The Birth-mark

Susan Howe

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Introduction

These essays were written after *My Emily Dickinson.* They are the direct and indirect results of my encounter with *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson,* edited by R. W. Franklin for the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press in 1981, and with *The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson,* also edited by R. W. Franklin, this time for the Amherst College Press in 1986. There I learned, examining the facsimiles, that Emily Dickinson, in her carefully handwritten manuscripts—some sewn into fascicles, some gathered into sets—may have been demonstrating her conscious and unconscious separation from a mainstream literary orthodoxy in letters, an orthodoxy not only represented by T. W. Higginson's and Mabel Loomis Todd's famous editorial interference but also to be found during the 1950s in Thomas H. Johnson's formal assumptions—assumptions apparently shared by Ralph Franklin (if one is to judge by the "Introduction" to *The Master Letters*). The issue of editorial control is directly connected to the attempted erasure of antinomianism in our culture. Lawlessness seen as negligence is at first feminized and then restricted or banished. For me, the manuscripts of Emily Dickinson represent a contradiction to canonical social power, whose predominant purpose seems to have been to render isolate voices devoted to writing as a physical event of immediate revelation. The excommunication and banishment of the early American female preacher and prophet Anne Hutchinson, and the comparison of her opinions to monstrous births, is not unrelated to the editorial apprehension and domestication of Emily Dickinson. The antinomian controversy in New England (1636–38) didn't leave Massachusetts with its banished originator. The antinomian controversy continues in the form, often called formlessness, of Dickinson's letters and poems during and after her crisis years of 1858–60. It continues with this nineteenth-century antinomian poet's gesture of infinite patience in preferring not to publish. Her demurral was a covenant of grace. The antinomian controversy continues in the

first reordering and revision of her manuscripts according to a covenant of works. The antinomian controversy continues in the manhandling of the Thomas H. Johnson editions of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts* (1951) and *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* (1958), published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. It continues in the current magisterial control of her copyrights and access to her papers exercised by the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the Harvard University Press, and to a lesser degree the Amherst College Library and the Amherst College Press. In July 1862, Emily Dickinson prophetically wrote to T. W. Higginson: "if at any time—you regret you received me, or I prove a different fabric to that you supposed—you must banish me—" (L 268).

Emily Dickinson's writing is my strength and shelter. I have trespassed into the disciplines of American Studies and Textual Criticism through my need to fathom what wildness and absolute freedom is the nature of expression. There are other characteristic North American voices and visions that remain antinomian and separatist. In order to hear them I have returned by strange paths to a particular place at a particular time, a threshold at the austere reach of the book.

* * *

> Is there a poem that never reaches words
>
> And one that chaffers the time away?
> Is the poem peculiar and general?
> There's a meditation there, in which there seems
>
> To be an evasion, a thing not apprehended or
> Not apprehended well. Does the poet
> evade us, as in a senseless element?
>
> Wallace Stevens, "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (TS 135)

First: before political theory people have no property. First: before civil order the arm of the church must extend its reach. First: the Law holds gibberish off. Follow the footprints of justices.

Here are unmown fields unknown inhabitants other woods in other words: enigma of gibberish unwritten wife

Poetry unsettles our scrawled defence; unapprehensible but dear nevertheless.

"and behold / the academies like structures in a mist." (TS 124)

* * *

When a group of English Puritans entered into an explicit contract they called a Covenant with God and left the European continent in what later came to be known as the Great Migration of the 1630s, they were trespassers. Although these colonists were propelled by a desire to escape religious and economic constraints, they were also anxious not to be considered Separatist. Circumstances they could not have foreseen enjoined a particular separatism. America as Educator. Here there was nothing to withdraw from but forsakenness.

First: these separating nonSeparatists were lawless in their particular northwestern settlement abroad in the world at the eastern margin of a continent. But a utopian exodus can't allow negligence. Humanity imposes obligations. The "Absolute Boundary of Reformation" is too immediately unsettling. As if speech must always recall sensation to order, the covenantal dialect installed its particular violences; its singular body and monologue of command expressions. Seventy years later, Cotton Mather's "A General Introduction" to the *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England, from Its First Planting in the Year 1620, unto the Year of Our* LORD, *1698, in Seven* BOOKS, nervously assures the reader: "But whether *New England* may *Live* any where else or no, it must *Live* in our *History*!" (MC 94).

One of the vivid "Lives of Sixty Famous Divines" in *Magnalia Christi Americana* is titled "Cottonus Redivivus; or, The Life of Mr. John Cotton." John Cotton, the historian Cotton Mather's maternal grandfather, was a library cormorant. "Mr. Cotton was indeed a most *universal scholar*, and a *living system* of the liberal arts, and a *walking library*. . . . Twelve hours in a day he commonly studied, and would call that *a scholar's day*; resolving rather to wear out with using than with rusting" (MC 273–76). John Cotton was also Anne Hutchinson's minister, friend, and eventually persecutor. Sometime during the antinomian controversy in New England a spark from the fire of Scripture singed the heart of the minister-scholar. "If we be hemm'd in with this Covenant we cannot break out," he once wrote.

America as Educator.

During its turbulent infancy, discourse in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, religious or otherwise, stirred by millenarian activism, fraught with puzzlement and rapture, fury and passivity, was charged with particular risks for women, who were hedged in by a network of old-world property values. *Charged*: "But now having seen him which is invisible I fear not what man can do unto me" (AC 338), said Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at her Examination at the Court at Newtowne/Cambridge. The antinomian controversy was

the primordial struggle of North American literary expression. The real Anne Hutchinson was banished by the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, then murdered in the natural wilderness by history. Emily Dickinson's textual production is still being tamed for aesthetic consumption. If antinomian vision in North America is gendered feminine, then what will save it from print misfortune?

