

Taming the Sculptress: Roman Beauty and Marble Love in Alcott's Art Tales

Daniela Daniele



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/18932>

DOI: 10.4000/ejas.18932

ISSN: 1991-9336

Publisher

European Association for American Studies

Electronic reference

Daniela Daniele, "Taming the Sculptress: Roman Beauty and Marble Love in Alcott's Art Tales", *European journal of American studies* [Online], 17-3 | 2022, Online since 27 October 2022, connection on 15 November 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/18932> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.18932>

This text was automatically generated on 15 November 2022.



Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International - CC BY-NC 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Taming the Sculptress: Roman Beauty and Marble Love in Alcott's Art Tales

Daniela Daniele

- ¹ In a time of important archeological discoveries in which Rome became the Mecca for marble artists, a number of transatlantic visitors, like the lawyer William Wetmore Story, came to study art in the Eternal City, and ended up devoting themselves to sculpture. Starting from Thomas Crawford, who was trained at the renowned school of Canova and Thorvaldsen along with Adamo Tadolini and Pietro Tenerani, the so-called American "literary sculptors" initiated two influential generations of American artists in Rome, inaugurating what Thorp defines as "the first American school of sculpture" (109). In their exquisite mixture of neoclassical and baroque styles, they expressed genuine American democratic values in their creations. Carved in eternal white Carrara marble, their works met the approval of many a patron of the rising American art, including the abolitionist Congressman Charles Sumner, who came to Italy in 1839 to urge his fellow countrymen who were trained there to adopt classic models for the rising American institutions. These sculptors also included, along with the above-mentioned Crawford and the Florence-based Hiram Powers and Horatio Greenough, women artists from the circle of the actress Charlotte Cushman who, like their male colleagues, "Romanized" American Senators and statesmen such as Lincoln, Washington and Jefferson by draping them in consular togas.
- ² The sovereignty of classical attires like the one chosen by Canova in his representation of "Napoleon" as the Roman God Mars (1806) gave to the creations of the American literary sculptors a Graeco-Roman nobility which dignified the U. S. Capitol with an eternal aura. In both sculpture and architectural reliefs (Brooks 46 ft. 4) they created marble allegories of American values and symbols in a style both modern and classical which Perniola would have defined as a "neo-ancient" travesty (46). In that elevated style they celebrated the new American epics of national independence and abolitionism through a domestication of classical myths which hinted to the growing

prestige of the New World. Their “neo-ancient” style combined the excellence of the training of Canova with the magnificence of Bernini’s baroque variations, whose “fantastic flourishes” were appropriated by Canova’s American disciples, often in defiance of the triumphant linear and rational values conveyed by Neoclassicism.¹

- 3 The Roman context encouraged those talented American expatriates to produce the hybrid convergence of Protestant and Catholic features especially detectable in the exquisite art of Thomas Crawford. In the admired tones of Tuckerman, especially this first-generation American literary sculptor was able to carry “to Rome the ardor of an Irish temperament and the vigor of an American character” (307), harmonizing the “grace, beauty” and “generous sympathies” of the Eternal City with the “more stoical than spontaneous” American virtues.² Crawford’s fruitful training at the renowned school of Thorvaldsen generated large commissions from the American government through Congressman Sumner, who secured a consistent part of the marble works and Neoclassical architectures which currently beautify the U.S. Capitol in Washington (Dimmick 177). Among the marble works finely chiseled into the white Carrara marble for the Rotunda, Vinnie Ream’s imposing statue of Lincoln stands out as a first, exemplary representation of the Greatest Modern Emancipator shaped by a woman upon the ancient model of Greek democracy (Dabakis “Sculpting”; *Sisterhood*). The icons of social justice created by the women sculptors in Rome included the group *Forever Free*, the celebration of the emancipation of Black people in America conceived in 1867 by the gifted expatriate of African and Indian descent Edmonia Lewis, who also sculpted a famous homage to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Song of Hiawatha” (1855) (Dabakis “Ain’t I”).
- 4 The sculptresses led by Cushman in Rome re-interpreted in feminist terms the edifying marble forms created by the “literary sculptors” of the first generation, encouraging other American women to pursue art studies abroad. As Rivas explains, with “the advent of the transatlantic steamer, the rise of a cultured class in the United States, and an already favorable rate of exchange of the dollar, Americans came thronging to the Eternal City” (Rivas 8). These changes allowed enthused travelers like Louisa May Alcott’s sister May to seek in Europe further opportunities of artistic and professional development (*Studying Art Abroad, and How to Do It Cheaply* 77-87).³ As a landscape painter and a renowned copyist of Turner, she authored a travel guidebook for ambitious women seeking an art education in Europe without being necessarily wealthy. The last chapter of *Studying Art Abroad* is dedicated to Rome, which she considered a perfect destination for sculptors, but enabled her to paint from nature under the guide of Frederic Crowninshield, who led her to Albano where she could better afford the models who lived in the green Campagna.
- 5 The considerable number of Louisa May’s art tales revolving around sculptresses deeply absorbed in their creations look back to the various ways in which “little women” like May Alcott Nieriker expected to fulfill their artistic ambitions between Rome and Paris, “in bliss with lessons, sketches, and... dreams” (Entry of November 10, 1870, *Journals* 175). In her recent film on *Little Women* (Columbia 2020), Greta Gerwig significantly develops the character of Amy March who firmly declares in chapter 13 of the novel her intention to “go to Rome, and do fine pictures, and be the best artist in the whole world” (*Little Women* 204). May Alcott’s professional aspirations generated the trip of the two Alcott sisters to Rome which was fictionally prefigured in *An Old Fashioned Girl* (1870), the novel that Louisa completed just before starting her second

