond, de Man asserts, because it is just this unity of "the living and the dead" that autobiography sets itself up to accomplish. However, such a unity of living and dead incurs "the latent threat that inhabits prosopopeia, namely that by making death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies, by the same token, that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death" (AD 928). That is, if the dead have voices, theirs would presume authority over those of the living, robbing the living author of his own proper voice and face.

Autobiography's supposed memorialization of the voice and face of the author, therefore, "deprives and disfigures to the precise extent that it restores" (AD 930). In this way, as de Man implies, autobiography denounces its own
language: "To the extent that language is figure (or metaphor or prosopopeia) it is indeed not the thing itself but the representation, the picture of the thing and, as such, it is silent, mute as pictures are mute" (AD 930). The better an image the autobiography gives of the subject, the more it defaces the subject. To the extent that the figure of the author is "restored" in his autobiography, the author is disfigured (and silenced) in his now eclipsed own person.

De Man typically shows a willingness to credit the text with some implicit grasp of its own rhetorical strategies. With The Scarlet Letter, The Education of Henry Adams, and Notes of a Son and Brother, a reader cannot very well do otherwise. Each text seems in some sense to contain or prefigure its own deconstructive reading, which is why the de Manian model is useful for reading them. Each of the three authors, though with differing degrees of awareness, is deconstructing the illusion of resolution and closure purported by the signature of the single subject. Each, therefore (again, with differing degrees of intention), unsettles the presumed unity of the autobiographical subject, refracting the illusion of the unified subject by foregrounding the promiscuous rhetoricity with which he presents himself. Also, in each his own way, Hawthorne, Adams and James
produce images of "the author" expressly to disfigure themselves (make themselves unfigurable). In autobiography, just as if it were one of their fictions, they exploit language's inherent freedom from the referent to re-image themselves. One might say they make this freedom from the referent the premise of their autobiographies, so that, in effect, they denounce their own language of autobiography. By exposing the seams in the fabric of the autobiographical suit of clothes, they concede it to be a fabrication. In denouncing their own language, they deface the face they construct for themselves. Yet each also invokes in some manner the trope of prosopopeia (the authority of he who writes from beyond the grave) in order to veil over this denunciation.

This is all by way of explaining why I take a textual, non-referential approach to the autobiographies in the readings which follow this introduction. Hayden White suggests that "the historically real . . . is that to which I can be referred only by way of an artifact that is textual in nature." The text itself is the only historical reality available to us, so in a sense, the study of the artifact is the only true study of the history which produced it. De Man's nonphenomenal reading, then, dissolves the difference between rhetorical and historical claims in the reading of autobiography.
Why These Three Figures?: A Biographical Essay

In the chapters that follow, it is not the lives of Hawthorne, Adams, and James that are examined, but the "Lives." My readings deal almost exclusively with the autobiographical document(s) of the author, and make little reference to the individuals outside of their own self-references. All the more reason it becomes imperative to establish the fundamental connections between the three which provide a rationale for their grouping.

Historically, the three share much common ground. All either were born or raised in the general Boston milieu, all within a generation of each other (Adams and James were contemporaries and knew each other well), two of families with colonial pedigree (Adams and Hawthorne's figuring somewhat prominently in the history books, James's arriving in 1789), all of genteel if not aristocratic background. 19

Though such similarities may seem adventitious, the three authors share a similar constellation of responses to these conditions which has a great deal to do with the type of self they construct in their autobiographies. Fathering is an important autobiographical motif for these three writers, and this is the case largely because of what their "fathering" failed to provide them. Adams translates the theme of the inadequate father into educational terms in
his autobiography, so that where his familial patriarchs are not deficient, the conditions of the patriarchy are. At age 70, the autobiographer remembers his childhood feeling of abandonment: "a rather slow boy felt dimly conscious that he might meet some personal difficulties in trying to reconcile sixteenth-century principles and eighteenth-century statesmanship with late nineteenth-century party organization." The onus for his lack of preparation falls on "education," a term which becomes a by-word for the larger nurturance a society extends to its "child" in order to promote its prospects. He writes:

the story will show his reasons for thinking that, in essentials like religion, ethics, philosophy; in history, literature, art; in the concepts of all science, except perhaps mathematics, the American boy of 1854 stood nearer the year 1 than to the year 1900. The education he had received bore little relation to the education he needed. (53)

His atavistic state constitutes a kind of orphanhood, an abandonment by the culture that had buoyed and supported his male forebears. Adams becomes a human analogue to the Pteraspis, the prehistoric fish which had no known evolutionary antecedent or decendent, but existed as an unfathered, unfathering anomaly to confute evolution, and
so becomes one of the metaphors for Adams's own selfhood in the Education.

Hawthorne's father died in Dutch Guiana when Nathaniel was four, and this deprivation is reproduced in the "Custom-House" sketch as the unwillingness of the republic to support the artist (an issue which has recently been revived in the assault currently being mounted against the National Endowment for the Arts). Not only is the artist made a wage slave by his sinecure in the custom-house, but the position grants him none of the protection from the world it is supposed to. Instead, it expells him naked and unfit into the economic jungle. The deprivation of the father is also central to the story of Pearl's estrangement from human sympathies in The Scarlet Letter, since it is because there is no father that the patriarchy (represented by Bellingham, Wilson, and Chillingworth) can tyrannize the otherwise unprotected mother and child.

James's paternal deprivation is both more directly addressed and more complicated in his autobiography. He tends to equivocate his father's inadequacy as a source of support and parental nurture by smoothing it over with nostalgic avowals of his father's charm and quaint eccentricities. And yet there is no mistaking that James indicts Henry Senior as ineffectual and self-indulgent. And like Hawthorne, James suffers this paternal inadequacy
particularly in the valuation of his artistic nature. In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, he recalls the paternal censure against a career in writing: "When I myself, later on, began to 'write' it was breathed upon me [from his father] that this too was narrowing."21

In the manner that their autobiographical testimonies situate them in the patriarchy of nineteenth-century Boston, all three are deprived of the self-esteem that had become the birthright of men born to fathers and to families such as theirs. And each responds to this deprivation at some time in his life by distancing himself from his patronym. Hawthorne is most literal about it, changing the spelling of his last name from Hathorne. John Irwin suggests that the significance of the change is related to his being a gender outcast: "Hawthorne breaks with family custom by being the first male in six generations to follow a sedentary occupation, and he signifies this break by rewriting the patronymic Hathorne as Hawthorne."22 James M. Cox points out that the change recovered the former spelling of the name. However, Cox adds that "[t]he recovery did not mean that he had returned to the past--there is never a whit of nostalgia in Hawthorne, nor is he antiquarian in outlook--but that he had laid claim to an aspect of the past which another and more dominant aspect of the past had suppressed."23
deleted "w" had been the mark of a suppression; Hawthorne's break with the male custom of his patriarchs, coinciding with the recovery of the "w" in the patronym, suggests that the spelling change signifies the recovery of the suppressed feminine.

Though they were less literal in their repudiation, James's and Adams's patronyms also represent for their bearers a patrimony they found onerous. Henry James had been named after his father and was known for the first forty years of his life as Henry James Junior. In print he would often be mistaken for his father and the proper name itself as well as the "Junior" always made him feel derivative. After his father's death in 1882 he eliminated "the tiresome and graceless 'Junior'" from his name, and when his nephew (William's son Henry) was considering naming his own son "Henry," James pleaded with him not to confer "that unfortunate mere junior" on a "helpless babe." Donna Pryzbyłowicz suggests that the omission of the "Junior" marks an attempt to recover his own identity and origin. The erasure "obliterates the former hierarchical distinction between father and son and liberates James by giving him . . . an original signifier of self and subjectivity." Adams's patronym carried a set of public associations and expectations which weighed him down his whole life.
Rather than vaulting him to success as one would assume, Adams suggests that the "eighteenth-century inheritance he took with his name" (7) was actually the circumstance that disabled him for success. This accounts for the playfulness with which he treats his patronym in the Education, finding numerous occasions to make a pun out of it. The name is an unwieldy public object for him. There is an underlying irony in his name, for it indentifies him as an individual while completely obscuring his individuality by signifying a whole set of public associations which have nothing to do with him. The title of the autobiography contains something of this irony, as Robert Sayre implies when he compares the title of Adams's book with the titles of James's: "It is also curious that Adams, who is so self-effacing in the book itself, should have advertised himself in the title while James, who asserts himself so strongly in the books, is so humble in his titles."26 One might suggest that Adams does this in The Education of Henry Adams because the "Henry Adams" in the title is an advertisement, a brand name.

Each in his autobiography, and in other writings as well, associates his subjectivity not with the figure of the father in the patriarchy but with the "other," which, in the patriarchy, is the feminine. All three end up taking a similarly aesthetic (and therefore, according to
Victorian sexual mythology, "feminine") career path. As Alfred Habegger points out, nineteenth-century male novelists in America, to some extent, "had to be fugitives from the rough masculine world" if they hoped to "enter[...] deeply into the feminine asperations" of a "woman's literary genre." He characterizes the America of Hawthorne, Adams and James's day as inimical to such a "feminine asperation" as art: "a world that was a lot rougher in a day when boys routinely owned firearms, scores of people were killed in accidents every Fourth of July, fighting if not dueling was still common, politics was intimately associated with saloon cliques, and business was apparently more of a free-for-all than today."27 The conditions of the patriarchy, which are associated with the father, deprive him of his individuality and alienate him from the sources of his creativity and self-esteem. Within these conditions, each consciously associates himself with the figure of the other: the estranged, unknown, trivialized, and ultimately "feminine" figure lost in the commercial, political, military, and ultimately "masculine" energies of nineteenth-century America.

The stages of self-representation which culminate in this association are similar in the autobiographical works of all three. Each author occasions his story around a seemingly featureless early self who had little to show.
In *A Small Boy and Others*, the first volume of his Autobiography, James characterizes himself as one of those unnoticed boys "whose faculty for application is all and only in their imagination and their sensibility. There may be during those bewildering and brooding years so little for them to 'show' that I liken the individual dunce—as he so often must appear—to some commercial traveler who has lost the key to his packed case of samples and can but pass for a fool while other exhibitions go forward" (8). This sense of the self as negligible in the opinion of the world persists through the other volumes of the Autobiography. As a young man of letters James is astonished when, at the table of his English host, he discovers that he "could be of interest to others." Even as an adult, he feels shadowy and effaced: "My identity for myself was all in my sensibility to their own exhibition, with not a scrap left over for a personal show" (559).

The most basic proposition of Adams's autobiography is to suggest that the featureless early self of its author blundered through life accreting to his person such "features" as his accidental education impressed on him from the outside. And the Education repeatedly points out that it contains a record not of this featureless self but of its worldly accretion: "Whatever was peculiar about him
was education, not character" (7). His character is "plastic" (29) and known only by the brands and stamps it bears, the Adams brand, the Harvard watermark, and so on. It is his very featurelessness which provides him with the central metaphor of his autobiography: his "surface was ready to take any form that education was ready to cut into it" (40).

Since Hawthorne's autobiographical sketch in The Scarlet Letter includes nothing of his childhood, he communicates the featurelessness of his early self as it is reflected in the featurelessness of his "natal spot." Salem's "flat, unvaried surface" proved no better resource for the boy's creative selfhood than might "a sentimental attachment to a disarranged checkerboard." Its barrenness threatened to turn him into a vegetable: "Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil."28 The sneers he gets from the ghosts of his Puritan forebears suggests how little his birthplace had validated or contributed to the features of the boy's sensibility, but had rather served to thwart that sensibility.

James, Adams, and Hawthorne each give the impression of being stunted as a boy by an inferior requisition of talents or circumstances. For each, sickness, solitude or
confinement stands in his life story as both the sign of that inferiority and as an enabling condition, the condition by which he comes into his own as an artist and separates himself from expectations placed on him by an impersonal patriarchal society.

For James, such an incident is recounted in *A Small Boy and Others* in which an early illness provides a secure environment where his imagination could operate freely. The small boy is sick in bed:

I lay, much at my ease— for I recall in particular certain short sweet times when I could be left alone—with . . . the far off hum of a thousand possibilities. I consciously took them in, these last, and must then, I think, have first tasted the very greatest pleasure perhaps I was ever to know—that of almost holding my breath in presence of certain aspects to the end of so taking in. It was as if in those hours that precious fine art had been disclosed to me.

(158)

This illness forces him into a confinement which the autobiographer translates as enabling the purpose of his life to come by serving as an initiation into the life of the imagination. It takes him out of the realm other boys inhabit and puts him in touch with his sources of
creativity and sensibility, both associated with the feminine. His passive "taking in" of impressions becomes the only aspect of his childhood consciousness that James explores in any detail. He seems to suggest that when he adopted the observer's stance—as a result of being de-activated (and therefore emasculated) by illness—he began the process by which he became an artist.

It is just this function that James's convalescence following his "obscure hurt" serves in his autobiography. For all the biographical attention, not to say sensation, surrounding James's "obscure hurt" in Notes, and the symbolic castration it has come to signify, the context of the disclosure, and its importance for James himself, is clearly as it enabled him to pursue "the life of the imagination . . . under the rich cover of obscurity" (414). James's obscure hurt, Paul John Eakin says, "exemplifies the extent to which a young man, deeply troubled by the problem of vocation as posed by both the culture and more particularly by his father, could find in illness and invalidism a 'socially acceptable' definition of the idleness necessary to his artistic development."29 Immediately before relating the incident in which he incurs the obscure hurt, James writes, "What I 'wanted to want' to be was, all ultimately, just literary" (413).

Functionally, the injury served to prohibit James's
participation in the Civil War (and, for critics, it provides a pretext for his sexual diffidence), but these are of secondary importance autobiographically. For James, the injury reifies his belief in his difference, his otherness, as an effective agency in the unfolding of his artistic self. 30

There is reason to believe that James got the idea for using illness as an enabling condition from The Education of Henry Adams, a book he had read and discussed with its author before having begun his own project. 31 In the opening pages of the Education, Adams suggests that his scarlet fever at the age of four was to have a permanent effect on him by setting him apart from the masculine world, so that, in retrospect, the autobiographer establishes it as a rationale for his otherness:

As a means of variation from the normal type . . . this fever of Henry Adams took greater and greater importance in his eyes, from the point of view of education, the longer he lived. At first, the effect was physical. He fell behind his brothers two or three inches in height, and proportionally in bone and weight. His character and processes of mind seemed to share in this fining-down process of scale. He was not good in a fight, and his nerves were more delicate than
boys' nerves ought to be. He exaggerated these weaknesses as he grew older. . . . His brothers were the type; he was the variation. (6)

Through the rest of the autobiography, Adams continually points up the differences between himself and other appropriate models of male action: his President grandfathers, his statesman father, his soldier-businessman brother, the millionaire-engineer Clarence King, the Secretary of State John Hay. Only Henry Adams, he would have us believe, frittered away his advantages in passive observation: "he never got to the point of playing the game at all; he lost himself in the study of it, watching the errors of the players," and adds sheepishly, "everyone cannot be a Gargantua-Napoleon-Bismarck and walk off with the great bells of Notre Dame" (4). Being the variation of the type, the anomaly, the other, however, enables Adams to acquire the perspective to write a book about his estrangement from the world of power brokerage, runaway capitализm and mindless technology.

The case of Hawthorne is telling because his separation from his peers and generation is the effect of choice and not sickness. It is worthy of one of his own story ideas: a robust young man goes into seclusion for twelve years and when he emerges, almost unremembered by friends and neighbors, he possesses a finished artistry and
goes by a new name. The years of self-confinement in Salem were more clearly enabling to his career than any other incident. Unlike Adams and James, who undergo what they both represent as the feminizing effect of illness, Hawthorne never had the "advantage" of a childhood illness to catalyze his sources of creativity or displace him from normal male expectations. It is as if he makes up for this good fortune by voluntarily abjuring his masculine prerogatives for the specific purpose of enabling his proclivity to produce art. Salem of 1825 was a waterfront. This allowed a young man of Hawthorne's social class a scope of two activities: commerce and politics. For Hawthorne, who tried to enter literature as other young men entered business or law, a literary career meant distancing himself from the male preserve. In terms of age, his years of solitude correspond to the years Adams and James spent traveling in Europe, gathering experiences, but have a greater affinity with the periods of childhood confinement that set them apart and threw them back on their inner resources. The "experiences" Hawthorne draws on for his fiction are garnered not from the wide world but from the inside of a room, and so exemplify a "feminine" interiority, passivity, and self-reflectiveness (evidenced by his stories in their profusion of mirrors).

The nineteenth-century American male who has been
sensitised to his "feminine" properties of imagination by a
disability or seclusion finds himself growing up into a
system which defines these acquisitions as inferior in the
free fight of commerce and politics. Therefore, he adopts
the self-protective comportment of structural inferiors,
using the model of subordination he is most familiar with--
the female model. The first step in his transformation
into the "other" begins with the realization that no other
males validate his artistic or imaginative qualities.
Deprived of reinforcement, particularly from his father(s),
he soon loses his own confidence in these properties and
learns to strategize their expression. (I doubt a more
elaborately strategized avowal of the imaginative life
could be found than that in "The Custom-House" preface).

The strategies for pursuing creative or intellectual
development, which are performed or at least purported by
all three figures, are a response to a land which expected
action from its men. These strategies are the typical,
so-called passive tactics of the powerless in any society:
silence, withdrawal, fantasy, and intellectual
equivocation; or as Adams posits for such a man as himself:
"The habit of doubt; of distrusting his own judgement and
of totally rejecting the judgement of the world; the
tendency to regard every question as open; the hesitation
to act except as a choice of evils" (6). The shyness,
self-effacement and skepticism characteristic of each of these three men runs directly counter to the confident, assertive, acquisitive model of American malehood operative in the nineteenth-century (and after).

In their position as artists, or simply as passive men, these three writers develop an affinity with the experience of women. The "hidden" agenda operating within Adams's career as a historian is a virtual litany to the feminine. In 1876, he lectured at the Lowell Institute on "The Primitive Rights of Women." In this essay he refutes the then popular claim that in primitive societies, women were slaves with the status of property (popular because it served to counter early feminist claims that disenfranchisement of women is culturally imposed instead of a natural phenomenon). He demonstrates that in all early societies with extant records, women were granted definite rights and privileges, including legal rights within the marriage. That women had since been denied these same rights in Western society, Adams claims, is due to the misogynous tendency of the Catholic Church:

In reprobation of these [rights] the Church raised up, with the willing cooperation of the men... the meek and patient, the silent and tender sufferer, the pale reflection of the Mater Dolorosa.32
In his later years, Adams's affinity with the feminine approached a kind of idolatry. In Mont Saint Michel and Chartes he seems eager to reorder society along the lines of a primordial gynocracy. He suggests that the modern mind "suffers under inherited cerebral weakness, when it comes in contact with the eternal woman--Astarte, Isis, Demeter, Aphrodite, and the last and greatest deity of all, the Virgin." This Virgin, he makes clear, is not the long suffering Mater Dolorosa, but she who "leads directly back to Eve, and lays bare the whole subject of sex."33 Sex, specifically a woman's reproductive superiority, is for Adams the rationale for the universal worship of the female principle. This superiority is not limited to sex, he suggests in the Education, but is a stamp of the mind and character of women who are far less deific than the Virgin. At a dinner party in 1903, with the Lodges, Roosevelts, Herberths and other friends in high places, Adams recalls being asked to defend his favorite dinner table gambit: "The American man is a failure." Adams rejoins to his skeptical friends:

'Has not my sister here more sense than my brother Brooks? Is not Bessie worth two of Bay? Wouldn't we all elect Mrs. Lodge Senator against Cabot? Would the President have a ghost of a chance if Mrs. Roosevelt ran against him? Do you
want to stop at the Embassy, on your way home, and ask which would run it best--Herbert or his wife?' (443)

Adams's identification with the feminine found an unambiguous outlet in his social and political life. With James and Hawthorne, this identification occurs in more circuitous emotional ways and tends to be withheld publically, only to be expressed in their autobiographies through a complicated identification with a female character.

In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James paints an idyllic picture of family life. Leon Edel shows, however, that this picture suppresses much of the confusion James experienced about gender roles. For the boy James, Henry Senior did not seem to have the strongly paternal identity that other fathers had. His father had no profession; he wrote, but writing did not give him an identity, since, unlike Emerson, the elder James never enjoyed public recognition for his writing. He lectured on metaphysics, but left not a single convert. He moved the family between Newport and Europe so often that in the memoirs, James combines brief residencies in order to disguise his father's transience. Though austere in his own personal habits, Henry Senior was soft and yeilding as a father and husband. James writes that his mother was the support "on
which my father rested with the absolute whole of his weight" (343). In the memoirs, the mother is firm and strong; the father, frequently infantilized by the family at home, is vacillating and dependent.

