

THE OMNISCIENT NARRATOR IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S *SIGHTS FROM A STEEPLE*

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Abstract: The study of Nathaniel Hawthorne's authorial style has been an intriguing one, and many studies have tried to examine his style that has more or less set the path of American Literature. In this study, I intend to further such studies and explain how Hawthorne's omniscient observations as the narrator in his earlier short story, *Sights from A Steeple*, can actually be related, and is applied, to his other short stories. In the process of doing so, I intend to explain the defining style that Hawthorne follows in most of his short stories. The narrator in *Sights from A Steeple*, seen acting as the author himself, has an unusually superior power of observation, using it to give judgments and insights into the characters and events. These characters, events, and insights are then developed into similar but more detailed characters and significant events in Hawthorne's short stories: *Wakefield*, *My Kinsman*, *Major Molyneux*, *Rappacini's Daughter* and *Artist of the Beautiful*. In this way, *Sights from A Steeple* acts like snapshots of Hawthorne's other short stories.

Keywords: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Sights From A Steeple*, Omniscient Narrator, Author style

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, *Sights from A Steeple*, can be considered unique in that it is written much like sketches describing a panorama. Quite different from most of Hawthorne's prominent works, *Sights from A Steeple* does not try to present a definite theme, a question, or a problem. It does not even try to delve deeply into moral and social questions which are of utmost importance in Hawthorne's works (Rowshanzamir, 2014) - perhaps this is the reason why there are not many scholarly investigations on this particular short story. Instead of presenting a moral or social question, *Sights from A Steeple*, provides a medley of sights and events that are told by a narrator. The narrator was standing high upon a steeple that overlooked a city, and while perched in that vantage point, he described what he saw. The narrator describes many aspects of human life, and in choosing each of the sights and commenting on them, in a way, he tells his own little stories. On that idea, it is interesting to draw a comparison between the narrator and Hawthorne himself as an author of short stories. In this study, I intend to explain how the perspective of the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple* can be read as the perspective that Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author of the short story, often has used in his other short stories; first in that both Hawthorne and the narrator of *Sights from A Steeple* narrate stories from a vantage point detached and isolated from the lives that they observe; and second, in how the narrator, similar to Hawthorne, focuses on events and themes that would later be explored in Hawthorne's later works. Ultimately, I intend to explain how such a reading of the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* can act as a point in discussing similar themes in other Hawthorne's works, bringing proper insight and exploration on Hawthorne's style of observations.

There are some notable works dealing with this subject. Sharon Cameron (2013) brilliantly describes how Hawthorne uses a 'nonbodily' aspect of storytelling, revealing how the characters in Hawthorne's stories are somewhat separated between their inner self and their outer realm. I intend to pursue a somewhat similar approach of separateness, although I act on a different level by proposing that it is Hawthorne himself who is detached from the events. Also, I use a different focus, which is *Sights from A Steeple*, as a basis to view other Hawthorne's works.

The subject of Hawthorne as a lone author up in a steeple has also been explored by Bernard Duffey (1955) in a mainly biographical study. Duffey focused on the notion of how Hawthorne is a somewhat isolated author with high ideals, and he revealed many of Hawthorne's inner thoughts and motivations. Duffey's article serves well as a reference to assess what Hawthorne's motivations are.

Duffey's revelation on Hawthorne's inner isolationist and brooding tendency is what I explore here.

Mohsen Mahmoud Rowshanzamir (2012), in his article about moral narration in Hawthorne's works, explores how Hawthorne is acutely aware of the defects of the social structures in his life and how Hawthorne employs a 'different look' to analyze the morality of his age. Rowshanzamir's article is particularly useful here as he explored the 'double distance' that Hawthorne took as a measure to analyze his surroundings, and I explore more on this 'distance' by seeing how Hawthorne employs it in some of his short stories.

Cursory reading can reveal that the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* and Nathaniel Hawthorne share similar ways in the way they describe events in their surroundings. Regarding this, Duffey believes that Hawthorne's climbing a steeple is symbolic of an effort of descrying "more nearly the affairs of earth" (1955). Also, the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* chose spectacles, topics, or themes that later on feature quite prominently in Hawthorne's future works. This is quite significant when it is considered that *Sights from A Steeple* is one of Hawthorne's early short stories. It is quite reasonable to assume, then, that the choice of subjects and themes in *Sights from A Steeple* are then further developed by Hawthorne into main topics, style, and themes of some of his later works.

