"WAS THIS GARDEN, THEN, THE EDEN OF THE PRESENT WORLD?": NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S REPRESENTATION OF PADUA IN "RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER"

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the concepts of historical accuracy and truthfulness of the setting in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844) through an analysis of his representation and depiction of Padua, in particular of its University and Botanical Gardens. Though the author had not yet visited Italy at the time of publication, his description of Padua in the tale is vivid and full of apt references that embody the city. Overall, little critical attention has been devoted to the Padua setting of the short story. Given the large use of allegory in Hawthorne's production, I read the Paduan setting of the tale and all the implications that revolve around it as an allegory of the artist/author's vast culture. Finally, by comparing the Padua of the tale with subsequent depictions of Italy in Hawthorne's production such as the Rome of *The Marble Faun: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni* (1860), I highlight similarities and differences in the treatment of history and setting in his later works.
Keywords: Nathaniel Hawthorne; romance; allegory; representations of Italy; Padua; Rome.

INTRODUCTION

In his Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, first published in 1851, Nathaniel Hawthorne claims a certain liberty in the drafting of romances as opposed to novels, particularly in regard to its settings and sources. According to him, the romance should be understood and read as an artistic work, representing "the truth of the human heart" (Hawthorne 2006, 3), rather than as an accurate historical document. And yet, some of Hawthorne's earlier works are not completely in line with his own arguments presented in this famous Preface. Hawthorne's 1844 "Rappaccini's Daughter,"[1] a short story set in Padua, Italy, plausibly during the Renaissance, which was later included in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), partially contradicts his statements regarding historical accuracy and truthfulness of the setting. Though Hawthorne had not yet visited Italy at the time

[1] First published in the December 1844 issue of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in New York.

of publication,[2] his description of Padua in the tale is vivid and full of apt references that embody the city. Overall, little critical attention has been devoted to the Paduan setting of the short story. However, a study of Hawthorne's rich and accurate references in the text reveals the author's somewhat unconscious desire, in contrast to his declarations at the beginning of *The House of the Seven Gables*, to convey his particularly deep knowledge of Italian literature, art, and history. In particular, as Hawthorne has been defined as an allegorical writer by critics (Quilligan 1979 and Ullén 2004), I propose that the Paduan setting of the tale and all the implications that revolve around it can be read as an allegory of the artist/author's vast culture. Furthermore, historical accuracy and truthfulness of the setting also tell us a lot about his writing practice. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to discuss Hawthorne's accuracy in his representation and depiction of Padua, in particular of its University and Botanical Gardens (*Orto Botanico*), in order to highlight some of his practices as a writer especially regarding the treatment and reworking of his sources. I will conclude my discussion by comparing the Padua of "Rappaccini's Daughter" with subsequent depictions of Italy in Hawthorne's production, especially the Rome of *The Marble Faun: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni* (1860), in order to show similarities and differences in the treatment of history and setting in his later works.

CONCEPTS OF ROMANCE AND ALLEGORY IN HAWTHORNE'S PRODUCTION

Before *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* (1850), Hawthorne had written exclusively in the short form, a genre deemed by contemporary reviewers as inherently ephemeral if not trivial (Baym 1984, 438). Thus, the issue of the genre in which he was working did not seriously arise before 1850. Starting with *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne decided to define his long narratives as romances in order to claim their difference from the novels of his day. He adopted the term used for the externally oriented works of Walter Scott

[2] As we will see, Hawthorne will eventually visit Italy in 1858-1859; in particular, he will be able to spend large amounts of time in Florence and Rome. In Rome, he will start working on *The Marble Faun* (1860) His personal experiences in Italy are memorialized in his letters as well as in the *French and Italian Notebooks* (1871).

and his American counterpart James Fenimore Cooper, but sought inwardness instead (Arac 2011, 135), as stated by himself in his Prefaces. As Nina Baym (1984) demonstrates in detail, despite Hawthorne's own insistence on such a classification for his longer works, reviewers of the time never described them as romances (438). Furthermore, we also have to keep in mind that "nineteenth-century critical terminology was so anarchic and inconsistent that the concept of romance was never used in any systematic sense for the description of genre patterns and genre attributes" (Fluck 1996, 418).

