***JAST*, 2020; 52:25-44**

Submitted: 21.10.2018

Accepted: 25.10.2019

ORCID# 0000 0002 5508 3179

Telling Her Own Side of the Story: *Notes in England and Italy* by Sophia Peabody Hawthorne

Elisabetta Marino

Abstract

While she is often regarded as merely Nathaniel Hawthorne's ailing wife—ignoring her careful (albeit secret) editing of his publications—Sophia Peabody Hawthorne nurtured artistic ambitions of her own. She was both a talented painter and writer. When she moved to Europe, with her family, she meticulously kept a journal and penned travel notes, which she later published as installments and then as a volume (in 1869), under the title *Notes in England and Italy*.

By focusing on the Italian part of her literary endeavor, this paper sets out to demonstrate that Sophia's experience abroad—especially in the Peninsula—enabled her to assert her identity as both a woman (beyond the customary depiction of a selfless and dutiful wife and mother) and an artist, capable of expressing her authoritative opinion, while sponsoring other fellow women artists based in Italy. As will be shown, Sophia Peabody's story narrated by Nathaniel Hawthorne—through the character of Hilda (a copyist) in *The Marble Faun* (a novel inspired by the same sojourn in Italy)—offers but a partial version of her life, which needs to be complemented with Sophia's own words.

Keywords

Sophia Peabody, Nathanial Hawthorne, Travel Writing, Gender, Women's Writings

Öyküyü Kendi Bakış Açısından Anlatmak: Sophia Peabody Hawthorne'nun *Notes in England and Italy* (İngiltere ve İtalya'dan Notlar) Adlı Kitabı

Öz

Çoğu zaman Nathaniel Hawthorne'un titizlikle çalışan gizli editörü olduğu göz ardı edilse ve yalnızca onun hasta eşi olarak anılsa da, Sophia Peabody Hawthorne kendi sanatsal tutkularını da besledi. O hem yetenekli bir ressam hem de yetenekli bir yazardı. Ailesiyle Avrupa'ya yerleştiğinde titizlikle kaleme aldığı günlüğü ve seyahat notları *Notes in England and Italy* (İngiltere ve İtalya'dan Notlar) başlığı altında önce bölümler halinde, 1869 yılında da kitap olarak basıldı.

Peabody'nin edebi uğraşının İtalya ayağına odaklanacak bu çalışma, onun ülkesi dışındaki, özellikte İtalya Yarımadası'ndaki, deneyimlerinin hem bir kadın (geleneksel kadın ve anne tanımının dışına çıkan) hem de İtalya'daki kadın sanatçılara maddi destek sağlayan bir sanatçı olarak kimliğini ortaya koymasını mümkün kıldığını göstermeye çalışacaktır. Bu çalışmadan da anlaşılacağı gibi, Sophia Peabody'nin Nathaniel Hawthorne'un İtalya'daki geçici ikametinden esinlenen *The Marble Faun* romanındaki kâtibe Hilda karakteri üzerinden anlatılan öyküsü, yalnızca onun hayatının kendisi tarafından tamamlanması gereken bir kısmını sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Sophia Peabody, Nathanial Hawthorne, Gezi Edebiyatı, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kadın Yazını

Until recently, Sophia Peabody's artistic endeavors as a painter and a writer have received scant and cursory critical attention. Indeed, as Annamaria Formichella Elsden has elucidated, Peabody's large body of letters (more than 1,500), the surviving portions of her nineteen journals, her travelogue entitled *Notes in England and*

Italy, and even her numerous canvases have often been examined and investigated by scholars with the sole intention of unearthing references to the "activities, health, state of mind, social engagements and literary productivity" (Elsden, *Roman Fever* 71) of her renowned husband Nathaniel Hawthorne. Starting from *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*[1] (1884), a joint biography in two volumes penned by their son Julian, the iconic portrait of Peabody as a dutiful, supportive, and self-effacing partner has been handed down to posterity, persistently repeated in a number of later biographical accounts.[2] More than a century later, for example, Edwin H. Miller[3] and by Luanne Jenkins Hurst voiced similar opinions. Hurst even asserts that Peabody willingly accepted the burden of household duties as well as her ancillary role as a mere facilitator in the crafting of Hawthorne's masterpieces.[4]