METHOD

This study is done as literary criticism on Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories, focusing on the short story *Sights from A Steeple*, from his earlier collection of short stories *Twice-Told Tales* (published 1837) as a basis of analyzing Hawthorne's other short stories, which are: *Wakefield* from *Twice-Told Tales*, also from *Mosses from an Old Manse* collection (published 1846), specifically *Rappacini's Daughter* and *The Artist of the Beautiful*, and from *The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales* collection (published 1852), specifically *My Kinsman, Major Molyneux*.

The discussion will focus on explaining how the omniscient narrator of the *Sights from A Steeple*, through mainly his choice of perspective and subjects of interest, can be interpreted as the author, Hawthorne, himself. The narrator is assuming the authorial perspective of Hawthorne, as the narrator seems to formulate and put in the seed of topics which Hawthorne then developed and expanded into other short stories: *Wakefield*, *Rappacini's Daughter*, *The Artist of the Beautiful*, and *My Kinsman, Major Molyneux*. This study aims to expound on possible ways that the *Sights from A Steeple* can be interpreted as providing brief snapshots of Hawthorne's other and later short stories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is useful to start this discussion by defining the nature of the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* before then trying to see this narrator's perspective applied in Nathaniel Hawthorne's other works.

In *Sights from A Steeple*, the narrator has not given a very clear character background. In the beginning, he exclaimed that he has reached a vantage point and then tried to explain the sights that he saw throughout the short story, adding commentary and insight as he focused on events that he observed. There is not a very clear sense of identity or purpose: on who the narrator was or why he did this. In this sense the narrator is 'detached' from his surroundings and environment. He is perhaps relatable to what Xiaohan (2019) describes as being a 'homeless' in Hawthorne's protagonists - in that Hawthorne's protagonists, being socially detached or unassociated with his social environment, may then be lead throughout the story to a heightened sense of understanding of himself. From such understanding, the narrator can be seen then as a more objective and knowledgeable observer of events.

Indeed, the narrator does seem to have a very good eye and senses in 'reading' the events happening around him. He supposedly drew on a wealth of information available to him by his advantageous vantage point above the town. He would select the things or events that were most interesting to him and conveyed them to the audience - we the readers. He serves, therefore, as a 'filter' to the world, selecting whatever he thinks is important to us, and leaves the unimportant details.

In this respect, the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple* is very similar to the 'flaneur' or an idle observer of urban life (Wood, 2008). The narrator here acts as a 'camera' of the world: selecting, editing, focusing, and refocusing the audience's eyes and shaping our perception of the world that the narrator lived in. However, unlike the 'flaneur,' the narrator was not actually strolling in the city, getting involved with the urban life. Rather, the narrator here was observing everything happening from his isolated tower in a detached sort of way.

This 'detachment' of an observer high on a steeple is similar to what Duffey (1955) perceives as the 'aloof loneliness' that Hawthorne often commented on himself as an author. Here on a vantage point, the narrator, i.e., Hawthorne, could see the life better upon the steeple, seeing more than the strollers who were walking in the city, whose sights were impeded by the buildings. He thus could supposedly see, for example, that the marching soldiers were about to unexpectedly bump into the funeral procession. There is a sense of superiority in the narrator, in that he can see and 'know' things

that other people, the real participants in the life below, might not know. However, he does admit limitations to his vision, as he could not see what is inside the souls of the people he observes:

The most desirable mode of existence might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity and shade from their sorrow, and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself. But none of these things are possible; and if I would know the interior of brick walls or the mystery of human bosoms, I can but guess. (Hawthorne, 2012:43)

Here, the narrator lamented his inability to attain his utmost desire, which was to pry inside human's hearts. However, he could still see sights that other people might not see, and he could observe, or 'stared,' into people's lives without the risk of being noticed of doing so. He is a kind of a 'social voyeur' in an advantageous position. We get the sense that the narrator is more 'knowledgeable' than other people in the story.

Aside from the sensory advantage, the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* also has an acute, deeper perception of characters and events whom he observed. The narrator could make comments and detailed judgments on people and spectacles he saw from above. His isolation from the people living below seems to bestow him the ability to give insights into these people. His ability to probe the lives of others, however visually limited, enables him to interpret and add meaning to others in a seemingly more objective light that the audience could trust. A simple example of this is in one of the earlier spectacles in the short story, where the narrator described a pensive passenger walking on the roadside. The passenger himself might not know, and certainly did not describe himself to the readers, that he had a 'pensive air' or looking melancholic and hot as if he was in love. The narrator, however, having the advantage of sitting idly on his steeple, can supply us with at least a third-person point of view about the details of this character: how he looked like, how he walked, or even speculations on how his feelings were. The narrator has the ability and privilege to direct us, what to think about this (and other) character and the events that the character was in.