* * *

"

Voices I am following lead me to the margins. Anne Hutchinson's verbal expression is barely audible in the scanty second- or thirdhand records of her two trials. Dorothy Talbye, Mrs. Hopkins, Mary Dyer, Thomas Shepard, Mrs. Sparhawk, Brother Crackbone's wife, Mary Rowlandson, Barbary Cutter, Cotton Mather may have been searching for grace in the wilderness of the world. They express to me a sense of unrevealedness. They walk in my imagination and I love them. Somewhere Coleridge says that Love may be a sense of Substance/Being seeking to be self-conscious

you. Fate flies home to the mark. Can any words restore to me how you *felt*?

you are straying, seeking, scattering. Was it you or is it me? Where is the stumbling block? Thoughts delivered by love are predestined to distortion by words. If experience forges conception, can quick particularities of calligraphic expression ever be converted to type? Are words children? What is the exchange value? Where does spirit go? Double yourself stammer stammer. Is there any way to proof it? Who or what survives the work? Where is the Patron of the stamp?

Mosses Moses Moby muffled maybe

I am drawn toward the disciplines of history and literary criticism but in the dawning distance a dark wall of rule supports the structure of every letter, record, transcript: every proof of authority and power. I know records are compiled by winners, and scholarship is in collusion with Civil Government. I know this and go on searching for some trace of love's infolding through all the paper in all the libraries I come to.

* * *

Old News

For a time, Nathaniel Hawthorne was a cormorant of libraries. After graduation from Bowdoin College in 1825 he returned to his mother's home in Salem. For most of the next ten years he lived with his mother, two sisters, a maternal uncle, and probably two aunts. There seems to have been little pressure on him to earn an income, and he was left alone to write. Between 1826 and 1838 his sister Elizabeth (another library cormorant) borrowed over a thousand books for her brother and herself, usually from the Salem Athenaeum. "The Athenaeum was very defective," Elizabeth later recalled, "it was one of my brother's peculiarities that he would never visit it himself, nor look over the Catalogue to select a book, nor do anything indeed but find fault with it; so that it was left entirely to me to provide him with reading, and I'm sure nobody else would have got half so much out of such a dreary old library as I did. . . . 6 vols. folio, of Howell's State Trials, he preferred to any others. There was also much that related to the early history of New England, with which I think he became pretty well acquainted, aided, no doubt, by the Puritan instinct that was in him" (EH 324). Michael Colacurcio thinks Hawthorne may have felt many of his stories were ironic repetitions of already familiar ones, and this is why he called the first book he signed his name to *Twice-told Tales*. Hawthorne's most recent biographer, Edwin Haviland Miller, thinks he simply meant these stories, now in book form, had already been published in magazines. The title could also be a reference to lines in Shakespeare's *King John*: "Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale, / Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man." Coincidentally or uncannily, *Twice-told Tales* was published in 1837, exactly two hundred years after the antinomian controversy. In 1837, Sara Coleridge's long fairy tale, "Phantasmion," was published in England. "It requires no great *face* to publish nowadays; it is not stepping upon a stage where the eyes of an audience are upon you—but entering a crowd, where you must be very tall, strong, and striking, indeed, to obtain the slightest attention. In these days, too, to print a Fairy Tale is the very way to be *not read*, but shoved aside with contempt," she wrote in a letter to a friend (SD 95).

* * *

In 1851, while he was rewriting *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville, another library cormorant, marked a passage in his copy of Hawthorne's story "The Gentle Boy." " 'Friend,' replied the little boy, in a sweet, though faultering

voice, 'they call me Ilbrahim, and my home is here'" (H 111). "The Gentle Boy" is one of Hawthorne's *Twice-told Tales*, although he wrote it years earlier and published it first, anonymously, in a magazine. Quaker antinomian Catherine is Ilbrahim's mother. She erupts into the narrative, as the muffled essence of enthusiasm.

> The muffled female, who had hitherto sat motionless in the front rank of the audience, now arose, and with slow, stately, and unwavering step, ascended the pulpit stairs. . . . She then divested herself of the cloak and hood, and appeared in a most singular array. A shapeless robe of sackcloth was girded about her waist with a knotted cord; her raven hair fell down upon her shoulders, and its blackness was defiled by pale streaks of ashes, which she had strewn upon her head. Her eyebrows, dark and strongly defined, added to the deathly whiteness of a countenance, which, emaciated with want, and wild with enthusiasm and strange sorrows, retained no trace of earlier beauty. (H 118)

Antinomian Anne Hutchinson roams through Nathaniel Hawthorne's imagination in *The Scarlet Letter*. After the introductory custom-house chapter she is immediately there at the prison door.

> This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that overshadowed it,—or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison-door,—we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to the reader. (SL 50)

The Scarlet Letter: A Romance is fiction. "The Birth-mark" is the first story in Nathaniel Hawthorne's collection of short stories *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Herman Melville called his essay on Hawthorne and American literary expression "Hawthorne and His Mosses." "The Birth-mark" is a twice-told title.

* * *

The Public Eye

Noah Webster defines *edit* this way: "1. *Properly*, to publish; *more usually*, to superintend a publication; to prepare a book or paper for the public eye, by writing, correcting, or selecting the matter."

> One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife, with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger, until he spoke.
>
> "Georgiana," said he, "has it never occured to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"
>
> "No, indeed," said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth, it has been so often called a charm, that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."
>
> "Ah, upon another face, perhaps it might," replied her husband. "But never on yours! No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature, that this slightest possible defect—which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty—shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection." (H 764–65)

In 1844, Edgar Allan Poe wrote several introductory passages concerning what he called his "idle practice" of making notes in the margins of books. He called the introduction and "subjoined *farrago*" "Marginalia." This was the first of a group of pieces he contributed under the same title to the *Democratic Review, Graham's, Godey's* magazines and the *Southern Literary Messenger* over the next five years.