trip to Europe: "Polly came to know a little sisterhood of busy, happy, independent girls, who each had a purpose to execute, a talent to develop, an ambition to achieve, and brought to the work patience and perseverance, hope and courage... young artists trying to pencil, paint, or carve their way to Rome" (228).

- 6 In *An Old Fashioned Girl*, behind the happy model image of an artistic sisterhood very probably stood the expatriate community of feminist artists in Rome led since 1858 by the patroness and diva Charlotte Cushman. A good friend and frequent correspondent of Louisa's mother, Cushman and her protégée Harriet Goodhue Hosmer visibly inspired with their cross-dressed style the tomboyish figure of Jo March, who humorously adapted the subversive values of that Fourierist community of women painters and sculptors in Rome to her adolescent readership. The Barbizon's circle of the cross-dressed painter Rosa Bonheur in France and the creative sisterhood of American sculptresses in Rome embodied a bold model of female independence, living in overt circumvention of dress and gender codes. Famously stigmatized by Henry James jr. as "a 'harem-scarem... (of) emancipated women who dwell there in heavenly unity'" (*William Wetmore Story and His Friends* I, 254) and described as a "strange sisterhood of American 'lady sculptors' who at one time settled upon the seven hills in a white, marmorean flock" (257), Alcott refers to these women artists in the pseudonymous novella "A Marble Woman; Or The Mysterious Model" (1865), their celibacy illuminating a model of female genius that Cushman's extended family nurtured with its related non-conformist love rituals.

- 7 The artworld in Rome and Florence which provides the setting for many of Alcott's art tales relies upon the sojourn in Italy in the late 1850s of her most admired literary neighbor in Concord: Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose *The Marble Faun, Or the Romance of Monte Beni* (1860) still resonated in the imagination of the travelling sisters. May herself listed Hilda's tower as an attraction in the last section of her travel guidebook dedicated to Italy (*Studying Art Abroad* 86). Moreover, Hawthorne's novel established, along with "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844), a narrative pattern especially relevant for illuminating the Oedipal complex which dominates Alcott's artistic protagonists, who appear affectively frozen in their withering dedication to art. This absolute dedication, which in her entry on "A Marble Woman" written for *The Louisa May Alcott Encyclopedia* Mary Chapman aptly associates with a "self-destructive addiction" (Eiselein-Phillips eds. 195), severely limits their love life in service of the requests of a demanding tutor. Like Rappaccini, the exacting father, who in Hawthorne's famous story, mentors his gifted daughter through a segregation (Rosenfeld), Alcott's mentors are either tyrannical fathers or possessive uncles who confine their apprentices within gilded cages filled with beauty and terror. Therefore, Roman statuary and the many studios in the Eternal City, which constituted a major attraction of the Grand tour, play an important role in reflecting the cold, celibate features of women artists in Alcott's tales, unable to transcend, in their marmorean immobility, the stark opposition between love and art.