His brother William does not seem to have been noticeably effected by the ambiguity and reversal of relation between his parents. He grew up adventurous, self-confident and very masculine. But Henry clearly formed a life-long identification with the feminine, partly in response to his father's vagaries and his older brother's rivalry, and partly by means of his attachment to the women of the household: his mother, aunt, and younger sister. He was the "good" son, known in the family as the "angel," and was his mother's favorite. According to Habegger, "James became a mama's boy--the type scorned most of all by American boys."34

Edel and others have read James's fiction in part as James's attempt to find a possible male role model for himself. However, James's ambiguity about his own male role is often reproduced in his fiction, where the "good" men, like Ralph Touchett, tend to be invalids or celibates, and the "manly" men, like Casper Goodwood, tend to have sensibilities blunted by their sexual and materialistic acquisitiveness.35 Sayre suggests that James can best be seen in his female characters, in whose plight and
sensibility the author can explore a deeper awareness of his own otherness. James's heroines, he says, "are not stand-ins or masked substitutes for himself but variously equipped extensions of himself." 36

James's identification with the feminine reaches perhaps its most intimate in the portrait of Minny Temple in *Notes of a Son and Brother*. Edel sees the long chapter on Minny (longest in the memoirs) as repressing an unhappy love story. 37 But Paul John Eakin contends that James's treatment of her in *Notes* "suggests that it is not his love for Minny but his identification with her that provides the clue to the significance of her portrait." 38 After Minny's death at age 24 in 1870, Henry wrote to William that Minny "represented . . . Youth, with which owing to my invalidism, I always felt in rather indirect relation." 39 Forty-five years later, in *Notes*, he would see in her death "the end of our youth" (515). She came to represent his own past, a youthful, adolescent figure cut off from the "play of life" by "almost tragically compromised conditions" (509). Eakin comments that "the thematic affinities between Minny's story and James's are unmistakable: The character of the sensitive invalid yearning for and missing the 'ampler experience' (p. 528) of life functions as a kind of alter ego for James himself." 40
What about Minny made her suitable for James as an alter ego? From the evidence of the letters reprinted by James in *Notes*, Minny seems to have been strongly attracted to virile men (like William James and John Chipman Gray) who in turn found her unfeminine—skeptical, proud, and combative. These qualities seem to have put her at odds with her own sex as well, as Minny herself notes in one of her letters: "If by chance I say anything or ask a question that lies at all near my heart my sisters all tell me I am 'queer' and that they 'wouldn't be me for anything'" (494). One possible reason for James's identification with Minny is that they were both gender outcasts. As he does so often in *Notes*, James reproduces letters which represent his own emotional situation, in this case, telling of his own state of gender estrangement through the story of his similarly estranged cousin.41

In his identification with feminine qualities, Hawthorne compares with both James and Adams. Like James, he works out his affiliations through characters (both male and female) who stand as extensions of himself and through whom he can explore his otherness as an artist. But like Adams, and unlike James, he carries out his identification with the feminine with the confidence of a man who does not feel himself withdrawing from his own masculinity in doing so.
In "The Custom-House" preface, Hawthorne invites the doubt as to the manliness of his chosen vocation as a "writer of story-books" when he permits his ghostly fathers to voice their scorn for him:

'What is he?' murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. 'A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life,—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!' (10)

John Irwin suggests that their impugning him on the grounds of professional triviality invokes the Puritan opposition between art and business, making the point that Hawthorne's ambition to pursue a career as an artist is tantamount to a condemnation of him as a man. Irwin explains:

In Hawthorne's day, as in that of his ancestors, financial dependence in adulthood was a feminine characteristic, and in terms of the Puritan work ethic the role of the artist—insofar as it involves sensitivity and sympathy, love of beauty, an observer's passivity, and long periods of rumination outwardly indistinguishable from idleness—has always been considered a feminine role, whatever the sex of the person who assumes
What follows this expression of scorn from his forefathers, with its imputation in Hawthorne of female weakness, is a satire on gender roles which reverses on the Puritans all their assumptions about the feminine role Hawthorne takes. The custom-house Hawthorne enters as Surveyor is inhabited by a "venerable brotherhood" of former sea captains and military officers. No woman is present; no evidence of a woman's domesticity is discernable in the place. It is an exclusive old-boy stronghold, This, combined with the solid business function of the custom-house, clearly makes it the male preserve Hawthorne associates with the Puritans. But as Hawthorne assumes his post at the custom-house, it is the "patriarchal" retainers there who are idle and dependent. The passive "writer of story-books" becomes in their midst the "exterminating angel," "abbreviating the official breath" of some of their brotherhood for their laziness. After the initial "terror" posed by the author, Hawthorne himself comes to be regarded by them as "paternal and protective" (13-15). The "harmless" author, seen by his ancestors as feminized, has tamed the house of custom, which represents the combined political, military, commercial--i.e., masculine--world of his patriarchal forefathers.

The contest between the Puritan-masculine world and
the artistic-feminine individual is played out again in the personage of Hester Prynne, a figure with clear autobiographical associations for Hawthorne. An artist in letters like Hawthorne, she uses her art to encode her secret rebellion against the patriarchy. And though she is considered weak by her oppressors, her creator clearly makes her stronger than the men around her. The figure of the woman is useful for Hawthorne not so much because of the supposed "femininity" of the artist, though this was an rooted prejudice in nineteenth-century America, but because the otherness Hawthorne experienced as a shy man, interested more in art than power, is most completely replicated in the otherness of the woman in a vehemently patriarchal society. The contest Hawthorne wages with the "venerable brotherhood" of the custom-house, then, is reproduced in the plight of the woman as "other" in The Scarlet Letter.

Constructing Otherness

The strategy of associating himself with the experience of the cultural other is a characteristic which sets these three writers apart from most male autobiographers in the nineteenth-century and helps to explain the formal and "metaphysical" differences in their autobiographical self-construction. Georges Gusdorf, in
"Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," predicates his "conditions" for autobiography on the study of those same autobiographers Hawthorne, Adams and James would have had as model: Augustine, Rousseau, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Newman. In Gusdorf's historical panorama of the genre, a new image of the individual was developing as old social and economic institutions crumbled during the industrial revolution. This revolution "disencumbered" the individual of institutional authority, who then began to look within himself as an isolated autonomous unit competent to direct his own affairs. For Gusdorf, this explains the form that autobiography takes--a retrospective reconstruction of a developing sense of self. Autobiography records a private process--the history of the self as "self-contained."

Susan Friedman, as I suggested earlier, argues that the supposed self-containment of the self is a "male" paradigm for autobiography, which is why Gusdorf never cites an autobiography by a woman. If the self and other are entangled, he says, autobiography is impossible. In order to know itself from other, the self must be unitary and unencumbered. By reversing this dictum, Friedman defines the principle of woman's autobiography: it records a life in which the individual feels herself to be in relation with others, that is, a life in which the individual is herself an "other."
The same thing that distinguishes woman's autobiography, then, distinguishes those of Hawthorne, Adams and James: the constitution of the self in its otherness within a patriarchal society. Hawthorne and Adams's condition of otherness is played out in the obvious differences they cite between themselves and "typical" men fulfilling male expectations. Hawthorne's ghostly forefathers and the "venerable brotherhood" of the custom-house situate him as different from themselves, they being representative of the male preserve of business and war, he being the deviant and feminized artist. The models of male prerogative and power with which Adams compares himself are anything but "typical"--presidents, statesmen, millionaires --but his failure to break into that circle of achievement constitutes him as impotent, and therefore other than his male peers. The otherness of the autobiographical subject in each is situated in the differences he insists on between himself and other men.

James's otherness as it is constituted in Notes does not arise from an alienation to his male role in the patriarchy (however true that may have been in his life), but in the constitution of his autobiographical self through relationship to others. The self as reflected by others is another characteristic of women's autobiographical selfhood. Mary Mason argues that a
woman's writing voice discovers and presents itself as an Other in discourse. That is, the autobiographical "I" is who she is because she is who she is to others. The "I" of the autobiographer is mediated through the agency of significant others.\(^{43}\) Though she is describing a feature of women's autobiography, the self as it is constituted through its discourse with others precisely figures the autobiographical self in *Notes of a Son and Brother*. The very format of this volume is based on the "dialogue" James creates between the letters that anchor his memories and his nostalgic comments on them. He is who he is in *Notes* because of who he is to others.

What I am suggesting is that the formal characteristics of the autobiographical text are inseparable from the concept of the self held by the writer. If Hawthorne, Adams and James conceive of themselves as different from their male coevals, making their experience of selfhood thematically approximate with that of women in a patriarchy, then the configuration of their experience in an autobiographical text will reproduce some of the same configurations women use to present the self in their own autobiographical writing. If we catalogue some of the general criteria that feminist critics have said differentiate "male" and "female" autobiographical writing,\(^ {44}\) it becomes clear that
Hawthorne, Adams and James participate as much if not more in a feminine form of self-writing than in a masculine form. If "male" autobiography evinces an isolated, unitary self, "female" autobiography evinces a multiple, proliferating self. If the male is teleological and linear, the female is fragmented and circular; if the male dramatizes the ego in its drive for self-realization, the female effaces the ego in its stories of other people. The proliferating, fragmentary and effaced versions of selfhood contained in "The Custom-House," the Education and Notes, albeit they are male autobiographies, are decidedly aligned with the feminine paradigm.

If the autobiographical writings of Hawthorne, Adams and James tell us anything about the form, it is how easily the categories of male and female migrate out of their spheres in writing as in selfhood. In their experience of otherness, the three were in a better position to see these and other categories as constructions, the products of typical nineteenth-century patriarchal conceptual representation which defined the world and the self in easy dichotomies. Though they were "products" of their time as much as any other man, and held many of the same assumptions that the acquisitive, aggressive masculine world held, their experience of otherness elicited from them the sense of the self as a construction of that world,
and this sense of the self as a construct is pervasive in the autobiographies of all three.
CHAPTER TWO

'A' FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHY: NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND HIS LETTER

A/uthor

Whereas Nathaniel Hawthorne's autobiographical "self" may properly inhabit "The Old Manse" and "The Custom-House," his "autobiographical impulse" is also reflected in the fictional third-person of the tales. For Hawthorne, the rhetoric of selfhood, whether using first- or third-person narrative, wears a sort of mantle of fiction. This is because Hawthorne posits the self as a narrative construct; the self is a "writer" in speech and gestures of a self-representative narrative. The Scarlet Letter, like "The Custom-House" sketch, is pervaded by an awareness of the narrating self: how self-representative language replaces the "self" it describes, how narrative makes a textual object of the self. As a result, selfhood as it is constituted in The Scarlet Letter becomes an act of narration, a textual event which shares with the act of writing the problems of originality and authorship.

In The Scarlet Letter, the status of writing and writing's relationship to originality and authorship is present everywhere and is everywhere put into question. Like those of Poe and Melville, Hawthorne's thematic world
is characterized by its "writtenness." That is, Hawthorne frequently exercises the disruptive writerly practice of introducing into the text itself the means and gaps of the text's own production and presentation, thereby raising the issue of his own status as author of the text we are reading. For instance, in the imagined rebuke from his ancestors in "The Custom-House" preface ("What is he? A writer of story-books!"), Hawthorne complicates his activity of authorship by seeming to question the validity of writing the sort of book he is prefacing. Elsewhere in the preface, he complicates the issue of originality by offering the reader an introductory sketch "of a kind always recognized in literature" (4), and by pretending to be the editor of Surveyor Pue's manuscript instead of the author of the tale.

This practice of rhetorical self-reference seems to aim at documentary precision. In deferring to his sources or referring to his lowly status as an obscure man of letters, Hawthorne appears unwilling to arrogate to himself an authority or originality which he makes out is not rightfully his. Instead, it makes his sources and influences the authority and himself the instrument. But this "instrumentality" raises questions about the authority purported to be behind his writing to which his writing defers. By intruding constant reminders upon the reader
that the events of the story are being narrated, Hawthorne's self-reference actually serves to disavow the authenticity of literary representation. The frequent references to the job of writing the book tend to persuade the reader that the story originates with the author and not with the worldly events it purports to represent.

It is just this gap in the origination of writing with which his ancestorsrebuke him.

'What is he?' murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. 'A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life,—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!' Such are the compliments bandied between my great-grandsires and myself, across the great gulf of time! And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine. (10)

For the Puritans, one's "business in life" is valorized when it originates in a meaning prior to itself by "glorifying God" or subsequent to itself by "being serviceable to mankind." They suspect that "story-books" originate only in their author's brain, and so lack the external referentiality which alone gives authenticity to
writing. Despite his gestures of documentation, Hawthorne does nothing to allay this suspicion, for it is the very writtenness that plays around his performance of documentarity, a writtenness Hawthorne insists upon, which elicits the scorn of his grandsires. For Hawthorne, writing is not the scene of glorification or service but the scene of displacement. His "written" style, intruding the means of production and representation into the text, causes those readers who assume an unmediated "presence" in language (as his ancestors do) to face writing's shadowy other: the fear that language is a displaced, redacted version of experience, that all tales are "twice-told."

Hawthorne's use of the word "intertwined" in the passage above suggests a number of meanings operating within the idea of writing and originality as it is thematized in The Scarlet Letter. The intertwining of disparate elements, the weaving together of sources that produces an alloy thought to be inferior to its origins—this is the definition of "adultery." The writtenness which characterizes Hawthorne's writing is an affront to the Puritans because it adulterates the authoritative claim of writing, the claim that writing faithfully presents historical event or transcendental meaning. Hawthorne disturbs this claim by foregrounding the means of the text's production, adulterating the immediacy of lived
events with a nagging awareness of their narration.

The text of The Scarlet Letter itself represents the kind of adulteration of history his forefathers consider to be a trivialization. Intertwining seventeenth-century events, an eighteenth-century manuscript, and a nineteenth-century redaction, the text locates itself with each rewrite "one remove farther from the actual" (36). The preface fictionalizes autobiography by combining a memoir of the custom-house years with the fictitious discovery of Pue's manuscript, and the tale historicizes fiction by employing documented events and people of seventeenth-century Massachusetts for story-book purposes. The ancestor's injunction against story-books, then, invokes not only the claims of ancestral priority but the law of genre, the law that divides history, which glorifies God and serves mankind, from fiction, which fiddles around. The stuff Hawthorne writes is textured, mixed, not one thing or the other, adulterate and therefore transgressive.

Adultery is a notion that in the context of the passage above applies equally to the status of writing and to the status of selfhood. For Hawthorne himself, the intertwining of ancestral traits with his own nature ("strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine") points to the lack of authenticity and originality in a self which always contains the trace of a
precursor. The self, then, neither begins nor ends with the individual but refers (and defers) to one's forebears. Intertwined with identities that are prior to itself, selfhood is like writing, never self-present but ceaselessly referential.

Though Hawthorne seems in this passage to aver his own lack of originality, he is actually establishing his claim to originality. He is, after all, the first Hathorne to discredit the family name by signing it to stories. Writing, then, is the difference between Hawthorne and Hathorne. John Irwin associates the way the letter in the tale and the letter in author's name operate as signs of originality: "If A is the mark that distinguishes Hester from the Puritan community of Salem, the mark by which she stands out in opposition to, in rebellion against, the customs of the village, then W is the mark that distinguishes Hawthorne the writer from his Puritan forebears." ² Weaving the activity of writing into the name Hathorne produces an original text, "Hawthorne," with W(riting) as the difference. The name spelled with a W interprets Hawthorne's self as different from his originals, the adulteration (and repudiation) of his origins. The implications of this sort of ontology correspond to the ancestors' distrust of story-books. As a product of imagination, writing of the sort Hawthorne
practices need not remain faithful to historical events nor serve any purpose but the author's fancy. The self that Hawthorne hypothosizes need not follow from its origins nor carry on the family name. He flouts both the epistomology and onotology of his Puritan forebears, which look for an authenticating typology operating within both writing and the self. Hawthorne instead shows writing and selfhood to be adulterated. Even while intertwining traces of its originals, the adulterated self repudiates the claims of ancestral priority just as the adulterated text does the laws of genre.

Puritan Logocentrism

And much as Hester's adultery transgresses the sexual claims of the Puritan community in the tale, so Hawthorne's textual adultery transgresses the assumptions of Puritan typology. The Puritans' logocentric vision supposes that all verbal gestures correspond to an absolute reference, a transcendental signified whose existence serves to authenticate the verbal gestures made around it. It derives from a religious typology which interprets events as a prefiguration or revelation in a literal, one-to-one correspondence, as the Old Testament is read by the Puritans as prefiguring events in the New Testament. Logocentrism supposes the meaningfulness of language, which
includes the truth-value of writing. In the tale, Hawthorne confutes the logocentrism of the Puritan community, particularly one of its manifestations—the sort of one-to-one literalism between sign and signified that his ancestors evince in rebuking him.

Typological reference is ubiquitous in the tale as seen in the frequent attention the narrator directs to signs, tokens, types and emblems. Typological epistemology is as much a part of the historical dress of the community Hawthorne writes about as its infamous moral absolutism. As Ursula Brumm suggests, every visible phenomenon was an emblem for the Puritans through which God was believed to be communicating. Any object or event was, according to Brumm, "potentially a sign used by God to proclaim His will like an inlaid motto to mankind." Puritan typology had the effect of making a text of the world. As Millicent Bell points out, the Puritans "analogized the world as a book which might be compared to scripture as an act of divine writing." And Hawthorne makes it clear that his Puritans view earthly phenomena as the text of the divine: "Nothing was more common, in those days, than to interpret all meteoric appearances, and other natural phenomena, that occurred with less regularity than the rise and set of sun and moon, as so many revelations from a supernatural source" (154). In their search for visible truths in
signs, tokens, and emblems, the Puritan community is shown as preoccupied with the status of the written. Language in its written form spreads over the surface of the colony. The most overt instance of the community's literalization is the scarlet letter itself. The punishment they settle on Hester is that she should be written upon. They transfer the letter of the law directly onto her, making her literally a text, a "living sermon" (63). Inscriptions turn up everywhere in the tale—in the sky, on Dimmesdale's breast, even the walls of the Governor's mansion are "decorated with strange and seemingly cabalistic figures and diagrams" (103). However indecipherable these inscriptions may be, no surface in the Puritans' world is left blank. This preoccupation with the written compels the Puritan community to a belief in the truth-value of writing. As a consequence of this belief, we see them in the tale identifying moral authority with writing. "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die," says one of the crowd in the opening scaffold scene. "Is there no law for it? Truly there is, both in the Scripture and the statute-book" (51-2). Behind the gestures of society, behind the utterance of the individual, there is always a piece of writing to be found. Complementing scripture and the statute-book in the Puritan's logocentric world is the Black Book. Its occurrence in the story
suggests that one's most ineffable and occulted being corresponds somewhere to a written record. One's mark in the Black Book, then, is the guarantee to the community that all is written, all is public record, much as Hester's mark guarantees to the community that she is a sinner and they are not who do not wear it. For Hawthorne's Puritans, all that which can be called the self is legible to those who can read. Chillingworth, of course, is the exemplar of this Puritan literalism, for his special role in the story is to give an accurate reading of a particularly problematic human text: "He bears no letter of infamy wrought into his garment, as thou dost," he says to Hester, "but I shall read it in his heart" (75). The writing is on the wall (and on everything else in Puritan's world) and wants only "the Daniel who shall expound it" (62). At the same time the Puritans trust that divine and human nature show themselves in signs, they exhibit a pervasive doubt as to their ability to interpret those signs correctly. Their misprision results, for instance, in a proliferation of readings around the scarlet letter. Originally the initial for adultery (though the word is never spelled out in the story), the A on Hester's breast starts to spell out alternate words—able, angel. This slippage occurs as a result of the community's (mis)interpretation of another sign, Hester's good deeds. A crisis of interpretation
occurs when the sign for moral correctness (good works) begins to reconfigure the sign for moral deviance (the A). Millicent Bell suggests that the confusion arises because the Puritans forget the semiological split between the sign and the signified which is inherent to their own theology. Original Sin (which Hester's letter can stand for) does not manifest itself in signs since even the most virtuous people share in it. Therefore deeds, good or otherwise, and badges, punitive or honorary, cannot signify an inner reality by the logic of the Puritan's own semiology. A deep ambivalence nags the Puritan faith in the logos. A conflict wages between the literalism of their typology, which trusts that divine and human nature are revealed phenomenally, and the pessimism of their theology, which mystifies the divine as inscrutable. Hawthorne exploits this ambivalence throughout the tale by showing how interpretations of signs, particularly those of the scarlet letter, proliferate beyond the community's ability to control their meanings.

A/bsent

The central "character" in the tale and principal occasion for hermeneutic ambiguity is the letter A. The A appears on Hester, on Dimmesdale, on Pearl (and as her, too), in the sky, enlarged in a convex mirror, on Hester's
tombstone, and ultimately reaches beyond the tale itself to survive as a "deep print" (259) in the author's brain and as a rag of cloth in the custom-house. This proliferation has irritated students and critics alike, who agree with Henry James that the "symbolism" of the A "is overdone at times . . . and grazes triviality." James complains that "Hawthorne returns to it constantly, plays with it, and seems charmed by it; until at last the reader feels tempted to declare that his enjoyment of it is puerile."6 This last indictment has an uncanny resemblance to the remark of Hawthorne's hypothetical ancestors. "A writer of story-books!" his ancestors exclaim in the preface. "Why the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" The artist and the moralist both accuse him of fiddling around, which is to say they both accuse him of promoting the writtenness, or self-conscious artificiality, of the narrative.

In different ways, then, both James and the Puritans expect a faithfulness in writing. The Puritans expect there to be a truth-value in writing. Like all earthly phenomena, writing is supposed to serve mankind as the faithful text of the divine. James expects writing to be true to an aesthetic law, and he does not find that playing with the letter as Hawthorne does constitutes faithful service to that other god, Art. However, as Millicent Bell
suggests, "James did not see that Hawthorne's method in the book was to express his own profoundest problem" as a novelist. Hawthorne "offers and withdraws, denies and provides the sense of the spirituality of life—and so suggests the opacity or unreliability of its signs."7

Rather than practicing a heavy-handed form of symbolism through the proliferation of the A, as James suggests, Hawthorne tends to disturb any law of connection between the outward sign and its meaning, thereby refusing to establish a final significance for it. The letter never quite coalesces into a symbol, as James and other critics have often suggested it does.8 Rather, its multiple and antagonistic meanings prevent symbolism. The denotation of the A is never settled (or pronounced) in the tale and so even for the community which places it on Hester in order to signify "adulteress," its signification becomes indistinct. Moreover, far from being too much before the reader, as James suggests, the letter is absent or illegible at crucial moments in the story, most notably in the two instances it blurs in and out of focus on Dimmesdale's breast. Not only is its meaning indeterminable to its viewers, but the question of its actual appearance is never settled by the author. In Hawthorne's world, we discover, there are no stable signs. One of the reasons the letter is so ineffable is that the
text never decides between the sign's historical and its alphabetic functions. In the context of the story, the letter has a historically determined significance; when worn on the breast in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, it signifies "adultery." But it is also an alphabetic sign, standing for any word beginning with A; moreover, it signals the beginning of the alphabet, therefore of language, of writing, and of literacy (Pearl recognizes it as the sign in her horn book, p. 178). As an alphabetic sign, it is purely phonetic, it represents nothing but a sound. Since it is empty of meaning, it can mean anything, or nothing. Whereas its historical context closes its meaning to a precise denotation, its alphabeticity leaves its meaning open. Both ways of reading it operate side-by-side in the text and this disparity is responsible for most of the sign's ambiguity. Consequently, Hawthorne typically allows different and conflicting readings of the letter to share his narrative. When Dimmesdale sees the letter in the sky at midnight, he reads the apparition as though it were "a fitting page for his soul's history and fate" (155). To the other citizens the same letter on the same night stands for "Angel," a sign of Governor Winthrop's apotheosis. In the next chapter, the citizens, beginning to regard Hester as a Sister of Mercy, "refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification"
and read it instead to mean "Able" (161). Because of its alphabeticity, the words and meanings the letter is able to spell out proliferate with each reading. As Gabriel Josipovici notes, "[t]he letter is not branded by God into Hester's flesh, it is stuck on there by the community." As a result, "the letter forms part of a conventional, not a natural, language, and how we read it depends on what assumptions we bring to it." Like any alphabetic signifier, its meaning is conventional (agreed-upon by conventional use) and not natural (bearing an organic relationship with a signified). Hester accepts the conventional function of the letter—for her it designates the judgement of society without necessarily having to correspond to anything in her being. Chillingworth, however, wants to force a natural reading of the letter. He insists on connecting the sign of the A to a specific word and a specific event (as in an allegory); but both word and event are constantly disappearing behind the letter's semantic polymorphousness. Because it is a letter of the alphabet, it stands for a sound, which is an initial, which stands for a word, which points to an act which is never present in the text, the sign of a sign of a sign.

