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Rappaccini's Daughter and Margaret Fuller

Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "Rappaccini's Daughter" represents Margaret Fuller and the relationship with her father. It is possible that Margaret Fuller's "Autobiographical Romance" was not originally meant to be published. This means Hawthorne was close enough to Margaret Fuller that she could have told him a lot about her life.

In "Rappaccini's Daughter," Hawthorne introduces a doctor named Rappaccini, his daughter Beatrice, their new neighbor Giovanni, and Professor Baglioni. Giovanni sees Rappaccini and Beatrice in the garden tending to some plants. This is one of the first references to Fuller's life. In the "Autobiographical Romance" Fuller states, "None of these were deeper than what I found in the happiest haunt of my childhood years, —our little garden... I liked nothing about us except the tall graceful elms before the house, and the dear little garden behind" (31). Hawthorne continues to draw connections in Fuller's life and his piece, "Rappaccini's Daughter." In Hawthorne's story he talks about a poisonous plant that only Beatrice tends to. In Fuller's "Autobiographical Romance" she talks about her favorite plant and the flowers she would tend to.

Another parallel of Fuller and Beatrice is the relationship with their fathers. One day Professor Baglioni speaks with Giovanni and tells him a story about that relates to Rappaccini and his daughter. The story quotes, "'That this lovely woman,' continued Baglioni, with emphasis, 'had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was

so imbued with them, she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence” (13). This is a metaphor for Fuller’s life because her father used to nourish his daughter with knowledge. Rappaccini wanted Beatrice to be a stronger woman and so he fed her poison and made her poisonous. In the story he states, “Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?” (18).

This represents Fuller and how her father constantly fed her knowledge. In the “Autobiographical Romance” Fuller talks about how her father overworked her and wanted her to overcome the prejudice against women. Fuller’s father knew knowledge is power and insisted on turning Fuller into a genius. In her father’s eyes, Fuller would be “poisonous” to anyone because she was so smart and could change the way men particularly viewed women. Fuller would become an icon and no one would be able to tear her down. Fuller’s father wanted this knowledge to be her strength and make her the most strong, and feared woman.

A last comparison is about Fuller’s father and Rappaccini. In “Rappaccini’s Daughter” Baglioni says, “But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind” (4). Margaret Fuller’s father was defined as, “a man of business, even in literature; he had been a high scholar at college, and was warmly attached to all he had learned there, both from the pleasure he had derived in the exercise of his faculties and the associated memories of success and good repute” (26). The father in both pieces has an intense focus on their trade and knowledge. “Rappaccini’s Daughter” focuses on his obsession with science, whereas the “Autobiographical Romance” focuses on her father’s obsession with business, literature, and knowledge.