In the past three decades, however, a few scholarly efforts reassessed Sophia Peabody's position. Patricia Dunlavy Valenti believes she deserves to be ranked "among the earliest women in American painting" (1), while Annamaria Formichella Elsden laments that, to date, her promising career as an artist has been overshadowed by her husband's blazing fame. Furthermore, as she observes, the emphasis constantly placed on Peabody as an editor of Hawthorne's novels and travel notes[5] regrettably "continues a legacy of silencing begun during her marriage" (Elsden, "Watery Angels" 130).[6]

Against the background of the recent re-evaluation of Sophia Peabody's output, this essay sets out to explore the Italian chapters of her *Notes in England and Italy* (1869)[7] which, as argued here, proved essential to the assertion of her identity as both a woman and an artist. Following an introductory section aimed at casting light on the controversial part her husband played in the delayed development and the ambivalent expression of Sophia's creative drive, this essay aims at providing insight into the strategies she devised to establish her authoritative voice, thus finally managing, after Hawthorne's death, to tell *her own* side of the story. First of all, the writer daringly offered her personal, often challenging perspective on ancient and contemporary works of art, thus subtly unsettling stereotypical perceptions of women. Secondly, Peabody did not refrain from taking a keen and open interest in the contemporary historical juncture, traditionally regarded as an *unfeminine* concern; she even crafted a project of political and social reform, which could be carried out through the contemplation and the democratization of art.

Coming from a family of intellectuals and writers, Sophia was granted an uncommonly comprehensive education for a woman, which included the study of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French (Valenti 1). She started her career as a copyist and painter as a profitable alternative to marriage: she was firmly convinced that no man would ever tie the knot with an ailing lady, whose recurrent and disabling headaches had been worsened by mercury-based treatments during childhood (Vogelius 86). Hence, under the careful guidance of well-known painters, such as Chester Harding, Thomas Doughty, and Washington Allston, she soon distinguished herself as a gifted copyist, capable of earning a comfortable living with the proceeds of her sales. Her detailed and entertaining letters, especially those from Cuba (where she repaired in 1833-35, to recover from mental exhaustion), attracted the admiring attention of both her sister Elizabeth (who repeatedly prompted her to publish them) and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Given his close acquaintance with Elizabeth, in fact, the young writer was afforded the rare possibility to read the so-called *Cuba Journal*, a collection of manuscript letters in three-volumes that the Peabody family had eventually bound for private circulation. Hawthorne was so impressed by Sophia's talent that he decided to copy some passages of her outstanding *Journal* into his own notebooks (Vogelius 86).

Following their wedding and the birth of their first child, Una, Sophia stopped painting,[8] while she eagerly continued to write. When the family left for Liverpool, where Nathaniel held the position of consul for five years (between 1853 and 1858), Peabody wrote several journal entries and fascinating letters, which delighted her friends back home. The Hawthornes' prolonged stay in Rome, Florence, and the surrounding areas, in 1858-59, resulted in a series of insightful notes that she shared with Elizabeth. Sophia was immediately approached by James Fields (of Ticknor & Fields, her husband's publishers) to arrange for their serialized publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*, but she gracefully declined his flattering proposal:

> I am very sorry indeed that you should ask me to do any thing [sic] for you which I cannot possibly do. I assure you most earnestly that nothing less urgent and terrible than the immediate danger of starvation for my husband and children would induce me to put myself into a magazine or a pair of book covers. You forget that Mr. Hawthorne is the Belleslettres [sic] portion

> of my being, and besides that I have a repugnance to female authoresses in general, I have far more distaste for myself as a female authoress in particular. (qtd. in Hall 138)

In a letter she wrote to Elizabeth, however, the writer provided an alternative, probably more truthful version of the same story; in a laconic—albeit revealing—comment, she earnestly voiced her disappointment and frustration at missing such an extraordinary opportunity: "I see that it is my plain duty not to argue the matter any further with Mr. Hawthorne. […] You know I have to postpone all my own possibilities in the way of art" (qtd. in Hall 139). Even though Hawthorne greatly valued his wife's writing skills and openly praised her account of their experience in England and Italy,[9] he never wished her narratives to appear in print, since he equated women's violation of the domestic sphere through publication with prostitution (Vogelius 87). His most (in)famous remark on women writers is included in a 1855 letter he sent to William D. Ticknor, his friend, advisor, and publisher. As he spitefully wrote, "America is now wholly given over to a d—d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash−and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (Hawthorne, *Letters* 55). As Edwin H. Miller has noticed, the author "did not want [his spouse] to become a female scribbler: he preferred silent women and no competition" (202).[10] The scholar's words are strikingly reminiscent of another (ill-)famed letter that Hawthorne sent to his friend Francis Bennoch in November 1859, where his idea of Sophia as a meek and compliant angel in the house is markedly evident:

> Mrs. Hawthorne had a note from Fields, yesterday, requesting her to become a contributor to the Atlantic Monthly! I don't know whether I can tolerate a literary rival at bed and board; there would probably be a new chapter in the "Quarrel of Authors." However, I make myself at ease on that score, as she positively refuses to be famous, and contents herself with being the best wife and mother in the world. (qtd. in Homer 279)

Notes in England and Italy was eventually released five years after Hawthorne's death,[11] when Sophia and her children were residing in Dresden, a city where the family could enjoy a comparatively higher standard of living with the same income.[12] Nevertheless, Peabody's

decision to finally expose her account to the public gaze cannot be ascribed to mere financial straits, as Miller seems to believe (202). After all, her editorial work on Hawthorne's notebooks was already yielding good returns. On the other hand, as Julie E. Hall has underlined, "in coming to Europe, Sophia Hawthorne had come into herself" (149): her travel to Europe in the 1850s and the foreign context in which her notes were revised for publication had provided her with the distance necessary to emancipate herself from social constraints, thus recovering a significant part of her identity. Accordingly, it could be argued that far from simply gathering her memories and impressions of picturesque locations, museums, and art galleries, her travelogue actually chronicled her quest for self-fulfillment and personal (as well as collective) liberation.

In her essay on American women and travel writing, Susan L. Robertson has drawn attention to the domestic dimension of *Notes in England and Italy*: indeed, Sophia travelled through England and Italy with her husband (whom she obediently followed) and their three children (224). Moreover, the volume is dedicated to Elizabeth Peabody, identified as "her sister" (Peabody Hawthorne 1), and signed in the most conservative way, as "Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne." The short "Preface" to the text apparently confirms this perception. The author seems at pains to highlight her unwillingness to "appear before the public" (3): as she humbly confesses, she had reluctantly surrendered to the pressure of her friends who had "repeatedly urged [her] to print [her notes] from a too partial estimate of their value" (3). Nonetheless, a quick comparison between the original letters and journals and their published edition reveals that, in the latter, most passages portraying family scenes are entirely missing (Vogelius 100). In addition, in *Notes*, Hawthorne, Una, Julian and Rose are barely hinted at through their initials, while Sophia wonders unchaperoned through the new territories *she* discovers. The domestic aspects of her life abroad, therefore, are virtually absent from her account which, especially in the Italian section, is centered on the countless works of art Sophia Peabody, the painter and the writer, has the occasion to admire and describe for the benefit of her readers.

The choice of the masterpieces featured in her travelogue is never accidental. At Palazzo Barberini in Rome she is captivated by one of Domenichino's canvases entitled "Garden of Eden, after the Fall," which enables her to address the issue of women's original

sin and their subsequent sense of guilt and subjection to men. In her interpretive ekphrasis, she makes clever use of the painting to subvert the customary depiction of the scene, which epitomizes the asymmetric relation between the sexes. While Eve displays dignity and composure in pointing at the snake (truly responsible for their fall), Adam reveals his vile and cowardly nature in casting all the blame on his companion:

> Adam points to Eve to excuse himself for having disobeyed His commands with a pitiful air of unmanly cowardice, and actually shrugs his shoulders at the Almighty [the first shrug], as if he said, "Thou seest how it is−that woman tempted me." Eve is kneeling, and turns to the Creator with a much more dignified and respectable gesture of concern, and points to the serpent for her defence; and the serpent is wriggling away as fast as it can, perfectly conscious of its base purpose. All the grandeur of Adam has collapsed under that shrug and cringing look toward his Maker, though it is evident that his "front" has been "sublime." Self-respect having gone, however, and taken with it his self-possession, he is king no more. He is weak, and his scepter is taken from him. (Peabody Hawthorne 210-11)

In the same palace, she lingers on the famous portrait of Beatrice Cenci attributed to Guido Reni. The ambiguity of Beatrice's character (after years of sexual abuse, the young girl had murdered her father) is completely deconstructed by Sophia: the parricide, "a spotless lily of Eden" (213), is an innocent victim of a desecrating power exercised by a vicious and violent man. Hence, she is viewed as an untainted angel, who has simply defended her inalienable right to life:

> Extremest youth, with youth's virgin innocence and ignorance of all crime−an expression in the eyes as if they asked, "Oh what is it−what has happened−how am I involved?" […] The white, smooth brow is a throne of infantine, angelic purity, without a visible cloud or furrow of pain, yet a wild, endless despair hovers over it. […] If this be a portrait, and it surely is, then Beatrice Cenci must have been as free from crime as the blazing angel of Domenichino's picture opposite to it[.] (213-14)

Together with proud Zenobia[13] (the queen of Palmyra, an emblem of nobility and female empowerment, even when captive), Beatrice Cenci is once again mentioned in the travelogue as one of the subjects of Miss Hosmer's statues.[14] While in Rome and Florence, Sophia had the chance to visit the studios of a number of expatriate artists. In *Notes in England and Italy*, therefore, she included a rather complimentary portrayal of Harriet Hosmer, the first professional female sculptor in America, as well as being a role-model for many women, inspired by her self-confidence and independence, coupled with impeccable manners and womanly charms. As Sophia records,

> Her action was as bright, sprightly, and vivid as that of a bird: a small figure, round face, and tiny features, except large eyes; hair short, and curling up round a black velvet cap, planted directly upon the middle of her head, instead of jauntily on one side, as is usual with artists; her hands thrust into the pockets of a close-fitting cloth jacket−a collar and cravat like a young man's−and a snowy plaited chemisette, like a shirt-bosom. I liked her at once, she was so frank and cheerful, independent, honest, and sincere− wide awake, energetic, yet not ungentle. (265)

Interestingly enough, after her encounter with Hosmer (whose unusual garments and hair-style visibly betrayed her disregard for gender boundaries and prerogatives), Sophia becomes increasingly outspoken, as if encouraged by a kindred spirit to express her perceptive thoughts without restraints. Hosmer used to share her Roman studio with another artist, Mr. Gibson, whose marble Venus elicits Sophia's disappointment, caused by the painted details of the statue. Despite his protestations that the effect was surely richer, she is "not frightened out of [her] protest" (266); quite the opposite, she boldly "persist[s] that [she] wishe[s] for pure form, and not painting in sculpture" (267), while the baffled man vainly strives to divert the conversation to a different subject and, eventually, ends up agreeing with her. In the rest of the account, Sophia refuses to be silenced, even when her opinion clashes with the views of prominent authorities (invariably men). While in Florence, for example, she defends the neoclassical sculptor Hiram Powers against the accusations of "W.S.," who "had said that [he] had but one type, and there was no variety in his ideal faces and forms" (365). Through the close examination of four of his marble

creations (namely Proserpine, Diana, Psyche, and Eve), she succeeds in demonstrating that "there is an entire difference between them" (365) and that W.S.'s was "quite an unjust remark" (365).[15] All the same, Sophia is never partial: a few pages later, she harshly criticized Powers himself for censuring the head of "the lovely Venus de Medici" (373): "He says she has the face of an idiot! […] The profile view is sweet and delicate, and fitly surmounts the unsurpassed beauty of the form" (374). She even dares to disagree with Ralph Waldo Emerson in matters of travel and the benefits one can derive from visiting a different country. In his essay entitled "Self-Reliance," in fact, the leader of the Transcendentalist movement had ridiculed "the superstition of travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt" (35), adding that "the soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home" (35), since "travelling is a fool's Paradise" (35). Conversely, as will be further discussed later on in this essay, Sophia believed in the enlightening potential of art, which could be better appreciated in the lands where "the Great Masters in Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting" (3) were born. Consequently, she thus comments, in a slightly teasing tone:

> How could wise and great Mr. E. say such a preposterous thing as that it was just as well *not* to travel as to travel! And that Each man has Europe in him, or something to that effect? No, indeed; it would be better if every man could look upon these wonders of genius, and grow thereby. Besides, Mr. E. had been to Europe himself, how could he tell? Would he willingly have foregone all he saw in Italy? It was mere transcendental nonsense– such a remark. (Peabody Hawthorne 326)