> In the *marginalia* . . . we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly—boldly—originally—with *abandonnement*—without conceit—much after the fashion of Jeremey Taylor, and Sir Thomas Browne, and Sir William Temple, and the anatomical Burton, and that most logical analogist, Butler, and some other people of the old day, who were too full of their matter to have any room for their manner, which, being thus left out of the question, was a capital manner, indeed,—a model of manners, with a richly marginalic air. . . . It may be as well to observe . . . that just as the goodness of your true pun is in the direct ratio of its intolerability, so is nonsense the essential sense of the Marginal Note. (PW 1–4)

* * *

Marginalia

When Hawthorne was an undergraduate at Bowdoin College (1821–25), one of his nicknames was Oberon. "Oh! I have a horror of what was created in my own brain, and shudder at the manuscripts in which I gave that dark idea a sort of material existence. Would they were out of my sight" (H 331), exclaims the author's fictional author Oberon in "The Devil in Manuscript," before he burns his stories. "The Devil in Manuscript," an early tale, was published anonymously in 1835. "The papers were indeed reduced to a heap of black cinders, with a multitude of sparks hurrying confusedly among them, the traces of the pen being now represented by white lines, and the whole mass fluttering two and fro, in the draughts of air" (H 335). In 1842, Edgar Allan Poe wrote a review of *Twice-told Tales* for *Graham's Magazine*; he advised Hawthorne to "mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of 'The Dial,' and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of 'The North American Review' " (PS 450).

"—Of Poe, I know too little to think—Hawthorne appalls, entices—." In 1879, Emily Dickinson was thanking T. W. Higginson for the Christmas present of his recently published *Short Studies of American Authors*. Higginson's book contained critical sketches of Hawthorne, Poe, Thoreau, Howells, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Henry James. The author of possibly a thousand unpublished poems sagely added, "Mrs Jackson soars to your estimate lawfully as a Bird, but of Howells and James, one hesitates—Your relentless music dooms as it redeems—" (L 622).

Editing is the art of discipline; the mastery of detail. Eccentric punctuation, blots, dashes, smudged letters, gaps, interruptions, aborted sketches, "textually irrelevant" numbers, uncanceled or canceled alternatives in the manuscript are a profitless counteraction. Editing is sensible partitioning.

The contents page of Melville's edition of *Mosses from an Old Manse* has a printer's error. "Egotism, or; the Bosom-Friend, FROM THE UNPUBLISHED 'ALLEGORIES OF THE HEART'" should read "Egotism, or, the Bosom-Serpent." Melville corrected the misprint by drawing a line through the word "friend" and writing "serpent" above it (MM 1:619).

" 'Here he comes!' shouted the boys along the street.—'Here comes the man with a snake in his bosom!' " (H 781) is the beginning of "Egotism."

"So much for the intellect! But where was the heart?" (H 1051) wonders Hawthorne's transgressive investigator Ethan Brand shortly before throwing himself into the furnace of a lime kiln on Mount Graylock. When Hawthorne published "Ethan Brand" in 1850, he had already written *Twice-told Tales* and *Mosses*.

In spite of the zealous searching of editors, authors, and publishers for the print-perfect proof of intellectual labor, the heart may be sheltering in some random mark of communication. Cancelations, variants, insertions, erasures, marginal notes, stray marks and blanks in John Winthrop's manuscript notebooks are neither a "Journal" nor a "History." Maybe they are memories in disguise. Thomas Shepard's inky Elizabethan embellishments emblazon many of his confessors' names. The Puritan minister's shorthand pen strokes, vertical dashes, abbreviations, and lists in another manuscript book may be a mimic autobiography or a counter-character and career. "When my brother was young, he covered the margins and the fly leafs of every book in the house with lines of poetry and other quotations, and with his own name, and other names. Nothing brings him back to me so vividly as looking at those old books" (EH 331), Elizabeth Hawthorne recalled to James T. Fields in 1871 when he was collecting information for his biography of Hawthorne. The marginal marks Herman Melville made in his copy of Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* are another kind of writing, as are Dickinson's word variants, directional dashes and crosses. Editors too often remove these original marks of "imperfection" or muffle them in appendixes and prefaces.

"Then why did you take me from my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!" cries fictional Georgiana in the "The Birth-mark" (H 765). Hawthorne wrote it over two hundred years after the real Anne Hutchinson was excommunicated and banished by an affiliation of ministers and magistrates for the crime of religious enthusiasm. The original records of her two trials have been lost. In 1830, "Mrs. Hutchinson" was one of Hawthorne's first published stories. He removed it from later collections gathered into books. The nervous author went to great lengths to destroy his first novel, *Fanshawe*, published anonymously at his own expense in 1828. Not only did he burn the manuscript, but he did everything possible to eradicate the few existing copies. Hawthorne persuaded his closest friend, Horatio Bridge, to destroy his edition of the book and never mention it to anyone. He concealed *Fanshawe*'s existence from his wife, who didn't know he had written it until after his death.

George is the first name of the first president of the United States. George Washington always tells the truth goes our primal myth.

"But the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the Hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away" (H 767). Every lie leads deep into itself.

The intuitive retrospection of Hawthorne's unpremeditated art is just beyond the genealogy of civil reach. Ann's name holds on.

* * *

Under the Banner of Young America

"Where do we find ourselves?" is the opening question of Emerson's essay "Experience." "Words! book-words! what are you?" asks the Poet in Whitman's "Song of the Banner at Daybreak." "For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting nothing, / Only flapping in the wind?" the Banner and Pennant ask back. "I use the wings of the land-bird and use the wings of the sea-bird, and look down as from a height," the Poet replies (LG 241). F. O. Matthiessen used the Whitman quotation in *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* as an epigraph to the chapter called "Only a Language Experiment."

"O you up there! O pennant! where you undulate like a snake hissing so curious, / Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought for, risking bloody death, loved by me, / So loved—" (LG 244).