The fact that it has both historical and alphabetic significations also gives the letter an elusive rhetorical
function. On Hester's bosom, it designates the nature of the wearer's past as well as marks her present status in the community, though because of its alphabetic blankness none of these meanings remain stable. Removed from her bosom, however, (the condition in which Hawthorne discovers it in the custom-house) it purports even less connection with its original reference. It becomes an "affair of fine red cloth" (31) speaking an unknown word from an unknown origin. The fabrication itself is beyond the reach of knowledge and "gives evidence of a now forgotten art, not to be recovered even by the process of picking out the threads" (31). Severed from the historical context which establishes a conventional definition for it, the rag of cloth is turned to another purpose altogether. It becomes a token discovered by the author signifying the truth of Surveyor Pue's manuscript. In this function, as Lloyd-Smith points out, the letter is a "gothic signifier," like bloodstained marks which cue the reader to respond in a way that previous literature has prepared them to. In this signifying function, the cloth letter itself "has a certain propriety, of a kind recognized in literature" (4). We recognize the letter's function in the preface because its appearance there is customary, or conventional. Again, the letter forms a conventional sign, but now the convention which determines its meaning has changed. The same piece
of cloth in a new context produces a new signified. What
the letter points to now is not an act of adultery but an
act of writing--Pue's manuscript (in the form of a
letter). One letter refers itself to another letter.

The Writing within Speech

Puritan logocentrism, which assumes that verbal
gestures correspond to an absolute reference, is disrupted
in The Scarlet Letter, for in Hawthorne's world, verbal
gestures refer only to other verbal gestures. The faithful
correspondence of sign to signified is adulterated by the
semiological promiscuity of written language. The usual
logocentric formula suggests that writing derives from and
defers to speech, and that speech is the irreducible and
self-present origin, the "living word." But, as Derrida
has pointed out, there is inevitably a trace of writing
within speech itself which contradicts the belief that
speech is "transparent and innocent." Instead, speech, as
a language system, is not prior to writing, but is itself a
form of writing. Therefore, as Derrida argues, "[t]he
ethic of the living word would be perfectly respectable
... if it did not live in a delusion and a nonrespect for
its own condition of origin, if it did not dream in speech
of a presence denied to writing, denied by writing."

The authenticity of the spoken word is under constant
attack in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne reverses the logocentric dictum that writing derives from and defers to speech by frequently having speech in the tale derive from and defer to writing. The magistrates' catechism of Pearl in Chapter VIII, for instance, reveals the way written law permeates spoken language. Wilson associates her with the "pearl of great price" (111), inscribing her in the written formula of the master law text the same way Bellingham writes the definition of the mother by inscribing Hester as the "type of her of Babylon" (110). The interrogation ("Who made thee?") formally substitutes the written for the spoken, and anticipates a rote (or pre-written) response. When Pearl answers that she was plucked from the bush of wild roses beside the prison, she defies their logophilia and also transgresses the law of (divine and ancestral) priority. (The act is analogous to Hawthorne's own double gesture of transgression. In writing a story-book autobiography, he simultaneously defies the law of genre and the law of the Hathorne patriarchs).

Speech, rather than being a pure and living form of presence, is shown to be contaminated by writing. Hawthorne plays with the written element within speech when he formalizes the aspersions coming from the mouths of Puritan children: "Behold, verily, there is the woman of the scarlet letter; and, of a truth, moreover, there is the
likeness off the scarlet letter running along by her side! Come, therefore, and let us fling mud at them!" (102).

Since the language is of a sort available only from books and not from conversation (the children's language must certainly have made this impression on Hawthorne's contemporaries as much as it does on us), it has an uncanny artificiality coming from children, who are ostensibly less contaminated by writing than Hawthorne's readers are. Not only is their spoken language bookish, but these children see Pearl typologically, as "the likeness of the scarlet letter." As they produce a speech that mimics writing, their vision of the world is mimetic of reading. In a world where other human beings bear a likeness to letters, where human beings are signifiers pointing only to other signifiers, everyone becomes a text, or as Hawthorne writes in his Notebook in 1839, "[l]etters in the shape of figures of men."

Speech, like writing, is obscured by its supplementarity. Like any language sign, speech has a problematic correspondence with the signified which is not ameliorated by the seeming immediacy of voice. "Hold thy peace, dear little Pearl," Hester whispers when Pearl recalls their forest meeting with the minister. "We must not always talk in the market place of what happens to us in the forest" (240). The possibility that speech does not reveal or
refer faithfully to an inner state argues for the supplementarity of the spoken word in Hawthorne's world. When Dimmesdale protests his innocence in going to the forest, Mistress Hibbins rejoins, "Well, well, we must talk thus in the daytime! You carry it off like an old hand" (221-22). The spoken word disguises meaning and intention. As Millicent Bell suggests, "[a]ll things hidden and all things exposed become antonyms in the novel to reflect the opposition of outer and inner." In the tale, then, spoken language is no more assumed to contain the pure and living presence of the speaker than written language does. Its inauthenticity is a condition of existence in Hawthorne's world where no law of connection can be confirmed between the outer sign and the inner meaning.

The Rhetoric of the Self

The status of speech is complicated not only by the polysemous nature of language but by the rhetoric of private selfhood. Hawthorne's notebooks and sketches repeatedly suggest that for him, the "self" is by no means prior to identity. The existence of the self can only be assumed, for the experience we have of another individual is really only the experience of a series of masks he puts on, a kind of writing made up of verbal and physical
gestures that need not correspond to any internal fact, as Mistress Hibbins' retort to Dimmesdale suggests. What we take as a person's "self" is the arrangement of gestures designed to create the impression of an inner being which has certain properties. There is a rhetoric of self-presentation which shares with all writing a supplementarity, a gap between the outward sign and the inner signified.

The characters in The Scarlet Letter are all engaged in an intricate rhetoric of selfhood in which they use verbal and gestural signs both to mask and to express their private experiences and intentions. Hester conceals her lover's name, and in withholding her lover's name she masks her intellectual rebellion against society. Both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale conceal their true relation to Hester; in suppressing this information, they mask their false relation to the community. Each harbors a secret within a secret. Each presents a false front to the community which hides two levels of deviance--personal and communal. And one level of secrecy is used as a smokescreen to hide the other. When, for instance, Hester's adultery is made public, her penance serves as concealment for another more deviant secret. Public attention is focused on the sensational aspect of her case--the hunt for her lover--and away from her thinly
disguised contempt for the community. The scarlet letter supposedly reveals her sin for all to see, but this publically appropriated sign itself becomes the cover, the false representation she hides her true self behind. 14

As Hester's case shows, the self is preoccupied with the rhetoric it produces to mask its real experience. The primary "self-representative" gesture is that of mediating the inner life through public postures calculated to throw off and mislead public attention, an act analogous to writing. The primary activity in the tale, then, is reading these gestures, reading the self behind the self-representation. With reading at the center of the action, Hawthorne focuses the drama on the rhetoric of private selfhood, the management and control of the impressions one communicates about one's inner life and the penetration by others of these impressions. This rhetoric, consequently, posits each character as a reader, a writer, and as a text being read by others.

Readers in/of the Text

Chillingworth's special function in the story is as the prober of secrets, the reader of the human text. In effect, he stakes himself to a belief in the communicability of meaning through signs, the Puritan typological assumption that all signs are meaningful
representations of an occult truth. When Hester says he will never know the name of her partner, Chillingworth responds:

'Never know him! Believe me, Hester, there are few things,—whether in the outward world, or, to a certain depth, in the invisible sphere of thought,—few things hidden from the man, who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the solution of a mystery. Thou mayest cover up thy secret from the prying multitude. Thou mayest conceal it, too, from the ministers and magistrates, even as thou didst this day, when they sought to wrench the name out of thy heart, and give thee a partner on thy pedestal. But, as for me, I come to the inquest with other senses than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy.' (75)

For Chillingworth, the rhetoric of the self is not an impenetrable text: "Let him hide himself in outward honor, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine!"; for if the text is obscure, he says, "I shall read it in his heart" (75). He is the private self's worst fear come true, for no skill in the rhetoric of self-presentation, no "holiday suit of unaccustomed smiles" (209), will prevent this
reader from reading the self's inmost doubts.

His role as reader corresponds conveniently to his role as physician, for as a physician he is a reader of symptoms. It permits him to invoke the claims of diagnostic symptomology (the medical study of which is called "semiology") as a rationale for examining the human text. "A bodily disease," he tells Dimmesdale, "may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part . . . a sickness, a sore place, if we may so call it, in your spirit, hath immediately an appropriate manifestation in your bodily frame" (136). Since the spirit has an "immediate" correspondence with the visible body, there is a literal, one-to-one relationship between sign (body) and signified (spirit). In a sense he embodies the Puritan typologic imagination by denying that a signifier has any potential for semiological variety. By insisting on reading into every self-representative gesture a meaning the author of the gesture can't disguise (all signs tell the truth), Chillingworth aligns himself with Hawthorne's logocentric ancestors and denies with them the possibility of language's polysemous instability.

On one level, Dimmesdale shares this logocentrism. Rewriting the Election Day sermon, he "fancied himself inspired; and only wondered that Heaven should see fit to transmit the grand and solemn music of its oracles through
so foul an organ pipe as he" (225). Language itself flows from a higher source; Dimmesdale is not the author of his own words but is merely the instrument of the divine. The text of the sermon also purports a typological pretext. It urges a way of reading "the relation between the Diety and the communities of mankind, with a special reference to the New England they were here planting in the wilderness" (249).

Yet, although he trusts language's source in meaning, Dimmesdale does not share Chillingworth's confidence in the legibility of signs. As a guilty person, he takes a furtive refuge in that doubt. Over an unmarked grave, the two offer their versions of the intelligibility of signs. For Chillingworth, the unsightly weeds that grow on the grave provide an unmistakeable text of the buried man's nature. "They grew out of his heart, and typify," he observes to the minister, "some hideous secret that was buried with him." He even equates the sign with the dead man's voice; the weeds "make manifest an unspoken crime" (131). Chillingworth's reading turns the phenomenon into discourse, into allegory, voice, and meaning. For Dimmesdale, the same sign provides no access to meaning. "There can be, if I forebode aright, no power, short of the Divine mercy, to disclose, whether by uttered words, or by type or emblem, the secrets that may be buried with a human
heart" (131). Dimmesdale's reading emphasizes the supplementarity of the sign and locates meaning beyond the reach of dispute, in the divine.

For the purposes of defending the secret self, Dimmesdale mystifies the meaning of signs. As a result, for him, to see something is not necessarily to have access to its true meaning, since all signs are open to all meanings. But in a world where all signs are unstable, the reader's impression of knowing corresponds easily to the evidence of the senses. The openness of signs to interpretation is a source of great anxiety for a person who emphatically does not want to be read, because it leaves him (his own words, gestures, body) open to the widest range of specularity (and speculation). It also creates great confusion in his reading of phenomena, since rival interpretations compete for the meaning of each sign. These rival interpretations tend to overwhelm him, for Dimmesdale's subjectivity lacks the power to distinguish inner and outer phenomena. What he imagines he sees and what is actually there obeys no law of priority. In the forest, for instance, as Hester surprises him along the wood-path, "he knew not whether it were a woman or a shadow," the narrator tells us. "It may be that his pathway through life was haunted thus, by a spectre that had stolen out from among his thoughts" (189). After their
forest meeting, "he threw a backward glance, half expecting that he should discover only some faintly traced features or outline of the mother and the child, slowly fading into the twilight of the woods. So great a vicissitude in his life could not at once be received as real" (214). Real or imagined? Illusion competes on equal terms with his physical senses to (un) determine the status of phenomena.

Without a reliable grasp of the phenomenal world, the subject begins to read all signs as signifiers of the self, the one irreducible locus of experience. This narcissism in regard to reading signs occurs in the midnight scaffold scene, when Dimmesdale sees the scarlet A in the sky. Hawthorne explains the pathology: "a man, rendered morbidly self-contemplative by long, intense, and secret pain, had extended his egotism over the whole expanse of nature, until the firmament itself should appear no more than a fitting page for his soul's history and fate" (155). Henry James took particular exception to this scene, suggesting that because of an excess of mirroring, the sign of the A "is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself." This, according to Peggy Kamuf, is precisely the point Hawthorne raises, that the sign can stand for nothing more serious than itself, and Dimmesdale's reading of it in such a way that it should mirror his own subjectivity, in fact, reenacts the moment
of interpretation, reenacts the way reading by itself invests meaning in signs. When the sexton offers an alternate version of the same sign—the A signifies Angel for the governor's passing into heaven—it suggests that meaning is endlessly mutable without even a change in the appearance of the sign. Taken to its extreme, Dimmesdale's reading shows, as John Irwin suggests, "that what a man knows is not an objective external world but simply the internal structure of his own mind." Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are both bound to the matrix of social communication, and so in their differing ways they are as invested in the meaningfulness of signs as they are in the other social categories dictating their lives. Hester's isolation, on the other hand, permits her to be detached from the tyranny of meaning. It makes her an ironic reader: "She had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions" (199). Having been expelled from the protection of social institutions, she could view them without the assumption of their sacredness. "Authority," Erving Goffman observes, "has always a tendency to surround itself with forms and artificial mystery, whose object is to prevent familiar contact and so give the imagination a chance to idealize." Outside its sphere of persuasion, the artificial mystery with which authority surrounds itself can be seen as a construct, a
form of rhetoric, its mystery diminished. The demystification works as well for the "authority" of signs. To the outcast Hester, the false authority-claim made by social institutions against the individual corresponds to the false truth-claim made by the letter about her inner nature.

For her the letter signifies meaning only in the village which places it on her. Free of content from her, Hester's letter serves perfectly as a mask, which, like Poe's purloined letter, is thrust forward the better to conceal. Her averted eyes and "the studied austerity of her dress" (163) allow her to "fade personally out of sight" while the letter creates its own Hester "under the moral aspect of its own illumination" (225). Where Dimmesdale conceals his letter conspicuously (enticing the detective-physician to probe for it), Hester wears her letter openly, where it can be appropriated and fetishized by the imagination of the viewer and, in effect, removed from her.19

The moment she emerges from the prison door, she has already adopted a rhetorical mask she would show the world, "a stony crust of insensibility" (69). Against this blankness the scarlet letter alone shines out, literally defacing her. The face she presents to the public is an object that gives nothing away. Consequently, her face
becomes a cipher drawing the desire for interpretation while redirecting interpretation to the symbol on her breast. The narrator repeatedly characterizes her face as having a "marble coldness," a "marble passiveness" (164, 228), signaling its analogy with a tombstone. And like the unmarked grave Chillingworth and Dimmesdale trade theories over, it bears no inscription for them to read. "Her face . . . showed the marble quietude which they were accustomed to behold there. It was like a mask . . . like the frozen calmness of a dead woman's features" (226). The very lifelessness of Hester's death mask has the effect of "taking her out of ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself" (54). Hester's self is reified, then, in the image of her own tombstone at the end of the story: "on this simple slab of slate--as the curious investigator may still discern, and perplex himself with the purport" (264), there is a motto which refers the reader not to a name and a face but to a letter, just as the stony blankness of her physical appearance refers the onlooker to the letter on her bosom. On her tombstone, there is not the successful speaking in the epitaphic of the voice or living word of the interred (in accordance with the figure of prosopopeia) but the displacement of name (and face) with the written.

If writing displaces the self, it is necessarily
displaced from the self, put at a remove. That is, if Hester does not own and operate the text of her self through her face, or through her verbal or physical gestures, she still may operate the text of her self through the world around her. Pearl, for instance, serves in displacement this signifying function for Hester. She acts as Hester's suppressed self projected into an external signifier: "Pearl, who was the gem on her mother's unquiet bosom, betrayed, by the very dance of her spirits, the emotions which none could detect in the marble passiveness of Hester's brow" (228). Hester symbolizes her emotions by dressing her daughter in a bright costume in order to exploit the rhetorical safety that symbolism affords self-expression. And her ornate needlework serves the same signifying function in displacement. She "writes" on the community with her embroidery, her first work being her own scarlet letter, but her writing can also be seen on the ruff of the governor, the gloves of the military men, even the gown of the minister. The message that she writes, in a needle style which violates the "sumptuary laws" (82) of the community, is the very message she is forbidden by the letter to utter—the passion the letter prohibits. As Millicent Bell suggests, "[h]er works are distinguished by their power of symbolic exhibition," which makes her work suitable "to show the meaning of other human situations,
the pomp of public ceremonies, the sorrow of funerals."\textsuperscript{20} The function of her needlework and of Pearl suggests how symbolism operates for Hawthorne as signification in displacement. The symbolic permits the self and its signifiers a "dilatory space"\textsuperscript{21} in the rhetoric of selfhood.

**Body as Text**

The tale suggests that selfhood is pervaded by a sense of narration. The assumption underwriting the tale, then, is that the self is a narrative, that selfhood takes shape in language. The language of the self, however, is somatic as well as verbal, so the body becomes a text for the self. The narratization of the self in the body suggests that the body is explicitly autobiographical. Hawthorne explores the textual connections between self and body in different ways with each character.

Hester realizes she can shelter the self as long as she appears to give herself to the public. She gives them her outer or visible part, from which she dissociates her real self. In effect, she allows her body to be made an object, specifically a textualized object, since she invites the onlooker to read the inscription the community has placed on her breast. Public scorn creates an identity for her which she need not even author; she has only to
give the public the small part of her it requires--the image of chastisement. She allows her body-text to be publically appropriated and controlled. She wears their letter, reflects their shame in her demeanor, and performs the rhetoric of penitence, probity, and exact predictability, behind which she remains unavailable to the viewer.

Clearly, however, she is caught in her object-status, petrified by community agreement to stand as "a statue of ignominy" (74). When Hester goes to church, for instance, she would "find herself the text of the discourse" (85). As she walks in public, "the young and pure would be taught to look at her" (79). She is reduced to the symbolic: "giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion" (79). The community successfully acquires her body for the use of its symbolism.

This reduction of personal identity is emblematized in the distorted reflection she sees of herself in Governor Bellingham's armour: "owing to the peculiar effect of this convex mirror, the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be greatly the most prominent feature of her appearance. In truth, she
seemed absolutely hidden behind it" (106). The woman is obliterated by her symbolic function, which is itself reduced to the abstract sign, A. She is, even in her own view, reducible to the letter, and stands for "the figure, the body, the reality of sin" (79).

A chilling moment in Hester's story occurs in the forest meeting when she discovers she can no longer elude the truth of her ontological reduction. Her symbolic identity as "the type of shame" (79) could be accommodated as long as it could be displaced and given over to the onlooker's fetishing attachment to the A. Suddenly, however, she finds that she herself disappears without the A. "The past is gone," she says to Dimmesdale, throwing off her scarlet letter. "Wherefore should we linger upon it now? See! With this symbol I undo it all, and make it as it had never been" (202). But gestures of self-revelation, like any utterance in the rhetoric of selfhood, employ the same grammar as gestures of self-concealment. They too become representations in a world where representations are alienated from the reality they purport to represent. Self-revelatory gestures are trapped in a language where language itself cannot produce anything original. The self, then, is unrecognizable without its textuality. Pearl refuses to accept the "presence" of her mother, and forces Hester to re-don the letter and her
object-status as text for the community's symbolism. After her long usage of the symbolic as a scene of displacement, Hester cannot suddenly bridge the dilatory space between self and signifier and pull off an authentic gesture. Her gesture of throwing off the letter, then, is merely symbolic.

The substitution of sign for identity that we see in Hester is reified in Pearl, who is a living reification: "the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life" (102). Her identification with the letter goes deeper than the frequently noted physical likeness. It is as though her "appointed mission" were "to hover about the ensignia of the scarlet letter" (180). She invokes the reader's search for meanings in signs, asking her mother why she wears the letter, what it means, why the minister holds his hand over his heart. As the living letter herself, she receives from adults the same interrogating questions about her own meaning. And like the letter, Pearl is an oblique text. "Child, what art thou?" Hester asks. "I am your little Pearl," she replies, offering only the sign (her name) as her meaning. Told of her father in heaven, she responds, "I have no Heavenly Father" (97-98). Her denial of "authorship" is a refusal to connect her body with a signified in the divine.

When Pearl puts an A made of eel-grass on her own
breast, the search for meaning becomes a playfully mocking tautology: "I wonder if mother will ask me what it means." But Hester says only that "the green letter, and on thy childish bosom, has no purport" (178). This reply severs letter from meaning, signifier from signified, and since Pearl is ubiquitously associated with the A, it severs Pearl from herself, or from what she, as the scarlet letter, signifies.

Pearl functions for Hawthorne as the literalization of the most basic linguistic problem. As a sign, Pearl is divided from the meaning she signifies, and no one seems able to reconnect her to meaning. As a letter, the initial of a word which is not spelled out, she embodies a language which is at once familiar and recognizable, yet hides an elusive meaning, so her existence taunts the others with a meaning they can't read. "She had been offered to the world, these seven years past, as the living hieroglyphic, in which was revealed the secret they so darkly sought to hide,—all written in this symbol,—all plainly manifest,—had there been a prophet or magician skilled to read the character of flame" (207). A hieroglyph is both pictographic and alphabetic; it signifies a word and depicts an object simultaneously. As a pictograph, Irwin observes, Pearl is "not a sign that is arbitrarily linked to its referent by convention," as Hester's A is, "but one
that is necessarily linked by resemblance." Michael Ragussis adds that Pearl exists as a reference to another, the initial of a hidden word or name, a clue to a full reading of another's act or identity. Both Pearl and the letter A, then, are abbreviations for adultery and for Arthur. She exists not in her own right but as an abbreviated form of her father, his name and (Dimmesdale fears) his features. And as long as her father's identity remains a mystery, Pearl remains a sign without a signified, alienated from her own reference.

With Chillingworth and Dimmesdale as well, the signifiers of the body are out of their authorly control. The body of each is visually a text (Hawthorne is explicit about this), but neither has full control of what the text signifies. The problem for each is that the self's dependence on a rigid public role raises questions about who is writing the text. The body becomes a palimpsest of internal and external authorship, so that the sign of the public role is constantly being interrupted by telegraphic messages from an internal (compulsive and uncontrolled) source.

Despite performing the role of a public-spirited man of learning for at least seven years, Chillingworth is victimized by a transparency of the body-text. His efforts to remain unknown behind a perfected mask are almost
comically thwarted. Chillingworth has, as Hester notes, a "carefully guarded look. It seemed to be his wish and purpose to mask this expression with a smile; but the latter played him false, and flickered over his visage so derisively, that the spectator could see his blackness all the better for it" (169). Not only is his mask obvious, it actually publishes his secret, "permitting the whole evil within him to be written on his features" (173). However, owing to the same semiological instability which makes the sign of the A illegible, the inner secret that Chillingworth's face publishes to the world is never more than a slippery innuendo, a suspected meaning.