In *Notes in England and Italy*, Sophia ventures into another realm positively forbidden to women: the terrain of politics. The debased condition of Italy, subjugated by foreign tyrants and exploited by greedy, corrupted, and depraved rulers, is one of the recurring motifs of the travelogue. The writer never misses the opportunity to emphasize the crass ignorance (or the culpable carelessness) of the French sentinels scattered in every corner of the Eternal City. When asked where Palazzo Rospigliosi was, they replied they did not know, "though they were keeping guard just opposite to it, as it proved" (216). "Je ne sais pas" (242) is the only full sentence "these mean-looking, ugly, diminutive barbarians" (342) are capable of uttering, which corresponds "to the exact amount of their knowledge" (342). The Pope,

in his capacity as spiritual and political guide of the Papal States, and his plethora of cardinals, bishops, and priests are equally thoughtless, uncultivated, and vulgarly attached to material possessions, to such an extent that the ancient Roman relics are plundered to embellish their residences. As readers are informed, Pope Urban VIII (a Barberini) built his Barberini Palace "out of the Coliseum−daring to pull down that lordly ruin for materials for his house"[16] (208). The Mausoleum of Cecilia Metella, along the Appian Way, was pillaged over the centuries by "reprehensible Popes [who had] violently destroyed a great part, for the sake of robbing it of the slabs of fine marbles with which it was covered" (251). Paul V (a Borghese) removed Raphael's "Entombment" from the church of San Francesco dei Conventuali to adorn his palace: "why should a Pope steal any more than a private person?"—wonders the author—"Does his position as Head of the Church make the crime less? I should think he, of all persons, should obey the commandments" (324). While citizens languish and starve, priests ravenously devour: in Florence, their appearance is "invariably repulsive" (480): "they are mostly fat, with flabby cheeks, chins, and throats, of very earthly aspect. There is nothing to compare them but to hogs, and they merely need to stoop upon their hands to be perfect likeness of swine" (480). The Grand Duke of Tuscany is also metamorphosed into an animal to signify his inner degradation: he "looked like a monkey, with an evil disposition, most ugly and mean"[17] (411).

The Hawthornes' intimacy with the Brownings (amply documented in the travelogue[18]) must have contributed to the shaping of Sophia's political ideas. Both Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were staunch supporters of the Italian cause in the years preceding the unification. Thus, after the initial enthusiasm for leaving the lands governed by Pope ("the Grand Duke will be quite a pleasant change after the Pontifex Maximus [341]), the writer soon discovers that, in truth, he is just as "treacherous" (399), and totally concurs with the negative judgment expressed by "Mrs. Browning [who had] deprived him of his princeliness by the deeds of his she ha[d] sung in 'Casa Guidi Windows'" (399). Peabody's political and artistic reflections once again merge in her description of illustrious Renaissance palaces, such as Palazzo Pitti, Palazzo Riccardi, and Palazzo Strozzi in Florence; those "dark, indestructible, gloomy" constructions frighten her with "a sense of hopelessness" (407): "they are defiant with strength, and like prisons

from which there is no escape" (407). Their thick, impenetrable, and immutable walls—curiously described as an "unsympathizing mass" (408)—cannot but instigate cruelty and other negative feelings in those who dwell between them: "when a prince gets inside those walls, can he feel any pity?" (408).

Oppressed by iniquitous governments, the Italians Sophia meets on the streets resemble "puppets galvanized into motion" (468), "empty chrysalids [*sic*]−deserted shells. Something has scared away souls−and only automatons remain" (468). The author regretfully contrasts those living ruins of men with the eminent figures of the past ("masters in Art, in State, in Science" [468]) whose marble effigies are still located in the court of the Uffizi: "they would be more fitting and proper to the place than those persons whom we meet to-day" (468). Nonetheless, despite the bleakness of the contemporary political and social scenario in Italy, "the land seems catching its breath. It is not dead, but oppressed and suffocated" (468). A few pages later Sophia Peabody reiterates that concept by stating that the country "is not dead−only faint, and Italy alone is thoroughly civilized through and through, since immemorial ages" (493). In her opinion, what may prompt the Italians to renew their eclipsed values, thus releasing themselves from the shackles of moral and physical servitude, is the redemptive power of ancient and pre-Raphaelite art, provided that it is adequately preserved and made available to all strata of society. Gazing at the magnificence of the Flaminian Way, "a masterpiece of human hands and heads" (296) with its large, flat stones skillfully joined together, the writer ponders on the empowering feelings inspired by the sight of such an astounding specimen of human craft:

> I look upon this road with absorbing interest. There is something that contents, or rather, that is satisfactory to man's right royal demand for incredible deeds, in these Roman relics. It is not the triumph of our pride, so much as the proof of our possibilities, that gratifies one. The Romans had the will and the might−*virtue*−as they understood it−according to their acceptation of the word. If there were will and might−virtue according to Christ, what could not be done? (297)

