

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY:
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S POETICS OF FIRE

by

SANDRA SUE HUGHES

(Under the Direction of Rosemary Franklin)

ABSTRACT

In my dissertation, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach influenced by psychology, religion, history, and philosophy. Employing the framework of Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological studies of the four elements to examine Hawthorne's canon, I argue that Hawthorne's recurrent use of fire imagery not only reveals an affinity for an ambiguous symbol admirably suited to his literary aesthetic, but also anticipates a theme prevalent in the manuscripts he left unfinished at his death: the search for the *Elixir Vitae* and the attainment of immortality. In works such as "Main-Street" and *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne employs fire imagery on a conscious level, celebrating its multivalent symbolism. Furthermore, in several of his complex fictions, most notably "Ethan Brand," he draws upon the legends of Prometheus, Empedocles, and the Phoenix—the three myths that Bachelard has identified as central to a "poetics of fire." I contend that Hawthorne's oneiric affinity with the element of fire indicates an abiding interest in the themes of regeneration, resurrection, and immortality chronicled in the Bachelardian fire myths, as well as in three disparate spiritual traditions linked to fire: the scriptural narrative of the Garden of Eden, the religious rituals of the Zoroastrians, and the mystical tradition of alchemy. After examining social contexts as well as biographical information that might explain why Hawthorne was particularly concerned with the idea of immortality, I conclude that although protagonists such as Septimius Felton—the title character

of a late, unfinished romance—hope to extend their lives through alchemical experiments, Hawthorne himself sought immortality through his art. Hawthorne acted to preserve his literary legacy not only by attempting to write in “characters of fire,” but also by burning (or threatening to burn) inferior work he produced. Hence, fire, in both its creative and destructive aspects, contributed to the survival of his literary reputation—a writer’s version of the *Elixir Vitae*.

INDEX WORDS: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Gaston Bachelard, American literature, Fire, Elements, Ambiguity, Immortality

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY:
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S POETICS OF FIRE

by

SANDRA SUE HUGHES

B.A., Kentucky Wesleyan College, 1991

M.A., Marquette University, 1993

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2003

© 2003

Sandra Sue Hughes

All Rights Reserved

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY:
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S POETICS OF FIRE

by

SANDRA SUE HUGHES

Major Professor: Rosemary Franklin

Committee: Hubert McAlexander
Hugh Ruppersburg

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the faculty, librarians, and resources of the University of Georgia. In particular, I benefited from the advice and direction of my doctoral committee members, Dr. Rosemary Franklin, Dr. Hugh Ruppensburg, and Dr. Hubert McAlexander. Rosemary Franklin was the best dissertation director a graduate student could ever hope to work with—her wisdom, her experience, her knowledge of Hawthorne, and her unfailing support of my project inspired me to do the best research and writing of which I am capable. Of course, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my mother, Connie, my brother, B.C., and my aunt Annette for their unwavering belief that I would succeed. I likewise extend my most heartfelt thanks to the members of my dissertation writing and reading group, April Nixon Kendra and Angela Pfile, who read countless drafts and made helpful suggestions at every stage of the writing process. In addition, I would like to thank the following friends for their kind and constant support, which was vital to the completion of my project: Colleen, Greg, Rebecca, Billie, Doug, Brad, Joy, Jodi, Julie, Bronwen, James, Eric, Lisa, Packy, Jennifer, Kathryn, Janice, Diana, Allen, Laura, Yoko, Miyoko, Hiromi, Claire, Paul, Garth, Beth, Sarah, Hester, and Nettie. I also acknowledge the love and support of those friends and family members who are with me still: Billy Gene Hughes, Carlton and Anne Watkins, John and Stella Cost, Emma Watkins, Alice Waldrige, Karen Taketa, and Barb Bertrand Nass. I dedicate this work to all of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Biographical and Historical Background: The Birth of an Elemental Consciousness	9
Elemental Philosophy and Psychology: The Creation of a Literary Legacy	15
2 “COOKERY” AND “APOCALYPSE”: FIRE’S MULTIVALENT SYMBOLISM	22
Domestic Fire: The “Comforting Warmth of the Hearth”	23
Demonic Fire: The “Damnation of Hellfire” and the Final Conflagration..	29
Fire as Polyvalent Symbol: A “Strategy of Pluralism”	38
3 THE GARDEN, THE KILN, AND THE CRUCIBLE: SPIRITUALIZED FIRE	62
The Garden: Eden.....	62
The Kiln: Zoroastrianism	69
The Crucible: Alchemy	75
<i>The Marble Faun</i> : A Convergence of Themes.....	82
Miriam, or Paradise Lost	84

	Hilda, or Paradise Sought	90
	Donatello, or Paradise Regained	99
	Kenyon, or Paradise Revisited	107
4	PROMETHEUS, EMPEDOCLES, AND THE PHOENIX: THE BACHELARDIAN FIRE MYTHS AND LITERARY CREATIVITY ...	110
	“A Virtuoso’s Collection”: Connections and Revelations	111
	“Ethan Brand”: Fictional Fusion of the Fire Myths	115
	Prometheus: Thief of Fire.....	122
	Empedocles: Flames of Purification.....	131
	The Phoenix: “Nest” and “Pyre”	134
	The Role of Fire in Literary Creation and Destruction	140
5	CONCLUSION.....	145
	<i>Septimius Felton</i> , the Civil War, and the <i>Elixir Vitae</i>	148
	The Final Years, and the Desire for a Literary Legacy.....	151
	NOTES.....	157
	REFERENCES	186

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*. . . we will never know for certain whether fire derives its meaning from
images of external reality or its power from the fires of the human heart.*
—Gaston Bachelard, *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire* (64)

Perhaps best known for his influential *Poetics of Space* (1958), French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) also produced several phenomenological studies of the four elements recognized by classical philosophers as comprising the universe: earth, air, fire, and water. According to Frank Thilly and Ledger Wood, the problem of external nature was taken up during the pre-Sophistic period, which lasted from around 585 to the middle of the fifth century BCE. The philosophers of this period sought to resolve two questions: 1) what is the original substance of the universe? and 2) how does this substance change in order to produce objects perceivable by the senses? (17). While Thales argued that water was the original substance of the universe (24), and Anaximenes claimed that the primal substance was air (26), Heraclitus maintained that fire was the original and essential element (32). Thus, in Fragment 30, Heraclitus writes, “The ordered world, the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is, and will be, an everliving fire . . .” (Heraclitus 25). For Heraclitus, fire symbolized the transformation, flux, and incessant activity he believed to constitute reality (Thilly and Wood 32-33). The answer to the question of how the primal stuff changes into familiar substances was finally offered by Anaxagoras, who postulated countless numbers of qualitative elements that were moved by a mind outside those elements, and by Empedocles, who proposed only four

elements—earth, air, fire, and water—which two mythical beings, Love and Hate, cause to unite and divide (41).¹

In books such as *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (1938), *Water and Dreams* (1942), *Air and Dreams* (1943), *Earth and the Reveries of the Will* (1947), *The Flame of a Candle* (1961), and *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire* (1988), Bachelard built upon classical elemental philosophy in order to construct an elemental *psychology*.² According to Bachelard, all writers possess an unconscious affinity with one of the four elements, revealed primarily through the author's choice of symbols, imagery, and myths. Hawthorne's frequent references to the myths of Empedocles, Prometheus, and the phoenix identify him as having what Bachelard terms a "consciousness of fire." I will argue that Hawthorne's recurrent use of fire imagery not only indicates a preference for an ambiguous symbol well suited to his literary aesthetic, but also anticipates a theme prevalent in the manuscripts he left unfinished at his death: the search for the *Elixir Vitae* and the attainment of immortality.

Specifically, I contend that Hawthorne's oneiric affinity with the element of fire suggests an abiding interest in the themes of regeneration, resurrection, and immortality chronicled in three disparate spiritual traditions linked to fire—the biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden, the religious rituals of the Parsees, or Zoroastrians, and the mystical tradition of alchemy—as well as in the three Bachelardian fire myths. After examining social contexts as well as biographical information that might explain why Hawthorne was particularly concerned with the idea of immortality, I conclude that although protagonists such as Septimius Felton—the title character of a late, unfinished romance—hope to extend their lives through alchemical experiments, Hawthorne himself sought immortality through his art. Hawthorne acted to preserve his literary legacy not only by attempting to write in "characters of fire," but also by burning (or threatening

to burn) inferior manuscripts he produced. Hence, fire, in both its creative and destructive aspects, contributed to the survival of his self-selected body of work—a literary version of the *Elixir Vitae*.

Although a number of critics have commented on the theme of immortality in Hawthorne's work, their studies have generally focused on two groups of unfinished romances written late in the author's life and published posthumously as fragments: 1) *The American Claimant Manuscripts*, consisting of *The Ancestral Footstep* (c. 1858), *Etherege* and *Grimshawe* (c. 1861), and 2) *The Elixir of Life Manuscripts*, consisting of *Septimius Felton* and *Septimius Norton* (c. 1861), and *The Dolliver Romance* (c. 1863).³ While it seems natural for an aging man to contemplate his impending death, as seen in these unfinished manuscripts, Hawthorne reveals a preoccupation with the theme of immortality in poetry he composed as early as age sixteen.⁴ Indeed, this theme appears not merely in Hawthorne's late work, but throughout his entire career, a fact that has gone unrecognized by scholars to date.

Furthermore, while precedent exists for basing elemental readings of literary texts on Bachelard's theories,⁵ no one has yet done such a study of Hawthorne. Instead, well-respected books in Hawthorne studies published in the past 20 years have largely followed biographical, historical, or political approaches.⁶ Recent biographies include Edwin Haviland Miller's *Salem Is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1991), and James R. Mellow's *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (1980), as well as innovative studies such as *Family Themes and Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web* (1984), in which Gloria Erlich provides a psychological interpretation of Hawthorne's work by focusing on biographical information concerning his maternal line of ancestry. The historical approach to Hawthorne's fiction, long popular with scholars because of the author's self-avowed interest in history, has been best

applied specifically by Michael Colacurcio in *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (1984), and more generally by David S. Reynolds in *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1988) and David Leverenz in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Sacvan Bercovitch's "The A-Politics of Ambiguity in *The Scarlet Letter*," which appeared in *New Literary History* (1988), and *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* (1991) refocused scholarly attention on *The Scarlet Letter*. More recent trends in Hawthorne criticism include a growing interest in politicized issues such as gender and class in his fiction, perhaps best exemplified by the essay collection *Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition* (1999), edited by John Idol and Melinda Ponder.

With the exception of James R. Mellow, none of the critics mentioned above touches significantly on Hawthorne's use of fire symbolism and mythology. In fact, critical discussions of the topic have, on the whole, been brief and underdeveloped. For example, in *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville* (1958), Harry Levin's comments on Hawthorne's use of fire symbolism center on "Ethan Brand":

The element of fire, which invariably fascinates Hawthorne and continually reminds him of Bunyan's side-gate to hell, flickers through the night of the story from sunset to sunrise. Its "lurid blaze," according to neighborly gossip, had sealed a pact with Satan. The brands that burn in this perpetual holocaust are not refined by the Dantesque flames of suffering and purgation. (62-63)⁷

Like Levin, Richard Fogle notes the relationship to hellfire in his treatment of the subject in *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark* (1964), where he argues that, in Hawthorne's writing, "the flames of hell [are] strangely mingled with the forge fire of Vulcan's smithy, and

the bright blaze of the hearth” (14). Significantly, Fogle recognizes the contradictory or paradoxical quality of fire—that it burns both on the hearthstone and in hell.

In a later study, *Hawthorne’s Imagery: The “Proper Light and Shadow” in the Major Romances* (1969), Fogle considers the role of fire in the portrayal of emotions when he suggests, without stating outright, that Hawthorne might associate fire with passion (138-39) and with anger (145). In a similar vein, Rita Gollin, in *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Truth of Dreams* (1979), briefly examines the role of firelight in “evok[ing] knowledge of the heart” when she contends:

A man may sit by the fire remembering those who have died, as in “The Village Uncle,” “Grandfather’s Dream,” and “John Inglefield’s Thanksgiving,” and affection can bring them back for a time. But more often, fire evokes nightmare images of suppressed guilt and searing passions, demons of the inner hell, as in “Ethan Brand,” “Young Goodman Brown,” and “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.” (97)

While Gollin does not fully explore the possibilities of her own assertions, she does establish a link between fire and “affection,” “guilt,” and “passions,” which contributes to an understanding of the element’s emotional connotations.

Gloria Erlich, in *Family Themes and Hawthorne’s Fiction: The Tenacious Web* (1984), goes a step further in recognizing fire’s connection with literary creativity. In her analysis of “The Old Manse” (1846), Erlich maintains that Hawthorne had “burrowed among the books and sermons of the garret ‘in search of any living thought, which should burn like a coal of fire, or glow like an inextinguishable gem’ (foreshadowing the scarlet letter, inflamer of living thought to be found in the attic of the Custom House) . . .” (18). She goes on to argue:

[H]is imagination never really caught fire at the Manse. Even this widely appreciated preface strains hard to set the imagination aflame. The author leads the reader around the premises, into the garret, up the Assabeth River, onto the historic battle-ground, trying to associate, moralize, reconstruct the Indian and Revolutionary past, all associative methods productive of fine writing in the style of Washington Irving, but not yet of the living coal of fire. (18)

Speaking generally, Erlich insists that “A sense of failed imagination pervades the essay” (17). While I disagree with portions of Erlich’s assessment,⁸ she makes an important contribution by acknowledging the relationship between fire and literary inspiration.

In *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (1980), James R. Mellow includes a far more detailed and comprehensive discussion of the centrality of fire in Hawthorne’s work, which hints at fire’s ambiguous resonances, as well as its role in nineteenth-century social structure, in rites of purification, and in the preservation of literary reputation. He begins by arguing that Hawthorne acknowledges both “domestic and diabolical aspects” of the element; in other words, the author sees fire as simultaneously signifying “the comforting warmth of the hearth, the purifying rites of the flame, the damnation of hellfire” (45). Mellow goes on to assert:

Hawthorne frequently referred to the benign aspects of fire; his low-key essay “Fire-Worship,” for example, is an ambling, topical commentary on the replacement of the fireplace by the new “air-tight” stove of nineteenth-century households Fire is the central metaphor of a late story, “Earth’s Holocaust,” in which an uncontrollable mob of reformers, in a rage for destruction, proceed to burn what they consider the vanities of the world, one by one. Fire is also the symbolic inferno—in the rustic but awesome image of the limekiln—in which Ethan Brand is purified of his “unpardonable sin.” Given this

literary obsession, there is a certain appropriate symbolism in the circumstance that at the outset of his career Hawthorne consigned his unwanted manuscripts to the flames. There may also have been an element of poetic inevitability in the fact that, some three years after publication, the remainder of the first—and only—edition of his unwanted novel, *Fanshawe*, was destroyed in a fire in the Marsh and Capen store. (45-46)

As this astute biographer points out, the appearances of fire in Hawthorne's *oeuvre* are various and multiform. Although Mellow does not explore fire's mythical echoes, its role in artistic inspiration, or its connection with the idea of immortality, this brief passage from his biography of Hawthorne provided the starting point for my project. In my study, I will take an eclectic critical approach that will draw not only from biography and history, but also from the fields of religion, philosophy, and psychology in order to provide a more broad-based perspective on fire as both image and symbol in Hawthorne's work.

A passage from the 1843 tale "The Birth-Mark" indicates that Hawthorne had contemplated elemental processes at some length, since he makes them the focus of his character's early scientific career:

[D]uring his toilsome youth, he [Aylmer] had made discoveries in the elemental powers of nature, that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region, and of the profoundest mines; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very

process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world to create and foster Man, her masterpiece. (X: 42)⁹

To be sure, Hawthorne mentions inquiries into the essential nature of the four elements in order to establish Aylmer's link with the elemental science of alchemy, but his focus on earth, air, fire, and water also indicates that the author must have spent time considering their influence on both humankind and the cosmos.

That Hawthorne was drawn in particular to the element of fire is undeniable. A quick review of John Byers and James Owen's two-volume *Concordance to the Five Novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1979) reveals Hawthorne's abiding interest in the element. The novels alone—to say nothing of the short fiction—contain 80 references to *fire*; 18 to *fiery* or *firelight*; and a total of 59 to *fireside(s)*, *hearth(s)*, or *fireplace*.¹⁰ The romances include, moreover, numerous mentions of properties or qualities associated with fire: *light*, 229; forms of *burn*, 70; *warmth*, 61; *glow*, 60; *heat*, *hot*, or *red-hot*, 57; forms of *flame*, 47; forms of *smoke*, 32; and forms of *blaze*, 23.¹¹ Since Hawthorne was likewise interested in the sun—the “fire” in the sky that served as an object of reverence for the Parsee “fire-worshippers”—he incorporates *sun*, *sunny*, *sunshine*, or *sunlight* a total of 333 times.¹²

The concordance also hints at Hawthorne's intense death anxiety and resultant fascination with the theme of immortality. The five novels themselves contain a stunning 464 references to *time*, as well as 462 uses of *death*, *dead*, or *die*.¹³ Further, they include a plethora of allusions to mortality: *grave(s)*, *graveyard*, or *grave-stone(s)*, 120; forms of *mortal(ity)*, 106; forms of *bury*, 70; and *tomb(s)* or *tombstone(s)*, 47.¹⁴ Hawthorne also refers to opposing concepts that suggest the transcendence of death or of time: he employs a form of *immortal(ity)* in 48 instances, and uses *eternal* or *eternity* on a total of 44 occasions.¹⁵ Taken together, these

numerous and persistent references to fire and to immortality indicate that these subjects were important to Hawthorne as both a man and a writer, and that they deserve more critical attention than they have as yet received.

Biographical and Historical Background: The Birth of an Elemental Consciousness

An author's choice of symbols is, as a matter of course, influenced by his family background and historical milieu. In the introduction to his *Dictionary of Symbols* (1962), J.E. Cirlot offers an insightful observation regarding the relationship between symbols and "historicity": "One of the most deplorable errors of symbolist theory, in its 'spontaneous' as well as in its occult and even its dogmatic interpretations, lies in opposing the symbolical to the historical" (xiii). Mircea Eliade likewise asserts that "Symbolism *adds* a new value to an object or an act, without thereby violating its immediate or 'historical' validity" (qtd. in Cirlot xv). In Hawthorne's case, his fondness for fire symbolism derives in part from his New England roots. Readers of Hawthorne's work can easily imagine how important fire must have been to someone growing up in Massachusetts and Maine in the early nineteenth century. In particular, an 1815 volcanic eruption in Indonesia led to the so-called "year without a summer," 1816. In New England, it snowed twice in June, and July brought at least one crop-killing frost, which created considerable hardship for farmers (Hughes, "Year"). As a twelve-year-old, Hawthorne must have huddled around the fire with his family to keep warm during this especially cold year.

When he was sixteen, the author learned of the execution by hanging of Stephen Merrill Clark, a youth his own age who had been convicted of arson (XV: 142). Although "there was much indignation against Clark" in Salem, where the arsonist was executed, because the stable fire he set had spread to and destroyed a nearby house (142), Hawthorne took a kinder view of

the situation than other Salem residents. In a letter to his mother which not only reveals young Nathaniel's interest in fire, but also his anxiety about death, Hawthorne wrote in May, 1821: "I did not go to see Stephen Clark executed. It is said that he could have been restored to life some time after his execution. I do not know why it was not done" (144).

During his college years, the author himself experienced fire's devastating power when Maine Hall, his place of residence at Bowdoin, was destroyed on March 4, 1822. Although he and Alfred Mason escaped without injury, they were forced to board elsewhere while the hall was rebuilt (XV: 169). Perhaps due to the loss of his "home" in the dormitory fire, Hawthorne became an observer of structural fires. In *Salem Is My Dwelling Place*, Edwin Haviland Miller reports the following curious incident: "On seeing Hawthorne one day at a fire nonchalantly observing the conflagration, one of his neighbors voiced her indignation 'at a strong young man's not going to work as other people did'" (85-86). According to James R. Mellow, Hawthorne's sister Elizabeth observed the same tendency in her brother: "'A great conflagration,' Elizabeth recalled, 'attracted him in a peculiar manner.' Whenever the alarms sounded, she said, Hawthorne was sure to be found at the scene, 'looking on, from some dark corner, while the fire was raging'" (46). Mellow therefore concludes that "The final episode of 'The Devil in Manuscript'—the gaping crowds, the alarms, the tolling of steeple bells, the bursts of flame and smoke, the showers of sparks against a black and wintry sky—were not simply the dark imaginings of the author; they had the force of experience" (46). Despite Hawthorne's apparent fascination with fire, he must have had mixed feelings about the Marsh and Capen bookstore fire that destroyed most of the remaindered copies of *Fanshawe* (1828), his first—and least successful—novel, which he had, as Mellow notes, published anonymously and at his own cost (41).

To suggest a broader historical context for the author's interest in fire, I would stress that during his lifetime, Hawthorne saw the fireplace of his youth permanently replaced by enclosed iron stoves. In her insightful study *From Fireplace to Cookstove: Technology and the Domestic Ideal in America* (2000), Priscilla Brewer analyzes the historical and social significance of the domestic fire in the nineteenth-century household. Brewer considers Hawthorne's "Fire-Worship" (1843) one of the primary statements of nostalgia for the open fire during the early decades of the 1800s, when it was being rapidly replaced in New England homes with more efficient air-tight cooking stoves. As Brewer points out, however, Hawthorne was not alone among literary men in preferring the hearth to the stove (103). The first example Brewer offers is "Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl" (1866), a poem in which John Greenleaf Whittier fondly recalls sitting around a fire with his family telling stories during a snow-storm that took place when he was a child. Whittier describes how the fire creates a haven from the storm: "What matter how the north-wind raved?/ Blow high, blow low, not all its snow/ Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow" (lines 176-78).

Brewer also discusses the end of the "Housewarming" section of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), in which the author reports that, during his second winter at Walden, he adopted for the sake of economy "a small cooking stove" that rendered cooking "no longer a poetic, but merely a chemic process." Thoreau further objects that "The stove not only took up room and scented the house, but it concealed the fire, and I felt as if I had lost a companion" (498). I would add that, when erecting his cabin the previous year, Thoreau took extra time building his fireplace since he considered it "the most vital part of the house" (486). He insists, "I . . . first began to inhabit my house . . . when I began to use it for warmth as well as shelter" (487), thus underscoring the importance of the hearth in the creation of a home. Thoreau also relates that he often left a fire

burning when he went for walks. He claims: “It was as if I had left a cheerful housekeeper behind. It was I and Fire that lived there; and commonly my housekeeper proved trustworthy” (497). Thoreau closes the “Housewarming” chapter with an excerpt from Ellen Sturgis Hooper’s poem “The Wood-Fire”:

Never, bright flame, may be denied to me
 Thy dear, life-imaging, close sympathy.
 What but my hopes shot upward e’er so bright?
 What but my fortunes sunk so low in night?
 Why art thou banished from our hearth and hall,
 Thou who art welcomed and beloved by all?
 Was thy existence then too fanciful
 For our life’s common light, who are so dull?
 Did thy bright gleam mysterious converse hold
 With our congenial souls? secrets too bold?
 Well, we are safe and strong, for now we sit
 Beside a hearth where no dim shadows flit,
 Where nothing cheers nor saddens, but a fire
 Warms feet and hands—nor does to more aspire;
 By whose compact, utilitarian heap
 The present may sit down and go to sleep,
 Nor fear the ghosts who from the dim past walked,
 And with us by the unequal light of the old wood-fire talked. (499)¹⁶

Hooper's verse, with its sentimental tone, serves as a fitting conclusion to Thoreau's lament for the open fire's replacement by the unpoetic stove.

More perhaps than any other of Hawthorne's literary contemporaries, Thoreau and Melville acknowledged the spiritual significance of fire. In addition to quoting at length from Hooper's "The Wood-Fire," Thoreau interjects into the "Housewarming" chapter of *Walden* a poem of his own, in which he meditates upon fire's religious implications:

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,
 Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
 Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
 Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
 Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
 Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;
 By night star-veiling, and by day
 Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
 Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
 And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame. (497)

Thoreau's poem not only links fire with myth, but also indicates an understanding of the sacred quality of fire, smoke, and incense. Therefore, it seems natural that Thoreau refers to the yearly fire festivals during which the Mucclasse Indians purge their towns of filth and evil as customs that "might, perchance, be profitably imitated by us" (322), and to Zoroaster, the founder of the Parsee religion, as a "wise [man], [who] knew [religion] to be universal, and treated his neighbors accordingly, and is even said to have invented and established worship among men" (360-61).

Melville, who drew heavily upon Zoroastrianism in *Moby-Dick*—even going so far as to include a practicing Parsee, Fedallah, in Ahab’s hand-picked crew, and to have Ahab worship the St. Elmo’s fire in “The Candles” chapter¹⁷—also produced a curious sketch called “I and My Chimney” (1856) in which he chronicles his narrator’s ongoing struggle to protect his 144-square-foot chimney from the collective scheming of his wife and daughters, who want to demolish the chimney in order to make way for a “grand entrance-hall.” Though the tone of the sketch is somewhat tongue-in-cheek and the language hyperbolic, Melville is largely serious in recognizing both the secular and sacred authority of the chimney in the household. In fact, the chimney reminds him of the Great Pyramids of Egypt. When he has the narrator say to the gentleman contracted to tear down the structure, “I look upon this chimney less as a pile of masonry than as a personage. It is the king of the house. I am but a suffered and inferior subject” (1304), Melville affirms the centrality of the fireside in the nineteenth-century home. Likewise, by calling the chimney “stately” and designating it a “grand high altar . . . right worthy for the celebration of high mass before the Pope of Rome, and all his cardinals” (1305), he echoes the position he took in “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850) when he praised Hawthorne’s glorification of the hearth into an altar in “Fire-Worship” (1843). Tellingly, Melville judged the title “Fire-Worship” alone to be “better than any common work in fifty folio volumes” (1156). In his introduction to *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard explains that one of the aims of his study is to “establish the secret persistence of this idolatry of fire” (4). Certainly, both Hawthorne’s “Fire-Worship” and Melville’s “I and My Chimney” are emblematic of this instinct.

If Hawthorne shared with many of his contemporaries a nostalgic affection—indeed, a reverence—for the domestic hearth, he felt quite differently about the forge, the steam

locomotive, and the steam boat, all of which he associated with increasing industrialization. Consequently, Robert Danforth, the blacksmith who steals Annie away from Owen Warland in “The Artist of the Beautiful,” is portrayed as a hard, practical man who must be “attempered by [the] domestic influences” of his household fire (X: 468). He stands in opposition to Owen’s delicate, artistic nature and love of the Beautiful. If Danforth has the sympathy of Annie’s father, the coldly pragmatic Peter Hovenden, he does not have Hawthorne’s. Even though Hawthorne is willing to poke fun at Owen, he still considers his artistic endeavors more worthwhile than Danforth’s work in iron. Perhaps the most telling affinity between Hawthorne and Owen Warland surfaces in Owen’s reaction to seeing a steam-locomotive: “he turned pale, and grew sick, as if something monstrous and unnatural had been presented to him” (450). Like locomotives, steamboats became a necessary part of nineteenth-century travel, but they were dangerous, as Hawthorne well knew. On August 12, 1823, a young Hawthorne wrote in a letter to his uncle Robert Manning: “I have heard that there is a Steam boat which runs twice a week between Portland and Boston. If this is the case, I should like to come home by that way if Mother has no apprehensions of the boiler’s bursting” (XV: 179). Indeed, this letter turned out to be prophetic of the way in which his sister Louisa would die in 1852.

Elemental Philosophy and Psychology: The Creation of a Literary Legacy

While commenting on Bachelard’s *The Flame of a Candle*, Joanne H. Stroud discusses the relationship between elemental matter and psychology, insisting: “Matter sparks inner images which in turn imbue matter with memory and values. An ever renewing reciprocity of reverberations between inner and outer qualities obliterates any absolute separation between objective and subjective experience” (Stroud vii). Thus, following Stroud’s theory, Hawthorne’s

external experiences with the elements of fire and water during his lifetime will necessarily influence his inner perceptions and thought processes. Water figured into Hawthorne's exposure to death even in early childhood: at age four, he had lost his father, Captain Nathaniel Hawthorne, who contracted yellow fever off the coast of Surinam and was buried on foreign soil. During the author's youth, a maternal uncle, John Manning, had likewise gone to sea and never returned—he enlisted as a sailor during the War of 1812, was never heard from after the following year, and was never officially declared dead (Erlich 41). In *Family Themes and Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web*, Gloria Erlich speculates: "This mysterious disappearance of a sailor resonated in the boy's mind to the failure of his own father to return from a voyage. The grandmother's faith in her son's return probably encouraged a similar hope and fear in Nathaniel, who often meditated on the horror of unconfirmed deaths" (41). At any rate, the deaths of his father and uncle clearly traumatized Hawthorne, who, as a young boy, was often known to quote from *Richard III*, declaiming, "Stand back, my lord, and let the coffin pass!" (Mellow 17).

Specifically, he had reason to associate water with death, and this fear may have been reinforced by his mother, who having lost a husband and a brother at sea, forbade Nathaniel to go to sea or even to learn how to swim (Erlich 63-64). Hawthorne did defy his mother and learn how to swim (Erlich 64), but, significantly, he did not follow the family tradition of going before the mast. The specter of death by water would continue to haunt him, however. During midlife, Hawthorne would be touched by three drowning deaths—twenty-year-old schoolteacher Martha Hunt, a suicide whose body Hawthorne assisted in recovering in 1845; the feminist Margaret Fuller, a former Concord neighbor, who perished along with her husband and child in 1850; and his sister Louisa in 1852.

It is easy to understand how someone such as Hawthorne who, on a deep psychological level, associated water with death might come to associate its opposite, fire, with life. Indeed, connecting fire with life is hardly an illogical position. In *Walden*, Thoreau, who lists fuel as one of the four “necessaries of life,” remarks upon “the present necessity to sit by [the fire],” saying:

According to Liebig, man’s body is a stove, and food the fuel which keeps up the internal combustion in the lungs The animal heat is the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out It appears, therefore, . . . that the expression, *animal life*, is nearly synonymous with the expression, *animal heat* The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us. (268-69)

Likewise, in his preface to Bachelard’s first book of elemental philosophy and psychology, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Northrop Frye asserts that fire evokes images of human vitality: “To the imagination, fire is not a separable datum of experience: it is . . . linked by analogy and identity with a dozen other aspects of experience. Its heat is analogous to the internal heat we feel as warm-blooded animals; its sparks are analogous to seeds, the units of life; its flickering movement is analogous to vitality . . .” (vi).

Despite the reasonable nature of these arguments, perhaps the most basic reason that Hawthorne clung to the image of fire was not logical at all, but rooted instead in his uncontrollable emotional responses to death. Hawthorne makes clear his distaste for Time and human mortality in an uncollected 1838 sketch entitled “Time’s Portraiture,” in which he insists:

Time is not immortal. Time must die, and be buried in the deep grave of eternity. And let him die! From the hour when he passed forth through the gate of Eden, till this very

moment, he has gone to and fro about the earth staining his hands with blood, committing crimes innumerable, and bringing misery on himself and all mankind. (XI: 336)

In a letter to Sophia composed the following year, Hawthorne offers another telling confession:

“I have never been called to minister at the dying bed of a dear friend; but I have often thought, that, in such a scene, I should need support from the dying, instead of being able to give it” (XV: 368). Indeed, he found himself in just such a situation at his dying mother’s bedside in 1849. He describes the poignant scene in his July 29 entry in *The American Notebooks*:

I did not expect to be much moved at the time . . . not to feel any overpowering emotion struggling, just then—though I knew that I should deeply remember and regret her . . .

Louisa pointed to a chair near the bed; but I was moved to kneel down close by my mother, and take her hand. She knew me, but could only murmur a few indistinct words—among which I understood an injunction to take care of my sisters . . . and then I found the tears slowly gathering in my eyes. I tried to keep them down; but it would not be—I kept filling up, till, for a few moments, I shook with sobs. For a long time, I knelt there, holding her hand; and surely it is the darkest hour I ever lived. (VIII: 429)

In the face of death, the author found himself almost inconsolable.

Doubtless, Hawthorne’s death anxiety derives not only from such traumatic losses, but also from the fact that he had come to associate aging with physical decrepitude as well as a waning of artistic powers. After a brief separation from Sophia in 1841, Hawthorne writes teasingly to her: “Wilt thou know thy husband’s face, when we meet again? Art thou much changed by the flight of years, my poor little wife? Is thy hair turned gray? Doest thou wear a day-cap, as well as a night cap? How long since didst thou begin to use spectacles?” (XV: 512). He goes on to describe his own condition as follows: “As for thy husband, he is grown quite bald

and gray, and has very deep wrinkles across his brow, and crowsfeet and furrows all over his face. His eyesight fails him, so that he can only read the largest print in the broadest daylight . . .” (512). Although Hawthorne was capable of jesting about the effects of age while in his thirties, he was far less so by his mid-forties. Thus, in June of 1848, Hawthorne mournfully announces in a letter to his old friend Longfellow, “Ten years more will go near to make us venerable men; and I doubt whether it will be so pleasant to meet, when each friend shall be a memento of decay to the other” (XVI: 225). Of course, Hawthorne also feared the prospect of someday losing the ability to write well. Having been asked in 1852 to contribute to the newly founded *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine*, an effort that garnered his personal skepticism, Hawthorne wrote to G. W. Curtis, one of the magazine’s editors: “Heaven . . . give all manner of success to the Magazine; but in that case, it must be effected by new talent, and not by such stumpy and rheumatic pens as mine. I counsel you, therefore, to seek the aid of young men, or young women” (XVI: 613).

Hawthorne would, in fact, rejuvenate himself as a man and as a writer by developing what Bachelard calls a “poetics of fire.” In commenting on fire’s multivalent resonances, Bachelard notes: “[Fire] is a pleasure for the *good* child sitting prudently by the hearth; yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well-being and it is respect. It is a tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad” (*Psychoanalysis* 7). In his posthumously published work on fire, *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*, Bachelard goes on to assert:

The Empedoclean philosopher’s great lesson, it seems, was to have pointed out the intimate, tenacious union between hatred and love. Empedocles was precursor to the philosophy of ambivalence. He inscribed love and hatred in the very mechanism of the

Universe. How could this same ambivalence not be present in the human heart? And how then could it not be found at the heart of that dynamic super-element, fire. Fire is benevolent and cruel. It is a god, truly. (113)

Fire, then, is both “tutelary” and “terrible,” “good” and bad,” “benevolent and cruel,” and I would argue that fire is a particularly fitting image for Hawthorne to adopt because the polyvalent symbolism, or deeply-rooted ambiguity, that Bachelard attributes to fire will become one of the distinguishing features and greatest strengths of Hawthorne’s writing.

Recalling the lack of “separation between objective and subjective experience” hypothesized by Stroud, it is easy to imagine why Hawthorne not only thought about fire, but also dreamed about it. In a May 26, 1839, letter to Sophia, Hawthorne speaks of a dream he had in which fire figured as a central image:

I dreamed that I had been sleeping a whole year in the open air; and that while I slept, the grass grew around me. It seemed . . . that the very bed-clothes which actually covered me were spread beneath me, and when I awoke (in my dream) I snatched them up, and the earth under them looked black, as if it had been burnt—one square place, exactly the size of the bed clothes. Yet there was grass and herbage scattered over this burnt space, looking as fresh, and bright, and dewy, as if the summer rain and the summer sun had been cherishing them all the time. (XV: 317-18)

He then enjoins Sophia to interpret the dream for him, saying: “What is signified by my nap of a whole year? (it made me grieve to think that I had lost so much of eternity)—and what was the fire that blasted the spot of earth which I occupied, while the grass flourished all around?—and what comfort am I to draw from the fresh herbage amid the burnt space?” (318). Bachelard would say that Hawthorne was “dreaming upon the conflagration of the Phoenix” (*Fragments*

39). Anxious about his own mortality, “grieving . . . that [he] had lost so much of eternity,”

Hawthorne dreamt about new growth emerging from the heart of the fire. The type of renewal or resurrection, the phoenix is the poetic image *par excellence* because it symbolizes an enduring literary legacy, a “rebirth” as each generation of readers and critics comes to the author’s work. Hawthorne looked to fire as a source of inspiration, an invitation to poetic reverie, a means of inflaming the imaginations of his audience—for, as Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in “The Poet” (1844), “[W]e are not pans and barrows, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers, but children of the fire . . .” (223).