- 8 This dilemma, introduced by Madame de Staël in *Corinne, ou l'Italie* (1807), and developed by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in *The Story of Avis* (1877),⁴ originated from de Staël's allusion to Ovid's Corinna, who appeared in the elegiac couplets of *Amores* in 16 B.C. Corinne re-actualized, as Louisa May's art tale "Psyche's Art" (1868), the classical myth of Love and Psyche variously reproduced in sculpture by two generations of Canova's disciples. This myth allegorizes the peculiar sense of imprisonment and

restraint that Alcott associated with sensual love, confirming the enforced virginity and the Faustian, hermaphroditic features that Margaret Fuller attributes to the female genius (Daniele "Sandism in Reverse"). Along with the restrained eroticism evoked by that mythical pattern essentially reproduced in Alcott's Hawthornean novella "A Marble Woman" (Cagidemetro), in the unfinished *Diana & Persis* (1879) and in "Victoria. A Woman's Statue" (1881)⁵ Alcott developed the theme of hampered love in a creative context framed by the exquisite combination of Neoclassical and neo-baroque aesthetic elaborated by the American literary sculptors in Rome. Their art not exclusively applied to moral and domestic purposes (Edwards 12) featured nude marble statues and conveyed a Catholic sense of indulgence and sensuality which both enchanted and repelled Hawthorne. Letting the paroxysm of enslaving passions licentiously escalate with all their Civil War resonances in her long-submerged thrillers, in her art tales Alcott explored the repression which sustained women's creative ambitions, producing oppressive Oedipal plots based on the "passionlessness" (Cott) of their "unwomanly" genius. As a convinced supporter of the American "natural" art advocated by Emerson, in "A Marble Woman" Alcott counters the remarkable sculptural works accomplished by her gifted heroines with a painful initiation to the art world which leaves no room for the erotic impulse which "overwhelmed and possessed" Sylvia in *Moods* (1864 248). Their Faustian creations are enhanced by the authoritarian guide of an elderly mentor who, in *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), coincides with the Hawthornean, devilish Bazil, "still busy with the piping Faun that had a place among the finer works of his own hands" (223). This affective dependence of Alcott's gifted women sculptors on a tyrannical uncle or tutoring father confines them, like Rappaccini's talented daughter, in a hothouse of beauty remote from the erotic domain of instincts in which, as Petrarch puts it, "impulse prevails, and reason is dead" («regnano i sensi, et la ragion è morta», *Il Canzoniere* CCXI, v.7).

- 9 Absorbed into an art essentially learnt from her own mentoring father, the author also suffered from a filial dependence on her grumbling mother and her exacting Pygmalion at home, along the severe, Oedipal patterns established by the strict Rappaccini who also kept his gifted daughter on her feet. Likewise, the marmorean condition of Louisa's artistic heroines assimilates them to the Carrara marble of their sublime creations, like Galateas eternally held in check by their Pygmalions (Daniele "Art is a Jealous Mistress"). In the same way, Bronson quenched his daughter's whims while nurturing her masculine talent which he placed on a feminist-abolitionist pulpit essentially built by himself.⁶ Quite significantly, Alcott's nickname at home was "Moody Minerva": the brainy goddess originated, according to the generative Greek myth, by Jove's brain as a female extension of his father's intellectual authority.
- 10 In her feminization of Hawthorne's famous tale, Alcott certainly attempted to make of her talented heroines not only the objects but the subjects of their art, but never escaped the Puritan dread of imperfection gloomily conveyed by Hawthorne in "The Birth-Mark" (1843), the tale in which a female model is finally suppressed, being unable to embody the artist's obsession with a flawless beauty devoid of human defects. As a result, Alcott's heroines' tomboyish and celibate initiation to art and knowledge eventually attributes, in her late, revised vision of *Moods*, a more significant role to the mature confidant Faith Dane: a unmarried sage who dispenses wisdom and advice to restless wives like Sylvia Yule painfully trapped in unhappy marriages (Daniele, "The Moods" 22-23). Her spinsterish solitude cautiously keeps the other characters dominated by adulterous passions at distance, prefiguring the mysterious character of

Joanna in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett (1896), who retreats on an island on account of a romantic if troubled past. That pensive and melancholic retreat under the masculine helmet of a chaste and laborious life offers a key to interpret Jo March's puzzling rejection of Laurie, in her Victorian resistance to passion typically embraced by the emancipatory feminism of her generation, with its Puritan emphasis on work versus love. As Saxton effectively concludes in her innovative biography: "So Louisa gives Jo a husband who will stay separate, cool, and detached, an older philosopher like Bronson, who will leave her hotter feelings untouched" (12).