Considering the implications of being a writer of national relevance, it should be emphasized that Hawthorne's definition of romance did not try to legitimize a distinctively American way of writing. In his Preface to *The Marble Faun*, for example, he insists on the difficulty if not the impossibility of writing a romance set in the United States, even though he had actually already done so: "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a Romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land" (Hawthorne 2002, 4). Here, he seems to suggest that "there is something un- or at least non-American in his imagination, in its attraction to themes and events that seemingly have so little pertinence to the ongoing national life" (Baym 1984, 442). As Jonathan Arac (2011) points out, the romance genre "gave Hawthorne resources to establish an independent imaginative space, to gain for his works freedom from compromising involvement with his personal political commitments as a Democratic party loyalist or with larger, national controversies over slavery" (135). His definition of romance was itself an exemplary act of self-authorization, "an attempt to elevate the [...] romance to a new level of epistemological promise and artistic respectability" (Fluck 1996, 418). Consequently, if Hawthorne's defense for the romance should be understood as a personal endeavor of self-characterization and self-promotion, the novel as a genre could be more universally considered as appropriately American, even though it was not an exclusively American literary form (Baym 1984, 443). Moreover, "[t]he distinctness of an American literature would lie in its choice of American settings, its treatment of American subjects" (ibid.).

In addition to being quite detached from the political question in his works of fiction, Hawthorne made extensive use of allegory in his short stories and romances in order to reflect on the relationship between writer and reader. Considering allegory as a separate genre, in *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (1979), Maureen Quilligan describes the author as a true allegorical writer (53) and explains the connotations of allegorical narrative in detail:

> [A]ll allegorical narrative unfolds as action designed to comment on the verbal implications of the words used to describe the imaginary action. If we understand allegories to unfold as narrative investigations of their own threshold texts, we can see the relationship between allegory as narrative and allegory as critical commentary in a new, clearer light. The allegorical author simply does what the allegorical critic does; but he writes a commentary on his own text rather than someone else's. And his "commentary" of course is not discursive, but narrative, a fact which complicates the matter but which does not detract from the simplicity of the shape. (Quilligan 1979, 53-54)

In *The Half-Vanished Structure: Hawthorne's Allegorical Dialectics* (2004), Magnus Ullén, instead, underlines that the allegorical nature of language precisely derives from the impossibility of establishing a clear distinction between word and object, and between text and interpreter (41). By using allegory as an interpretative method, Ullén (2004) demonstrates how Hawthorne always consciously made use of metatextual allegory in his works (13). In other words, the author consistently wrote about the artist and his audience, and, most importantly, about the medium through which these two actants (artist and audience/writer and reader) establish a meaningful relation (ibid.).

TIME FRAME AND HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE PADUAN SETTING

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is generally understood as a tale that combines elements of the Gothic tradition with other features deriving from European Romanticism carefully reworked by Hawthorne. As Malcom Cowley (1977) affirms, at first, Beatrice, the heroine of the tale, appears to be a familiar Romantic figure, the beautiful woman whose embrace is death (150). Then, however, the reader learns that she is a victim of her father, who cares more for science than for mankind. Over the years, Hawthorne's short story has provided an impressive critical mass, but there still seems to be no overall

agreement by scholars about the interpretation of the tale's many themes and motifs, and especially its ambiguous moral message.