CHAPTER 2

“COOKERY” AND “APOCALYPSE”: FIRE’S MULTIVALENT SYMBOLISM

In an 1836 sketch entitled “Fire Worshippers,” Hawthorne writes: “There is, in truth, nothing that can be seen or felt, which combines so many symbolic attributes of splendor, terror, and beneficence, as fire” (494). The disparate terms “splendor,” “terror,” and “beneficence” indicate that Hawthorne sees in fire the same multivalent symbolism that intrigued Gaston Bachelard. In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard asserts: “Among all phenomena, it [fire] is really the only one to which there can be so definitely attributed the opposing values of good and evil. It shines in Paradise. It burns in Hell. It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and it is apocalypse It can contradict itself; thus it is one of the principles of universal explanation” (7). Based on Bachelard’s observations about fire, I would like to suggest that Hawthorne’s recurrent use of fire symbolism in his fiction represents a conscious exploration of an ambiguous symbol admirably suited to his literary aesthetic. As Sacvan Bercovitch insists, “No critical term is more firmly associated with *The Scarlet Letter* than ambiguity” (*Office* 18). Bercovitch goes on to say:

[V]irtually every scene in the novel is symbolic, virtually every symbol demands interpretation, and virtually every interpretation takes the form of a question that opens out into a variety of possible answers, none of them entirely wrong, and none in itself satisfactory It is a strategy of pluralism—issuing, on the reader’s part, in a mystifying sense of multiplicity—through which each set of questions and answers is turned toward the same solution: all meanings are partly true; hence interpreters must

choose as many parts as possible of the truth, and/or as many truths as they can possibly find in the symbol. (*Office* 19)

I will contend, then, that Hawthorne embraced fire as symbol because, like the scarlet letter—which may stand for “Adulteress,” “Able,” or “Angel,” as suggested by the text, or for “Arthur [Dimmesdale]” or “Adversity,” as suggested by Bercovitch (“A-Politics” 631)—it conveys many meanings at once. It is important to note, however, that what Bercovitch has called Hawthorne’s “virtuoso performance of ‘multiple choice’” (“A-Politics” 638) extends beyond *The Scarlet Letter* to encompass much of his other work.¹⁸ Indeed, the polyvalent symbolism of fire as cookery and apocalypse is central to works as diverse as “Fire-Worship,” “Main-Street,” and *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Domestic Fire: The “Comforting Warmth of the Hearth”

As Bachelard’s term “cookery” suggests, fire often evokes notions of hearth and home. For Hawthorne, fire did indeed connote domestic bliss, as evidenced by the letters he wrote to his betrothed, Sophia Peabody, during their long engagement. For example, on September 6, 1839, Hawthorne writes to Sophia: “It seems to me that it is our guardian-angel, who kneels at the footstool of God, and is pointing to us upon earth, and asking earthly and heavenly blessings for us—entreating that we may not be much longer divided—that we may sit by our own fireside” (XV: 344). On December 1 of the same year, he admits: “My evenings are very precious to me . . . I have no other time to sit in my parlor (let me call it ours) and be happy by our own fireside—happy in reveries about a certain little wife of mine . . .” (380). Finally, he writes to her on December 18, saying:

I wish you could see our parlour to night—how bright and cheerful it looks, with the blaze of the coal-fire throwing a ruddy tinge over the walls But the soul of home is wanting now. Oh . . . why are you not here to welcome your husband with a kiss, and a pressure in your arms against your warm bosom, when he comes in at eventide, chilled with his wintry day's toil? Why does he not find the table placed cosily in front of the fire, and a cup of tea steaming fragrantly—or else a bowl of warm bread and milk . . . ? A much-to-be-pitied husband am I, naughty wife—a homeless man—a wanderer in the desert of this great city; picking up a precarious subsistence wherever I happen to find a restaurateur or an oyster-shop—and returning at night to a lonely fireside and a lonely pillow. (387)

In these passages, Hawthorne reveals that he associates the hearth with domestic happiness; he believes that when he and Sophia are married, they will sit together by a common fireside—where she will brew tea and prepare meals for him—and they will enjoy each other's company. For Hawthorne, the hearth is the center of the home.

Not surprisingly, the author goes on to discuss fire's domestic resonances in his tales and sketches. In "The Ambitious Guest" (1835), for example, the hearth serves as the focal point for the family circle. The tale begins: "One September night, a family had gathered round their hearth, and piled it high with the driftwood of mountain-streams, the dry cones of the pine, and the splintered ruins of great trees, that had come crashing down the precipice" (IX: 324). Even though their home is precariously placed in a notch of the White Mountains where avalanches are common, the family members feel safe because they are gathered around the comforting warmth of the fire. As the narrator relates, "The faces of the father and mother had a sober gladness; the children laughed; the eldest daughter was the image of Happiness at seventeen; and

the aged grandmother, who sat knitting in the warmest place, was the image of Happiness grown old” (324). The fire attracts a traveler, who, though he had planned to go a greater distance, decides to stop, saying: “[W]hen I saw this good fire, and all your cheerful faces, I felt as if you had kindled it on purpose for me, and were waiting my arrival. So I shall sit down among you, and make myself at home” (326). As he warms his benumbed limbs, exclaiming, “[T]his fire is the right thing!” the young stranger reveals his secret—a “high and abstracted ambition,” which leads him to seek fame and leave behind some monument to his own greatness. The daughter, however, warns against such exploits, insisting that “It is better to sit here, by this fire . . . and be comfortable and contented, though nobody thinks about us” (328). The fact that the stranger ignores the daughter’s advice to prefer the comforts of a hearth fire to the accolades of worldly achievement prefigures the tale’s ironic ending. When an avalanche begins, the family—who have been steadily drawn into the visitor’s fancy—and the stranger abandon the fireside for an emergency shelter outside; the slide engulfs everything on the mountain *except* the house, ending the stranger’s hope of worldly recognition. The home, including “the fire [that] was yet smouldering on the hearth, and the chairs in a circle round it” (333), remains untouched as a lesson to those who would sacrifice domestic bliss for the sake of fame.

Hawthorne likewise comments upon fire’s domestic connotations in “Roger Malvin’s Burial” (1832). Having been injured in a 1725 frontier skirmish known as “Lovell’s Fight,” the title character, accompanied only by his future son-in-law Reuben Bourne, knows that he faces certain death in the wilderness. Under these circumstances, he despairs of ever reaching his home, saying: “There is many and many a long mile of howling wilderness before us yet; nor would it avail me anything, if the smoke of my own chimney were but on the other side of that swell of land. The Indian bullet was deadlier than I thought” (X: 339). Here, the “smoke of [his]

own chimney” clearly represents for Malvin a picture of domestic comfort he will never again experience. In an attempt to persuade Reuben to save himself, though it means leaving Malvin to die alone, the older man salves Reuben’s conscience by insisting: “[P]arties will be out to succour those in like condition with ourselves. Should you meet one of these, and guide them hither, who can tell but that I may sit by my own fireside again?” (342). This false hope of restoring Malvin to his fireside pales, however, in comparison to Reuben’s own desire for homely comfort and the love of Malvin’s daughter, Dorcas. Although his desire for domestic happiness with Dorcas leads Reuben away from the dying Malvin, his refusal to return and bury Malvin’s bones ironically spoils the domestic bliss he might otherwise have enjoyed.

Although fire in this tale is clearly linked with the joys of home, “Roger Malvin’s Burial” also makes the point that “Home is where the hearth is.” After eighteen years, with the Malvin farm in ruins due to Reuben’s neglect, the guilt-ridden man is reduced to the necessity of setting forth into the wilderness with his wife and fifteen-year-old son to live off the land. Dorcas, however, uses fire to create a home wherever the family may wander. On the fifth day, after the family have “reared their hut, and kindled their fire,” Dorcas cooks a meal for them over this “fire of fallen branches” (354). As she continues her dinner preparations, the narrator comments:

It had a strange aspect—that one little spot of homely comfort, in the desolate heart of Nature. The sunshine yet lingered upon the higher branches of the trees that grew on rising ground; but the shades of evening had deepened into the hollow, where the encampment was made; and the fire-light began to redden as it gleamed up the tall trunks of the pines, or hovered on the dense and obscure mass of foliage, that circled round the spot. The heart of Dorcas was not sad; for she felt that it was better to journey in the

wilderness, with two whom she loved, than to be a lonely woman in a crowd that cared not for her. (357)

Dorcas can hardly be lonely in the home that she has created through the maintenance of a hearth fire, so she begins to sing a song celebrating domestic happiness. The lyrics describe “a winter evening in a frontier-cottage, when, secured from savage inroad by the high-piled snow-drifts, the family rejoiced by their own fireside.” In the refrain, which “shone out from the rest, like the blaze of the hearth whose joys they celebrated,” the songwriter “instilled the very essence of domestic love and household happiness” (358). The home-like tranquility that Dorcas has achieved through a hearth fire, cookery, and song is soon shattered by the sound of a gunshot. The narrator relates that “either the sudden sound, or her loneliness by the glowing fire, caused her to tremble violently” (358). Her unforeseen loneliness by the very fire that she had used to create a home for her family in the wilderness prefigures the interruption of domestic bliss that comprises the tale’s grim ending: mistaking him for a deer, Reuben shoots and kills his son upon the same spot where Malvin perished eighteen years ago.

Hawthorne employs fire imagery in “Roger’s Malvin’s Burial,” as in “The Ambitious Guest,” to emphasize the domestic joys that the title character forfeited—in this case, by refusing to fulfill his vow to a dying man. The fire symbolism in “Roger Malvin’s Burial” also directs attention toward Dorcas, a figure whom scholars have largely ignored. Although many critics recognize the pathos of the image of Roger Malvin dying alone in the wilderness, few have noted the plight of Dorcas.¹⁹ Despite the fact that Dorcas exerts great effort to establish a home in the wilderness, she loses both her father and her son, becomes a reproach to a husband who neglects her, and ultimately, is destined to occupy a lonely fireside.

Like “The Ambitious Guest” and “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” “Wakefield” (1835) contains fire imagery that focuses on cookery, or domesticity. However, a shift in point of view occurs, since the first two stories provide an insider’s view of the fireside circle, while the latter tale offers an outsider’s perspective on the domestic hearth fire. In “Wakefield,” the title character’s exclusion from the fireside circle, although self-imposed, becomes a symbol of his status as an outsider. “Wakefield” is the story of a man who “under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years” (IX: 130). This self-exile, which began on a whim as a sort of joke to be played on his wife, extended well beyond the length originally intended, until Wakefield found it impossible to go home, even had he wanted to do so. Significantly, the sight of an appealing hearth fire is what eventually convinces him to return to his wife. The narrator describes Wakefield’s observation of his wife through the window:

It is a gusty night of autumn, with frequent showers Pausing near the house, Wakefield discerns, through the parlor-windows of the second floor, the red glow, and the glimmer and fitful flash, of a comfortable fire. On the ceiling, appears a grotesque shadow of good Mrs. Wakefield. The cap, the nose and chin, and the broad waist, form an admirable caricature, which dances, moreover, with the up-flickering and down-sinking blaze, almost too merrily for the shade of an elderly widow. At this instant, a shower chances to fall, and is driven, by the unmannerly gust, full into Wakefield’s face and bosom Shall he stand, wet and shivering here, when his own hearth has a good fire to warm him, and his own wife will run to fetch the gray coat and small-clothes, which, doubtless, she has kept carefully in the closet of their bed-chamber? No!

Wakefield is no such fool. He ascends the steps—heavily!—for twenty years have stiffened his legs, since he came down—but he knows it not. (139)

Although powerfully drawn to the promise of domestic happiness represented by the hearth fire, Wakefield will find no warm welcome within his former home. The fact that he stares at the fire from the outside of the house is emblematic of his willfully imposed outsider status. Twenty years have passed, and, as Hawthorne subtly suggests through his description of the fire, Wakefield's widow is a merry one. Accordingly, the narrator comments that during his long absence, Wakefield was, figuratively speaking, "always beside his wife, and at his hearth, yet must never feel the warmth of the one, nor the affection of the other" (138). Thus, by voluntarily abandoning his own hearth, Wakefield becomes "The Outcast of the Universe."

Demonic Fire: The "Damnation of Hellfire" and the Final Conflagration

Despite his praise of fire's homely attributes, Hawthorne does not forget that fire can represent—to use Bachelard's terms—"apocalypse" as well as "cooking." As his letters attest, the author associated fire not only with domesticity, but also with wrath, vengeance, and the flames of hell. In a letter to Longfellow, written on June 5, 1849, in the midst of the political upheaval that would end in Hawthorne's removal from the Salem Custom House, he writes: "I must confess, it stirs up a little of the devil within me, to find myself hunted by these political bloodhounds. If they succeed in getting me out of office, I will surely immolate one or two of them" (XVI: 269). The author's expressed desire to "immolate" his political enemies is ultimately satisfied with the publication of "The Custom House" preface to *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), in which he brutally satirizes Custom House officials and those who supported his removal. In his correspondence with lifelong friend Horatio Bridge, Hawthorne famously

describes *The Scarlet Letter* itself as “positively a hell-fired story, into which I found it almost impossible to throw any cheering light” (312). If Hawthorne’s private correspondence burns with the flames of vengeance, then *The Scarlet Letter* blazes with the fires of hell.

Hawthorne’s treatment of fire’s demonic resonances is not, however, limited to *The Scarlet Letter*; his fascination with apocalyptic fire begins with one of his earliest tales—“My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1832). The first paragraph of the story delineates its revolutionary setting. The people of Massachusetts Bay Colony had become dissatisfied with the royally appointed governors sent to rule them. Since they “looked with most jealous scrutiny to the exercise of power, which did not emanate from themselves,” they had opposed all governors following “the surrender of the old charter, under James II” (XI: 208). According to historians, two of those six governors “were imprisoned by a popular insurrection,” another “was driven from the province by the whizzing of a musket ball,” and yet another “was hastened to his grave by continual bickerings with the House of Representatives” (208). Into this climate of political unrest comes eighteen-year-old Robin, a naïve country boy seeking preferment from his relative, Major Molineux, who occupies a position of power in the provincial government. After suffering numerous rebuffs from townspeople in answer to queries about his kinsman’s whereabouts, a frustrated Robin at last threatens a passerby with violence if the man refuses to direct him to the Major’s dwelling. Having told Robin, “Watch here an hour, and Major Molineux will pass by,” the stranger unmuffles his face, revealing a shockingly painted countenance: “One side of the face blazed of an intense red, while the other was black as midnight . . . and [the] mouth, which seemed to extend from ear to ear, was black or red, in contrast to the color of the cheek.” According to the narrator, “The effect was as if two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this

infernial visage” (220). At length, a procession approaches along the street with the man of the “particolored features” at its head. The narrator describes the scene using vivid war imagery:

Then a redder light disturbed the moonbeams, and a dense multitude of torches shone along the street, concealing by their glare whatever object they illuminated. The single horseman, clad in a military dress, and bearing a drawn sword, rode onward as the leader, and, by his fierce and variegated countenance, appeared like war personified; the red of one cheek was an emblem of fire and sword; the blackness of the other betokened the mourning which attends them. (227)

The meaning of the fire and color symbolism becomes apparent when a cart passes directly in front of Robin, bearing someone familiar to him: “There the torches blazed the brightest, there the moon shone out like day, and there, in tar-and-feathery dignity, sat his kinsman, Major Molineux!” (228). The discontent of the oppressed colonists has erupted in a procession designed to humble the provincial governor.

Hawthorne employs fire symbolism in the preceding descriptive passages in order to emphasize the colonists’ rage. The eyes of the procession’s leader glow “like fire in a cave,” burning with the flames of insurrection. His countenance unites a “fiend of fire,” symbolized by red, and a “fiend of darkness,” represented by black. This “infernial visage” blazes with the “intense red” of hellfire. However, red is the color not only of hellfire, but also of Mars, blood, and war. Thus, in the second description, the leader “appear[s] like war personified,” and the red seems to suggest “fire and sword,” while the black recalls “mourning.” “Fire and sword” are emblematic of the devastation that is commonplace in war, and “mourning” serves as a reminder that no revolution comes without cost. “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” then, burns with apocalyptic fires of wrath, destruction, and revolution.²⁰ Moreover, the final scene of

humiliation, illuminated by a torch light that is both dramatic and demonic, brings a sense of satisfaction to all the observers of the scene, including a young—if no longer naïve—boy from the country, who may yet “rise in the world, without the help of [his] kinsman, Major Molineux” (231).

Demonic fire also plays a central role in a second tale of initiation, “Young Goodman Brown” (1835). Indeed, fire holds a significant place in Brown’s family history. On the verge of yielding to the temptation to accompany his demonic companion to the witch meeting in the forest, Brown desperately clings to the fact that “My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him” (X: 77). The devil retorts: “I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans [I]t was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip’s war” (77). An ironic complement to the domestic hearth fires in stories such as “The Ambitious Guest,” the demonic fire kindled at the devil’s own hearth is linked to one of the sins committed by Brown’s ancestors. Predictably, Brown relents in the face of all the evidence presented by his tempter; he takes his companion’s staff and hastens toward the meeting, arriving—appropriately enough—just at midnight. The narrator describes the scene:

At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage, that had overgrown the summit of the rock, was all on fire, blazing high into the night, and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow (84)²¹

In this passage, fire lends a demonic atmosphere to the forest gathering. The “four blazing pines,” which are configured as candles around an altar, emphasize the fact that this meeting represents an inversion or corruption of a traditional religious service. Fire likewise serves to heighten the dramatic effect of the scene. For example, when the celebrant steps forth to conduct the service of baptism and communion, the blazing fires function as a type of stage lighting that draws attention to his entrance: “The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke-wreaths, above the impious assembly. At the same moment, the fire on the rock shot redly forth, and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure” (86). At the figure’s command, Young Goodman Brown and his wife, Faith, are separately dragged toward the altar, where they recognize each other “by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches,” and are left “trembling before that unhallowed altar” (87). When the moment of baptism approaches, and the “Shape of Evil” dips his hand into the basin, the narrator asks: “Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame?” (88). The narrator’s speculation links fire to the revelation of the “mystery of sin” through the ritual of baptism, and further conveys a reminder of the punishment for sin—eternal torment among the flames of hell.

Demonic fire imagery remains central not only to “Young Goodman Brown,” but also to “The Celestial Railroad” (1843) and “Feathertop” (1852). “The Celestial Railroad” and “Feathertop” are both satirical pieces, with the former targeting the evils of technology, and the latter the manners of the aristocracy.²² The stories share not only the satiric mode, but also the theme of appearance versus reality; in both tales, fire symbolism assists the reader in discerning the truth of the situation. For example, the narrator of “The Celestial Railroad,” while on his dream journey from the city of Destruction to the Celestial City, encounters many demonic

figures who are identified as such by their association with hellfire. Having decided to travel to the Celestial City by railroad, a progressive route that has obviated the need for traveling on foot like Bunyan's pilgrim, the narrator becomes acquainted with Mr. Smooth-it-away, a gentleman sharing his coach. In talking with Mr. Smooth-it-away, the narrator learns that Prince Beelzebub's subjects occupy many positions with the railroad, some being "employed about the Station House, some in taking care of the baggage, others in collecting fuel, [and] feeding the engines" (X: 189). Another demon—Apollyon, with whom Christian battled in the Valley of Humiliation—serves as the conductor of the train. The narrator's depiction of the train and conductor reveals a similitude between the two:

The engine . . . took its station in advance of the cars, looking . . . much more like a sort of mechanical demon, that would hurry us to the infernal regions, than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. On its top sat a personage almost enveloped in smoke and flame, which . . . appeared to gush from his own mouth and stomach, as well as from the engine's brazen abdomen. (190)

The narrator further emphasizes the demonic nature of the railroad by calling the engine a "mechanical demon" and describing Apollyon as "brother to the engine he rides upon" (190). Fittingly, the fires of hell itself fuel the steam engine, and the malice of the conductor becomes evident when he encounters two pilgrims traveling to the Celestial City in the traditional manner: "Apollyon . . . contrived to flirt the smoke and flame of the engine, or of his own breath, into their faces, and enveloped them in an atmosphere of scalding steam" (191). The iron used to construct the train is likewise forged in Tophet, in a cavern where "the inhabitants . . . were unlovely personages, dark, smoke-begrimed, generally deformed, with misshapen feet, and a glow of dusky redness in their eyes; as if their hearts had caught fire, and were blazing out of the

upper windows” (195). In addition to stopping at this cavern, the train passes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where so-called modern “improvements” include a system of gas lighting to “dispel the everlasting gloom”: “For this purpose, the inflammable gas, which exudes plentifully from the soil, is collected by means of pipes, and thence communicated to a quadruple row of lamps, along the whole extent of the passage. Thus a radiance has been created, even out of the fiery and sulphurous curse that rests forever upon the Valley . . .” (193-94). Clearly, the “fiery and sulphurous curse” refers to hell, and the demonic fire imagery in the foregoing passages reveals that this journey represents a devil’s errand, a fact which does not become apparent to the naïve narrator until his friend, Mr. Smooth-it-away, who has provided assurances at every stage of the journey, combusts before his very eyes. As the narrator boards a steam ferry-boat—portrayed in much the same manner as the steam engine—at Mr. Smooth-it-away’s behest, he realizes that he has been betrayed by his acquaintance who remains on shore: “And then did my excellent friend, Mr. Smooth-it-away, laugh outright; in the midst of which cachinnation, a smoke-wreath issued from his mouth and nostrils; while a twinkle of lurid flame darted out of either eye, proving indubitably that his heart was all of a red blaze” (206). The narrator exclaims indignantly: “The impudent Fiend! To deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his breast!” (206). The capitalization of the word “Fiend,” as well as the characterization of Mr. Smooth-it-away as a liar and deceiver, suggest that, like Young Goodman Brown, the narrator was accompanied on his journey by the devil himself.

The purpose of the fire imagery Hawthorne employs in the “The Celestial Railroad” is three-fold: to illuminate the nature of the characters, to critique nineteenth-century notions of progress, and to point out the folly of attempting to take the easy way to heaven.²³ The hellfire that burns within the breasts of Apollyon, the blacksmiths of Tophet, and the railroad workers

betrays their allegiance to Prince Beelzebub and Mr. Smooth-it-away. Similarly, the hellfire that burns within the boilers of the steam engine and the steam ferry, along with the “mephitic gases” that provide gas lighting in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, reveal Hawthorne’s underlying attitude toward these types of technological advancement. Tellingly, what Mr. Smooth-it-away assures the narrator is progress is actually no progress at all, since the pilgrims who travel in the traditional way reach the Celestial City, while the narrator awakes “with a shiver and a heart-quake,” grateful that he has been dreaming, and will not have to cross the river of Death on the steam ferry.

Like Apollyon in “The Celestial Railroad,” the title character of “Feathertop” draws his life from hellfire. A creation of the great witch Mother Rigby, the animated scarecrow depends upon the smoke of a pipe to preserve the illusion of life. Significantly, the narrator reveals that the pipe was not lit at the hearth, for Mother Rigby had not kindled a fire that morning; rather, it was lit by a coal fetched by her demon familiar, Dickon. If Feathertop relies upon hellfire for his existence, he also depends upon good looks and a wardrobe that “betoken[s] nothing short of nobility”:

He wore a richly embroidered plum-colored coat, a waistcoat of costly velvet, magnificently adorned with golden foliage, a pair of splendid scarlet breeches, and the finest and glossiest of white silk stockings . . . he had lace ruffles at his wrists, of a most ethereal delicacy, sufficiently avouching how idle and aristocratic must be the hands which they half concealed. (X: 236-37)

Likewise equipped with a repertoire of polite phrases such as “Really! Indeed! Pray tell me! Is it possible! Upon my word! By no means! Oh! Ah! Hem!” (234), Feathertop sets out toward town to woo Polly Gookin at Mother Rigby’s request, with the star on the breast of his coat

blazing each time he puffs on his pipe. On occasion, this star “scintillate[s] actual flames, and thr[ows] a flickering gleam upon the wall, the ceiling, and the floor” (241). When the sight of himself in the mirror reveals to Feathertop what he really is—a heap of sticks and straw with a pumpkin for a head—he breaks off his pursuit of Polly, returns home to Mother Rigby, and ends his life by flinging his pipe “with all his might against the chimney” (245).

As in “The Celestial Railroad,” fire symbolism in “Feathertop” assists readers in separating truth from fiction, and in comprehending the object of satire. By pointing out that the hearth contained no fire when Mother Rigby lit her pipe, Hawthorne sets up a contrast between hearth fire and hellfire. Clearly, Feathertop owes his existence to the latter. Although Feathertop differs from the demons in “The Celestial Railroad” in that he has no desire to live once he has realized his origins, the star that blazes on his chest, a symbol of his social prominence, recalls the fire that burns in the eyes of Mr. Smooth-it-away. Like the character of Mr. Smooth-it-away, the star is linked with deception. Hence, in “Feathertop,” Hawthorne utilizes fire imagery to emphasize the theme that all that glitters is not gold. Moreover, as its association with hellfire had pointed to the author’s disapproval of the railroad in “The Celestial Railroad,” the link with demonic fire draws attention to Hawthorne’s satire of the aristocracy in “Feathertop.” Having falsely assured Feathertop at the moment of creation that “not one man in a hundred . . . was gifted with more real substance than [him]self,” Mother Rigby eulogizes him thus:

Poor fellow! . . . There are thousands upon thousands of coxcombs and charlatans in the world, made up of just such a jumble of worn-out, forgotten, and good-for-nothing trash, as he was! Yet they live in fair repute, and never see themselves for what they are! And why should my poor puppet be the only one to know himself, and perish for it? (245)

In spite of Mother Rigby's protest, Feathertop's realization is important because in seeing himself for "the wretched, ragged, empty thing I am" (245), he exposes the shallowness of those who privilege appearance and social graces over substance.

Fire as Polyvalent Symbol: A "Strategy of Pluralism"

Although the stories I have examined to this point all contain meaningful considerations of either domestic or demonic fire, Hawthorne's most interesting fire imagery appears in works such as "Fire-Worship," in which he explores the multivalent symbolism of his chosen image—its simultaneous association with both cookery *and* apocalypse. Written in 1843, and collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), "Fire-Worship" takes as its subject the "great revolution in social and domestic life" precipitated by "this almost universal exchange of the open fire-place for the cheerless and ungenial stove" (X: 138). A large portion of the introductory paragraph represents not mere description, but rather a substantive consideration of the four elements.

Hawthorne writes:

It is sad to turn from the clouded sky and somber landscape—from yonder hill, with its crown of rusty black pines, the foliage of which is so dismal in the absence of the sun; that bleak pasture-land, and the broken surface of the potato field, with the brown clods partly concealed by the snow-fall of last night; the swollen and sluggish river with ice-encrusted borders, dragging its blueish grey stream along the verge of our orchard, like a snake half torpid with the cold—it is sad to turn from an outward scene of so little comfort, and find the same sullen influences brooding within the precincts of my study. (138)

The author clearly sees the “clouded sky” (representing air), the “bleak pasture-land” and partially concealed “brown clods” (representing earth), and the “swollen and sluggish river with ice-encrusted borders” (representing water) as “sullen influences.” Hawthorne thus suggests that the three elements representing states of matter stand in opposition to the positive influence of fire, “that comfortable inmate, whose smile, during eight months of the year, was our sufficient consolation for summer’s lingering advance and early flight” (138-39).

The author argues that, beyond providing comfort and cheer, fire is domestically useful. Fire, of course, plays a central role in cooking the family’s meals. Hawthorne claims that although “He [the fire] was equal to the concoction of a grand dinner,” he generously “scorned not to roast a potato, or toast a bit of cheese” (140). Fire further assists the family by bringing the tea-kettle to a boil, lighting pipes, drying clothing, and “humanely” thawing either a “school-boy’s icy fingers” or an “old man’s joints.” The narrator exclaims, “With how sweet humility did this elemental spirit perform all needful offices for the household in which he was domesticated!” (140), noting in addition that fire—a “chimney-corner companion, who mingle[s] himself so sociably with household joys and sorrows” (144)—never refuses “even a part of his own substance to kindle a neighbor’s fire” (140).

The author confirms that fire is socially significant, because this “domestic fountain of gladsomeness” causes people to gather around its heat and warmth, allowing them an opportunity for pleasant conversation and quiet contemplation of their companions. Regarding the substitution of the stove for the hearth, he states, “It is my belief, that social intercourse cannot long continue what it has been, now that we have subtracted from it so important and vivifying an element as fire-light” (145). The author even implies that fire is itself social since he frequently personifies fire, using the term “companion” or the personal pronoun “he.” In

addition, Hawthorne maintains that a hearth fire exerts a moral influence essential to maintaining national and family unity, claiming that “While a man was true to the fireside, so long would he be true to country and law—to the God whom his fathers worshipped—to the wife of his youth—and to all things else which instinct or religion have taught us to consider sacred” (140). Accordingly, the author bitterly regrets the advent of the stove, a loss to both the old and the new generations:

We [of the hearth fire generation] shall draw our chairs together, as we and our forefathers have been wont, for thousands of years back, and sit around some blank and empty corner of the room, babbling, with unreal cheerfulness, of topics suitable to the homely fireside. A warmth from the past—from the ashes of by-gone years, and the raked-up embers of long ago—will sometimes thaw the ice about our hearts. But it must be otherwise with our successors. On the most favorable supposition, they will be acquainted with the fireside in no better shape than that of the sullen stove; and more probably, they will have grown up amid furnace-heat, in houses which might be fancied to have their foundation over the infernal pit, whence sulphurous steams and unbreathable exhalations ascend through the apertures of the floor. (146)

In other words, the replacement of the hearth may not only deprive his successors of the positive, domestic influence of the hearth fire, but may well expose them to the demonic influence of furnace-heat. Here, Hawthorne employs fire symbolism to support his own predilections: by associating the hearth with gentle, domestic fire and the furnace with polluting, demonic fire, he clearly indicates his preference for the hearth fire. He goes on to express his concern that “There will be nothing to attract these poor children to one centre. They will never behold one another through that peculiar medium of vision—the ruddy gleam of blazing wood or bituminous coal—

which gives the human spirit so deep an insight into its fellows, and melts all humanity into one cordial heart of hearts” (146). The author registers a warning that, if the hearth fire is replaced, “Domestic life—if it may still be termed domestic—will seek its separate corners, and never gather itself into groups” (146). Thus, the older generation will be left with nothing but pleasant memories of fireside interaction, and the younger will find itself entirely bereft of fire’s homely and moral influence.

Hawthorne is quick to acknowledge, however, that fire connotes not only cookery, but also, as Bachelard has pointed out, apocalypse. Hawthorne makes clear early in “Fire-Worship” that he believes fire should not only be appreciated for its household applications, but also for its “many-sided utility” in forging tools and in powering steam-boats and locomotives. While, at first, this “many-sided utility” seems a positive attribute, it becomes less so when one considers Hawthorne’s attitude toward steam locomotives in particular. In his July 27, 1844, entry in the *American Notebooks*—the same passage discussed by Leo Marx in the first chapter of *The Machine in the Garden* (1964)—Hawthorne writes of having a day of observation and reverie in a pleasant natural setting interrupted by the shriek of a train whistle:

But, hark! There is the whistle of the locomotive—the long shriek, harsh, above all other harshness, for the space of a mile cannot mollify it into harmony. It tells a story of busy men, citizens . . . who have come to spend a day in a country village; men of business; in short of all unquietness; and no wonder that it gives such a startling shriek, since it brings the noisy world into the midst of our slumberous peace. (VIII: 248-49)

For Hawthorne, the train remains opposed to nature and to peaceful, country life; it represents a change as serious and as regrettable as the exchange of the fireplace for the stove. It is no accident that in a second sketch from *Mosses*, he portrays the steam locomotive as a “mechanical

demon,” fed by hellfire, and conducted by Apollyon. Appropriately, then, Hawthorne places this discussion of fire’s “many-sided utility” in the same paragraph with more overtly apocalyptic comments regarding its “terrible might” and “all-comprehensive destructiveness.” He offers the volcanic eruptions of Mount Aetna and the flashes of lightning in a thunder-storm as examples of fire’s “terrible might”; he goes on to mention the great fires that “devoured London and Moscow” and the promised fire of the apocalypse as evidence of its “all-comprehensive destructiveness” (139-40). Hawthorne explores in this passage the notion of fire in combination with other elements: fire and earth in the case of the volcano, fire and air in the lightning, and fire and water in the steam engine. Significantly, when combined with fire, the elements of air and earth are infused with might and splendor, and the element of water with special utility. Thus, fire animates the other elements, granting them the power of destruction, whether of life or of a way of life.

Ironically, it is this very power of destruction, placed in juxtaposition with its pleasant domestic attributes, that endears fire to the author, who admits:

Nor did it lessen the charm of his soft, familiar courtesy and helpfulness, that the mighty spirit, were opportunity offered him, would run riot through the peaceful house, wrap its inmates in his terrible embrace, and leave nothing of them save their whitened bones.

This possibility of mad destruction only made his domestic kindness the more beautiful and touching. It was so sweet of him, being endowed with such power, to dwell, day after day, and one long, lonesome night after another, on the dusky hearth, only now and then betraying his wild nature, by thrusting his red tongue out of the chimney-top! True, he had done much mischief in the world, and was pretty certain to do more; but his warm heart atoned for all. (141)

After reading this passage, it becomes apparent that the author derives his pleasure from the *fusion* of fire's domestic and demonic aspects into a single element, from an appreciation of fire's ambiguous role in cookery and apocalypse.

Hawthorne further explores fire's association with both hearth and hell in a later sketch, "Main-Street," originally published in 1849 and collected in *The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales* (1851). In "Main-Street," Hawthorne chronicles a showman's depiction of the foundation of Hawthorne's native town of Salem, Massachusetts. The author initially focuses on the role of fire in creating a civilization out of the wilderness. Here, the fires of domesticity are turned to the purpose of *domesticating* the New World. For example, the showman describes the first Governor of the new settlement, John Endicott, as having a face that is "resolute, grave, and thoughtful, yet apt to kindle with that glow of cheerful spirit, by which men of strong character are enabled to go joyfully on their proper tasks" (XI: 55). Not long after the fires of determination "kindle" in Governor Endicott's face, the "Anglo-Saxon energy" brings about significant alterations in the landscape: "So many chimneys now send up their smoke, that it begins to have the aspect of a village street" (57). The smoke of domestic fires, then, represents the first sign of civilization. However, another type of fire also remains essential to the formation of a colony by these Puritan settlers: "the zeal of a recovered faith burned like a lamp within their hearts, enriching every thing around them with its radiance" (58). Appropriately, the settlers' worshipful sentiments are later described as ascending to heaven like the smoke of their hearth fires: "House after house awakes, and sends the smoke up curling from its chimney, like frosty breath from living nostrils; and as those white wreaths of smoke . . . climb skyward, so, from each dwelling, does the morning worship—its spiritual essence bearing up its human imperfection—find its way to the heavenly Father's throne" (65). Unfortunately, as time passes,

the spiritual zeal of the settlers also wanes. This change, too, is described using fire symbolism: “All was well, so long as their lamps were freshly kindled at the heavenly flame. After a while, however, . . . these lamps began to burn more dimly, or with a less genuine luster; and then it might be seen, how hard, cold, and confined, was their system,—how like an iron cage was that which they called Liberty!” (58). In other words, when their lamps no longer burn with “heavenly flame,” the settlers face grave danger arising from a lack of religious direction.

At this point in the sketch, Hawthorne shifts the focus of his imagery from hallowed and domestic fires to the fires of hell and the apocalypse in order to reflect this change, which Michael Davitt Bell has identified as a “decline” from the strength, integrity, and spirit of the first generation of Puritans.²⁴ In a similar vein, Hawthorne’s narrator claims that the older generation had bequeathed intact its “religious gloom” while transmitting only a “counterfeit of its religious ardor” (67). Indeed, the showman avers that the same chimneys that once carried the settlers’ prayers heavenward likewise have “flues so vast that it must have been easy for the witches to fly out of them, as they were wont to do, when bound on an aerial visit to the Black Man in the forest” (64). This depiction anticipates a central event in the town’s history—the Salem Witch Trials. As the showman recounts the events of 1692, he speaks of a famous participant in the procession to the gallows:

It is Martha Carrier, whom the devil found in a humble cottage, and looked into her discontented heart, and saw pride there, and tempted her with his promise that she should be Queen of Hell. And now, with that lofty demeanor, she is passing to her kingdom, and, by her unquenchable pride, transforms this escort of shame into a triumphal procession, that shall attend her to the gates of her infernal palace, and seat her upon the fiery throne. Within this hour, she shall assume her royal dignity. (75-76)

The “fiery throne” of Martha Carrier’s “infernal palace” stands in sharp contrast to the “heavenly flame” of the early colonists’ religious zeal; hallowed fire has given way to hellfire.

Likewise, the domestic fire symbolism of the first half of the sketch gives way to more apocalyptic associations, highlighting the fact that “The pavements of the Main-street must be laid over the red man’s grave” (55). The showman relates an early chapter in the natives’ displacement:

The red men have become aware, that the street is no longer free to them, save by the sufferance and permission of the settlers. Often, to impress them with an awe of English power, there is a muster and training of the town-forces, and a stately march of the mail-clad band, like this which we now see advancing up the street. There they come, fifty of them, or more; all with their iron breastplates and steel-caps well burnished, and glimmering bravely against the sun; their ponderous muskets on their shoulders, their bandaliers about their waists, their lighted matches in their hands, and the drum and fife playing cheerily before them. (59-60)

In this passage, the lighted matches—which would be used to light the muskets’ fuses—are part of a public display of bravado, indicating that the settlers are prepared to use force against the native people. However, they may not need to employ force, since fire in the form of “fire-water” may accomplish the task just as well.²⁵ The showman recounts the tragic tale of a descendant of the great Squaw Sachem, who once ruled the area and was recognized by the earliest settlers as a “sovereign potentate”: “There stand some school-boys . . . in a little group around a drunken Indian, himself a prince of the Squaw Sachem’s lineage. He brought hither some beaver-skins for sale, and has already swallowed the larger portion of their price, in deadly draughts of fire-water” (72). The performer goes on to ask: “Is there not a touch of pathos in that

picture? and does it not go far towards telling the whole story of the vast growth and prosperity of one race, and the fated decay of another?—the children of the stranger making game of the great Squaw Sachem's grandson!" (72). In the foregoing passages, Hawthorne uses fire symbolism to suggest subtly the causes for the impending decline of an entire race.

Having explored the contradictory symbolism of the hearth fire and hellfire, Hawthorne sets up a final contrast in the showman's depiction of the Great Snow of 1717. Despite the fact that this storm becomes "famous for the mountain-drifts in which it buried the whole country," hearth fires create a haven for the townspeople. The smoke that rises from the Ship Tavern and several homes proves that "fireside comfort, domestic peace, the sports of children, and the quietude of age, are living yet, in spite of the frozen crust above them" (80-81). The showman, however, views this delightful domestic picture as monotonous. He makes his apologies to the audience: "But it is time to change the scene. Its dreary monotony shall not test your fortitude like one of our actual New England winters, which leave so large a blank—so melancholy a death-spot—in lives so brief that they ought to be all summer-time" (81). The negative tone of this assessment prefigures the show's unhappy ending. As he struggles to turn the crank that will advance the scene, the showman discovers that "A wire is broken" and "The scene will not move." Therefore, he brings his presentation to a hasty conclusion: "The street continues buried beneath the snow, and the fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii has its parallel in this catastrophe" (81).

Hawthorne juxtaposes the domestic fires that protect life in a New England storm with the apocalyptic fires of the volcanic eruption that ended the lives of the citizens of Herculaneum and Pompeii in order to point out that if fire can create many domestic comforts, fire can also destroy them. Furthermore, the sketch's Bachelardian symbolism of cookery and apocalypse

aptly conveys Hawthorne's ambivalence about his Puritan ancestors. If those Puritan forbears were possessed of the great strength of character and religious zeal needed to hew a settlement out of the wilderness, they were also capable of great evils such as the Salem Witch Trials and the extermination of America's native people. Hawthorne's conflicted feelings are best expressed in the following revealing passage: "Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of ages" (68).