- 11 Therefore, Italy, which is the setting of "The Rival Painters: A Tale of Rome"—the narrative which officially inaugurated Alcott's literary career on November 11, 1852—remains for American women artists both a land of opportunity and of enforced chastity. Alcott casts a grim female look over the sacrificial pattern established by Hawthorne's generative *Künstlerroman*, later developed in *Diana & Persis*. In this unfinished roman à clef, the writer pseudonymously inscribes herself in eternal rivalry with her painting sister, habitually perceived as her opposite in their daily management of sentiments and talent, and in their views on "the purpose of art" and its "moral applications" (Edwards 9, 1). The novella centers on the conflicting aesthetic sensibilities of the celibate sculptress Diana and the married painter Percy, who revive Hawthorne's compelling confrontation in *The Marble Faun* between the chaste Hilda and the passionate Miriam. Therefore, as much as the painter May Alcott defined Rome a paradise for sculptors in her *Studying Art Abroad*, in her unfinished novella, Louisa May's alter-ego Diana embraces sculpture as a cold material able to express her natural resistance to the domain of desire, confirming the recurrent contrast between art and love which invariably quenches the romantic needs of the writer's most ambitious heroines.
- 12 It can be argued that, in establishing a castigating pattern of passionless initiation to the marble art, most of Louisa May's art narratives imply a constant confrontation of the writer's creative independence with the comparably less successful art career of her younger sister, whose education in London and Paris she financially supported, before the painter's final decision to settle in Paris with her Swiss husband and depend on him, instead, to the great dismay of her older sister. Like the sculptress in *Diana and Persis* and the Saint-Simonian Cushman, throughout her life Alcott remained a firm advocate of female celibacy and of a full devotion to a creativity which she radically opposed to any conventional form of conjugal life. In her unfinished novella, she disconsolately depicts the end of Percy's painting career after marriage, in her last, caustic fictional representation of her sister May that only her untimely death in Paris deterred her from concluding.
- 13 Therefore, it can be argued that in her strong views on the inescapable combination of art and chastity in a woman's life, Alcott mostly followed a Gothic, international theme introduced by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a writer deeply admired by Louisa despite the frequent frictions between her parents and her most revered neighbor.⁷ *The Marble Faun* was obviously in her mind when she wrote "A Marble Woman," and Hawthorne's influence also reverberates in Alcott's fairy tales which, as early as 1854, much owed to the graphic style of her distinguished neighbor's "twice-told" myths. Like the chilly, marmorean environments dominated by Puritan tyrants, the snowy, winter tales of *Flower Fables* also evoke "The Snow Queen" (1844) by Hans Christian Andersen, the Danish writer who was very familiar with the Roman sculptural ateliers in the

Barberini area where he wrote, early in the 1830s, *The Improvisatore* and attended Charlotte Cushman's cross-dressed *soirées* and to his countryman and master sculptor, Bertel Thorvaldsen who, as the most courted bachelor in town, used to urge his sculpting disciples to dedicate their "existence singly to their vocation" (Freeman 115).