"Rappaccini's Daughter" begins with a short fictional introduction treating the text as a translation from a work by French author Monsieur Aubépine.[3] In the subsequent narration, young Giovanni Guasconti from Southern Italy comes to Padua to study at the university and takes lodgings near Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini's palace. One day, Guasconti sees Beatrice, Rappaccini's daughter, in her father's garden and falls in love with her; her beauty curiously reminds him of the poisonous plants and flowers that her father cultivates. Professor Pietro Baglioni, a friend of Guasconti's late father, warns him that Dr. Rappaccini's love of science has led him far beyond the limits of morality and respect for mankind, and that Beatrice seems to be a product of his sinister arts. The young man, however, does not flinch. The relationship between the couple deepens and Guasconti finds himself a victim of the evil and poisonous influence of the garden. Subsequently, Guasconti administers an antidote to Beatrice that Baglioni has given to him. The young woman drinks it, but "as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death. And thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni" (Hawthorne 1977, 212-13).

Coming back to the concept of allegory, in Ullén's (2004) reading, this precise tale constitutes a paradigm of Hawthorne's allegorical dialectics (69). In his opinion, "Rappaccini's Daughter" can be exactly considered as an allegorical depiction of the plight of the artist who insists on working through the form of allegory (ibid.). In particular, the allegorical connotations should all be seen as subservient to the primary allegory of the short story, in which Rappaccini is a figure of the artist/writer, Beatrice, his beloved creation, stands for the tale itself, and Giovanni, finally, is a figure of the audience/reader (Ullén 2004, 72). Keeping all this in mind, I propose that the Paduan

[3] Aubépine is the French name of the hawthorn plant.

setting of the tale and all the implications that, as we will see, revolve around it can be read as an allegory of the artist/writer's extensive knowledge and vast culture.

For the sake of my analysis of the historical accuracy and truthfulness of the setting, it is now important to focus on the concept of history and how the author applies it to his production. Concerning the relationship between Hawthorne and history, in his influential book-length study of the author's early tales and sketches *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (1984), Michael J. Colacurcio affirms that Hawthorne can be understood as one of the first and most important modern intellectual historians of the United States. Hawthorne's fiction, therefore, has to be mainly read as historical literature influenced by the moral history of New England. In particular, according to Colacurcio (1984), Hawthorne does not simply borrow from historical sources, but engages in a dialectic with them, his best tales representing "the limits of perception or experience at a certain critical historical moment in the historical past" (20). Given the prominence of the historical theme in Hawthorne's production, it is fascinating to analyze how the interconnected concepts of history and setting are rendered in a tale such as "Rappaccini's Daughter," which takes place in Europe and not in the United States, even though in this specific case, as I affirmed above, the moral aspect is more obscure[4] and has not generated agreement among scholars.

The Paduan setting of "Rappaccini's Daughter" emerges from the very first line of the story. While Hawthorne makes the story's physical location clear from the outset, the events that transpire in the story unfold in an unspecified Renaissance past. Despite the vagueness of the story's temporal placement, Hawthorne's descriptions accurately describe Padua during the Renaissance. Carol Marie Bensick affirms this in her influential monograph titled *La Nouvelle Beatrice: Renaissance and Romance in "Rappaccini's Daughter"* (1985). Here, Bensick concludes that the story must take place

[4] According to Hawthorne's biographer Edwin Haviland Miller, not even the author himself was sure about the moral implications of the tale. Sophia Peabody Hawthorne is supposed to have asked her husband before he completed the work whether Beatrice is to be "a demon or an angel;" his answer was, "I have no idea!" Miller, *Salem Is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 252.

during the Renaissance, and not in the Middle Ages as some previous commentators had suggested,[5] basing her observations on the author's symbols and references. Furthermore, as she argues, "[a]ny literate nineteenth-century writer (and reader) would have been aware of the fame, particularly marked in the Renaissance, of Padua and its university" (Bensick 1985, 29-30). Decisive clues regarding the Renaissance setting are offered, in order of appearance, by Hawthorne's references to Dante and his *Divine Comedy*, the University of Padua, sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini, and the Borgia family.