Sophia is just afraid that those "admirably fitted blocks" (296) might be foolishly removed by covetous and selfish Popes to build other

structures: "how impious in this way are the Piuses, how merciless the Clements, how unblest the Benedicts!" (297). When it comes to pre-Raphaelite art, the author, first of all, clarifies what she means by that term, thus rejecting the modern notion of Pre-Raphaelitism:

> what is called preraphaelite [*sic*] painting in England is not like this. Expression without beauty, to be sure, we see in modern English pictures, called by this name; but all the religion is left out, all the holy fervor, sincerity, and simplicity. Perhaps I should not say the *sincerity* is left out; but the simplicity is−the single thought−the unselfish aim. (312)

Indeed, the great masters of the past created their works of art "without a thought of earthly fame" (313); they are compared to "holy men [who] dedicated their genius to heaven" (328). Ample sections of the narrative are dedicated to the meticulous descriptions of altarpieces, frescoes, and canvases, as well as to the ennobling reactions they arouse in the viewer, somehow appeased and comforted by them. The illumined clouds painted by Pinturicchio, for example, are endowed with the faculty of restoring hope, since they "show that Our Father is present even in what seems to us to be shadows. What a tender manner of teaching this eternal truth!" (328), comments Sophia. Before the "Madonna and Child" by Fra' Angelico, she feels soothed by the baby Jesus, standing upon his mother's knees with both his arms stretched out in blessing: "he is the Sun of righteousness, delineated with the pencil of a mortal saint, and this Sun is all made up of Love−good will to man. How can one believe in an angry, avenging Deity who looks upon this true revelation of the Father?" (356-7). The invaluable treasures of Italian art, however, are being neglected by local authorities, who fail to acknowledge their real worth. In the church of Santa Croce, in Florence, frescoes by Giotto and Giottino have "all been whitewashed over" (405) and only recently restored (albeit poorly). In another church, in San Miniato, "ancient frescoes are fading and crumbling on the walls" (499): exceedingly dejected, the writer discerns "some great old saints fast vanishing away, alas! Alas! And alas!" (499). Sodoma's fresco of Christ bound to the column, in Siena, "is peeling off the wall, and is already very much injured" (504). Hence, Sophia Peabody, the engaged artist, offers her advice to the Pope, encouraging him to undertake major works of restoration for the sake of an improved society: "I should think Pio Nono would be better

employed in preserving such works from destruction than in writing encyclical letters; for I believe he would save more souls by it. If any visible thing can win a soul to heaven, it is this embodied worship in spirit and in truth" (312).

In the same passage, she also expresses the following, unusual wish, probably stemming from the feeling that her suggestions are doomed to remain within the confines of her account: "Oh, why does not some one [*sic*] draw and engrave the divine creations of the old masters in fresco, before they are all faded away!" (312). The abundant presence of copyists (mainly active in Rome and Florence) and the wide circulation of copies from ancient and famous paintings are among the most remarkable features of *Notes in England and Italy.*[19] Sophia even elucidates the qualities true copyists must possess, which are by no means limited to talent and skills: "they should be informed with the feeling and secret of the soul that wrought the wonder, or they only hide the masterpiece they pretend to repeat" (260). After introducing her readers to a long succession of mediocre artists,[20] at the Vatican Museums she eventually happens to notice a young painter, copying the groups and the single figures of a frescoed chapel "in an extraordinary manner and with the utmost fidelity" (320): "he, and others as accomplished and faithful, should be commissioned to save in imperishable lines the vanishing masterpieces of fresco-painting, so that at least the designs and expression may not be lost" (320-21). As mentioned before, the author herself was a fine copyist and, possibly, she felt entrusted with that very mission. Furthermore, as Christa Holm Vogelius has pointed out, her travelogue may be read as a spectacular series of ekphrases or word paintings, characterized by "the same preservationist function" (93) of visual copies. Still, it could be argued that the importance Peabody attached to the creative efforts of a copyist (and to the verbal copies she inserted in her narrative) is even greater than the sheer conservation of damaged masterpieces, vanishing repositories of forgotten but much needed values. Through the truthful duplication and the thorough dissemination of inspiring works, art ceases to be the privilege of a mean-spirited and egotistical elite; on the contrary, it can be democratically shared and universally enjoyed, thus enhancing the possibilities of an individual as well as a communal regeneration.

Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's gravestone bears the following inscription: "Sophia, Wife of Nathaniel Hawthorne." As this essay tried

to demonstrate, she cannot be simplistically identified as the spouse, the confidante, the editor, or the supporter of the celebrated writer. An artist herself, a tireless traveler, a spirited lady, an acute observer of contemporary phenomena and historical events, she certainly deserves the scholarly attention that, until the past three decades, she has been completely denied. Through her *Notes in England and Italy*, released five years after the death of her husband, she finally managed to recover her voice in order to tell, at least in part, *her own* side of the story.

Notes

[1] In the title, Sophia is merely identified with her role as a wife.

[2] Julian described his mother as an accomplished and learned lady; yet he could not refrain from infantilizing her, by adding that she was "always childlike in her modesty and simplicity" (vol. I 40). Seemingly unsure of her worth, she heavily relied on the superior judgment of her spouse, whom she loved and served with utmost devotion. As Julian observed, "her husband appreciated her, but she had no appreciation of herself. She only felt what a privilege it was to love and minister to such a man, and to be loved by him" (vol. I 41).

[3] Miller published a calendar of Sophia's letters preceded by a brief biographical sketch; as well as labeling her "the invalid of the [Peabody] family" (200), due to her persistent and debilitating migraines, he maintained that "her 'sphere', to use one of her favourite words, was the family, first the Peabody family and later her own as the wife of a man whom she ranked with Shakespeare and the classical gods, especially Apollo" (199).

[4] In her 1999 essay entitled "The Chief Employ of Her Life," Hurst acknowledged Sophia's major contribution to "the success of her husband's career as one of America's great men of letters" (46), namely "her concern for the sanctity of his study" (45), her almost religious respect for his intellectual activities.

[5] Sophia Peabody copy-edited most of her spouse's works; besides, she edited and published his travel notes and notebooks: *Passages from the American Notebooks* appeared in 1868; *Passages from the English Notebooks* was published in both England and the US in 1870 and *Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks* (in two volumes), in 1871-72 (Hall 141).

[6] Her opinion is also shared by Julie E. Hall, who forcefully rejects the general perception of Sophia "as the quintessential Victorian woman, contented to live her life within the confines of nineteenth century gender codes" (137); conversely, the artist deserves to be

recognized "as a creator and a word-crafter herself" (141), not just as Hawthorne's first audience, as the committed preserver of his manuscripts.

[7] Her travelogue was the only work she released during her lifetime. Sophia Peabody died in February 1871: she probably had no time to plan other publications.

[8] To increase the financial security of her family, she used to make "inlaid hand fire-screens and painted lampshades for five dollars each" (Valenti 15).

[9] In a letter to Ticknor he had candidly admitted that "Mrs. Hawthorne altogether excel[led him] as a writer of travels" (qtd. in Hall 138).

[10] Probably for this very reason Hawthorne decided to burn virtually all his wife's love letters before departing for Europe (Miller 201). Destroying her written words was a way of silencing Sophia.

[11] Some excerpts appeared in *Putnam's Magazine* in 1869; later that year, the entire travelogue was published in a book form in both the United States and England. The account proved to be quite successful, since it went into eight editions between 1869 and 1882 (Hall 137).

[12] The city was also chosen to give Julian the chance to study engineering at the prestigious Polytechnic.

[13] Elsewhere in the travelogue, the historical figure is described as "proud Zenobia" (250).

[14] In this case, the girl sleeps peacefully on a tomb.

[15] Many more examples could be quoted; in front of the "Gate of Paradise" sculpted by Ghiberti for the Florence Baptistery, she observes: "I wish Westmacott would not twaddle so about bas-reliefs as he does. I do not agree with him at all; but when Academicians get hold of a rule they stultify themselves by holding to it, against all the intuitions of genius" (388). Again, at the Uffizi Gallery, unlike

Mr. Ware, she is not particularly impressed by Michelangelo's "Holy Family:" "I wished to see Michel Angelo's Holy Family, after reading Mr. Ware's excessive eulogium of the Madonna. Mr. Ware has gone mad on that Madonna, I believe, for I am sure she is not what he describes her to be. With all my faith in and enthusiasm for the artist, I cannot see in it what he rages about" (422). Other times, she cannot refrain from exhibiting her singular talent as an art expert: "we saw a vase of marvelous beauty of design and execution−bronze, about two feet high. I exclaimed that it must be by Benvenuto Cellini, and the custode [*sic*] said it was so" (466). Given her vast experience of art galleries and her familiarity with the effects of light and darkness on a canvas, Sophia often blames the Italians for their poor arrangement of paintings and statues; for instance, Michelangelo's "Pietà" in the Florentine Duomo is in a "dark place, where it is nearly impossible ever to see it all" (425); in the Chapel of the Salviati, the beautiful bas-reliefs "are placed too high to be seen−how unaccountably foolish!" (450).

