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Nathaniel Hawthorne and his biblical contexts

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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND HIS BIBLICAL CONTEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Biblical Contexts

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The majority of criticism and scholarship devoted to the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne takes for granted the relationship between Hawthorne and the Bible, focusing instead upon theology and philosophy. This work proposes that the Bible was an important and pervasive influence in Hawthorne's fiction. The Bible provides Hawthorne with numerous resources for both his artistic and moral concerns. At a basic level the Bible provides a popular platform that allows Hawthorne to immediately connect with his contemporary audience who were intimately familiar with the Bible. More importantly, though, are the vast examples and perspectives of the human condition and human experience found in the Bible. The historical aspect of the Bible gave depth to Hawthorne's creativity. The moral aspect of the Bible provided themes and ideas around which Hawthorne could craft his own stories. Ultimately the central position of the Bible in the Western tradition offers Hawthorne a touchstone from which to pursue his artistry as did his favorite authors: John Bunyan, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser.

This work provides a sustained study of the biblical contexts of Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction. I begin by establishing Hawthorne's familiarity with and reverence

for the Bible. I then explore the connections between a selection of his characters and the biblical figures they are named after. Next, I explore the focused parallels and analogues between specific works of fiction and specific figures and events taken from the Bible. Finally, I explore the broader biblical themes derived from the story of the Fall, which captivated Hawthorne and appears throughout numerous of his works. This study provides a focused and substantial exploration of the biblical contexts of Hawthorne's fiction. Through these biblical contexts one can gain additional insight to Hawthorne's artistic and moral concerns as expressed in his writing.

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PREFACE

The study of Nathaniel Hawthorne's writing and his life has a long history. As a leading figure in American literature he and his works have been studied, criticized, and used in all forms of literary scholarship and theory. Additionally, his presence in the formative years of the early nineteenth century and his familial and authorial connection to the Puritan colonies have made him an equally interesting and valuable subject for studies of various and wide-ranging aspects of American history and culture. This present study seeks to explore the role of the Bible in Hawthorne's fiction – an all too often overlooked aspect of Hawthorne's writing that has roots in both cultural and literary history. The Bible has had a deep and lasting effect upon Hawthorne as a person and, unsurprisingly, can be detected in his fiction as the source of ideas, events, and even characters.

However, the subject of the Bible in Hawthorne's fiction has received little critical attention. John Cline's unpublished dissertation, "Hawthorne and the Bible" (Duke University, 1948), focuses on the role of the Bible in Hawthorne's life. In regard to its presence in his fiction, Cline does well to point out similar passages from the Bible that match well with passages in Hawthorne, but he does not give each reference much context, nor does he treat recurrent biblical themes. Ely Stock's dissertation, *Studies in Hawthorne's Use of the Bible* (Brown University, 1966), focuses on only eight works (*Fanshawe*, "Alice Doan's Appeal," "The Hollow of the Three Hills," "Roger Malvin's Burial," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Young Goodman Brown," "Earth's

Holocaust,” and “Ethan Brand”). In addition to his rather small sampling, Stock’s contextualization of some the stories incorporates numerous biblical passages from both testaments and many books, which, while valid, does not offer a coherent investigation into the role of the Bible in Hawthorne’s fiction. Aside from these unpublished dissertations no scholar has devoted any large scale treatment of Hawthorne and the Bible.

Perhaps one reason for this is the recognition of Hawthorne’s religious nature but the confusion about what religious membership Hawthorne may have claimed. Joseph Schwartz, in his chapter on Hawthorne in *American Classics Reconsidered: A Christian Appraisal*, argues

More than any other writer of his time, Hawthorne was a God-concerned writer. He was innately religious, as his profound reverence for the mysteries of Christianity demonstrates. Many of his stories deal with religious subjects, with prayer, and with man’s relation to God. His personal notebooks are filled with many habitual references to God. That he often wrote about religious subjects is not strange, for he felt that religion was not the property of the professional and exclusive religionists. His many caustic barbs were directed at the elements which surrounded a particular denomination; about the subject of religion in general he was deeply respectful. (126-127)

His exposure to religions – to Puritanism and Unitarianism in his younger years in Salem and thereabouts; and later in Italy, to Catholicism more fully than ever before – is often discussed and interpreted to various ends. Hyatt Waggoner in his *Hawthorne: A Critical*