Dante plays an important role as a source in "Rappaccini's Daughter," a point under-emphasized in Bensick's discussion. To understand the importance of Dante's presence in the narration, let us focus on the incipit of the tale in which the male protagonist Giovanni Guasconti is first introduced by the narrator:

> A YOUNG man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice, which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his Inferno. (Hawthorne 1977, 178)

First of all, let us concentrate on the direct reference to Dante's *Inferno* in the quoted passage.[6] In a probable attempt to undervalue or mask his knowledge of Dante, the author does not reveal the actual name of the Paduan noble. However, given that the only consistent description of a Paduan in Dante's *Inferno* comes from Canto XVII, it is

[5] Since the tale is now in public domain, some independent publishers still brand "Rappaccini's Daughter" as a Medieval tale. An example is offered by the E-Artnow edition in their Gothic Classic line titled "Rappaccini's Daughter: A Medieval Dark Tale from Padua."

[6] Dante is also extensively quoted in *The Marble Faun*.

quite easy to establish the identity of the noble: Rinaldo degli Scrovegni. In the *Inferno*, Rinaldo, an evil usurer known for having commissioned the Scrovegni Chapel to Giotto, endures the agonies of hell, suffering, like the other usurers, from falling flakes of fire while sitting on hot sand. Like other usurers, Rinaldo's "armorial bearings" are found in a purse emblazoned with his family's coats of arms placed around his neck:

> That from the neck of each there hung a pouch, / Which certain colour had, and certain blazon; / And thereupon it seems their eyes are feeding. […] And one, who with an azure sow and gravid / Emblazoned had his little pouch of white, / Said unto me: "What dost thou in this moat? / Now get thee gone; and since thou'rt still alive. […] A Paduan am I with these Florentines. (*Inferno*, Canto XVII, lines 55-70, tr. Longfellow)

The allusion to Rinaldo degli Scrovegni even allows us to give a precise geographical placement to the palace in which Guasconti takes lodgings: Palazzo degli Scrovegni. Adjacent to the previously mentioned chapel frescoed by Giotto, the palace was the Scrovegni family's ancestral home, which was demolished by the new owners, the Gradenigos, in 1827 after years of abandonment. The neglect of the palace, which, among other things, overlooked an enclosed garden that still exists today (*I Giardini Dell'Arena*, The Gardens of the Roman Arena), goes well with Dame Lisabetta's remark at the beginning of the tale: "Do you find this old mansion gloomy?" (Hawthorne 1977, 178) and with the dark atmosphere presented in the long quotation from the incipit above.

As I have asserted, Hawthorne's almost hidden reference to Rinaldo degli Scrovegni proves his profound knowledge of Dante. According to Joseph Chesley Mathews (1940), Hawthorne certainly read the *Inferno*, presumably all of it, by 1843—probably by 1835—and likely read the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* as well (165). At the time when he was writing the tale, Hawthorne "had a sound knowledge of Latin, and read Italian easily enough, although he never attained any proficiency in speaking it" (157), not even after his long trip to Italy. However, as Mathews points out at the end of his article, whether he read *The Divine Comedy* in Italian or in translation cannot be established (165). By 1844, eight partial or complete English translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* were available. These translations were all penned by British authors

except Thomas William Parsons's *The First Ten Cantos of the Inferno of Dante* published by Ticknor and Fields in Boston in 1843 (later expanded under the title *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Houghton Mifflin, 1893). Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's highly influential translation[7] was published only in 1867 and, therefore, it too cannot have been consulted by Hawthorne for the drafting of the tale. Given the reference to *Inferno*, Canto XVII in the incipit of the story, excluded from Parson's partial translation, Hawthorne must have accessed a British translation or the original Italian text.

Not until the Renaissance period was Dante first starting to be read outside the Tuscan borders; in the Middle Ages, circulation of the text was still limited to Florence. Therefore, the fact of a Neapolitan like Guasconti reading *The Divine Comedy* supports the argument for a Renaissance setting. Secondly, it is in the analyzed passage that Hawthorne emphasizes the importance of *The Divine Comedy* as "the great poem" of Italy, a distinction especially marked after the unification of the Italian state. Furthermore, Dante has a key role as a precursor in the *questione della lingua* (the question of Italian language), the name given to the centuries-long debate about the nature of the linguistic practice to be defined as standard Italian. It is not by chance that what became known as standard Italian is the literary version of Florentine dialect. Given that the *questione della lingua* originated as a debate in the Italian Renaissance, and given its predominance in Italian Renaissance culture, this may be a further point in favor of the Renaissance thesis.