* * *

An Idea of Enthusiasm

In January 1939, F. O. Matthiessen wrote a letter to himself while he was a patient at McLean Hospital. At the time the Harvard professor, cultural historian, scholar, critic, and library cormorant was writing the book that became the classic text for American studies until the revisionary 1960s and 1970s. Matthiessen entered the hospital when suffering from depression, anxiety, and worry over his inability to finish the work; he was recurrently overwhelmed with the desire to kill himself by jumping from a window.

> Why? That is what is so baffling, so unfathomed. Because my talent was less than I thought? Because, on the first onset, I couldn't write the book I wanted? Such reasons seem preposterous to anyone reasonable, and certainly they do to me. . . . For even though it should

> turn out that I am an enthusiast trying to be a critic, a Platonic rhapsode trying to be an Aristotelian, that means a fairly hard period of readjustment, but scarcely grounds for death for a man of thirty-six. But what if you found out you couldn't write any book at all? But why introduce that phantom when you have already written three? Must it be aut Caesar aut nullus? Must everything meet you on your first terms? As Dr. Barret said a couple of days ago, "No one kills himself over a book." And I answered, "Nobody but a goddamned fool, and I'm not a goddamned fool."
>
> Towards the end of my session with Dr. Fremont-Smith he dwelt on the danger of fear, and perhaps intuitively introduced the fear of the death of someone you loved. . . . Bruno [Kollar] once remarked on how conscious I was. The American mind terribly aware of itself. Has its bright scrutiny, the self-knowledge which I have believed to be my sureness in making my life an integrated one, shut off more than I am aware, has it left nine-tenths of the ice-berg hidden? (RD 245–47)

An antinomian is a religious enthusiast. Noah Webster defines an enthusiast as "1. One who imagines he has special or supernatural converse with God, or special communications from him. 2. One whose imagination is warmed, one whose mind is highly excited with the love or in the pursuit of an object; a person of ardent zeal; as, an *enthusiast* in poetry or music. 3. One of elevated fancy or exalted ideals. *Dryden*" (WD 400). For English Romantic poets, fancy and enthusiasm are more ambiguous terms, even if fancy is frequently feminized. In chapter 4 of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge says that imagination and fancy are different faculties. Fancy is the lower aggregating and associative power of the mind. Nevertheless, for him, fancy and imagination are necessary. Shakespeare

> possessed fancy; fancy [is] considered as the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of likeness distinguished: *e.g.*, Full gently now she takes him by the hand, / A lily prison'd in a gaol of snow, / Or ivory in an alabaster band: / So white a friend engirts so white a foe. Still mounting, we find undoubted proof in his mind of imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, and by a sort of *fusion to force many into one*;—that which afterwards showed itself in such might and energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven. (CWS 56–57)

Walter Birch, in "A Sermon on the Prevalence of Infidelity and Enthusiasm" preached in the parish church of St. Peter, Colchester, on Tuesday, July 28, 1818, at the visitation of the Lord Bishop of Lindon, Oxford 1818, defined *enthusiasm* as "the offspring of presumption; of a presumption, the highest and most perilous *in kind* that it is possible to conceive; for it is essential to *her* [my italics] nature to assume the fact, upon inadequate grounds, of an extraordinary communication of notions, figures, powers, or authority, from above. Instead of submitting *her* opinion on this point, or indeed on any other, to the rule of Scripture." (C 494). Coleridge objected to the mixture of appropriate and inappropriate terms used by the minister: "I am convinced," he wrote in the margin,

> that the disease of the age is want of enthusiasm, and a tending to fanaticism. . . . Enthusiasm is the absorption of the individual in the object contemplated from the vividness and or intensity of his conceptions and convictions: fanaticism is heat. . . . The enthusiast, on the contrary, is a solitary, who lives in a world of his own peopling and for that cause is disinclined to outward action. . . . I am fully aware that the words [*enthusiasm* and *fanaticism*] are used by the best writers indifferently, but such must be the case in very many words in a composite language such as the English, before they are desynonymized. Thus imagination and fancy; chronical and temporal, and many other. (C 495–97)

The copy of Birch's sermon containing Coleridge's annotations is missing. The Princeton edition has taken them from *Literary Remains II*, Lost List, edited by his daughter and son-in-law in 1836–39.

"Fancy" is an irredeemably feminine word for most Americans. In our democratic culture men are not encouraged to display elevated fancy or exalted ideals. Webster says it is contracted from *fantasy*. Fancy: false notion, caprice, whim. Fancy, *v.i.* "If our search has reached no farther than simile and metaphor, we rather *fancy* than know. *Locke*" (WD 437). Walt Whitman's "Good-bye my Fancy! / Farewell dear mate, dear love! / . . . . Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy" (LG 458–59) is a truant exception in canonical American literary expression. In *Pierre, or The Ambiguities*, Herman Melville's doomed hero is an enthusiast. Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" is an antinomian gesture. "'I prefer not to,' he respectfully and slowly said, and mildly disappeared" (PT 45).

* * *

The Birth-mark

"It is one thing for me to come before a public magistracy and there to speak what they would have me to speak and another when a man comes to me in a way of friendship privately there is difference in that": Mrs. Hutchinson to Governor Winthrop at her examination by the Court at Newtowne, 1637 (AC 319). "What if the matter be all one," the Governor answered.

F. O. Matthiessen increasingly banished his homosexuality from his public and intellectual life as a professor and critic. The Preface to *American Renaissance* ends with the name of a place—Kittery, Maine—and a date, April 1941. He often lived there with the painter Russell Cheney. The two were lovers and companions for over twenty years, until Cheney's death in 1945. When they were away from each other, and they often were because of separate careers, they wrote daily letters. Matthiessen later willed the 3,100 letters to a Yale classmate with an allegorical or symbolic name: Hyde. Apparently, Matthiessen thought of this private correspondence as "journal-letters" or a "continued journal." Louis Hyde subsequently edited a selection of the correspondence-journal called *Rat & the Devil: Journal Letters of F. O. Matthiessen and Russell Cheney*. Matthiessen's other letters, the public, respectable ones, are in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale. In his Introduction to the suggestively titled *Rat & the Devil*, (nicknames the two men used with each other), Hyde assures readers that there is nothing "mean, narrow, selfish, ingrown, sensual" in this record of an "all-encompassing bond between two men" (RD 12). The editor also cites an entry on Matthiessen in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. "For most of his students and younger colleagues Matthiessen's homosexuality was suggested, if at all, only by the fact that his circle was more predominantly heterosexual than was usual in Harvard literary groups of the time and that he was unusually hostile to homosexual colleagues who mixed their academic and social relations" (RD 12).