Hawthorne goes on to discuss the same theme of generational decline—albeit with a happier resolution—in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Again, he employs the opposition of domestic and demonic fire to add depth to his fiction. The first sentence of the novel suggests that fire will play a central role in the narrative: "Half-way down a by-street of one of our New England towns, stands a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely peaked gables facing towards various points of the compass, and a huge, clustered chimney in the midst" (II: 5). The chimney that stands "in the midst" of the House of the Seven Gables represents its hearth, the core of the household. In the chapter entitled "Alice Pyncheon," the narrator maintains that, while Alice lived there, the House of the Seven Gables was "a substantial, jolly-looking mansion." Moreover, it "seemed fit to be the residence of a patriarch, who might establish his own headquarters in the front gable, and assign one of the remainder to each of his six children; while the great chimney, in the center, should symbolize the old fellow's hospitable heart, which kept them all warm, and made a great whole of the seven smaller ones" (191). Just as the heart represents the center of the human body, the chimney, or hearth, symbolizes the heart of the Pyncheon house.

Significantly, the hearth of the House of the Seven Gables is central not only to the ancestral home, but also to the narrative itself, due to the importance of “fireside tradition” in perpetuating the myths and stories about the Maule and Pyncheon families. For example, in the original account of the wizard Maule’s hanging, the narrator claims:

At the moment of execution—with the halter about his neck, and while Colonel Pyncheon sat on horseback, grimly gazing at the scene—Maule had addressed him from the scaffold, and uttered a prophecy, of which history, as well as fireside tradition, has preserved the very words.—“God,” said the dying man, pointing his finger with a ghastly look at the undismayed countenance of his enemy, “God will give him blood to drink!” (8)

Hence, “fireside tradition” contributes to the transmission of the very legend upon which the novel’s plot is based. Moreover, while the role fireside story-telling played within the Maule family remains uncertain—“[I]f, at their own fireside, they transmitted, from father to child, any hostile recollection of the wizard’s fate, and their lost patrimony, it was never acted upon, nor openly expressed”(25)—the narrator relates that in “times when chimney-corners had benches in them, where old people sat poking into the ashes of the past, and raking out traditions, like live coals,” stories were told about all the dead Pyncheons assembling in the parlor of the House of the Seven Gables at midnight in order to see that the portrait of their progenitor remained upon the wall according to the stipulations of his will (278). Although Hawthorne’s narrator self-deprecatingly acknowledges that such ghost stories “are hardly to be treated seriously, any longer” (279), he elsewhere affirms:

[A]ncient superstitions, after being steeped in human hearts, and embodied in human breath, and passing from lip to ear in manifold repetition, through a series of generations,

become imbued with an effect of homely truth. The smoke of the domestic hearth has scented them, through and through. By long transmission among household facts, they grow to look like them, and have such a familiar way of making themselves at home, that their influence is usually greater than we suspect. (124)

Indeed, the richly embroidered tapestry of legend that enfolds the House of the Seven Gables would hardly exist without such fireside speculations.

If fire remains at the center of both the Pyncheon house and the novel, it also maintains its associations with cookery, or domesticity.²⁶ Fire is, of course, employed in cooking the original Pyncheon's house-warming feast, during which time, "The chimney of the new house . . . belching forth its kitchen-smoke, impregnated the whole air with the scent of meats, fowls, and fishes, spicily concocted with odiferous herbs, and onions in abundance" (11). Likewise, fire figures prominently in Hepzibah's preparation of a dinner to welcome Clifford home from prison after his long absence:

Her zeal over the fire . . . was quite an heroic test of sentiment. It was touching, and positively worthy of tears . . . to see her rake out a bed of fresh and glowing coals, and proceed to broil the mackerel. Her usually pale cheeks were all a-blaze with heat and hurry. She watched the fish with as much tender care . . . as if her own heart were on the gridiron, and her immortal happiness were involved in its being done precisely to a turn! (100)

However, the most significant association of fire with domesticity appears in the narrator's descriptions of the Pyncheons' country cousin. Phoebe—whose name means "bright" or "radiant"—is frequently depicted in conjunction with images of sunlight or firelight.²⁷ For example, the narrator relates that "Phoebe, and the fire that boiled the teakettle, were equally

bright, cheerful, and efficient, in their respective offices” (76). He goes on to say that “She was very pretty; as graceful as a bird, and graceful much in the same way; as pleasant, about the house, as a gleam of sunshine falling on the floor through a shadow of twinkling leaves, or as a ray of firelight that dances on the wall, while evening is drawing nigh” (80). Phoebe’s sunny disposition and domestic gifts bring light and life to the gloomy House of the Seven Gables and its inmates, Hepzibah and Clifford.

However, in this novel, as in much of his other work, Hawthorne explores fire’s contradictory association with apocalypse as well as cookery. Perhaps because *The House of the Seven Gables* is generally written in a lighter tone than *The Scarlet Letter*, many allusions to apocalypse in the former text are somewhat tongue-in-cheek. For example, when Hepzibah, who had always considered herself a lady of aristocratic standing, is forced to open up a small shop to help provide for herself and for Clifford, Hawthorne writes:

Now let Hepzibah turn the old Pyncheon portraits with their faces to the wall, and take the map of her eastern-territory to kindle the kitchen-fire, and blow up the flame with the empty breath of her ancestral traditions! What had she to do with ancestry? Nothing;—no more than with posterity! No lady, now, but simply Hepzibah Pyncheon, a forlorn old maid, and keeper of a cent-shop! (51)

Here, the narrator mockingly refers to the destruction by fire of the Pyncheon family’s ancestral land claim, and thus of the family’s aristocratic status. In a similar vein, Phoebe expresses concern about Hepzibah’s mysterious border, Holgrave. After hearing Hepzibah’s account of Holgrave’s interest in “animal-magnetism,” which might, in other times, lead him to a study of “the Black Art,” Phoebe exclaims: “But, dear Cousin! . . . if the young man is so dangerous, why do you let him stay? If he does nothing worse, he may set the house on fire!” (84).²⁸ In

Phoebe's mind, Holgrave represents the threat of the destruction of the family mansion. Since, like the Ushers of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," the Pyncheons are bound up with the fate of their ancestral home, Holgrave seemingly offers a challenge to the continuance of the Pyncheon line, which is arguably as corrupt a family dynasty as the Ushers.²⁹

Phoebe's concern is misplaced, however, since the most imminent danger to Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon originates *within* the family: Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon—not Holgrave—poses the most serious risk to the siblings' happiness because he plans to have Clifford institutionalized if the latter refuses to reveal the secret location of the deed to the Pyncheons' fabled Maine property. Like Phoebe, Judge Pyncheon possesses a certain "warmth" of character. In describing the Judge, the narrator mentions "that broad benignity of smile, wherewith he shone like a noonday sun along the streets, or glowed like a household fire, in the drawing-rooms of his private acquaintance" (122). At her first meeting with Judge Pyncheon, Phoebe becomes "quite overpowered by the sultry dog-day heat . . . of benevolence, which this excellent man diffused out of his great heart into the surrounding atmosphere" (119). Later, when he tries to advance past a stubborn Hepzibah in order to question Clifford, the Judge "adopt[s] the sensible precaution . . . to cover his advance with a smile, so broad and sultry, that, had it been only half as warm as it looked, a trellis of grapes might at once have turned purple under its summer-like exposure," a smile that might likewise have served "to melt poor Hepzibah, on the spot, as if she were a figure of yellow wax" (127). Given the implication that the Judge would be willing to destroy Hepzibah in order to gain access to Clifford, it is not surprising that when Judge Pyncheon first hears Clifford's "enfeebled" voice, "a red fire kindle[s] in his eyes." According to the narrator, "[I]t rendered his aspect not the less, but more frightful, that it seemed not to express wrath or hatred, but a certain hot fellness of purpose, which annihilated everything but

itself” (129). It is important to note that Judge Pyncheon’s expression recalls the fires of “annihilation” or apocalypse; if his smile is warm enough to ripen grapes on the vine or to melt Hepzibah like a wax figure, its heat is demonic in origin.

Interestingly, it is fire—in the form of the sunlight used to create a daguerreotype—that reveals the Judge’s true character. Holgrave asserts, “There is a wonderful insight in heaven’s broad and simple sunshine. While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it” (91). Holgrave’s daguerreotype of Judge Pyncheon proves that the “sultry dog-day heat” of his smile masks a heretofore unrecognized grimness and malevolence. Jaffrey Pyncheon’s “odious grin of feigned benignity” (282) stands in direct contradiction to the sunny disposition of Phoebe; while she is associated with the hearth fire, or cookery, he is linked with hellfire, or apocalypse. Hence, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne emphasizes the dual nature of both sunlight and firelight to illuminate the radically different personalities and motivations of two of his central characters: Phoebe and Jaffrey Pyncheon.

Indeed, Hawthorne uses fire symbolism to reveal essential truths about each of the romance’s main figures. In the characterization of Clifford and Hepzibah, fire is associated with intellect, spirit, or passion, as exemplified by the narrator’s description of Clifford’s diminished mental capacity:

The expression of his countenance—while, notwithstanding, it had the light of reason in it—seemed to waver, and glimmer, and nearly to die away, and feebly to recover itself again. It was like a flame which we see twinkling among half-extinguished embers; we gaze at it, more intently than if it were a positive blaze, gushing vividly upward—more

intently, but with a certain impatience, as if it ought either to kindle itself into satisfactory splendor, or be at once extinguished. (104)

Again, the narrator relates: “[A]fter a blank moment, there would be a flickering taper-gleam in his eyeballs. It betokened that his spiritual part had returned, and was doing its best to kindle the heart’s household-fire, and light up intellectual lamps in the dark and ruinous mansion, where it was doomed to be a forlorn inhabitant” (105). Hepzibah, possessing no such flame, remains lost in her fantasies of being rescued from poverty by a rich relative: “These were some of the fantasies which she had long dreamed about; and, aided by these, Uncle Venner’s casual attempt at encouragement kindled a strange festal glory in the poor, bare, melancholy chambers of her brain, as if that inner world were suddenly lighted up with gas” (65). If, as an “abortive lover of the Beautiful” (216), Clifford retains a flicker of spiritual and intellectual activity, poor Hepzibah must rely on gas light alone.³⁰

As expected, Hawthorne uses fire symbolism to describe the remaining principal character, Holgrave, who develops personal warmth relatively late in the narrative. In the chapter entitled “The Flower of Eden,” Phoebe comes to the understanding that Holgrave no longer represents a threat; he has no wish to burn the house down or to destroy the Pyncheons. Indeed, when Holgrave looked at Phoebe:

His smile . . . was full of genuine warmth, and had in it a joy, by far the most vivid expression that Phoebe had ever witnessed, shining out of the New England reserve with which Holgrave habitually masked whatever lay near his heart. It was the look wherewith a man, brooding alone over some fearful object, in a dreary forest or illimitable desert, would recognize the familiar aspect of his dearest friend, bringing up

all the peaceful ideas that belong to home, and the gentle current of every-day affairs.

(301)

Although Holgrave had once been associated with demonic or apocalyptic fire, in the end, he becomes subtly linked with a fire that is more domestic in nature. This passage depicts a man who banishes fear in order to “recognize the familiar aspect of his dearest friend,” Phoebe, who, in turn, “bring[s] up all the peaceful ideas that belong to home.” Indeed, the genuine warmth in Holgrave’s smile—which stands in stark contrast to the “dog-day sultriness” of Judge Pyncheon’s ominous expression—foreshadows the novel’s happy ending, one that at last unites the Pyncheons and the Maules through a marriage that represents “The Flower of Eden.” In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne’s use of fire symbolism ultimately allows readers not only to gain a deeper understanding of the characters, but also to follow the plot—which focuses on the apposition of demonic and domestic forces—to this successful conclusion.

Although *The House of the Seven Gables* represents a compelling performance, Hawthorne’s most intriguing exploration of fire’s multivalent symbolism appears in his acknowledged masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). As in *The House of the Seven Gables*, fire symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter* assists the author in his delineation of central characters. For example, Chillingworth, the most one-dimensional character in the novel, is generally depicted in association with a single type of fire—hellfire. The narrator first develops this association through his description of the change Chillingworth undergoes during the course of dwelling with and exacting his revenge upon Dimmesdale:

At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they [his neighbors] had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight, the oftener they looked upon

him. According to the vulgar idea, the fire in his laboratory had been brought from the lower regions, and was fed with infernal fuel; and so, as might be expected, his visage was getting sooty with the smoke. (I: 127)

In a second passage reminiscent of “The Celestial Railroad,” the narrator divulges that “Sometimes, a light glimmered out of the physician’s eyes, burning blue and ominous, like the reflection of a furnace, or, let us say, like one of those gleams of ghastly fire that darted from Bunyan’s awful door-way in the hill-side, and quivered on the pilgrim’s face” (129). Building on this allusion to Tophet, the narrator further relates that “Ever and anon . . . there came a glare of red light out of his eyes; as if the old man’s soul were on fire, and kept on smouldering duskily within his breast, until, by some casual puff of passion, it was blown into a momentary flame” (169). Hellfire, then, burns both in Chillingworth’s laboratory and in his eyes; it also consumes his soul, thus serving as an apt punishment for the cruel revenge he enacts on the minister who trusts him.

In contrast to Chillingworth, Dimmesdale is linked to two opposing types of fire—the fire of heaven and the “fiery torture” of diabolical punishment—as a token of the double life he leads. As a minister, Dimmesdale maintains a connection with holy fire. When his health begins to decline, his parishioners assume that his pallor may be explained by “his too earnest devotion to study, his scrupulous fulfillment of parochial duty, and . . . by the fasts and vigils of which he made a frequent practice, in order to keep the grossness of this earthly state from clogging and obscuring his spiritual lamp” (120). Dimmesdale not only has a reputation for self-denial, but also for tremendous eloquence in the pulpit. The narrator comments regarding Dimmesdale’s colleagues: “All that they lacked was the gift that descended upon the chosen disciples, at Pentecost, in tongues of flame; symbolizing, it would seem, not the power of speech in foreign

and unknown languages, but that of addressing the whole human brotherhood in the heart's native language" (142). Although the other church fathers lack "heaven's last and rarest attestation to their office, the Tongue of Flame," Dimmesdale clearly possesses it. The very tone of his voice, even in the absence of intelligible words, has the power to influence his parishioners. According to the narrator, his flock "fancied him the mouthpiece of Heaven's messages of wisdom, and rebuke, and love" (142). Indeed, Dimmesdale admits to Hester that his congregation "listen[s] to [his] words as if a tongue of Pentecost were speaking" (191). Accordingly, at the conclusion of his Election Sermon, the narrator is moved to ask: "Were there not the brilliant particles of a halo in the air about his head? (251). However, being thus idolized pains Dimmesdale because he knows his words mask the "black reality" of his sin. Thus, the fires of agonizing punishment rage in his breast alongside "the Tongue of Flame." These "fiery tortures," which Chillingworth "analyze[s] and gloat[s] over" (170), cause the minister to grow increasingly enfeebled. When he confesses his sin during the final scaffold scene, Dimmesdale reveals that the "red stigma"—twin to Hester's own—that he bears upon his chest "is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart." He further claims that "God's eye beheld it! The angels were for ever pointing at it! The Devil knew it well, and fretted it continually with the touch of his burning finger!" (255). Thus, to the end of his life, the minister maintains intimate connections with both hallowed fire and the fires of torturous punishment as an emblem of his bifurcated existence.

Not surprisingly, Hawthorne's most multifaceted and complex character, Hester Prynne, is associated with many of the divergent resonances of fire identified by Bachelard. Indeed, fire imagery in the novel chronicles her evolution from sinner to sufferer to saint. Initially, the scarlet letter maintains connections to both hellfire and the burning pain of punishment.

According to rumors circulating among the townspeople, the letter “was not mere scarlet cloth, tinged in an earthly dye-pot, but was red-hot with infernal fire, and could be seen glowing all alight, whenever Hester Prynne walked abroad in the night-time” (87-88). The acknowledged witch Mistress Hibbins even tells Pearl that the “A” on her mother’s bosom represents “the Black Man’s mark,” and that “it glows like a red flame” when Hester meets him in the forest at midnight (185). When Pearl asks her mother about this remark, Hester admits: “Once in my life I met the Black Man! This scarlet letter is his mark” (185). Clearly linked with the fires of hell, which are indicative of Hester’s sin, the letter also inflicts an excruciating punishment that the author frequently depicts through fire symbolism. For example, one of the unkind matrons in the marketplace asserts that “At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne’s forehead” (51). Even without the application of the hot iron, Hester’s letter still represents a “burning shame” that “blaze[s]” forth and seems to “scorch” her breast as if it were “red-hot” (73). Because the “A” has “seared Hester’s bosom so deeply” (88), she defiantly declares in the face of the Reverend Mr. Wilson’s offer to remove the letter if she repents that “It is too deeply branded. Ye cannot take it off” (68). Having chronicled her life as a sinner and sufferer, the author depicts Hester’s evolution into a saintly figure. After wearing the scarlet emblem for seven years, she gains a reputation as one who cares for the sick and provides both food and clothing for the impoverished. Accordingly, many of her neighbors decline to “interpret the scarlet A by its original signification,” insisting instead that the “A” stands for “Able” (161). In time, the badge of shame comes to have “the effect of the cross on a nun’s bosom” (163). Hence, Hester Prynne becomes associated less with the “lurid gleam” cast by the scarlet letter (69) than with the “taper of the sick chamber,” a symbol of her good works as a “Sister of Mercy” (161).

Fire symbolism not only assists Hawthorne in depicting Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, and Hester Prynne, but also in communicating the story's moral. He hints at this lasting significance in a passage concerning Hester's changed perspective after seven years of wearing the letter:

Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. (199)

In concocting this list, the author deems the fireside of equal value with the foremost institutions of church and state. He thus advances a subtle argument that the fireside deserves the selfsame reverence due to these bastions of temporal and spiritual authority.³¹

In order to elucidate this theme, Hawthorne discusses the relationship of all the principal characters to domestic fire. For example, while contemplating the folly of his marriage to Hester, Chillingworth—whose name suggests the “chilling” effect his presence will have upon his young, beautiful wife—excuses himself by saying:

[U]p to that epoch of my life, I had lived in vain. The world had been so cheerless! My heart was a habitation large enough for many guests, but lonely and chill, and without a household fire. I longed to kindle one! It seemed not so wild a dream,—old as I was, and somber as I was, and misshapen as I was—that the simple bliss, which is scattered far and wide, for all mankind to gather up, might yet be mine. And so, Hester, I drew thee into my heart . . . and sought to warm thee by the warmth which thy presence made there! (74)³²

Despite his desire for a wife and a comfortable fireside, Chillingworth acknowledges to Hester that “from the moment when we came down the old church-steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path!” (74). Indeed, it is the “bale-fire” of the letter that prevents Hester from experiencing fireside joys. The narrator recounts that during her time alone on the scaffold, Hester stood “with the scarlet token of infamy on her breast; with the sin-born infant in her arms; [and] with a whole people . . . staring at the features that should have been seen only in the quiet gleam of the fireside, in the happy shadow of a home, or beneath a matronly veil, at church” (63). Because her sin prohibits her enjoyment of domestic bliss, Hester becomes “like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt; no more smile with the household joy . . .” (84).³³ Nor can Dimmesdale, who remains a bachelor, expect to feel the comforts of the hearth, for he is “Doomed by his own choice . . . to eat his unsavory morsel always at another’s board, and endure the life-long chill which must be his lot who seeks to warm himself only at another’s fireside . . .” (125). Unsurprisingly, Hester’s times at the fireside with Chillingworth become some of her “ugliest remembrances,” and her prediction that she and Dimmesdale will one day “have a home and fireside of [their] own” represents nothing more than a forlorn hope. The only one of the main characters to achieve domestic bliss is Pearl, who is thought to be “not only alive, but married, and happy, and mindful of her mother.” Although Pearl, who lives in Europe, would “most joyfully have entertained [her] sad and lonely mother at her fireside,” Hester feels compelled to return to “a more real life . . . in New England” (262). Hawthorne intimates through his use of fire symbolism that all the suffering experienced by Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth might have been avoided had they sought out a cheerful fireside like Pearl.

As it had in *The House of the Seven Gables*, fire, then, helps readers to discern the deeper truths of *The Scarlet Letter*. In a passage concerning Pearl, the narrator reveals that the mystery of Dimmesdale's relationship with Hester was always open to discovery: "She [Pearl] had been offered to the world, these seven years past, as the living hieroglyphic, in which was revealed the secret they so darkly sought to hide,—all written in this symbol,—all plainly manifest,—had there been a prophet or magician skilled to read the character of flame!" (207). If this "character of flame" points to the fact of the couple's connection, fire also illuminates Hester's speculation that "the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's" (86). The blazing light of those other letters recalls Parson Hooper's observation: "I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil" (IX: 52). Both the Black Veil and the scarlet letter are emblematic of the sin in every human heart, an essential verity revealed, in the latter case, through blazing fire.

The final truth discovered through the agency of fire concerns multiplicity of interpretation. In the second scaffold scene, when Dimmesdale stands together with Hester and Pearl, an eerie light appears in the sky. The narrator describes the effect of the meteor's passage: "So powerful was its radiance, that . . . [t]he great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp . . . They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another" (154). Within this "light that is to reveal all secrets," the minister discerns the shape of "an immense letter,—the letter A,—marked out in lines of dull red light" (155). His own guilt leads him to view this letter as a companion to the letter on Hester's bosom, but many of the townspeople who see the "great red letter in the sky" believe the "A" to stand for "Angel"—a recognition of the death of Governor Winthrop, "who was made an angel this past night" (158).

In other words, the individual interpreter can decide whether the letter carries a positive connotation, a negative connotation, or both; the truth of *The Scarlet Letter* is a truth that demands multiple readings.

Like the “A” seen during the meteor’s passage, or the scarlet letter itself, fire encompasses many meanings. It is a symbol well suited to the author who refuses to reveal whether Young Goodman Brown actually attended the witch meeting in the forest or whether he only dreamt of it; whether the staff of Brown’s companion really writhes like a snake or whether it is a trick of the light; whether the “A” on Dimmesdale’s chest—if it is present at all—came there through self-inflicted torture, systematic poisoning, or the gnawings of remorse. This unmistakable fondness for ambiguity led Hawthorne to adopt a powerful elemental symbol that would simultaneously recall the flames of heaven and of hell, of domestic bliss and demonic torture, of “cookery” and “apocalypse.”

CHAPTER 3

THE GARDEN, THE KILN, AND THE CRUCIBLE: SPIRITUALIZED FIRE

As suggested by titles such as “Fire-Worship,” along with repeated references to hallowed fire in “Main Street” and the biblical Tongue of Flame in *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne associated fire not only with “cooking” and “apocalypse,” but also with spirituality. Indeed, Hawthorne’s *oeuvre* contains detailed explorations of three disparate spiritual traditions related to the element of fire: the religious narrative of the Garden of Eden; the sacred practices of the Ghebers, or Persian fire-worshipers; and the mystical lore of alchemy.³⁴ The Eden story’s connection with fire is two-fold: fire represents the passion or sexual heat that caused expulsion from the garden, as well as the fire of the flaming sword that prevents reentry into the paradise where death was unknown. The Zoroastrians, also known as Parsees or Ghebers, were thought to worship fire, and they maintained perpetual flames in temples created specifically for that purpose.³⁵ In alchemy, fire serves as an agent of transmutation; it is the element that provides the means for the discovery of the *Elixir Vitae*. Significantly, all three traditions are linked not only to the element of fire, but also to the idea of immortality. I will argue, therefore, that Hawthorne’s affinity for fire as a literary symbol went beyond an appreciation of its ambiguous resonances to an appreciation of its connection with immortality.

The Garden: Eden

I will begin by considering the religious implications of fire in the Eden story. If one assumes that the Fall is associated with a sexual indiscretion, as Adam and Eve’s sudden shame

at their nakedness would suggest, it follows that the heat of passion is the fire that actually caused the eviction from Eden and the attendant curse of human mortality. In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard asserts that since “none of the practices based on rubbing that are used by primitive peoples to produce fire can be directly suggested by a phenomenon of nature,” the idea of rubbing sticks together to produce a fire must have arisen through analogy with the sex act (22-23). Quoting Max Muller’s statement that fire is “the son of two pieces of wood” (24), Bachelard notes, “[I]t is the hand which pushes the wooden stick through the groove, thereby imitating more intimate caresses” (25). Bachelard further asserts, “Everything that rubs, that burns, or that electrifies is immediately considered capable of explaining the act of generation” (27); thus, he claims that such fire is “impure,” “the fruit of a secret love” (24).³⁶ By applying Bachelard’s theories to the Eden story, one may easily discern that the fire surrounding the phallic sword that guards the tree of life is emblematic of sexual heat, the true barrier that separates humankind from the Garden of Eden.

In his fiction, Hawthorne frequently examines the mythology of Eden, particularly the various attempts to recreate Eden in the New World. Based on the exploits of Thomas Morton and his followers at Mount Wollaston, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1836) chronicles just such an effort to restore the pleasures and carefree life of Eden. In this Eden, however, the May-pole has replaced the tree of knowledge. The story opens with the words, “Bright were the days at Merry Mount, when the May-Pole was the banner-staff of that gay colony!” (IX: 54). The May-Pole, whose “votaries danced round it, once, at least, in every month,” some viewing it as “their religion, or their altar” (60), is only one remnant of the folk festivals of Old England reenacted by the colonists at Merry Mount. They also celebrate pagan fire festivals; the narrator reports, “On the eve of Saint John, they felled whole acres of the forest to make bonfires, and

danced by the blaze all night, crowned with garlands, and throwing flowers into the flame” (60). At that time, St. John’s Eve, a nominally Christian festival based on an earlier pagan festival held on the summer solstice, or Midsummer Eve, was celebrated throughout Europe (Frazer 622). In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer describes the rituals of this festival as observed in Bohemia:

Sometimes the young men fell a tall straight fir in the woods and set it up on a height, where the girls deck it with nosegays, wreaths of leaves, and red ribbons . . . and at nightfall the whole is set on fire. While the flames break out, the young men climb the tree and fetch down the wreaths which the girls had placed on it. After that the lads and lasses stand on opposite sides of the fire and look at one another through the wreaths to see whether they will be true to each other and marry within the year. Also the girls throw the wreaths across the flames to the men, and woe to the awkward swain who fails to catch the wreath thrown him by his sweetheart. (626)

Frazer explains that, in many locations, the bonfires were closely tied to the harvest because St. John’s Eve was in part a fertility festival (624). In *A Dictionary of Symbols*, J. E. Cirlot elaborates on this notion, asserting, “Vegetation, in all its forms, has two main implications: firstly, pertaining to its annual cycle, whence its symbolism of death and resurrection following the pattern of winter and spring; and secondly, its . . . connexion with fertility and fecundity.” In amplification of Frazer, Cirlot observes: “Vegetation rites are celebrated in many different regions, and on dates ranging from Carnival (Shrove-tide) to the feast of St. John (24th June). In every case, the aim is to encourage the cosmic forces to continue to bring about the annual regeneration of life” (339).

Hawthorne alludes to pagan festivals such as Midsummer Eve that emphasize the link between fire and fertility, or sexuality, in order to represent the passion that brings an end to the

Edenic existence of Edgar and Edith, the “Adam and Eve” who are to be married in this New World paradise. As they stand next to the May-pole, emblematic of the tree of knowledge, and the priest prepares to pluck a wreath of roses from the tree and throw it over them, symbolic of the fruit wrongfully taken, Edgar notices that Edith looks “pensive.” Whether she is disturbed by the sudden awareness of a band of Puritan onlookers or by a premonition of the coming eviction from paradise, Edith’s sadness prompts Edgar to whisper, “[S]weet Lady of the May . . . is yon wreath of roses a garland to hang above our graves, that you look so sad? Oh, Edith, this is our golden time! Tarnish it not by any pensive shadow of the mind; for it may be, that nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere remembrance of what is now passing” (58). Happiness is ephemeral because, as Edgar unknowingly suggests, it is certain that the couple’s passion will bring the curse of death upon humankind. The narrator bewails their fate, saying:

Alas, for the young lovers! No sooner had their hearts glowed with real passion, than they were sensible of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures, and felt a dreary presentiment of inevitable change. From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth’s doom of care, and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount. (58)

When passion enters the garden, then, all is lost—having tried to recreate Eden, the colonists of Merry Mount succeed only in reenacting the Fall.

Although Edith represents an interesting early portrayal of the Eve character, the fiery passion that occasions the expulsion from Eden is most clearly brought to life in the Dark Ladies of Hawthorne’s novels—Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), and Miriam in *The Marble Faun* (1860)—all of whom act as sexual temptresses following the model of Eve.³⁷ Like Hester’s scarlet “A” and Miriam’s scarlet

peasant costume, the tropical hothouse flower that Zenobia unfailingly wears in her hair suggests the smoldering flames of a passionate and unrepressed sexuality. In fact, what stands between the Blithedale communitarians and the creation of a second Eden is essentially one woman's passion.

Narrator Miles Coverdale's initial assessment of Zenobia illustrates her connection with sexuality: "She was dressed as simply as possible, in an American print . . . but with a silken kerchief, between which and her gown there was one glimpse of a white shoulder. It struck me as a great piece of good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse" (III: 15). Marked as a Dark Lady by her hair, "which was dark, glossy, and of singular abundance," and by its single ornament, "an exotic [flower] of rare beauty . . . as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just clipt it from the stem" (15), Zenobia commands male attention. The fact that she is unabashedly flirtatious contributes to her sexual attractiveness, as evidenced when she remarks to Coverdale, "As for the garb of Eden . . . I shall not assume it till after May-day!" (17), leading him to envision her naked. Here, as well as in the "moveable festival" decreed at Blithedale on May-Day, and in the masquerade near the end of the novel, readers may detect echoes of the pagan celebrations chronicled in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount." On a global level, the masks and costumes, along with the peeping, sneaking, secrets, and "confessions" linked to the aptly named Coverdale, reinforce the Edenic theme of secret, or forbidden—not to mention sexual—knowledge.

Coverdale does, indeed, view Zenobia as the "Eve" of the Blithedale paradisiacal experiment. He explains:

We seldom meet with women, now-a-days, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all; their sex fades away and goes for nothing, in ordinary intercourse. Not so

with Zenobia. One felt an influence breathing out of her, such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying—
 “Behold, here is a woman!” (17)

Having compared her to Eve, Coverdale goes on to imagine Zenobia as Pandora, observing as she sits next to the fire that “there was a glow in her cheeks that made me think of Pandora, fresh from Vulcan’s workshop, and full of the celestial warmth by dint of which he had tempered and moulded her” (24). It is no accident that Zenobia is sitting near the fire when Coverdale comments on her similarity to Pandora, for Zenobia’s “warmth” and the “fire” in her eyes—brought into high relief by contrast to the “wan, frost-nipt” “snow-maiden” Priscilla—are the symbols of her sexual desires, as well as those aroused within Coverdale whenever he looks at her. In Coverdale’s judgment, this “Eve” or “Pandora” is clearly guilty, and the evil that she has let out of the box is passionate sexuality.³⁸

Coverdale thus confesses, “I know not well how to express, that the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust—in a word, her womanliness incarnated—compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her” (44, my emphasis). In fact, Coverdale is a willful voyeur who protests too much. He continues to focus on the flower that represents Zenobia’s sexuality, describing it, in language that links passion to heat, as “a hot-house flower . . . a flower of the tropics, such as appeared to have sprung passionately out of a soil, the very weeds of which would be fervid and spicy” (45, my emphasis). The red-hot language of these passages hints at one of Zenobia’s secrets. Though it costs him some pangs of jealousy, Coverdale correctly speculates, “Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal . . . in this perfectly developed rose!” (47), which, in turn, leads the

reader to wonder what kind of Eden would admit an Eve who is not a maiden. Clearly, Zenobia's sexual experience renders her unfit to play the role of Eve—*this* Eve has already been seduced by Satan, embodied in the person of Westervelt, and her passionate, but unreciprocated, love for Hollingsworth will soon cause the garden to become tainted by the curse of death.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne employs fire symbolism to reveal misdirected passion, not only that of Zenobia, but also that of Hollingsworth. When Coverdale broaches the subject of Hollingsworth with Zenobia in order to test her feelings for him, "Zenobia's eyes [dart] lightning; her cheeks [flush]; [and] the vividness of her expression [is] like the effect of a powerful light, flaming up suddenly within her" (166). Sadly, her passion is misplaced. A man utterly obsessed with his grand scheme of prison reform, Hollingsworth is described as having a "heart [that] is on fire with his own purpose, but icy for all human affection" (100). In Coverdale's estimation, it is a waste for Hollingsworth to have "so completely immolated himself to that one idea of his" (166).

However deluded Hollingsworth may be, he alone sees the flaw in the dreamy philosophy underpinning the Blithedale experiment. When Coverdale tries to read passages of Fourier to him, Hollingsworth angrily exclaims: "Take the book out of my sight . . . or, I tell you fairly, I shall fling it in the fire! And as for Fourier, let him make a Paradise, if he can, of Gehenna, where, as I conscientiously believe, he is floundering at this moment!" (54). As Hollingsworth realizes, the notion of creating a Heaven in Hell (or, in this case, on earth) is, at best, impractical, and at worst, ridiculous. One cannot, after all, remake Eden in a post-lapsarian world.

Therefore, rejected by Hollingsworth, and "sick to death of playing at philanthropy and progress" (227), Zenobia determines to extinguish the flames of her unreturned passion by drowning herself. Fittingly, when Hollingsworth fishes her rigid body out of the stream where

she suffered her “death-agony,” he wounds it in the heart. Linked with fire because it is described as “warmth” or “heat,” Zenobia’s passion, like Eve’s misguided choice, ultimately admits death into the idyllic community and effects the ruin of Hollingsworth’s noble scheme of reform, leaving him “haunted” and miserable—a cursed Adam. Tragically, the death that Zenobia brings into the garden is her own.

The Kiln: Zoroastrianism

Hawthorne’s discussions of the Eden theme often center on the idea of America as a type of New World Eden,³⁹ but he did not limit his exploration of the spiritual implications of fire to such native subject matter. In fact, his extensive readings in Eastern travelogues created in him a strong fascination with the religious traditions of Zoroastrianism, or Persian “fire worship.”⁴⁰ In his 1836 sketch entitled “Fire Worshippers,” Hawthorne writes, “There is a sect in Hindostan, who call themselves descendants of the ancient Persians, and, like their ancestors, pay adoration to the sun, the moon, and stars, but especially to fire . . .” (494). Appearing in *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, then under Hawthorne’s editorship, “Fire Worshippers” represents the outgrowth of Hawthorne’s native fascination with fire and his reading of Carsten Niebuhr’s *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East* (1792). Niebuhr’s name appears in the Hawthorne sketch, and Luther Luedtke has placed *Travels through Arabia* among Hawthorne’s readings of this period (37). Niebuhr’s chapter entitled “Of the Parsees” provides general information about the character of the group, in addition to a description of their customs of dress, trade, marriage, burial, and worship (427-30). In “Fire Worshippers,” Hawthorne relates news gleaned from Niebuhr of a religious group in Hindostan dedicated to the worship of fire. Hawthorne expresses awe at the notion of temples that contain

perpetual flames, fed over centuries with costly aromatic woods. He muses over the sect's prohibition against blowing out flames, lest the breath of a human being defile the purity of the fire. Taking all into account, he concludes that "if there could possibly exist an idolatry founded on reason, and which did not degrade the Divine Majesty by the symbols of its worship, it would be that of the adorers of fire . . ." (494). Over the course of his career, Hawthorne's interest in Zoroastrian religious practice, which had originally been sparked by Niebuhr, made its way first into non-fiction extracts such as "Fire Worshippers," then into sketches such as "Snow-Flakes" and "Fire-Worship," and finally into complex tales such as "Ethan Brand," where it adds a rich symbolic subtext.

In the first of these sketches, "Snow-Flakes," published in 1838, the narrator observes and reflects upon a snow storm. Declaring, "I love to watch the gradual beginning of the storm" (IX: 343), the narrator sits down, pen in hand, to "sketch out the personification of a New-England winter" (346). His hearth fire offers cheering warmth on a cold day, and provides artistic inspiration as well. The narrator admits: "My hour of inspiration—if that hour ever comes—is when the green log hisses upon the hearth, and the bright flame, brighter for the gloom of the chamber, rustles high up the chimney, and the coals drop tinkling down among the growing heaps of ashes" (344). That the fire has spiritual as well as artistic resonance soon becomes apparent; the narrator declaims: "'Winter is come! Cold Winter has begun his reign already!' Now, throughout New-England, each hearth becomes an altar, sending up the smoke of a continued sacrifice to the immitigable deity who tyrannizes over forest, country-side, and town" (347). However tongue-in-cheek the reference, Hawthorne unmistakably alludes to the Zoroastrians' reverence for fire by using words such as "altar," "sacrifice," and "deity" that place the hearth in a religious context. Moreover, when the narrator asserts that "the peat-smoke

spreads its aromatic fragrance through the atmosphere” (346), readers are reminded of the expensive aromatic woods that the Ghebers used to maintain their perpetual flames. Clearly, Hawthorne employs a comic tone when referring to Zoroastrian religious practice in “Snow-Flakes,” but within five years, he would produce a much more serious treatment of the subject in sketch form.