Study determines that Hawthorne “was a nineteenth century New England liberal Protestant of a rather special sort. He had no church, though his family had been Unitarian, and he never formulated his religious thought in precise doctrines. Indeed, as an antirationalist he resisted, for reasons both temperamental and principled, the theologian’s efforts to achieve clarity in such matters” (14). A different but thorough assessment is offered in *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne’s Theology*, by the Rev. Leonard Fick, who goes so far as to suggest “it is clear that Hawthorne has aligned himself with the Arminians as opposed to the traditional New England Calvinists” (22). The debate over Hawthorne’s official religion has ranged from claims that he was Arminian, Puritan, Unitarian, as well as suggestions that he was a Protestant leaning towards Catholicism, have been explored and my study does not seek to make any additions to that subject. As Schwartz asserts, the particularities of interpreting the source and the consequent institutional practices were why Hawthorne did not adopt or participate in a formal religion:

He could not accept the dogmas of the warring sects that contended for his approval. Given the milieu in which he grew up, it is easy to see why he insisted on individual belief, religion “as a matter between the Deity and man’s soul.” His natural antipathy for Calvinism made him suspicious of all formal religion. He deplored the fact that each sect should surround “its own righteousness with a hedge of thorns.” His native sense of independence made him reject both the old and the new. (127)

Schwartz's view of Hawthorne implies that "religion in general" was respected because it had a common concern – humankind's relation to God – and a common source of revelation: the Bible. Thus, my study is concerned with the Bible, not theology.

Furthermore, it is widely known that Hawthorne was well read thanks to the efforts of Marion Kesselring, whose work, *Hawthorne's Reading, 1828 – 1850: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum*, offers insight to Hawthorne's library account. This work is especially important due to Hawthorne's discretion, some might call secrecy, in regard to his notes and source materials, on which Hawthorne has left no records. From Kesselring's book and Hawthorne's family and letters it becomes clear that Hawthorne was very fond of works by John Bunyan, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser, among others. These influential authors can be detected throughout Hawthorne's fiction. So, too, can another distinct influence, that of the writings of New England Puritans like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. These influences have been well documented and covered in numerous articles and books, and the subject does not require my input. Although I will make reference to the poets and ministers from time to time, it is not within the scope or subject of my study to digress into lengthy and detailed explications of a passage in the Bible and its use by, say, John Bunyan, and elsewhere, in say, Jonathan Edwards, and then in Hawthorne. These influences had a common source in the Bible, which was itself readily available to Hawthorne. Therefore, while the influence of poets and ministers will be acknowledged, my focus will remain on Hawthorne's treatment of the Bible in his fiction through the ideas, images, events, and themes he develops in his own works. In respecting Hawthorne's individuality as a person and as an artist I additionally intend to

identify the values that Hawthorne discovered for himself in the Bible and communicated to his audience through his own writings.

I use the King James Version as it is the most likely version available and familiar to Hawthorne. However, one cannot overlook his familiarity with the story of Susanna or the story of Judith, both of which are part of the Apocrypha, which is not included in the King James Version. Therefore, when referencing passages from the Apocrypha I will be using *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha*. As for Hawthorne's writings, all my direct quotes and references will come from *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Claude M. Simpson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), 1962-. 23 vols. In my footnote citations I will simply identify the title followed by the volume and the page number(s). The full bibliographic information will be in the bibliography at the end of this book.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my wife Alicia and my parents Richard and Margaret for their love and support throughout the process of my studies and the writing of this dissertation. I would like to thank Dr. Ralph Beuchler for being the Graduate College Representative on my committee. I thank Dr. Joe McCullough and Dr. Darlene Unrue for their time and their knowledge, which they imparted in their respective classes and again in their role as committee members for this dissertation. Finally, I would especially like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Richard Harp for his constant help and guidance throughout my studies and in the writing of this dissertation. His diligence, his encouragement, and his insight, have served me – and a great many other students – well and are a testament to his talents as a professor and a mentor.

CHAPTER 1

HAWTHORNE IN BIBLICAL AND LITERARY TRADITION

In *American Literature and Christian Doctrine*, Randall Stewart asserts that “the Bible has been the greatest single influence on our literature.”¹ Furthermore, Stewart holds that American “writers, almost without exception, have been steeped in Biblical imagery, phrasing, [and] rhythms.”² These assertions are supported by Carlos Baker, who finds biblical influence in both the style and substance of the majority of American literary works. Baker contends that “from the beginnings of American fiction in the early national period, our writers have shown a marked tendency to turn to the Bible either for rhetorical inspiration or for what may be called stylistic conditioning.”³ Baker believes it goes beyond stylistics into “the realms of image and idea. Again and again in the history of American letters we find writers using metaphors of Biblical origin.”⁴ The Bible is present in the majority of Hawthorne’s work in large part because he and his cultural milieu were steeped in the Bible:

Well into the early national period, when our prose fiction began, the New England mind was saturated with the Old Testament rather than the New. All children were raised on the Bible from the cradle, and writers could assume, as we can no longer do, that the stories of Moses in the bulrushes, or Lot's wife, or Ruth amid the alien corn, or Abraham's sacrifice, were

known to them as our children know the complex lore of missiles and moon-conquest.⁵