"Dearest Rat . . . 'The splendid untrammeled freedom of love'—that's the essence of it all, right. . . . Our union has no name, no label; in the world it does not exist. It is simply the unpalpable, inexpressible fullness of our lives" (RD 46).

In 1924, when F. O. Matthiessen wrote this letter to Russell Cheney, he had recently graduated from Yale and was studying at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. The early letters show how deeply the youthful Matthiessen was

inspired by Shelley's youthful idealism, his political and sexual radicalism. A letter to Cheney written February 5, 1925, discusses the poet's expulsion from Eton because he and James Hogg had written an essay called "The Necessity of Atheism." The letter ends: "Thank God I didnt go directly from Yale to an American graduate school, and bury myself in the mechanical grind. Here [Oxford] I have been able to pick and choose, and will know definitely what I want when I put my back to the Harvard mill for grinding out PhDs. And at last will come the time when I can express to classes and perhaps in books some of the million things that I have been taking in" (RD 79).

Jonathan Arac, in "F. O. Matthiessen: Authorizing an American Renaissance," points out that T. S. Eliot's insistence on "form" and "impersonality" in poetry increasingly cast a heavy influence on Matthiessen's reading. In 1941 the author of *American Renaissance*, under the influence of Eliot's critical dismissal of Shelley, downplayed his influence on Melville and deplored it in Hawthorne. In the chapter called "Allegory and Symbolism," Matthiessen quoted a passage from an original notebook entry Hawthorne later reworked for the introduction to *Mosses*, about the strange play of reflections in water: "I am half convinced that the reflection [of tree and sky in the Concord River] is indeed the reality—the real thing which Nature imperfectly images to our grosser sense. At all events, the disembodied shadow is nearest to the soul." Matthiessen here added: "That passage is full of Neo-Platonic pitfalls for the artist. It recalls Shelley's similar preference for scenery imaged in water, because it was one remove further from what was actually seen and grasped; and the unfortunate results are apparent in the thinness of the texture of his lines when contrasted with the richer tactual imagery of Keats. Far worse, Hawthorne's terms seem here to converge with those of Sophia, who, when her body had been sluggish about leaving the house on a fine day, announced that 'Ideality led me out'" (AR 259).

"Deezie, [Devil] on the back of your letter this morning was a shopping list, and with a flood the actual scene of your life—your being alive there—

sugar cocoa cereal eggs bread salt pepper	was all through me. It sort of took my breath it was so real—as though I'd reached out and touched you. . . ."

Oct 7, 1929 (RD 158)

In 1925, F. O. Matthiessen excitedly wrote to Russell Cheney: "Shelley's letters take me more and more into his nature." An author takes the reader in. Enchantment of the other. When he was writing *American Renaissance*, Matthiessen was particularly interested in Melville's marginalia. Marks in the margin are immediate reflections. Reflection is also a coupling. Marginal notes are not works. "The Crimson Hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their invisible frames return to dust" (H 766). Melville underlined the two words in his copy of *Mosses* and drew a line in the right-hand margin. We are always returning to unconscious talking. *Gripe*: to seize, to hold fast, to clutch, pinch, to feel the colic. Erogenous zones are ineludibly linked to the unconscious. The devil in manuscript. Repression says to write notes on it. "'Then sir,' said the stranger, who proved a lawyer, 'you are responsible for the man you left there. He refuses to do any copying; he refuses to do anything; he says he prefers not to; and he refuses to quit the premises'" (PT 39). Un-useful scholarship. Are substitutes couples? Marginalia may be called speed reading or ghost writing.

"*Right* originally means *straight; wrong* means *twisted . . . transgression*, the crossing of a *line*" (EN 33). Trespassing. Just what I was thinking. That's why daughters are dumb. Presence is necessary. Bartleby *mildly* disappears.

Elizabeth Hawthorne loved walking and reading. Nathaniel Hawthorne warned his wife, Sophia, not to walk with his sister "because she is indefatigable, and also wants to walk half round the world, when once she is out-of-doors" (EH 316). Elizabeth's written recollections of her brother are in the form of letters written to James T. Fields. He asked for them when he was writing Hawthorne's biography. Then he didn't use them.

In 1941, for the chapter on Melville called "Reassertion of the Heart," the author of *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* and *American Renaissance* cited Melville's marking in Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna* "The brave impetuous heart yields everywhere / To the subtle contriving head" (AR 488). Bartleby may have once been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington. He would have continually handled undelivered letters. He would have gathered them together to be burned.

The long chapter on Whitman in *American Renaissance: Art and Ex-*

pression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman is utterly conflicted. Matthiessen's Preface to *American Renaissance* assures readers that he wishes "to pass beyond such interrelations to basic formulations about the nature of literature" (AR xiii). "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (PT 45) What is the nature of epistolary enthusiasm?

In 1924, "Devil" (Matthiessen), then a young graduate student, wrote to Cheney ("Rat"):

> Eton with its late perpendicular chapel modelled after King's College, Cambridge. Eton with its red-brick courts. Eton where Shelley was miserable, and where he left his name carved on the oak wainscoting along with Walpole's and Pitt's and some ten thousand others.
>
> I carried Walt Whitman in my pocket. Thats another thing you've started me doing, reading Whitman. Not solely because it gives me an intellectual kick the way it did last year, but because I'm living it. How about this to characterize our relationship?
>
> I announce the great individual, fluid as nature, chaste,
> affectionate, compassionate, fully-armed.
> I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement, spiritual, bold,
> And I announce an old age that shall lightly and joyfully meet
> its translation.
>
> Those rich, embracing adjectives may not sum it all up, but they certainly include a great many of the elements. (RD 26)

In England, in 1924, Walt Whitman inspired a young American idealist to accept his sexuality in bold and romantic terms.