Let us now focus on Hawthorne's representation of the University of Padua and its famous medical department. Bensick invites the reader to interpret Hawthorne's following lines regarding a possible historical truth beyond the scientific dispute between Rappaccini and Baglioni:

> [Guasconti] might have taken Baglioni's opinions with many grains of allowance, had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Doctor Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have

[7] Longfellow and Hawthorne graduated together as members of the class of 1825 of Bowdoin College and later became friends.

> gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua. (Hawthorne 1977, 185-86)

As Bensick (1985) adds, "[i]t is a fact of history that the University of Padua was the site of an especially heated academic controversy in the second decade of the sixteenth century, over the rational provability of the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul" (31). This controversy was viewed as a crucial and relevant moment by intellectual historians of the nineteenth century not only in Europe but also in the United States.

Lastly, let us focus on Hawthorne's references to Benvenuto Cellini and the Borgia family. In the narration, Cellini is mentioned only once as the creator of Baglioni's beautiful silver vial. In the passage, though, the Borgias are quoted as well: "Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous" (Hawthorne 1977, 204). Bensick points out that Cellini's *Autobiography* (1728), one of the most important autobiographies from the Renaissance that was conveniently available to the English-speaking nineteenth-century reader in Thomas Nugent's 1828 translation,[8] confirms that the famous goldsmith did make a set of silver vials which were commissioned by Dr. Jacopo Berengario da Carpi,[9] on whom the renowned artist does not show great consideration. The quick reference to the Borgias may have been used by the author to evoke a general

[8] To further prove Hawthorne's vast knowledge of Cellini's *Autobiography* I can quote from Chapter XVII of *The Marble Faun*: "'Nay, I have good authority for peopling the Coliseum with phantoms,' replied [Kenyon]. 'Do you remember that veritable scene in Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography, in which a necromancer of his acquaintance draws a magic circle—just where the black cross stands now, I suppose—and raises myriads of demons? Benvenuto saw them with his own eyes,—giants, pygmies, and other creatures of frightful aspect, capering and dancing on yonder walls. Those spectres must have been Romans, in their lifetime, and frequenters of this bloody amphitheatre'," 121.

[9] In Cellini's *Autobiography*, there is an extensive passage on the silver vials: "This is a copy from a little silver goblet, of such and such weight, which I made at such and such a time for that charlatan Maestro Jacopo, the surgeon from Carpi. He came to Rome and spent six months there, during which he bedaubed some scores of nobleman and unfortunate gentlefolk with his dirty salves, extracting many thousands of ducats from their pockets. At that time I made for him this vase and one of a different pattern. He paid me very badly; and at the present moment in Rome all the miserable people who used his ointment are crippled and in a deplorable state of health," http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4028 (name of translator not found).

atmosphere of treachery in a Renaissance setting while also referring to the theme of poisoning.

RAPPACCINI'S GARDEN AS A DOUBLE OF PADUA'S *ORTO BOTANICO*

Now that I have considered Hawthorne's historical and literary references in the story, I can affirm that his deliberate choice of these specific details attests to his desire for historical accuracy. In Bensick's view, given the examples discussed above, the tale must take place between 1527 and 1533. Let us now focus on Rappaccini's garden and how it can be understood as a representation of Padua's renowned Botanical Gardens, also belonging to its ancient University. The garden is first described at the beginning of the tale as follows:

> From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain in the centre, sculptured with rare art, but so woefully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. (Hawthorne 1977, 179)