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in 1804 and resided for much of his childhood in Salem, after his father's death when Nathaniel was just four years old, in the care of his mother's family, the Mannings. As is already well documented, Nathaniel was of a long established Salem family with deep Puritan roots. However, during the early 1800s many New Englanders began switching to Unitarianism, and the Manning family also experienced such changes in doctrine as the widow Hawthorne and others began to attend Unitarian services. Hawthorne biographer Brenda Wineapple notes that

Doctrinal distinctions aside, the Mannings, like their fellow citizens, knit religion into the fabric of their enterprising lives, their ambitions to get ahead, to own more land, or stagecoaches or horses or fruit trees than anyone else, to prove themselves equal to Salem's snobbish upper crust, to rise on the social ladder and yet make themselves of use, to disseminate the Bible and remind one another in perpetuity of their fallen nature, their need for redemption.⁶

The household and the community in which Hawthorne existed were steeped in religion and as such he became quite familiar not just with the services and mannerism that accompanied religion but also with the source: the Bible. It was a ubiquitous household item in Salem and the center piece of Hawthorne's early education. Jean Normand calls attention to the fact that "at the time of Nathaniel's birth, religious fanaticism had ceased to flourish in New England. The Hawthornes, once intolerant Puritans, had become Unitarians. The only point upon which Mrs. Hawthorne displayed any intransigence –

devout though she was – was that of Sunday activities. In particular, she forbade all reading other than that of religious works.”⁷ Wineapple goes on to suggest that

None of this was lost on young Nathaniel, who complained about the hard wooden pews at the First Church and the ugly bust of John Wesley at home. [...] But Nathaniel drank in the lilting cadence of scripture and stored up its parables, repeated often at Herbert Street, which he prized for the fine stories they were. At the idea of damnation, however, he squirmed; though protest was unavailing.⁸

For Hawthorne, recognizing the Bible as a source of “fine stories” at such a young age carried over to his adulthood where the Bible served not just as spiritual fountainhead but a creative one as well.

John Cline observes that “it is certain that Hawthorne learned enough of the Bible in his Sunday school class, his reading at home, and his attendance upon sermons in the church that he could and did quote Scripture readily in his letters and notebooks as well as in his purely literary works.”⁹ The letters and notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne do attest to his familiarity with and appreciation of the Bible. When writing to his family members he casually quotes and references the Bible as one who is not just familiar with but prone to biblical allusions in everyday conversation as parallels with biblical passages arise in contemporary life. Some of his quotes from his letters written between 1813 and 1843 include: Acts 8:22-23, Mark 11:23, Matthew 24:35-36 and 13:57, Isaiah 35:1, and John 1:47.¹⁰ Other quotes from his letters between 1843 and 1853 include: 1 Corinthians 13:1, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Numbers 23:11, Proverbs 26:13 and 25:22, and Romans 12:20.¹¹ Frequency aside, the quotations are fairly well distributed throughout the Bible. The early

letters of Hawthorne also provide evidence of his close relationship with the Bible. In a letter to Louisa Hawthorne dated 24 August 1829, Hawthorne admits that wearied from travel the day before he missed the “divine service” on Sunday but “in the evening, however, I went to a Bible class.”¹² In another letter, also to Louisa, he mentions that he “staid at home and wrote a dissertation on the Tower of Babel.”¹³ These brief references demonstrate that he was in constant contact with the Bible throughout his youth and education into his adulthood and literary career.

As to the presence of the Bible in Nathaniel’s own home, his son, Julian Hawthorne, records in his biography of his parents that “on Sundays Mrs. Hawthorne, with the two elder children, would go to the Unitarian Chapel in Renshaw Street, and listen to eloquent sermons from the Rev. W. H. Channing, the American; but Hawthorne himself never attended church, that I remember.”¹⁴ However, as Ely Stock points out in his dissertation on Nathaniel Hawthorne, Julian elsewhere “notes that his father ‘read much at various times, the New Testament, and in certain portions of the Old...’ and, apparently, reading the Bible aloud was a Hawthorne family custom, especially when the children were young.”¹⁵ Additionally, Julian describes just such an instance that occurred when Nathaniel was the U.S. Consul in Liverpool:

After dinner at Rock Park – or, if it were to be a late affair, before – we would have family prayers in which the servants joined. This was in deference to English custom; not that we were irreligious, but we had not before been accustomed to express our religious feelings in just that manner. All being grouped in a semicircle, my father would open the Bible and read a chapter; then he would take a prayer-book containing

thirty to forty well-considered addresses to the Almighty, and everybody would kneel down and cover their eyes with their hands. The “Amen” having been reached, and echoed by every one, all would rise to their former positions, and the servants would file out of the room. It must have been somewhat of an effort for my father to go through with this ceremony; but I think he did it, not only for the reason above mentioned, but also because he thought it right that his children should have the opportunity of gaining whatever religious sentiment such proceedings might articulate.¹⁶