From these advantages and superior powers of observation and meaning-making, it is possible to acknowledge the narrator here acting as the *author*—Hawthorne himself. The flaneur-like quality of the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple* emerges: the narrator at the time was 'possessed' by the author; he was actually Hawthorne himself making his own powerful statement inside the universe of the story, very similar to what Rowshanzamir has called "authorship sovereignty" (2012). More 'insights' that this narrator supply to the readers will be discussed here, in relation to Hawthorne's other stories, to grasp what Hawthorne aims to do with such technique. The first is the details and sequence of events in the *Sights from A Steeple* that are very similar to Hawthorne's other stories.

There are many sights and events that the narrator described, but the events involving the social aspects of the people are perhaps the most significant here. The narrator touched on subjects of human loneliness, frustration, hypocrisy, eccentricity, and frailty; topics which have been identified by Rowshanzamir (2014:243) as major themes in Hawthorne's works. The narrator's commentaries about love and relationships between the town folks, as well as the social contrasts signified with the 'clash' of the military parade and the funeral procession, are perhaps the best start to this discussion. These particular themes, as we shall see, have a significant bearing on Hawthorne's later works. These two themes can shed light on how Hawthorne's social commentaries and insights, germinated in *Sights from A Steeple*, are developed towards a more 'mature' social criticism in his other and later short stories. In showing the development of these themes, more insights on how Hawthorne employs his 'detached' commentaries in these short stories can be gained.

As noted before, the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* was quite a passive, albeit a powerful, observer of events. In observing the 'love affair' of the two ladies, the young man and the ladies' father, the narrator described them in a timely, chronological manner. The narrator began by eyeing the two ladies, one which was fairer than the other. The lens, by which the narrator observed these characters, zoomed in with describing very subtle details such as: "and, though she be so serious at this moment, I could swear that there is a treasure of gentle fun within her." (Hawthorne, 2012:44). Again, such remarks prove that the narrator had an uncanny ability to see very deeply into the character of the people he saw. The narrator then moved his sights, focusing on an old man:

The elderly personage in somewhat rusty black, with powdered hair the superfluous whiteness of which is visible upon the cape of his coat. His twenty ships are wafted on some of their many courses by every breeze that blows, and his name, I will venture to say, though I know it not, is a familiar sound among the far-separated merchants of Europe and the Indies. (Hawthorne, 2012:44)

The narrator here saw the father of the ladies mentioned before, and again he proves his superior, almost impossibly-attained, knowledge by saying that, although he did not know the name of the person, he knew that the person's name was famous among international merchants. It seems rather improbable that the narrator could know the fame of someone that he did not even know the name of. The narrator's view again shifted, going back to the ladies and how they encountered the previously mentioned 'young man with pensive air':

On looking again to the long and shady walk I perceive that the two fair girls have encountered the young man. After a sort of shyness in the recognition, he turns back with them. Moreover, he has sanctioned my taste in regard to his companions by placing himself on the inner side of the pavement, nearest the Venus to whom I, enacting on a steeple-top the part of Paris on the top of Ida, adjudged the golden apple. (Hawthorne, 2012:44-45)

By this time, the narrator positioned himself very close to the couple by saying that the young man agreed to his preference. The reference to Venus suggests that the narrator imply a romantic relationship between the man and woman, and indeed, it was then fully revealed:

I discern the rich old merchant ... yonder, at a far more rapid pace, come three other of my acquaintance, the two pretty girls and the young man unseasonably interrupted in their walk... a sudden catastrophe has chanced... they come plump against the old merchant... He likes not the sweet encounter; the darkness of the whole air gathers speedily upon his visage, and there is a pause on both sides. Finally he thrusts aside the youth with little courtesy, seizes an arm of each of the two girls, and plods onward like a magician with a prize of captive fairies... How disconsolate the poor lover stands... (Hawthorne, 2012:46-7)

Such timely storytelling, with the addition of closer insights on the characters' feelings, preferences, and motives, lend more reason to perceive this narrator as the author's embodiment. The narrator here 'zooms in' and probes on these characters, inviting the audience to make judgments and anticipate the characters' deeper motives and feelings. However, the narrator also remained both physically and emotionally distant from this event, as he then continued to describe the coming rain without mentioning more details of the incident anywhere in the story, and thus 'breaking' himself away from the forlorn young man. It is interesting here that the narrator, after having intensely describing an event still evolving, suddenly detached himself completely from the event.