- 14 Likewise, Alcott's sculpting heroines visibly privilege a celibate, creative seclusion in arty cages of affective restriction which the author opposed to what she perceived as her sister's perfect happiness as a wife and a mother. Louisa May felt that her disciplinary and closely monitored model of female emancipation was puzzlingly spared, in real life, to her painterly sister, along with the ultimately consuming sacrifice of any romantic aspiration in the compulsive Oedipal scene of moral obligations polemically depicted by Henry James jr. in his portrait of the celebrated oratress Verena Tarrant, manipulated like a puppet by her father in *The Bostonians* (1885-86). In the same way, from his Puritan perspective as an American traveler in Italy, Hawthorne was both amazed and wary of the splendor of a Roman art milieu which invariably cast cold shadows on the unuttered abuses which occurred behind the perfection of its polished marble surfaces. This suspicious approach to the Roman art life explains the lurid interest of many an American traveler in the tragedy of Beatrice Cenci (notably dramatized in verse by Percy Bysshe Shelley in the summer of 1819), along with the violent circumstances of the robbery and murder in Trieste of the renowned theorist and patron of Neoclassicism, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (Brooks 24), which became equally representative of the macabre implications of that sublime model of ancient beauty.
- 15 If Hawthorne's romances played an important role in the making of Alcott's art tales and of their chaste protagonists, the author's own intellectual growth under the guide of her demanding father represents another grim feature of her sensation stories, which come to terms with those dark regions of the Puritan mind that Hawthorne strategically dislocated, as he announces in his preface to *The Marble Faun*, "in a foreign land... sketched out during a residence of considerable length in Italy" (vi). In this respect, not only does the Italian setting of Alcott's art tales echo those disquieting sculptural interiors but ultimately urged his young neighbor in Concord to reproduce those restrictive patterns in *Diana & Persis*. The frigid connotations of the white and cold material which framed the rising American sculptural scene in Rome make of "A Marble Woman" a caustic, female reply to the master of the American Renaissance who stigmatized as "scribbling women" popular writers like Louisa May who, quite ironically, absorbed from him the "lurid" style which still lurks in the most charming episodes of *Little Women*.⁸
- 16 Having been long unclaimed by Alcott, who was mostly identified by her audience with the "Aunt Jo" from the March saga, her pseudonymous sensation stories deeply delved into the unuttered contradictions of married life, introduced in her first, controversial novel *Moods*, which gender prejudices excluded from the sphere of serious literature. If, in *Diana & Persis*, Percy's creative powers as a painter are essentially neutralized by her marriage, the community of sculpting women led by Charlotte Cushman set an alternative pattern for the unresolved conflict between art and love enacted in many an Alcott's art tale.⁹ The unbridged gap between the marble sculpture professionally embraced by the celibate sculptress Diana and the brush-stroke abandoned on a dusty canvas by her married painterly friend Percy stresses two ways in which women's individual ambitions can be painfully fulfilled or put aside.

- 17 Like Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, who proudly celebrated suffragism in her Roman sculptures, in *Diana & Persis*, Alcott confronts the unbridled Diana with a modern Persephone, whose name is a plausible short for her antagonist "Percy," allegorically abducted, according to the ancient myth, into the Hades of an obscuring marriage. Their different ways of conceiving the role of women in the arts reflect the opposite decisions made by the Alcott sisters, since May lived as a married painter in Paris, with a baby and a supportive husband, while Louisa skeptically looked down on her sibling's domestic scene which she considered domesticating, critically inspecting, from the semi-autobiographical perspective of the chaste Diana, the dusty palette and painting tools of the colleague who had initially shared her art studies abroad. In their parallel *Künstlerroman*, the training of the two girls and their creative growth are abruptly interrupted when Percy becomes a wife and a mother, in contrast to Diana's resistance to marriage in her attempt to preserve her full creative powers.
- 18 Jo March's mild passions, which hardly reassure her fans on her conjugal happiness in *Little Women Part II*, are adumbrated in *Diana and Persis* as that unfinished novella comes to a close, with Diana eventually choosing a fellow sculptor who certainly shares her professional enthusiasms but seems little equipped as a true romantic lover. Her alliance with the widowed sculptor Stafford reminds us of the pedagogic mission of Jo and Doctor Bhaer in Plumfield, which sadly endorses a model of companionate marriage that looks more like a professional agreement between peers than an enduring couple. When Stafford creates, as the literary sculptor William Wetmore Story in Rome also did, an imposing statue titled "Saul," he prepares to become another aged and exacting art mentor, able to gain, as it occurs in Louisa's art tales, the sincere devotion and obedience of his sculpting apprentice but not her love.
- 19 Margaret Fuller's hermaphroditic configuration of true genius, which inspired the unfinished Roman novel by Julia Ward Howe (Daniele, "Sandism in Reverse"), notably postulated that any woman who happens to be an artist assumes the masculine individualism provocatively displayed by George Eliot and George Sand. These two lauded women writers also rivaled male authors, symbolically taking male pseudonyms like Jo March and walking around in male attire like Harriet Hosmer in Rome. Likewise, Alcott's "A Marble Woman" appeared under the no-gender pseudonym of A. M. Barnard and, in her late unfinished novella, Diana incarnates the virgin huntress and the masculine sylvan goddess that her mythological name evokes. In her sportive and tomboyish style, in *Little Women* Jo March is as free as Hosmer in Rome to run in the open like a Wordsworthian embodiment of the transience of youth, notably epitomized by the ephebic allure of Canova's hermaphroditic models.
- 20 What I here argue is that, in their cross-dressed exuberance, the painter Rosa Bonheur in Paris and the actress Charlotte Cushman in Rome led the way to establish the no-gender, tomboyish style which made Jo March such a legendary character. As a scandalous painter *en travesti* from the Barbizon school, Bonheur was well known in the American suffragist circles for rejecting marriage and wearing comfortable male trousers while painting wild animals in the forest of Fontainebleau (Hewitt). The same masculine style and unusual success in the artworld also distinguished the circle of the American literary sculptresses in Papal Rome. Being led by the prominent cross-dressed diva, like Bonheur, the American women sculptors rode in the thick of the green fields, picturesquely interspersed with the ancient ruins that Henry James jr. defined "the mouldy crumbs of the festal past" (*Travelling Companions* 13). Like the

unbridled Harriet Hosmer who rode horseback with Anne Whitney across the Roman Campagna, in *Diana & Persis* the sculpting protagonist exhibits the androgynous features of her mythological namesake to restore, in the baroque and Neoclassical mixture which nurtured her sculptural career, another young Hippolytus to a disrupted family order which Cushman's extended family contributed to reform. Quite significantly, in her unfinished novella, Alcott hints to a new family model in which the unmarried Diana joyfully adopts, as Louisa May did with her sisters' children, the orphan son of her aged fellow sculptor, Angelino, significantly named after the sons of three major American expatriates related to the same sculptural scene: William Wetmore Story, Margaret Fuller and the unmarried Cushman herself, who also replaced her nephew's missing father in her creative community of women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcott, Amos Bronson. *The Letters of A. Bronson Alcott*, edited by Richard L. Herrstadt, Iowa State UP, 1969.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *An Old Fashioned Girl*. Roberts, 1870.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *Moods*. Edited by Sarah Elbert, Rutgers UP, 1991.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*. Edited by Joel Myerson, Daniel Shealy, and Madeleine B Stern, Georgia U.P., 1997.
- Alcott, Louisa May. "The Rival Painters." First appeared in *Olive Branch*, May 8, 1852. Rpt. in *The Early Stories of Louisa May Alcott. 1852-1860*, edited by Monika Elbert, Ironwood, 2000, pp. 19-24.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women: An Annotated Edition*. 1868. Edited by Daniel Shealy, Harvard UP-Roberts, 2013.
- Alcott, Louisa May. *A Modern Mephistopheles*. 1877. Edited by Octavia Cowan, Bantam, 1987.
- Alcott, May Nieriker. *Studying Art Abroad, and How to Do It Cheaply*. Roberts, 1879.
- Brooks, Van Wyck. *The Dream of Arcadia. American Artists and Writers in Italy 1760-1915*. Dutton 1958.
- Bullington, Judy. "Inscriptions of Identity: May Alcott as Artist, Woman, and Myth." *Prospects*, vol. 27, 2002, pp. 177-200.
- Cagidemetro, Alide. "Introduction" to Louisa May Alcott, *Una donna di marmo, o Il misterioso modello*. It. Trans. La Rosa, 1980, pp. v-xiii.
- Cott, Nancy F. "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1978, pp. 219-236.
- Culkin, Kate. *Harriet Hosmer: A Cultural Biography*. Massachusetts U. P., 2010.
- Dabakis, Melissa. "Ain't I a Woman? Anne Whitney, Edmonia Lewis, and the Iconography of Emancipation." *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflicts in American Visual Culture*, edited by Patricia A. Johnston, California UP, 2006, pp. 84-102.

- Dabakis, Melissa. "Sculpting Lincoln: Vinnie Ream, Sarah Fisher Ames, and the Equal Rights Movement." *American Art*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2008, pp. 78-101.
- Dabakis, Melissa. *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*. Pennsylvania State UP, 2014.
- Dabbs, Julia. *May Alcott Nieriker, Author and Advocate: Travel Writing and Transformation in the Late Nineteenth-Century*. Anthem P, 2022.
- Daniele, Daniela. "The Moods of Louisa May Alcott: Growing Up a Little Woman Writer in Concord", *Letterature d'America*, vol. 14, no. 55, 1994, pp. 5-32.
- Daniele, Daniela. "'Art is a Jealous Mistress': Living Galateas in Louisa May Alcott's Art Tales." *Per Teresa. Dentro e oltre i confini. Studi e ricerche in ricordo di Teresa Ferro*, edited by Giampaolo Borghello, *Forum*, vol. 1, 2009, pp. 487-504.
- Daniele, Daniela. "Sandism in reverse: the strange, marmorean beauty of Julia Ward Howe's *The Hermaphrodite*." *The Victorian Web. Literature, History and Culture in the Age of Victoria*, Apr 2013, <http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/daniele1.html>. Accessed 10 May 2022.
- Dimmick, Lauretta. "Veiled Memories, or, Thomas Crawford in Rome." *The Italian Presence in American Art. 1760-1860*, edited by Irma B. Jaffe, Fordham 1989, pp. 176-94.
- Edwards, Alexandra. "'Proper for a lady's brush': The Visual Arts in the Work of Louisa May Alcott." *Concept*, vol. 35, 2012, pp. 1-14.
- Eiselein, Gregory, and Anne K. Phillips, editors. *The Louisa May Alcott Encyclopedia*. Greenwood P, 2001.
- Flint, Azelina, and Lauren Hehmeyer, editors. *The Forgotten Alcott: Essays on the Artistic Legacy and Literary Life of May Alcott Nieriker*. Routledge, 2022.
- Freeman, James Edward. *Gatherings from an Artist's Portfolio*. D. Appleton, 1877.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Marble Faun, or The Romance of Monte Beni*. 1859. With an afterword by Murry Krieger, Signet-New American Library, 1961.
- Herrnstadt, Richard L., ed. *The Letters of A. Bronson Alcott*. Iowa UP, 1969.
- Hewitt, Catherine. *Art is A Tyrant: The Unconventional Life of Rosa Bonheur*. Icon Books, 2020.
- Hosmer, Harriet Goodhue. *Letters and Memoirs*. Edited by Cornelia Carr, Moffat, Yard & Co, 1912.
- James, Henry. *The Bostonians*. 1885-86. Macmillan, 1886.
- James, Henry. *William Wetmore Story and His Friends, from Letters, Diaries and Recollections*. Vol. I. Houghton, Mifflin, 1903.
- James, Henry. *Travelling Companions*. Boni and Liverigt, 1919.
- Perniola, Mario. *L'arte e la sua ombra*. Einaudi 2000.
- Rivas, Michèle. "Introduction. American Writers and Their Everyday Life in Papal Rome." *Americans in Rome: 1764-1870: Rome with Hawthorne and James*, edited by Paola Ludovici and Biancamaria Pisapia, Centro Studi Americani, 1984.
- Rosenfeld, Natania. "Artists and Daughters in Louisa May Alcott's *Diana & Persis*." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 1, 1991, pp. 3-21.
- Saxton, Martha. *Louisa May Alcott. A Modern Biography*. 1977. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995.
- Thorpe, Margaret Farrand. *The Literary Sculptors*. Duke UP, 1965.

Tuckerman, Henry. *Book of the Artists. American Artist Life, Comprising Biographical and Critical Sketches of American Artists; Preceded by an Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of Art in Americas*. G. P. Putnam, 1867.

Wagner, Frederick. "All Pine and Apple Orchard: Hawthorne and the Alcotts." *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, vol. 118, 1982, pp. 31-41.

Zastoupil, Carol. "Creativity, Inspiration and Scandal: Harriet Hosmer and Zenobia." *The Italian Presence in American Art, 1769-1860*, edited by Irma B. Jaffe, Fordham UP, 1989, pp. 195-207.

NOTES

1. "One should choose beautiful portions of different works, Wincklemann said, and reconstruct them harmoniously in a single figure, the recipe also of Raphael Mengs in painting, and this was what Canova had done when he replaced in sculpture Bernini's fantastic flourishes and operatic whims. Canova was all grace and elegance, rather Italian than Roman and Greek, in spite of the cult of antiquity that he represented, and (Washington) Irving must have found him sympathetic, for his own talent in prose was all elegance and grace. Irving shared the fashionable taste for the Borghese Caracci, and for Guido Reni's 'Aurora' and Domenichino, as well as to the 'inimitable' Claude and Poussin" (Brooks 14-15).

2. According to Tuckerman, "The truth is (notwithstanding Milton), there has never been any natural alliance between Puritanism and poetry. They are moral antipodes. Romanism is the religion of Art. With all her errors, she had ever met the native sympathies of the heart, and obeyed the great law by which the True is sought through the Beautiful. Puritanism represents Christianity as an opinion; Catholicism as a sentiment; the former addresses the intellect, the latter the feelings and the imagination" (208).

3. On May Alcott's art career see Judy Bullington, "Inscriptions of Identity: May Alcott as Artist, Woman, and Myth," the recent volume by Dabbs and the one edited by Flint and Hehmeyer.

4. Brooks reminds us that de Staël's novel was conceived by "collecting impressions" in Rome when her friend Washington Irving was also in town, producing a forerunner of *The Marble Faun* and of George Eliot's *Romola*, as "a vademecum of tourists in years to come... a glorified guidebook of Italy... Multitudes thronged about Corinne, the most beautiful woman in Italy who was attired like Domenichino's sybil, in blue over a robe of virgin white, tuning her lyre at the Capitol and improvising while the crowd threw laurels and myrtle at her feet. The greatest woman of her day, the cynosure of artists, who was to die at last of a broken heart, rejected by Lord Nevil for whose sake she defied the world, became for many a bluestocking the beau ideal. How far did not Margaret Fuller, for one, model herself on this poetess, this *improvisatrice* of an earlier Rome who refused to be judged by the common herd and travelled with Lord Nevil to Naples and Venice, ignoring the laws that were applicable to ordinary persons?... the cicerone... Irving, who talked with Madame de Staël on still another occasion in Rome, might have met the original of Lord Nevil, another American, a rich young man who spent many years in Italy and France, the first American archeologist" (15-16).

5. "Victoria. A Woman's Statue" was published serially in the March, April and May issues of the *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* in 1881, edited by Alcott's friend, the feminist journalist Jane Cunningham Croly.

6. "Don't name your writing 'poor scribble,'" he wrote in a letter to his daughter, "write away about whatever interests you: all is delightful to me, and will be so suggestive to you on your return. May you have the health, leisure, comforts, as you have the Genius to shape them into fair volumes, for the wider circles of readers." Letter of Bronson Alcott to his daughter Louisa (Richard L. Herrstadt ed. 377).

7. On the tensed relation between the Hawthornes and the Alcotts see Wagner and Catherine Carr Lee's entry on "Nathaniel Hawthorne" written for *The Louisa May Alcott Encyclopedia* (Eiselein-Phillips eds. 131).

8. Monika Elbert astutely argues that it was Hawthorne who inspired the "lurid" style of her thrillers: "Alcott admired Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850); even though her mother found the book not altogether wholesome, Alcott insisted that she was drawn to the 'lurid' quality of Hawthorne's writing and found it 'true and strong also'" ("Introduction." *The Early Stories of Louisa May Alcott* 9).

9. As Harriet Hosmer wrote in a letter from Rome of 1834 to her patron Dr. Crow, "Even so inclined, an artist has no business to marry. For a man, maybe well enough, but for a woman, on whom matrimonial duties and cares weigh more heavily, it is a moral wrong, I think, for she must either neglect her profession or her family, becoming neither a good wife and mother nor a good artist. My ambition is to become the latter, so I wage an eternal feud with the consolidating knot." (Cornelia Carr, ed. 35). See on the subject Culkin and Zastoupil (195-207).

ABSTRACTS

In her feminization of Hawthorne's famous Italian tales, Alcott made of her talented heroines not only objects but subjects of their art. The excellent training of many of her aspiring women sculptors follows the Oedipal patterns which oppressively dominate Nathaniel Hawthorne's own Roman artworld. Being victimized by a Puritan ideal of beauty that no living body could equal, Alcott's feminized versions of *The Marble Faun* allude to the American colony of women sculptors led by the actress Charlotte Cushman, whose extraordinary accomplishments in the arts challenged the patriarchal demands of the male gaze.

INDEX

Keywords: Nathaniel Hawthorne, American literary sculptors in Rome, Louisa May Alcott's art narratives, May Alcott Nieriker, Charlotte Cushman, Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, Greek mythology

AUTHOR

DANIELA DANIELE

Daniela Daniele teaches Anglo-American Literature at the University of Udine. She edited two Italian versions of Louisa May Alcott's *Moods*; the Italian edition of Alcott's suffragist writings *and of From Jo March's Attic*; the 2006 Einaudi edition of the March saga, and, more recently, the Italian editions of *Enigmas, of The Amber Amulet*, and of Martha Saxton's biography of Louisa May Alcott.