As Julian indicates, such public and ceremonious expressions of religious sentiments were likely uncommon to witness in Hawthorne, who appears, via the context of letters and notebook entries, to have often referred to 2 Corinthians 5:1 – specifically, “a building which God has provided – a house not made by human hands” – as justification for his spending the Sabbath not in church but in nature, outside in the woods of Concord or perhaps his own garden at the Wayside (a subject depicted in his sketch “Sunday at Home”). Hyatt Waggoner, also aware of the irony, confirms that Hawthorne “considered his Christian faith unshakable, yet never went to church, disliked theological writings, and usually was repelled by preachers of the gospel.”¹⁷

There is, however, more anecdotal proof that the Bible was not only familiar to Hawthorne – and thus easily and ironically used to justify his absence from church – but vastly important to him. James T. Fields, a friend and longtime editor of Hawthorne’s works, in his book, *Yesterdays With Authors*, reveals another more specific aspect of Hawthorne’s relationship with the Bible. Fields recalls,

Hawthorne was a diligent reader of the Bible, and when sometimes, in my ignorant way, I would question, in a proof-sheet, his use of a word, he would almost always refer me to the Bible as his authority. It was a great pleasure to hear him talk about the Book of Job, and his voice would be tremulous with feeling, as he sometimes quoted a touching passage from the New Testament.¹⁸

The diligence and the genuine feeling remembered by Fields certainly confirms that the Bible was hugely important to Hawthorne in his personal life, and as it occurs in the context of conversation between author and editor it demonstrates that the Bible played a role in Hawthorne's creative process, all the more likely considering that Hawthorne's works tend to be fixated on morality. The final bit of evidence to which I will point is a letter from Hawthorne to his wife, Sophia, written in 1848: "Thou badest me burn two pages of thy last letter; but I cannot do it, and will not; for never was a wife's deep, warm, chaste love so well expressed, and it is as holy to me as the holy Bible."¹⁹ As all Hawthorne scholars know, and as becomes obvious to anyone reading his letters and notebook entries, Hawthorne is deeply and genuinely in love with his wife, and the connection he places between her and the Bible is the fullest example of the Bible's immense importance to him.

There is also Hawthorne's treatment of the Bible in his short story "Earth's Holocaust." In the story a worldwide reform movement unites, by means of a gigantic bonfire, to rid humanity of its errors and vices, which includes, among other things, all manner of books. While Hawthorne was never very open about what he read or about his opinions of the many authors and works familiar to him, this story offers some limited

degree of literary criticism from Hawthorne. When “the hundred volumes of Voltaire” are added the incineration caused “a brilliant shower of sparkles, and little jets of flame; while the current literature of the same nation burnt red and blue, and threw an infernal light over the visages of the spectators, converting them all to the aspect of parti-colored fiends.”²⁰ Hawthorne then catalogs a great many more.

German stories emitted a scent of brimstone. [...] Milton’s works in particular, sent up a powerful blaze, gradually reddening into a coal, which promised to endure longer than almost any other material of the pile. From Shakespeare there gushed a flame of such marvellous splendor, that men shaded their eyes against the sun’s meridian glory; nor, even when the works of his own elucidators were flung upon him, did he cease to flash forth a dazzling radiance, from beneath the ponderous heap. It is my belief, that he is still blazing as fervidly as ever.²¹

Shelley’s poetry comes off the best of his contemporaries while the depiction of Lord Byron’s work is unflattering. Predictably, Hawthorne’s narrator notes that the books of several unnamed authors “instead of bursting into a blaze, or even smouldering out their substance in smoke, suddenly melted away in a manner that proved them to be ice.”²² To the narrator’s surprise, the reformers throw a copy of the Bible upon the bonfire; however, unlike any of the other books, the “Holy Scriptures, the pages of which, instead of being blackened by the tinder, only assumed more dazzling whiteness, as the finger-marks of human imperfections were purified away. Certain marginal notes and commentaries, it is true, yielded to the intensity of the fiery test, but without detriment to the smallest syllable that had flamed from the pen of inspiration.”²³ The Bible not only

withstands the flames but becomes more perfected than ever – proof of “trial by fire” as explained in 1 Corinthians 3:13. Surely there can be no doubt as to the veneration Hawthorne gave to the Bible even though all the while remaining skeptical in regards to the human institutions that used it to declare various and sometimes competing “truths.”