There is a possible motive for the narrator, understood here as Hawthorne himself, in choosing to do such a sudden disengagement—that the narrator was keeping the reader in suspense for a possible, more detailed elaboration in a later story. In this light, I would argue that the brief meeting between the two ladies, the young man, and the father, is very much reminiscent of similar events in Hawthorne's other works: the *Rappacini's Daughter* and *Artist of the Beautiful*.

In these short stories, the young male protagonists faced a very similar situation described in *Sights from A Steeple*. In the *Sights from A Steeple*, as well as in *Artist of the Beautiful* and *Rappacini Daughter*, the young men's love was made impossible by the repulsive old father of the women whom the young men loved. The protagonist young men end up being left alone 'in the rain' as well. The old merchant in *Sights from A Steeple* does very much resemble Rappacini and Peter Hovenden, in that they act as an insurmountable obstacle for the young men to attain the love the women in their respective stories. The images of the magician and the captive fairies resemble to the image of Rappacini, with his seemingly magical abilities in cross-breeding plants, malevolently 'capturing' both young Giovanni and his own daughter Beatrice in his poisonous entrapment. Owen Warland, the young protagonist in *Artist of the Beautiful*, also suffered at the hand of Peter Hovenden, the father of Owen's darling, Annie. Peter Hovenden is very similar to the old merchant in *Sights from A Steeple*: a hateful, wealthy 'father-in-law' whose authority and power caused suffering to the protagonist—a young man. In these three short stories too, the love relationship largely remained unfinished. The young man was left alone in the rain, much as Giovanni was left alone with Beatrice's death. In the end of *Artist of the Beautiful*, Owen Warland did not marry Annie, and he had, in some way, renounced his love to Annie, but still, he was left in a similar state of loneliness: he was alone, unloved, with his precious creation, the butterfly, destroyed. This melodramatic, almost tragic, treatment of the unfinished, unsolvable problem of love appears very similar in these short stories.

Although Giovanni in *Rappacini Daughter* and Owen Warland in the *Artist of the Beautiful* were more complex characters than the young man in *Sights from A Steeple*, their romantic struggles still follow the very simple formula glanced by the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple*. It is interesting to note as well that the narration of both *Rappacini Daughter* and *Artist of the Beautiful* is done using a third-

person point of view; meaning that, much like the narrator on the *Sights from A Steeple*, the narrator-author still takes some distance away from the characters involved. Similar to how the narrator in the *Sights from A Steeple* stopped observing the romantically forlorn young man, the author of the stories in *Rappacini's Daughter* and *Artist of the Beautiful* stopped the story right after the protagonists lost their romantic causes: the story left Giovanni at the moment of Beatrice death, and Owen Warland's story stopped the moment when his butterfly was crushed.

This man-woman-father encounter is not the only significant encounter as there is also another significant event in *Sights from A Steeple* that shed light on Hawthorne's authorial perspective and seems to be similar in many ways to Hawthorne's other stories: the encounter between the military parade and the schoolboys with the funeral procession. In *Sights from A Steeple*, the military march was described as "a proud array" of soldiers who resembled, from afar, painted toy soldiers who were playing warlike fife and music. Just behind the soldiers' parade, "marches a battalion of schoolboys" in "crooked and irregular platoons, shouldering sticks, thumping a harsh and unripe clatter from an instrument of tin and ridiculously aping the intricate manoeuvres of the foremost band." The narrator then asked, "as slight differences are scarcely perceptible from a church-spire, one might be tempted to ask, "Which are the boys?" or, rather, "Which the men?" (Hawthorne, 2012:45). It is interesting here, in contrast to the description of the ladies mentioned before, that the 'lens' of the narrator 'zooms out' so that he could not see the soldiers and the children distinctly, and both seemed to melt together. It is peculiar, however, that the narrator can still see details, such as the schoolchildren's 'manoeuvres' or the children's sticks, and arrives at a conclusion that the schoolboys were aping the soldiers. Comparing this scene to the previous scene with the young man and the ladies, the narrator seems to be more involved with the scene involving the young man and the ladies – he felt a certain intimacy with his 'Venus'—therefore, his lens zoomed in to this scene. In contrast, in the scene of the soldiers' march, whom he somewhat mockingly described as 'toy-soldiers' aped by school children, the narrator zoomed out and perceived the soldiers and schoolboys as identical. This idea of 'distance' here is hence treated according to how much the narrator's—or in this case Hawthorne's—interest is toward a particular scene.