In New England, seventeen years later, Matthiessen's book about "mid-nineteenth century *re-birth*" begins with a bracing epigraph from Emerson's essay "Representative Men." The long final chapter on Whitman falters over the creative intentions of the author of *Leaves of Grass*. Commenting on the opening of "Song of Myself," the utterly conflicted cultural historian and critic wrote:

> Readers with a distaste for loosely defined mysticism have plenty of grounds for objection in the way the poet's belief in divine inspiration is clothed in imagery that obscures all distinctions between body and soul by portraying the soul as merely the sexual agent. Moreover, in the passivity of the poet's body there is a quality vaguely pathological and homosexual. This is in keeping with the regressive, infantile fluidity, imaginatively polyperverse, which breaks down all mature barriers, a little further on in 'Song of Myself,' to declare that he is 'maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man' (AR 535).

The public, critical Matthiessen divorced himself from the immediacy of Whitman the maternal enthusiast. Scholarship should be applied for good, not for pampering. Love in an earlier beginning is here consigned to the immature margins: feminized—with mothers. Matthiessen's rebukes and defenses of Whitman may be the expression of a war in himself between a covenant of faith and a covenant of works. We will not read it here. "It is blank here, for reasons" (LG 356). An ocean of inaudible expression. An American educator. A careful citizen. A mind so terribly aware.

These 3,100 journal-letters, these 1,600,000 untrammeled marks of presentation: "It is dark here underground, it is not evil or pain here, it is blank here, for reasons. / . . . I turn but do not extricate myself. / Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness yet" (LG 355–56).

Oh hunger that crosses the bridge between

Jonathan Arac points out that the American Civil War isn't even indexed in F. O. Matthiessen's book about mid-nineteenth-century rebirth.

I have neglected to mention Matthiessen's many and varied leftist political affiliations during the 1930s and 1940s. Maybe my reading domesticates him.

F. O. Matthiessen ended the final section of the "Allegory and Symbolism" chapter, called "Coda," by citing D.H. Lawrence: "An allegorical image has a *meaning*. Mr. Facing-both-ways has a meaning. But I defy you to lay your finger on the full meaning of Janus, who is a symbol" (AR 315).

When Matthiessen jumped from a window of the Manger Hotel during the night of March 31, 1950, he left behind the keys to his apartment on Beacon Hill and a note: "I have taken this room in order to do what I have to do . . . Please notify Harvard University—where I have been a professor. I am exhausted . . . I can no longer believe that I can continue to be of use to my profession and my friends. I hope that my friends will be able to believe that I still love them in spite of this desperate act." On the back of the page he wrote: "I should like to be buried beside my mother in the cemetery at Springfield, Mass. My sister . . . will know about this. Please notify, *but not until morning* . . . Mrs. Farwell Knapp . . . or Mrs. Ruth Putnam. I would like them to go to my apartment and to see that the letters on the desk are mailed" (RD 367).

In 1941 women were banished from Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman.* At one time he intended to include Margart Fuller but thought better of it. Matthiessen ended his section called "Acknowledgements" this way: "The true function of scholarship as of society is not to stake out claims on which others must not trespass, but to provide a community of knowledge in which others may share" (AR xx).

* * *

So we must meet apart –
You there – I – here –
With just the door ajar
That Oceans are – and Prayer –
And that White Sustenance –
Despair – + Exercise – privilege –

(MBED 2:797)

During the 1950s, although I was only a high school student, I was already a library cormorant. I needed out-of-the-way volumes from Widener Library. My father said it would be trespassing if I went into the stacks to find them. I could come with him only as far as the second-floor entrance. There I waited while he entered the guarded territory to hunt for books. At the margin of the stacks of Widener there are three small dioramas built into the wall. Conceived in 1936, these simulations were meant to celebrate the tricentennial of Harvard College. Each one holds a bird's-eye view of Cambridge then and before. These minature versions of a past that wasn't and a present that isn't are locked in place behind glass in the entrance hall to Widener Library.

Hawthorne's sister first read Shakespeare's *As You Like It* when she was nine. The play made her wish for an outdoor life. "It has always seemed to me," Elizabeth wrote to Una, her niece, "that there must be agreeable people in the woods like those in the Forest of Arden" (EH 316). Thoreau said, in an essay called "Walking," that in literature it is only the wild that attracts us. What is forbidden is wild. The stacks of Widener Library and of all great libraries in the world are still the wild to me. Thoreau went to the woods because he wished to live deliberately in order to give a true account in his next excursion. I go to libraries because they are the ocean.

* * *

and so she sate
Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait.

("Revolt of Islam," S 44)

During the 1980s and 1990s a group of scholars, with Donald H. Rieman acting as the General Editor, has been working on the Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts. Each volume, published by the Garland Press, is a facsimile edition with full transcription and scholarly apparatus. Rieman says, in the Foreword to volume 7: "The chief aim of the Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts is neither textual nor critical, but archival. That is, our collective primary task is to make available to readers around the world—both in quality photofacsimiles and in introductions, bibliographical descriptions, and textual notes that clarify the representations in those facsimiles—the materials in the literary manuscripts of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary W. Shelley in the Bodleian Library, Oxford" (B 7:vii). The result is not an explication of Shelley's poetics; rather it represents a group of scholars from various disciplines who are working together with a variety of methodologies to solve problems and to raise new questions for readers of Shelley. In Germany another group of co-editors and scholars is working on a new critical edition of Hölderlin's late drafts and fragments. Richard Sieburth writes in the introduction to his translation of Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hymns and Fragments*: "[The editors of the Frankfurt Hölderlin] by presenting Hölderlin's texts as events rather than objects, as processes rather than products, [convert] the reader from passive consumer into active participant in the genesis of the poem, while at the same time calling attention to the fundamentally historical character of both the reader's and writer's activity" (HF 35).