Unfortunately these anecdotes from letters and remembrances are the only proof of the influence of the Bible on Hawthorne’s writing. While this point is oft lamented, it is concisely summarized by Arlin Turner, who states, “Hawthorne was uncommunicative as to the sources on which he drew for the materials underlying his writings,” which is frustrating for scholars because “that he is read widely is shown by an examination of the list of books that he borrowed from the Athenaeum Library at Salem during his residence of some twenty years in that town.”²⁴ A comprehensive publication of that reading list was published by Marion Kesselring, who calculates that literature accounted for “24%” of the list while religion and philosophy accounts for “10%.”²⁵ It is these additional texts and authors that provide further points of comparison for Hawthorne in regard to his views of religion and the Bible. In considering the titles on the list Kesselring observes

That belief, no less than superstition, is a part of social history Hawthorne recognized by his reading of the sermons and biographies of many religious leaders, Samuel Parr, Bishop Hurd, Baxter and Jeremy Taylor in England, and Samuel Willard and Samuel Mather in the colonies.

Hawthorne let many a “narrow but earnest cushion-thumper of puritanical times” preach at him from bound volumes of Thanksgiving, Funeral, Artillery, Election, and Ordination sermons, for he preferred their faith

and confidence to the sentiments of the “cold, lifeless, vaguely liberal clergymen of our own days,” whom he would not go to church to hear.²⁶

The titles that offer direct interaction with the Bible and interpretations of the Bible include, among others: *A New History of the Holy Bible; The Trial and Triumph of Faith; Religious Ceremonies and Customs; The History of the Puritans, or Protestant Non-Conformists; Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England; A Companion for Communicants; Psalterium Americanum. The Book of Psalms, In a Translation Exactly Conformed unto the Original: But all in Blank Verse; An Historical Dictionary of all Religions; Universal Historical Dictionary: or, Explanation of the Names of Persons and Places in the Departments of Biblical, Political and Ecclesiastical History, Mythology; and Apostolici: Or, The History of the Lives, Acts, Death, and Martyrdom of those Who were contemporary with, or immediately succeeded the Apostles.*²⁷ Additionally, Hawthorne read books on Mohamed and the Koran, as well as books covering Catholicism, the Shakers, and the Quakers. All of these texts enriched Hawthorne’s understanding of the Bible and no doubt helped him refine his own thoughts and understanding. Furthermore, the three texts by Cotton Mather (*Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England, A Companion for Communicants, and Psalterium Americanum. The Book of Psalms, In a Translation Exactly Conformed unto the Original: But all in Blank Verse*) deal directly not only with the Bible but the historical outlook of Hawthorne’s ancestors and community with which he deals so often in his fiction. Further supplementing Hawthorne’s own knowledge of the Bible and its contexts are a handful of literary texts that artistically deal with the

subjects of the Bible and religion in general. These include the works of John Bunyan, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser.

David Kirby, through his studies of foreign influences on American literature, believes that “each of our authors knew the Bible. [...] To Hawthorne, for instance, the Bible was a basis for dreaming rather than spiritual exercise.”²⁸ This dreaming is in part the product of his familiarity, from an early age, with the works of Bunyan and Milton. Another source of this dreaming is the history he inherited from his family and his community. These literary figures, working from a Christian perspective, and the cultural legacy of the Puritans of New England all found inspiration in the Bible and in turn combined to inspire and influence the artistry of Hawthorne. Jean Normand remarks upon those associations by noting that “in both Milton and Bunyan, the courtly, allegorical, and love elements were all combined in a religious argument. The Puritan ideal and the symbolical ideal found a common meeting ground in their works. So that Hawthorne was presented with a ready-made solution: art charged with symbolic implications.”²⁹ Thus, as Normand argues, “the couple of Milton’s paradise is always there in the background of Hawthorne’s idylls, and no adultery is ever consummated except with the Serpent, who always recurs in the guise of the ‘demoniacs.’ Satan’s gesture of rage is reproduced by many of the latter.”³⁰ The literary influences upon Hawthorne do not escape the notice of Richard Chase, who observes that Hawthorne’s “symbols are broadly traditional, coming to him from the Bible, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and Bunyan – the light and the dark, the forest and the town, the dark and the fair woman, the fountain, the mirror, the cavern of the heart, the river, the sea, Eden, the rose, the serpent, fire and so on.”³¹

These symbols are not simply reserved for poetry and fiction but come to be used frequently and powerfully in the sermons and pamphlets of the New England Puritans.