As many commentators point out, apart from the real Paduan gardens themselves, Hawthorne's inspiration for the depiction of Rappaccini's garden could come from two Italian literary sources: the aforementioned *Divine Comedy* and Bocaccio's *Decameron*. The Dante reference regarding the representation of Rappaccini's garden has been studied by some scholars, most notably Lois A. Cuddy (1987). Cuddy claims that Rappaccini's garden is a reworking of the allegorized Garden of Eden at the summit of Mount Purgatorio in Cantos XXVII-XXXIII of *Purgatorio*, the place where Dante first meets the heavenly version of Beatrice. The Boccaccio inspiration, however, was only recently introduced. In his essay, by initially proving Hawthorne's knowledge of Boccaccio through a reading of the *French and Italian Notebooks*, William Sayers (2006) underlines that the villa in Fiesole, near Florence, to which the group of seven young men and women move between Days Two and Three of the *Decameron,* is also surrounded by an attractive garden (n. pag.). As Sayers shows, Bocaccio's description of

the garden is highly similar to Hawthorne's, especially in its beauty and the interconnection between fountains, water, and plants:

In the middle of the lawn was a basin of whitest marble, graven with marvellous art; in the centre whereof—whether the spring were natural or artificial I know not—rose a column supporting a figure which sent forth a jet of water of such volume and to such an altitude that it fell, not without a delicious plash, into the basin in quantity amply sufficient to turn a mill-wheel. The overflow was carried away from the lawn by a hidden conduit, and then, reemerging, was distributed through tiny channels, very fair and cunningly contrived, in such sort as to flow round the entire lawn, and by similar derivative channels to penetrate almost every part of the fair garden, until, re-uniting at a certain point, it issued thence, and, clear as crystal, slid down towards the plain, turning by the way two mill-wheels with extreme velocity to the no small profit of the lord. The aspect of this garden, its fair order, the plants and the fountain and the rivulets that flowed from it, so charmed the ladies and the three young men that with one accord they affirmed that they knew not how it could	A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window, and made him feel as if a fountain were an immortal spirit, that sung its song unceasingly, and without heeding the vicissitudes around it; while one century embodied it in marble, and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. […] There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care; as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden-pots; some crept serpent-like along the ground, or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. (Hawthorne 1977, 179-80)

receive any accession of beauty, or what other form could be given to Paradise, if it were to be planted on earth. (*Decameron*, Third Day, Introduction, tr. Rigg)	

Moreover, even though "Rappaccini's Daughter" takes place in Padua and not in Florence, "[i]t may be objected that many enclosed Italian gardens of the Renaissance and later resemble one another, that the walls, walks, and fountain, to single out architectural details, are conventions, and that the flora are similarly commonplaces—in reality as in literature" (Sayers 2006, 35).

After considering these plausible literary sources, it is also noteworthy to see how Hawthorne's descriptions of Rappaccini's garden correspond to reality. As depicted above, it is not difficult to reason that Hawthorne could have based his depiction of Padua on his literary predecessors and contemporaries. Moreover, the author could never ascertain whether his descriptions were accurate; he never got to visit the Veneto region during his trip to Italy[10] in the years following the publication of the tale. However, as Pietro Casetta (2014) has studied, Hawthorne's depiction of Rappaccini's garden is indeed faithful and well-researched and this is important because, once more, it attests to his desire to provide a plausible setting for his tale.

At the time when Hawthorne was writing, there were seventeen fountains in Padua's *Orto Botanico*; some of them can still be seen today and are indeed "sculptured with rare art" depicting some elegant lion's muzzles. The description of the plants and flowers also proves to be truthful and scientifically accurate. In fact, some of the plants described in the narration can still be found in the *Orto Botanico*: "All about the pool into which the water subsided grew various plants, that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent" (Hawthorne 1977, 180). According to Casetta (2014),

[10] A visit to at least Venice was planned for Hawthorne's Italian stay, however, his daughter's Una sudden illness cut the trip short. Battilana, "Il fantastico 'Orto' padovano di Hawthorne," 9.

Hawthorne is referring to the *Colocasia esculenta* here, an aquatic plant native to India and Malaysia, which loves humidity and moisture, exactly as in Hawthorne's depiction. Hawthorne is even correct regarding the existence of a statue dedicated to Vertumnus, the god of seasons and plant growth as well as gardens and fruit trees: "One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study" (Hawthorne 1977, 180). The statue, created by prominent sculptor Antonio Bonazza, still exists and can be spotted during a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Padua.

