

Both in his myth books for children and in his final novel, *The Marble Faun*, Nathaniel Hawthorne transformed myth to suit America by using Ovid's own methods against him. He announces in the preface to *The Wonder Book for Girls and Boys* that "he does not . . . plead guilty to a sacrilege, in having sometimes shaped anew . . . the forms that have been hallowed by antiquity for two or three thousand years." Writing the *Metamorphoses* had been for Ovid a *crimen* and *error*; Hawthorne will undo this "sacrilege" by restoring Ovid's myths to their original and moral purpose. The *Metamorphoses* takes us from the beginning of creation through the creation of Rome; Hawthorne wants to reverse the process, allowing the stories "to transform themselves and reassume the shapes which they might be supposed to possess in the pure childhood of the world."

In transforming classical myths for a Puritan America, Hawthorne assumed the role of Ovid's Pygmalion, for the vivification of marble was Hawthorne's master metaphor for this process: "I aim at substituting a tone in some degree Gothic or Romantic . . . instead of the classic coldness which is as repellent as marble." Transformation in Ovid more commonly moves from animate to inanimate (e.g. Daphne); Pygmalion appealed to Hawthorne because his was a rare example of a metamorphosis from marble to life. As Hugo McPherson has noted, Hawthorne's Gothic aesthetic "humanizes the classic form by infusing it with feeling or emotional colour." Quite literally, Pygmalion modeled for Hawthorne the artistic challenge of bringing the "Greek Stones" to life for America; for in Hawthorne's terms, Pygmalion was already a Gothic artist, preferring purity and life to the stony immorality of the women of Cyprus. Like Pygmalion, Hawthorne wanted to moralize what seemed to him to be decadent and immoral in the ancient myths. Hawthorne turned to this myth most explicitly in a short story titled "Drowne's Wooden Image" in which "a modern Pygmalion in the person of a Yankee mechanic" carves a wooden figure-head in the shape of a woman and is amazed when it seems to come to life.

It was in *The Marble Faun*, however, that Ovid and Pygmalion were most central to the challenge which antiquity presented to Hawthorne as artist. Originally published in England with the title *Transformation*, *The Marble Faun* in its American version is named for Praxiteles' marble sculpture of a faun, which a group of American artists residing in Rome imagine to have been transformed into their Italian companion, Donatello. Through the transformation of Donatello Hawthorne as Pygmalion seeks to transform Rome the "Ruin" back into the ideal which guided the founders, into a Republic with a cast of moral exemplars. But the "moral" of the story, at its end, is that characters such as Donatello, "compounded for happiness," have no longer any place on earth: "such men must change their nature, or else perish." Hawthorne's attempt to transform Ovidian myth back into something like the legends of Livy founders on the reality of metamorphosis itself.