The Bible comes to life with new energy and meaning in the works of the Puritans as much as it did in the works of Bunyan and Milton. Ministers like Samuel Danforth, Jonathan Edwards, and the men of the Mather family all eloquently and forcefully used the Bible to illustrate and explain the contemporary experiences of their people. The belief that “all of the Old Testament is an errand to the New; and all of history after the Incarnation, an errand to Christ’s Second Coming. It leads from promise to fulfillment: from Moses to John the Baptist to Samuel Danforth; from the Old World to the New; from Israel in Canaan to New Israel in America; from Adam to Christ to the Second Adam of the Apocalypse,”³² explains Sacvan Bercovitch. That belief allows the Puritans to view themselves “like John the Baptist, though with a brighter and fuller degree of revelation, the Puritan colony is a light proclaiming the latter-day coming of the Messiah, a herald sent to prepare the world to receive His often-promised, long-expected Kingdom.”³³ The Puritan ministers gave sermons on many occasions, all of which seek to bring their audience into communion with the Bible, to show that they are participating in events experienced and foreshadowed by the Israelites. As Bercovitch notes “the Puritans were careful to make Scripture the basis of their figuralism. They always rooted their exegeses (however strained) in biblical texts, and they appealed to (even as they departed from) a common tradition of Reformed hermeneutics,”³⁴ not too unlike those of the English poets of the same eras.

The most important occasion, as Judith Shklar notes, for New England Puritan sermons is election day, when in order “to guide the magistrates and the people as a

whole the clergy delivered particularly political sermons.”³⁵ Shklar states that “the content of these sermons was a review of the events of the past in terms of biblical hermeneutics. It was not a new interpretive system, but the occasions to which it was applied were highly original.”³⁶ Shklar thoroughly explains that “the way to understand one’s own world was to relate it to the appropriate biblical type of which it was the antitype. That is how one could understand who one was, what had already happened, and what was likely to occur.”³⁷ Therefore:

The clergy was meant to show the community to what biblical events they were to look in order to discern the meaning of their most recent political conduct. The question “who are the people” was answered in no uncertain terms. The Puritans were the people of Israel. As such they were apart from every other people. They were, of course, not the natural heirs of the ancient Hebrews, but their replica. The Old Testament was their story as a prophecy to be reenacted.³⁸

Ultimately, Shklar concludes, the Puritans did not find it “difficult to fit themselves into these prophetic molds.”³⁹ Such imagery and exegesis required more than knowledge of the Bible, it required introspection, imagination, as well as an ability to accept and create allegory.

Allegory, shared by Bunyan, Milton, and Spenser, as well as with the Puritans becomes a mainstay in Hawthorne’s own world perspective and especially in his fiction. “Allegory is organic to Hawthorne, an innate quality of his vision,” argues Richard H. Fogle, who further asserts:

It is his disposition to find spiritual meaning in all things natural and human. This faculty is an inheritance from the Puritans, who saw in everything God's will. To this inheritance was added a gift from nineteenth-century Romanticism, which endowed the natural world with meaning by seeing it as life. In Hawthorne allegory is inseparable from moral complexity and aesthetic design, qualities to be enjoyed in themselves.⁴⁰

In consideration of Hawthorne's own fiction, his style and techniques, and his overall connection to the Bible, Carlos Baker concludes that

The method of Hawthorne is instructive for any reader whose religious commitment is deep rather than loud, and whose taste in fiction has been formed by a study of the masters. For it seems to suggest the important esthetic law that the use of Biblical materials should always be made with extreme delicacy if the effect is not to become banal to the point of actual embarrassment. This is not of course to say that religious ideas may not be legitimately and movingly dealt with in fiction. Yet it is to insist that a writer who turns to a Biblical episode for any metaphorical or illustrative purpose ought to be content to treat it allusively, to allow it to operate in the realm of suggestion, unless he is willing to vulgarize his source, or to count on windy rhetoric to carry his point.⁴¹

Hawthorne's sources and techniques come from an artistic biblical tradition. Although the Puritan ministers Hawthorne had read were principally theological in their focus, they nonetheless attempted to be artistic in their ability to interweave the Bible in their own

everyday lives and thus makes sense of both the Bible and life. Additionally, the works of Bunyan and Milton and their peers provided Hawthorne with models for entertaining, enduring, and educating artistry based on the Bible and focused on the examination and improvement of the human soul within the ambiguities of a world that contains both good and evil.

And while acknowledging the traditions from which Hawthorne drew is important, it still cannot overshadow the Bible as the common source. The Old Testament provides Hawthorne with more specific events and more variety of characters from which to draw; meanwhile, the New Testament, according to Stephen Cox, has particular literary elements, which, I believe, are prevalent in Hawthorne's fiction. Like the Old Testament, Cox argues, "the New Testament places a heavy emphasis on events, and on the connection of human events with God's plans for humanity."⁴² However, in Cox's view, "New Testament stories are not just about the encounter of God and humanity; they are also about the difficulties of the latter coming to terms with the former – difficulties that include not just the incomplete or false perceptions of people living in the world of time, but also the presence of sin in their lives and perceptions of reality."⁴³ Much of Hawthorne's fiction centers on such false perceptions and the presence of sin, ideas central to works like *The Scarlet Letter* and "Young Goodman Brown." Additionally, the false perceptions and sin in Hawthorne's works offer paradoxes, which also bring about the possibilities of personal transformation and communal unification (consider *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Marble Faun*). This too finds its counterpart in the New Testament, in which, according to Cox, "transformation, unification, and paradox all herald the convergence of God and humanity."⁴⁴