Originally published in 1843 and republished in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), “Fire-Worship” takes as its subject the “great revolution in social and domestic life” precipitated by “this almost universal exchange of the open fire-place for the cheerless and ungenial stove” (X: 138). The title concept of the sketch leads readers to a reconsideration of fire in the Zoroastrian context explored in the fore-study, “Fire Worshippers” (1836). Hawthorne provides an important clue regarding the source of “Fire-Worship” (1843) when he mentions the Ghebers by name, saying that fire is “he whom the Gheber worshipped, with no unnatural idolatry” (139).⁴¹ According to Hawthorne’s reading of Niebuhr, the Ghebers worshipped fire as a deity, as an earthly representative of the sun; therefore, they erected fire temples where perpetual flames were maintained. Influenced by this notion of doing reverence to fire, Hawthorne asserts in “Fire-Worship” that—due to its domestic usefulness, metaphysical qualities, and its contributions to “the picturesque, the poetic, and the beautiful”—fire should not be imprisoned within an iron stove, but rather should remain subject to adoration within an open hearth. As Melville asks in “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” “Was ever hearth so glorified into an altar before?” (1156). Hawthorne, in fact, praises the union of altar and hearth in the ancient patriotic statement *pro aris et focus* (“for the altars and the hearths”) because he sees the hearth and the altar as possessing a “kindred sanctity” (X: 146). Hawthorne further speaks of fire as “rendering

himself a part of all life-long and age-coeval associations” (140). For Hawthorne, as for the Zoroastrians who maintained eternal flames, fire was endlessly contemporary.

Like “Fire-Worship,” “Ethan Brand” (1850) clearly reveals the influence of Zoroastrianism. James Frazer’s *Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time*, published in 1834 and easily available to Hawthorne as part of the popular Harper’s Family Library series, states regarding Zoroastrians:

The visible objects of their veneration are the elements, especially that of fire; and light is regarded as the noblest symbol of the Supreme Being, who is without form or limits. The sun, moon, planets, and stars, and even the heavens themselves, obtain particular respect; and in praying they turn to them, and especially to the rising sun. (118)

Dawn, then, represents the most propitious time for those who revere the sun and its earthly emanation, fire; and, as Mark Hennelly has noted, the action of “Ethan Brand” “moves from twilight, through the dark night of the soul, to a rebirth at dawn” (100).

Furthermore, Bartram’s lime-kiln, the focal point of action in the story, structurally resembles the Zoroastrian temples used for housing perpetual flames. Frazer describes the temples as follows:

The Atishkhudahs are merely edifices for guarding the sacred fire from defilement or extinction: in these the flame is kept burning; it is approached with the greatest reverence; and their most awful rites are practiced before it. These houses are so constructed that the sun’s rays never fall on the sacred fire. (118-19)

Certainly, both the temple and the lime-kiln are constructed so that “the sun’s rays never fall on the sacred fire.” Moreover, like the Ghebers’ eternal flames, the flame within the lime-kiln—described by Hawthorne as a “daily and night-long fire”—requires continual human supervision.

In guarding and feeding the fire, Brand assumes the role normally assigned to Zoroastrian priests, who must attend the fire and add fuel during all five watches of the day.

Once a *margarzan*, or mortal, sinner, Brand—through his presumably mesmeric experimentation upon the innocent Esther—is guilty of committing the following acts described by a modern Zoroastrian priest as “worthy of death”: first, he “learns witchcraft and practices unnatural intercourse . . . and deceit,” and second, he “casts an evil glance on a strange woman and seduces her” (Kotwal and Boyd 124). However, the Zoroastrian belief system also allows for *patet*, which means “confession” or “expiation.” Brand admits to Bartram that, after an eighteen-year search, he found the Unpardonable Sin—“The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man, and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims” (XI: 90)—within his own breast. Sensing the depths of his guilt, Brand exclaims, “Unshrinkingly, I accept the retribution!” (90). Since he is as yet unable to feel true remorse, he realizes that his only hope of expiation lies in surrendering himself to the purifying agency of the fire.⁴²

Interestingly, many aspects of Ethan Brand’s suicidal sacrifice mirror Zoroastrian rituals regarding the disposal of the dead. Niebuhr relates: “They [the Parsees] retain the singular custom of exposing their dead to be eaten by birds of prey, instead of interring or burning them. I saw on a hill at Bombay a round tower, covered with planks of wood, on which the Parsees lay out their dead bodies” (428). Such a *dakhma*, or “tower of silence,” was generally about twenty feet high (“Parsis”). Hawthorne’s description of Bartram’s lime-kiln—“It was a rude, round, tower-like structure, about twenty feet high”—is eerily similar to that of a *dakhma*. Furthermore, according to Zoroastrian ritual practice, the *dakhma* was to be constructed of “stone and lime” and to be placed in a “high mountainous area” (Kotwal and Boyd 80-81). What better New

England parallel to Zoroastrian ritual may be found than a lime-kiln—in which marble, or stone, is converted into lime—situated on the Green Mountain described in Hawthorne’s 1838 North Adams journal, the notebook entry that ultimately generated “Ethan Brand”?

Clearly, then, when Brand advances toward the lime-kiln, he approaches a holy space that serves as both *Atash Bahram* (a fire temple) and *dakhma* (a tower of silence). Although he could have easily entered the lime-kiln via the “massive iron door” at the bottom, he chooses to ascend to the top of the structure, the place where the corpse would be exposed, in order to throw himself into the fire. The actions that precipitate Brand’s sacrifice resemble those of a priest preparing to do *bandagi*, a spoken prayer or meritorious act. According to a nineteenth-century Zoroastrian catechism, “To do *bandagi* we must hold our hands high and reverently” (Kotwal and Boyd 53). Hawthorne writes that, poised on the edge of the fiery gulf, Brand “stood erect and raised his arms on high” (XI: 100). With arms raised in an attitude of prayer, Brand addresses Mother Earth, saying, “Oh, Mother Earth . . . who art no more my Mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved!” (100). This declaration alludes to the Zoroastrian prohibition against burying the dead, lest the corpse pollute the earth.

Significantly, Ethan Brand times his leap into the fire to coincide with the moment of conversion from marble to lime. When he encounters Bartram at the beginning of the tale, Brand, himself an experienced lime-burner, observes: “Your task draws to an end . . . This marble has already been burning three days. A few hours more will convert the stone to lime” (86). This reference to a period of three days is symbolic because Zoroastrians believe the soul stays near the place where the funeral ceremonies are performed for three days. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, the soul “leaves the area, follows the light of the rising sun, and proceeds toward the . . . bridge which connects this world with the next” (Kotwal and Boyd

xxiv). Likewise, in “Ethan Brand,” it is on the fourth day, in the bright, early hours of a symbolic dawn, that Bartram and his son inspect the newly transformed contents of the lime-kiln: “The marble was all burnt into perfect, snow-white lime. But on its surface, in the midst of the circle—snow-white, too, and thoroughly converted into lime—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to long repose” (102).⁴³ According to Niebuhr’s description of Zoroastrian ritual, “When the flesh is devoured, they [the Parsees] remove the bones into two chambers at the bottom of the tower” (428). Thus, after Brand’s body has been reduced to bleached bones or lime, he is “interred” in the tower-shaped structure of the lime-kiln—a fitting end to this thoroughly Zoroastrian tale. Indeed, the numerous similarities between the action of “Ethan Brand” and Zoroastrian religious practice hardly seem coincidental given the fact that Hawthorne began this “chapter from an abortive romance” in notebook form only two years after mentioning Niebuhr and the Ghebers in the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*.

The Crucible: Alchemy

By reading the same types of Eastern travelogues that had interested him in the precepts of Zoroastrianism, Hawthorne could well have encountered information regarding alchemy.⁴⁴ In addition to accounts of Eastern travels, Hawthorne read and admired Western works such as Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, a rich source of information on alchemical processes and symbolism (Luedtke 86). Hawthorne may also have learned about Western alchemical adepts such as Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus—both of whom he mentions by name in “The Birth-Mark” (X: 48)—from popular biographical dictionaries.⁴⁵ Unarguably, the author’s frequent recourse to alchemical themes indicates a keen interest in the subject. As Raymona Hull

contends, “By the time Hawthorne reached the climax of his writing career . . . he had made use of several phases of alchemy—the alchemist and his experiments, the various magic effects of elixirs, the idea of renewed youth, and the search for the unattainable” (103).

My purpose here is not to reiterate the alchemical motifs and patterns of imagery that have already been identified by scholars such as Randall Clack, Mark Hennelly, and others,⁴⁶ but rather to explore the ways in which Hawthorne’s alchemical themes and symbolism reinforce the connection between fire and immortality. Bachelard suggests in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* that for a legendary alchemist like Paracelsus, “fire was life” (73). Because many adepts joined Paracelsus in his belief that “whatever secretes fire truly bears the seed of life” (73), the early alchemists used fire as the agent of transmutation during their search for the Philosopher’s Stone or the *Elixir Vitae*. In his landmark work on the origins of alchemy entitled *The Forge and the Crucible* (1956), Mircea Eliade maintains that “The alchemist . . . is a ‘master of fire’ [because] [i]t is with fire that he controls the passage of matter from one state to another” (79). According to hermetic tradition, the transmutation of base matter into gold involves several stages, each of which is heralded by a change in color. The typical progression is from black (also known as *nigredo*), to white (*albedo*), to red (*rubedo*) or gold (variously referred to as *aurum potabile* [“drinkable gold”], the *Elixir Vitae*, or the Philosopher’s Stone).⁴⁷ Lyndy Abraham explains:

The first operation of the opus requires a mild, warm, moderate fire which continues until the matter of the Stone in the vessel turns black (*nigredo*) and then white (*albedo*). With the appearance of the white colour, the heat is increased until the Stone is dried up and calcined. When the matter is completely dried, the fire is made even stronger and more fierce until the Stone is transformed into its perfect ruby red colour (*rubedo*). (76-77)

Thus, the agency of fire is essential to the completion of the multiple stages of the *opus alchymicum*.

Regarding the metaphysical component of the opus, Eliade contends that alchemists subscribed to the notion that “the Stone or the Elixir completes and consummates the work of Nature” (166). He elaborates on this idea by saying, “the [alchemical] operation was a continuation of the aspirations of the *artifex* of prehistoric times who played with fire in order to change Nature, to create new forms, in short, to collaborate with the Creator, to perfect his creation” (170). In Eliade’s view, the alchemists evinced a belief that “by conquering Nature through the physico-chemical sciences, man can become Nature’s rival without being the slave of Time” (174).

Through the practice of alchemy, Hawthorne characters such as Aylmer in “The Birth-Mark” seek to evade the natural law of human mortality. Indeed, Hawthorne explicitly states that Georgiana’s birthmark symbolizes her most human imperfection, her susceptibility to death. In seeking to erase that mark of mortality, Aylmer seeks to erase the Fall—an action that smacks of *hubris*. Raymona Hull observes, therefore, that “In almost every work [of the Hawthorne canon] the alchemist, whether approached humorously or seriously, is treated unfavorably” (103).⁴⁸ While it is true that Aylmer and the other alchemists of Hawthorne’s fiction do not succeed in their attempts to subvert the natural order, the fact remains that the notion of a quest for immortality marked Hawthorne’s entire literary career—stories as early as “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment” (1837) and works as late as the four fragmentary romances that he was working on at the end of his life revolve around this central theme. Certainly, Hawthorne does condemn the quest for the Elixir Vitae as immoral, but he also returns inexorably to this theme, indicating an abiding interest in the idea of immortality—one that he was incapable of ignoring, particularly

near the end of his life when he began to feel the effects of age and illness. Like Hawthorne himself, the alchemist, as Eliade maintains in *The Forge and the Crucible*, “was afraid of Time”; just as the adept “longed for the beatitude of paradise, aspired to eternity and pursued immortality, the *elixir vitae*” (174-75), Hawthorne returned again and again to the theme of alchemical transformation and the Elixir of Life.

For the moment, I would like to consider the cases of two singularly unsuccessful alchemists in Hawthorne’s fiction—Dr. Cacaphodel of “The Great Carbuncle” (1837) and Aylmer of “The Birth-Mark” (1843). Dr. Cacaphodel is unflatteringly described as “a little elderly personage, wearing a high crowned hat, shaped somewhat like a crucible . . . who had wilted and dried himself into a mummy, by continually stooping over charcoal furnaces, and inhaling unwholesome fumes, during his researches in chemistry and alchymy” (IX: 151). He leaves the fires of his laboratory behind in order to seek in person the legendary Great Carbuncle of the White Mountains.⁴⁹

Obviously a symbol for the Philosopher’s Stone, the Great Carbuncle is connected with the *rubedo* or “rubification” stage of the *opus alchymicum*. Lyndy Abraham explains, “At the rubedo the silvery moonlight and dawn light of the albedo phase develop into the golden illumination of the midday sun, symbolizing the attainment of the philosopher’s stone, the attainment of the consciousness of God, the goal of the opus” (174). Thus, Hawthorne writes that although “it might seem so easy to follow to its source a light that overpowered the moon, and almost matched the sun” (IX: 153), the Carbuncle had eluded all seekers. Abraham goes on to assert regarding the *rubedo*, “At this point the limited lunar consciousness, the brain, receives the full illumination of the spiritual sun” (174). Dr. Cacaphodel, however, fails to grasp the

spiritual significance of the Stone. Calling the Great Carbuncle the “most precious gem that ever was concocted in the laboratory of Nature,” he reveals his purpose in seeking it:

Immediately on obtaining it—for I have a presentiment . . . that the prize is reserved to crown my scientific reputation—I shall return to Europe, and employ my remaining years in reducing it to its first elements. A portion of the stone will I grind to impalpable powder; other parts shall be dissolved in acids, or whatever solvents will act upon so admirable a composition; and the remainder I design to melt in the crucible, or set on fire with the blow-pipe. By these various methods, I shall gain an accurate analysis, and finally bestow the result of my labours upon the world, in a folio volume. (IX: 154)

Dr. Cacaphodel’s reference to “the laboratory of Nature” is particularly telling, because it is his obsession with the scientific method and with the fame he believes his scientific “discoveries” will bring that blinds him to the attainment of his *desideratum*. Having sought the Philosopher’s Stone for his entire lifetime, he plans, upon finding it, to reverse the alchemical process. By working backwards toward the *nigredo*, he will reduce the glorious Stone to its worthless base elements.

Unsurprisingly, the narrator relates that the ambitious alchemist “returned to his laboratory with a prodigious fragment of granite, which he ground to powder, dissolved in acids, melted in the crucible, and burnt with the blow-pipe, and published the result of his experiments in one of the heaviest folios of the day” (164). Because Dr. Cacaphodel never comprehends the true object of his quest, the narrator comments sardonically, “And, for all these purposes, the gem itself could not have answered better than the granite” (164). To Dr. Cacaphodel, the Stone is merely a stone; thus, he works regressively, in *opposition* to the process of spiritual transformation.

“The Birth-Mark” represents a further exploration of the tension between scientific analysis and spiritual transformation in alchemy. Like Dr. Cacaphodel, Aylmer emphasizes science over spirituality, but with even more disastrous results. Specifically, Aylmer casts too cold and scientific an eye on human relationships, as if they were to be concocted or perfected in a laboratory.⁵⁰ Though Aylmer had once “made experience of a spiritual affinity, more attractive than any chemical one” by forsaking his laboratory, washing off the “furnace-smoke,” and removing the “stain of acids from his fingers” in order to “persuade[] a beautiful woman to become his wife” (X: 36), his interest in Georgiana wanes as he becomes increasingly obsessed with the birthmark on her cheek. The narrator reveals the reasoning behind Aylmer’s growing distaste for the crimson mark that mars his wife’s beauty: “[S]eeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable It was the fatal flaw of humanity, which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain” (38-39). In short, the birthmark becomes a “frightful object” for Aylmer because he “select[s] it as the symbol of his wife’s liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death” (39). Dedicated to correcting this “defect” at any cost, Aylmer resolves to erase the mark of mortality through alchemical means, designating Georgiana as the base matter of his experiment.

Unfortunately for Georgiana, Aylmer proves to be a poor practitioner of alchemy. He sets to work, using fire as a transmuting agent. When Georgiana enters her husband’s laboratory, she immediately notices “the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which, by the quantities of soot clustered above it, seemed to have been burning for ages” (50). Though Aylmer possesses all the trappings—“retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research” (50)—he fails as an alchemist because, like Dr. Cacaphodel, he

tries to reverse the alchemical process. He is supposed to be making an Elixir of Life, a single draught of which will confer immortality, but he produces instead a deadly poison with which he may “apportion the lifetime of any mortal” he chooses. Furthermore, he seeks to bleach Georgiana’s birthmark, which manifests as “a crimson stain upon the snow” of her pale cheek, to a whiteness that is untainted by red. However, in alchemy, snow represents the *albedo* phase, and the reddening of the white matter signifies the coming of the successive phase, the *rubedo*, which is often equated with the attainment of the precious Philosopher’s Stone or *Elixir Vitae* (Abraham 174-75). According to the *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, “As the heat of the fire is increased, the divine red tincture flushes the white stone with its rich red colour, a process sometimes likened to blushing” (Abraham 174). Therefore, when he attempts to eradicate the red birthmark from the field of white, Aylmer turns the *opus alchymicum* on its head, creating death in place of life, and sending his wife to a premature grave.

The regressive color sequence in “The Birth-Mark” indicates Aylmer’s fundamental misunderstanding of the entire alchemical process, particularly its spiritual component. Through his research and experimentation upon Georgiana, Aylmer moves increasingly farther away from attaining the goal of immortality; indeed, he *hastens* the natural course of human mortality through his actions. Like Dr. Cacaphodel, Aylmer does, in fact, “murder to dissect.” Notably, however, *The Marble Faun* (1860), written roughly two decades after “The Great Carbuncle” and “The Birth-Mark,” provides a much more positive view of alchemy. As we shall see, in his last published novel, Hawthorne chooses to focus not on the mechanical or “scientific” procedures of alchemy, but rather on the spiritual symbolism of the hermetic art—on the ways in which human interaction and worldly events may serve as catalysts for spiritual growth.

The Marble Faun, A Convergence of Themes

Interestingly, *The Marble Faun* contains references not only to alchemy, but also to the story of Eden and to Zoroastrianism. Indeed, the three traditions are masterfully interwoven to create a narrative that reveals an indisputable connection between fire and immortality. Critics have long acknowledged the centrality of the Eden story and the theme of *felix culpa* in *The Marble Faun*.⁵¹ Like many of Hawthorne's works, *The Marble Faun* features two heroines: Miriam, the mysterious, experienced, and sexual Dark Lady, and Hilda, the universally comprehended, innocent, and spiritual Light Lady. Most scholarly interpretations to date have followed Miltonic tradition in identifying Miriam, who is associated with temptation and guilt, as the narrative's Eve figure.⁵² While not entirely incorrect, these readings neglect important evidence offered by Hawthorne in the novel's first paragraph, in which he describes a statue of Eve that stands in the Roman Capitol, asserting: "Here . . . is seen a symbol . . . of the Human Soul, with its choice of Innocence or Evil close at hand, in the pretty figure of a child, clasping a dove to her bosom, but assaulted by a snake" (IV: 5). By mentioning this artistic representation of Eve, Hawthorne directs readers' attention to the fact that Eve had a choice. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the sculpture of the "Dying Gladiator, just sinking into his death-swoon" and the statue of Eve in the novel's opening paragraph, Hawthorne emphasizes the gravity of Eve's forthcoming decision: the price for disobedience is the curse of mortality. While Milton's Eve chooses disobedience and remains forever stained with sin, Hawthorne's Eve may elect to ally herself with "Innocence" or with "Evil." Thus, Hawthorne splits the Eve archetype into two characters—Hilda and Miriam, the former being linked with innocence and the latter with guilt.⁵³

Hawthorne provides readers with clues regarding each woman's innocence or guilt through his use of color symbolism. Hilda, for example, is consistently linked with the color

white, which signifies holiness, sexual purity, and innocence. In contrast, Miriam is frequently associated with red, which represents sinfulness, sexual passion, and guilt. Hawthorne further distinguishes between the two heroines by linking them to two separate qualities of fire—light and heat. In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard explains the relationship between these two properties of the element, saying:

[T]he true idealization of fire is arrived at by following the phenomenological dialectic of fire and light . . . [which] rests on a phenomenal contradiction: sometimes fire shines without burning; then its value is all purity Light is not only a symbol but an agent of purity It awaits the soul. It is . . . the basis for spiritual illumination. (106-07)

It follows, then, that Hilda, who is linked to platonic idealization, or spiritual love, should be associated with light, and Miriam, who is connected to sexual passion, or physical love, should be affiliated with heat.

I trace the origin of Hawthorne's dualistic notion of the Eve archetype to his reading of a popular eighteenth-century biographical dictionary compiled by Pierre Bayle. According to the charge records of the Salem Athenaeum, Hawthorne borrowed, and presumably read, all five folio volumes of *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle* (1734) during the early years of his career (Kesselring 174).⁵⁴ Bayle's entry on "Eve," which occupies nine folio pages, contains references to two widely divergent conceptions of Eve, as well as to *The Marble Faun's* major theme of *felix culpa*. Specifically, the biographer's first depiction of Eve, which characterizes her as a sexual temptress, represents a popular interpretation of the Eden myth, whereas his second portrayal of the Eve figure, which emphasizes her purity and innocence, suggests parallels to Zoroastrianism. In addition, Bayle's rendering of the *felix culpa* motif

points to the novel's focus on *transformation*, a concept which resides at the heart of the alchemical tradition.

Miriam, or Paradise Lost

One "extravagant Fable of the Rabbins" related by Bayle is that "Eve was formed out of her Husband's Tail." According to this story, God initially gave Adam a tail, and afterwards deeming it unattractive, cut it off and used it to form a woman "so beautiful, that the Prince of all the Angels fell desperately in love with her; which was the Cause of his falling from a State of Innocence" (*Dictionary* 855). In other words, Eve tempts and seduces *Satan*, not the reverse. Bayle elaborates on this rabbinic portrayal of Eve as the object of Satan's sexual desire, recounting: "[The Serpent] saw Adam and Eve enjoying one another, as the Laws of Marriage allowed them to do; he saw them both naked in this Exercise; such an Object excited very irregular Passions in him; he wished to be in Adam's place, and hoped he should enjoy that Happiness, if she should become a Widow" (851).⁵⁵ Although Bayle condemns this interpretation, Hawthorne relies upon it heavily. Speculations about Donatello's "caudal appendage" clearly link him to the figure of Adam, and the jealous struggle between Donatello (Adam) and Miriam's Model (the Serpent) over Miriam's favor may likewise find its source in this narrative. Following this interpretation, Miriam, like Eve, is a sexual object, who must be guilty of great wrong to have attracted so much attention.

In *The Marble Faun*, Miriam's passionate nature often reveals itself through her art. In commenting on Miriam's paintings, the narrator observes: "Whatever technical merit they lacked, its absence was more than supplied by a *warmth* and *passionateness* which she had the faculty of putting into her productions, and which all the world could feel" (IV: 20-21, emphasis

added). Later, when Kenyon offers her his hand, which is stained with sculptor's clay, Miriam states: "I will not touch clay; it is earthy and human . . . I have come to try whether there is any calm and *coolness* among your marbles. My own art is too nervous, too *passionate*, too full of agitation, for me to work at it whole days together, without intervals of repose" (116-17, emphasis added). In both of the foregoing excerpts, Hawthorne describes Miriam's art as full of heat and passion. Therefore, she laments to Kenyon: "You turn feverish men into cool, quiet marble. What a blessed change for them! Would you could do as much for me!" (119).

Of course, *The Marble Faun's* dark heroine grapples with Satan not in the Garden of Eden, but in the Catacomb of St. Calixtus in Rome. As the four principal characters—Miriam, Donatello, Hilda, and Kenyon—explore the subterranean tomb, their guide tells them that "the first [man] that went astray here was a pagan of old Rome, who hid himself in order to . . . betray the blessed Saints, who then dwelt and worshipped in these dismal places" (26). When Miriam herself goes astray in the catacombs, she encounters a spectral figure, whom the guide judges to be the pagan of the legend, and she later tells the following fanciful tale of her encounter:

[S]he would aver that the spectre (who had been an artist in his mortal lifetime) had promised to teach her a long lost, but invaluable secret of old Roman fresco-painting. The knowledge of this process would place Miriam at the head of modern art; the sole condition being agreed upon, that she should return with him into his sightless gloom, after enriching a certain extent of stuccoed wall with the most brilliant and lovely designs. (34)

The "pagan" of the legend—who actually turns out to be Miriam's Model, a sinister figure from her past—clearly represents Satan. His stated purpose is to "betray . . . the Saints," and he offers Miriam a Faustian pact that involves selling her soul in return for knowledge of techniques that

will grant her artistic immortality.⁵⁶ The themes of betrayal, temptation, and desire for forbidden knowledge all parallel important aspects of the Eden story.

In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne chooses to portray the Fall in curiously literal terms: innocence vanishes forever as Miriam's Model falls—or rather, is cast—from the precipice of the Tarpeian Rock.⁵⁷ When the Model accosts Miriam, Donatello is driven by the fires of passionate jealousy and wrath to commit the murder. Immediately following the act, Donatello's eyes “[blaze] with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him,” and the narrator explains that this passionate impulse gained him his manhood, but only at the cost of forfeiting his innocence. Like an indignant Adam, Donatello insists that Miriam prompted his action, that he only “did what [her] eyes bade [him] do” (172). Miriam's reflections upon her involvement in the murder are also presented in language that highlights her blazing passions:

Looking back into the frenzy and turmoil of the scene just acted, she could not deny . . . that a wild joy had flamed up in her heart, when she beheld her persecutor in his mortal peril. Was it horror?—or ecstasy?—or both in one? Be the emotion what it might, it had blazed up more madly when Donatello flung his victim off the cliff, and more and more, while his shriek went quivering downward. (172-73)

The thrill quickly dissipates, though, for as the narrator explains, “With the dead thump upon the stones below, had come an unutterable horror” (173). However exciting it was to behold her tormentor in “mortal peril,” it is horrifying to witness his actual death. As Miriam stares down at the “heap of mortality,” watching in vain for movement of any kind, she begins to realize the dire consequences of her actions. As the narrator observes, “How icy cold is the heart, when the fervour, the wild ecstasy of passion, has faded away, and sunk down among the dead ashes of the fire that blazed so fiercely, and was fed by the very substance of its life!” (178).

While exploring the effects of the murder, Hawthorne further develops the Eden parallel by twice alluding to the Serpent. First, Miriam exclaims to Donatello, “We two slew yonder wretch. The deed knots us together for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent,” and then the narrator opines, “Their deed—the crime which Donatello wrought, and Miriam accepted on the instant—had wreathed itself, as she said, like a serpent, in inextricable links about both their souls, and drew them into one, by its terrible contractile power” (174). Despite this claim that Donatello “wrought” and Miriam only “accepted,” Hawthorne’s judgment falls more harshly upon Miriam as instigator than on Donatello as agent when he writes: “She turned to him—the guilty, blood-stained, lonely woman—she turned to her fellow-criminal, the youth, so lately innocent, whom she had drawn into her doom” (173). Here stands Eve in her guise as the mother of all evil, as the woman whose fiery passions bring the curse of mortality into Paradise.⁵⁸

Hawthorne emphasizes Miriam’s characteristic “warmth” and “passionateness” by associating her with the color red and with blazing heat. In describing the bond between Miriam and her Model, who knows her darkest secrets, the narrator says:

Marvellous it was, to see the hopelessness with which . . . she resigned herself to the thralldom in which he held her. That iron chain, of which some of the massive links were round her feminine waist, and the others in his ruthless hand—or which perhaps bound the pair together by a bond equally torturing to each—must have been forged in some such unhallowed furnace as is only kindled by evil passions and fed by evil deeds. (93)

The fire that burns within Miriam, then, has its source in an “unhallowed furnace,” which only “evil passions” can “kindle”; her sketch of Jael driving the stake through Sisera’s head hints at her participation in “evil deeds.” The narrator relates: “It was dashed off with remarkable power . . . as if Miriam had been standing by, when Jael gave the first stroke of her murderous

hammer—or as if she herself were Jael, and felt irresistibly impelled to make her bloody confession, in this guise” (43). The redness of blood colors the sketch of Jael, suggesting Miriam’s connection with bloody acts of murder. Thus, Miriam’s Model accuses her by asserting: “[M]en have said, that this white hand had once a crimson stain” (97).

The connection between scarlet, heat, and sexual passion also links Miriam to an earlier Dark Lady—Hester Prynne. Hawthorne initially identifies the two characters as Dark Ladies through his portrayal of their physical features. Hester Prynne is depicted as follows: “She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes” (I: 53). Miriam is likewise described as having dark features:

She . . . had what was usually thought to be a Jewish aspect; a complexion in which there was no roseate bloom, yet neither was it pale; dark eyes, into which you might look as deeply as your glance would go, and still be conscious of a depth that you had not sounded She had black, abundant hair, with none of the vulgar glossiness of other women’s sable locks; if she were really of Jewish blood, then this was Jewish hair, and a dark glory such as crowns no Christian maiden’s head. (IV: 48)

Aside from similarities of appearance, the women share the burden of a terrible secret that cannot be revealed.⁵⁹ When Miriam seeks to rid herself of the secret by telling Kenyon, she confesses: “There is a secret in my heart that *burns* me!—that tortures me!” (128, emphasis added). Miriam later refers to this secret, which burns her breast much as the scarlet letter had seared that of Hester Prynne, as “my dark-red carbuncle—red as blood” (130). This link between redness and searing heat recalls Hester’s sin of passion, and it represents an extension of Miriam’s inner

nature. Appropriately, when Miriam appears in Rome to reassure Kenyon prior to Hilda's disappearance, Miriam wears "a gem . . . on her bosom . . . that glimmer[s] with a clear, red luster" (396). The narrator asserts: "Somehow or other, this coloured light seemed an emanation of herself, as if all that was passionate and glowing, in her native disposition, had crystallized upon her breast . . . in sympathy with some emotion of her heart" (396).

Appropriately enough, Miriam chooses the scarlet costume of a *contadina* to wear both on the Roman *campagna* and to the Carnival. Her costume, which the narrator describes as "largely kindled up with scarlet, and decorated with gold embroidery" (426), again recalls Hester Prynne's blazing scarlet "A," framed by fantastical gold embroidery. It is fitting that the verse accompanying the letter "A" in the *New England Primer* (1805) was "In Adam's Fall / We sinned all" (Shannon, "New") since Hester and Miriam both represent highly sexualized Eve figures. Through his choice of imagery, Hawthorne suggests that they are largely to blame for the "Fall" from innocence into guilt experienced by their respective lovers, Dimmesdale and Donatello.

Like the scarlet "A," the fiery sword which God places at the east of Eden to protect the tree of life and prevent Adam and Eve's reentry into the Garden is emblematic of the very passion that it punishes. Genesis 3:22-24 states:

[T]he Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. [KJV]

Hawthorne alludes to this biblical passage twice in *The Marble Faun*. In the first instance, he writes about the disillusioning of innocents such as Hilda, saying: “In due time, some mortal, whom they reverence too highly, is commissioned by Providence to teach them this direful lesson; he perpetrates a sin; and Adam falls anew, and Paradise, heretofore in unfaded bloom, is lost again, and closed forever, with the fiery swords gleaming at its gates” (204). In the second, he muses upon the “feverish influence” that haunts the “beautiful lawns and woodlands, around the suburban villas” surrounding Rome, maintaining: “What the flaming sword was to the first Eden, such is the malaria to these sweet gardens and groves. We may wander through them, of an afternoon, it is true; but they cannot be made a home and a reality, and to sleep among them is death” (326-27). The former excerpt emphasizes the connection between the fiery swords and the loss of Eden, while the latter explicitly links the flaming, phallic sword with the curse of mortality. If man has lost his chance at immortal life, clearly, the passionate natures of Eve, of Miriam, and of Hester are to blame. According to this version of the Eden myth, fire seems to stand between humankind and the promise of immortality.⁶⁰

Hilda, or Paradise Sought

Typically, however, Hawthorne refuses to advance a single interpretation of events; instead, he creates Hilda, a second Eve character whose motivations and actions stand in direct opposition to those of Miriam. In developing this character, he follows an alternative story related in *Bayle's Dictionary*—namely, that Eve “instituted a Religious Order of certain young Women, who were always to remain Virgins, and to preserve unextinguished the Fire that fell from Heaven upon Abel's Sacrifice, and which was called Vesta, or the Flame of God” (*Dictionary* 854). Following the legend, then, Eve becomes the mother of the Order of Vestal

Virgins. In this incarnation, Eve is not a dangerous, sexual woman like Miriam, but an innocent who, following the model of Hilda, remains deeply devoted to spirituality. Hawthorne draws a distinction here between Miriam, who *caused* the murder of the Model to occur, and Hilda, who merely *witnessed* the sinful deed, and later sought purification through confession and through devotion to the Virgin's flame.

Although Hilda purportedly trims the lamp atop her tower in honor of the Virgin Mary, her connection to the Vestal Virgins is supported by numerous textual details. The Vestals were consecrated priestesses who served the goddess Vesta at the oldest temple in Rome, the city in which Hawthorne locates the principal action of *The Marble Faun*. After a long period of training, a Vestal Virgin would spend ten years watching over the sacred fire kept continually burning on the altar of Vesta (287). Hilda, a maiden herself, likewise undertakes the duty of maintaining the perpetual flame at a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Fittingly, Hilda says regarding the Virgin's flame, "It has for me a religious significance . . . and yet I am no Catholic" (IV: 112). Of course, Hilda alludes here to the fact that she is a Protestant, but Hawthorne's deliberately ambiguous phrasing also hints at an association with the Order of Vestal Virgins.

Naturally, each Vestal Virgin took a vow of celibacy at her initiation, and the Romans boasted that during the one thousand year history of the Order, only eighteen women suffered punishment for violation of this pledge (Zimmerman 287). Indeed, the honesty and integrity of a Vestal remained above reproach, and Roman law accorded her certain privileges based on her revered position: a priestess swore no oath in court because her honesty was taken for granted, and she could pardon a criminal on the way to execution with a mere word (Zimmerman 287). The Order of Vestal Virgins, then, is associated with the concept of immortality not only due to

the Vestals' maintenance of an ever-living flame, but also because each Vestal literally possessed the power to restore life to a condemned criminal.

In accordance with the esteem in which the Vestals were held by the Roman populace, a priestess of Vesta was offered a place of honor at all public festivals (Zimmerman 287). Thus, when Hilda appears at the Carnival depicted in the final pages of *The Marble Faun*, she shares a "private balcony" with an Abbate and three "English people of respectability" (IV: 452). Her beauty "attract[s] the gaze of many," and the revelers shower her with "bouquets and bon-bons— freshest blossoms and sweetest sugar-plums, sweets to the sweet" (453). Interestingly, any Vestal who retired after thirty years of service was released from her vow of celibacy and allowed to marry if she wished (Zimmerman 287). Hilda, therefore, does not violate the traditions of the Order when she consents to marry Kenyon. Hawthorne writes regarding Hilda's decision to retire from her duties: "Another hand must henceforth trim the lamp before the Virgin's shrine; for Hilda was coming down from her old tower, to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (IV: 461). The notion of Hilda as a "household Saint" who will be revered at "her husband's fireside" not only carries connotations of domestic happiness, but also establishes a final connection to the Order of Vestal Virgins since Vesta, who was worshipped through the safeguarding of a perpetual flame, was the Roman goddess of hearth and home (Zimmerman 286).

Hilda's commitment to preserving the sacred flame also suggests a link with the ancient religious tradition of Zoroastrianism. In "Fire Worshippers," Hawthorne explicitly affirms the association between the religious practices of the Order of the Vestal Virgins and those of the Parsees when he reports, "Like the Roman Vestals, they keep a perpetual fire in their temples, feeding it with odoriferous woods, of great value" (494). The parallel does not end there,

however, as the description of the “old tower” with its “lofty shrine” where Hilda maintains the Virgin’s flame also contains details relevant to Zoroastrian religious rituals. Hawthorne writes that “for centuries, a lamp has been burning before the Virgin’s image, at noon, at midnight, and at all hours of the twenty-four, and must be kept burning forever, as long as the tower shall stand” (IV: 52). Like an *Atash Bahram*, or sacred fire of the Zoroastrians, the fire under Hilda’s supervision requires attention during all watches of the day. Hawthorne even refers indirectly to the Parsees’ “odoriferous woods” when he has Miriam say to Hilda, “You breathe sweet air, above all the evil scents of Rome” (53).

The author does, however, make minor changes in his depiction of Parsee religious practice. Hilda’s tower—which would typically represent a *dakhma*, or “tower of silence” for exposure of the dead—is a place of life rather than death for most of the novel, and the birds of prey that would usually consume the corpse have been transformed into doves, which symbolize Hilda’s innocence and incorruptibility. Even so, Hilda’s tower remains a place of worship, and her pious dedication to preserving the perpetual flame resembles that of a Zoroastrian priest. The narrator provides readers with a glimpse of Kenyon’s thoughts regarding her devotion:

Kenyon knew the sanctity which Hilda . . . imputed to this shrine. He was aware of the profound feeling of responsibility . . . with which her conscience had been impressed, when she became the occupant of her aerial chamber, and undertook the task of keeping the consecrated lamp a-light. There was an accuracy and a certainty about Hilda’s movements . . . which made it as possible and safe to rely upon the timely and careful trimming of this lamp, (if she were in life, and able to creep up the steps,) as upon the rising of tomorrow’s sun, with luster undiminished from to-day. (399)

The metonymic link between the flame and the rising sun is particularly interesting given the fact that Zoroastrians believe both the sun and fire to be earthly emanations of Ahura Mazda, or natural reflections of the light of God.

In Zoroastrianism, either the sun or a sacred fire can serve as an appropriate *qibla*—object of attention, or focus of meditation—for praying (Kotwal and Boyd xv); thus it is, perhaps, that when Hilda and Kenyon visit the Pantheon near the end of the novel, their collective attention is drawn toward the “central aperture” that remains open to the sky, admitting sunlight. Hilda soliloquizes:

I like . . . to look at the bright, blue sky, roofing the edifice where the builders left it open. It is very delightful . . . to see the masses of white cloud float over the opening, and then the sunshine fall through it again, fitfully, as it does now. Would it be any wonder if we were to see angels hovering there . . . with genial, heavenly faces, not intercepting the light, but only transmuting it into beautiful colours? Look at the broad, golden beam—a sloping cataract of sunlight—which comes down from the aperture and rests upon the shrine (457)

Despite being surrounded by “arched recesses and stately altars, formerly dedicated to heathen gods, but Christianized through twelve centuries gone by,” and to the neglect of her stated purpose of “pay[ing] . . . homage at the tomb of Raphael” (456-57), Hilda focuses on the *sunlight* spilling through the aperture. Rather than approaching the shrines to pray, she turns toward the sun, one of the earthly representatives of Ahura Mazda. When he replies to Hilda’s speech, Kenyon likewise recalls Zoroastrian beliefs by saying: “Then, Hilda, . . . the only place in the Pantheon for you and me to kneel, is on the pavement beneath the central aperture. If we pray at a Saint’s shrine, we shall give utterance to earthly wishes; but if we pray, face to face with the

Deity, we shall feel it impious to petition for aught that is narrow and selfish” (458). At this point, it remains unclear if the “Deity” to whom Kenyon refers is the Christian God or Ahura Mazda. However, in a certain sense, whether Hilda prays before the flame atop her tower, in front of holy tapers in a cathedral, or along with Kenyon, to the sun itself, she follows Parsee religious practice because both the sun and fire may serve as legitimate *qibla*, or objects of attention for worship.