Another procession in this event was the funeral procession, described as "similar" to the soldiers' march and "excite identical reflections in the thoughtful mind" (Hawthorne, 2012:45). There was a hearse and some coaches whose drivers were half asleep, and a dozen "careless mourners in their every-day attire" (Hawthorne, 2012:45). Regarding how 'indifferent' the funeral procession was, the narrator then commented: "Such was not the fashion of our fathers when they carried a friend to his grave." The narrator, however, believes that Death, the King of Terror, still "retains his proper majesty," and showed what this meant by having the military parade being stopped short by the funeral procession:

The military men and the military boys are wheeling round the corner, and meet the funeral full in the face. Immediately the drum is silent, all but the tap that regulates each simultaneous footfall. The soldiers yield the path to the dusty hearse and unpretending train, and the children quit their ranks and cluster on the sidewalks with timorous and instinctive curiosity (Hawthorne, 2012:45).

The elaborate military flourish and the schoolchildren's revelry here were stopped short by the procession of Death. A similar image and comment to this may also be found in Hawthorne's short story, *My Kinsman, Major Molineux*.

In this short story, a similar military image is present in the Major Molineux character, whom the protagonist in that short story, Robin, described the Major as "acquired civil and military rank" with "great pomp." (Hawthorne, 2012:14-15). Robin intended to meet the Major and received help promised to his father some time ago. However, Robin then witnessed a procession in which his would-be military benefactor was paraded in tar and feather in a cacophony of mockery. *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* is similar to the *Sights from A Steeple* in that both of them treat the subject of military pomp with contempt, but most importantly, both are told from the perspective of a narrator or an observer that reacted passively to the events at hand. The narrator in *Sights from A Steeple* as well as Robin in *My Kinsman, Major Molineux*, did not intervene in the events happening before them, and both of them silently 'agreed' to the mocking event: the narrator believes Death retains its majesty by stopping the military parade, while Robin accepted what happened to the Major, laughed it off, and went home. By this understanding, it can be seen that the mocking scenes and spectacles serve to transmit Hawthorne's own values of criticizing the military by providing appropriate spectacles: the halted parade and the mockery of a military officer. Also, the narrator/protagonist characters were made passive, impotent, and receptive to this message conveyed through the given spectacles.

The scenes involving the desperation of the man-woman relationship, and the mocking authorial tone, all found in the *Sights from A Steeple*, can also be found in a different but more developed form in

another of Hawthorne's short story, *Wakefield*. There is, in the man-woman relationship in *Sights from A Steeple*, a certain sense of authorial and relationship experimentation that is applicable to *Wakefield*. In *Sights from A Steeple*, the young man tried to go along with the lady he liked to further his romantic interests, but unexpectedly stumbled upon the lady's father and stopped short. Also, in this story, the military procession tried to stir pomp and elegance but was mocked by the aping children and stopped short by the funeral procession. I would argue that *Wakefield* combines the mocking authorial tone and the character's own mockery towards the man-woman relationship by somehow deleting the father figure and relegating it to the man, the protagonist, himself. Instead of having a father figure forcefully separating the man and the woman, the protagonist Wakefield took as his own willful initiative to separate himself from his wife.

The authorial presence in the news article format of *Wakefield* is similar to the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple*, but further, in *Wakefield*, the author takes on a full existence as he himself narrating the whole story. The authorial presence here can be seen as the development from *Sights from A Steeple* because the author here narrated the story with very strong comments and even judgments of the story, an enhanced version of the *Sights from A Steeple's* narrator who also made comments on the spectacles that he viewed.