The Old Testament also offers evidence and insight to the convergence of God and humanity. Providence is frequently invoked by Hawthorne's narrators and characters as they attempt to understand the events and situations in which they are engaged. This too, obviously, is an aspect of the Bible. However, the difference between the two testaments is that the Old Testament privileges society whereas the New Testament emphasizes the individual. Cox reminds us that

The New Testament's stories are largely concerned with individuals, not with philosophical ideas or social concepts. For the New Testament writers, Jesus is not a diffuse God-power or the expression of a people's religious and social aspirations; he is a unique individual. All the New Testament's significant figures are portrayed as individuals, often as curious and eccentric ones; and conversion, like salvation, is presented as an individual matter. Individualism – a respect for the individual life and a commitment to studying it – is a major emphasis of Christian literature.⁴⁵

Hawthorne's fiction also emphasizes the trials and tribulations of individuals, many of whom are "curious and eccentric" such as Richard Digby, Owen Warland, Hephzibah Pyncheon, Goodman Brown, and the Reverend Hooper. Individualism is a strong element in Puritanism and Romanticism and thus naturally becomes central to Hawthorne, who often points to the individual's need to be self-reflective. Furthermore, as in the New Testament, the characters found in Hawthorne's fiction are all struggling to find some form of conversion or salvation in regard to the lives they are living; at times this will lead them to communion with others (as, say, the disciples are called together); at other

times this will lead them to a temporary but necessary separation from society (as when Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness).

An additional parallel between Hawthorne's fiction and the New Testament is that of the journeys in which the external and the internal are representative of one another. The more obvious example, of course, is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the physical journey Christian takes brings about an internal spiritual journey, analogous to many in the New Testament, chief of which, perhaps, is Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul. Cox argues that

Christian literature habitually challenges travelers to a *change of perspective* – often a reversal of perspective, from confusion to clarity, doubt to belief, entrapment by the natural to liberation by the supernatural. The challenge is, in a way, the reason for the literature's existence. By showing other people's journeys, other people's conflicts, other people's doubts and hesitations, Christian literature offers a new perspective on the reader's own journey.⁴⁶

This reliance upon the change of perspective wrought by a journey is a recurring element in Hawthorne's fiction, as in "The Celestial Rail-road," "Young Goodman Brown," and *The Marble Faun*. Movement between isolation and community, between forest and town, between light and dark, are hallmarks of Hawthorne's fiction because he attributes psychological and spiritual change to the various settings that his characters move between.

It should be clear that Hawthorne had deep connections to the Bible. He was raised in a deeply religious family and community in which personal knowledge of the

Bible was expected and instilled in him from his earliest youth. He was familiar with the history and rhetoric of his Puritan ancestors, and later as Unitarianism took vogue, he was equally familiar with the newer ideas. Additionally, Hawthorne was well read and from an early age was intimately familiar with his favorite writers – Bunyan, Milton, and Spenser – who themselves are deeply indebted to the Bible in their own works. However, not to be forgotten is the fact that the archetypes so valued by the Puritans and the subject matter so valued by the authors he read were available to Hawthorne firsthand in the Bible. The communal and literary influences, quite likely the most powerful influences of his formative years, share the Bible as a common source. While his society and his literary role models can be detected in his fiction, Hawthorne demonstrates a personal knowledge of the Bible throughout the breadth of his fiction. Although he is exceedingly discrete about quoting and alluding to particular sources, Hawthorne allows the Bible to become a quite noticeable, though critically overlooked, aspect of his fiction.

Carlos Baker contends that in considering the fiction of Hawthorne it is clear that his

Working knowledge of the Bible, like his interest in demonology and witchcraft among his Puritan ancestors, helped him to infuse a continuous lurking sense of the remotely antique, the exotically oriental, and the far distant in time and place into such localized New England novels as *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance*.⁴⁷

The Bible, then, provides Hawthorne with more than religious revelation. As literature it provides metaphors, images, plots, and poetry as well as diverse rhetorical elements. Culturally it is an immediate connection to bygone eras, Hawthorne's contemporaries, and perhaps, contributes to his relevance today. But such observations while providing some insight, still fail to answer what books of the Bible and what powers they accrued spoke to Hawthorne and in turn speak again in his fiction. Hawthorne's fiction must be studied for such answers to emerge.