A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one little pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight. His face darkened with some powerful emotion, which, nevertheless, he so instantly controlled by an effort of his will, that, save at a single moment, its expression might have passed for calmness. (61)

About this passage, one critic asks, "what does a face that writhes like a snake look like, and how could such a grimace also pass in a trice, for calmness?"24 The meanings which writhe themselves across the text of
Chillingworth's face have only the language of his familiar features to work with. Twisted to express new meanings, his facial features only become a cartoon of the signified: a parodic (mis)representation of the unseen.

Dimmesdale's body also publishes his inner secrets to the world, and in his case, his lack of authorship over the text of his body hastens the disintegration of his sense of self. Dimmesdale is particularly susceptible to this sort of signifying transparency. Chillingworth says to Dimmesdale, "You, Sir, of all men whom I have known, are he whose body is the closest conjoined, and imbued, and identified, so to speak, with the spirit whereof it is the instrument" (136). The remark is calculated, clearly, to enhance the writtenness of Dimmesdale's private feelings, for it could only have the effect of producing somatic reactions in Dimmesdale. Chillingworth, then, co-authors the text of Dimmesdale's body.

Dimmesdale is in a no-win situation with regard to the authorship of his own text. The more he conforms in his rhetoric to the rigid public role of saintly pastor that the community writes for him, the more power Chillingworth has to draw to the surface the reluctant truth of his guilt and thereby inscribe his body with signs and tokens. The way to reclaim his own text, of course, is to confess. While discussing secret sin with his physician, however,
Dimmesdale explains why undetected sinners do not confess: "they shrink from displaying themselves black and filthy in the view of men; because, thenceforward, no good can be achieved by them; no evil of the past redeemed by better service. So, to their own unutterable torment, they go about among their fellow creatures, looking pure as new-fallen snow" (132). Dimmesdale is trying here to have it two ways. Signs (good works) both are and are not reliable in this example. Chillingworth perceives the slipperiness of Dimmesdale's rationalization and erases the slash between sign and signified: "Wouldst thou have me believe, O wise and pious friend, that a false show can be better . . . than God's own truth" (133).

When Hester later supportively brings up his good works as a sign of his true self, Dimmesdale himself repudiates their authenticity. "And surely thou workest good among them. Doth this bring thee no comfort?" she asks. "I have laughed in bitterness and agony of heart, at the contrast between what I seem and what I am!" he answers. "There is no substance in it! It is cold and dead . . . it is all falsehood!--all emptiness!--all death!" (191). Hester's question forces Dimmesdale to confront his ontological insecurity. What is he, where is he, if he is not to be found in the signs of his own body? The instability of the body's signs produces something like
an identity breakdown in him. "No man," Hawthorne tells us, "for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true" (216). Hawthorne's remark suggests that the "true" self may perhaps depend for its foundation and certainly its locus on the external image, a metaphysical reversal in which signified (the self) is produced by signifier (the public role).

Hawthorne lends to Dimmesdale's character something of this horrifying awareness, for the minister tries to reassert the suppressed self by divorcing his external image. When he reenters the town from his forest visit, he imagines himself saying to those who recognize him: "I am not the man for whom you take me! I left him in yonder forest . . . go seek your minister, and see if his emaciated figure . . . be not flung down there like a cast-off garment" (217). The gesture is futile, though, for now "Dimmesdale" is an object even to himself.

The object-status of the body is manifested in a sort of conversion hysteria in which the body and its signifying functions (including the voice) operate compulsively, and therefore simultaneously represent and misrepresent the self. For instance, Dimmesdale fears that he "shall unawares have spoken what he imagines himself only to have
thought”; he trembles "lest his tongue should wag itself"
and seem to have "his consent for doing so, without his
having fairly given it" (124, 218). The hysterical
babblings Dimmesdale fears would represent the self
accurately, but would not arise from the self which chooses
its own narrative. By the end, all choice in self-
signification is abrogated; his body converts literally
into a piece of writing, compulsively publishing his secret
crime.

But even when the body itself is explicitly
textualized, its writing is still the scene of displacement
—the self disappears behind the signifier. Dimmesdale's
Election Day revelation centers around the scarlet letter
printed on his breast, behind which, now despite his every
attempt at literalism, meaning becomes increasingly distant
and vague. Hester's scarlet letter, he claims, "is but the
shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even
this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what
has seared his inmost heart" (255). The written is a
shadow of a stigma of the type of the unseen, demonstrating
the letter to be only at the end of a series of
substitutions, its origin still unknown.

Again, the visual sign is not constitutive of origin
or authorship; its presence does not guarantee a referent:
"As regarding its origin, there were various explanations,
all of which must needs have been conjectural" (258). Some believe the stigma is self-inflicted, some that it is Chillingworth's doing, others that it is the mark of remorse. Each version posits a different author for the letter. Others still see no mark and hear nothing in his words to connect Dimmesdale with Hester's crime. The only light Hawthorne sheds on its meaning and its authorship is to suggest that meaning (and to some extent authorship) is the responsibility of the reader: "The reader may choose among these theories" (259).

A/utobiography

In Dimmesdale's case as in those of the other characters, the body-text remains supplemental to the self, which suggests that the self is inevitably unknowable since the language of selfhood is never fully authorized. Presumably, however, this condition is anathema to neither Dimmesdale nor Hawthorne himself, for it assures the self of a certain detachment and secrecy. The slash between the sign and signified of the self in the tale is but the fictional redaction of the veil the author draws over the "inmost Me" in the preface--the veil of illegibility. In many ways, then, Dimmesdale's condition of alienation from his signifiers is a deliberate (though displaced) version of Hawthorne's own autobiographical rhetoric.
The tension in *The Scarlet Letter* builds almost entirely around Dimmesdale's choice of when to speak his confession. As Michael Ragussis points out, Dimmesdale's acts of speaking or not speaking are framed in *The Scarlet Letter* by Hawthorne's own analogous acts of speaking as the author. Dimmesdale's confession at the end of the story, Ragussis suggests, turns us back to the beginning, to "The Custom-House" preface, where Hawthorne himself desires "[t]o confess the truth" (40). The hesitations and caution that characterize Dimmesdale's relation to speaking throughout the story are reflected in the hesitations about speaking that mark the opening of Hawthorne's preface. 25

As with Dimmesdale's body-text, Hawthorne's signifiers are not confidently authorized. Hawthorne makes out that he is "taken'possession of" by "an autobiographical impulse" (3). There is a sense in the preface of Hawthorne, like Dimmesdale, disavowing both the urge and the consequences of speaking by putting the words for the self at a rhetorical remove, the same way Dimmesdale does later by confessing in the third-person as if confessing for another ("he stands up before you! He bids you look again at Hester's scarlet letter," 255). Ragussis suggests that Dimmesdale's confession in the third-person merely reifies the fictionalization of the self that Hawthorne posits in the autobiographical preface. If either "I" or
"he" can be used to confess the self, being detachable from the self as both the preface and the tale imply, than either "I" or "he" can be used to hide the self. Autobiography and confession (both "I" narratives) each involve a moment of rhetorical self-alienation in which the self becomes a fiction, that is, becomes a "he" narrative. Neither pronoun, then, necessarily purports priority or originality. According to Ragussis, the opposites of the text--"I" and "he," author and character, autobiography and fiction--cannot be pure or unadulterated with each other. The confession and the autobiography begin to mirror each other's rhetoric. Hawthorne's pose as editor of another man's manuscript repeats Dimmesdale's own fiction of concealing the paternity of his offspring. Dimmesdale had in effect disowned his child by withholding his name as the father. No less, though with tongue in cheek, does Hawthorne disown his "child" (The Scarlet Letter) by a similar concealment--withholding his name as its author. 26

Though he does not suppose he is fooling anyone about the origin of the story, Hawthorne's masking of authorship behind the name of Jonathan Pue is also a gesture of self-concealment that mirrors the rhetoric of selfhood in the tale. The obvious parallel is the physician: "Under the appellation of Roger Chillingworth . . . was hidden another name" (118). For both, the veil of an assumed name
disguises relationship, Chillingworth's relationship to Hester, Hawthorne's relationship to the story. For Hawthorne, then, veiling authorship is a way of reemphasizing the slash between the signifier of the text and the signified ("inmost Me") of the text's author. It is actually just one in a series of displacements of authorship that are calculated to "keep the inmost Me behind its veil." He ducks behind Pue, declaring that the story is "authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue" (32), though he also evades documentary responsibility by saying that he has allowed himself "as much license as if the facts had been entirely of [his] own invention" (33). The admission is very puzzling because it means that the author of any particular scene or utterance in the story can't be positively identified. Is it Pue or is it Hawthorne? And, of course, Pue's "original" manuscript will be forever a mystery. The author won't be caught in either of the story's discourses, history or fiction.

Authorship of the text (in this instance the author himself) is further displaced when he titles his volume the "Posthumous Papers of a Decapitated Surveyor" (43). He places himself beyond the reach of any reader, behind the veil of death, albeit a metaphorical death, so that we are limited to a confrontation with his "Papers" alone.
Hawthorne claims at the end of the preface that he "writes from beyond the grave" (44), a prosopopeia which seemingly authenticates the words he writes even as it erases the author behind them.

This same gesture of erasure through prosopopeia applies to Pue as well, whose manuscript, unlike his exhumed body, contains the presence of the absent author. Having read an account of Pue's exhumation, Hawthorne seems to recall that

Nothing . . . was left of my respected predecessor, save an imperfect skeleton, and some fragments of apparel, and a wig of majestic frizzle; which, unlike the head that it once adorned, was in very satisfactory preservation.

But, on examining the papers which the parchment commission served to envelop, I found more traces of Mr. Pue's mental part, and the internal operations of his head, than the frizzled wig had contained of the venerable skull itself. (30)

The "traces of Mr. Pue's mental part" live on in the writing while the body fades away, making the written self the more palpable version of an individual. The written in this instance even manifests the full presence of the original: "With his ghostly hand, the obscurely seen, but majestic, figure had imparted to me the scarlet symbol, and
the little roll of explanatory manuscript. With his own ghostly voice, he had exhorted me . . . " (33). By purporting to experience the direct touch, vision, and voice of the writer through the artifact, that is, through the trope of prosopopeia, Hawthorne provides an oblique retort to his Puritan forebears, evoked earlier in the preface, who had scorned the "writer of story-books." They now lie as dead in their graves as Pue's exhumed corpse, but do not have Pue's (or Hawthorne's) surviving presence in writing.

However, as Paul de Man suggests, "the latent threat that inhabits prosopopeia" is the realization that the writing is not the author himself. The survival in language of the author is counterveiled throughout the preface by the deadness of the surviving language, making the writing which outlives its author akin to the writing on a tombstone, which, in The Scarlet Letter, is always illegible. At the moment in the preface when he finds Pue's written remains, Hawthorne's activity suggests something of the problem of survival in language: he is "unfolding one and another document, and reading the names of vessels that had long ago foundered at sea or rotted at the wharves, and those of merchants, never heard of now on 'Change, nor very readily decipherable on their mossy tombstones" (29). There is perhaps a connection between
this moribund observation and the discovery he is about to make.

The manuscript of Pue has essentially the same "difference" from its author as the documents do with the merchants, or for that matter the cloth A does from its former wearer. All are the mark of an absence, *écriture* as a trace, or architrace (a la Derrida), of both difference and deferral. Of particular interest to Hawthorne, the manuscript (Pue's letter) and the A (Hester's letter) are present as *écriture*, yet each is distinct from the body on which (or by which) it is inscribed. Hawthorne finds the two simultaneously, the one letter (Pue's) wrapped in the other letter (Hester's), refering to each other as self-reflexive letters in a mirror of language. But each has a material and an abstract signification which are incompatible for Hawthorne. Materially, the scarlet letter is tangible ("each limb proved to be precisely three inches and a quarter in length," 31), whereas epistemologically the letter remains abstract ("there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation . . . but evading the analysis of my mind," 31).

The two aspects of the scarlet letter reflect the condition of the autobiographer himself. The scarlet letter is present as a material object but its signified is absent. The man of letters is present in the material book
but is absent in his own person. The difference between his presence and absence produces a desire in the reader for the illusion in the book of the missing primary object. In the autobiography, the missing primary "object" is the "inmost Me" of the autobiographer. The scarlet letter Hawthorne finds in the custom-house both reveals and disguises its missing object; so too does the text of the autobiography reveal and disguise the missing writer. The problem with signification is that the material object (the A) calls up not another object (Hester) but an unrepeatable event or life. And so with the autobiography. The book calls up not its author, who is unrepeatable, but the image of the author as he was in life.

The problem all of the characters in the tale have around the signification of the self is the dilemma Hawthorne has in writing an autobiography, and this problem is reified in the division of the scarlet letter into material and abstract object. As the trace of a former event which is not repeatable, the A purports the illusion of repetition. As the illusion of repetition, the material letter itself lives on long past the absent signified. It is, then, a tombstone inscription marking the "death" of the signified. In the story we see this when Hester resumes wearing the letter after its meaning has been
officially lifted. The letter lives on signifying a now erased transgression. Moreover, it lives on to survive in the custom-house, still signifying an erasure.

This, too, is the dilemma Hawthorne raises in an autobiographical sketch which can only signify an erasure. Like any autobiography, it is a sign that will survive long past the author it signifies. The writtenness which characterizes Hawthorne's style in the sketch, like the writtenness which characterizes the rhetoric of selfhood in the tale, tends to undermine the illusion of repetition, the illusion that the author is repeated or doubled in his autobiographical writing. Instead, Hawthorne's awareness of the writing act constantly reminds the reader of the inauthenticity of the artifact, invoking the difference between the writing and the writer. His "written" style in The Scarlet Letter denounces his own language of autobiography. His hesitations, qualifications, and undecipherability force the reader to acknowledge that a text, any text, offers the reader only letters, which, as the scarlet letter does with its interpreters, frustrates our attempts to read the autobiographical text as an authorized sign.
CHAPTER THREE

'THE FAULTS OF THE PATCHWORK': THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS

Adams's Autobiographical Project

Explaining in a letter why he would not write a memoir of his friend John Hay, Henry Adams said that "[a]ll memoirs lower the man in estimation." If "memoirs lower the man," they do so perhaps because they limit the man's life to their scope, a scope which is always narrower than the actual life, suggesting that the literal representation in the memoir is itself an effacement of the man.

But if this is the case, how are we to understand The Education of Henry Adams and Adams's apparent willingness to "efface" himself in it in the form of a literal representation? A reading of the Education shows that, far from being a mere inference made in his letters, his self-effacement is both a principal motive and motif in the Education itself. He goes on in the same letter to point out that if any of those people he mentions in the Education "would hint a wish to be left out, I would gladly do it; and still more gladly omit myself." The reading of the Education offered in this chapter is intended to suggest that Adams very systematically does omit himself, takes himself out of the text that ostensibly contains him.
Adams's strategy is to exploit the tropological nature of autobiography in order to fashion a mask while at the same time eluding the ontological confines inherent in autobiographical narrative. When he introduced *The Education of Henry Adams* to a select group of first readers, Adams offered it with the same sort of disclaimers and effacements which characterize the life-narrative itself. Shortly after having the *Education* printed privately in forty copies, he tells William James, "it was printed only for communication to you and a few others," because for any one else it would be "a stack of rubbish" (Ford, II, 485). Elsewhere he writes, "the volume as it stands is merely a proof sent out for revision to persons interested, and to no one else." And in a more emphatic disclaimer, he says, "The *Education* ... is meant only for ... general condemnation. It undertakes to offer itself for blame, contempt, and refusal. It hobbles on its knees, asking to be raised and educated ... I am ashamed of it, and send it out into the world only to be whipped" (510). His posture as author is one of repudiation—all the more curious since it is his own life story he appears to repudiate. Numerous indications suggest that the distance Adams puts between himself and his book is a tactic calculated to throw off the public exposure incurred in an autobiography. One gets the impression from his
letters that he would gladly limit his readership. In one letter he writes, "as my experience leads me to think that no one any longer cares or even knows what is said or printed, and that one's audience in history and literature has shrunk to a mere band of survivors, not exceeding a thousand people in the entire world, I am in hopes a kind of esoteric literary art may survive, the freer and happier for the sense of privacy and abandon" (Ford, II, 476). Of his earlier History of Jefferson and Madison, he remarks in the Education, "[a]s far as Adams knew, he had but three serious readers . . . he was amply satisfied with their consideration, and could dispense with that of the other fifty-nine million, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-seven" (327). Confident in the book's likely obscurity, Adams trusts, as he says in his Preface, "that it might quietly fade from memory" (xxviii).

Why would a writer who is apparently concerned about being too closely seen in his text ever write an autobiography? The primary ontological problem in making the self the subject of a book is that the book then fixes the self—it contains the self within the set of memories, experiences, and associations that are narrated within the book. So the autobiographical project at once allows the author to select and shape what he is to be known as, but it also fixes the author to a literary representation in a
volume consumed by the reading public. Autobiography diminishes the subject by making the self readable, that is, reducing selfhood to a set of textually appropriate tropes. Disclaiming for his autobiography any need for serious attention suggests a way of writing about himself while at the same time disengaging himself from his representation, making that representation "not him," that is, keeping himself unavailable to anyone who picks up the volume.

Paul de Man, in his essay, "Autobiography as Defacement," touches on this autobiographical dilemma. But whereas de Man sees the paradox as nugatory to the autobiographical project, Adams can be seen exploiting the paradox to make the autobiography perform a new function—to unfix himself from the autobiographical subject. De Man writes, "[f]or just as autobiographies, by their thematic insistence on the subject, on the proper name, on memory, on birth, eros, and death, and on the doubleness of specularity, openly declare their cognitive and tropological constitution, they are equally eager to escape from the coercions of this system." Adams is not only eager to escape from the coercions of "tropological constitution," but succeeds in escaping this coercion through the exploitation of narrative tropes.

In short, Henry Adams shows that the autobiography can
be written which gives to posterity a public artifact of the self while denying to the public the author himself. The nature of the book, he feels sure, will deflect interest and inquiry into its author: "I am satisfied that it is immaterial whether one man or a thousand or a hundred thousand read one's books. The author [Adams himself] is as safe as the seventeenth-century clergyman who printed his Sermon on Righteousness--his pet sermon" (Ford, II, 525). In a letter to Henry James, Adams suggests that the autobiography is a "shield of protection in the grave." Adams "takes" his own life in his own way "in order to prevent biographers from taking it in theirs" (Ford, II, 495). To posterity, then, Adams consigns a self which is a carefully fashioned mask, and he assures himself against being defined by his own mask through various strategies of self-effacement.

The strategy that strikes the reader immediately in the Education is Adams's use of the third-person "he" to refer to himself. The third-person pronoun permits Adams to review his life from the perspective of infinity. The self he looks back on within the throes of chaotic, unknowable historical forces seems powerless and alienated. From the beginning of the book Adams plays up his insignificance, and his self-diminution is a strategy for showing himself alienated from power. But viewed from
"infinity" (from beyond the grave, if we take Adams's prosopopeic figure at the end of the book), Adams's life appears dreamlike and comic. The bitter ironies, the failures of self and society seem amusing more than tragic. And this "high" comic quality is born out by Adams's frequent emphasis on amusement rather than truth as a goal in education, as if, from beyond the grave, nothing of it matters anymore.

The use of the third-person allows Adams what de Man terms a "doubleness of specularity" in his autobiography, that of being both inside and outside of history. As both writer and subject—as both actor of the life and commentator on the actor—Adams avoids being contained completely within his book. Adams the writer is always outside its plot, outside its stack of bound pages, whereas the "he" of the narrative is comically contained therein.

The use of the third-person subject pronoun announces the formal pattern of self-effacement in the Education. Adams goes on to pursue the implications of this formal "de-facement" in a pervasive ontological disengagement of himself from the autobiography. To perform this disengagement, he employs three other strategies to make sure he is not caught in the text. First, he takes himself out of the story as much as the form of the book allows him to while still remaining its subject. The autobiography
comes to be less about Henry Adams than about the ideas that attract his mind. Second, regarding his own subjectivity, he focuses the autobiography exclusively on the public identity of the individual known as Henry Adams. The effect is to make the individual no longer an individual but a generalization arising from his circumstances and influences. Last, Adams separates the protagonist of the book from the writer by putting the "he" of the story in the grave at the end. He terminates the book's protagonist, in effect, to erase the identification with himself.

**The Prefaces: Masks and Manikins**

The pattern of omission, or effacement, begins with the Editor's Preface, written by Adams but signed with the name "Henry Cabot Lodge." Ernest Samuels's annotation of the Editor's Preface includes the letter written by Adams in 1916 to Henry Cabot Lodge and has important implications for a reading of the Education. Adams writes:

I send you herewith a sealed packet containing a copy of my Education . . . see that the volume is printed as I leave it. With this view I have written a so-called Editor's Preface, which you have read, and which I have taken the liberty, subject to your assent, to stamp with your
initials. Also, may I beg that you bar the introduction of all illustrations of any sort. You know that I do not consider illustrations as my work, or having part in any correct rendering of my ideas. Least of all do I wish portraits. I have always followed the rule of making the reader think only of the text, and do not wish to abandon it here. (541, emphasis added)

The letter shows Adams insisting that the reader be limited to a confrontation with his words and with no other representation of himself. In a sense it privileges the written text as "authoritative" in accordance with the figure of prosopopeia. De Man says in "Autobiography as De-facement": "the figure of prosopopeia, the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity . . . confers . . . the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, prosopon poien, to confer a mask or a face (prosopon). Prosopopeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name . . . is made as intelligible and memorable as a face. Our topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, figure, figuration, and disfiguration." In the letter to Lodge, Adams "de-faces" himself by denying the reader a portrait, but in doing so he confers his own
authority of speech on the mask of his literary portrayal, giving a face and a voice to it. His refusal to allow illustrations of himself is a way of authorizing the mask, "Adams," to speak in his absence.

In the Editor's Preface, Adams uses his friend's signature both to allude to his own absence as well as veil his presence. As editor/author, Adams is in the paradoxical position of writing about the details of his own career even after "a severe illness in the spring of 1912 put an end to his literary activity forever" (xxviii). This "severe illness," which serves to silence the author "forever," mirrors the death the author-subject experiences at the end of the autobiography. In the last chapter Adams sends his autobiographical caricature to the grave with his friends King and Hay, putting an end to his literary embodiment. In the Editor's Preface, "Lodge" sends Adams, the writer, to his literary grave, putting "an end to his literary activity forever." So Adams the writer of the Education has purportedly written his last by "the spring of 1912," though he has surreptitiously written an Editor's Preface in 1916.