Although Hawthorne conflates pagan, Christian, and Zoroastrian symbolism in his portrayal of Hilda, he consistently associates her with the color white and with light, as opposed to heat, in order to emphasize her purity and spirituality. Hilda’s tower, for example, is tenanted by “a flock of white doves” who are fed by “A fair young girl, dressed in white” (52). The narrator comments upon the relationship between Hilda and the doves who share her dwelling, saying, “They soon became as familiar with the fair-haired Saxon girl as if she were a born sister of their brood; and her customary white robe bore such an analogy to their snowy plumage, that the confraternity of artists called Hilda The Dove, and recognized her aerial apartment as The Dove-cote” (56).⁶¹ The dove’s traditional association with the Holy Spirit strengthens the link between whiteness and holiness. Hilda is therefore described as having an “innocent, delicate, white soul” (67), and as being Miriam’s “white-souled friend” (202). As a result, while asserting her own innocence, Miriam claims that her “conscience is still as white as Hilda’s” (128). When, near the end of the novel, Hawthorne speaks of the “white radiance of [Hilda’s] soul” (385), he emphasizes both symbolic associations with her character—whiteness and light.

Whether a Vestal Virgin, a Catholic devotee of the Virgin Mary, or dutiful Parsee worshipper, Hilda remains intimately associated with the flame which she bears responsibility for maintaining. For example, Hilda’s would-be lover Kenyon says to her:

Dear Hilda, this is a perplexed and troubled world! It soothes me inexpressibly to think of you in your tower, with white doves and white thoughts for your companions, so high above us all, and with the Virgin for your household friend. You know not how far it throws its light—that lamp which you keep burning at her shrine! I passed beneath the tower, last night, and the ray cheered me—because you lighted it. (112)

Indeed, the young woman's fate becomes so intricately bound up with the life of the flame that when, during the period of Hilda's mysterious disappearance, Kenyon sees "the flame flicker and expire," he fears that Hilda is dead. In part, this connection is driven by what George Lakoff and Mark Turner, in *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (1989), identify as one of the basic conceptual metaphors recognized by all human beings—"LIFE IS A FLAME" (31) or "LIFE IS A FIRE" (52). However, the fact that Hilda is personally associated with the holy and "never-dying flame" of the Virgin's shrine is no accident, given her links to the Vestal priestesses and Zoroastrianism.

As revealing as Miriam's sketch of Jael, Hilda's copies of the works of the "Old Masters" underscore her connection to light. In discussing the types of subjects Hilda chooses to paint, the narrator explains:

It was not Hilda's general practice to attempt reproducing the whole of a great picture, but to select some high, noble, and delicate portion of it, in which the spirit and essence of the picture culminated—the Virgin's celestial sorrow, for example, or a hovering Angel, *imbued with immortal light*, or a Saint, with the *glow of Heaven* in his dying face;—and these would be rendered with her whole soul. If a picture had *darkened* into an indistinct *shadow*, through time and neglect . . . she seemed to possess the faculty of seeing it in its pristine glory. The copy would come from her hands with what the

beholder felt must be the *light* which the Old Master had left upon the original in bestowing his final and most ethereal touch. (58-59, emphasis added)

Significantly, the narrator says that many viewers of Hilda's work "felt inclined to believe that the spirits of the Old Masters were hovering over Hilda, and guiding her delicate white hand" (58). Undoubtedly, it is Hilda's "whiteness," or innocence, that permits her to render holy subjects "imbued with immortal light," or to restore the "pristine glory" to works that have "darkened into . . . shadow," just as Miriam's "redness" enables her to capture the moment of Jael's bloody attack upon Sisera.

In fact, a young Italian artist highlights this selfsame contrast when he paints a portrait that "represent[s] Hilda as gazing, with sad and earnest horror, at a blood-spot which she seemed just then to have discovered on her white robe" (330). The portrait—titled *Innocence, dying of a Blood-stain!*—gently spoofs Hilda's shock and dismay at learning of Miriam's involvement in the Model's untimely death. In spite of this jest, Hawthorne takes a much more serious tone when having Hilda recount the reasons why she cannot forgive Miriam or continue to associate with the guilty woman. Hilda explains: "If I were one of God's angels, with a nature incapable of stain, and garments that never could be spotted, I would keep ever at your side, and try to lead you upward. But I am a poor, lonely girl, whom God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as when she put it on." Clearly distressed, Hilda speaks further to Miriam, saying: "Your powerful magnetism would be too much for me. The pure, white atmosphere, in which I try to discern what things are good and true, would be discoloured" (208). Hilda maintains, then, that her white robes of innocence would be "stained" by a friendship with Miriam. In the foregoing passage, the carefully chosen term "discoloured" heightens readers' awareness of the color symbolism that

separates the principal female characters. Appropriately, when Hilda appears at the Roman Carnival, “She [is] dressed in a white domino, and look[s] pale” (451). Hilda’s costume—which differs markedly from that of the scarlet-clad Miriam—emphasizes her piety and goodness, as does her position on a “private balcony” elevated far above the “crowd and confusion” of the Carnival.

By associating Miriam with scarlet and heat and Hilda with white and light, Hawthorne draws a strong distinction between the two disparate incarnations of Eve defined by *Bayle’s Dictionary*. As Bachelard points out, light carries quite different connotations than heat, though both are properties of fire.⁶² Miriam burns with sexual passion and energy, which she channels into her original artistic works, whereas Hilda shines with holy light and innocence, which allow her insight into the sacred subjects of painters like Raphael. If Hawthorne’s depiction of Miriam places her in the lineage of Dark Ladies such as Hester Prynne, his characterization of Hilda identifies her as a descendent, albeit a more overtly spiritual one, of Light Ladies such as Phoebe Pyncheon. Both fair-haired maidens, Hilda and Phoebe are frequently connected with images of sunlight, which, among other things, suggests a “sunny” or cheerful disposition. One of Kenyon’s observations regarding Hilda—“He could scarcely tell whether she was imbued with sunshine, or whether it was a glow of happiness that shone out of her” (364)—could just as well have been spoken by Holgrave about Phoebe. The same could be said for the final sentence of *The Marble Faun*, which explains that, in spite of her concerns about the fates of Miriam and Donatello, “Hilda had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountain-tops” (462). Furthermore, both Phoebe and Hilda fit the profile of the “household saint,” and their respective marriages bring *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* to generally positive conclusions.⁶³ Phoebe’s cheerful domesticity brings hope for a healing of the rift between the

Pyncheon and Maule families, and Hilda's earnest devotion represents the chance for a restoration of what was lost in Eden. Just as the curse of mortality proceeds from Miriam's guilt, so does the hope of humankind lie in Hilda's initial innocence, and in her subsequent desire for confession and absolution. Thus, the narrator of *The Marble Faun* concludes that "[B]ad as the world is said to have grown, Innocence continues to make a Paradise around itself, and keep it still unfallen" (387).

Donatello, or Paradise Regained

In Donatello, Hawthorne creates a character intended to epitomize such prelapsarian innocence. Having offered readers a glimpse of Adam before the Fall, the author examines the ways in which Donatello changes as a result of his pivotal role in the Model's death. If, in his portrayal of Miriam and Hilda, Hawthorne wrestles with the notion of whether Eve was to blame for humankind's fall from grace, in his depiction of Donatello, he struggles with the following question regarding the consequences of the events in Eden: was the Fall fortunate or unfortunate? In other words, did Adam benefit from his initiation into knowledge of evil? Surprisingly, given his deep antipathy toward the curse of human mortality, Hawthorne argues that the Fall *was* fortunate.⁶⁴ However, the fact that the author employs alchemical imagery to chronicle the Count of Monte Beni's transformation suggests that immortality will remain at the center of Hawthorne's imagination as he describes Donatello's evolution. Indeed, as Mircea Eliade explains in *The Forge and the Crucible*, "The gestation of metals in the bowels of the earth obeys the same temporal rhythms as those which bind man to his carnal and fallen condition; to hasten the growth of metals by the operation of alchemy is tantamount to absolving them from the laws of Time" (114). Thus, the practice of alchemy—or, one could argue, the prominent use

of alchemical symbolism—implies an inherent interest in combating the forces of time, decay, and death.

For his characterization of Donatello, Hawthorne again draws upon *Bayle's Dictionary* as a source. Regarding the theory of *felix culpa*, Bayle cites a rabbinical tradition which maintains that “Adam did very well to eat of the forbidden Fruit, because without it Man would have been like a Beast, not discerning good and evil, and would have had no pre-eminence above the Brutes but the faculty of speaking” (*Dictionary* 854). Donatello, sometimes called “the Faun” because of his resemblance to the Faun of Praxiteles, is initially described in language that largely echoes Bayle's entry. After seeing Praxiteles' statue, Miriam remarks:

Imagine . . . a real being, similar to this mythic Faun; how happy, how genial, how satisfactory would be his life, enjoying the warm, sensuous, earthy side of Nature; reveling in the merriment of woods and streams; living as our four-footed kindred do—as mankind did in its innocent childhood, before sin, sorrow, or morality itself, had ever been thought of! (13)

In particular, Hawthorne's phrase “living as our four-footed kindred do” recalls Bayle's assertion that “Man would have been like a Beast,” while Bayle's “not discerning good and evil” reappears as “before sin, sorrow, or morality itself, had ever been thought of!”

Hawthorne depicts Donatello's transition from innocence into knowledge through alchemical symbolism.⁶⁵ The author's decision to use hermetic imagery in this text seems particularly appropriate given the central theme of acquisition of knowledge common to both the story of Eden and the alchemical opus; after all, as Eliade explains, “In the mind of many alchemists, the procuring of the Philosopher's Stone is equated with the perfect knowledge of God” (166). In *The Marble Faun*, as in alchemy, fire functions as the agent of transmutation.

Therefore, Hawthorne writes that Donatello's transgressive act "kindled him into a man" (172). In telling the story of *The Transformation*—which, in fact, was the title under which *The Marble Faun* was published in England—Hawthorne emphasizes the successive "stages" of Donatello's development by assigning a color of the alchemical sequence to all of the principal characters except Kenyon, who serves as a sort of commentator on, or chronicler of, the process. The Model represents the black phase (*nigredo*); Hilda and Miriam, as previously discussed, are linked to white (*albedo*) and red (*rubedo*), respectively; and, finally, Donatello is associated with gold—the color of the *aurum potabile*, the "drinkable gold" of the *Elixir Vitae*.

From the outset, Miriam's Model remains connected with black, the color which, according to Lyndy Abraham's *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, "signifies the onset of the nigredo, the dissolution or death and putrefaction of the old form or body of the metal (or the Stone's matter) at the beginning of the opus" (26). Thus, the Model makes his first appearance in the blackness of the Catacombs, a place of "death and putrefaction." He is, moreover, described as a "mysterious, dusky, death-scented apparition" (36). Later, when Miriam and Donatello visit the Fountain of Trevi during "A Moonlight Ramble," Miriam leans over the basin and sees, "Three shadows . . . Three separate shadows, all so black and heavy that they sink in the water [where] they lie on the bottom, as if all three were drowned together" (147). The shadows belong to Miriam, Donatello, and "a shapeless mass, as indistinct as the premonition of calamity" (147) that turns out to be the Model. Mircea Eliade emphasizes the pivotal role of water in the *nigredo*, saying:

At the operational level, 'death' corresponds usually to the black colour . . . taken on by the various ingredients. It was the reduction of substances to the *materia*

prima, to the *massa confusa*, the fluid, shapeless mass corresponding . . . to chaos. Death represents regression to the amorphous, the reintegration of chaos. This is why aquatic symbolism plays such an important part. (153)

The presence of the color black in a fountain, the idea of sinking in water, of lying on the bottom, of drowning (that is—dying in water) all suggest an alchemical operation known as the ablution, which Hawthorne refers to by name when he describes the Model's act of washing his hands in the fountain: "Dipping his hands into the capacious wash-bowl before him, the Model rubbed them together with the utmost vehemence. Ever and anon, too, he peeped into the water, as if expecting to see the whole Fountain of Trevi turbid with the results of his ablution" (147). Since "[t]he beginning of the opus is a time of bloodshed and lamentation" (Abraham 135), readers are not surprised to learn that when the Model "washe[s] his brown, bony talons," he also "peer[s] into the vast basin, as if all the water of that great drinking-cup of Rome must needs be stained black or sanguine" (148). As for the symbolism of the fountain, Lyndy Abraham suggests that "The fountain is synonymous with the bath or spring into which the king, as the raw matter of the Stone steps to be purified of his blackness" (81).

During the ablution, then, "the blackness of the nigredo is washed and purified into the whiteness of the albedo" with the following result: "When the old 'body' of the metal or matter of the Stone has been dissolved and lies putrefying at the bottom of the alembic, the 'soul' is released . . ." (Abraham 1). The black shadows lying at the bottom of the fountain anticipate the circumstances of the Model's murder. When Miriam and Donatello lean over the edge of the precipice, they discover a "dark mass, lying in a heap," which is further described as a "heap of mortality" (173). The shadows in the fountain and the Model's corpse at the foot of the cliff both recall the black mass present at the bottom of the alembic during the process of ablution.

Abraham explains the *nigredo*'s metaphorical significance, insisting that "The beginning of spiritual realization is always accompanied by some kind of sacrifice or death, a dying to the old state of things, in order to make way for new insight and creation" (136). In terms of *The Marble Faun*'s plot, the symbolism of the *nigredo* suggests that the Model must die so that Donatello may achieve "new insight."

In the alchemical opus, the *albedo*, or white stage, succeeds the *nigredo*, and transformation by water gives way to transformation by fire. In order to emphasize the theme of transition, Hawthorne dramatizes the struggle between black and white through his focus on Guido's painting of the Archangel Michael's battle with Satan. Upon seeing Guido's work, Miriam criticizes it for its sanitized portrayal of the "death-struggle with Evil," envisioning instead a "smoke-blackened" demon "clutching [the] white throat" of the "nice young angel" (184-85). Although blackness or evil wins in Miriam's version of the painting, Hilda greatly admires Guido's original, which gives the white angel the victory. Miriam affirms that Hilda interprets the painting in this way because her soul is "white and pure" (183). Because of her "white and pure" soul, her white robes, and the doves that surround her in her tower—the stages of the alchemical opus are each represented by a different type of bird, with the dove being specifically related to the *albedo* (Abraham 58)—readers come to associate Hilda with the white stage of the opus. Here, the holy fire with which Hilda is linked throughout the text may be understood to defeat the "smoke-blackened" demon that symbolizes the *nigredo*.

The white phase of the alchemical process is followed by the red, or *rubedo*. Again, Hawthorne chooses to highlight the moment of transition through a painting—this time the portrait of Hilda entitled *Innocence, dying of a Blood-stain!* According to Lyndy Abraham, "the attainment of the red elixir . . . after the white . . . is sometimes compared to the dyeing or

staining of white sheets with red blood” (28). The blood that stains Hilda’s white robe, then, announces the arrival of the *rubedo*, embodied in the person of Miriam and in the dark red gem that she wears on her bosom. As Abraham asserts, the red stone attained in the *rubedo* phase “has the power to transmute all base metal into pure gold and earthly man into the illumined philosopher” (173). Miriam therefore occupies a higher position in the alchemical hierarchy than Hilda because Miriam has the power to transform Donatello from an “earthly man into the illumined philosopher” by exposing him to the knowledge of sin. Miriam’s *contadina* costume, which is scarlet with gold embroidery, indicates her role as catalyst for the final fiery transformation from the *rubedo* to the golden elixir of life.

Throughout the text, Donatello is linked with the color gold—whether in references to the “Golden Age” or to the “Sunshine” that his family has brewed for generations. For example, when Donatello initiates “the sylvan dance,” in the chapter of the same name, the narrator comments: “Here, as it seemed, had the Golden Age come back again, within the precincts of this sunny glade; thawing mankind out of their cold formalities . . .” (88). In this passage, the glowing warmth of the sun helps reproduce the atmosphere of the Golden Age. At Donatello’s ancestral home in Monte Beni, the vineyards yield grapes the family uses to make a golden wine called Sunshine that has a similar effect upon those who drink it. After tasting the wine, Kenyon declares: “This is surely the wine of the Golden Age, such as Bacchus himself first taught mankind to press from the choicest of his grapes” (224). Described as an “invaluable liquor” of a “pale golden hue,” the Sunshine “[stands] in Kenyon’s glass [with] a little circle of light glow[ing] on the table roundabout it, as if it were really so much golden sunshine” (223).

These depictions of Sunshine contain numerous allusions to alchemical materials and processes. First, grapes represent “the raw matter for the Stone, the fruit of the philosophical

tree” (Abraham 89). During the Middle Ages, the vine likewise served as an emblem of the philosophical tree (90), which in turn symbolizes the “course of the opus alchymicum, the growth of gold and the maturation of the philosopher’s stone” (150). In addition, the “juice of grapes or wine is . . . known as the alchemist’s secret fire” (90), and harvest symbolizes “the culmination of the opus,” the “attainment of the philosopher’s stone” (95). As for the Sunshine itself, it resembles the *aurum potabile*, or “drinkable gold,” of the elixir of life, the medicine that alchemists believed to have powerful curative and preservative properties (14). Finally, Hawthorne includes a reference to gold as metal, or money. Kenyon admiringly says to Donatello, “The pale, liquid gold, in every such flask as that, might be solidified into golden scudi, and would quickly make you a millionaire!” to which the young count replies, “The Counts of Monte Beni have never parted with a single flask of it for gold” (224). Naturally, the golden elixir would be worth more than any amount of gold, but Hawthorne is doing more than playing on the multiple senses of “gold” here. In commenting on gold’s symbolic meaning, Mircea Eliade says: “[S]ince gold is the bearer of a highly spiritual symbolism . . . the part assumed by the alchemist [is that of] the brotherly saviour of Nature. He assists Nature to fulfil her final goal, to attain her ‘ideal’, which is the perfection of its progeny—be it mineral, animal or human—to its supreme ripening, which is absolute immortality . . .” (52).

Offering further comment on the spiritual resonances of gold and the efforts of the alchemist to “perfect” humanity, Lyndy Abraham asserts:

Gold is seen as the perfect immutable metal which is able to withstand the test of the fire. But when the alchemists speak of gold they mean more than material gold. In the microcosmic-macrocosmic law of correspondences, gold is the metallic equivalent of the sun, the image of the sun buried in the earth. The sun in turn is the physical equivalent of

the eternal spirit which lodges in the heart (the “sun” of the human microcosm) . . . The real transmutation is that of the earthly man into the enlightened man, whose purified . . . soul and body perfectly reflect the gold of the divine spirit (87).

Thus, when he writes, “In the black depths, the Faun had found a soul, and was struggling with it towards the light of Heaven” (268), Hawthorne demonstrates his understanding not only of the color sequence of the opus, but also of alchemy’s deep spiritual significance.

In his reading of the alchemical symbolism in “Ethan Brand,” Mark Hennelly observes that “the *opus* usually consists of three or four stages corresponding generally to death . . . purification, reunion, and rebirth” (98). If the murder of the Model represents the death phase, and Hilda’s devotions constitute purification, then Miriam and Donatello’s reunion on the *campagna* before the Carnival may be expected to presage a type of rebirth. In a sense, Donatello has been reborn, or “created” like an alchemical *homunculus*. The *homunculus*, otherwise known as the “philosophical child,” sometimes “occurs as the personification of a deeply sacred conception—the birth of the babe of light and knowledge in the illumined soul of man” (Abraham 102). Hawthorne emphasizes this correlation between “light and knowledge” by referencing yet another alchemical concept—the *cauda pavonis*. Called the “peacock’s tail” because of its brilliant rainbow colors, the *cauda pavonis* is, according to many hermetic treatises, “the alchemical stage that announces the philosophers’ stone” (26). Hilda alludes to this stage when spinning a fanciful story about the “holy candlestick of the Jews” lost during the time of Constantine. She promises that her story, to be called “The Sacred Candlestick,” will be a “seven-branched allegory, full of poetry, art, philosophy and religion” (371). Here, the word “seven-branched” constitutes an unmistakable reference to the philosophical tree, which was frequently “depicted as a golden tree with seven branches, signifying the seven metals and

planetary influences: mercury (Mercury), copper (Venus), iron (Mars), lead (Saturn), tin (Jupiter), gold (Sun) and silver (Moon)” (Abraham 151). Hilda goes on to say of her candlestick that “As each branch is lighted, it shall have a differently coloured luster from the other six; and when all the seven are kindled, their radiance shall combine into the intense white light of Truth” (371). When the combination of the rainbow colors of the *cauda pavonis* into this concentrated white light is achieved, Hilda affirms that “the whole world will gain the illumination which it needs” (371). As a consequence of gaining knowledge and experience, then, Donatello will emerge as an “illuminated soul.”

Kenyon, or Paradise Revisited

Donatello’s evolving consciousness, along with other significant transformations in the novel, will be reexamined through the work of Kenyon the sculptor. Kenyon’s primary role in *The Marble Faun* is the same as that of Hawthorne: to observe and to record his observations through the medium of art. For example, in his artistic rendering of Cleopatra, Kenyon captures the essence of the beautiful, sensual, and dangerous Miriam. The narrator describes the statue thus:

In a word, all Cleopatra—fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment—was kneaded into what, only a week or two before, had been a lump of wet clay from the Tiber. Soon, apotheosized in an indestructible material, she would be one of the images that men keep forever, finding a heat in them which does not cool down, throughout the centuries. (127)

The “heat . . . which does not cool down” indicates the existence of “a great, smouldering furnace, deep down in the woman’s heart,” as well as her intent to “kindle a tropic fire in the

cold eyes of Octavius” (126-27). In much the same way, Miriam’s passionate nature will exert a powerful, and irrevocable, influence upon Donatello.

Kenyon’s marble cast of Hilda’s hand and his bust of Donatello are similarly revealing. Hilda’s “small, beautifully shaped hand,” which had been “sculptured in marble” and “lapt in fleecy cotton,” draws the following commentary from the narrator: “Such loving care and nicest art had been lavished here, that the palm really seemed to have a tenderness in its very substance. Touching those lovely fingers—had the jealous sculptor allowed you to touch—you could hardly believe that a virgin warmth would not steal from them into your heart” (120). This work of art not only betrays Kenyon’s secret love for Hilda, but also contrasts the “tenderness” and “virgin warmth” attributable to Hilda with the ferocity and burning, passionate heat that characterize Miriam.

Perhaps due the fact that she is, according to Miriam, “abundantly capable of sympathy,” Hilda is an insightful art critic. Upon seeing the Kenyon’s second bust of Donatello, she immediately grasps the fact that Kenyon wants to focus on Donatello’s spiritual evolution, and declares “[I]t is the Faun, but advancing towards a state of higher development” (380). At Hilda’s suggestion, Kenyon allows the bust of Donatello to remain “in an unfinished state.” Thus, the bust of Donatello reinforces the idea of ongoing transformation formally as well as thematically.

Kenyon’s sculptures provide important commentary on *The Marble Faun*’s principal characters and their development throughout the course of the narrative, but, since Kenyon also functions as Hawthorne’s mouthpiece in the novel, his philosophical musings may provide insight as well. Indeed, the narrator and Kenyon both express opinions that seem to favor the

notion of *felix culpa*. When Miriam and Donatello forget their cares and cavort together in “The Faun and Nymph” and “The Sylvan Dance,” the narrator observes:

They played together like children, or creatures of immortal youth; for . . . they seemed . . . endowed with eternal mirthfulness instead of any deeper joy. It was a glimpse far backward into . . . the Golden Age, before mankind was burthened with sin and sorrow, and before pleasure had been darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief, and make it Happiness. (83-84)

In a similar vein, Kenyon argues that “Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him.” The sculptor goes on to ask, “Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier Paradise than his?” (460).

Kenyon’s question stresses the theme of transformation, a major focus of the fire symbolism Hawthorne employs in *The Marble Faun*. We have seen that the fires of Eden were linked in the author’s imagination with physicality, or the heat of sexual passion; that the fires of the Parsees were associated with spirituality, or the flames of devotion; and that the fires of alchemy were related to the various operations through which baseness or physicality might be transformed into spirituality. Miriam, Hilda, and Donatello all have a part to play in the realization of this process. Miriam embodies the sexuality that brought the curse of mortality upon humanity. Through her spiritual devotions, Hilda, in turn, suggests the possibility of restoring the “freshness and elasticity of innocence” through confession (355). Donatello, and the alchemical imagery that surrounds his character, represents a relentless longing after the promise of immortality. Finally, Kenyon’s position as artistic chronicler draws attention to a recurrent theme in Hawthorne’s fiction about which I shall have more to say in the next chapter—the idea that an artist’s greatest hope of achieving immortality is through his art.

CHAPTER 4

PROMETHEUS, EMPEDOCLES, AND THE PHOENIX:

THE BACHELARDIAN FIRE MYTHS

Each of the spiritual traditions discussed in the previous chapter has a mythic or legendary counterpart that Hawthorne explores at length in his tales and sketches: the Eden narrative is linked to the story of Prometheus, Zoroastrianism to legendary accounts concerning the suicide of Empedocles, and alchemy to the myth of the phoenix. “A Virtuoso’s Collection,” an 1842 sketch that chronicles a somewhat skeptical narrator’s tour through an exhibition consisting of creatures and artifacts drawn from myth, legend, and literature, simultaneously comments on the aforementioned correspondences and offers important clues regarding Hawthorne’s view of literary immortality. According to the narrator, the collection of curiosities includes “the vulture that preyed upon the liver of Prometheus” (X: 480), the “original fire which Prometheus stole from Heaven” (488), “the brazen shoe of Empedocles, which was thrown out of Mount Aetna” (485), and “a live phoenix” (481). Thus, in a single sketch, Hawthorne makes reference to the three myths that Bachelard has identified as central to a “poetics of fire.” Certainly, Hawthorne’s allusions to the myths of Prometheus, Empedocles, and the phoenix reveal what Bachelard would call an oneiric affinity with the element of fire. I would further propose, however, that the fire myths appealed so strongly to Hawthorne because, whether consciously or unconsciously, he associated these stories with regeneration, survival beyond death, and the promise of resurrection. Having established that Hawthorne was attracted to the element of fire because, in its mythic echoes, it is associated with the idea of conquering death, I

will go on to explore the ways in which the Bachelardian fire myths enrich and illuminate Hawthorne's own creative process as he attempts to achieve literary immortality.

“A Virtuoso's Collection”: Connections and Revelations

As “A Virtuoso's Collection” suggests, an author's best hope of eluding the fatal judgment of time is through the act of writing. Through his choice of title, Hawthorne intimates that any “virtuoso,” or artist of consummate skill, should compile the mythical, legendary, and literary allusions needed to enrich his art in a mental “collection” of themes.⁶⁶ Readers of “A Virtuoso's Collection” may learn a great deal by examining: 1) the author's grouping of objects in the collection, and 2) the narrator's reaction to the artifacts presented to him. First, by noting the order of the author's overt references to the fire myths under consideration, one may observe that the following items appear in relative proximity, metonymically suggesting a relationship: the “‘spirited sly snake,’ which tempted Eve” in Eden (479) and the vulture that daily tormented Prometheus (480); the live phoenix (481), the magic glass of alchemist Cornelius Agrippa (482), and a golden relic of King Midas (483); as well as Empedocles' brass sandal (485) and an inextinguishable flame from the tomb of Charlemagne (487-88). Secondary fire myths such as the legend of Benvenuto Cellini's salamander and the story of Epimetheus and Pandora also receive mention at other points in the sketch.

Whether Hawthorne intended for readers to infer a metonymic relationship among the listed objects is arguable, but the connection among the various religious and mythical traditions is clear. For example, both the Eden narrative and the Prometheus myth concern human “theft” of knowledge reserved for the gods,⁶⁷ and both stories tell of a terrible punishment for transgressing boundaries set by divine beings. Representative of the classical Greek tradition,

the legend of Prometheus treats the theme of a presumptuous desire for forbidden knowledge, while the story of Pandora and her husband Epimetheus (brother to Prometheus) depicts an archetypal couple, an “Adam and Eve” as it were, who disobey an important behavioral injunction. The Judeo-Christian story of Eden unites these two separate strains in a single narrative; indeed, it is possible to view these stories as pagan and Christian versions of the same idea.

Furthermore, the phoenix relates to the figures of Cornelius Agrippa and King Midas because all three are tied to alchemy. The phoenix symbolizes the *rubedo*, the phase of the alchemical opus that heralds the arrival of the Philosopher’s Stone (Abraham 23). Also, Agrippa was a celebrated alchemical adept of the sixteenth century, and Midas was said to possess the “golden touch”—a reference to the Philosopher’s Stone, which could transmute base matter into gold. Both alchemy and the phoenix are associated with the idea of an intense fire that purifies as it burns, finally resulting in a magnificent transformation linked to immortality, whether in the form of the *Elixir Vitae* or, in the case of the phoenix, of a literal resurrection. As Randall Clack rightly asserts in *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: Alchemical Regeneration in the Works of Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller* (2000), the phoenix was “one of many symbols for the philosophers’ stone, related to the metaphor of the sun and the mystery of death and resurrection” (82).

Finally, the allusion to Empedocles’ suicidal leap into Aetna and the description of the “undying” flame from the tomb of Charlemagne—a clear analogue for Zoroastrian perpetual flames—both reveal a reverence for the elements, particularly the element of fire, that amounts to a type of worship. Moreover, the fire that exists at the core of the volcano resembles the protected fire that serves as the focal point of every Zoroastrian temple, and Empedocles and the

Parsees possess remarkably similar ideas about death. According to James Frazer's *Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (1834), "[A]nnihilation, even for a time, forms no part of the doctrine of Zoroaster. At death the materials of the body rejoin their respective elements, —earth to earth, —water to water, —fire to fire, —and the life to the viewless air. The last hour is thus stripped of its terrors to the Parsee, by the conviction that nothing is reduced to nonentity" (117). Like the Zoroastrians, Empedocles professed a belief that at the time of death, the body breaks down into its component elements and thus continues to exist within the universe. The story of Benvenuto Cellini's salamander reveals an Empedoclean impulse as well, in that the salamander can safely remain in the midst of the fire and emerge unscathed.⁶⁸

Perhaps the most interesting of all the metonymic linkages in "A Virtuoso's Collection" is the uninterrupted appearance of the following six references to traditions involving fire: the eternal flame of Charlemagne (487-88), the fire that Prometheus stole from heaven (488), the salamander seen by Cellini (488), the Great Carbuncle of the White Mountains (488), the Philosopher's Stone (489), and the *Elixir Vitae* (489). Significantly, all six traditions reinforce the connection between fire and immortality. As previously discussed, the "undying" flame and the salamander both point to the ability to survive beyond death. Likewise, the fire that Prometheus takes from heaven represents "forbidden" knowledge jealously guarded by the gods, and since the knowledge that most clearly differentiates human beings from divine beings is the secret of immortality, Prometheus may be said to steal the "spark" of life from the gods of Olympus. The Great Carbuncle, the Philosopher's Stone, and the *Elixir Vitae*, of course, all refer to the alchemical Elixir of Life, which, according to Randall Clack, was "reported to prolong life and in rare cases to restore the dead" (14).⁶⁹

Hawthorne conveys his theme in “A Virtuoso’s Collection” not only through his grouping of items in the museum, but also through his portrayal of the narrator’s reactions to the artifacts presented to him. Surprisingly, the narrator rejects his host’s invitation to partake of several rare opportunities: he refuses to try the wishing-cap of Fortunatus (481), to rub Aladdin’s lamp (481), to look in Agrippa’s magic glass (482), or to don the seven-league boots (483). This series of stubborn refusals culminates in the narrator’s decision to reject the *Elixir Vitae* itself. When the narrator says, “I desire not an earthly immortality,” his guide replies, “All this is unintelligible to me Life,—earthly life,—is the only good. But you refuse the draught? Well, it is not likely to be offered twice within one man’s experience” (489). Given Hawthorne’s intense interest in the *Elixir Vitae*, the narrator’s reaction to the proffered draught of immortality is puzzling indeed.

However, the narrator’s very different response to a second group of objects clarifies Hawthorne’s intent. For example, the narrator responds with great enthusiasm to the sight of Una’s lamb from Spenser’s *Faerie Queen* (478), to the emaciated figure of Don Quixote’s horse Rosinante (478), and to the “huge bundle, like a pedlar’s pack” that turns out to be Christian’s “burthen of sin” from *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (486). When the same skeptic who refused to look into Cornelius Agrippa’s magic glass waxes suddenly effusive over “an iron-clasped volume, bound in black leather” that proves to be Agrippa’s book of magic, which is “rendered still more interesting by the fact that many flowers, ancient and modern, [had been] pressed between its leaves” (490-91) in memory of various authors, a pattern of preference for literary artifacts becomes apparent.⁷⁰ The narrator describes each writer’s contribution at length:

Here was Halleck’s Wild Rose of Alloway. Cowper had contributed a Sensitive Plant, and Wordsworth an Eglantine, and Burns a Mountain Daisy, and Kirke a White a Star of

Bethlehem, and Longfellow a Sprig of Fennel, with its yellow flowers. James Russell Lowell had given a Pressed Flower, but fragrant still, which had been shadowed in the Rhine. There was also a sprig from Southey's Holly-Tree. One of the most beautiful specimens was a Fringed Gentian, which had been plucked and preserved for immortality by Bryant. From Jones Very,—a poet whose voice is scarcely heard among us, by reason of its depth,—there was a Wind Flower and a Columbine. (491)⁷¹

Each poet, then, is commemorated by a flower that appears in one of his compositions; just as a flower may be pressed inside the pages of a book, so may the flowers that are subjects of worthy poems be “plucked” and “preserved for immortality” within the leaves of the tome. Thus, through monitoring the reactions of the narrator as he tours the exhibits in the Virtuoso's Collection, readers may divine Hawthorne's message—namely, that immortality is not to be obtained through magic or wish-fulfillment, but rather through literary achievement. Now the meaning of the narrator's comment, “I desire not an earthly immortality” becomes clear: the narrator's statement conveys Hawthorne's own desire to create a meaningful literary legacy—a writer's version of the *Elixir Vitae*.

“Ethan Brand”: Fictional Fusion of the Fire Myths

Like “A Virtuoso's Collection,” “Ethan Brand” contains allusions to all of the Bachelardian fire myths, and it reinforces the link between the legend of Empedocles and Zoroastrian beliefs. Naturally, Brand's name causes readers to associate him with the element of fire, and further analysis reveals that Hawthorne draws much of the tale's imagery and symbolism from the legends of Prometheus, Empedocles, and the phoenix. An exploration of Hawthorne's use of these legends will shed light upon the ambiguous ending of “Ethan Brand.”

The Prometheus myth is perhaps the most familiar among the three fire legends that inform “Ethan Brand.”⁷² In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Bachelard identifies various complexes that affect the human psyche, one of which is the “Prometheus complex,” defined as follows:

There is in man a veritable *will to intellectuality* We propose, then, to place together under the name of the *Prometheus complex* all those tendencies which impel us *to know* as much as our fathers, more than our fathers, as much as our teachers, more than our teachers The Prometheus complex is the Oedipus complex of the life of the intellect. (12)

Hawthorne’s description of Ethan Brand’s intellectual attainments closely resembles Bachelard’s definition of the Prometheus complex. Hawthorne writes regarding the change wrought in Brand by his quest for the Unpardonable Sin: “The Idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education; . . . it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer, to stand on a star-light eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him” (XI: 99). This notion, then, of a Prometheus complex—which Bachelard encapsulates in the phrase “will to intellectuality”—contributes significantly to an understanding of Ethan Brand’s character and motivation. In Brand’s case, after contemplating the roaring flames in his kiln, the lime burner determines to search out the Unpardonable Sin, a sin so terrible that its commission would place the sinner beyond God’s mercy. Brand ultimately finds that sin within himself, in his unconscionable violation of the mind and heart of a young woman named Esther whom he encounters on his travels. Brand’s eighteen-year quest for the very sin that will, in Mark Hennelly’s terms, “make him like a god” (104) represents an essentially Promethean act of pride.

Prometheus, of course, suffers for his presumption. Zeus punishes Prometheus for his intellectual pride by ordering him chained to Mount Caucasus where a vulture feeds daily on his liver, which is made to regenerate continually (Zimmerman 221-22). With regard to Prometheus's punishment, Bachelard writes:

The gods do not deprive Prometheus of fire. On the contrary, his body is consumed by fire. The eagle[?] comes to torment his being at its fiery crucible, his liver, still alive and functioning. The firebird arrives each day to freshen his agonizing wounds, to devour his liver which regenerates again and again. (*Fragments* 85)

The fact that fire serves as both inducement to commit the sin and punishment for having committed it highlights the circularity of the story. Resembling the incident the narrator imparts of the stray dog chasing its tail, Brand's journey involves a circular movement that leads back to the point—the lime kiln at the foot of Graylock—where the sin was conceived, for that is the only place where it may be expiated.⁷³

To determine the means of that expiation, it is necessary to examine a second mythical influence on "Ethan Brand"—the legend of Empedocles, a Greek poet-philosopher of the fifth century BCE who purportedly "cast himself into Mount Aetna in order to give the idea that he had been miraculously translated" (Millerd 7). Regarding the legendary account of Empedocles's suicide at Aetna, Bachelard argues, "This total death which leaves no trace is the guarantee that our whole person has departed for the beyond. To lose everything in order to gain everything. Empedocles chooses a death which fuses him into the pure element of the Volcano" (*Psychoanalysis* 19). If Empedocles "chooses a death which fuses him into the pure element of the Volcano," then, certainly, Ethan Brand chooses a death which fuses him into the pure

element of the lime kiln. This action corresponds to what Bachelard calls the “Empedocles complex.” He explains:

[F]ire suggests that desire to change, to speed up the passage of time, to bring all of life to its conclusion, to its hereafter. In these circumstances the reverie becomes truly fascinating and dramatic; it magnifies human destiny; it links the small to the great, the hearth to the volcano The fascinated individual hears *the call of the funeral pyre*. For him destruction is more than a change, it is a renewal. This very special and yet very general kind of reverie leads to a true complex in which are united the love and the respect for fire, the instinct for living and the instinct for dying. (*Psychoanalysis* 16)

As Hawthorne conceives the action of “Ethan Brand,” he pays tribute to the overwhelming power of the Empedocles complex.