Dickinson is a poet of the order of Shelley and Hölderlin. She is one of the greatest poets who ever wrote in English. The trace of her unapprehended passage through letters disturbs the order of a world where commerce is reality and authoritative editions freeze poems into artifacts. Why isn't there a similar editorial project working now to show the layerings and fragile immediacies of her multifacted visual and verbal productions? Why is there still no substantial critique of the history of these authorized and unauthorized texts? Foucault's questions in "What Is an Author?": "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?" are relevant here. New questions have been heard and new placements determined for poets who are men. How can "the subject (and its substitutes) . . . be stripped of its cre-

ative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse" (LCP 138) before we have been allowed to even see what *she, Emily Dickinson*, reveals of her most profound self in the multiple multilayered scripts, sets, notes, and scraps she left us? I cannot murmur indifferently: "What matter who's speaking?" I emphatically insist it does matter who's speaking. The presentation of the author's, Emily Dickinson's, texts through the cooperative editing of a facsimile edition of all of the poems, letters, and fragments owned by the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the Amherst College Library, and the Boston Public Library, with full transcription and scholarly apparatus, by a group of scholars working together is long overdue.

* * *

When Shelley sailed from Leghorn on July 8, 1822, he had recently been reworking his unfinished drama, *Charles I*. For the voyage home to San Terenzo he took along three memorandum books. After the sunken *Don Juan*—which the poet had hoped to rechristen *Ariel*—was raised, Captain Daniel Roberts pulled them from the wreck.

One of these rough-draft notebooks includes the holograph fair copy of over a quarter of "A Defence of Poetry," and drafts for the Preface and some stanzas from "Adonais." This notebook, pulled from the bottom of the sea, has now been designated "Bodleian Manuscript Shelley adds. e. 20." It is heavily damaged by water, mildew, and restoration. The poet wrote in this early manuscript a draft of the essay "A Defence."

```
   A   P oet  is  as-  nightin gale  who  sits
< >  dar kness  &  sings  to cheer  its own
  so li tude  w ith  s w eet  sounds;  his
  au ditors  are  as  m en  entr anced  by
                     an    unseen
  the  me lody  of  the  in-vis-i-ble  mus ician
 who
  &   feel   that   they   are   m ov ed  &
   s oftened,  yet  know  not,  w hence  or  w hy.
```

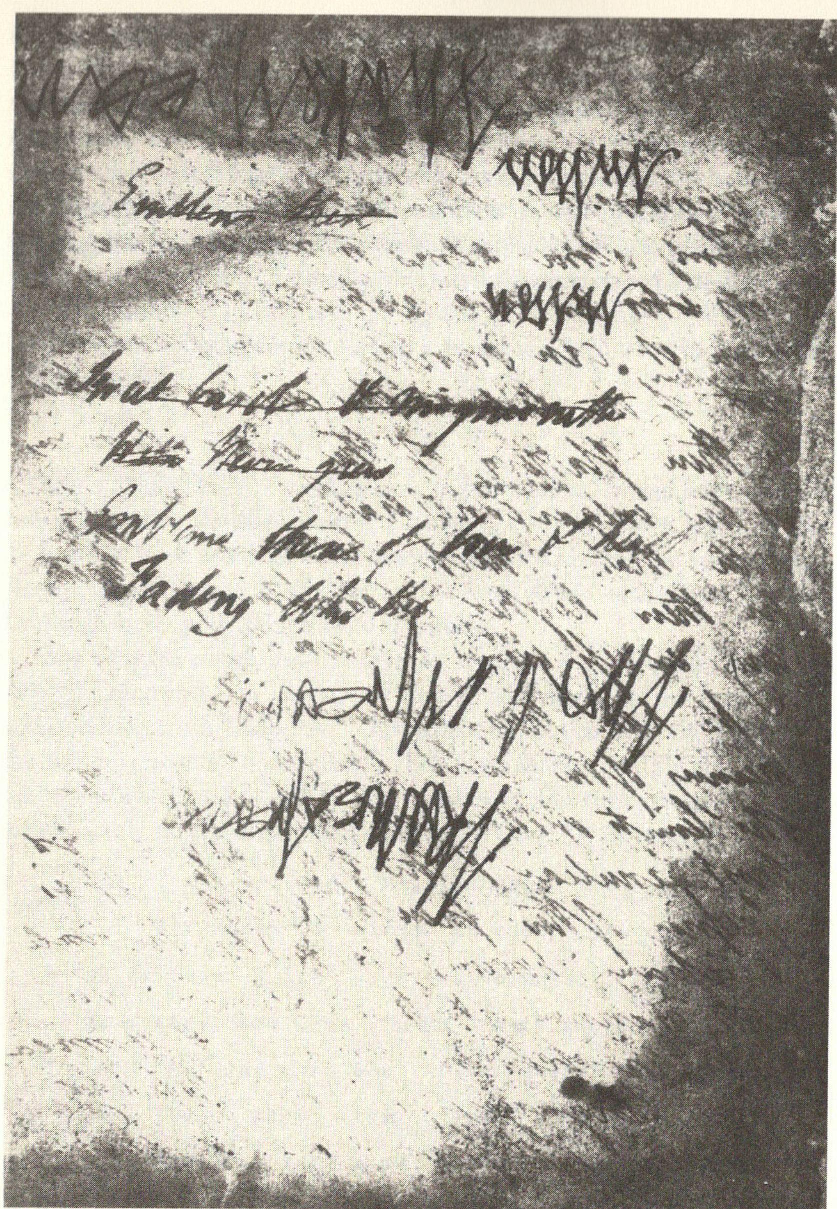
(B 169)

In the margin of his copy of *Shelley Memorials: From Authentic Sources . . . To Which Is Added a Letter on Christianity, by Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Lady Jane Gibson Shelley and published by Ticknor Fields, Boston, 1859, Herman Melville underlined and checked this passage from a

letter written by the poet to Mrs. Gisborne, May 8, 1820: "Take care of yourselves, and do *you* not forget your nightly journal. *The silent dews renew the grass without effort in the night*. I mean to write to you, but not to-day" (MM 2:505).