This matter of writing/not-writing the Editor's Preface, of silencing the author with a "severe illness," then breaking the silence by coming out with his own preface—all suggests the problem of closure in the
Unhappy with his treatment of his "Dynamic Theory of History" as it was articulated in the *Education* (1907), Adams went on to write "The Rule of Phase Applied to History" (1908). Unsatisfied with that essay, he later replaced it with *A Letter to American Teachers of History* (1910). This second sequel to the book is then mentioned by name in the Editor's Preface (1916), which makes the two sequels ("The Rule of Phase" and *A Letter to Teachers*) prefatory to the Editor's Preface, which itself prefaces the author's own Preface in the volume. Written after the *Education*, the two prefaces themselves stand as sequels. What results is a series of "final" statements which point to the writer's failure finally to state the truth which purportedly stands behind the whole sequence.

The dilemma of closure is disturbed further when we note that Adams characterizes the *Education* itself as a sequel. He remarks in a letter that he "had to write a long supplementary chapter to explain in scientific terms what I could not put into narration" (514), making, then, the Dynamic Theory of History "supplementary" to the autobiography. Furthermore, the autobiography itself is a sequel, for he admits that the *Education* originated as "a completion and mathematical conclusion from the previous volume about the Thirteenth Century" (Ford, II, 495). He sees the *Education* as an effort to finish Chartres, an
effort which itself is never finished, for each new try at
closure has only that authority which is projected back
onto it by a sequel, and each new sequel undermines (and
effaces) the effort which came before it. 5

The two Prefaces (the so-called Editor's Preface and
the author's own Preface) raise the issue of authority in
the autobiography, and this necessarily complicates the
status of authorship. As a writer and reader of
autobiography, Adams is concerned in his Preface to place
himself within the tradition of such writing while
simultaneously distancing himself from his literary models.
Adams's biographer, Ernest Samuels, points out that Adams
was an avid reader of diaries and autobiographies and was
familiar with those of Carlyle, Darwin, Huxley, Mill,
Newman, Ruskin, Spencer, and Trollope (542). M. K. Blasing
notes further that the **Education** consciously plays off of
specific autobiographies. 6 It is a completion of St.
Augustine's **Confessions**, a rebuttal of Rousseau's
**Confessions**, an inversion of Franklin's **Autobiography**, and
as many commentators have pointed out, a continuation of
Carlyle's ironic autobiographical project, **Sartor Resartus**.
In the two Prefaces, Adams names the **Confessions** of
Augustine and Rousseau, and the **Autobiography** of Benjamin
Franklin—the three of which serve in one way or another as
models of form, of self-narratizing, of self-teaching—and
all fail as models, for "no one has discussed what part of education has . . . turned out to be useful, and what not." Adams says: "This volume attempts to discuss it" (xxiii). He places himself as a writer in the tradition, setting up a discourse with his models. But he also repudiates that tradition to create his own anomalous form. Just as the inheritance of his genealogical fathers would fail to prepare him for living in the twentieth-century, so the inheritance of his literary fathers would fail to instruct him on how to make the book about living in the twentieth-century.

When Adams addresses the reader in the author's Preface, it is the only time in the autobiography that he permits a direct, synchronic relationship between the writing-self and the written-self. Yet even here he entirely avoids the use of the first-person "I" in reference to himself. This omission is significant because the Preface addresses the very issue of literary self-reference. In it Adams repudiates Rousseau's model of romantic egoism, saying: "Most educators of the nineteenth century have declined to show themselves before their scholars as objects more vile or contemptible than necessary, and even the humblest teacher hides, if possible, the faults with which nature has generously embellished us all" (xxix). Adams's recoil from the egoism
of Rousseau suggests that the purpose and method of his own autobiography is to deflect attention from the self. This intention, ironically, is made possible by Rousseau: "largely thanks to him, the Ego has steadily tended to efface itself, and for purposes of model, to become a manikin on which the toilet of education is to be draped in order to show the fit or misfit of the clothes. The object of the study is the garment, not the figure" (xxx). The function of the manikin is to set off the garments (that is, acquired qualities like education) and to submerge its own presence under these acquisitions.

The tailor image Adams uses in the Preface describes the construction of the self. "The tailor adapts the manikin as well as the clothes to his patrons' wants. The tailor's object, in this volume, is to fit young men in universities or elsewhere, to be men of the world, equipped for any emergency; and the garment offered to them is meant to show the faults of the patchwork fitted on their fathers" (xxx). 7 In the Education, Adams is both tailor and manikin, writer and subject. The image is used to suggest Adams's task as autobiographer and also to stand as Adams's view of the self. The garment is a patchwork of styles and tastes which the tailor arranges on the manikin. The self is a patchwork of influences and events which the autobiographer arranges into a text. As the Education goes
on to bear out, these influences are rarely successfully planned or cultivated, but occur by accident and fiat. The result, as we see in the case of Henry Adams, is a patchwork of identities, a chaos of careers, a multiplicity of purposes, which is why he points here to "the faults of the patchwork."

The image of the manikin (the "small man") is one Adams returns to throughout the Education in various sly references and suggests both Adams's smallness in the scheme of things and the nullity of the subject-self. In the Preface he concludes that:

The manikin, therefore, has the same value as any other geometrical figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition; it must have the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life. Who knows? Possibly it had! (xxx)

The manikin image, then, becomes Adams's version of a selfhood which must be lent "the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life." These must be assumed because all the self can be known by is the education with which it is draped. The principal
gesture of self-effacement, then, is making the garment (education) the subject of the autobiography and not the manikin (self). When he titles it "The Education of Henry Adams" instead of "The Life" or "The Autobiography," then, he has made his preliminary gesture of self-erasure.

The passage above also points to another tropological effacement. Adams generalizes himself into an abstraction --views himself on the one hand as an everyman indistinct from any other, having "the same value as any other geometrical figure," and on the other hand as a no one, without being, without place in the human enterprise, an empty shell in space which is "treated as though it had life." Throughout the Education, Adams alternates his own characterization between these two generalities, everyone and no one. He is alternately an anonymous member of the mass and a singular anomaly, accidental and alone in history. He is sometimes "Adam" without an Eve--first and last of his kind in the universe--or sometimes an "atom"--too small and anonymous to be noticed as an individual entity.

Self-Effacement

Chapter I of the Education opens with just this play of alternation between the singular, idiosyncratic
qualities of an individual known as Henry Adams and the
effacement of his uniqueness:

Under the shadow of Boston State House, turning
its back on the house of John Hancock, the little
passage called Hancock Avenue runs, or ran, from
Beacon Street, skirting the State House grounds,
to Mount Vernon Street, on the summit of Beacon
Hill; and there, in the third house below Mount
Vernon Place, February 16, 1838, a child was
born, and christened later by his uncle, the
minister of the First Church after the tenets of
Boston Unitarianism, as Henry Brooks Adams. Had
he been born in Jerusalem under the shadow of the
Temple and circumcised in the Synagogue by his
uncle the high priest, under the name of Israel
Cohen, he would scarcely have been more
distinctly branded. (3)

Adams determines the distinctive facts of his birth—
address, date, exact ceremonial affiliation, and full name
of the book's subject. Then he undetermines that precise
identity by showing how universal, how anonymous the story
is, how "Adams" could be "Cohen," or anyone (or no one),
how Adams is, therefore, the manikin of the Preface. The
identifiers of selfhood are not just accidental but
arbitrary and do not change the essential identity—
providing relation of the "garments" to the manikin. It did not matter what manikin was born February 16, 1838, in the third house below Mount Vernon Place, it is "ticketed through life" (3) by the accidental circumstances of its birth.

So, on the one hand, he is sui generis since "[n]o such accident had ever happened before in human experience" (5). On the other hand, the "accident" comes to suggest only this particular convergence and arrangement of identifiers--Adams, Mount Vernon Street, Boston. Because they are all extrinsic, commonplace signs, these determiners allow the subject-self to remain undetermined, unknown, uncaught. He gives us the garment ("Adams") but not the privately lived life. Just as the garment effaces the manikin underneath, so too the identifiers efface the subject, that is, replace the subject with these commonplace signs. 8

In a sense, Adams's state of ontological anomality, his being the only accident of his kind in the world, requires him to accept a state of being unknown, a state of anonymity. Adams frequently emphasizes his anonymity, referring to himself as "the New England type," as opposed to the Southern or Western or Pennsylvania types, suggesting that if we know the type, we know the individual. The Education reflects this in its use of
generic autobiographical properties, as when, returning to 
Germany to resume his studies, "[h]e took a room in the 
household of the usual small government clerk with the 
usual plain daughters" (82). By substituting the "usual" 
for the unique or specific, Adams gives the impression of 
disclosure while actually deleting himself from the life he 
purports to be his own. The generic becomes a way of 
knowing the life without knowing the subject. In a passage 
such as this from the Education, Adams can be seen 
straining the "contract" between the author and the reader. 
By sharing the name "Adams" the author of the text and the 
author in the text are assumed to be the same individual. 
The substitution of generic autobiographical properties for 
the author's own experience undermines the authenticity of 
the name "Adams" when applied to both the generic figure in 
the autobiography and the individual who authored the book.

Anonymity, the state of being unknown, however, is an 
attractive alternative to a person whose name carries with 
it so many "troglodytic" (3) associations. As a boy 
leaving the Boston-Quincy sphere for the first time, he 
"felt himself no longer an isolated atom in a hostile 
universe, but a sort of herring-fry in a shoal of moving 
fish" (48). The Adams name (and its associations) no 
longer exerts its power of determining, and thereby 
isolating, once the self is outside the sphere of
referentiality ("Boston, Mt. Vernon Street, Quincy," 3).

This liberation from the referent, however, becomes a loss of referentiality, and the generic figure starts to lose all definition. Adams suggests his ontological quandry in Chapter X when he relates his experiences as his father's private secretary at the American Legation in London.

His position was abnormal. The British government by courtesy allowed the son to go to Court as Attache, though he was never attached, and after five or six years toleration, the decision was declared irregular. In the Legation, as private secretary, he was liable to do secretary's work. In society, when official, he was attached to the Minister; when unofficial, he was a young man without any position at all. As the years went on, he began to find advantages in having no position at all except that of young man. Gradually he aspired to become a gentleman; just a member of society like the rest. The position was irregular; at that time many positions were irregular; yet it lent itself to a sort of irregular education that seemed to be the only sort of education the young man was ever to get. (145)
The abnormality of his position as private secretary makes him attached and unattached, official and unofficial, at the same time. But being in a position wholly irregular and without precedent comes to mean "having no position at all except that of young man," the most generic and ill-determined status possible to him. Singularity, instead of making him someone, has made him no one. And he finds in the loss of self-referencing determiners a release from particularity into generality: "he aspired to become a gentleman, just a member of society like the rest."

Throughout the Education, the author is systematically sliding under the "Adams" brand. He starts out as differentiated and alienated by being over-determined, then finds a way into the mass, some way of becoming unremarkable, and therefore, unknown.

The writer of the Education at times assumes no more knowledge of the subject-self than the reader. He describes himself in youth as an outside observer would: "he seemed well-behaved, when anyone was looking at him; he observed conventions, when he could not escape them; he was never quarrelsome, towards a superior; his morals were apparently good, and his moral principles, if he had any, were not known to be bad. Above all, he was timid and showed a certain sense of self-respect, when in public view. What he was at heart, no one could say; least of all
himself" (70-71). What he is, is only what can be known on the surface. And with each of these observations, he adds a qualification, a suggestion that a reader's knowledge of the human subject is kept within the bounds of certain observable commonalities, and Adams, in order to promote the distance between himself and the boy, joins the reader in his inability to read the boy more deeply.

All one can know of him are the appearances, and these appearances, Adams makes clear, cannot infer a transcendental authority behind themselves. At Harvard, he is exposed to the philosophy of Concord. But when it pressed him for an assertion of the reality of the transcendental self, "[h]e perpetually fell back into the heresy that if anything universal was unreal, it was himself and not the appearances" (63). What existed underneath the garments of the Adams identity, underneath the drappings of his education, is still a manikin. What the manikin is remains a blank.

To an extent, Adams remains a cipher in his own autobiography. His existence is effaced and he remains unknowable through the set of determiners his public identity wears. At times, even these references of public identity begin to slip away. In the London social world, for instance, the public identifiers which fixed him to a tangible identity in America start to shift into
burlesques:

The last Saturday evening he ever attended, he gave his name as usual at the foot of the staircase, and was rather disturbed to hear it shouted up as 'Mr. Handrew Hadams!' He tried to correct it, and the footman shouted more loudly: 'Mr. Hanthony Hadams!' With some temper, he repeated the correction and was finally announced as 'Mr. Halexander Hadams,' and under this name made his bow for the last time to Lord Palmerston who certainly knew no better. (134)

The Adams Memorial

This practice of self-erasure is formalized in the Education around the twenty-year lacuna. "What one did," Adams explains about the twenty-years elided from the life-story, "or did not do--with one's education, after getting it, need trouble the inquirer in no way" (314). But though he attempts to throw off inquiry into the veiled years, a presence (or rather an absence) from those years exerts an influence on the narrative when it resumes.

Marian Adams is ostensibly effaced from the Education. She is never named, and no allusion is made to his marriage to her nor to her suicide. Nothing of his wife exists in the story of Henry Adams except the monument made by St.
Gaudens (on her otherwise unidentified tomb). It is to this bronze figure on his wife's tomb that Adams turns when he resumes the narrative, and the figure is made, in a sense, to "speak" for the twenty years the narrative omits.

His first step, on returning to Washington, took him out to the cemetery known as Rock Creek, to see the bronze figure which St. Gaudens had made for him in his absence. . . . he was apt to stop there often to see what the figure had to tell him that was new; but, in all that it had to say, he never once thought of questioning what it meant. He supposed its meaning to be the one commonplace about it--the oldest idea known to human thought. . . . The interest of the figure was not in its meaning, but in the response of the observer. As Adams sat there, numbers of people came, for the figure seemed to have become a tourist fashion, and all wanted to know its meaning. Most took it for a portrait-statue, and the remnant were vacant-minded in the absence of a personal guide. . . . The only exceptions were the clergy, who taught [Adams] a lesson even deeper. One after another brought companions there, and, apparently fascinated by their own reflection, broke out passionately against the
expression they felt in the figure of despair, of atheism, of denial. Like the others, the priest saw only what he brought. Like all great artists, St. Gaudens held up the mirror and no more. (329)

The tombstone figure reifies the tropological strategy Adams uses in the Education. Because Adams listens to "all that it had to say," the figure comes to embody the prosopopeia, the trope which de Man defines as "the fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the-grave." And Adams, too, as suggested by the Editor's Preface, exists in his own text in a kind of speech from beyond the deathlike silence of "severe illness." As the bronze statue effaces his wife from the story, substituting itself for her in the text, the caricature of "Adams" effaces the author, substituting itself for the author's presence in the text. Just as the bronze figure represents the voice of an absence and so is conferred a face in accordance with the figure of prosopopeia, and just as this mask is mistaken by most "for a portrait-statue" of Marian Adams, so too the caricatured self in the Education represents the voice of an absence (the author's self) that likewise assumes a mask (called "Adams") which is easily mistaken for a portrait, though is no more a portrait of the author than the bronze is a portrait of his wife.
The *Education*, then, stands between the author and the reader as the bronze figure stands between Adams's wife and the tourists. The reader/viewer tries to read the subject, but the representation prevents access since it is a substitution. Instead of reading the subject, then, the readers become "fascinated by their own reflections." The reader who probes "deeper" can see "only what he brought." Like the meaning of the statue, the subject of the autobiography is wholly opaque. Adams is displaced in the text by the historical caricature of himself, so Adams himself remains as unreadable as his wife is when read through the figure on her tomb.

Samuels says in his note on the bronze figure that the tomb it stands over is "nameless" and is known merely as the "Adams Memorial" (633). The bronze figure, then, eclipses even the name of the interred, and the grave comes to stand as a general memorial for "Adams." In a sense the uninscribed tomb is made to stand in the *Education* as the sign of Adams's own absence from the text.

That we are to see in John Hay's death at the end of the book a version of the writer's own death in the autobiography, Adams leaves little room for doubt. As he introduced the book to his friends, he called it "my last Will and Testament" (Ford, II, 477). And Adams would have us believe at the end of the *Education* that "life stopped"
(501) when he finished the book. The Education closes as he watches Hay's decline and death and knows "it was only a quiet summons to follow" (505). But the death Adams enacts for himself in his autobiography is the same form of death he projects for "the author" in the Editor's Preface: silence. "There it ended!" he says in the ultimate paragraph. "Shakespeare himself could use no more than the commonplace to express what is incapable of expression, 'The rest is silence!'" (504). The silencing of the author at the end has two implications on the autobiographical project. It makes any transcendental authority one may presume to stand behind the text unavailable to the reader since the author can say no more. We have only the artifact he leaves behind to stand for him. And since the Education "replaces" Adams's own face and voice, the book silences its author, offering itself instead of its original. We are cut off from Adams and confined to a confrontation with his autobiography.

On the other hand, this replacement of the author by his book implies that writing reconstitutes the author as a wholly new thing. In this sense writing becomes an "originary" activity. Freed from any obligatory reference to the author it eclipses, the autobiography comes to be about a self which originates in the play of language. The ontological implication is that the self represented in
autobiography takes shape as it is being written.

**Palimpsest**

The next question follows naturally: what is it that originates in the play of Adams's language? If it is a wholly new thing, separate from the author's own being, what is the "he" of the narrative and where does it come from? In the *Education*, "Adams" takes shape as a combination of fragmental material drawn from historical references, travel accounts, and reading, and the autobiographer's job is to edit that material into a "life." To the question, "what is the 'he' of the narrative?" one concludes that the "Henry Adams" we confront in the book is itself a text.

This text-like quality of the protagonist bears a similarity to the Teufelsdrockh figure in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, which was a kind of sourcebook for Adams (Adams invites the parallel by titling one of his own chapters "Teufelsdrockh"). In *Sartor Resartus*, "the Tailor Retailored," Carlyle suggests that the self is made (tailored), that it is humankind's own secular production. Like Adams (though treated more parodically), Carlyle's Teufelsdrockh exists as a chaos of autobiographical documents. Carlyle hints that his Teufelsdrockh is both author of the autobiographical documents and editor of them
under an assumed name, a relation to the text which precisely anticipates Adams's relation to the Education. The suggestion in both books is that the self is constructed out of fragments, that writing autobiographically is actually an editorial process. As Paul Jay points out, Carlyle foregrounds the editorial process, letting the reader watch the self take shape in editorial decisions. Adams, on the other hand, represents in his autobiography a reification of the editorial metaphor—making a manuscript of the self.

The textuality (and texturality) of the persona Adams presents is suggested in his metaphor of inscribing, marking or molding the self. While discussing his youth, Adams consistently represents the self as plastic, as passively accepting or at least ready to accept the imprint or inscription of his surrounding influences. He begins life "branded" by the Adams associations and is "warped beyond recovery" by this inheritance. The politics of his father bore its impression on him "at the moment when character is most plastic." The "stamp" on the young man is "indelible." The self is passive clay "ready to take any form that education was ready to cut into it." The metaphor describes a self that is identifiable only by the brands and stamps it bears. But as the
Education shows, the imprints Adams would receive would do little to form him. In fact, they would tend to deface him, leaving him with such a confusion of identities and influences that the self becomes overinscribed, a palimpsest. In the course of the Education, Adams is a student, professor, historian, newspaperman, private secretary, editor, economist, pamphleteer, politician, and "stable companion" of the influential. He identifies himself with Adam, Odysseus, Rasselas, Teufelsdrockh, Pendennis, Faust, and Hamlet among others. In his own authorly enterprise he fashions himself after Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, Gibbon, Rousseau, Carlyle, Macauley. The effect is that we read not about an individual but a "multiple." He bears the impression of every book he has ever read, every influence he has ever felt.\footnote{11}

This overinscription is what Adams wryly calls his "accidental education" (Chapter VI). Having planned an education that "led nowhere" (88) he then allows education to come to him. He would "take whatever chance fragments of education God or the devil was pleased to give him, for he knew no longer the good from the bad" (89). The self he posits is no longer that which makes choices but a self which merely drifts. But this education creates only a "tourist" (88). As a tourist he is a type of manikin of the educational sphere—the tourist is both anyone and no
one, a presence without an influence.

In London, Adams's lack of definition reflects the accidental nature of his construction: "The young man knew no longer what character he bore. Private secretary in the morning, son in the afternoon, young man about town in the evening" (194). The identities are competing and tend to fragment the self rather than integrate it. So, at twenty-eight, trying to be both an English gentleman and an American man of letters, he finds himself to be the copy of the two worst models available. He was "dragged on one side into English dilettantism, which of all dilettantism he held the most futile; and on the other, into American antiquarianism, which of all antiquarianism he held the most foolish" (222-23).

**Watermarks**

The ontological stance of passivity has implications on the autobiographical project because it posits not a life acted, but a life acted upon. The autobiographical subject becomes conflated with its influences. Adams touches this dilemma when he reflects on the imprint Harvard made on him: "its graduates could commonly be recognized by the stamp, but such a type of character rarely lent itself to autobiography. In effect, the school created a type but not a will. Four years of Harvard
College, if successful, resulted in an autobiographical blank, a mind on which only a watermark had been stamped" (55).

Harvard leaves the self unformed, or, as Adams's metaphor suggests, unwritten. The individual leaves Harvard literally a blank sheet of paper, with only a watermark to act as inscription. The passage suggests the "autobiographical" dilemma of the passive self, which Adams resolves by textualizing the self—he arranges and edits a self out of its numerous inscriptions. This makes the autobiography less about his life than about who and what has written his life. Therefore, the project results in a book that is written by others—scientists, presidents, revolutionaries, Boston, London, Berlin, Darwin, Augustine, Carlyle, and so on. The autobiography which results, like the author, is an amalgum of reminiscence, historiography, political commentary, scientific theory, cultural critique. It is itself a palimpsest written over by all the influences that "wrote" on the author-subject's sheet of paper. And the author-subject must then cut and paste together a story, a self.

In The Will to Power, Nietzsche suggests a view of the subject which closely articulates Adams's epistemology of the self. Nietzsche says that "the 'subject' is not something given" so much as it is "something added and
invented and projected behind what there is."\textsuperscript{12} It is assumed from what is observable. The self, then, is a construct. It does not exist in a state of ontological purity, at least in any knowable way, but rather is constituted in the assumptions of the very language used to identify it. Such self-constituting language as we get in autobiography raises questions about the self which are unanswered because the self will always remain an assumption "projected behind what there is." Paul de Man pursues this implication: "We assume that life produces the autobiography as an act produces consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?"\textsuperscript{13} Like Nietzsche, de Man suggests that the autobiographical subject arises from the very activity of "self-portraiture." The implication is that the self is a textual production. It is that which a reader can infer from the inscriptions on the blank sheet, as the Harvard watermark infers a certain character in Adams. What we typically get in autobiography, then, is an effort to write on the blank sheet of the self. What we get in the autobiography of a passive, plastic self, such as the
Education, is an effort to arrange those inscriptions which have been written on the blank. The activity proper to the Education, then, is not historical, not even creative, but editorial.