Specifically, Bachelard’s assertion that Empedoclean reverie “magnifies human destiny” by “link[ing]the small to the great, the hearth to the volcano” finds direct expression in Hawthorne’s tale. As Brand approaches the lime kiln where he once plied his trade, Bartram, the current lime burner, threatens him, crying out, “Come forward, and show yourself, like a man; or I’ll fling this chunk of marble at your head!” In response to this discourteous greeting, Brand says, “You offer me a rough welcome . . . Yet I neither claim nor desire a kinder one, even at my own fireside” (85). Clearly, the lime kiln represents for Brand the closest approximation of a domestic hearth that he may lay claim to, and yet, it also exhibits characteristics of a volcano. The narrator describes the kiln as a “rude, round . . . structure, heavily built of rough stones, and with a hillock of earth heaped about the larger part of its circumference; so that blocks and fragments of marble might be drawn by cart-loads, and thrown in at the top” (84). The lime kiln’s shape and the gaping hole at the top of the “hillock” suggest a volcano, as does the

following depiction of the fire inside the kiln that the lime burner must tend: “At frequent intervals [Bartram] flung back the . . . iron door, and, turning his face from the insufferable glare, thrust in huge logs of oak, or stirred the immense brands with a long pole. Within the furnace, was seen the curling and riotous flames, and the burning marble, almost molten with the intensity of heat” (85). Here, the word “molten” recalls the interior of a volcano, and the “immense brands” that burn within the furnace offer a foreshadowing of Ethan Brand’s fate.⁷⁴ As he stares into the kiln, Brand falls into an Empedoclean reverie, hears the “call of the funeral pyre,” and leaps into his own Aetna.

Many critics have viewed Brand’s decision to climb to the top of the lime kiln and leap in as a suicidal act committed out of pride or despair. Kurt Eisen, for example, maintains that Ethan Brand’s “cathartic self-immolation” represents his “unflinching final act of isolation” (57).⁷⁵ The myth of Empedocles, however, suggests that what Brand actually seeks is to *survive* death through an elemental transformation in state. Contemplating what he calls the “drama of Empedocles,” Bachelard asks: “To dedicate oneself to fire is this not to become fire? Or perhaps to dedicate oneself to fire is to succeed in achieving a state of Nothingness Or again, perhaps such grand and totalizing fire is one’s guarantee of total purification. But is not purification a guarantee of rebirth?” (*Fragments* 91). Based on these speculations, I would argue that Brand’s action does not indicate a desire for self-destruction, but rather an impulse to self-creation or self-perpetuation.

Indeed, Brand betrays concern about his reputation during his initial encounter with Bartram when he says to his successor: “But you are a new comer in these parts. Did you never hear of Ethan Brand?” (87). Later, when the ragtag band of curious onlookers summoned from the village to view the man who searched for the Unpardonable Sin disperses, and the village

children, finding “nothing but a sun-burnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes” (94), shift their attention to the Jew of Nuremberg’s diorama, Brand realizes that he must go beyond seeking the Unpardonable Sin if he hopes to become a legend. Thus, he determines to follow the model of Empedocles.

The legend of the phoenix—the final mythological echo identifiable in the tale—represents a logical extension of the Empedocles story. In Bachelard’s view, the phoenix “is doubly the stuff of fable” in that “It both bursts into flame of its own fires, and rises again from its own ash” (*Fragments* 29-30). He further maintains that “[The Phoenix] presides over the magic moments of life and death, a strange synthesis of powerful images of nest and pyre, attaining greatest glory in its final conflagration: an ultimate image which would take as its inevitable title ‘The Triumph of Death’” (38). Like the phoenix, Ethan Brand burns with inner fire: his “deeply sunken eyes” are portrayed as gleaming “like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern” (86). This depiction of Brand’s eyes eerily mirrors the description of the lime kiln—a type of furnace, or cavernous space, excavated from a hillside—in which he immolates himself at the tale’s conclusion. The presence of the masculine element of fire within a recessed space suggests gestation, and Brand surely intends to consign himself to the flames, so the kiln becomes a place of both life and death, a “nest” and a “pyre.”

According to Bachelard, the phoenix symbolizes “life which grows through the mere fact of beginning again, and doing so with youthful strength refined in the fire.” He goes on to assert that “The phoenix myth is the myth of progressive rebirth, the dialectic of life and death, a dialectic clearly weighted in the direction of life which magnifies, life which passes through troubles and disappointments, through death and defeat” (*Right* 136). This cycle of life, death, and rebirth is fittingly depicted in the tale through nature imagery. Ethan Brand first appears just

at dusk. The narrator notes that while the “upper sky” still contains a “flitting congregation of clouds, still faintly tinged with the rosy sunset,” the “sunshine had vanished [from the valley] long and long ago” (85). Following Brand’s redemptive act, the valley is accordingly bathed in golden sunlight:

Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered, likewise, over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others . . . hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. (101)

Between dusk and dawn, the sun has undergone a symbolic death and rebirth. As Cirlot points out, “the death of the Sun necessarily implies the idea of resurrection and actually comes to be regarded as a death which is not a true death” (303). This positive pattern of imagery suggests that Brand’s final act is not self-destructive, but restorative.

Although Ethan Brand originally attempted to seize fire like Prometheus, to discover the Unpardonable Sin by means of intellect alone, he ultimately achieves an expiation of that guilt by surrendering himself to the purifying influence of the fire like Empedocles. As Bachelard maintains, “Elemental death is death both by and for the Cosmos” (*Fragments* 105). For Empedocles, something survives via his translation into the elements, survives in the very makeup of the universe. Here, as in alchemy, fire accomplishes the desired transition from matter to spirit. Out of that conflagration, phoenix-like, Brand is reborn. His self-immolation, then, represents an act that will simultaneously preserve his reputation and make him one with

the cosmos. Thus, when Ethan Brand leaps into the lime kiln, he passes directly through the fire into legend.

Prometheus: Thief of Fire

Like his embattled protagonist Ethan Brand, Hawthorne wishes to pass through the fire into legend.⁷⁶ If, as Bachelard asserts in *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*, “[T]he only way for one to live out the Empedoclean Act is through one’s poetry” (95), it is no surprise that Hawthorne enacts the myths of Prometheus, Empedocles, and the phoenix in his own creative life. Symbolizing the spark of literary creativity, the fire myths themselves become a powerful force of self-renewal, of artistic re-creation.

In “Fire-Worship,” Hawthorne describes fire as “that brilliant guest—that quick and subtle spirit whom Prometheus lured from heaven to civilize mankind, and cheer them in their wintry desolation” (X: 138). Hawthorne associates Promethean fire not only with civilization and domesticity, as indicated in the previous passage, but also with inspiration and creativity. Prometheus’s theft of fire, which Bachelard describes as an act of “clever disobedience,” represents a quest for knowledge that properly belongs to the gods. Bachelard says that the Prometheus myth speaks of our desire to be smarter than, greater than our fathers. This impulse parallels Hawthorne’s desire to establish his own literary reputation. The descendent of hard-line Puritans on his father’s side and of Yankee businessmen on his mother’s side, Hawthorne struggled to find a niche for himself that was neither religious nor entrepreneurial.⁷⁷ Referring to ancestors William and John Hathorne, the author writes in an oft-quoted passage from “The Custom-House” preface to *The Scarlet Letter*:

Doubtless . . . either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins, that . . . the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine—if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success—would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. “What is he?” murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. “A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life,—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!” (I: 10)

Hawthorne’s maternal uncle Robert Manning, an eminently practical man, would hardly have disagreed with this estimation. Therefore, it became apparent that Hawthorne must overcome his guilt about being an “idler” on the “topmost bough” of the family tree and engage in acts of “clever disobedience” if he wanted to create an artistic legacy.

Bachelard explains that, according to Aeschylus, Prometheus may be seen as “the inventor of science” (*Fragments* 87), but there is also “an entire philosophic tradition which would see Prometheus as the initiator of the arts” (86). Quintessentially Promethean tales such as “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844) and “The Birth-Mark” (1843) emphasize Prometheus’ role as the “inventor of science.” Dr. Rappaccini wants to subvert the natural order by creating his own poisonous version of Eden, Aylmer by erasing the mark of human mortality on his wife’s face. Dr. Rappaccini’s Promethean experiment ends, like Aylmer’s, with a woman being blighted, then sacrificed, by a man who remains consumed with his science. Although these stories about scientific ambition represent some of his best work, Hawthorne more openly contends with the

issue of creating a literary legacy in tales such as “The Artist of the Beautiful” (1844) that portray Prometheus as “the initiator of the arts.” Indeed, Owen Warland’s ongoing battle against the constraints that Peter Hovenden, Annie Hovenden, and the community at large would impose on him parallels Hawthorne’s own situation, which required that he defy both familial and societal expectations in order to achieve literary immortality.

In *Family Themes and Hawthorne’s Fiction: The Tenacious Web* (1984), Gloria Erlich argues—I think correctly—that Peter Hovenden is modeled after Hawthorne’s uncle Robert Manning. Erlich elaborates on the circumstances that may have led Hawthorne to recall his uncle’s disapproval of artistic pursuits, saying:

At the time of writing, in 1844, [Hawthorne] was facing the impracticality of his literary vocation as the economic support for his growing family. In this year of Una’s birth he was living cheaply at the Old Manse but earning little and, though dedicating himself to writing, not producing much in quantity or quality. His lack of literary success and the realities of his family situation may have awakened the disapproving voice of his guardian chiding him for not taking up more manly and remunerative work. (135)

Erlich believes that Hawthorne purposely resurrected the figure of Uncle Robert, dead for two years, “in order to reawaken the counterforce that had previously helped define him as an artist and piqued him into productivity.” In other words, she insists that through the vehicle of this fictional tale, Hawthorne “marshals his arguments against the internalized avuncular figure in order to rouse himself into renewed creative activity” (135). Thus, Hawthorne may be said to work in opposition to Robert Manning in much the same way that Owen Warland struggles against Peter Hovenden, the master to whom he was bound as an apprentice. It becomes

obvious, then, that both Owen Warland and Hawthorne must define themselves as artists through Promethean acts of “constructive disobedience.”

In Owen’s case, disobedience consists of refusing to go quietly about his work as a maker and repairer of watches. Notably, Owen Warland’s protestations against the confines of his occupation as watchmaker reveal his anxiety about the passage of time. Observing Owen’s activities, Annie says to her father, “Perhaps, father . . . Owen is inventing a new kind of time-keeper. I am sure he has ingenuity enough.” The hard and practical Peter Hovenden replies, “He would turn the sun out of its orbit, and derange the whole course of time, if . . . his ingenuity could grasp anything bigger than a child’s toy” (X: 448). In fact, the narrator relates that Owen “altogether forgot or despised the grand object of a watchmaker’s business, and cared no more for the measurement of time than if it had been merged into eternity” (451). Clearly, “[T]urn[ing] the sun out of its orbit” and “derang[ing] the whole course of time” represents a Promethean aspiration, for to possess the power to stop time—to be able to think in terms of “eternity”—is to have the power of a god.⁷⁸

The watchmaker’s cavalier attitude toward time leads him to take an extremely unconventional approach to his work:

If a family-clock was entrusted to him for repair—one of those tall, *ancient* clocks that have grown nearly allied to human nature, by *measuring out the lifetime* of many generations—he would take upon himself to arrange a dance or *funeral procession* of figures, across its *venerable face*, representing twelve mirthful or *melancholy hours*.
(451, my emphasis)⁷⁹

The italicized phrases in the foregoing passage reveal that Owen associates these clocks with aging and death. While it is not unusual to see timepieces as a measuring out the human

lifespan, Owen's attitude toward them amounts almost to an obsession. Predictably, Owen's fanciful creations are not well-received in the community; as the narrator reports, "Several freaks of this kind quite destroyed the young watchmaker's credit with that steady and matter-of-fact class of people who hold the opinion that time is not to be trifled with, whether considered as the medium of advancement and prosperity in this world, or preparation for the next" (451). The "steady and matter-of-fact class of people" who value either "advancement and prosperity in this world" or "preparation for the next" suggest parallels to Hawthorne's own maternal and paternal relatives, with their respective mercantile and religious values, and the actions taken by Owen's relations—confronted with Owen's unusual "genius," "[t]he boy's relatives saw nothing better to be done . . . than to bind him apprentice to a watchmaker, hoping that his strange ingenuity might thus be regulated, and put to utilitarian purposes" (451)—convey an expectation, which Hawthorne must have felt, to be "useful" in the world. Like Hawthorne, Owen Warland is prepared to engage in "constructive disobedience" against his relatives and against his community in the hope of achieving Promethean status as "father of the arts."

Once Owen commits himself to this Promethean course of creating "a beauty that should attain to the ideal which Nature has proposed to herself, in all her creatures, but has never taken pains to realize" (466), he exhibits particular concern about the effects of time on human achievement. The following excerpt explains why immortality is of such great importance to the laboring artist:

[Owen] was incited to toil the more diligently, by the anxiety lest death should surprise him in the midst of his labors. This anxiety, perhaps, is common to all men who set their hearts upon anything so high . . . that life becomes of importance only as conditional to

its accomplishment. So long as we love life for itself, we seldom dread the losing it.

When we desire life for the attainment of an object, we recognize the frailty of its texture. (467)

In fine, the artist fears death because he cannot face the fact that he might have to die without having accomplished the great work that will make his reputation. The narrator contemplates the case of a great philosopher, poised to “speak the word of light,” but suddenly silenced by death, saying, “Should he perish so, the weary ages may pass away—the world’s whole life-sand may fall, drop by drop—before another intellect is prepared to develope [sic] the truth that might have been uttered then” (467). The phrase “the world’s whole life-sand may fall, drop by drop” is particularly interesting because, here, Hawthorne uses the language of earth (“sand”) and water (“drop by drop”) to depict death, while he uses the language of fire (“word of light”) to suggest artistic immortality.⁸⁰

As the narrator observes, however, many cases of great accomplishments being arrested by untimely death exist, with the unjust and intolerable result that “The prophet dies; and the man of torpid heart and sluggish brain lives on. The poet leaves his song half sung, or finishes it, beyond the scope of mortal ears, in a celestial choir” (467). Time is the enemy of the artist; if he wants to perpetuate his name, he must steal fire from heaven. As is often the case with his depiction of spiritualized fire, Hawthorne speaks of Owen Warland’s Promethean creativity in terms of light. Upon the occasion of one of Owen’s numerous failures at creating the Beautiful, readers are told that “[H]e sat, in strange despair, until his lamp flickered in the socket, and left the Artist of the Beautiful in darkness” (454). Later in the story, the narrator avers: “The chase of butterflies was an apt emblem of the ideal pursuit in which he had spent so many golden hours . . . Sweet, doubtless were these days . . . They were full of bright conceptions, which gleamed

through his intellectual world, as the butterflies gleamed through the outward atmosphere, and were real to him for the instant . . .” (458). Furthermore, Owen calls the butterfly he hopes to replicate the “child of the sun” (462), and when he succeeds at last in creating a butterfly to rival the handiwork of nature, Hawthorne’s description of the wondrous accomplishment emphasizes its radiant and luminous qualities:

Nature’s ideal butterfly was here realized in all its perfection; not in the pattern of such faded insects as flit among earthly flowers, but of those which hover across the meads of Paradise The firelight glimmered around this wonder—the candles gleamed upon it—but it glistened apparently by its own radiance, and illuminated the finger and outstretched hand on which it rested, with a white gleam like that of precious stones.
(470)

This depiction of Owen’s butterfly recalls the accomplishments of Prometheus in two respects. First, Prometheus is credited with “making with clay the first man and woman” (Zimmerman 222); Owen Warland likewise imbues a creature with the spark of life. Second, Prometheus is celebrated for “giving mankind the fire he had stolen from heaven” (Zimmerman 222), an action that is mirrored on a literal level when Owen gives the radiant butterfly to Annie Hovenden Danforth as a wedding present.

“The Artist of the Beautiful” does not represent, as some critics have suggested, a tragic “choice” between art and life for Owen Warland, but rather a positive rewriting of the Prometheus myth and a celebration of Promethean creativity.⁸¹ If Owen Warland is Hawthorne’s version of Prometheus, then blacksmith Robert Danforth is his version of Hephaestus, the god of fire and metalworking; thus, readers may deduce that Annie Hovenden assumes the role of the one woman who ties the characters of Hephaestus and Prometheus together—Pandora.⁸²

Although interpreters of the Prometheus myth often focus on the titan's disobedience of and punishment by the gods, it is important to remember that after thirty years of torture on Mt. Caucasus, Prometheus was freed by Hercules and taken to Olympus to join the very gods he had once challenged (Zimmerman 222). This positive outcome depends upon Prometheus' earlier *rejection* of Pandora, who "was made with clay by Hephaestus at the request of Zeus" because the king of all the gods "desired to punish Prometheus for stealing fire from heaven by giving him a wife" (Zimmerman 199). Therefore, the subtext of the Prometheus myth in "The Artist of the Beautiful" reveals that Owen loses little by opting to pursue his art rather than the hand of Annie Hovenden.

Indeed, Owen Warland does not eschew home and family life to no good purpose. Annie, after all, is not what she seems, as Owen ultimately admits: "Of course he had deceived himself; there were no such attributes in Annie Hovenden as his imagination had endowed her with. She . . . was as much a creation of his own, as the mysterious piece of mechanism would be were it ever realized" (464). The fact that Annie appears to be quite happy in her marriage to Robert Danforth proves unequivocally that she would never have been capable of fully appreciating Owen's work. J. E. Cirlot asserts that "[S]uffering (like that of Prometheus) corresponds to sublimation." Cirlot goes on to say, "The rescue of Prometheus by Hercules expresses the efficacy of the process of sublimation, and its outcome" (254). Like Prometheus, Owen Warland is "rescued" by means of sublimation: he sublimates his sexual desire for Annie Hovenden into a Promethean quest to duplicate nature's handiwork, and though the creation is destroyed, the noble and beautiful idea of it will continue to exist. According to Hawthorne's inventive rewriting of the Prometheus myth, it is Prometheus rather than Pandora who opens the

box. When Owen opens the beautifully carved box to let out his butterfly, he releases not Evil, but Beauty into the world, and even when the butterfly itself has been crushed, Hope remains.

In *Hawthorne's View of the Artist* (1962), Millicent Bell has argued: "We are told that Owen Warland succeeded in his effort to create an image of the Beautiful. Yet we see at once that here is no Carlylean 'hero as poet,' for Owen is unable to communicate his discoveries to those around him. Hawthorne concludes that the idealist artist will be misunderstood and unappreciated" (107). Bell, therefore, sees the ending of the tale as a "melancholy triumph" (111). While it is true that Hawthorne treats Owen Warland with some irony, it is a gentle irony, and as the conclusion of the story indicates, the loss of the wondrous butterfly itself is really no loss at all. Although Annie screams, Peter Hovenden laughs cruelly, and Robert Danforth stares dumbly at the "small heap of glittering fragments" in his child's hand, Owen remains unperturbed because the material manifestation of Beauty is unimportant. Hawthorne writes:

[A]s for Owen Warland, he looked placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which was yet no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this. When the artist rose high enough to achieve the Beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the Reality. (475)

Through his portrayal of Owen, Hawthorne conveys a vital point: artistic recognition can be fleeting, but it is a mistake not to strive toward perfection, even if the artist remains the only "audience" for his own work.⁸³ Owen Warland faces and recovers from numerous setbacks, even outright failures—not to mention destructive behavioral patterns such as eating and drinking to excess, and falling into lethargy—in order to succeed at last in creating the Beautiful. In some sense, then, "The Artist of the Beautiful" becomes a tale of the *rehabilitation* of the

artist's reputation—after all, Prometheus does go to join the gods of Olympus after his torture has ended.

Finally, it is important to note that Hawthorne judges scientists such as Aylmer who aim at noble, spiritual ideals, but fail to achieve them much more harshly than artists who likewise aim at such ideals: whereas Georgiana dies in “The Birth-Mark,” no one is hurt in “The Artist of the Beautiful,” except Owen himself, and even then, it is only a wound to his pride. Unlike Aylmer and Rappaccini, Owen does not willfully sacrifice human subjects on the altar of his art. Rather, like the carver in “Drowne's Wooden Image,” he succeeds once, and only once, in creating the Beautiful, and while that is more poignant, it is enough.⁸⁴

Empedocles: Flames of Purification

Appearing alongside “Drowne's Wooden Image” (1844) and “The Artist of the Beautiful” in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), “Earth's Holocaust” (1844) bridges the gap between the myths of Prometheus and Empedocles. Although numerous ancient and contemporary treatments of the Prometheus myth might have been known to Hawthorne, *Bayle's Dictionary* seems a likely source for his knowledge about Empedocles.⁸⁵ Bayle recounts a story told by Hippobatus, which states that “[Empedocles] rose from his place and went to Aetna, where he leaped into the fire, that he might leave behind him an opinion that he was a God; and that afterwards it was discovered by one of his sandals cast up by the fire, for his sandals were of brass” (*General* 5: 28).

“Earth's Holocaust” concerns a great bonfire, which, like Aetna, possesses both the power to destroy and the power to purify. In this sketch, Hawthorne offers a somewhat satiric commentary on the numerous popular reform movements of the 1840s and simultaneously seeks

to carve out a place for himself within the context of major literary traditions and giants of the canon such as Shakespeare and Milton. “Earth’s Holocaust,” in short, is about the American writer’s place—or lack of place—in the world and in literary history.

Like the legend of Empedocles, this sketch emphasizes the notion of preserving one’s reputation through submission to the purifying influence of the fire. The story begins like a legend or fairy tale: “Once upon a time—but whether in time past or time to come, is a matter of little or no moment—this wide world had become so overburdened with an accumulation of worn-out trumpery that the inhabitants determined to rid themselves of it by a general bonfire” (X: 381). By the narrator’s admission that he had come to watch the bonfire not only because he had “a taste for sights of this kind,” but also because he thought that “the illumination of the bonfire might reveal some profundity of moral truth, heretofore hidden in mist or darkness” (381), the reader is made aware that this fairy tale will have a moral. In fact, “Earth’s Holocaust” contains a moral based on an understanding of the multiple meanings and functions of fire. Hoping to purge the world of vice and foolishness, the gathered “inhabitants” determine to destroy all manner of heraldic devices, emblems of royalty, and harmful or addictive substances. Having rid themselves of these unwanted items, the reformers proceed to cast the implements of war along with the paper money and legislative documents into the flames. Interestingly, the fire has made servants of its observers, who must continually fuel the fire in order to keep it burning. Up to this point in the narrative, Hawthorne emphasizes the destructive and purgative properties of the great bonfire.

However, in the subsequent section, which concerns book burning, Hawthorne focuses on fire’s constructive role as an instrument of discernment and agent of purification. Swept away with the spirit of reform and unconvinced by the arguments of a few protesters—the most

notable being a book-seller who is invited to join the flames himself—the masses decide to consign all of the world’s literature to the flames. In “Earth’s Holocaust,” the narrator likens the poet to Prometheus, who, having outwitted the gods by stealing fire from them, was then able to distribute it among inferior men. The fact that the narrator describes Shelley’s poetry as “emit[ing] a purer light than almost any other productions of his day” is no accident, given that Shelley had produced a popular treatment of the Prometheus myth in 1820 (*Prometheus Unbound*) and that he himself was the subject of a fire-myth. According to Sterling Eisiminger, Shelley’s abnormally large heart was supposed to have survived “several days in the sea, the devastations of lime and sand, and finally the cremation fire itself” (3). Like the brazen sandal of Empedocles, Shelley’s heart survives the fire and serves as a testament to his immortality.⁸⁶

Judged as worthy as Shelley’s poetry, the works of Milton “sen[d] up a powerful blaze, gradually reddening into a coal, which promise[s] to endure longer than almost any other material of the pile” (395). Tellingly, the narrator relates that from the volumes of Shakespeare “there gushed a flame of such marvellous splendor, that men shaded their eyes as against the sun’s meridian glory”; in stark contrast, the works of “lexicographers, commentators, and encyclopediasts,” fall among the embers with a “leaden thump” and soon turn to ashes, “like rotten wood” (395). Clearly, the fire performs a purifying function as it separates the wheat from the chaff, the unrivalled genius of Shakespeare from the plodding thoroughness of the lexicographer.

Later, when several Bibles are thrown into the flames, they, of course, survive the bonfire completely unharmed. Entering a sly comment on the “purity” of the original text versus the “pollution” of critical commentary, Hawthorne observes that the pages of the Bibles only blaze with “a more dazzling whiteness” as the human fingerprints and marginal comments are

obliterated by the cleansing influence of the fire. J. E. Cirlot explains the value of cleansing or sacrificial fire, saying: “Death at the stake, the consummation of sacrifice through fire, and, from the mystic point of view, any kind of cremation, are all symbols of sublimation, . . . of the destruction of what is base to make way for what is superior; or, in other words, salvation of and through the spirit” (63). In addition to noting the purifying quality of the flame, Hawthorne considers its inspirational potential: “Could a poet but light a lamp at that glorious flame,” remarks the narrator, “he might then consume the midnight oil to some good purpose” (396).

Taken together, the myths of Prometheus and Empedocles suggest the moral of “Earth’s Holocaust”: to attempt to save the world by means of the “feeble instrument” of the intellect alone is to commit a sin of pride; in order to save the world, the human heart must, following the model of Empedocles, be willingly offered to the purifying influence of the flame. In *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*, Bachelard writes: “With Empedoclean imagery one is never really certain whether writers are casting themselves into the flames alongside their heroes or not. They observe, and by doing so perhaps encourage their heroes’ flameward progress” (110-11). As Bachelard’s assertion implies, Hawthorne wants to become one with the fire, to be purified as Shelley and the Bible have been, for he understands that his work must emit a “higher and purer flame” if he hopes to survive the ravages of time and literary criticism.

The Phoenix: “Nest and Pyre”

If “Earth’s Holocaust” reveals a connection between the Prometheus and Empedocles myths, then “The Devil in Manuscript” (1835) elucidates that between the stories of Empedocles and the phoenix. Indeed, the latter two legends both focus on “their heroes’ flameward progress” and on their heroes’ “survival” of the flames. According to Bachelard, whose discussion of the

phoenix centers around the mythical creature's ability to defeat death, the phoenix represents the "archetype of the imagination of fire" (*Fragments* 55). In his *Dictionary of Symbols*, J. E. Cirlot affirms that the phoenix is a symbol of eternity (94). Cirlot relates: "Legend has it that when it saw death draw near, it would make a nest of sweet-smelling wood and resins, which it would expose to the full force of the sun's rays, until it burnt itself to ashes in the flame" (241).

Bachelard muses upon the phoenix's moment of self-renewal, saying:

A descriptive causal dialectics suggests itself here as appropriate for dreaming upon the conflagration of the Phoenix, for which either the Sun or the inner substance of the Phoenix itself is responsible. Does the bird take flame by concentrating the sun's rays or, hearth alive with fire, does it prepare its own demise? (*Fragments* 39)

In either case, as with the legend of Empedocles, it is clear that the myth of the phoenix focuses on transformation, and survival through that transformation. Cirlot explains: "In every respect [the phoenix] symbolizes periodic destruction and re-creation In the Christian world, it signifies the triumph of eternal life over death." (242). As a writer, Hawthorne seeks to model himself after the phoenix. Although he cannot literally defeat death like the mythical firebird, the author comes to realize that the measure of immortality he *can* attain is a literary "life" or reputation that will survive the death of the body.

In "The Devil in Manuscript" (1835), Hawthorne openly conjectures about the role of fire in the creation and preservation of a writer's literary legacy. In this early tale, the narrator, Oberon—a college nickname of Hawthorne's—seeks creative inspiration from fire, and, at length, disgusted with his inability to find a publisher for his works, resorts to burning his unwanted manuscripts in protest, thus succeeding at last in sparking the town's imagination. James Williamson has rightly understood the story to represent an ironic comment on the state of

American publishing in the 1830s (156). Although valid on its face, Williamson's reading of "The Devil in Manuscript" overlooks the story's undeniably powerful elemental symbolism.

As the story opens, Hawthorne directs the reader's attention to the hostile presence of the elements in the scene he describes:

[I]t was a bitter night, clear starlight, but cold as Nova Zembla—the shop-windows along the street being frosted so as almost to hide the lights, while the wheels of coaches thundered equally loud over frozen earth and pavements of stone. There was no snow, either on the ground or the roofs of the houses. The wind blew so violently, that I had but to spread my cloak like a mainsail and scud along the street at the rate of ten knots, greatly envied by other navigators who were beating slowly up, with the gale right in their teeth. One of these I capsized, but was gone on the wings of the wind before he could even vociferate an oath. (XI: 170)

Here, the element of earth appears as "frozen earth," ground that remains as unyielding as "pavements of stone" while the coach rolls over it. The element of air is present in the bitter wind, which either prevents the pedestrians' progress or, as with the narrator, drives them mercilessly before the gale, causing them to lose all control over speed and direction. The element of water, though not present in the form of actual precipitation, is implied through the mention of "frozen" earth and through the elaborate nautical conceit used to depict the action of the wind.

The element of fire remains conspicuously absent from these descriptions. In fact, Hawthorne privileges fire by placing it in a new paragraph, which begins, "After this picture of an inclement night, behold us seated by a great blazing fire, which looked so comfortable and delicious that I felt inclined to lie down and roll among the hot coals" (170). The paragraph

division places a barrier between the elements of earth, air, and water—the unpleasant causes of the inclement weather—and the element of fire. The narrator betrays a clearly Empedoclean impulse when he confesses his desire to cast himself into the fire and roll in the hot coals.

Oberon, the frustrated writer whom the narrator has come to visit, intends to cast not himself, but his rejected manuscripts into the fire. Of the seventeen booksellers to whom he had offered his tales, only one had given a forthright—if discouraging—answer as to the reason for the rejection: “[N]o American publisher will meddle with an American work, seldom if by a known writer, and never if by a new one, unless at the writer’s risk” (173). Having been tortured during the composition of his tales and during his continued, but unsuccessful, attempts to publish them, Oberon concludes that these manuscripts have the devil in them. He purposes, therefore, to “commit the fiend to his retribution in the flames” (171).

Interestingly, fire symbolism in “The Devil in Manuscript” is associated not only with the destruction of manuscripts, but also with their creation. Speaking of a scene in one of his stories, Oberon recounts, “This scene came into my fancy as I walked along a hilly road, on a starlight October evening; in the pure and bracing air, I became all soul, and felt as if I could climb the sky and run a race along the Milky Way” (174). He clearly relates this phase of his creativity to the element of air, an element that fails him; he recalls that “the gray dawn came and found me wide awake and feverish, the victim of my own enchantments” (174). Deeply disappointed, he looks to earth and water for inspiration. He sums up his artistic process, saying:

Sometimes my ideas were like precious stones under the *earth*, requiring toil to *dig them up*, and care to polish and brighten them; but often, a delicious *stream* of thought would *gush* out upon the page at once, like *water* sparkling up suddenly in the desert; and when

it had passed, I gnawed my pen hopelessly or blundered on with cold and miserable toil, as if there were a *wall of ice* between me and my subject. (174, my emphasis)

Since working with earth requires considerable toil, Oberon rejects it, finally turning to fire, the only element capable of melting the “wall of ice” created by water between the author and his subject matter. However, he now finds in his manuscripts no traces of these moments of purest artistic inspiration, no traces of the “golden pen, with which I wrote in characters of fire” (175). Thus, in a moment of near madness, Oberon determines that if fire is unable to serve him creatively, then it will serve him destructively: he tosses his tales into the flames.

As he watches the leaves of his manuscripts burn, Oberon’s imagination takes flight. He speaks with hitherto unequaled eloquence:

They blaze . . . as if I had steeped them in the intensest spirit of genius. There I see my lovers clasped in each other’s arms. How pure the flame that bursts from their glowing hearts! And yonder the features of a villain, writhing in the fire that shall torment him to eternity. My holy men, my pious and angelic women, stand like martyrs amid the flames, their mild eyes lifted heavenward. Ring out the bells! A city is on fire. See!—
destruction roars through my dark forests while the lakes boil up in steaming billows, and the mountains are volcanoes, and the sky kindles with a lurid brightness! All elements are but one pervading flame! (176)

It would seem that fire has, after all, inspired Oberon. He is now able to see a tremendous poetry in its multiple significances—to the artist, it means genius; to the lovers, passion; to the villain, torment; to the angelic men and women, martyrdom; to the city, destruction. Among the four elements, fire becomes ascendant here because it facilitates changes in state—if earth symbolizes solids, water exemplifies liquids, and air represents gases, then fire suggests “the temperature

which brings about the transformations of matter” (Cirlot 91). Thus, fire alone is capable of altering the other three elements: water becomes “steaming billows,” earth becomes a volcano, and the air “kindles” in the presence of fire.

Impressed by the fire’s destructive power, its tremendous rate of consumption, Oberon soliloquizes:

What is more potent than fire! . . . Even thought, invisible and incorporeal as it is, cannot escape it. In this little time, it has annihilated the creations of long nights and days, which I could no more reproduce, in their first glow and freshness, than cause ashes and whitened bones to rise up and live. There, too, I sacrificed the unborn children of my mind. All that I had accomplished—all that I planned for future years—has perished by one common ruin, and left only this heap of embers. (177)

The references to “ashes” that “rise up and live,” together with the reference to “unborn children”—prefigured as they were by Oberon’s earlier mention of the ashes of the destroyed manuscripts (172) and the ashes of own his cremated body (175)⁸⁷—remind readers of the myth of the phoenix. In this case, the phoenix legend suggests that the “devil,”—another term for a literary hack⁸⁸—has been released through the ultimately revivifying, if temporarily destructive, agency of fire in order to make way for a new, more powerful, and more creative artist.

Demonstrating a characteristic appreciation for multiple levels of meaning,⁸⁹ Hawthorne causes readers to understand the firing of the town as both literal and figurative. While the burning manuscripts ignite a real fire that begins to consume all the buildings in the town, Oberon realizes that his thoughts are, indeed, capable of inflaming his audience’s imagination. Thus, the struggling American writer declares victory, shouting: “My tales! . . . The chimney! The roof! The Fiend has gone forth by night, and startled thousands in fear and wonder from

their beds! Here I stand—a triumphant author! Huzza! Huzza! My brain has set the town on fire! Huzza!” (178).

The Role of Fire in Literary Creation and Destruction

Bachelard writes that “A person who sets a fire, who activates fire, magnifies but also controls and regulates the forces of the world” (*Fragments* 69). Specifically, fire served Hawthorne as an agent of both literary creation and destruction—he acted to preserve his literary legacy not only by attempting to write in “characters of fire,” but also by burning inferior work he produced. If the myth of the phoenix conflates the images of “nest and pyre,” so, too, does Hawthorne’s strategy for securing a literary reputation. Fire represents the “nest”—that is, the spark, or the origin—of many of Hawthorne’s best fictional works, and, simultaneously, the “pyre” of those judged by the artist to be unsuccessful and potentially damaging to his legacy.

Bachelard observes in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* that “The fire confined to the fireplace was no doubt for man the first object of reverie, the symbol of repose, the invitation to repose.” He goes on to assert, “[T]o be deprived of a reverie before a burning fire is to lose the first use and the truly human use of fire” (14). In “The Custom-House” preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, which admirably demonstrates Bachelard’s point, Hawthorne discusses the indispensable role that firelight plays in the creation of romance:

The somewhat dim coal-fire has an essential influence in producing the effect which I would describe. It throws its unobtrusive tinge throughout the room, with a faint ruddiness upon the walls and ceiling, and a reflected gleam from the polish of the furniture. This warmer light mingles itself with the cold spirituality of the moonbeams, and communicates, as it were, a heart and sensibilities of human tenderness to the forms

which fancy summons up. It converts them from snow-images into men and women. Glancing at the looking-glass, we behold—deep within its haunted verge—the smouldering glow of the half-extinguished anthracite, the white moonbeams on the floor, and a repetition of all the gleam and shadow of the picture, with one remove further from the actual, and nearer to the imaginative. Then, at such an hour, and with this scene before him, if a man, sitting all alone, cannot dream strange things, and make them look like truth, he need never try to write romances. (I: 36)

As this passage suggests, the coal fire aids the artist in imagining, in “dreaming strange things” that he can convert into successful plots and characters that will contribute to the survival of his reputation.

In “The Custom-House,” the moonlight and firelight contribute to a mental landscape resembling what Bachelard, in *The Flame of a Candle* (1961), poetically styles “the psyche’s chiaroscuro”:

Reveries of faint light make the dreamer feel at home; the dreamer’s unconscious becomes home for him. The dreamer, that twin of our being, that chiaroscuro of the thinking person, feels secure in his existence during this reverie in faint light. Whoever trusts in the reveries of faint light will discover this psychological truth: the tranquil unconscious, an unconscious without nightmares and in harmony with its reverie, is quite precisely the psyche’s chiaroscuro, or better yet, the chiaroscuro’s psyche. Images from this faint light teach us to love this chiaroscuro of innermost vision. As soon as he begins to love his reverie, a dreamer who wishes to know himself as a dreaming being . . . is tempted to formulate an aesthetics for this chiaroscuro of the psyche. (4-5)

Thus, Bachelard summarizes the pivotal role that “faint light” can play in reverie that leads to the creation of art.

