

I was left puzzled from our discussion on Wednesday about the metaphor surrounding Rappaccini's Daughter and the Adam and Eve Garden of Eden story. Olga and Lindsay both asserted that Hawthorne's style is to construct blatant and solid-to-a-fault metaphors, and I agree with that conclusion. So if that is true, then how come we had such a difficult time in class coming to a consensus on the roles from Rappaccini's Daughter within the analogy? I had my own opinions on the content of the metaphor and will clarify them here.

Adam is a reasonable place to begin: Adam is the original figure of good and of humanity. God brings him into the world and sets him in a good situation for him to be happy. Later, Adam is given a companion whom he loves and cherishes, but who ultimately gives him a gift (as she sees it) that is actually detrimental to him. Giovanni seems to be the Adam within Hawthorne's story - he comes into Padua innocent and bright, young and beautiful, and is situated in a comfortable condition: the apartment and university. However, he is lonely and seeks companionship in Beatrice. Beatrice is the Eve because she is the companion of Giovanni, the one who is his first friend in the world of Padua. She also is the one who gives him a gift which she feels is agreeable. Just as Eve innocently gives Adam the apple, Beatrice gives Giovanni the poisonous cloud and lets it permeate his being.

The other clear analogy is the garden. Rappaccini's garden is clearly resembling the Garden of Eden. It is secluded and beautiful, with plants, animals, insects, and is the place where Adam (Giovanni) and Eve (Beatrice) meet and fall in love. The knowledge that exists in the forbidden fruit is the poison, an evil which resulted from an abuse of knowledge.

The Serpent in the Adam and Eve story is the one who convinces Eve to take the apple and therefore is the detriment to the human race. He is also the only "evil" character in that plot - he is purposely tricking the humans and going against God's will. Dr. Rappaccini is the Serpent in Hawthorne's story. He gave his daughter the poison from the beginning and convinced her that it was a positive thing. While his motives may not have been as evil as the Serpent, the result is the same- Eve, and consequently Adam, are poisoned by knowledge in the Bible and toxins in Hawthorne.

Finally, the last crucial figure in the Adam and Eve narrative is God. God is the one who put everyone in place, who provided the surroundings and figures within the story. He had a constructive reason for his doings, but because of the defection of one (Lucifer), evil sneaks into even the most pure of environments. In Rappaccini's Daughter God is the University. The University brought Dr. Rappaccini, who defects to evil, as well as Baglioni, who is the voice of reason to Giovanni. The University also enrolled Giovanni himself and placed him in the city. Finally, the University is the source of knowledge, just as is God, which is hoped to be used positively but in each story, Adam and Eve as well as Rappaccini's Daughter, but is abused by one figure and therefor and used against the innocent human couple.

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