CONCLUSION: HAWTHORNE'S REPRESENTATIONS OF ITALY BEYOND "RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER"

The study of Hawthorne's Paduan setting of "Rappaccini's Daughter" proves indeed to be multilayered and multifaceted. As we have seen, the study of the rich references in the text through the wealth of examples provided allows the reader to understand the author's desire for historical accuracy and truthfulness to his setting by partially disproving the author's later remarks in the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne's choices, although they may seem obscure at first, can be read as a powerful allegory of the artist's wide culture, a deliberate tool to convey a particularly deep knowledge of Italian literature, art, and history. Moreover, as Ullén (2004) points out, this very short story already bears in itself the embryo of the main structural principle, mostly the use of chiastic inversion, of the longer romances that were to follow within five or six years (74).

By way of conclusion, it can be affirmed that the Padua of "Rappaccini's Daughter" with its gloomy and Gothic atmospheres foreshadows subsequent representations of Italy in Hawthorne's production and, in particular, the Rome of *The Marble Faun* (1860), the author's last completed romance. Hawthorne's Rome in *The Marble Faun* is certainly appreciated by its narrator and main characters for its beauty, splendid architecture, and rich history. However, as the following passage underlines, it is also a city that hides a darker side, just like Padua in the previously analyzed tale:

> We know not how to characterize, in any accordant and compatible terms, the Rome that lies before us; its sunless alleys, and streets of palaces; its churches, lined with the gorgeous marbles that were originally polished for the adornment of pagan temples; its thousands of evil smells, mixed up with fragrance of rich incense, diffused from as many censers; its little life, deriving feeble nutriment from what has long been dead. Everywhere, some fragment of ruin suggesting the magnificence of a former epoch; everywhere, moreover, a Cross,—and nastiness at the foot of it. As the sum of all, there are recollections that kindle the soul, and a gloom and languor that depress it beyond any depth of melancholic sentiment that can be elsewhere known.
> Yet how is it possible to say an unkind or irreverential word of Rome? —the City of all time, and of all the world!—The spot for which Man's great life and deeds have done so much, and for which Decay has done whatever glory and dominion could not do! [...] (Hawthorne 2002, 87)

Given the prominence of the Italian setting in the romance, which was essentially based on a careful reworking of lengthy passages taken from Hawthorne's *Italian Notebooks*, some commentators have even defined *The Marble Faun* as a Gothic travel book or as a "charming guidebook" (Miller 1995, 447) of Rome.[11] In fact, the romance was published at the precise historical moment when Americans were starting to become truly obsessed with Europe and Rome, in particular. Even the romance's narrator jokingly remarks: "as all my readers know, for everybody nowadays has been in Rome" (Hawthorne 2002, 56). As Susan Manning (2002) points out in her introduction to the romance, in the nineteenth century, American visitors to Europe, especially literati and artists, were moved by a desire for culture and were mainly seeking authenticity, even though they were not always able to discern it (xxxii). As we have seen, Hawthorne already possessed a solid knowledge of Italian culture before even visiting the country. In the narration, the events that intertwine the lives of Donatello, the Count of Monte Beni, Kenyon, a sculptor, and the two painters, Hilda and the mysterious Miriam, come to life in a frame that is, on the one hand, precise from a historical perspective and, on the other hand, enigmatic and purely Gothic. Donatello, who is often compared to

[11] For example, Christian Tauchnitz's three-volume illustrated printing of *The Marble Faun* contained photogravure prints of the churches, buildings, towers, and art referenced in the narration. Moreover, nineteenth-century American tourists even took the romance with them and used it as a real guidebook when visiting Rome.

Adam and amazingly resembles the marble Faun of Praxiteles, falls in love with Miriam and his love for the woman even leads him to commit a murder. The bond between Donatello and Miriam will make the narrative a fresco on the complicated relationship between man and evil.