But the editing becomes complicated, as we have seen, as the influences--i.e., authors--multiply, and the palimpsest of the self becomes indecipherable. This very problem of deciphering is illustrated in the episode of the Rafael drawing (Chapter XIV) which stands as a critique on the problem of reading the Education itself.

On the advice of an art critic friend, Adams purchases a chalk sketch which the critic claims is a Rafael. The dealer who just purchased it in a parcel of drawings has no belief in its value and lets Adams have it for a few shillings. Holding his purchase to the light, Adams notices verses written on the back of the sketch. He takes it to the Curator of the British Museum to have it taken off its mount and deciphered. The Curator preemptorily says, "it's not Rafael!" Adams is at a loss as to whose authority to trust. After a week of study, however, the Curator informs Adams, "I should tell you that the paper shows a watermark which I find the same as that of paper used by Marc Antonio" (218). This response puzzles Adams. Not only does it leave the authorship of the sketch and inscription indeterminate, but Adams is "a little taken
aback by this method of studying art," a method that requires no particular learning or education at all. But though the Curator can read the watermark, he cannot read the inscription and sends Adams to the Keeper of the Manuscripts. The Keeper is unable to read the abbreviations and archaic forms through the crayon's scratchings and sends Adams to a famous bibliophile. The bibliophile, an expert in Italian manuscripts, can hardly recognize the ancient and unusual inscription, a key word of which he says is in some unknown language.

Having gone to the experts with a question about authenticity, he comes away not only without an answer, but without a comprehensible question. Each expert manages only to obfuscate the origin and meaning of the inscription and contradict the previous readings. The story concludes: "Adams himself never wanted to know more about it. He refused to seek further light. He never cared to learn whether the drawing was Rafael's, or whether the verses were Rafael's, or whether even the watermark was Rafael's" (219).

Of the different markings on the sketch Adams purchased--the sketch itself, the watermark, the verse inscription--none cast any light on the authenticity of the other markings nor even on their own authenticity. They could as easily be the markings of three different people,
Of the different markings on the sketch Adams purchased—the sketch itself, the watermark, the verse inscription—none cast any light on the authenticity of the other markings nor even on their own authenticity. They could as easily be the markings of three different people, none of whom could be known. Through the crayon scratching and archaic abbreviations, all the experts can be sure of deciphering properly is the watermark, though this only because of its likeness to a known watermark, not from its own authenticity. The problem of determining the sketch's authorship through the markings is like the problem of reading the authentic self through a record of its influences: all one learns is how the authority of either withdraws behind the superinscriptions. The problem of the passive self, then, is projecting an authentic self behind the palimpsest of influences which overlay it. And the farthest the reader can go in knowing this authentic self is identifying the "watermark" on the self—that is, only that about the self which likens it to other blank sheets so marked.

'A Marketable Object'

It is in his autobiographical function as self-editor that Adams must translate, arrange, and collate the chaotic inscriptions of the self into a story. He constructs
himself with fragments drawn from his origins, readings, wanderings and other acquisitions of his accidental education, and the self that emerges from this selection and combination is like an edition.

A fundamental implication of this editing process is rendering the self into language, that is, seeing the self as a language construct. On the historical level, his self-construction in language begins when Adams "takes to the pen" (66). Throughout the Education he is showing how he becomes a writer (and how the writer becomes language). His first attempts at authorship "seemed to him thin, commonplace, feeble . . . and he found that he had very little to say" (66). However, when he discovers that, through writing, "the habit of expression leads to the search for something to express," it is not long before he says, "the most useful purpose he set himself to serve was that of his pen" (89). Here, Adams reflects the Nietzschean premise that the subject takes its shape from the language used to think it into being. And just as de Man suggests that "the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life," Adams here is suggesting in his own autobiography the same relation between language and subject: the activity of writing itself fashions the subject. Autobiographical writing, then, becomes an originary activity. It involves not the revelation of the
self but its invention.

It is with this idea that he originates in the language used to describe himself that Adams begins to present himself in terms of his relation to textuality. As private secretary in London, he "copied the notes into his private books, and that was all the share he had in the matter... to his copying eye, as clerk, the words... merely stated a fact, without novelty, fancy, or rhetoric" (172-173). As a mere extension of the pen, he is both constituted and effaced in the function of transcribing words. His subjective investment in the language is still "thin, commonplace, feeble." It is not until he takes up a career with the press that Adams himself begins to take shape as he translates his accidental education into pieces for the press. He reasons: "Any man who was fit for nothing else could write an editorial or a criticism. The enormous mass of misinformation accumulated in ten years of nomad life could always be worked off on a helpless public" (211). "The enormous mass of misinformation" which comprises the subject is "worked off" in the form of newspaper pieces, and, eventually, in the form of an autobiography. His "nomad life" becomes a commodity by becoming a textual production.

The product-ness of the self in language is treated literally in the Education. Adams discovers himself in
various print avatars, such as the inclusion of his name and his Harvard career under the list of Adamses cited in *Appleton's Cyclopedia* (305), and in later life, his name "on scores of title-pages and in one or two biographical dictionaries" (326). These representations seem to take Adams as much by surprise as they do the reader. Before becoming a newspaperman, he had insisted that the subject he had to translate into words (himself) had "not much copy" (212). But then the copy-value of his nomad life occurs to him. "As a marketable object," he had little value himself, but he began to realize that his "accidental education, whatever its economical return might be, was prodigiously successful as an object in itself" (93).

Education measured with market values contributes to making the self into an object which can be worked off in the form of marketable writing.

When Adams returns to America with his stock of accidental education, "[h]e was for sale, in the open market" (240), "[h]e wanted to be bought . . . [h]is price was excessively cheap" (267). He had hoped Boston would "buy him as an investment" but discovered instead that "Boston seemed to offer no market for educated labor" (241).

The merchandising imagery suggests the relationship the self falls into when it becomes a textual product for
consumers, as it does in any autobiographical writing. 
Education comes to mean "value," self becomes "product" and 
writing becomes the means of "marketing" the product. The 
function of preparing it for the reading market belongs to 
the editor. That this kind of merchantile relationship 
with the textual product obtains for Adams is suggested in 
the cynicism with which he views his experience as editor 
of the North American Review: "The secrets of success as an 
editor were easily learned; the highest was that of getting 
advertisements. Ten pages of advertisement made an editor 
a success; five marked him as a failure. The merits or 
demerits of his literature had little to do with his 
results" (308).

Autobiography and Romance

The relation between the self as product and writing 
as self-production suggests that autobiographical 
epistemology incorporates the activity of ontogenesis. 
Because Adams is not just producing a book but producing a 
self, the artistic concerns he expresses for his book-
fashioning are conflated with those of his self-fashioning.

His letters indicate the formal concerns he had with 
the construction of the Education. He wrote to William 
James that "it interests me chiefly as a literary 
experiment" and points out that "your brother Harry tries
such experiments in literary art daily" (Ford, II, 490). The remark has an echo in the Education itself which qualifies the experiment he means: "Henry James . . . taught the world to read a volume for the pleasure of seeing the lights of his burning-glass turned on alternate sides of the same figure" (163). Though Adams's own literary experiment undertook to "complete St. Augustine's Confessions," he chose this model for similar reasons he cites Henry James: "St. Augustine alone has an idea of literary form,—a notion of writing a story with an end and object, not for the sake of the object, but for the form, like a romance" (Ford, II, 490). The form he wants is one he calls "romance," for he suggests, somewhat ingenuously, I think, that "the nearer you come to romance the more chance that someone will read--and understand" (513).

Adams, of course, is not the first to suggest that historiography bears an aesthetic similarity with romance. In The Use and Abuse of History (1873), Nietzsche raises the notion of the aesthetic origin of history, and instead of explaining away the historiographer's role in shaping history, Nietzsche affirms and privileges its aesthetic origin by insisting that it was the historiographer's purpose to be artistic and creative rather than pretend to be objective. The past is unavailable to the historian since it exists only in representations of unknowable
authenticity, so the historian creates an artificially true version of the past. He puts elements together in a way that creates an impression, like a romance.\(^{15}\) Adams takes this rule one step further by showing, in the *Education*, that the past is also unavailable to the autobiographer in any kind of knowable authenticity. The point is elaborately drawn in Chapter X, "Political Morality."

Reading the memoirs of certain English statesmen he had known during the Civil War, Adams learns things that "upset all that Henry Adams had taken for diplomatic education" (175). His faith in the integrity of Russell, Palmerston, and Gladstone in 1862 is reversed forty years later after reading their letters, diaries and "Lives." The biographical records show Adams how false the English were in 1862, but also how false their biographical representations are. He finds in the "Lives" of the statesmen "the sum of contradictions" (164). They paint their deceits as being the requirements of statesmanship and butcher their own facts when they "mixed up policy, speech, motives, and persons" (176) in their recollections. The implication for history, and for life-history, is to obfuscate an authentic version of the past, even the personal past. What is history (or education? or the self?) if it is forever subject to the kind of revision Adams finds himself making? His father had gone to his
grave believing "certainties" about the English which Henry would learn were false. The lesson this holds for Adams is vivid: one can no more assume knowledge of the events of the past by having lived them than by having read about them. So, the epistemology of autobiography is no more reliable or incontrovertible than that of historiography. Nietzsche had likened history to fiction or drama. No less than with history, the events of autobiography take shape and become known only as they are being narrated. Autobiography, like historiography, privileges the shaping, composing, editing process rather than any absolute quality of the thing being shaped. This is why Adams could say of the Education, "[t]he arrangement, the construction, the composition, the art of climax are my only serious study" (512). In fact, Adams suggests repeatedly in the Education that it is not the actual past so much as the imaginative reconstitution of the past he is concerned with. He says about his first trip to Washington, "the actual journey may have been quite different, but the actual journey has no interest for education. The memory was all that mattered" (43). When he recounts the duplicity of the English during the Civil War, he looks for an aesthetic quality: "The old-fashioned logical drama required unity and sense; the actual drama is a pointless puzzle, without even an intrigue" (156-57). In both instances, and throughout the
Education, Adams brackets the actual events in order to privilege the way they are reconstituted.

At Harvard, he sees the reasons for privileging the form of history over its content: "A teacher must either treat history as a catalogue, a record, a romance, or as an evolution" because the object itself is "incoherent and immoral." Content follows the form it is given: the teacher "makes of his scholars either priests or atheists, plutocrats or socialists, judges or anarchists" (300-01) depending on the construction he places on the content. The narratizing function of the historian (or writer), then, creates what is "known," which in turn shapes a reader to itself.

Before he was able to write The Education of Henry Adams, Adams claims to have "toiled in vain" to write a history which did not create its content by narratizing it. The work was the History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison. He tells us, "[h]istorians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect." In order to avoid the trap of assuming a relation of cause and effect, he wrote his History "to see whether, by the severest process of stating; with the least possible comment, such facts as seemed sure, in such order as seemed rigorously consequent, he could fix for a
familiar moment a necessary sequence of human movement" (382). That he could not accomplish this in his History shows him that historiography and autobiography are as inevitably the constructs of narrative as fiction or poetry.

Sequence, order, unity are the "romances" of historiography and autobiography. As Nietzsche had done, Adams affirms and privileges this aesthetic epistemology, for, as he says, "he really did not care whether truth was, or was not, true. He did not even care that it should be proved true unless the process were new and amusing" (231-32). And Adams himself subverts the relationship between the truths and the facts of history. He warns us "[t]he historian must not try to know what is truth, if he values his honesty; for, if he cares for his truths, he is certain to falsify his facts" (457).

Autobiography attempts to conflate two incompatible epistemologies, the empirical and the aesthetic. In writing at all, the historian/autobiographer has already made his choice which one to privilege. The epistemology inherent to writing arises from the work of writing itself: "The pen works for itself, and acts like a hand, modelling the plastic material over and over again to the form that suits it best. The form is never arbitrary, but is a sort of growth like crystallization, as any artist knows too
Romance, as Adams infers its definition, suggests the way the mind shapes and constructs its object as it forms it into language. The autobiographer, in writing a book, is necessarily crystallizing a form for the "millions of chance images stored away without order in the memory" (353). Adams goes on to show us that the whole of his education taught him the method of romance. He quotes Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science* (around which Adams fashions a chapter): "'Order and reason, beauty and benevolence, are characteristics and conceptions which we find solely associated with the mind of man... In the chaos behind sensations, we cannot infer necessity, order or routine, for these are concepts formed by the mind of man on this side of sense-impressions'" (450-51). The necessity, order, and relation found in an autobiography are the constructs of the language used to crystallize the narrative. Mind function lends its own order and form to the reality it purports to describe, and therefore constitutes the reality. Adams sought an education in science and history hoping to find a "formula which should satisfy the conditions of the stellar universe" (376). Instead of this formula, the universe the scientists showed him, by their own admission, was "an Eden of their own invention" (459). Likewise, it was as though the
historian, too, "was a dramatist, a painter, a poet" (421). Everywhere he turned, Adams discovered the same aesthetic principle: "the mind existed in a universe of its own creation" (460).

Adams makes this aesthetic principle the epistemological basis of his autobiographical project. As the historians and scientists invent a universe that posits their own assumptions of sequence, order, and unity, so too Adams invents a narrative the very organization of which posits a self. The ostensible plot Adams lends to his life is the pursuit of education. A narrative involving the pursuit of education tends to posit a student as its subject; a student is "docile" (55) in the presence of those influences which form him; Henry Adams, therefore, becomes docile and effaced in accommodation to the education plot he uses to structure his narrative. The self-effacement which characterizes the protagonist, then, is a projection of the demands of narration.

The aesthetic principle—that autobiographical narrative shapes and constructs the self as it forms it into language—consequently "deconstructs" Adams's own claim to passive selfhood. The passive self that the Education figures is a version of himself Adams constructs through tropological choices incumbent in the act of narration. He invents a plot which shows himself to be the
passive product of universal and chaotic forces. He even posits an elaborate post facto theory of history, purporting the passivity of mind in the universal chaos, in order to cover up his subject's inventedness. But in so inventing, he undermines his own claim to passivity and authorizes instead the aesthetic assumption in which the autobiographical enterprise has its birth. Instead of discovering a formula which shapes all (including Henry Adams) to itself, he has done the reverse: "invent[ed] a formula of his own for his universe" (472). The irony of tropological constitution which allows Adams to write about himself in the third-person, then, is the mere rhetorical adumbration of that irony more accurately termed existential: that of a writer fashioning a version of selfhood which shows the writer incapable of self-fashioning.
CHAPTER FOUR

"PAPERS," NOTES, AND LETTERS:
READING HENRY JAMES READING IN NOTES OF A SON AND BROTHER

The Aspern Papers

There could be no Venetian business without patience, and since I adored the place I was much more in the spirit of it for having laid in a large provision. That spirit kept me perpetual company and seemed to look out at me from the revived immortal face—in which all his genius shone—of the great poet who was my prompter. I had invoked him and he had come; he hovered before me half the time; it was as if his bright ghost had returned to earth to assure me he regarded the affair as his own no less than as mine and we should see it fraternally and fondly to a conclusion. It was as if he had said: "Poor dear, be easy with her; she has some natural prejudices; only give her time. Strange as it may appear to you she was very attractive in 1820. Meanwhile are n't we in Venice together, and what better place is there for the meeting of dear friends?" [...] I felt even a mystic companionship, a moral fraternity with all those
who in the past had been in the service of art. They had worked for beauty, for a devotion; and what else was I doing? That element was in everything Jeffrey Aspern had written, and I was only bringing it to light.

I lingered in the sala when I went to and fro; I used to watch—as long as I thought decent—the door that led to Miss Bordereau's part of the house. A person observing me might have supposed I was trying to cast a spell on it or attempting some odd experiment in hypnotism. But I was only praying it might open or thinking what treasure probably lurked behind it. I hold it singular, as I look back, that I should never have doubted for a moment that the sacred relics were there; never have failed to know the joy of being beneath the same roof with them. After all they were under my hand—they had not escaped me yet; and they made my life continuous, in a fashion, with the illustrious life they had touched at the other end. I lost myself in this satisfaction to the point of assuming [...] that poor Miss Tina also went back, and still went back, as I used to phrase it. She did indeed, the gentle spinster, but not quite so far as Jeffrey Aspern, who was
simple hearsay to her quite as he was to me. Only she had lived for years with Juliana, she had seen and handled all mementoes and--even though she was stupid--some esoteric knowledge had rubbed off on her. That was what the old woman represented--esoteric knowledge; and this was the idea with which my critical heart used to thrill.

--from The Aspern Papers

The role of the narrator in this passage from The Aspern Papers (1888) is suggestive of the narrative and commemorative role its author, Henry James, later plays when he writes his own memoir, Notes of a Son and Brother (1914). This latter work, the second installment in a projected autobiography, presents the author's remembrances of his father and brother, among other intimates, mainly through the device of their letters. In Notes, as in The Aspern Papers, letters form a cathexis for the narrator's desire for the absent writer. In both works, letters are "sacred relics" and come to enjoy the mystique of originality and self-presence. The dead letters are treated as though they were alive and had speech--a figure of prosopopeia. Through various figurative strategies, employed in Notes and dramatized in the above passage from
The Aspern Papers, James attributes to the objects of written language the voice and visibility associated with presence, thereby denying the secondary or "supplementary" status of writing. And in the process he is able to reinvent and reinterpret his origin as an act of reading and writing. Certain structural and rhetorical coincidences between the two texts, one fiction, the other ostensibly nonfiction, make the earlier tale a good place with which to start a discussion of James's myth of literary origins.

The Aspern Papers presents the story of an unnamed editor, a "publishing scoundrel" (118) who, on the basis of various pretenses, attempts to inveigle the love letters of a long deceased poet, Jeffrey Aspern, from the poet's former mistress, now an ancient spinster. What is of particular interest is the way the letters of the poet are given the status of a self-authenticating meaning in the story through the trope of prosopopeia. The writing of the poet is made to stand for a full recovery of the original. The figure of the deceased poet "speaking" through the letters accords perfectly with Paul de Man's definition of prosopopeia as "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech." In the passage above, the narrator's imaginary
apostrophe to Aspern's letters calls up what seems to be the presence of the poet himself.

The narrator is himself a critic and biographer of Aspern and desires the poet's "literary remains" (12) in order to complete his "Life" of the poet. But more important than this is his desire to recreate through some sort of communion with the letters a version of Aspern that will serve him in a relationship of complementarity—the complementarity of reader and writer, of poet and critic, of literary progenitor and descendant. The boundaries between reader and writer, even between text and commentary, begin to blur, as do the boundaries here of the real and the imaginary. Even though the narrator declares his motives as promoting the cause of Aspern's reputation ("we had done more for his memory than anyone else," 6), he seems to covet a private, imaginary relationship with the poet. The love letters, the last unpublished remnants of Aspern, become for the narrator a physical extension of the poet and make the narrator's life "continuous, in a fashion, with the illustrious life they had touched at the other end." The letters embody an ideal Aspern—not the Aspern who loved and wrote them to Juliana Bordereau, but the Aspern the narrator himself invents for his complement, that is, for his "Life" of the poet, which, through their relationship of complementarity, is the narrator's own
"Life" too. The kind of "reading" the narrator performs (here largely invention) posits an act of co-creation between reader and writer, where the reader feels his life "continuous" with that of the writer and the writer is restored to full presence in the reader.

Because they are cathected with the narrator's desire for this invented Aspern, the letters interpose a more desirable or surrogate text between the narrator and the original. In his meditation on the "spirit" of Venice above, the narrator has successfully recovered the Aspern he has idealized. "That spirit kept me perpetual company," he says, "and seemed to look out at me from the revived immortal face . . . of the great poet" (an unmistakeable prosopopeial). The poet is very tangibly recovered to both sight and hearing: "he hovered before me half the time . . . to assure me he regarded the affair as his own no less than as mine and that we should see it fraternally and fondly to a conclusion." So in this passage, the same voice and visage which authored the letters seem to authorize them from on high as the authentic embodiment of that very voice and visage. In this vertiginous looping of voice and text, the letters are privileged as the self-authenticating presence of the writer.

So real is the image of Aspern that he speaks through it, and what he says concerns not the content of the
letters (the expression in them of Aspern's love for Juliana since, naturally, the narrator does not care for that relation), but instead focuses on the fraternal bond he feels with the narrator. The reciprocal specularity the narrator and Aspern share as reader and writer, then, shapes them to each other. That is, the narrator wants Aspern to himself and so projects his own desire onto the writer. Thus, the letters, the surrogate text of Aspern himself, come to life and tell of the poet's desire for the narrator instead of for Juliana: "Poor dear, be easy with her; she has some natural prejudices; only give her time. Strange as it may appear to you she was very attractive in 1820. Meanwhile, are n't we in Venice together, and what better place is there for the meeting of dear friends?" By projecting Aspern's desire for himself into Aspern's words, the narrator is in a sense read by the poet (the kind of loving reading the narrator affords is anticipated by Aspern in his own letters). Encoded in Aspern's voice, and therefore in the letters, is the kind of reader he wants, which now happens to be the narrator.

This direct, unmediated relationship he enjoys with Aspern occurs in the narrator's imagination, but by the same imaginary process, the commonplace obstacles that separate him from his objects also become part of the "text" of Aspern he desires. Just as the letters which
mark the poet's absence are cathected with the narrator's desire and themselves become surrogate objects of desire, so too do the obstacles which separate him from the letters become cathected with desire as signs of the letters' existence and are therefore incorporated into the expanded "text" of his reading. "I used to watch—as long as I thought decent—the door that lead to Miss Bordereau's part of the house. A person observing me might have supposed I was trying to cast a spell on it or attempting some odd experiment in hypnotism. But I was only praying it might open or thinking what treasure probably lurked behind it."

He is, in effect, observed in the act of reading, or "reading into" as James would later put it. In the act of reading his desire into the text, the reader posits the text's "treasure" and therefore posits the text. Reading, here, takes on a metaphorical function of conjuration, as by spells or hypnotism. That is, reading conjures a writer, conjures meaning, conjures, in effect, writing. And so the "text" expands to meet the reader's desire. In this way, Venice, the palace, the sala, the door, even Juliana and Tina themselves become embued with the same aura of Aspern's presence that the letters enjoy, and become, for that one reader, part of the text he reads because they signify a meaning he conjures in them.