In *Wakefield* the author, for example, described Wakefield in a description full of rather snide commentaries:

What sort of a man was Wakefield? We are free to shape out our own idea and call it by his name. He was now in the meridian of life; his matrimonial affections, never violent, were sobered into a calm, habitual sentiment; of all husbands, he was likely to be the most constant, because a certain sluggishness would keep his heart at rest wherever it might be placed. He was intellectual, but not actively so; his mind occupied itself in long and lazy musings that tended to no purpose or had not vigor to attain it; (Hawthorne, 2012:97)

In this passage, Hawthorne described Wakefield in much of the same way, quite similar in style but different in tone, to the pensive young man and the 'Venus' lady mentioned in *Sights from A Steeple*. Hawthorne also made a revealing judgment of his Wakefield character:

Poor Wakefield! little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world. No mortal eye but mine has traced thee. Go quietly to thy bed, foolish man, and on the morrow, if thou wilt be wise, get thee home to good Mrs. Wakefield and tell her the truth. (Hawthorne, 2012: 98)

Here we see a similar style, albeit in a very different tone, with what the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple* made when the narrator exclaimed that his preference toward the 'Venus' lady agrees with the young man's preference. It is interesting to note too, that what the narrator from *Sights from A Steeple* did when he preferred the 'Venus' woman, and ignored the matronly 'Ida,' was done in *Wakefield* as well; in that the author/narrator describes Wakefield's wife in a too simplistic way – almost as if the author *ignored* Mrs. Wakefield. Janus Semrau in his study noted how Mrs. Wakefield appeared grotesquely "muffled," "placid," and "settled" to two decades of ordeal from her husband's irresponsible actions (2013:47).

In essence, the passage quoted above in *Wakefield* serves to reveal Hawthorne's full authorial voice and intention very clearly to the audience, whereas, in *Sights from A Steeple*, it was relegated to the narrator. The passage from *Wakefield* also reveals how detached the author is from the events in the story. The authorial comments in *Wakefield* disagree strongly with the protagonist, and they assert themselves powerfully by actually revealing the outcome of Wakefield's experiment even before the actual event was narrated, as the story opens with:

In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story, told as truth, of a man—let us call him Wakefield—who absented himself for a long time from his wife. The fact, thus abstractedly stated, is not very uncommon, nor, without a proper distinction of circumstances, to be condemned either as naughty or nonsensical. Howbeit, this, though far from the most aggravated, is perhaps the strangest instance on record of marital delinquency, and, moreover, as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities. (Hawthorne, 2013:96, my emphasis)

The author here can be seen as very condescending and judgmental even before the actual event was told to the reader, and it also shows how detached the author is from the event in the story.

The author's mentioning of the summary of the whole story and condescending judgment of his characters when introducing them, remove much of storytelling enjoyment, and because of this, the author seemed more detached and careless with his story. It can be concluded here that *Wakefield* is an advancement of the detached and lofty authorial presence which was somewhat toned down in *Sights from A Steeple*.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Taken as a whole, Hawthorne's *Sights from A Steeple* can be treated as a basis in which some of its major themes are then to be explored further in his other short stories. Hawthorne's 'detached' omniscient observations, briefly explored in *Sights from A Steeple*, were properly explored and matured on his other and later works. Notable among these works are the short stories *My Kinsman*, *Major Molyneux*, and in some ways *Rappacini's Daughter* and *Artist of the Beautiful*, all of which were published after *Sights from A Steeple* in 1837. *Wakefield* perhaps deserves a mention in that Hawthorne's authorial tone was more powerful than the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple*, and that *Wakefield* was published in the same compilation with *Sights from A Steeple* in 1837. There is a possibility that *Wakefield* was published after *Sights from A Steeple*, but what is clear is that *Wakefield* shares the narrating authorial presence reminiscent of *Sights from A Steeple*.

One aspect that I do not yet touch upon in this study is the aspect of Nature that frames the observations of the narrator in *Sights from A Steeple*. In many ways, the forces of Nature are quite prominent in the beginning and the end of this short story, and the force of nature, notably in the form of rain and the sky, at least gives motivations to the outcome of some events in *Sights from A Steeple* and Hawthorne's other works. A more thorough investigation on the forces of nature in *Sights from A Steeple* can perhaps yield interesting interpretations, seeing that Nature and its symbolisms are prominent in Hawthorne's other works, notably in his novel, *Scarlet Letter* (Gao, 2018).

In the end, reading through Hawthorne's stories, one cannot escape the feeling that Hawthorne was actually up there in a lofty vantage point throughout the storytelling. He was up in a steeple, recording, commenting, and conveying to us the many aspects of his characters and events in a medley of unique observations.

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