In addition to faint light, fire may contribute vital heat to the artist’s generative process. Indicating his distaste for the commercial atmosphere of the Custom House that inevitably stifles his creative impulses, Hawthorne writes: “My imagination was a tarnished mirror. It would not reflect . . . the figures with which I did my best to people it. The characters of the narrative would not be warmed and rendered malleable, by any heat that I could kindle at my intellectual forge” (34). Furthermore, it soon becomes apparent that the failure to “kindle” heat within his “intellectual forge” results in “dead” characters. The thwarted artist laments, “They would take neither the glow of passion nor the tenderness of sentiment, but retained all the rigidity of dead corpses, and stared me in the face with a fixed and ghastly grin of contemptuous defiance” (34). Both the light and the heat of the fire, then, become necessary parts of the successful writer’s generative activity.

However, as noted earlier, fire serves Hawthorne the artist not only as a “nest,” but also as a “pyre.” As Williamson and others have argued, “The Devil in Manuscript” finds its origins in Hawthorne’s dissatisfaction with the contemporary American publishing market and with his own perceived failures in it. In *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989), David Leverenz provides a thorough discussion of the unfriendly publishing climate of the 1830s-50s, which, in America, favored female authors of sentimental or domestic fiction, and, internationally, favored European writers, due to the absence of any international copyright law. According to James Mellow’s *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (1980), a frustrated Hawthorne did, indeed, burn manuscript materials at the beginning of his career (45).

On the other hand, in *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (1976), Nina Baym argues against Hawthorne's sister Elizabeth's claim that Hawthorne, furious with his publisher's delays, recalled the tales that were meant to constitute *Seven Tales of My Native Land* and burned them. Although this story is "supported by the mordant fiction 'The Devil in Manuscript,' as well as by the revised 'Alice Doane's Appeal' and a letter from 1845 in which Hawthorne expressed regrets that he had burned fictions that might have been useful after all," Baym maintains that "no direct evidence proves that a complete and integrated collection of tales was burned" (24).

Roy Harvey Pearce addresses the critical controversy about whether Hawthorne burned all accessible copies of another of his early works—the gothic novel *Fanshawe*—in his introduction to the Centenary Edition text. Pearce concludes the only certainties are that Hawthorne asked his sister to return her copy, which he, according to Elizabeth, "no doubt burned," and that Hawthorne's friend Horatio Bridge burned his personal copy at Hawthorne's request (III: 309). It has also been determined that Hawthorne sought to suppress his connection with the anonymously published novel, and Sophia Hawthorne confessed that "he never told me even that there was such a book printed" (313).

Hawthorne writes in an 1853 notebook entry, "What a trustful guardian of secret matters fire is!" (VIII: 552). Although he speaks here of several of Sophia's "maiden letters" that he had thrown to the fire for the sake of preserving the couple's privacy, Hawthorne often claims in his letters that he burned—or at least wanted to burn—copies of his own work. For example, in the 1845 letter to which Nina Baym refers, Hawthorne confides to E. A. Duyckinck, "Here I am . . . in the old dingy and dusky chamber, where I wasted many good years of my youth, shaping day-dreams and night-dreams into idle stories—scarcely half of which ever saw the light; except it were their own blaze upon the hearth" (XVI: 126). Again, in 1863, he states, "The first tales that

I wrote (having kept them in manuscript, for lack of a publisher, till I was able to see some of their demerits) I burnt” (XVIII: 521). Moreover, in an 1848 communication with the associate editor of the *American Review*, the author says, “I am as tractable an author as you ever knew, so far as putting my articles into the fire goes; though I cannot abide alterations or omissions” (XVI: 251). When asked in later life for a manuscript excerpt to sell at the New York Metropolitan Sanitary Fair that was held very shortly before his death, the author replied, “In the way of manuscript, I generally burn everything behind me, like a retreating army . . .” (XVIII: 648). On separate occasions, he alludes to burning the manuscript draft of *The Scarlet Letter* (November 3, 1850; XVI: 372), and to his willingness to burn the finished copy of *The Blithedale Romance* (May 3, 1852; XVI: 539) should his publishers find the romance unacceptable, and James T. Fields avers that “If I had found the slightest fault” with *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne “would instantly have flung the whole MS. into the fire” (XV: 6).

Ultimately, it seems to me that whether Hawthorne actually burned manuscripts is immaterial; the point is that, as his prefaces and letters attest, he thought of fire—in both its creative and destructive aspects—as the best means of preserving his literary reputation. While not Promethean in terms of pride, Hawthorne certainly engaged in acts of “clever disobedience” throughout his life in order to create a place for himself as an artist within the Puritan work ethic of his paternal ancestors and the mercantile values of his maternal relatives. Furthermore, by willingly submitting his manuscripts to the purifying influence of the fire, he, like Empedocles, was transformed into something greater than he had been. Finally, although the ashes of his burned manuscripts represented a kind of death, Hawthorne, in imitation of the phoenix, did indeed rise from his own ashes to attain literary immortality.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Like the legendary phoenix, Hawthorne had to pass through death in order to attain his own brand of immortality. During the final decade of his life (1854-1864), Hawthorne served as U.S. Consul in Liverpool, lived for a time in Italy where he wrote *The Marble Faun* (1860), and resettled at the Wayside in Concord with hopes of writing one last great romance. All of the manuscripts left unfinished at the author's death are concerned in one way or another with the theme of the Elixir of Life. Although Hawthorne scoffs at the attempts made by his characters Dr. Heidegger, Aylmer, Septimius Felton, and Dr. Dolliver to undo the curse of mortality, the fact that he returned to this subject matter—the alchemists' search for the *Elixir Vitae*—time and time again, particularly at the end of his life, indicates that this search held psychological significance for him. Some of the reasons were personal. Toward the end of the Hawthorne family's time in Europe, both the author's wife and his daughter Una had been dangerously ill. In *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of Disclosure in Hawthorne's Novels* (1988), Gordon Hutner discusses the impact that his family's health problems had on Hawthorne:

After the winter of 1859, Hawthorne was spent. It is impossible to overestimate the effect that Una's illness had on her father. Julian suggests that Hawthorne was never the same man after the ordeal of having his daughter near death and his wife gravely ill. His son reports that during this benighted season Hawthorne developed a croak in his voice, which he was to have for the rest of his life. (185)

As Hutner suggests, Hawthorne himself was beginning to weaken physically. He would be dead of an undiagnosed malady, now believed to be a type of stomach cancer, within a few years.

Hawthorne refused to see a doctor, but he probably knew that his health was beginning to fail.

His daughter Una had first fallen ill in Rome, which Hawthorne called a “pestilential city.” In a March 4, 1859, letter to William Ticknor, Hawthorne explains the harmful influence that Rome could have on one’s health:

[N]othing of much importance has happened, unless it be that I was, for a short time, confined to my bed. This Roman climate is really terrible, and nobody can be sure of life or health from one day to another. The utmost caution is requisite, in regard to diet, and exposure to air; and after all the care that can be taken, there is a lurking poison in the atmosphere that will be likely enough to do your business. (XVIII: 163)

Hawthorne’s words became prophetic when Una, who had contracted malaria in late October of the previous year, nearly died of the disease in April of 1859 (XVII: 93). Though she survived that dangerous episode, Una suffered a relapse in September 1860 after the Hawthornes had returned to Concord (95). On December 17, 1860, Hawthorne wrote to his friend Francis Bennoch, explaining: “Una has been very much out of health since our return. The dregs of that miserable Roman fever are still in her blood; and we sometimes feel very much discouraged about her, though the medical people say that her youth and naturally strong constitution will ultimately overcome it” (XVIII: 353). Among Hawthorne’s greatest fears was the prospect that Una’s mind might be permanently affected by her bout of “Roman fever” (Mellow 537).

However, his fears were allayed when Una was “cured” by means of electrical fire: a Mrs. Rollins of Cambridge, whom Hawthorne referred to as an “electrical witch,” relieved Una’s symptoms of mental disorientation by treating her with an early type of electroshock therapy

(537-38). It seems more than coincidence that Hawthorne began work on *Septimius Felton*—the first of the “Elixir of Life” manuscripts—in October 1861, only a month after the author’s anxiety about death had been heightened by Una’s recurrence of malaria.

A second reason that Hawthorne may have begun work on the manuscript at this time is the outbreak of the Civil War.⁹⁰ I join critics such as Nina Baym and Terence Martin in suggesting that the references to the Revolutionary War in *Septimius Felton* serve as an analogue for the Civil War, which was currently in progress in Hawthorne’s America.⁹¹ In fact, certain statements in *Septimius Felton* suggest that Hawthorne saw Septimius’s research into the means of attaining earthly immortality as an understandable reaction to the climate of death that war creates. Although Hawthorne noted with relief that his son Julian was too young to join the war effort, the writer watched as one of his near neighbors, thirty-year-old Louisa May Alcott—who would in time make her own mark on the literary world—returned home from her work in a Washington war hospital with what looked to be a fatal case of typhus (Mellow 561). In *Chiefly about War Matters, by a Peaceable Man* (1862), Hawthorne asserts: “There is no remoteness of life and thought—no hermetically sealed seclusion, except, possibly, that of the grave—into which the disturbing influences of this war do not penetrate” (XXIII: 403).

Hawthorne even worried on occasion about the long-term effects that the war would have on the publication and consumption of literature. He wrote to his publisher James Fields on January 8, 1863, saying:

Methinks it would be better to defer publication [of *Our Old Home*] till the autumn—at least, till summer; though perhaps it may be desirable to make what harvest we can while the war lasts; for when that comes to an end, I look for utter ruin—at all events, so dark a

gloom that nobody can see to read in it, and so no more books will be bought. Not that I really believe this, but I should not wonder if it were true. (XVIII: 523)

As this letter indicates, in times of war, even men who are not normally concerned about such matters may meditate upon their own mortality, literary and otherwise. Overall, the personal and social circumstances that surrounded the author in the fall of 1861 might well have produced a state of morbid contemplation similar to that experienced by Septimius Felton.

Septimius Felton, the Civil War, and the Elixir Vitae

Septimius Felton is the story of a young college graduate who, rather than pursuing the love of a woman or joining his friend Robert Hagburn as a soldier in the Revolutionary War, exhausts himself pouring over a manuscript that he believes to contain the secret of producing the Elixir of Life. In spite of the war—perhaps *because of* the war and the threat to life that it represents⁹²—Septimius remains absorbed in his esoteric studies. His chief complaint is that “We [human beings] live so little while, that . . . it is little matter whether we live or no” (XIII: 7). He continues, saying, “I doubt, if it had been left to my choice, whether I should have taken existence on such terms; so much trouble of preparation to live, and then no life at all . . .” (7). Septimius bases his objections not only on the love of life itself, but also on the principle that death interrupts the process of learning and thwarts human achievement. He opines:

The whole race of man, living from the beginning of time, have not, in all their number and multiplicity and in all their duration, come in the least to know the world they live in! And how is this rich world thrown away upon us, because we live in it such a moment. What mortal work has ever been done since the world began! Because we have no time. No lesson is taught. We are snatched away from our study, before we have learned the

alphabet. As the world now exists . . . it seems to me all a failure, because we do not live long enough. (11-12)

Indeed, as Terence Martin notes in “*Septimius Felton* and *Septimius Norton*: Matters of History and Immortality,” where he analyzes some of the ancillary documents Hawthorne left behind: “Septimius is never an Aylmer . . . or Rappaccini, even in his most obsessive moods. Hawthorne conceives him (in the Scenario) as a figure who must have ‘grand and heroic qualities,’ who ‘must desire long life, not meanly, but for noble ends’” (2).⁹³ Hawthorne elaborates upon this notion, explaining that Septimius is to possess “[n]o mean dread of death, but an abhorrence of it, as being cloddish, inactive, unsuitable” (XIII: 528). Finally, the author reminds himself to “Make [Septimius’s] nobility of character grow upon the reader in spite of all his defects” (528).

Despite Hawthorne’s insistence on Septimius’s “nobility of character” in the Scenario, moral judgments against the protagonist abound in the manuscript of *Septimius Felton*. On multiple occasions, the author implies that Septimius is a man willing to give up his soul to the Devil (represented by Dr. Portsoaken) in return for the ultimate forbidden knowledge—how to avoid death. Even though he seems, at times, to condemn Septimius, Hawthorne was ineluctably drawn to stories of the quest for immortality, and he identified with his frustrated protagonist on a deeply personal level, as indicated by the following passage:

Then a great depression fell upon [Septimius]; he had flung himself so earnestly and entirely upon his strange purpose, that when it seemed about to be removed from him, he felt that he must wander vaguely, stagger, go no whither, and finally sit down by the wayside, and remain there, staring at the wayfarers who *had* a purpose, until he died. I know well what his feeling was! I have had it oftentimes myself, when long brooding and busying myself on some idle tale, and keeping my faith in it by estrangement from all

intercourse besides, I have chanced to be drawn out of the precincts enchanted by my poor magic; and the look back upon what I have thought, how faded, how monstrous, how apart from all truth it looks, being now seen apart from its own atmosphere, which is entirely essential to its effect. (XIII: 130)

Tellingly, at the end of this paragraph, Hawthorne makes a note to himself to “Put the above in the third person” (130). In this editorial comment, readers can see an intense sympathy, almost a blurring of identity, between author and character, which is emphasized by the particular language Hawthorne chooses. When he says that Septimius believes he must “sit down by the wayside, and remain there,” Hawthorne echoes the phrasing of his preface to *The Snow-Image* (1851), in which he writes:

[A] fiction-monger . . . [I] became. But, was there ever such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public, as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life, like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprung up around me, and the bushes grew to be saplings, and the saplings became trees, until no exit appeared possible, through the entangling depths of my obscurity. (XI: 5)⁹⁴

Further identification with his protagonist occurs when Hawthorne considers one of the possibilities inherent in the long life that awaits Septimius should the latter achieve his aim of producing the *Elixir Vitae*: “He would write a poem, or other great work, inappreciable at first, and live to see it famous—himself among his own posterity” (XIII: 177).

In fact, the situations of Septimius Felton and Nathaniel Hawthorne are to a certain extent comparable. Both character and author long for immortality, and both strive to attain immortality through the agency of fire. Whereas Septimius works with the fire beneath his retort to distill the Elixir of Life, Hawthorne—like his namesake Oberon of “The Devil in

Manuscript”—attempts to write in “characters of fire,” to inflame the imaginations of his readers with his prose. As James D. Wallace has insightfully observed in “Immortality in Hawthorne’s *Septimius Felton*,” “there is a parallel between Septimius’ desperate and exhilarating quest for immortality and Hawthorne’s struggle to write one last romance, for in chronicling Septimius’ efforts to achieve the elixir of life, Hawthorne is attempting to create a traditional symbol of cultural immortality—a book” (23). It is clear, then, that while protagonists such as Septimius Felton hope to extend their lives through alchemical experiments, Hawthorne himself sought immortality through his art.

The Final Years, and the Desire for a Literary Legacy

Like Septimius Felton, Hawthorne was surrounded by an atmosphere of war and death that kept the subject of human mortality in the forefront of his thoughts. In the early 1860s, while the war raged on, two of Hawthorne’s friends lost their wives, and the author himself lost two friends of long standing—author Henry David Thoreau and publisher William Ticknor. First, in the summer of 1861, Fanny Longfellow died in a terrible accident at home when her dress caught fire from some burning wax she had been using to seal an envelope (Mellow 544). Longfellow was badly burned in attempting to save her, and was so ill he could not even attend her funeral (545). On July 14, Hawthorne wrote to James Field to inquire: “How does Longfellow bear this terrible misfortune? How are his own injuries?” (XVIII: 391). Despite his deep concern for his friend, Hawthorne admitted, with a recognition of the impact that such an event can have on a person’s psyche, “I shall be afraid ever to meet him again; he cannot again be the man that I have known” (391). Only a year and a half later, Franklin Pierce’s wife died, and Hawthorne found his longtime friend greatly in need of comfort (XVIII: 620).

In the midst of these two losses, during the spring of 1862, Hawthorne's friend and fellow author Henry David Thoreau died of tuberculosis at only forty-four years old (Mellow 558). Hawthorne planned to frame the preface to *The Dolliver Romance*—a romance based on a story Thoreau had told him about a “deathless man” who was rumored to have inhabited Hawthorne's home—as a tribute to Thoreau. Despite his conviction that “It seems the duty of a live literary man to perpetuate the memory of a dead one,” Hawthorne finished neither the preface nor the romance (559). In this remark about “perpetuat[ing] the memory” of dead authors, Hawthorne not only expresses his desire to strengthen Thoreau's literary legacy in particular, but also betrays a concern about the quickly fading reputations of “literary men” in general.

Certainly, apprehensions about his own literary legacy plagued Hawthorne during the early 1860s as he struggled in vain to write another great romance. In an August 3, 1862, letter, Hawthorne confesses: “I doubt whether I ever again have spirits and vigor and tranquility to produce another Romance. Since my return from England, my health has not been so good as formerly, and this terrible war will not let us think of anything but itself . . .” (XVIII: 468). These doubts, of course, surfaced in the romances that he had been trying to write for the past several years. Commenting on the genesis of *The American Claimant Manuscripts*—namely, “The Ancestral Footstep,” which became “Etherege,” and then “Grimshawe”—Edwin Haviland Miller relates:

Hundreds and hundreds of pages followed with corrections, interpolations, exclamations of frustration, and unanswerable questions as to plot, characterization, and motivation. Names of characters changed, sometimes within a few pages. In the daytime he pronounced the material nonsensical. At nighttime the veil of seeming nonsense was

raised and the truth laid bare: “. . . there seem to be things that I can almost get hold of, and think about; but when I am just on the point of seizing them, they start away, like slippery things.” (485)

Miller goes on to explain that “Late in 1861 or early in the following year Hawthorne put aside the manuscript and confirmed his failure to weave the tale into a tapestry . . . [because] he found it too painful to continue” (488). Since the name Grimshawe “evokes Fanshawe as well as Hawthorne” (Miller 486), it is easy to envision parallels with Hawthorne’s early, unsuccessful romance. If Hawthorne did, indeed, burn copies of *Fanshawe*, then one might ask why he did not burn the manuscripts of his late romances. I would speculate that *Fanshawe*, a completed work that Hawthorne believed to be a failure, was easier to part with than the manuscripts representing the only possibility that he might write another great romance before his death.

Although he no longer thought seriously of burning manuscripts, Hawthorne’s editorial comments made in the process of composing “Etherege” indicate that he continued to think of literary creativity as being linked with images of fire. James R. Mellow reports:

Nothing indicates the unhappiness and uncertainty of Hawthorne’s frustrated creative impulses—or does so with such poignancy—as the repeated editorial asides that crop up in his “Etherege” manuscript: ironic, caustic, grimly humorous comments about the unsatisfactory performance of the writing, the unmanageable plotting. “The life is not yet breathed into this plot, after all my galvanic efforts,” Hawthorne upbraids himself. “Not a spark of passion as yet. How shall it be attained?” (547)

Hawthorne speaks here of his efforts to resuscitate the plot with “galvanic,” or electrical, fire, to kindle it into a “passion[ate]” blaze by means of the “spark” of imagination.

During the winter of 1863-64, as Hawthorne's physical condition dramatically worsened, he continued to look to fire for literary inspiration. Mellow describes Hawthorne's physical and mental state as follows:

Physically, he was shrunken and worn, subject to fits of seemingly incurable restiveness that were followed by unavoidable fatigue. He had little inclination to read or write. "I have fallen into a quagmire of disgust and despondency with respect to literary matters," he wrote Donald Grant Mitchell. "I am tired of my own thoughts and fancies and my own mode of expressing them." Fields, visiting in January, found Hawthorne sitting before the fireplace, gazing into the flames, his gray dressing gown wrapped round him "like a Roman toga." (572)

Unfortunately, no matter how long Hawthorne gazed into the flames, no creative inspiration seemed to come. In February of 1864, the author gave up his attempts to write *The Dolliver Romance*, a story about an elderly apothecary believed to possess the secret of concocting the Elixir of Life.

The following month, Hawthorne set off on a trip with publisher and friend William Ticknor that Sophia hoped would restore her husband's health and spirits. Instead, it turned out to be a nightmarish journey, as Ticknor fell suddenly ill, progressively worsened, and then, on the morning of April 10, died in his Philadelphia hotel room (Mellow 575). Mellow reports that "Hawthorne, in a dazed condition, sat by his dead friend until some member of the family arrived. In his distraught state, he was convinced that death had made a mistake and claimed the wrong man" (575). Feeling the effects of age, illness, and trauma, Hawthorne resembled his character Dr. Dolliver, of whom he writes:

The weight of years had a perennial novelty for the poor sufferer. He never grew accustomed to it, but long as he had now borne the fretful torpor of his waning life . . . he still retained an inward consciousness that these stiffened shoulders, these quailing knees, this cloudiness of sight and brain, this confused forgetfulness of men and affairs, were troublesome accidents that did not really belong to him. He possibly cherished a half-recognized idea that they might pass away. (XIII: 463)

In a return to one of the basic conceptual metaphors identified by Lakoff and Turner—"LIFE IS A FLAME" (31) or "LIFE IS A FIRE" (52)—Hawthorne philosophizes upon Dr. Dolliver's condition, insisting:

Youth . . . is undoubtedly the proper, permanent, and genuine condition of man; and if we look closely into this dreary delusion of growing old, we shall find that it never absolutely succeeds in laying hold of our innermost convictions. A somber garment, woven of life's unrealities, has muffled us from our true self, but within it smiles the young man whom we knew; the ashes of many perishable things have fallen upon our youthful fire, but beneath them lurk the seeds of inextinguishable flame. (463-64)

Hawthorne's own life was extinguished when he died peacefully in his sleep, in the early morning hours of May 19, 1864, only five weeks after the passing of Ticknor.

Fittingly, Ticknor's partner, James Fields, placed the uncompleted manuscript of *The Dolliver Romance* on the author's coffin (XVIII: 620). In February of that year, Hawthorne had written to Fields, "I hardly know what to say to the Public about this abortive Romance, though I know pretty well what the case will be. I shall never finish it" (640). Hawthorne went on to express his hopes for the unfinished work in terms of the elemental symbol that would become a hallmark of his writing. Of *The Dolliver Romance*, he said, "I cannot finish it, unless a great

change comes over me; and if I make too great an effort to do so, it will be my death; not that I should care much for that, if I could fight the battle through and win it, thus ending a life of much smoulder and scanty fire in a blaze of glory” (641).⁹⁵

NOTES

¹ Empedocles appears throughout my study in two guises—one historical and one mythical or legendary. Born in Sicily in 495 BCE, the historical Empedocles was a well-known statesman, orator, religious teacher, physician, poet and philosopher. Though legendary, the story that Empedocles committed suicide by jumping into Mt. Aetna so that he might reunite with the basic elements of the universe was well known to Hawthorne, who treated this material as myth. Interestingly, Empedocles taught the doctrine of transmigration of souls (Thilly and Wood 43)—which might well have appealed to an author interested in immortality—and he was famous for having brought a “dead” woman back to life (Bayle, *General* 5: 26).

² Though I have provided English titles for Bachelard’s works, all publication dates given refer to the original French editions.

³ Representative studies regarding Hawthorne’s interest in the theme of immortality include Raymona Hull’s “Hawthorne and the Magic Elixir of Life: The Failure of a Gothic Theme,” which appeared in *ESQ* in 1972, James D. Wallace’s 1986 article in *Studies in American Fiction* entitled “Immortality in Hawthorne’s *Septimius Felton*,” and Terence Martin’s 1986 essay in the *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* called “*Septimius Felton* and *Septimius Norton*: Matters of History and Immortality.” I discuss the former article in Chapter 3 and the latter two in Chapter 5.

⁴ In a letter to his sister Louisa written on September 28, 1819, Hawthorne includes the following verses:

Oh earthly pomp is but a dream
 And like a meteor's short lived gleam
 And all the sons of glory soon
 Will rest beneath the mould'ring stone//
 And Genius is a star whose light
 Is soon to sink in endless night
 And heavenly Beauty's angel form
 Will bend like flower in winter's storm. (XV: 114)

The presence of the fiery meteor image in this early poem establishes the relationship between fire and fame, or "Genius." The same letter contains a second poetic fragment that articulates the budding writer's concern with the fleetingness of artistic reputation, which would give way to his adult quest for literary immortality:

I saw where in his lowly grave
 Departed Genius lay.
 And mournful yew trees oer it wave
 To hide it from the day. (XV: 114)

⁵ For example, C. W. Spinks has produced an article-length reading of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" that draws upon Bachelard's *Water and Dreams*. Additionally, four dissertations produced in the past two decades employ Bachelard's elemental philosophy as a framework through which to examine literary texts: Harriet Billups's *The Motifs of Fire and Water in the Works of Julien Green* (1981), Rosa Turner's *The Space of Monuments: To the Lighthouse, Lord Jim, The Return of the Native, and Wuthering Heights through the Poetics of Gaston Bachelard*

(1983), Talaat Moreau's *Elemental Imagery in the Poetry of Eliot and Iqbal: A Bachelardian Approach* (1991), and Marcia Bell's *Courting the Elements: Jane Urquhart's Novels and the Material Imagination* (1998).

⁶ One interesting exception to this trend is Gordon Hutner's insightful thematic study *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of Disclosure in Hawthorne's Novels* (1988).

⁷ Levin refers explicitly to Bachelard in his discussion of Melville's "Jonah complex" (230), but he does not apply Bachelard's theories to Hawthorne's canon.

⁸ Although it is difficult to make an argument for "The Old Manse" as a piece of writing superior to *The Scarlet Letter*, Erlich seems to undervalue not only this prefatory essay, but also, implicitly, *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) as a whole. When she says that Hawthorne's imagination "never caught fire at the Manse," she slights such virtuoso pieces of short fiction as "The Birth-Mark," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and "The Celestial Railroad." In fine, she—erroneously, I believe—falls into Hawthorne's own condemnation of himself as a "writer of idle stories" (X: 4).

⁹ All references to Hawthorne's works will be taken from *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 23 vols., ed. William Charvat, *et al.* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962-1997). Both the volume number and the page number will appear at the first mention of a work, while subsequent references will cite only the page number.

¹⁰ *Fiery*, 8; *firelight*, 10; *fireplace*, 6; *hearth(s)*, 20; *fireside(s)*, 34.

¹¹ *Burning*, 39; *burnt*, 10; *burn*, 9; *burned*, 8; *burns*, 4 (this number excludes references to Robert Burns); *heat*, 23; *hot*, 29; *red-hot*, 5; *flame*, 40; *flaming*, 4; *flames*, 2; *flamed*, 1; *smoke*, 24; *smoke-blackened*, 4; *smoky*, 4; *blaze*, 14; *blazing*, 5; *blazed*, 3; *blazes*, 1.

¹² *Sunshine*, 169; *sun*, 87; *sunny*, 61; *sunlight*, 16.

¹³ *Death*, 227; *dead*, 165; *die*, 70.

¹⁴ *Grave(s)*, 110; *graveyard*, 7; *grave-stone(s)*, 3; *mortal*, 70; *mortality*, 14; *mortals*, 21; *mortally*, 1; *burial*, 14; *buried*, 47; *bury*, 7; *burying*, 2; *tomb(s)*, 33; *tombstone(s)*, 14.

¹⁵ *Immortal*, 24; *immortality*, 16; *immortally*, 5; *immortalized*, 1; *immortalizing*, 1; *immortals*, 1; *eternal*, 32; *eternity*, 12.

¹⁶ For a sharply contrasting view of fire as full of very the “ghosts . . . from the dim past” denied by Hooper, consider the following excerpt from “The Fire of Drift-wood” (1849), written by Hawthorne’s long-time friend Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

And all that fills the hearts of friends,

When first they feel, with secret pain,

Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,

And never can be one again;//

The first slight swerving of the heart,

That words are powerless to express,

And leave it still unsaid in part,

Or say it in too great excess.//

The very tones in which we spake

Had something strange, I could but mark;

The leaves of memory seemed to make

A mournful rustling in the dark.//

Oft died the words upon our lips,

As suddenly, from out the fire
 Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
 The flames would leap and then expire.//
 And, as their splendor flashed and failed,
 We thought of wrecks upon the main,—
 Of ships dismasted, that were hailed
 And sent no answer back again.//
 The windows, rattling in their frames,—
 The ocean roaring up the beach,—
 The gusty blast—the bickering flames,—
 All mingled vaguely in our speech;//
 Until they made themselves a part
 Of fancies floating through the brain,—
 The long-lost ventures of the heart,
 That send no answers back again.//
 O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!
 They were indeed too much akin,—
 The drift-wood fire without that burned,
 The thoughts that burned and glowed within. (lines 17-48)

¹⁷ Mukhtar Isani provides an excellent discussion of Melville's borrowings from Zoroastrianism in "Zoroastrianism and the Fire Symbolism in *Moby Dick*," which appeared in

American Literature in 1972. See also Millicent Bell's "Pierre Bayle and *Moby Dick*" in the September 1951 issue of *PMLA*.

¹⁸ Hawthorne's fondness for ambiguous language and symbols has been well-documented by scholars. In addition to Ch. 1 of Bercovitch's *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* (1991), see Matthiessen, Bell, Mathé, Mosher, and Feeney, who provide representative arguments. F. O. Matthiessen characterizes Hawthorne's "variety of symbolical references" as "the device of multiple choice," which he considers one of the author's "most fertile resources" (276). Sylvie Mathé maintains that through "the narrator's blatant discourse of multiple choice," Hawthorne achieves a "latent stance of multiple meaning" (605). She further suggests that the bewildering number of potential readings of the letter "A"—Adulteress, Able, Affection, Angel, Art, Atonement, Ascension, America, Ambiguity, and so on—leads to the "impossibility of any certainty in the ultimate significance of the cipher" (608). Likewise, Millicent Bell asserts that the theme of *The Scarlet Letter* is "the obliquity or indeterminacy of signs" ("Obliquity" 157). She point out that, in the face of the narrator's reluctance to reveal "what, if anything, Chillingworth saw on Dimmesdale's bosom, or what, if anything, was seen in the sky during the night-scaffold scene in Chapter XII or what, if anything, was seen on Dimmesdale's bosom, again, by the assembled multitude in the final scaffold scene," Hawthorne merely sums up the witnesses' conflicting accounts, and then says, 'The reader may choose among these theories.' (161). Finally, Harold Mosher, Jr., and Joseph Feeney provide structural analyses of ambiguity in "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Maypole of Merry Mount," respectively.

¹⁹ For the fullest discussion to date of Dorcas's role in the story, see Guy Ortolano's "The Role of Dorcas in 'Roger Malvin's Burial'" in the *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 25.5 (1999): 8-

13. Ortolano argues that Dorcas functions as both a source of her husband's guilt and a focal point for Reuben's revenge.

²⁰ Admittedly, the procession represents only a mock revolution, a joke played at the expense of the King and his agent, but such acts of defiance anticipate the coming conflict between England and her subjects.

²¹ The narrator's description of the witch meeting calls to mind a scene in the *Moby-Dick* chapter "The Candles": "All the yard-arms were tipped with a pallid fire; and touched at each tri-pointed lightning-rod-end with three tapering white flames, each of the three tall masts was silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar" (549). Given Melville's evident admiration for Hawthorne—indeed, he dedicated *Moby-Dick* (1851) to him—this scene from "The Candles" may consciously echo Hawthorne's tale collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), which Melville had favorably reviewed in 1850.

²² Of course, "The Celestial Railroad" also includes a light-hearted satire of Transcendentalism.

²³ For more information on the nineteenth-century ideal of progress, see Jonathan Cook. Placing the sketch in dialogue with both contemporary societal trends and the Book of Revelation, Cook declares "The Celestial Railroad" to be one of Hawthorne's "most outspoken critiques of post-millennial beliefs in antebellum America" (214). He concludes that "'The Celestial Rail-road' is a remarkably astute satire of the comprehensive perfectionist ideology of an era that considered the millennium a foregone conclusion but was unknowingly rushing into the abyss of civil war" (218).

²⁴ In *The Historical Romance of New England* (1971), Michael Davitt Bell asserts that Hawthorne shared in a “general feeling that the second and third generations of Puritans were no match for their fathers or grandfathers” (60). Bell’s reading focuses on “Young Goodman Brown” and “Main-Street,” with the latter work offering “Hawthorne’s fullest description of this process of decline” (62). See also Roy R. Male’s *Hawthorne’s Tragic Vision* (1957). Male maintains that “With the passing of the first generation . . . The solid piety of the early Puritans was transmuted into neurotic persecution of Quakers and witches” (qtd. in Bell 62).

²⁵ The association between fire and fire-water may be seen later in the sketch when the showman questions the Puritans’ indulgence in drink at a funeral: “and why, if we may ask without offence, should the nose of the Reverend Mr. Noyes, through which he has just been delivering the funeral discourse, glow like a ruddy coal of fire?” (79). Numerous similar associations appear in Hawthorne’s temperance piece “A Rill from the Town Pump.”

²⁶ Susan Van Zanten Gallagher provides an insightful reading of domestic conventions and motifs in the novel. Emphasizing the importance of the “cult of domesticity” that developed in nineteenth-century culture, she asserts that the “home-hearth and its fire” represent an essential “image pattern” in domestic fiction (4). Gallagher, who rightly traces the germ of these ideas to Hawthorne’s earlier sketch “Fire-Worship,” portrays the hearth fire as important to heating, cooking, family interaction, and even “creative reflection” (4). She further argues that the “repeated fire imagery associated with Phoebe directly links her to the tradition of the domestic novel” (6). See also Robert Whelan, Jr., who maintains that Hawthorne never “cease[s] finding analogies between Phoebe and other stock images of love such as sunshine and fire.”

According to Whelan, “Love in the person of Phoebe kindles the household fire, and lets the sunshine in” (68).

²⁷ Phoebe was a pet name Hawthorne used for his wife, Sophia. On November 27, 1840, the author writes to her: “Oh, this weather!—how dismal it is. A sullen sky above, and mud and ‘slosh’ below! Thy husband needs thy sunshine, thou cheerfulest little wife The days should be all sunshine when he is away from thee; because, if there were twenty suns in the unclouded sky, yet his most essential sunshine would be wanting” (XV: 504-05). In Greek mythology, Phoebe was the feminine counterpart of Phoebus, the sun; hence, Sophia’s pet name for Hawthorne: Apollo. (XV: 702-03, n. 1) For a complete discussion of the relationship between the sun and fire, see J.E. Cirlot’s *A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. 100-02.

²⁸ Hawthorne adds an interesting detail to the inventory of Hepzibah’s shop, a “package of Lucifer-matches, which, in old times, would have been thought actually to borrow their instantaneous flame from the nether fires of Tophet” (36). By introducing this item into the cent-shop’s inventory, he strengthens the comic allusion to hellfire and apocalypse. These matches not only represent a part of Hepzibah’s aristocratic “downfall”—which she views as the end of the world—but also provide the means for Holgrave, her first customer (and a boarder who has unimpeded access to the Pyncheon home), to set the house afire, were he inclined to do so.

²⁹ While much of Hawthorne’s discussion of the “apocalypse” motif remains playful, readers detect a more credible threat to the Pyncheons’ survival after they discover Holgrave’s connection with the Maule family.

³⁰ As in “The Celestial Railroad,” gas light—much like the heat of the furnace or the stove in “Fire-Worship”—carries negative connotations; in Hawthorne’s imagination, gas light will always be seen as inferior to firelight.

³¹ Although Hawthorne, like Hester, is sometimes critical of authority, he clearly believes that one can go too far in transgressing it. See Bercovitch’s comments (*Office* 6-7) regarding the pivotal statement: “The scarlet letter had not done its office” (II: 166).

³² The word “chill” in this passage—particularly placed in juxtaposition with “a household fire”—serves to emphasize the symbolism of the physician’s name. Significantly, Chillingworth is a name he *chooses for himself* in order to mask his real appellation. Dimmesdale’s name, like that of Chillingworth, proves that he is incompatible with Hester. Roy R. Male comments on Dimmesdale’s connection with “dim” light, saying that “the minister fasts and vigils in the darkness and preaches words that place him in a false light.” In contrast, “Hester, her glowing letter, and Pearl are as lights shining in the darkness of the community” (103).

³³ “John Inglefield’s Thanksgiving” (1840) emphasizes Prudence Inglefield’s exclusion from the fireside circle under similar circumstances. Having become one of “the painted beauties at the theatre of a neighboring city” (XI: 184), she can never again be part of her family’s domestic happiness. Although she temporarily rejoins her loved ones around the hearth for the holiday, in the end, she is reclaimed by that “same dark power” that originally drew her away from “her father’s hearth” (185).

³⁴ In *The Forge and the Crucible* (1956), Mircea Eliade argues convincingly for an understanding of alchemy as a “sacred science.” He explains, “From the alchemist’s point of

view, chemistry represented a ‘Fall’ because it meant the secularization of a sacred science” (11). Eliade goes on to insist that “Everywhere we find alchemy, it is always intimately related to a ‘mystical’ tradition; in China with Taoism, in India with Yoga and Tantrism, in Hellenistic Egypt with gnosis, in Islamic countries with hermetic and esoteric mystical schools, in the Western Middle Ages and Renaissance with . . . Christian and sectarian mysticism . . .” (183). In *The Forge and the Crucible*, Eliade draws, of course, on the earlier, and quite extensive, writings of C. G. Jung on the subject of alchemy’s spiritual and psychological significance. See, for example, Jung’s *Alchemical Studies* (1967).

³⁵ In actuality, Zoroastrians did not—and do not—“worship” fire any more than a Christian “worships” a cross. Rather, fire is seen as the earthly symbol of the deity. Dastur Kotwal, a modern Zoroastrian priest, explains: “He, the fire, is called the ‘son of God.’ He is the medium through which our prayers are sent to God, and it is through him that we receive benefits from God” (Kotwal and Boyd 55). That being said, what is important here is not the true religious practice of Zoroastrians, but what Niebuhr, and thence Hawthorne, *thought or understood* to be their ritual practice.

³⁶ Mircea Eliade explains that this notion of fire’s symbolic link to sexuality is at least as old as the text of the *Rig Veda*, in which “Fire itself was looked upon as the result (the progeny) of a sexual union: it was born as a result of the to-and-fro motion (compared to copulation) of a stick (representing the male organ), in a notch made in a piece of wood (female organ)” (39).

³⁷ The idea that Eve was a sexual temptress responsible for the fall of humankind, however, represents only a single possibility in Hawthorne’s thinking. As I will demonstrate in my discussion of *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne also considered the possibility that Eve might

have been innocent, or at least penitent. Hawthorne's characterization of the "ethereal" and "spiritual" Priscilla hints at an "alternate" view of Eve, which will only be fully realized in *The Marble Faun's* Hilda.

³⁸ In an 1842 sketch entitled "A Virtuoso's Collection," Hawthorne makes reference to Pandora's box—an exhibit in the museum of curiosities—saying: "Pandora's box, without the lid, stood next, containing nothing but the girdle of Venus, which had been carelessly flung into it" (X: 491). According to Zimmerman's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Venus's magic girdle "gave beauty, grace, and elegance to the most deformed, excited love, and rekindled extinguished ardors" (26). The association of Venus's girdle with Pandora's already-opened box indicates that the "evil" Pandora released from the box was women's sexuality.

³⁹ In *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), R. W. B. Lewis discusses *The Marble Faun* (1860) in this light, asserting: "[The novel's] action is the transformation of the soul in its journey from innocence to conscience: the soul's realization of itself under the impact of and by engagement with evil—the tragic rise born of the fortunate fall. It is a New World action—my supposition is that it is *the* New World action, the tragic remainder of what Lawrence called the myth of America. It is what has to happen to 'golden youth' if it is to mature; and the novel is the kind of novel which had to be written if the young literature was to mature" (122).

⁴⁰ Hawthorne's readings included the following likely sources for information about Zoroastrianism: Sir John Chardin's *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies* (1686), Jonas Hanway's *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea; with the Author's Journal of Travels from England through Russia into Persia* (1754), Vincent

LeBlanc's *The World Surveyed; or, The Famous Voyages & Travailes of Vincent Le Blanc . . . through . . . The East and West Indies, Persia, Pegu, the kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, Guinny, and through all Africa* (1660), Adam Olearius's *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors Sent . . . to the Great Duke of Muscovy and the King of Persia* (1662), and Bernard Picart's 1731 *Religious Ceremonies and Customs, vol. 1-2, 3-6* (Luedtke 223-25). Furthermore, according to Arlin Turner, Hawthorne referred to the following sources relevant to Persia and/or Zoroastrianism in his writings for *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*: Arthur Conolly's *Journey to the North of India Overland from England, through Russia, Persia, and Afghaunistaun* (1830), Carsten Niebuhr's *Travels through Arabia, and Other Countries in the East* (1792), and Emma Roberts's 1835 *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan* (Luedtke 230-31).

⁴¹ Hawthorne's readings on Zoroastrianism obviously exerted a powerful, long-term influence on his family, as evidenced by the fact that Sophia Hawthorne painted a fire screen dedicated to "fire worshippers," which still stands in front of the hearth at the Wayside in Concord (Luedtke 45).

⁴² Ethan Brand shares certain Promethean characteristics with Captain Ahab, and Zoroastrian motifs run through both "Ethan Brand" and *Moby-Dick*. For example, Fedallah, the leader of Ahab's secret whale boat crew, is a Parsee, and Ahab himself claims to be a "true child of fire" (551). Unlike Brand, however, Ahab refuses to surrender himself to the fire. In "The Candles," when the captain is faced with three blazing masts, he places his foot on the kneeling Fedallah and addresses the fire, crying: "Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act so burned by thee, that to this hour I bear

the scar; I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance” (550). Ahab differs from Brand in that the former’s rebellious stance precludes any possibility of expiation or purification. Given the proximity of Hawthorne’s and Melville’s residences during part of the period when Melville was working on *Moby-Dick*, mutual influence may account for the presence of Parsee lore in both authors’ work. For more on Melville’s treatment of the Parsees, see Mukhtar Isani’s “Zoroastrianism and the Fire Symbolism in *Moby Dick*.”

⁴³ This passage describing the remains of Ethan Brand may have alchemical as well as Zoroastrian resonances. Quoting from Gino Testi’s *Dizionario di Alchimia e di Chimica Antiquaria* (1950), J. E. Cirlot explains: “The alchemic symbolism of *putrefactio*, with its graphic representation as black crows, skeletons, skulls and other funereal signs, embraces the concept of life renewed Hence it has been said that it signifies ‘rebirth of matter after death and the disintegration of the residue.’ From the psychological point of view, putrefaction is the destruction of the intellectual impediments in the way of the evolution of the spirit” (255).

⁴⁴ As Mark Hennelly notes, Hawthorne’s voracious reading of travel books, especially those related to Egypt and Turkey, as well as the author’s interest in science could have “easily led him to alchemical source material” (97).

⁴⁵ In particular, I am thinking of Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionary Historical and Critical* (1734-1738), which, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne knew quite well.

⁴⁶ In *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: Alchemical Regeneration in the Works of Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller* (2000), Randall Clack argues that Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller “distilled the essence of alchemical philosophy into a figurative *elixir vitae*” in order

to reinforce the themes of transformation and regeneration in their work (1). Centering his discussion on the short fiction, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The House of the Seven Gables*, Clack concludes that Hawthorne's "alchemy of love" works toward a "golden conjunction of male and female" revealing the "transmutative" powers of human love. For more analysis of alchemical themes, see "Hawthorne's *Opus Alchymicum*: 'Ethan Brand,'" from the 1976 *ESQ*, in which Mark Hennelly uses Eliade's *The Forge and Crucible* and C. G. Jung's alchemical writings to interpret hermetic motifs such as transformation/conversion, *aurora consurgens* (the "alchemical dawn"), and the sun and heart symbolism in "Ethan Brand." Although I am most indebted to Clack and Hennelly, other studies that contributed to my understanding of Hawthorne's alchemical imagery include: Charles Swann's essay "Alchemy and Hawthorne's Elixir of Life Manuscripts," which appeared in the *Journal of American Studies* in 1988; "Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*: A Is for Alchemy?" by Luther H. Martin, published in *ATQ* in 1985; and Klaus Stich's "Hawthorne's Intimations of Alchemy" in the March 1991 issue of *ATQ*.

⁴⁷ Some older texts mention another stage—yellow (*citrinitas*)—said to occupy a position between white and red. According to Abraham's *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, "From the early Christian era the opus was divided into four main stages characterized by specific colours: 1) the nigredo or black stage, 2) the albedo or white (silver) stage, 3) the citrinitas or yellow stage, and 4) the rubedo or red (gold) stage" (42). Hawthorne makes no mention of the *citrinitas* stage, and, as the yellow and gold stages of the opus may be easily confused, I have omitted discussion of it.

⁴⁸ Arthur Versluis, in *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance* (2001), carries Hull's argument to an extreme, insisting that in Hawthorne's fiction, "Alchemy is never the

spiritual practice that we find described in alchemical texts; instead . . . it is always the illegitimate and vain search for earthly immortality, or the pursuit of a sinister figure like Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*” (89). Although I agree that this statement clearly applies to a character such as Dr. Cacaphodel in “The Great Carbuncle,” I have difficulty reconciling Versluis’s assertion with the complex—and I would argue spiritual—representation of alchemy found in *The Marble Faun*.

⁴⁹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “[I]n the Middle Ages and later, besides being a name for the ruby, the term [“carbuncle”] was especially applied to a mythical gem said to emit a light in the dark.” Interestingly, the word “carbuncle” is derived from the Latin *carbunculus*, meaning “small coal”; it is also the diminutive form of the Latin *carbon-* or *carbo*, which means “charcoal” or “ember” (*Webster’s*).

⁵⁰ In this respect, he resembles Dr. Rappaccini of “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” who creates a “laboratory” in his garden by breeding poisonous plants, and then tries to trap a mate for his daughter, rendered poisonous herself through long contact with the plants. Like Aylmer, Rappaccini sacrifices a female member of his own family in the interests of conducting a scientific experiment. Thus, Rappaccini’s scientific competitor Baglioni observes that Rappaccini “was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child, in this horrible manner, as the victim of his insane zeal of science.” Using the language of alchemy, Baglioni goes on to condemn Rappaccini with the statement, “For—let us do him justice—he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic” (119)

⁵¹ For representative treatments of this topic, see R.W. B. Lewis’s *The American Adam* (1955), pp. 120-26; David Howard’s “The Fortunate Fall and Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*” in

Romantic Mythologies (1967), pp. 97-136; and Peter Beidler's "The Theme of the Fortunate Fall in *The Marble Faun*" in *ESQ* (1967). In addition to providing an excellent summary of fortunate fall criticism that predates the MLA Online Bibliography, Beidler—whose essay is the best I have encountered on the theme of *felix culpa* in *The Marble Faun*—proposes that any inquiry into whether Donatello's fall was "fortunate" must ultimately be broken down into four separate questions: 1) "[D]oes sin educate [Donatello]?" (59), 2) "If sin educated Donatello, is sin then the *only* means of education?" (60), 3) "Was Donatello's education, his growth, good as it unquestionably was, worth the sacrifice of the old Donatello?" (60), and 4) "Was Adam's fall part of a divine plan by which we might all rise to greater moral and intellectual heights?" (60-61). Beidler offers the following nuanced conclusion: "To say that Hawthorne believed that sin could have educative effects is not necessarily to say that he believed that *only* sin could have educative effects, or that he believed that these educative effects could not be balanced or overbalanced by bad effects, or that he believed that Adam's fall was the destined means by which we are all to attain a higher state" (61).

⁵² For the most thorough and convincing reading of Miriam, in her guise of temptress, as the novel's Eve figure, see pp. 62-71 of Judith Fryer's *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (1976).

⁵³ Having examined the various narratives about Eve presented in *Bayle's Dictionary*, I would suggest that Hawthorne purposely included all of these stories in order to portray Eve not merely as the instigator of all evil and human suffering, but as a multifaceted character who played a complex role in humankind's fall from grace.

⁵⁴ Although Hawthorne can only be proven to have read Bayle at this time, his familiarity with minute details of Bayle's entries suggests that he may have reread the *Dictionary*, or portions thereof, at a later date. In any case, Bayle's discussion of the various stories about Eve clearly captured Hawthorne's imagination.

⁵⁵ Two other apocryphal tales mentioned in *Bayle's Dictionary* focus on the legendary character of Lillia or Lilitha. According to the first version, Adam "continued excommunicated One hundred and fifty Years for eating the forbidden Fruit, during which time he lived with a Woman . . . whom they call Lillia . . . [and] he begot Devils by his Commerce with this Woman, and . . . at length, when his Excommunication was taken off, he married Eve, who came out of his Head, and begot Men." The second version holds that "Adam, desiring to do Penance, kept himself at a Distance from Eve for One hundred and thirty Years, and devoted himself to another Woman named Lilitha, upon whom he begot nothing but Devils" (*Dictionary* 853).

⁵⁶ Tellingly, the narrator exclaims, "And what true votary of Art would not purchase unrivalled excellence, even at so vast a sacrifice!" (34). Through the persona of the narrator, Hawthorne obliquely intimates here that he would be willing to sell his soul to the devil in return for such an artistic legacy, a subject to which I shall return in the next chapter. For more on Faustian themes in Hawthorne's fiction, see William Bysshe Stein's *Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype* (1968).

⁵⁷ The fact that the Tarpeian Rock, also known as the "Traitor's Leap" (168), was a place of execution for condemned criminals links the location with the concepts of the law and of betrayal, both being appropriate given the context of the Eden story.

⁵⁸ Much later in the novel, when Miriam is reunited with Donatello after a long separation, she says to him: “There was something so sacred in the innocent and joyous life which you were leading! . . . And, encountering so rare a being . . . it was my doom, mine, to bring him within the limits of sinful, sorrowful mortality!” (320).

⁵⁹ Through numerous textual allusions to Beatrice Cenci—the Roman noblewoman who was executed in 1599 for her role in the conspiracy to kill her father, a notoriously cruel man (“Beatrice Cenci,” *Columbia Encyclopedia*)—Hawthorne suggests that Miriam may in some way be connected with a murder, but one that was arguably justified.

⁶⁰ That is, unless one considers that sexual heat often produces children, who offer the nearest approximation of immortality in a post-lapsarian world. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from Hawthorne’s letter to Sophia of April 7, 1856: “I think a great deal about poor little Rosebud [their daughter Rose], and find that I loved her about ten million times as much as I had any idea of. Really, dearest wife, I have a heart, although, heretofore, thou hast had great reason to doubt it. But it yearns, and throbs, and burns with a hot fire, for thee, and for the children that have grown out of our loves.” (XVII: 465). This letter echoes an epistle written to Sophia on May 27, 1844, in which Hawthorne rhapsodizes about his love for his eldest daughter, Una, saying: “And how does our belovedest little Una?—whom I love more than I ever told thee, though not more than thou knowest—for is she not thine and mine, the symbol of the one true union in the world, and of our love in Paradise” (XVI: 37).

⁶¹ “My Dove” was one of Hawthorne’s pet names for Sophia. See his letter to her of August 21, 1839, as an example of his use of this term of endearment (XV:338-39).

⁶² Both types of fire discussed here derive from biblical sources. In I Corinthians 7:8-9, Paul portrays fire as emblematic of sexual heat or lust when he writes: “I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide [in chastity] even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” In contrast, Acts 2:1-4 depicts fire as the sacred messenger of the Holy Spirit: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” [KJV].

⁶³ In fact, the two women were modeled on Sophia Hawthorne, as the following excerpt from Hawthorne’s August 21, 1839, letter to his wife—apparently written in a fit of depression—suggests: “My stock of sunshine is so infinitely increased by partaking of yours that . . . I incomparably prefer its gloom to the sullen, leaden tinge, that used to overspread my sky. Were you to bring me, in outward appearance, nothing save a load of grief and pain, yet I do believe that happiness, in no stinted measure, would somehow or other be smuggled into the dismal burthen. But you come to me with no grief—no pain—you come with flowers of Paradise; some in bloom, many in the bud, and all of them immortal.” Thus, he states, “My beloved, you make a Heaven roundabout you, and dwell in it continually; and as it is your Heaven, so is it mine” (XV: 338).

⁶⁴ Of course, the orthodox interpretation of the “fortunate fall” is that if human beings had not fallen from grace, then they would never have had the opportunity to know God’s mercy or

to experience redemption through Christ. Diverging from the traditional interpretation, Hawthorne chooses to focus instead on Donatello's personal development in terms of both knowledge and maturity after he murders the Model.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, according to hermetic lore, Adam himself was the first alchemical adept (Abraham 3).

⁶⁶ Hawthorne's choice of "a" as opposed to "the" in the title "A Virtuoso's Collection" implies that he is not referring to one particular virtuoso, but to an example of a type; thus, he subtly suggests that *any* virtuoso should boast such a collection.

⁶⁷ The story of Faust represents a variation on this theme, in that a human being obtains forbidden knowledge from the devil rather than from God.

⁶⁸ In *The Age of Fable*, Thomas Bulfinch offers the following explanatory excerpt from the sixteenth-century Italian artist's autobiography, *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*: "When I was about five years of age, my father, happening to be in a little room in which they had been washing, and where there was a good fire of oak burning, looked into the flames and saw a little animal resembling a lizard, which could live in the hottest part of that element. Instantly perceiving what it was, he called for my sister and me, and after he had shown us the creature, he gave me a box on the ear. I fell a-crying, while he, soothing me with caresses, spoke these words: 'My dear child, I do not give you that blow for any fault you have committed, but that you may recollect that the little creature you see in the fire is a salamander; such a one as never was beheld before to my knowledge.' So saying he embraced me, and gave me some money" (358). Thomas Bulfinch explains, "The foundation of the . . . fables [about the salamander] is supposed to be the fact that the salamander really does secrete from the pores of his body a milky juice,

which when he is irritated is produced in considerable quantity, and would doubtless, for a few moments, defend the body from fire” (358). The salamander’s ability to survive exposure to fire is discussed not only by Benvenuto Cellini, but also by Aristotle and Pliny (358).

⁶⁹ Clack explains that from the Middle Ages onward, “the carbuncle has been a common name for the philosophers’ stone” (39, *n.* 55).

⁷⁰ As Benjamin Goluboff notes in his article entitled “‘A Virtuoso’s Collection’: Hawthorne, History, and the Wandering Jew,” the narrator also responds positively to the few American artifacts that appear in the museum, and, in fact, complains that more are not included. While I agree with Goluboff that the sketch reveals a “nationalistic impulse,” I would suggest that such an impulse might have as much to do with creating a voice for American authors at a time when British authors were more widely read and respected as with making an argument for the value of American “history” *per se*.

⁷¹ Before discussing the flowers associated with the writers in question, the narrator mentions that the book also contains “a rose from Eve’s bridal bower, and all those red and white roses which were plucked . . . by the partisans of York and Lancaster” (491). Since the former flower is linked to Eden, and the red and white roses to alchemy (since they symbolize the *rubedo* and *albedo*, respectively), the presence of these flowers reinforces the theme of immortality.

⁷² William Stein and Joan Klingel have each identified Ethan Brand with Faust rather than Prometheus. In fact, both Faust and Prometheus seek to obtain knowledge belonging to the divine realm, and both suffer eternal torment as punishment for their indiscretions. Although the

“devil” in the lime kiln points to the Faust myth, the Prometheus myth appeals more to Hawthorne because of its direct association with fire.

⁷³ In this respect, “Ethan Brand” resembles “Roger Malvin’s Burial.” Like Ethan Brand, Reuben Bourne must return to the exact spot where he conceived of a terrible wrong—in Bourne’s case, leaving Roger Malvin unburied—in order to expiate that sin. Both stories posit an eighteen-year cycle for conceiving of, committing, and expiating the sin in question.

⁷⁴ For more on the significance of Brand’s name, particularly its biblical resonances, see John McElroy’s “The Brand Metaphor in ‘Ethan Brand,’” which appeared in *American Literature* in 1972.

⁷⁵ In addition to Eisen’s “The Tragical History of Ethan Brand” (1992), see McElroy’s “The Brand Metaphor in ‘Ethan Brand’” (1972), and Mark Harris’s “A New Reading of ‘Ethan Brand’: The Failed Quest” (1994). McElroy emphasizes Brand’s “willful alienation from the world” and his “pride” in thinking of himself as “a special sort of sinner, an unpardonable sinner” (633). McElroy maintains that “Brand’s name and his suicide by fire carry out the motif of damning egotism” because “Brand’s concept of himself as an *unpardonable* sinner, whereby he creates for himself a special category that makes him unapproachable by other men, is a strong violation of the value Hawthorne gave the commonality of sin” (634). In contrast, Harris views Brand’s final act as one of despair, insisting that Brand only *claimed* to have committed the Unpardonable Sin, but never managed to do so. Thus, Harris concludes that “Ethan Brand begins his search as nothing but a common man and returns from it a common failure, and *this*, rather than his successful commission of the Sin, drives Brand to suicide” (69).

⁷⁶ As Christopher Brown explains in “‘Ethan Brand’: A Portrait of the Artist,” Brand’s lime kiln may be seen as “a general symbol of the creative process” (171). Specifically, Brown contends that “Brand’s profession of lime-burning, of transforming raw material into pure substance by the agency of fire, suggests the artist’s craft.” He goes on to assert that “As the kiln operator produces lime by feeding limestone into his furnace, so the author subjects his raw material to the fire of his intellect, revealing thereby the essence within that material” (171). Although I disagree with his assertions that Ethan Brand represents an “exaggerated, one-sided portrait of Hawthorne” and that “Ethan Brand” “may well constitute Hawthorne’s treatment of certain tendencies within himself he had come to fear” (174), I am indebted to Brown’s article because he demonstrates the link between fire and literary creativity.

⁷⁷ As noted in my introduction, there was also a sailing tradition in the Hawthorne family, but the author’s mother opposed his going to sea.

⁷⁸ In artistic terms, to prefer eternity to the passage of time reveals an affinity for the Ideal as opposed to the Real.

⁷⁹ The alternative mention of the dancing figures and “mirthful” hours, within the overwhelmingly negative context of the passage as a whole, seems out of place. These dancing figures may be seen as the manifestation of denial, a common defense mechanism against the psychological pain accompanying thoughts about death. Consider, for example, the courtiers in Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death,” who dance right up until the moment when Death walks among them.

⁸⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, Hawthorne considers both heat and light as essential properties of fire. He generally uses light to discuss the more spiritual or ethereal connotations of fire.

⁸¹ For example, in *Hawthorne's View of the Artist* (1962), Millicent Bell writes: "As demonstrated in the parable of Owen Warland, the realm of the true and beautiful is forever removed from the world of actuality Life gives no aid to the artist and cannot be affected by his discoveries, for his work itself is but a paltry visible demonstration of the inexpressible splendor within him. Art is not a social activity, consequently. Not only is it irrelevant, it may even be inimical to the normal human pattern of love and happiness" (95). Frederick Crews also comments on the opposition of art (symbolized by Owen's butterfly) and life (represented by Robert and Annie Danforth's child) in this text. In *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (1966), Crews asserts that "As soon as we take Owen's brainchild as the real baby's rival—and this becomes unavoidable when the baby eventually crushes the butterfly in his hand—the contrast is damaging to Owen from both a human and an artistic standpoint" (169). Crews concludes by insisting: "We are not permitted to doubt Hawthorne's word that Owen's new 'reality' is a great solace to him. But this is very different from saying that art is worth making sacrifices for. Both Owen and Hawthorne show every sign of preferring the human reality which art imperfectly, ineffectually, and guiltily simulates, but which is unattainable for certain temperaments" (170).

⁸² The fact that Owen Warland's nemesis is a blacksmith is perhaps not coincidental given that the business of the Manning family was the closely related stagecoach business.

⁸³ That such a situation was not unheard of among nineteenth-century authors is evidenced by an October 28, 1853, journal entry, in which a disgruntled Thoreau writes: “For a year or two past, my *publisher*, falsely so called, has been writing from time to time to ask what disposition should be made of the copies of ‘A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers’ still on hand, and at last suggesting that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. So I had them all sent to me here, and they have arrived to-day by express, filling the man’s wagon,—706 copies out of an edition of 1000 which I bought of Munroe four years ago and have been ever since paying for, and have not quite paid for yet Of the remaining two hundred and ninety and odd, seventy-five were given away, the rest sold.” At last, Thoreau wryly observes, “I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself” (“Living” 1920).

⁸⁴ The achievement of the sculptor in “Drowne’s Wooden Image” resembles Prometheus in that the former creates a “living woman” from a block of wood and the latter shaped the first human beings out of clay.

⁸⁵ Ancient writers who refer to the story of Prometheus include Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound*; contemporary texts of note include Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* (Zimmerman 222).

⁸⁶ As Eisiminger points out, this circumstance also eerily echoes the description of Ethan Brand’s “remains” within the lime kiln: “[I]n the midst of the circle—snow-white too, and thoroughly converted into lime—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to long repose. Within the ribs—strange to say—was the shape of a human heart” (XI: 102).

⁸⁷ Earlier in the tale, Oberon muses aloud to the narrator, “When [my tales] are ashes, perhaps I shall be as I was before they had existence.” Feeling sorry for himself, he says, “[T]he sacrifice is less than you may suppose; since nobody will publish them” (172). Oberon ultimately inquires of the narrator: “Would you have me a damned author?—To undergo sneers, taunts, abuse, and cold neglect, and faint praise, bestowed, for pity’s sake, against the giver’s conscience! An outlaw from the protection of the grave—one whose ashes every careless foot might spurn, unhonored in life, and remembered scornfully in death! Am I to bear all this, when yonder fire will ensure me from the whole?” (175).

⁸⁸ James Williamson first noted the double significance of this term (155).

⁸⁹ Like its ending, the tale’s beginning forces multiple interpretations; the setting—a cold, windy night in December—provides a perfect background against which readers may appreciate the multiple significances of fire: never could a warm fire be more comforting, and never could a house-fire spread more quickly.

⁹⁰ In *The Shape of Hawthorne’s Career* (1976), Nina Baym speculates: “Perhaps, although he was not yet seriously ill, Hawthorne felt himself to be aging, and became newly aware of the value of a world he might not enjoy much longer; but more probably his sense of life’s preciousness resulted directly from the threat to life and continuity presented by the war” (259).

⁹¹ In “*Septimius Felton and Septimius Norton: Matters of History and Immortality*,” Martin claims, “Hawthorne . . . cannot dismiss the all too potent reality of the Civil War (and his relation to it), which enters the narrative by way of analogy in each major draft” (1). Martin goes on to argue that “Hawthorne in these drafts and studies [the Septimius sequence] explores the

possibilities of the Elixir of Life theme to a point of existential frustration and concludes as he must that there is no short-cut to immortality, that one must participate in history to realize the human potential” (4).

⁹² As the narrator reports, “war had filled the whole brain of the people, and enveloped the whole thought of men in a mist of gunpowder” (XIII: 54). In an editorial aside, Hawthorne comments on the effect that war—and he refers here to the Civil War as well as to the Revolutionary War—can have on both individuals and society, saying: “Indeed, this war, in which the country was so earnestly and enthusiastically engaged, had perhaps an influence on Septimius’s state of mind; for it put everybody into an unnatural and exaggerated state In times of Revolution and public disturbance, all absurdities are more unrestrained; the measure of calm sense, the habits, the orderly decency, are in a measure lost. More people become insane, I should suppose; offenses against public morality, female license, are more numerous; suicides, murders, all ungovernable outbreaks of men’s thoughts, embodying themselves in wild acts, take place more frequently, and with less horror to the lookers-on” (67). Later in the narrative, when Septimius journeys to Boston, he sees old cannons “lying idle in the streets,” “maimed persons, limping along the streets,” and “a sort of wildness in the look of many of the inhabitants” (131). As Septimius hears the drum accompanying the young men’s battle drills, he thinks to himself: “For there seemed to be no other life than this—the purpose to kill one another” (131).

⁹³ Martin explains that in addition to the two primary drafts, now referred to as *Septimius Felton* and *Septimius Norton* because Hawthorne changes the name of the title character, the author left “eight studies, sketches for the development of his story, and a Scenario or summary, apparently written between the two main drafts” (1).

⁹⁴ In fact, this notion of “[sitting] down by the wayside of life” was such a tenacious image in Hawthorne’s psyche that he named his last home The Wayside. He purchased the house from Bronson Alcott, who had called it Hillside (Mellow 391). Upon taking possession, Hawthorne altered the name to The Wayside.

⁹⁵ Hawthorne added in his characteristically self-deprecating tone, “But I should smother myself in mud of my own making” (XVIII: 641); however, it was fire rather than earth that would become his legacy.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, Lyndy. *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*. Trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988.
- . *Earth and the Reveries of the Will: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Trans. Kenneth Haltman. Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 2002.
- . *The Flame of a Candle*. Trans. Joni Caldwell. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988.
- . *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire*. Ed. Suzanne Bachelard. Trans. Kenneth Haltman. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1990.
- . *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon P, 1964.
- . *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. Trans. Alan C. M. Ross. Boston: Beacon P, 1964.
- . *The Right to Dream*. Trans. J. A. Underwood. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988.
- . *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Trans. Edith R. Farrell. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1983.
- Bayle, Pierre. *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle*. 5 vols. Microfilm. [1734-1738]. New Haven, CT: Research Publications, 1974.
- . *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*. 10 vols. London, 1737.
- Baym, Nina. *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1976.
- "Beatrice Cenci." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. 6th ed. 2001. 27 May 2003
 <<http://www.bartleby.com/65/ce/Cenci-Be.html>>.

- Beidler, Peter. "The Theme of the Fortunate Fall in *The Marble Faun*." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 47 (1967): 56-62.
- Bell, Marcia. "Courting the Elements: Jane Urquhart's Novels and the Material Imagination." Diss. York U, 1998.
- Bell, Michael Davitt. *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.
- Bell, Millicent. *Hawthorne's View of the Artist*. Albany: State U of New York, 1962.
- . "The Obliquity of Signs: *The Scarlet Letter*." *Critical Essays on Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. David B. Kesterson. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988.
- . "Pierre Bayle and *Moby Dick*." *PMLA* 66 (1951): 626-48.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. "The A-Politics of Ambiguity in *The Scarlet Letter*." *New Literary History* 19 (1988): 629-54.
- . *The Office of the Scarlet Letter*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991.
- Billups, Harriet. "The Motifs of Fire and Water in the Works of Julien Green." Diss. U of Maryland College Park, 1981.
- Brewer, Priscilla. *From Fireplace to Cookstove: Technology and the Domestic Ideal in America*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000.
- Brown, Christopher. "'Ethan Brand': A Portrait of the Artist." *Studies in Short Fiction* 17 (1980): 171-74.
- Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable*. New York: The New American Library, 1962.

- Byers, John R., Jr., and James J. Owen. *A Concordance to the Five Novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. 2 vols. New York: Garland, 1979.
- “Carbuncle.” OED Online. 2nd ed. 23 June 2003 <<http://triton3.galib.uga.edu:80/cgi-bin/homepage.cgi>>.
- Carlson, Eric W., ed. *A Companion to Poe Studies*. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1996.
- Chardin, John. *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East-Indies, through the Black Sea, and the Country of Colchis*. [1691]. Microfilm. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1961.
- Cirlot, J. E. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1962.
- Clack, Randall A. *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: Alchemical Regeneration in the Works of Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller*. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 2000.
- Colacurcio, Michael. *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.
- Conolly, Arthur. *Journey to the North of India, Overland from England, through Russia, Persia, and Affghaunistaun*. London, 1834.
- Cook, Jonathan A. “New Heavens, Poor Old Earth: Satirical Apocalypse in Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*.” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 39.4 (1993): 209-51.
- Crews, Frederick. *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*. [1966.] Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.
- Doudna, Martin K. “Hawthorne's Pandora, Milton's Eve, and the Fortunate Fall.” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 31.3 (1985): 164-72.
- Eisen, Kurt. “The Tragical History of Ethan Brand.” *Essays in Literature* 19.1 (1992): 55-60.

- Eisiminger, Sterling. "The Legend of Shelley's Heart and Hawthorne's 'Ethan Brand.'" *The Hawthorne Society Newsletter* 2.2 (1976): 3-4.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*. 2nd ed. Trans. Stephen Corrin. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson: An Organic Anthology*. Ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.
- Erlich, Gloria. *Family Themes and Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1984.
- Feeney, Joseph J. "The Structure of Ambiguity in Hawthorne's 'The Maypole of Merry Mount.'" *Studies in American Fiction* 3 (1975): 211-16.
- Fogle, Richard Harter. *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1964.
- . *Hawthorne's Imagery: "The Proper Light and Shadow" in the Major Romances*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1969.
- Frazer, James B. *Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time*. New York, 1834.
- Frazer, James G. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Hertfordshire, Eng.: Wordsworth Reference, 1993.
- Frye, Northrop. Preface. *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. By Gaston Bachelard. Boston: Beacon P, 1964. v-viii.
- Fryer, Judith. *The Faces of Eve: Women in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976.

Gallagher, Susan Van Zanten. "A Domestic Reading of *The House of the Seven Gables*."

Studies in the Novel 21.1 (1989): 1-13.

Gollin, Rita K. *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Truth of Dreams*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1979.

Goluboff, Benjamin. "'A Virtuoso's Collection': Hawthorne, History, and the Wandering Jew."

Nathaniel Hawthorne Review 21.1 (1995): 14-25.

Hanway, Jonas. *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea with the*

Author's Journal of Travels from England through Russia into Persia. London, 1754.

Harris, Mark. "A New Reading of 'Ethan Brand': The Failed Quest." *Studies in Short Fiction*

31.1 (1994): 69-77.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. 23 vols.

Eds. William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, Claude M. Simpson, et al. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962-1997.

---. "Fire Worshippers." *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge* 2

(1836): 494.

Hennelly, Mark. "Hawthorne's *Opus Alchymicum*: 'Ethan Brand.'" *ESQ: A Journal of the*

American Renaissance 22 (1976): 96-106.

Heraclitus. *Fragments: A Text and Translation*. Ed. T. M. Robinson. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987.

The Holy Bible. King James Version. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996.

Howard, David. "The Fortunate Fall and Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*." *Romantic*

Mythologies. Ed. Ian Fletcher. London: Routledge, 1967. 97-136.

Hughes, Patrick. "The Year Without a Summer." 19 July 2003

<<http://wchs.csc.noaa.gov/1816.htm>>.

Hull, Raymona. "Hawthorne and the Magic Elixir of Life: The Failure of a Gothic Theme."

ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance 67 (1972): 97-107.

Hutner, Gordon. *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of Disclosure in Hawthorne's Novels*. Athens: U

of Georgia P, 1988.

Idol, John L., and Melinda M. Ponder, eds. *Hawthorne and Women: Engendering and*

Expanding the Hawthorne Tradition. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1999.

Isani, Mukhtar. "Zoroastrianism and the Fire Symbolism in *Moby Dick*." *American Literature*

44.3 (1972): 385-97.

Jung, C. G. *Alchemical Studies*. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967.

Kesselring, Marion L. *Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850: A Transcription and Identification of*

Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum. New York: New York

Public Library, 1949.

Klingel, Joan E. "'Ethan Brand' as Hawthorne's Faust." *Studies in Short Fiction* 19.1 (1982):

74-76.

Kotwal, Firoze M., and James W. Boyd, ed. *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion: A Nineteenth*

Century Catechism with Modern Commentary. Trans. Firoze M. Kotwal and James W.

Boyd. Chico, CA: Scholars P, 1982.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Turner. *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*.

Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

- Leblanc, Vincent. *The World Surveyed; or, The Famous Voyages and Travailes of Vincent le Blanc . . . through . . . The East and West Indies, Persia, Pegu, the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, Guinny, and through All Africa*. London, 1660.
- Leverenz, David. *Manhood and the American Renaissance*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Levin, Harry. *The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville*. New York: Knopf, 1958.
- Lewis, R. W. B. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1955.
- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. "The Fire of Drift-Wood." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 5th ed. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: Norton, 1998. 1454-55.
- Luedtke, Luther S. *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Romance of the Orient*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Male, Roy R. *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1957.
- Martin, Luther H. "Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*: A Is for Alchemy?" *ATQ: The American Transcendental Quarterly* 58 (1985): 31-42.
- Martin, Terence. "Septimius Felton and Septimius Norton: Matters of History and Immortality." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 12.1 (1986): 1-4.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1972.
- Math , Sylvie. "The Reader May Not Choose: Oxymoron as Central Figure in Hawthorne's Strategy of Immunity from Choice in *The Scarlet Letter*." *Style* 26.4 (1992): 604-33.
- Matthiessen, F. O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. New York: Oxford UP, 1941.

- McElroy, John. "The Brand Metaphor in 'Ethan Brand.'" *American Literature* 43 (1972): 633-37.
- Mellow, James R. *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.
- Melville, Herman. "Hawthorne and His Mosses: By a Virginian Spending July in Vermont." *Pierre, Israel Potter, The Piazza Tales, The Confidence-Man, Uncollected Prose, Billy Budd, Sailor*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984. 1154-71.
- . "I and My Chimney." *Pierre, Israel Potter, The Piazza Tales, The Confidence-Man, Uncollected Prose, Billy Budd, Sailor*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1984. 1298-1327.
- . *Moby-Dick, or The Whale*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Miller, Edwin Haviland. *Salem Is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991.
- Millerd, Clara Elizabeth. *On the Interpretation of Empedocles*. New York: Garland, 1980.
- Moreau, Talaat. "Elemental Imagery in the Poetry of Eliot and Iqbal: A Bachelardian Approach." Diss. Catholic U of America, 1991.
- Mosher, Harold F. "The Sources of Ambiguity in Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown': A Structuralist Approach." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 26.1 (1980): 16-25.
- Niebuhr, Carsten. *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*. [1792]. Reading, Eng.: Garnet Publishing, 1994.
- Olearius, Adam. *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors Sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy, and the King of Persia*. London, 1662.

Ortolano, Guy. "The Role of Dorcas in 'Roger Malvin's Burial.'" *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 25.5 (1999): 8-13.

"Parsis." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. 6th ed. 2001. 27 Mar. 2003
<<http://www.bartleby.com/65/pa/Parsis.html>>.

Picart, Bernard. *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World*. London, 1731.

Reynolds, David S. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. New York: Knopf, 1988.

Roberts, Emma. *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan, with Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society*. London, 1835.

Shannon, Timothy J. "The New England Primer 1805." 26 May 2003
<<http://www.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/his341/nep1805contents.html>>.

Spinks, C. W. "Peirce's Lake and Coleridge's River: Water and Metaphors of the Mind." *Semiotics* 1995. Ed. C. W. Spinks and John Deely. New York: Peter Lang, 1996. 250-59.

Stein, William Bysshe. *Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype*. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1968.

Stich, Klaus P. "Hawthorne's Intimations of Alchemy." *ATQ: The American Transcendental Quarterly* 5 (1991): 15-30.

Stroud, Joanne H. Foreword. *The Flame of a Candle*. By Gaston Bachelard. Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988. vii-xv.

- Swann, Charles. "Alchemy and Hawthorne's Elixir of Life Manuscripts." *Journal of American Studies* 22.3 (1988): 371-87.
- Thilly, Frank, and Ledger Wood. *A History of Philosophy*. 3rd ed. New York: Holt, 1959.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "Living with 706 Copies of *A Week*." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 4th ed. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: Norton, 1994. 1920.
- . *The Portable Thoreau*. Ed. Carl Bode. New York: Penguin, 1947.
- Turner, Rosa Shand. "The Space of Monuments: *To the Lighthouse*, *Lord Jim*, *The Return of the Native*, and *Wuthering Heights* through the Poetics of Gaston Bachelard." Diss. U of Texas at Austin, 1983.
- Versluis, Arthur. *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.
- Wallace, James D. "Immortality in Hawthorne's *Septimius Felton*." *Studies in American Fiction* 14.1 (1986): 19-33.
- Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1979.
- Whelan, Robert Emmet. "*The House of the Seven Gables*: Allegory of the Heart." *Renascence* 31.2 (1979): 67-82.
- Whittier, John Greenleaf. "Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 5th ed. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: Norton, 1998. 1462-80.
- Williamson, James L. "'Young Goodman Brown': Hawthorne's 'Devil in Manuscript.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 18.2 (1981): 155-62.
- Zimmerman, J. E. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. New York: Bantam, 1964.