Through their possession of the papers, the Misses
Bordereaux can offer the narrator something of the same order of gratification in displacement that the letters can offer him in the place of Aspern. For the narrator, contact with Aspern's former lover means the opportunity to "look into a single pair of eyes into which his had looked or to feel a transmitted contact in [the] aged hand that his had touched" (8). When he first meets Juliana, he longs to hold "the hand Jeffrey Aspern had pressed" (30) and thinks while she speaks that her "individual note had been in Jeffrey Aspern's ear" (25). The absent author becomes embodied through her, so she takes Aspern's place for the narrator. But also, it is now the narrator whose ear contains the note of Juliana's voice and he who longs to look into her eyes, so the narrator takes Aspern's place with Juliana. He now occupies the space of desire for both of the lovers. Consequently, he confesses to having the feelings of the lovers: "as she sat there before me my heart beat as fast as if the miracle of resurrection had taken place for my benefit" (23). Even Tina, for whom Aspern is "simple hearsay," embodies the poet if only because she has "handled all mementoes" of the author, from which, it can be supposed, "some esoteric knowledge had rubbed off on her." Like the letters, the Misses Bordereaux are stamped with the presence of Aspern. In effect, they are themselves "texts" in the economy of reader-writer
desire. They, too, are the "literary remains" of Aspern.

That the narrator treats the Misses Bordereaux as though they were (textual) objects is, of course, the blind spot in him that leads to his fall. He is, therefore, stubbornly resistant to the letters' context, which can be assumed to express the kind of affection and intimacy that threatens the image of the idealized Aspern he has created for his own "Life." In order to preserve that image, and to preserve his "exclusive" relationship with Aspern as the privileged reader Aspern wants, the narrator is forced to divorce the letters from their content. The letters come to be purely fetishistic, representing not what they are but what his desire makes them. So far from being the sympathetic reader of them (sympathetic to their message of love), he is instead the appropriating reader, the reader who will cannily read (or misread) the text in order to safeguard his reading (and "his" writer). Though they are a primary text within the novel, the letters are known only in the narrator's inferences about them. Since he never reads them nor do Juliana or Tina ever mention their content, this condition of his power of creation over the text (and over Aspern) is preserved.

It is, then, with "a critical heart" that the narrator approaches his task. The critic's job of work, the tale implies, is just this exercise of power over the text and
over the author—the power of imagination the reader exercises over the writer in the text. This is why the narrator's affair requires "the nerves of an editor" (9). The narrator's acts of appropriation blur the boundaries between himself and Aspern, between the text and the commentary on the text.

Papers and Notes

The Aspern Papers provides an "allegory of reading" (homage a de Man) which is reenacted in James's own memoir, Notes of a Son and Brother. This latter volume is ostensibly an autobiography but is made up mostly of reminiscences of James's father and older brother, with portraits of others along the way. These portraits follow almost entirely from reading old letters. James reproduces scores of letters in entirety or in part and comments extensively on their authors. The rhetoric of this volume is unique among James's autobiographical works in its use of other people's writing, and so it projects into reality the type of book the narrator of The Aspern Papers had planned in his "Life" of Aspern. Moreover, the relationship James establishes with the letters in his volume, and therefore with "his" letter-writers, shows him to be reprising the role the narrator played in The Aspern Papers. Both narrate the story surrounding the reading (or
acquisition) of letters. Both narrators embue these letters with the mystique of originality and self-presence through the metaphors of voice and visibility. Both narrators establish a reciprocating desire with the letters' originals in which reader and writer enjoy a relationship of complementarity. Both, consequently, enact (even celebrate) a reading of their texts which permit acts of appropriation consistent with their role as critical readers, and both therefore promote a blurring of boundaries between text and commentary, making their acts of reading into acts of creation.

Origins: The Father in the Text, Part I

It is in the act of reading as an act of creation in Notes that we can decipher James's attempt to reinvent a myth of origins, to subsume a historiographic version of his origins to a myth of literary origin stemming from the co-creating act of reading other people's writing. This new myth of literary origin encounters the historical obstacle of his father. Notes is centrally about this encounter and about James's attempt to appropriate and control the absent father (by means of reading his written remains) much as the narrator of The Aspern Papers attempts to appropriate Aspern by acquiring the letters.

The issue of James's "supplementarity" is key to his
autobiographical project. An autobiography is fundamentally the pursuit of knowledge of the self's origination. But the pursuit of the self's origin implies an acknowledgement of the self's secondary, or supplementary, status, for if the self has an original, that original must have priority in time. Priority in time is the source of the father's power over the child and over the child's autobiography. The problem of the father's priority is formalized in the structure of Notes. Just as, in biographical terms, the child is supplemental to the parent, so too, in rhetorical terms, are James's "notes" supplemental to the letters he reproduces. In both ways, then, the self's originality is usurped by the father. The search for origins ensures the secondary status of the searcher.

Because autobiography narrates the self's origin, the issue of paternity has implications for both the writer and the narrative. Something of these implications are encoded in the title Notes of a Son and Brother, in which deference to the father is acknowledged. The father's priority in time, then, militates his priority in the narrative.

The function which psychoanalysis appoints to the father is the binding of the son's desire to the father's law. This is essential for the son's achievement of selfhood. Following Jacques Lacan's redaction of Freud's
Oedipal drama, the father presents an obstacle to the fulfillment of the son's incestuous desire. He bars the son's access to the mother, but he also prevents the mother's exclusive possession of the son, because, again, the father has priority in that relationship. The father thus releases the son from the rivalry of the family circle and allows him to move on to other object-choices. This facilitates the son's entry into the wider world of social relations. The father's role, then, is that of interdictor through whose authority order and hierarchy are maintained, both within and without the family. The son's desire seeks complete satisfaction in its object. In the Oedipal scene, this "object" is the mother. Because it meets the resistance of the father, this desire must seek satisfaction in substitutes, conforming to the paternal law. The "no" of the father's prohibition, then, directs the son into a relationship with the father instead of the mother, where the son now desires to conform to the father's will. The successful repression of his desire for the mother encourages in the son a symbolic identification with the father, the "symbolic father," or figure of the law. In this way, the son's desire is bound to the law. So the biological father (whose only contribution to the drama is his seed and is therefore quickly removed) is not as important as the symbolic father, what Jacques Lacan
calls "the name-of-the-father," whose function is to enforce the law, that is, bar access to the mother and thereby force the child's entry into other object-choices. The downside for the son in this transference is that it reasserts the father's priority, which usurps the son's originality, which forces the son into a "supplementary" status. This same symbolic father, the enforcer of the law in the Oedipal scene, usurps priority in the literary text as well. The relations governing the Oedipal scene can be used as a paradigm for textuality in what can be called the "psychoanalytic anthropomorphism of the text." Since the father is now cathected with the desire of the son, paternal absence serves a structural function in the evocation of a lack (the lack the narrative tries to make up for). Awareness of paternal absence, then, controls the text by invoking the expression of desire for what is missing. Consequently, the narrative becomes dependent on the structural absence that initiates it. As Roland Barthes puts it, "Death of the Father would deprive literature of many of its pleasures. If there is no longer a Father, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus? Isn't story telling always a way of searching for one's origin, speaking one's conflicts with the Law, entering into a dialectic of tenderness and hatred?"
The son is again restrained in his sphere of action by the law of the father. In the text, this paternal restraint is accomplished by the control the father's absence has over the son's narrative. Desire to know one's origins equates with desire for the absent father, since the father figures to be those origins. This makes the son's narrative of self always already tributary to the father. "Without his father, [the son] would be nothing but, in fact, writing," suggests Jacques Derrida. "The specificity of writing would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father." Barthes and Derrida's readings of the place of the father in the text parallel the position of the father in the Freudian Oedipal. Paternal priority is the principle according to which the text unfolds and constitutes a structural pretext for autobiographical writing.

Priority in time is the source of the father's power over the son and over the son's narrative. Writing, then, is a continual reminder to the son of how little power and freedom he has over his own text. This, of course, is a source of anxiety and resentment on the part of the son. Even though the son desires the absent father, the perpetual control the symbolic father (who is never absent) exercises over the son is resented. The relationship with the father will always have this ambivalence. For this
reason, as Harold Bloom postulates, the writer experiences the same sublimated and guilty hatred of the father for his control over the narrative that the son experiences in the symbolic family. Consequently, the writer/son's will to expression finds subtle and artistic forms of displacement, or defensive tropes, which simultaneously disguise and indirectly articulate the will to be self-begotten and original, the will to deny prior authority. 7

This same defensive troping occurs in the rhetoric of Notes. Just as in The Aspern Papers the narrator denies his secondary status to the poet by re-positing a complementary relationship through acts of appropriation consistent with his vocation as critic, so too does the narrator of Notes reclaim an equal status with his originals (the letter-writers) by replacing the rhetoric of documentation with the rhetoric of his own reading experience. A relationship of complementarity with his originals offers James a structure which releases him from a secondary status and gives him a way of appropriating for his own activity—reading and writing literary texts—an originary ontology.

Deconstructing the Rhetoric of Documentation

It is important that one recognizes James's role as critic in Notes, that is, his role as the reader who
appropriates for himself the seemingly autonomous text he reads. James leads the reader away from this recognition in two ways: by the title of the volume and by its epistolary format, a format which purports the rhetoric of documentation.

The volume's title, Notes of a Son and Brother, veils a gap between the apparent topic and the textual dynamics which govern that topic. The objectivity-claim of the author (the author's claim to being himself the object of the autobiography) is undermined in the title by the apparent effacement of the author. The focus of the volume is presumably the father and brother implicated in the title with the author reduced to a mere point of reference to them (the author is their "Son and Brother"). Furthermore, the volume represents the "Notes" of the already effaced autobiographer. In two ways, then, the author is constituted as supplementary in the book—supplementary to the book's concerns with Henry Senior and William, as well as others, and in the supplementarity of the notes added to their texts (their letters). The title insists on the instability of the autobiographical claim of the volume, which is the author's claim to priority in that volume. The primary text in the autobiographical text is no longer "himself" but the letters of his intimates. Twice in Notes James reiterates his purpose as
"commemorative" or "commemoration" (259, 408), emphasizing this supplementary function.

The deferential posture taken in the title is reified in the volume's epistolary format. Ten of its thirteen chapters are structured wholly or in part around the letters of James's family members and their correspondents. None of the letters is written by the volume's author and only a handful are addressed to him. So much of Notes develops from other people's subjectivities that a common critical view of the volume is that "the important roles are all assigned to others" while the author remains "shadowy and dim by comparison." On the surface, then, Notes resembles the "Family Book" of remembrances James originally intended to write. Leon Edel points out that the early working title for Notes was "Early Letters of William James with Notes by Henry James." The volume, in structure and in intent, is ostensibly more commemorative than autobiographic. Henry James's contribution (and therefore claim to authorship) comes in the form of the interepistolary comments with which he tries to link (often against chronology) one set of letters with the next. This rhetoric keeps the reader's primary attention trained on the writers of the letters rather than on the writer of the volume, who is now only a reader of the letters. James's autobiographical object-claim is disturbed by this
contorted specularity. He situates himself outside the book's focus—with the reader, reading the letters of family members. It is this rhetoric of documentation that makes his role seem supplementary. James becomes the center of the story only once in Notes, in what he refers to as "a long parenthesis" (427). In this "parenthesis" (chapter nine), he departs from the epistolary format and from his commemorative duties to recount three events from his own life: his decision to go to law school, the incursion of his "obscure hurt" (415), and his visit to the Civil War wounded, all legitimately autobiographical in content. However, the parenthetical, he seems to suggest, can be elided from the "predicate" of the volume without loss of meaning. With the author's life literally bracketed in his own autobiography, James turns the life-story inside out. The author's object-claim is now a fold in the story being unfolded through the letters, and it is enfolded in one of the longer of the many supplemental passages which move the story of the letters forward. Instead of a story in itself, his life is inscribed in the foreground of a frame narrative which invites the reader to gaze with him at "other matters and other lives" (410), lives documented and stabilized by the reproduction of the letters. Other evidence, however, suggests a reading of Notes contrary to this guided
reading. A memoir based on the letters of those figures being remembered purports a certain documentary authority, but the fact that Henry James altered the letters he presents points to purposes other than commemoration or documentation. Answering criticism from his nephew that he had made changes in William's letters in Notes, James asserts his prerogative as a critical reader (rather than as a historian), claiming he had all along been guided by a "spirit and a vision as far removed as possible from my mere isolated documentation of your father's record." Instead, the purpose of his narrative was to be "a reflection of all the amenity and felicity of our young life at the time at the highest pitch that was consistent with perfect truth." The "perfect truth" which sanctioned the alterations simply was (as James says) "my truth." The past was there "to do what I would with." The factual materials of documentation (like the fixed text of a letter) are subject to his shaping hand, so the story of others is really the story of his shaping of these others. Henry James, Sr., William, Wilky, and Mary Temple, his chief letter-writers, may have existed to the world as historical personages in their own right, but as intimates of the author, they are figures in the author's memory and become personages in his book, the same way Aspern is confiscated by the piratical narrator in the earlier tale.
His selection and alteration of the letters shows that the epistolary "documentation" is made to serve the themes of James's story of himself. In short, the selection is autobiographic in intention and not commemorative. Despite the supplementarity of his role as suggested in the title and in the deferential rhetoric of documentation implied in the epistolary format, James's activity in *Notes* complements those letters rather than supplements them. "James's story of himself" in the memoir is one which is evasive and ambiguous enough to have fueled much speculation. James's critics and biographers have offered numerous versions of "the story" to be found in *Notes*, operating themselves in the same appropriating manner with James that the narrator of *The Aspern Papers* does with his idol. Most of these versions, important as they are to James scholarship, tend to privilege the power of priority rather than the autobiography's originary activity. Leon Edel, whose five volume biography planted the seeds for all of the following readings, sees a story that acts as an antedote to the numerous disappointments in James's life at the time of composition (failing health, depression, professional setbacks) by allowing James the chance to resolve old family tensions. Conversely, Donna Pryzbylowicz delves behind the deliberately idealized picture of childhood relations in *Notes* and reads the
unconscious repression of the feelings of rivalry and inadequacy which Edel sees as being resolved. Robert Sayre argues, like Edel, that Notes was motivated by a desire for healing old and new wounds, but contends the work is basically elegiac, celebrating what has been irretrievably lost. He goes on to observe, however, that Notes "contains more the matter of his literary apprenticeship than the history of his boyhood," giving rise to the type of reading that sees Notes as the story of the artist's development. Jane Tompkins, like Sayre, sees James performing "rituals of commemoration," but ones in which James is able imaginatively "to merge with the creatures of his memory," making Notes a story of personal "salvation." Carol Holly, also following Edel and Sayre, reads Notes as a story of "redemption" in which the author could "make use of and make up for all of boyhood's suffering" by redeeming it through art. The autobiographical function of this boyhood suffering, according to Paul John Eakin, is to serve a personal myth of transcendence. For Eakin, Notes thematizes the isolation of the author's youth in order to show the part isolation played in James's artistic development. Basically, these readings see James as making peace with the past; they read in him a motive consistent with the passivity of James's own self-representation in Notes.
None of these readings, however, accounts for the single most important structural feature of *Notes*: James's use of the letters to tell his own story. His use of letters as a narrative device has been completely ignored in the critical literature, yet it forms the most obvious cathexis in James's desire for originality. In chapter nine, the "long parenthesis" in the book in which James describes in detail the manuevers and effacements surrounding his (non)commitment to a law career, James admits what the theme of his story in *Notes* is: "What I 'wanted to want' to be was, all ultimately, just literary" (413). The object of the author's desire posits an autobiographical subject which is not passive but highly defined. This subject is inscribed in the autobiography in the "design of becoming as 'literary' as might be" (475). His story is one of literary generation. He rewrites a myth of origins which conflates personal and literary geneology. The concern, then, is how he uses letters as a defensive trope to inscribe his literary autobiography.

**Writing and Self-Presence**

The desire to be "literary," then, is nothing other than the desire to read and be read, the desire to be seen in letters, seen as letters, as opposed to being seen in "mere life" (411). In *Notes*, as in *The Aspern Papers*,
letters become the privileged form of discourse, disturbing the gap between the writer's absence and his or her presence. Consequently, James expresses the feeling throughout *Notes* that the letter represents the writer. When James opens the "door into the limbo of old letters, charged with their exquisite ghostly appeal," he experiences the "recoverable charm" (263) of each writer. James is affected, for instance, by a letter of William's which "touches its contemporary scene and hour into an intensity of life for him" (317). Amid his brother's letters, James declares, "I can really keep my hand from nothing, of whatever connection, that causes his intensity of animation and spontaneity of expression to revive" (321). Within the letters lingers his brother's "fitful hovering presence" (322). Since the writer is "recoverable" in the letters, he is present as a letter in the text. Rather than displacing the brother, the letter replaces him in the text.

The writers, consequently, take on a visible and audible presence for James in his act of reading, making the letters a living part of the writer through prosopopeia. For instance, James discovers his father's "very voice . . . in a letter to R.W. Emerson" (344). Minnie Temple, he says, "is expressed to my vision in every word" of her letters (530). The desire James attaches to
letters is not to their content but to their tone. "His tone," he remarks while reviewing his father's letters, "always so effectually looks out, and the living parts of him so singularly hung together" (373). James offers the letters out of chronological order and is little concerned with their context. Through his sensitivity to tone, James hints that the letters (and written language in general) embody an authentic or self-contained plentitude of meaning. Tone is the quality in written language which allows James to reduce writing to a stable meaning equated with the character of speech. Tone, voice, or even visibility become metaphors of truth and authenticity, a source of "living" speech as opposed to the secondary and lifeless characteristics of writing. In spoken language, the implication is, meaning is "present" (there is an immediate fit between utterance and speaker). Letters (or any texts) are accorded by James this same status of self-authenticating meaning and truth. They enjoy the mystique of originality. The suggestion, made ubiquitously in Notes, is that the tone of a letter is charged with the presence of the writer and therefore embodies the writer. It denies absence by denying the difference between the writer and the writing.

After presenting a brief letter written by his father, James unequivocally erases the difference between letter
Almost all my dear father is there, making the faded page to-day inexpressibly touching to me; his passionate tenderness . . . and his beautiful fresh individual utterance, always so stamped with the very whole of him. The few lines make for me, after all the years, a sort of silver key, so exquisitely fitting, to the treasure of living intercourse. (269-70)

Letters form a visual and audible cathexis in James's economy of differences. The autobiographical hole left by the absence of the writer is filled by the "whole of him" in his letter. The letter is the signifier of desire, the signifier of that which the writer means to the reader ("living intercourse"). However, while appearing to promote the metaphors of voice and self-presence as the metaphysical origin of the writer, James is actually appropriating these for writing. So James reverses the dictum (endemic to Western metaphysics according to Derrida) that devalues writing as imitative. He denies the secondary or "supplementary" character of writing, by which the supplement signifies the lack of the author's presence, and compensates for that lack by erasing the relationship of difference between writer and writing. Writing does not destroy the authenticity of the utterance since writing is
no less authentic than direct speech in its ability to convey a "living intercourse" with the speaker. So what seems in Notes to be a nostalgic craving for origins and presence by James is really an assertion of the primacy of writing. Far from proving "presence" to be the exclusive quality of the original and the letters to be the mere instrument of memory, Notes confirms the priority of the "supplement" (the letters) and the illusory character of all such myths of originality.

Desire and Complementarity

The word "treasure" in the passage cited above ("the treasure of living intercourse") suggests the way language is charged with the desire of the reader, much as the same word is used in the passage cited from The Aspern Papers ("But I was only praying it might open or thinking what treasure probably lurked behind it"). The reiteration of this word in contexts surrounding letters points to the identical relationship the two narrators have with their desired texts. The narrator of The Aspern Papers frequently describes his role in terms of his basic piracy: "I can arrive at my spoils only by putting her off her guard" (11-12). The narrator of Notes, though more delicate in sensibility, is no less acquisitive. He is, as he says, "a hunter, for charm" (281). Since writing
responds to and fulfills their desire for the absent, the narrators plunder writing's compensatory plentitude.

Though James disclaims any rationale for his selection of the letters he includes other than for their charm and tone, the tone he wants in them reflects his own wanting, so that the story of James's own desire is told in the language of the letters themselves as the expression in them by the correspondents of a desire to receive letters (a desire for "living intercourse" in another's writing). Just as in The Aspern Papers, letters are perfect projections of certain aspects of the narrator's own desire. A letter from William in Cambridge to their mother illustrates the way letters form a cathexis, both for the correspondents and for James:

The first few days, the first week here, I really didn't know what to do with myself or how to fill my time. I felt as if turned out of doors. Then I received H.'s and Mother's letters. Never before did I know what mystic depths of rapture lay concealed within that familiar word. Never did the same being look so like two different ones as I going in and out of the P.O. if I bring a letter with me. Gloomily, with despair written on my leaden brow I stalk the street along toward the P.O., women, children and students
involuntarily shrinking against the wall as I pass ... But when I come out with a letter an immense concourse of people generally attends me to my lodging, attracted by my excited wild gestures and look. (312-13)

That William's joy at receiving letters is to be taken as a cynosure of James's own desire is inferred by Notes itself, for the volume is nothing but James's "joy" at finding (and reading) old letters. (Recall also the narrator's "joy at being beneath the same roof" with Aspern's letters.) The kind of satisfaction expressed in the letter above becomes not only a way of privileging letters (as standing in for the writer's presence) but of privileging the act of reading (as satisfying the desire for/of the writer).

The desire to be the desired of the other, to have one's own desire reflected in the object of desire, is the nexus of the primal scene in psychoanalysis and is responsible for the cathecting of desire to any object. 13 Much as it is expressed in William's letter (and consequently throughout James's memoir), this same mirroring of desire, translated into literary terms, finds ample representation in the letters of James's selection:

'Write me whenever you have the slightest or most fleeting inclination to do so. If you have only
one sentence to say, don't grudge paper and
stamps for it You don't know how much good you
may do me at an appropriate time by a little easy
scratching of your graceful nimble pen.' (320)

'I snatch the pen from my wife's hand to enjoy,
myself, the satisfaction of saying . . .' (387)

'I know quite well I don't owe you a letter, and
that the custom for maidens is to mete out
strictly letter for letter; but if you don't
mind it I don't, and if you do mind that kind of
ing that you had better learn not to at once . . .' (525)

The writers evince a kind of Barthesian pleasure in
the text--both in reading and in being read, the text forms
the cathexis of the desired writer. "The text is a fetish
object, and this fetish desires me," writes Roland Barthes,
"and lost in the midst of a text (not behind it, like a
deus ex machina) there is always the other, the author."14
It is precisely this fetishizing pleasure within and around
the letters that we see James illustrating in his
selection. As readers, the correspondents desire a writer
(desire to be the object of a writer's desire), and as
writers themselves, they desire a reader (desire to be the object of a reader's desire). The letters, then, purport the same kind of reader-writer desire that James, as a reader, experiences with the correspondents, and that as a writer he experiences with us, his own readers. While invoking a mutuality of satisfaction between one letter-writer and another, he is positing the same order of satisfaction between himself and the letter-writers, and between himself and his own readers. He situates himself in his autobiography as the object of the correspondents' desire (the reader they long for), as he himself longs for them. But he also, as a writer himself, fulfills the object of our desire (as readers) to be written to. Rhetorically, he has occupied the space of desire between text and reader. In both directions, then, James's desire is transformed and transcribed as his being desired.

