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九州大学大学院 : 修士課程

<https://doi.org/10.15017/4377721>

出版情報 : 九大英文学. 60, pp.71-79, 2018-03-31. 九州大学大学院英語学・英文学研究会
バージョン :
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The Destruction of Model and the Lost Story in *The Marble Faun*

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The Marble Faun was published by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1860. It is his last major work. He attempted some works after *The Marble Faun*, but he could not complete them in his life. His other three major works, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), were successively published, while it took seven years for him to write *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne was appointed as an American consul in Liverpool in 1853 and spent his life in Europe studying art until *The Marble Faun* was published, so that this work is different from the other three. It is more novelistic and mysterious.

The Marble Faun has been accepted by many readers and criticized by many critics at the same time. Takaaki Niwa says in his book, *The Dread Self-Portrait: Hawthorne and 'the Unpardonable Sin,'* that the plot of *The Marble Faun* is inconsistent, and that it does not reveal enough mysteries. According to Randall Stewart;

There had been, however, one persistent objection in the critical reception of the book— namely, that the author had not told with sufficient explicitness what actually happened in the story— and this objection Hawthorne good-naturedly took cognizance of in a short epilogue written in March and appended the second edition. (211)

Critics have argued that Hawthorne did not unravel the mysteries though he created them. It goes without saying that the most significant mystery concerns Model and

Miriam. The man called Model suddenly appears in front of Miriam, but why he stalks her and what happened between them is not explained in the end. He is killed by Donatello, not having told the truth. Therefore, it can be said that Model's destruction causes the collapse of the completion of *The Marble Faun*.

He also describes a lot of works of art found in Italy in this novel. Appreciating them, the main characters discuss the theory of art. Miriam and Kenyon state their opinions about the art works as a painter and a sculptor. Their opinions can be interpreted as Hawthorne's ones. He was eager to study art when he was in Europe. He also had enough time to think of the art of writing. Hawthorne develops his art theory through this novel, especially about the object of art. It means that we can observe how Hawthorne transforms as a writer in *The Marble Faun*. Especially, we focus on Model.

Model does not only play the role of a model within the novel, but also represent a model of Hawthorne's writing itself. How Hawthorne describes Model reflects the figure of Hawthorne as a writer. The purpose of this essay is to clarify the relationship between the destruction of Model and the lost story in *The Marble Faun*.

The Marble Faun is a more novelistic work than any other work of Hawthorne. The narrator says in the preface that "the author proposed to himself merely to write a fanciful story, evolving a thoughtful moral, and did not purpose attempting a portraiture of Italian manners and character" (4). Hawthorne emphasizes that this work is a Romance. This is actually a Romance; however, the nature of Novel remarkably stands out more than his other works. This is because Hawthorne changes the art of writing.

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is

presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity... The former—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. (3)

From the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, this is the theory of Romance and Novel of Hawthorne. The remarkable point is that a Romance writer has the latitude to present the truth under circumstances of the writer's own choosing or creation, while a Novel aims at a very minute fidelity. Considering his theory of Romance, it can be observed that his writing in *The Marble Faun* tends to be closer to a Novel.

In the other works, Hawthorne creates the construction of the works by the imagination or inspiration from the model of writing. In the preface of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne suggests that the romance writer must conjure up “a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other” (28). He encounters the scarlet letter in a neutral territory, and creates the writing through his imaginary power. In opposition to this, *The Marble Faun* is created by the description of Italy in detail. Hawthorne sets Italy as a model of his writing, and he reproduces it by picturing it faithfully. This is why this novel was well accepted by his readers. For the American readers admired Europe, and they could catch sight of Italy through *The Marble Faun*.

From one of the windows of this saloon, we may see a flight of broad stone steps, descending alongside the antique and massive foundation of the Capitol, towards the battered triumphal arch of Septimius Severus, right below... Far off, the view is shut in by the Alban mountains, looking just the same, amid all this decay and change, as when Romulus gazed thitherward over his half-finished wall. (7)

His detailed description gives readers the impression that this novel is travel writing. Niwa states as follows;

There are a lot of troubles in the respect of the completion of the work; however, the remarkable points of *The Marble Faun* are the description in detail about the popular places and remains in Rome, and a great deal of the references to the famous fine arts in Europe. The points which are 'factual,' in other words 'novelistic,' stand out. (243)

Hawthorne prefaced the nature of Romance of this work; however, how he describes the object shows his transition from Romance to Novel. When Hawthorne experienced the travel and the study of art in Italy, he transformed as a writer. He was attracted to fidelity. The transformation on his creative style resembles Hilda's one.

Hilda had early shown her genius for the pictorial art in her native land. She had produced sketches by delicate imagination which lacked reality. However, she moved to Italy and her painting transformed a lot. "More and more, as she grew familiar with the miracles of art that enrich so many galleries in Rome, Hilda had ceased to consider herself as an original artist" (46). Her eyes for the fine arts in Italy had the great power to comprehend any picture that interested her. This is why it happened that "she ceased to aim at original achievement in consequence of the very gifts, which so exquisitely fitted her to profit by familiarity with the works of the mighty Old Masters" (46). So Hilda becomes a copyist. Her transformation can be interpreted as Hawthorne's transition from the Romance to the Novel. Hawthorne also shifted his way of writing from the Imaginary to the Actual. Both of them change their way of representing their model, which means they decided to describe their model with fidelity.

