and the Red Cross." He discusses at length the narratology of the early contemplated framed cycles; the negative epiphanies of the dream-vision sketches such as "An Old Woman's Tale," "The Wives of the Dead," and "The Hollow of the Three Hills"; and the narrative interventions in the historical tales: "The Gray Champion," "Roger Malvin's Burial," and "The Gentle Boy." He devotes complete chapters to discussions of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and "Alice Doane's Appeal." For each scrutiny of the tale and of its extended text he insists on the artistry of a writer who is present in his work in ambiguous but definite ways: sometimes as author/narrator, sometimes as spectator from an ironic distance. Hawthorne is seen as the master of doubling meanings, indeterminate conclusions, and the "subjectivity of history, morality, religion, and patriotism" (116).

The concluding chapter, "The Oberonic Self," sums up Thompson's various themes: Hawthorne's habitual interposing of an external narrator in his work (204); the author who is "the persistent voice behind, in, around, and at a distance" (231); and "his comprehensive romantic irony and the mastery of romantic narratology" (237). The notes are packed with references not only to Hawthornean critics, but to Dante, Conrad, Shakespeare, and, of course, Poe, among many others.

Thompson has obviously read not only Hawthorne but also much Hawthorne criticism and theory, and he perceives the ironical double vision as well as the authorial presence of Hawthorne in his work. He has also, as he states, redefined "romantic narrative in more contemporary terms" (21). Therein lies my problem with the book. His text is such a thicket of the dense, almost impenetrable language found in recent critical jargon that the reader must be willing to dig deeply to find the pot of gold. For instance, such a sentence as, "Narratival paradigms are adapted to Hawthorne from narratological theory, especially the semiotics of narratological mediation and transaction" (5) is enough to make one want to cry with David in "An Old Woman's Tale": "Oho! what have we here?"

Margaret B. Moore, Independent Scholar, Athens, Georgia


Karen Sánchez-Eppler sent a buzz through humanities departments everywhere when she published "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition" in a 1988 *Representations*. The rigor and elegance of that oft-reprinted essay and its interest in the confounding intersections of corporeality, sexuality, racial identity, politics, and representation characterize the whole of *Touching Liberty*, of which "Bodily Bonds" is now the first chapter. In succeeding chapters on Walt Whitman, Harriet Jacobs, and Emily Dickinson, Sánchez-Eppler brilliantly traces the assault on oppressively incorporeal, mystifyingly abstract
notions of personhood that occurred with the rise of organized abolitionism and
the coincident surge of feminist social energy. These movements, she argues,
helped ground American political identity in the haptic particularity and social
difference of actual human bodies. The writers she studies confronted the body’s
centrality to social identity but with botched, compromised, or revealingly am-
biguous results owing to the contradictions of language and of antebellum political
thought.

Sánchez-Eppler writes with a disciplined, intense focus on rhetorical, bodily,
and political matters both discretely and as each puts pressure on the others.
The paradoxical effect of this tight focus is that *Touching Liberty* accumulates
an exhilarating expansiveness. In sentimental abolitionist fiction, Sánchez-Eppler
argues, white women appropriated the black body as a way of staging their own
racial and sexual dilemmas; their earnest belief in human sameness foundered
on the literary othering of the bodies they sought to redeem. Walt Whitman’s
predicament of skin, the egalitarian desire to merge black and white bodies while
singing their corporeal uniqueness, similarly winds up dissolving or indeed de-
stroying the bodies themselves. The violence wrought upon the black corpus is
registered in Harriet Jacobs’s work, but because of domestic ideology’s sexual
strictures its enunciation is far from unproblematically emancipatory. Through-
out *Touching Liberty* there is an almost de Manian emphasis on the way writing
defeats, occludes, or denies the bodies it would represent, and a nearly perverse
reiteration that the desire for emancipation relies on (and, the implication is, would
tolerate) the oppression and conflict it works to mend. The payoff of these strate-
gies is what Sánchez-Eppler terms “cautionary tales” about the easily disrupted
or exploitative character of alliances that might seem natural or inevitable.

This is a stern lesson, and no doubt a bracing one in an era of unexamined
multiculturalism and uncertain sisterhood. But it left me feeling uneasy about the
apolitical comer into which Sánchez-Eppler writes herself. She is uneasy about it
too, and makes sounds of protest when she finds herself celebrating Dickinson’s
quietest clarity, her willingness to fight the female body into words at her own
cost rather than someone else’s. Oddly but perfectly logically, Dickinson is the
book’s hero, which returns *Touching Liberty* to Sánchez-Eppler’s own home base
of Amherst. But Dickinson was cynical about what she regarded as the folly of
political reform. While this is a stance Sánchez-Eppler is too committed to take,
*Touching Liberty* needs more optimism of the will to counter its pessimism of the
intellect—the aggregate onus of bodily difference, linguistic guile, and political
misdemeanor it so superbly details.

Eric Lott, University of Virginia

Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson’s Fascicles. By Sharon Cameron. Chicago:

Cameron contends that while the lyric is traditionally held to be coterminous
with closure, the “revoked referentiality” and “vexed connections” in Dickinson’s