Typical of Notes, as a result, is James's habit of placing us at the scene of his reading rather than at the historical scenes the letters recall. Throughout Notes, he situates the reading act as the primary drama, by the use of scenic reminders of his activity: "I have before me another communication," (267); or again "Faded and touching pages, these letters are in some abundance before me now, breathing confidence and extraordinary cheer" (460); or by foregrounding his fussy editorial concerns with his book:
I shall here find convenience in borrowing a few passages from my small handful of letters of the time to follow—to the extent of its not following by a very long stretch. Such a course keeps these fragments of record together, as scattering them would perhaps conduce to some leakage in their characteristic tone, for which I desire all the fullness it can give. (382)

I judge best to place together here several passages from my father's letters belonging to this general period, even though they again carry me to points beyond my story proper. It is not for the story's sake that I am moved to gather them, but for their happy illustration, once more, of something quite else, the human beauty of the writer's spirit. (385)

James draws attention to his act of reading because within it is enacted the movement of co-creation between writer and reader. That is, his reading of them is "superadded" to the lives the letters embody, making his "own poor perusal" an active complement of them (396, 461). James closes Notes with a long reminiscence of Mary Temple,
whose letters had been "sacredly preserved by the recipient" (504). The recipient gives the whole series to James, who says of him, "[h]e could have done nothing to accord more with the spirit in which I have tried to gather up something of the sense of our far-off past . . . and no loose clue that I have been able to recover unaided touches into life anything like such a tract of the time-smothered consciousness" (504-05). His gathering (and reading to us) of the letters is seen as a completing of the life, part of the "sense" the letters mean, an act which "touches into life . . . the time-smothered consciousness." James's life, therefore, is a continuation of Mary Temple's, a continuation of the life found in all his letters.

In their expression of the desire for the reading which will touch them into life, the letters that make up the volume point directly to James's own reading of them. In this way, the letters and their authors project their own reading and therefore project James, their reader. In the act of reading into them his own desire, he is read by them. Since the text inscribes the reader's desire as part of its own meaning, the meaning of the text evolves with the desire of the reader. The deep structure of Notes infers the same power of the reader over the text that the passage from The Aspern Papers dramatizes. So James's desire for the "far-off past" stitches the past into the
present moment: "these recoveries . . . even to the effect . . . of stringing their apparently dispersed and disordered parts upon a fine silver thread . . . mak[e] trial of . . . the imaginative faculty under cultivation."

So his reading of the letters purports "the personal history, as it were, of an imagination" (454), his own imagination. The history being read, then, is the history of his own reading, which is the history of his imagination.

James replaces the rhetoric of documentation with the deprioritized logic of his own reading experience, thereby erasing the line between text and interpretation. If the text is bound to the commentary, the commentary proliferates a meaning which the text can neither halt nor fully contain. As a result, the commentator is no longer bound by the text but is effectively absolved of all responsibility for limiting the play of his own imagination. This accords James the freedom to break with the notion of fidelity enjoined by his nephew.

**Origins: The Father in the Text, Part II**

James's deconstructive merging of text and commentary, of origin and supplement, is an adumbration of a merging of father and son. In psychoanalytic terms, *Notes* is an attempt to eclipse the control of the symbolic father by
his integration and reinvention in the notes of the son. The desire on James's part to be "literary"--the desire to read and be read--establishes more than a "living intercourse" with the absent. It becomes itself a kind of intercourse between origin and supplement in whose reciprocal specularity a writer and reader are mutually reproducing. This specularity is seen in Notes in James's relationship as a reader to the "text" of his father. One of the main autobiographical themes in Notes is that the "text" of his father is unsatisfying, that the father's lack of profession and religion, his lack of recognizable ties to the material world leaves him vague and unknown as a father figure in the memory and desire of the son. Though James's criticism of paternal form is camouflaged under laudatory terms, the subtext of his "commemoration" is often that "[a] less vague or vain idealist couldn't . . . have been encountered" (370).

The letters of James Senior that are presented in Notes repeatedly insist on the father's instability in language. The figure the elder James makes in Notes is one of how unfigurable he is, how resistant he is to saying and to being said or interpreted, and it is his letters themselves which project this:

'I can not say what I want to say, what aches to
say itself in me . . . What shall I do? Shall I get me a little nook in the country and communicate with my living kind—not my talking kind—by life only; a word perhaps of that communication, a fit word once a year?' (to Emerson, 1842, 345)

'When a man lives, that is lives enough, he can scarcely write. He cannot read, I apprehend, at all. All his writing will be algebraicised, put into the form of sonnets and proverbs.' (to Emerson, 1849, 352)

'the fact is that a vital truth can never be transferred from one to another, because life alone appreciates it.' (to Emerson, n.d., 356)

'The letter of every revelation must be directly hostile to its spirit, and only inversely accordant, because the very pretention of revelation is that it's a descent, an absolute coming down of truth, a humiliation of it from its own elevated and habitual plane to a lower one.' (to Mrs. Cameron, n.d., 377)
The elder James's inability (or refusal) to say himself opens him up to the dilemma of being said, being spoken for. And what James finds is that the son must "say" the father to give him form, in a sense, must "say" the father into existence. The father's vagueness leaves him open to the usurping gesture of the critic/son, or memoirist. It amounts to a literalization in Notes of the specularity with which the writer and reader are mutually reproducing. The father, biologically authoring the son, is in turn authored by the son in the son's attempt to name or "say" the father, and thereby give him the form of his saying. This "authorial" imagery is played out in implicit terms in the following recollection:

I perfectly recover the effect of my own repeated appeal to our parent for some presentable account of him that would prove us respectable. Business alone was respectable... I remember my friend Simpson's telling me crushingly, at one of our New York schools, on my hanging back with the fatal truth about our credentials, that the author of his being... was in the business of a stevedore. That struck me as a great card to play—the word was fine and mysterious; so that 'What shall we tell them you are, don't you see?' could but become on our lips at home a more
constant appeal. It seemed wantonly to be prompted for our father, and indeed greatly to amuse him, that he should put us off with strange unheard-of attributions, such as would have made us ridiculous in our special circles; his 'Say I'm a philosopher, say I'm a seeker for truth, say I'm a lover of my kind, say I'm an author of books if you like; or, best of all, just say I'm a Student,' saw us so very little further. Abject it certainly appeared to be reduced to the 'student' plea; and I must have lacked even the confidence of my brother Bob, who, challenged, in my hearing and the usual way, was ready not only with the fact that our parent 'wrote,' but with the further fact that he had written *Lectures and Miscellanies* James. (278-79)

The "text" the father presents to the reading of the son is one that begs the complementary activity of the critic, in short, begs interpretation. The same proliferation of sense that leaves the text open to the piracy of the critic leaves the father inadequately named and in need of being spoken for. When asked what "the author of his being" is, James must provide the word himself, as his brother Bob had done. In a sense, he, the reader, must provide "the author." The feeling that the
elder James was a "void" (279) leaves the father overdetermined by the logic that all names and titles stuck. One solution to the problem of the father's identity in the passage is to textualize him, to identify him by his own text, and in so doing inadvertently to conflate the name of the father with the title of the text (Lectures and Miscellanies James as one long title). This reduces the father to a stabilized language which consequently reduces him to the status of an object (e.g., the book Bob produces as proof of his father's identity).

It is natural, then, that the locus of desire for the father (who is identifiably as a text) becomes the father's "papers." These "papers," collected by William into The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James (1885), consist of the father's unfinished autobiography, and his "much re-written" lectures and articles. The story James reads in the "papers," however, is not that of the literal text but one that pre-empts the text with his own act of reading. James recalls, "I have spoken of the fashion in which I still see him, after the years, attentively bent over those much re-written 'papers' . . . into which I think I was more often than not moved to read . . . some story of acute inward difficulty" (372). The "papers" of the father are usurped by the reading of the son, who is "moved to read" in them a story of his father that contains the
"difficulty" the papers omit. The "papers" function as a literary progenitor to the son's own attempt to "say" the father. Therefore, the father's "Literary Remains" are both a part of and pre-empted by the "Notes of a Son." The appropriation of the remains of the father into the notes of the son reifies the mutually reproductive specularity of reading, where writer and reader are literally and literally father and son.

With the blurring of boundries between origin and supplement, text and commentary, author and critic, a new myth of complementary selfhood subsumes the overtly supplementary version of selfhood the volume initially suggests. The structure, then, systematically weakens the power of the father's priority and defuses his symbolic authority over the text (and the life) of the son. The merging that occurs both temporally and textually denies the difference between origin and supplement since the origin is partially written by the supplement, and therefore effectively negates the paternal metaphor (father as enforcer of priority, enforcer of difference). To erase these differences between father and son (that is, in this case, to author one's father as one is authored by him) is to triumph over the paternal prohibition which:

1) instigates the repression of desire for the mother,
2) redirects that desire to the father
3) whose absence controls the narrative by constituting the lack the narrative tries to fill.

The fact that the father is constituted in language objects (artifacts of his own writing) makes it easier for James to subordinate the symbolic father to his own text by way of the historical father's letters. James's means of appropriating the father is the father's language, a medium which James already controls. As Hillis Miller suggests, it is the language the critic shares with the text he interprets that allows him to enter the author's state of mind: "He can insert himself into the text because both he and it are already interpenetrated by their common language. The means of his interpretation is also language, those words of his which even in the most passive act of reading he adds to the text as he understands it."

The Desire of the Mother

"... what account of us all can pretend to have gone the least bit deep without coming to our mother at every penetration?" (342)

By appropriating the father (inserting himself into Henry Senior's text), James erases paternal priority. In effect, he appropriates the place of the father, for now James's father "originates" in James's own reading of him. In psychoanalysis, the father and son compete for the desire of the mother and, as Freud suggests, the father
always wins, leaving the son forever subordinate and derivative. By confiscating the text of the father and re-inscribing the father in his own text, James usurps the father's priority as his origin. Symbolically, then, James usurps the place of the father in the desire of the mother.

The only characterization of the mother (Mary James is never named in Notes and figures only in one brief reference) is as she desires the father's "papers." "I see our mother listen to the full music of the 'papers,'" James says. "She could do that by the mere force of her complete availability, and could do it with a smoothness of surrender" (343). The mother's desire (according to the son) is to listen to the father, and the father's desire (like that of the son) is for her attentive listening: James recalls "my father's reading out to my mother with an appreciation of that modest grasp of someone's attention . . . some series of pages from among his 'papers' that were to show her how he had this time at last done it" (342). Docile, passive, receptive (in this imaginary scene), the mother is the sympathetic reader, a fantasized and fetishized object of the writer/son's own desire.

The essential relationship in the marriage of his parents as it is reconstituted in Notes—that of author with reader—is the same one James posits as the new myth of his own literary origination. Reader and writer, James
suggests in his rhetoric, interpenetrate in the text, whereupon the act of reading can recover "presence" in writing. James projects the specularity of writer and reader into his parents' relationship, whereby the writer/father desires to be the desired of the reader/mother. Because his role as critic allows James to "insert himself into the text" of his father, he, in a sense, usurps the place of his father in the specular relationship of his parents. The mother's "surrender" of herself to his father's "papers" is as much her surrender to the son himself (he who now controls his father's "papers"). In the mutuality of their imaginary desire for each other as writer/son and reader/mother, James circumvents the paternal metaphor (which bars the son from the mother). By writing an autobiography in which he usurps his own origins, James reappropriates the imaginary space (formerly occupied by his father) as the object of his mother's desire.
APPENDIX A:

INDIVIDUAL CHAPTER NOTES
I.

INTRODUCTION: THE SELF AND THE 'LIFE'


7. Friedman, 35.


13. Rudolfe Gasche, "In-Difference to Philosophy: de Man on Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche," in Reading De Man Reading, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich, Theory and History of
Literature, vol. 59 (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 263.


15. The Resistance to Theory, 11.

16. Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," Modern Language Notes 94 (1979), 920. Subsequent page references to this article are cited parenthetically in the text as AD.


19. All three figures are also implicated in each other's autobiographies, even if tangentially. In Notes, James cites Hawthorne as an early influence, having read his romances from youth: "the moral was that an American could be an artist, one of the finest, without 'going outside' about it" (480). James, of course, went on to write a critical biography of his boyhood model in 1879. Adams also cites James in the Education (cf. p. 128 of this study), and Robert Sayre suggests a curious influence the two had on each other in their autobiographical projects: "as James's William Wetmore Story and His Friends and other works may in certain ways have affected the writing of the Education, so did the Education and Adams's trenchant letters stand very distantly behind A Small Boy and Notes" (Sayre 185, see note 26 below).

20. The Education of Henry Adams, ed. Ernest Samuels (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 49. Subsequent page references to the Education are to this edition and are given in the text parenthetically.
21. Notes of a Son and Brother, in Henry James: Autobiography, ed. F.W. Dupee (New York: Criterion Books, 1956), 269. Subsequent page references to all three volumes of James's memoirs A Small Boy and Others (1913), Notes of a Son and Brother (1914), and The Middle Years (1917) are to this collected edition and are cited in the text parenthetically.


27. Alfred Habegger, Gender, Fantasy and Realism in American Literature (Columbia University Press, 1982), 56.


30. As Edel shows, the body of literature on James's obscure hurt is preponderant (see Edel 720). Though there is no truth to the rumor first suggested by Van Wyck Brooks and spread by Hemingway, the "obscure hurt" episode in Notes has lent unearned credibility to the theory that James's celibacy was the result of a castrating accident suffered in youth. The language with which James couches the incident does nothing to discourage such a conclusion, which has led the more savvy critics to ask why James would want to permit such a reading of the incident when it was
not true. Recent psychoanalytic readings place James's "castration" in the imaginary. James settles unresolved Oedipal tensions with his father by symbolically submitting to the father's authority (i.e., by "castrating" himself). See Pryzbylowicz, 226-228.

31. See note 19.


34. Habegger, 259.

35. Habegger, 74-78.

36. Sayre, 71.

37. Edel, 77.


41. The characters of Isabel Archer and Milly Theale are versions of Minny Temple, the first, probably closer to the actual Minny, and the second, combining the qualities of sensitivity and passivity James so honored in the feminine, is probably a redaction of Minny as read through James's identification with her. See Habegger, 270.

42. Irwin, 270.


Notes 204


II.

'A' FOR AUTOBIOGRAPHY: NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND HIS LETTER


5. Bell, 162.

6. Henry James, Hawthorne (Little, 1879), 89.

7. Bell, 161.

8. Most influential, perhaps, is Charles Fiedelson, who assumes that the various meanings of the letter coalesce into a symbol (Symbolism and American Literature, University of Chicago Press, 1953). Eric Sundquist suggests the opposite: "Hawthorne's scarlet A is uncanny—not because it produces a sympathetic burning on his breast, but because in the opposite extreme it refuses to assume the function of the thing it symbolizes, that is, so refuses to stand reliably for any one thing and thus draws all significance into itself that all referents disappear
into the function of symbolizing" (Home as Found, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, pp. 112-13).

9. The notion of the scarlet letter's alphabeticity has been taken up in a number of Postmodern readings of The Scarlet Letter, starting perhaps with Gabriel Josipovici (see note 10 below). My discussion of it owes a debt to his chapter on Hawthorne, as well as to the chapters and essays on the novel by Eric Sundquist (note 8), John Irwin (note 2), Millicent Bell (note 4), Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith (note 11), and Christine Brooke-Rose, "A for But: 'The Custom House' in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter," Word & Image, 3 (2) April-June 1987, 143-155.


13. Bell, 166.

14. In this respect Hester's posturing as well as that of the other characters bears a very close likeness to the false self system of the schizoid personality type described by R. D. Laing (The Divided Self, New York: Random House, 1960, pp. 84-85), a study which was seminal to my original interest in the ontology of the characters' self-representation.

15. James, 90.


17. Irwin, 241.


19. The scarlet letter as fetish of the repressed desire of the community is the subject of Joanne Feit Diehl's excellent essay, "Re-Reading The Letter: Hawthorne, the Fetish, and the (Family) Romance," New Literary History 19
Notes 206

(3), Spring 1988, 655-73.

20. Bell, 164.


22. Irwin, 249.


25. Ragussis, 70. About the opening, Ragussis says, "At the beginning of 'The Custom-House' [Hawthorne] hesitates and cautions himself in a stop-and-start-again style almost paralyzed by interrupting dashes (six occur in the first two [actually three] sentences alone) and limiting conjunctions ('but' and 'though' and 'however') that reroute the direction of his desire: to speak or not to speak. What finally allows him to write this autobiographical preface is the carefully rehearsed set of checks and balances that becomes the subtext--namely, cautions about speaking while speaking" (70).

26. The forgoing paragraph stands as a summary of that part of Ragussis' essay (pp. 71-75) that deals with the connections between Hawthorne's self-representations surrounding his authorship and Dimmesdale's self-representations surrounding his fatherhood.


III.

'THE FAULTS OF THE PATCHWORK': THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS


2. The Education of Henry Adams, ed. Ernest Samuels, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 539. All citations from the Education and from Samuels's notes and appendices are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.


5. A good point of reference in recent theoretical literature for this issue of closure is Jacques Derrida's Dissemination (tr. Barbara Johnson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), the preface of which (titled "Outside the Book") addresses itself to the idea of his failure to write the book that he is forever prefacing, that his entire oeuvre is prefatory to an unwritable book. Furthermore, Derrida's preface, he says, is "another text entirely" which is at the same time the "double" of the main text (Dissemination, 35). These prefatory gestures are anticipated by the Education, where the doubling of preface and text in Adams's autobiography suggests that writing always finishes "outside the book," and therefore the book is never finished.


7. The suggestion here that Adams had intended the Education for young university men is refuted by the evidence of his letters. When he wrote the book, it was intended only for family and those of his friends who were mentioned by name in it. The claim to didacticism is at best retrospective and is another mask Adams adopts to intercede between himself and the reader.

Wordsworth's use of the garment metaphor in "Essays on Epitaphs": "If words be not . . . an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely they will prove an ill gift." De Man goes on to comment:

Wordsworth has similarly characterized the right kind of language as being 'not what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul' . . . The sequence garb-body-soul is in fact a perfectly consistent metaphorical chain: garment is the visible outside of the body as the body is the visible outside of the soul. The language so violently denounced is in fact the language of metaphor, of prosopopeia and of tropes . . . The language of tropes (which is the specular language of autobiography) is indeed like the body, which is like its garments, the veil of the soul as the garment is the sheltering of the body. ("Autobiography as De-facement," 929-930)

It is this very language of tropes, which Wordsworth denounces, that Adams employs as a garment in order quite specifically to veil the self. Adams sees his tropological constitution in the signs of his identity as not only inevitable but useful for his own effacement. These signs (Mount Vernon Street, Boston, Quincy, etc.) replace him; the language of autobiography replaces him. Writing down the self, then, becomes the act of erasure Adams intends it to be. The "clothing" of the thing itself in language which Wordsworth decries is the motive and method of the Education.


14. The *Education of Henry Adams*, 326. Paul de Man somewhat wryly suggests that "any book with a readable title-page is, to some extent, autobiographical" since the "claim to authorship that takes place whenever a text is stated to be by someone" assumes a "contractual agreement" between the text and its author (op. cit., 922-923). Adams's seemingly unwitting discovery of his name "on scores of title-pages" would suggest that he wishes to discredit that contract. This points to the larger disavowal of his name which this chapter suggests is occurring in the *Education*.


16. Nietzsche makes a similar remark about this ontogenetic property in art in *The Will to Power*: "One is an artist at the cost of regarding what all non-artists call 'form' as content, as 'the thing itself.' To be sure, then one belongs in a topsy-turvy world: for henceforth content becomes something merely formal—our life included" (op. cit., 433).

17. The *Dynamic Theory of History*, which occupies Henry Adams in his closing chapters (and years), can be read as an explanation, or "apology," for this aesthetic principle behind his project of self-fashioning. Briefly, Adams suggests in the Dynamic Theory that man "is the sum of the forces that attract him" (474). Forces (such as the idea of eternal life to use Adams's example) exert an attraction on the mind and can account for man's endeavors in religion, philosophy, art, etc. It suggests a passive, plastic mind that is shaped and molded by the universe. However, there is a reflexive relationship between the mind of man and the universe, so that, whatever man seems to be is assumed to have originated with the universe which shaped him. Therefore, as Adams says, "[t]he universe that had formed him took shape in his own mind as a reflection of his own unity" (475). So man projects the assumption of his own unity back onto the universe and therefore, in a sense, creates his own reality. Then Bacon suggested that we let the universe tell us what it is instead of we telling it. With that, man began observing the universe
with greater and greater technical acumen and discovered whole new cosmic and microscopic worlds which put to rout his assumptions of unity. His metaphysics were consequently reversed. The mind no longer generated reality (by projecting its assumption of unity on the world), but instead became the passive recorder of reality. As the accuracy of his instruments of measurement increased, so did his discovery of chaos and contradiction in the universe. Adams ends by suggesting that there are so many forces of attraction pulling on the mind of man that the mind has been paralyzed into a passive relationship with the universe. The Dynamic Theory of History, then, serves as an explanation of Adams himself. The "plot" that he sees working in history is the same "plot" he suggests is operating in his own life story. He has been paralyzed into a passive relationship with the world by the chaos of influences which "formed" him. In a final gesture of self-effacement, he substitutes an explanation of the universe for an explanation of himself, suggesting once more that it is enough to know the general rule of the universe to know Henry Adams. Adams thereby erases his claim to individual subjectivity in his own autobiography. An effect of this erasure is that in those passages where Adams seems to be writing most directly about himself, as in his Harvard or London years, he is writing instead about a tropological construct, a caricature devised to throw off inquiry into the author himself. When he seems to be writing about something unrelated to himself, as with the Dynamic Theory, he is perhaps in his most subjective and knowable form, though disguised. It seems no coincidence, then, that the theory outlines a relationship between the mind and the universe that mirrors the very relationship Adams has with the world. The story he tells of himself through the Dynamic Theory of History posits the formation of the kind of passive self he represents in the Education.

IV.

"PAPERS," NOTES AND LETTERS:
READING HENRY JAMES READING IN NOTES OF A SON AND BROTHER

1. Henry James, The Aspern Papers, in The Novels and Tales of Henry James, New York Edition, XII (New York: Scribner's, 1908), 42-44. All further references to The Aspern Papers are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.
2. James's autobiographical writings, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), and *The Middle Years* (1917), originally published separately by Charles Scribner's Sons, were later gathered in *Henry James: Autobiography*, ed. F.W. Dupee (New York: Criterion Books, 1956). All page references to *Notes of a Son and Brother* are to this latter edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

3. I give here an abbreviated and very much narrowed summary of Jacques Lacan's own recap of Freud's Oedipal theory. The condensation is based on the following:


