Abstract: This application proposes the creation of a digital, interactive, online critical edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* simulating nineteenth-century readers' experience of the novel. Students and teachers could use this resource as an historical and intellectual guide to Rome—the setting of the novel—supplemented by annotations, chronologies and contextual notes, and mapping software to bring this classic of the American Renaissance to twenty-first century readers.

The Digital Faun

"The life of the flitting moment, existing in the antique shell of an age gone by, has a fascination which we do not find in either the past or present, taken by themselves."
> —Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, Chapter 34

It has been years since readers have had access to an updated, annotated scholarly edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun, or The Romance of Monte Beni* (1860), an oft-overlooked masterpiece the American Renaissance. Andrew Delbanco's 2012 volume, for example, includes no footnotes,[1] and the Norton Critical series has yet to produce an edition. The most recent, fully annotated version published as part of the *Oxford World Classics* is nearly a decade old.[2] Although Hawthorne is better known to readers today for his short stories and novels—particularly *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)—*The Marble Faun* represents his late style, completed just four years before his death. Hawthorne himself considered it his best work, going so far as to claim, "If I have written anything well, it should be this romance; for I have never thought or felt more deeply, or taken more pains."[3] *The Digital Faun,* an online, hypertext edition of *The Marble Faun* for the twentieth-first century, would be worthy of Hawthorne's own assessment of his most popular novel.

Hawthorne's self-appraisal was shared by his contemporary readers and reviewers who overwhelmingly praised the work. To quote one review:

> There is no work of this class on Rome and its treasures which brings their details so closely and vividly before us. It is worth all the guidebooks we ever met with, as regards the gems of Italian art, the characteristic features of Roman edifices, and the atmosphere of Roman life. In fact, we conceive it calculated in many instances to impart new views of objects with which travelers may have imagined themselves too familiar.[4]

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[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, John Harvard Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, ed. by Susan Manning, Reissue edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); original issue: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, Oxford World's Classics. (Oxford : New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Letters*, Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 1804-1864 (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1984), p. 262.

[4] *Classified Catalogue of New and Standard Works* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860), p. 18.

It remains difficult to explain *The Marble Faun's* decreased popularity in the twentieth century. Susan Williams calls this critical decline "One of the greatest paradoxes of American Literary history…that the most unread of Hawthorne's works in our time was the most popular in his."[5] The novel was not just popular with American readers at home, though, it was also required reading for those traveling abroad in Italy. Due to the book's peculiarly topographical aspects, nineteenth-century readers would often follow Hawthorne's protagonists as they traversed Rome—the Eternal City—both across the page and physically, in person, across the city. It was a kind of literary road map, a guidebook for English-speaking visitors on the Grand Tour. It was a singularly interactive reading experience—one could walk around Rome with the book in hand and read the story aloud, imagining the plot unfolding in front of the Pantheon, the Coliseum, or the Trevi Fountain.

The publication history of *The Marble Faun* is also notable. Shortly after its first printing, the German press Tauchnitz Printers began selling editions with blank pages interspersed throughout the novel, thereby prompting readers to insert their own personal photographs and drawings—or purchase photogravures—to illustrate their own editions. Tauchnitz sold 14,500 copies of the *Marble Faun* in its first year of publication, more than the total sales of any of Hawthorne's works.[6] These editions, popular from 1865 until around 1920, invited readers to engage in a directly participatory role with the text, themselves playing the role of characters in the novel.[7] One scholar even suggests that *The Marble Faun* the first book designed explicitly to foster such an immersive readerly experience.[8] The goal of this project is to recreate that experience for modern readers.

The Digital Faun will have multiple layers of annotation legible on a phone or tablet. At the most basic level, it would provide the plain text while enabling readers to view added layers of explanatory or contextual information, including links to photographs, relevant images or artworks, and museum collections. A mapping widget, such as *Story Maps* <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/> or *Google Maps*, would provide interactive walking guides of *The Marble Faun,* superimposing pagan, imperial, Christian, nineteenth-, and twenty-first-century Rome. Readers could then add their own annotations or insert their own photos. The *Digital Faun* will also employ *Google Lens* so readers can photograph objects Hawthorne describes and automatically call up relevant information. Readers could then participate in online community of *Faun*-atics reenacting scenes and embellishing the digital edition with selfies—much like nineteenth-century readers with the Tauchnitz edition. For academic readers, *Digital Faun* would provide complementary critical, historical, and theoretical sources and materials. For the student of art history, Hawthorne's nineteenth-century misattributions—for example, he incorrectly identifies the artist responsible for the eponymous statue—would be updated with newer scholarship. For instructors, the *Digital Faun* will include suggested crowd-sourced syllabi as well as strategies for incorporating the edition into courses focused on Roman architecture reader, American literature, or Renaissance art history. For the tourist or lay reader, Hawthorne himself comes alive as a digital tour guide.

This is not a small task, but it is one I am prepared to accomplish. Having undertaken similar projects, I am very familiar with the challenges and opportunities of digital humanities scholarship. For instance, my hypertext edition of Herman Melville's novel *The Encantadas or Enchanted Isles* (1854) uses Javascript to create an easily legible set of side notes. Since writing the annotated *Encantadas*, I've

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[5] See: Susan Williams "Manufacturing Intellectual Eqipment: The Tauchnitz Edition of *The Marble Faun*," in Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles, *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America* (Univ of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 118.

[6] See: Susan Williamss in Moylan and Stiles, p. 119.

[7] The Houghton Library has several copies of this Tauchnitz edition.

[8] Paul Edwards, 'Musing with the Muse in the Photographically Illustrated Marble Faun', *Word & Image*, 30.1 (2014), 64–75.

been working toward a Ph.D. in American Studies at Harvard University, where I've received an M.A. in English with a focus on American Literature and passed my qualifying exams with a major field in art history. I've previously published essays on American Renaissance literature, specifically Melville. I am also proficient in Italian, having spent two summers teaching for the Harvard-Ca' Foscari summer study abroad program in Venice. Most importantly, I am uniquely positioned to utilize Harvard University's tremendous scholarly resources. Harvard's Houghton Library collections house eight editions of the Tauchnitz *Marble Faun.* Various digital and public humanities initiatives— including Harvard DARTH ([Digital Arts & Humanities](#)), the Harvard Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, and the English Department's [Humanities Online Practicum](#)—would further bolster the project's ambitions.

       The Marble Faun merits an extended, annotated, scholarly apparatus highlighting its intellectual, aesthetic, and historical novelty. Readers chase Hawthorne's fictional phantoms across a landscape of time, history, and myth—made astoundingly real by the fact of the city itself. Readers notice how Hawthorne choreographs his scenic descriptions, how Rome is far more than a literary setting: For Hawthorne, all of Rome is a stage. The American Academy in Rome would be an ideal setting for the site-specific research necessary to mapping and plotting *The Marble Faun* across Rome. Even more importantly, the Rome Prize would provide a community of scholars and practicing artists whose wide-ranging and multidisciplinary expertise in Roman history and culture would tremendously benefit the conceptualization and execution of *The Digital Faun.* Let's build a Tauchnitz for the twenty-first-century.

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