Anne Hutchinson is the rose at the threshold of *The Birth-mark: unsettling the wilderness in American literary history*. In this dark allegory—the world—wild roses are veils before trespass.

* * *



Page from Shelley's Manuscript Book (Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 20: Quire II Folio 2 Recto = 2 Recto). Transcription (right) by Donald H. Reiman and Hélène Dworzan Reiman in *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts: A Facsimile Edition, with Full Transcriptions and Scholarly Apparatus*, Volume VII, (New York, 1989), 138–39. Used by permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

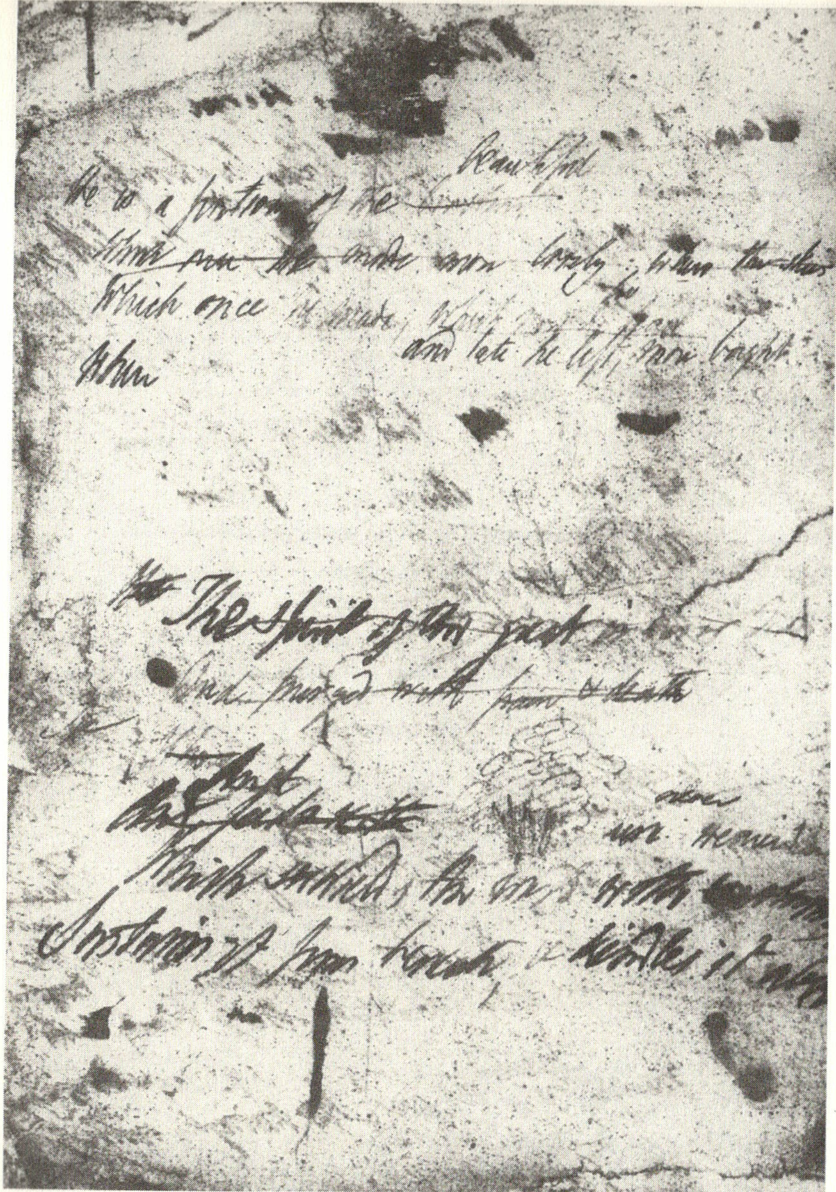
```
                                  beautiful
       He  is  a  portion  of  the -~~loveliness~~

         Which ~~-once--he--made--more--lovely--;--where--the--skies~~
4         Which  once  he  made,  ~~which--now--he--[?leave<>-]~~
                                   and late he left, more bright
         Where
                                                    [SKETCH
                                                      OF
                                                    TREES]
                 [He]
                   The--~~spirit--of--the--great--is--never--dead~~

                   ~~And--purged--with--pain--&--death~~

                                          [SKETCH
10             ~~The Who-~~                      OF
                  ~~And~~                    TREES]            never
                  ~~And--feels--with~~                    [un]  wearied
                  Which [~~eer~~] wields the world with [?~~eer~~]~~sustaining~~
                                                                     love

15         Sustains   it   from   beneath,   &   kindles   it   above
```



Page from Shelley's Manuscript Book (Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. e. 20: Quire VI Folio 4 Verso = 37 verso. Transcription (right) by Donald H. Reiman and Hélène Dworzan Reiman in *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts: A Facsimile Edition, with Full Transcriptions and Scholarly Apparatus*, Volume VII, (New York, 1989), 292–93. Used by permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

beautiful
He is a portion of the ~~loveliness~~

Which ~~once he made more lovely + where the skies~~

4 Which once he made, ~~which now he [?leave<>]~~
and late he left, more bright

Where

[SKETCH
OF
TREES]

[He]
~~The spirit of the great is never dead~~

~~And purged with pain & death~~

[SKETCH
OF
TREES]

10 ~~The Who~~
~~And~~
~~And feels with~~
never
[un] wearied
Which [~~eer~~] wields the world with [?~~eer~~]~~sustainting~~
love

15 Sustains it from beneath, & kindles it above