[16] Elsewhere in the narrative, Sophia informs that "four great palaces have already been built out of the Coliseum, and a dozen more would have been pulled out of it, if the Cross had not been set up in the arena" (232).

[17] In another passage of the travelogue, she thus remarks: "when a prince takes the form of a monkey, he ought to be deposed" (468).

[18] See, for example, pages 344, 345, 362, 393, 399, 409, and 424. Other writers committed to the cause of Italian independence are also mentioned: P.B. Shelley (282), Leigh Hunt (477) and, most of all, Lord Byron, whose lines are often quoted (301, 306, 332, 464, 473, 492, 533). Mazzini, the head of the Giovane Italia (a political movement founded to promote an insurrection in the reactionary states) is also featured in the travel account: "the city gate swung up in the air to let our carriage pass under, and we might have smuggled Mazzini into Florence; for though they asked us questions, they did not look into our midst, and the guard on duty quietly stood aside" (403).

[19] See, for example, pages 210, 212, 236, 238, 240, 258, 264, 312, 320, 323, 351, 354, 357, 369, 373, 456, 466, 479. Nathaniel

Hawthorne did not hold copies in particular esteem; in his last complete novel, *The Marble Faun*, also based on his experience in Italy, he included a copyist among the characters, Hilda, whose works are ironically considered "the counterpart, in picture, of so many feminine achievements in literature!" (*The Marble* 49). According to Louise Hall Tharp, Hilda was modeled on Sophia: "Hawthorne, seeing her perennially young as he always did, began to picture her as a young artist in Italy. 'I was *not* Mr. Hawthorne's Hilda', Sophia would declare again and again after *The Marble Faun* was finished. She would not have needed to deny it so often if those who knew her had not found her in the book (258).

[20] Here are some instances: "a young artist was copying one of the groups […] he had not succeeded in getting a single face right" (236); "this of Guilio [*sic*] Romano [*a copy of Raphael's portrait of Julius II*], though very splendid, has not the strength in the mouth that Raphael's has, and the artist who was copying it today failed still more in the same feature" (238); "the artist who was copying [the canvas] had entirely missed the face and the sway of the attitude" (258)."

Works Cited

Elsden, Annamaria Formichella. *Roman Fever: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-century American Women's Writing*. Ohio State UP, 2004.

---. "Watery Angels: Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's Artistic Argument in *Notes in England and Italy.*" *Reinventing the Peabody Sisters*, edited by Monika M. Elbert et al., U of Iowa P, 2006, pp. 129-145.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Self-Reliance, The Over-Soul and Other Essays.* Coyote Canyon Press, 2010.

Hall, Julie E. "'Coming to Europe,' Coming to Authorship: Sophia Hawthorne and her *Notes in England and Italy.*" *Legacy*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2002, pp. 137-151.

Hawthorne, Julian. *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography*. 2 vols. Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1885.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Letters of Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor, 1851-1864*. Vol. I. Newark: Cataret Book Club, 1910.

---. *The Marble Faun.* Oxford UP, 2002.

Hawthorne, Sophia Peabody. *Notes in England and Italy.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1875.

Homer, Bryan. *An American Liaison: Leamington Spa and the Hawthornes 1855-1864.* Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1998.

Hurst, Luanne Jenkins. "Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's Contribution to Her Husband's Career: The Chief Employ of Her Life." *Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition*, edited by John L. Idol Jr. and Melinda M. Ponder, U of Massachussetts P, 1999, pp. 45-54.

Miller, Edwin Haviland. "A Calendar of the Letters of Sophia Peabody

Hawthorne." *Studies in the American* Renaissance, 1986, pp. 199-281.

Robertson, Susan L. "American Women and Travel Writing." *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, edited by Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera, Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 214-227.

Tharp, Louise Hall. *The Peabody Sisters of Salem.* Little, Brown and Company, 1951.

Valenti, Patricia Dunlavy. "Sophia Peabody Hawthorne: A Study of Artistic Influence." *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1990, pp. 1-21.

Vogelius, Christa Holm. "'Folded up in a Veil:' Sophia Hawthorne's Familial Ekphrasis and the Antebellum Travelogue." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, vol. 59, no.1, 2013, pp. 79-111.