The narrator praises Hilda's copies a lot. "If they paused to look over her shoulder, and had sensibility enough to understand what was before their eyes, they

soon felt inclined to believe that the spirits of the Old Masters were hovering over Hilda.” “Her copies were indeed marvelous” (47). Hawthorne respected copying of the works of art, so that he practices the art of copy in *The Marble Faun*.

The Faun is the marble image of a young man, leaning his right arm on the trunk or stump of a tree; one hand hangs carelessly by his side; in the other, he holds the fragment of a pipe, or some such sylvan instrument of music. His only garment—a lion’s skin, with the claw upon his shoulder—falls half-way down his back, leaving the limbs and entire front of the figure nude... the nose is almost straight, but very slightly curves inward, thereby acquiring an indescribable charm of geniality and humour... It is impossible to gaze long at this stone image without conceiving a kindly sentiment towards it, as if its substance were warm to the touch, and imbued with actual life. It comes very close to some of our pleasantest sympathies. (9-11)

This is the description of the marble Faun of Praxiteles. It gives us its detailed image. He copies the marble Faun and projects it into his work with his writing. Copying the works of art in Italy and reproducing them in his novel show Hawthorne’s novelistic nature.

It is necessary to consider the existence of Model when we argue about the model of art. A “model” means the object of art of course. When he appears in front of Donatello, Miriam, Hilda and Kenyon for the first time, he is described as follows;

He looked as if he might just have stepped out of a picture, and, in truth, was likely enough to find his way into a dozen pictures; being no other than one of those living models, dark, bushy bearded, wild of aspect and attire, whom artists convert into Saints or assassins, according as their pictorial purposes demand. ‘Miriam,’ whispered Hilda, a little startled,

‘it is your Model! (17)

According to Hilda, the man who suddenly appears is Miriam’s Model. In addition to how the man is called, it is significant to focus on how the narrator describes Model. He states that artists can convert him into Saints or assassins according to what they want to paint. Painters have rights to recreate their model into their creation freely. These rights resemble the right of romance writers, namely “latitude.”

Sculptors do not have latitude as painters. Kenyon says that “in any sculptural subject, there should be a moral standstill, since there must of necessity be a physical one” (15). Miriam replies that “your frozen art has nothing like the scope and freedom of Hilda’s and mine” (15). There are no rights and freedom on the side of sculptors like painters have. This contrast indicates the resemblance between Romance and Novel. It means that painting has the same nature as Romance; on the other hand, sculpture has the same nature as Novel.

Model transforms from the model for Miriam to the model for Kenyon via his death. Model changes his nature of model from painting to sculpture. Miriam and Kenyon argue about painting and sculptures, and they are in opposition in their theory of art. When they visit the church after Donatello kills Model, Kenyon finds the dead in the church and says that “I must look more closely at that dead monk, before we leave the church” (142). He approaches the dead monk and observes him. This dead monk is called Antonio who is the same person as Model. “In the study of my art, I have gained many a hint from the dead, which the living could never have given me” (142). Miriam replies to him that “I can well imagine it,” and that “One clay image is readily copied from another” (142). Antonio is originally a model for Miriam, which means that he is an object of painting. However, he changes after he dies into a model for Kenyon who is a sculptor.

When we focus more on the argument between Miriam and Kenyon, we can understand the significant difference between models of painting and sculpture. “In painting, there is no similar objection to the representation of brief snatches of time;

perhaps because a story can be so much more fully told, in picture, and buttressed about with circumstances that give it an epoch” (15). Miriam suggests that sculpture should be a sort of fossilizing process. In other words, sculpture snatches a moment; on the other hand, painting snatches broader swaths of time, namely story. Whether they have “stories” or not is the biggest difference between them. In this sense, a model, an object of painting, has each story in him. Model also has it, as long as he lives. He loses his story through his death and transformation into a model of sculpture.

Donatello kills Model by pushing him over a cliff. He dies and becomes a model of sculpture. Thus, Model becomes a novelistic model and loses his story and the right of a Romance writer, which is “fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer’s own choosing or creation.” This is why Hawthorne could not reveal the mysteries about Model and collapse the plot. Model exceeds the limit of a model for Miriam or Kenyon, and he can be interpreted as a model of Hawthorne’s writing.

The Marble Faun is more novelistic than any other of his works. Firstly, Hawthorne’s description aims at fidelity in this novel. The Italian landscape and the fine arts are well described in detail. Secondly, Hilda’s transformation into a copyist resembles Hawthorne’s transition of writing from Romance to Novel. She gives up her original painting by using her rich imaginary power and engages herself in copying the works of Old Masters. Hawthorne practices the art of copying in his writing too. Furthermore, Model also becomes novelistic through the transition from a model of painting to a model of sculpture. He transforms into a model of sculpture because of his death; as a result, he loses his story.

Writing is often compared to painting. June Kamin suggests that writing is painting with words. Hawthorne must have thought of the resemblance between painting and writing when he engaged himself in studying art. He was influenced by the circumstances in Europe. Therefore, his writing in *The Marble Faun* is different from the other works.

The Marble Faun has been criticized in that unsolved mysteries still remain. Hawthorne appended the chapter titled "Postscript" to the second edition. The author interviews Kenyon and Hilda about the mysteries in the story. However, the mystery of Miriam and Antonio is never told. Hawthorne could not reveal it because he lost the right to describe him freely. The plot of this novel seems to be awkward. This awkwardness is caused by the shift of Hawthorne's way of writing and the death of Model. The lost story arises from the loss of Model.

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