In the Preface to *The Marble Faun*, by walking away once again from the ideas expressed at the beginning of *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne (2002) claims the importance of the Italian setting and of the descriptions "of various Italian objects, antique, pictorial, and statuesque" (4). Moreover, as the author points out, "these things fill the mind everywhere in Italy, and especially in Rome, and cannot easily be kept from flowing out upon the page when one writes freely, and with self-enjoyment" (4-5). Compared to "Rappaccini's Daughter," the author's desire to demonstrate his knowledge of Italian culture (in particular art, architecture, and history) is still allegorical but finally made explicit. All of this, combined with the experiences derived from Hawthorne's real-life extended visit to Rome, contributes to create a romance in which the truthfulness of the setting and fidelity to the actual have been deemed as some of its strongest features.

Furthermore, the historical aspect, as highlighted in Ugo Rubeo's article, is once again important in the romance's structure (Rubeo 2014, 1).[12] Since the days of "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne had been deeply fascinated with the relationship that Italy has with its rich and complex history. A relationship of strong dependence on the past and constant negotiation between past and future, something that is different if compared to a nation like the United States with a more recent history, even though for the author himself, particularly given his unique family history, the past always has repercussions on the present. In *The Marble Faun*, the author finally has the opportunity to analyze this deep bond, especially through the strong symbology of sculpture. In fact,

[12] It is precisely Hawthorne's personal interaction with Rome that unsettles his perception of history and the notion of antiquity. In fact, as one passage from his *Italian Notebooks* highlights: "It is strange how our ideas of what antiquity is become altered here in Rome; the sixteenth century, in which many of the churches and fountains seem to have been built or reedified, seems close at hand, even like our own days; a thousand years, or the days of the latter empire, is but a modern date, and scarcely interests us; and nothing is really venerable of a more recent epoch than the reign of Constantine," 19-20.

it is no coincidence that the only Roman character in the romance is named Donatello, a name that immediately provokes a striking connection with one of the greatest Italian sculptors of the early part of the Renaissance. Furthermore, the author's general insistence on marble statues and effigies in the romance is highly reminiscent of the descriptions of the marble fountains and the statue of Vertumnus in "Rappaccini's Daughter." I can quote a passage from the long description of the garden of the palace in which Miriam's studio is located in Chapter V of *The Marble Faun*, which is strikingly similar to Rappaccini's garden:

> THE courtyard and staircase of a palace built three hundred years ago are a peculiar feature of modern Rome, and interest the stranger more than many things of which he has heard loftier descriptions. [...] In the centre of the court, under the blue Italian sky, and with the hundred windows of the vast palace gazing down upon it from four sides, appears a fountain. It brims over from one stone basin to another, or gushes from a Naiad's urn, or spurts its many little jets from the mouths of nameless monsters, which were merely grotesque and artificial when Bernini, or whoever was their unnatural father, first produced them. [...] In one of the angles of the courtyard, a pillared doorway gives access to the staircase, with its spacious breadth of low marble steps, up which, in former times, have gone the princes and cardinals of the great Roman family who built this palace. (Hawthorne 2002, 31-32)

Descriptive passages like the one above have precise performative functions in Hawthorne's allegorical aesthetics (Ullén 2004, 269). They make the reader aware of the author's personal involvement with the events of the story (Ullén 2004, 327). They also establish a direct relationship between the historical realm of the reader and the fictitious sphere of the narrative (ibid.).

As we have seen, in addition to being historically accurate, Hawthorne's representations of Italy in the analyzed tale and romance need to be read both as an aesthetic and intellectual endeavor. The author's Padua and Rome in these two works are essentially a sum of the art works, and art and literary history that can be found there. Hawthorne offers the reader his personal but verisimilar take on the two cities mediated by his knowledge of Italian literature, art, and history without ever falling into exoticism. Through the wealth of intellectual references at work in the Paduan and

Roman settings of the two narratives, we can therefore identify an overarching allegorical depiction of the artist/author's own vast culture.

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