Prior to literary explications it is perhaps a good time to acknowledge the "hard facts" in regard to the connection between the Bible and Hawthorne's fiction. The data provided in the unpublished dissertation of John Cline is diligent, and gives a good idea as to the frequency of Hawthorne's use of the Bible:

His total references to the Bible, including quotations and allusions, amount to 287 – to the Old Testament, 121; to the Apocrypha three; to the New Testament, 163. His favorite book in the Old Testament, apparently, was *Genesis*; though he quoted it only once, he referred to it many times, mainly because of his fondness for the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. The next Old Testament favorites, in order, were *Psalms*, *Job*, and *Proverbs*. In the New Testament his most-mentioned books, in order, are *Matthew*, its parallel Gospel – *Luke*, *Mark*, and *Revelation*. He evidently considered, as most people do, the New Testament more important than the Old.⁴⁸

However, as Ely Stock observes, "information of this kind, interesting and useful as it is, tells us little about the ways in which the Bible functioned in Hawthorne's work."⁴⁹ And

while Cline's work does not contribute much in the way of contextualizing and examining the functions of those numerous references he does offer some basic observations. Cline concludes that Hawthorne "usually quotes correctly as to the sense of the Biblical passage, and in most cases gives the exact words of the Bible," and, in regard to the direct allusions, "very rarely distorts the true meaning of a passage."⁵⁰ However, despite such frequency and accuracy, Cline thinks that Hawthorne does not seem "to follow any deliberate plan or method of quoting from the Bible, but rather to speak out the passage which comes to his mind in connection with any thought on any subject."⁵¹

As to Hawthorne's purposes, Cline conjectures that Hawthorne

Must have desired, more or less consciously, to impress the great multitude of average readers with his knowledge of the most important book in history. He was dealing generally with moral subjects; consequently Biblical teachings on these subjects were constantly coming to mind and offering themselves as ammunition to be used. And he knew that Biblical allusions would be recognized, and Biblical arguments considered weighty, by the great majority of his readers.⁵²

And while Cline's work does not contribute much in the way of contextualizing and examining the functions of those numerous references he does offer some basic data by which to quantify and generally identify the presence of the Bible in Hawthorne's fiction.

While this present study may not deal directly with each and every one of the 287 biblical references identified by Cline, it will focus in on the biblical themes that provide contexts, structures, themes, and images for Hawthorne's creativity. Within this work I will identify the biblical influences and trace the biblical themes that appear in the fiction

of Nathaniel Hawthorne adding depth and significance beyond the personal, contemporary, and historical aspects. At times my focus will be narrowed upon a single short story and a particularly strong biblical analogue. At other times my focus will be much broader, following a biblical theme and its variations through numerous works. Within each chapter or subchapter I hope it will become clear as to what power Hawthorne attributed to each story or theme or character he borrowed from the Bible. In the conclusion I will show that all the smaller analogues and the larger themes combine to provide a specific sense of the powerful message he drew from the Bible and communicated in his own writings.

¹ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 3

² Ibid.

³ Baker, "The Place of the Bible in American Fiction," 53

⁴ Ibid., 55

⁵ Ibid., 56

⁶ Wineapple, *Hawthorne, A Life*, 23

⁷ Normand, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, 15

⁸ Wineapple, *Hawthorne, A Life*, 23

⁹ Cline, "Hawthorne and the Bible," 12

¹⁰ *Letters, 1813-1843*, Vol. XV. The page numbers are listed in the index.

¹¹ *Letters, 1843-1853*, Vol. XVI. The page numbers are listed in the index.

¹² *Letters, 1813-1843*, XV:198

¹³ Ibid., 240

¹⁴ J. Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography*, 22

¹⁵ Stock, "Studies in Hawthorne's Use of the Bible," iv

¹⁶ J. Hawthorne, *Hawthorne and His Circle*, 125-126

¹⁷ Waggoner, *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, 6-7

¹⁸ Fields, *Yesterdays With Authors*, 94-95

¹⁹ *Letters, 1843-1853*, XVI:235

²⁰ "Earth's Holocaust," X:395

²¹ Ibid., 396

²² Ibid., 397

²³ Ibid., 402

²⁴ Turner, "Hawthorne's Literary Borrowings," 543

²⁵ Kesselring, *Hawthorne's Reading, 1828 - 1850*, 8

²⁶ Ibid., 11

²⁷ Ibid., 44-61

²⁸ Kirby, *America's Hive of Honey, or Foreign Influences on American Fiction through Henry James*, 32

²⁹ Normand, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, 100

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, 77

³² Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 14

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- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 93
- ³⁵ Shklar, "The Boundaries of Democracy," 67
- ³⁶ Ibid., 67
- ³⁷ Ibid., 67-68
- ³⁸ Ibid., 68
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Fogle, *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark*, 7
- ⁴¹ Baker, "The Place of the Bible in American Fiction," 61
- ⁴² Cox. *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 22
- ⁴³ Ibid., 26
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 30
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 36
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 25
- ⁴⁷ Baker, "The Place of the Bible in American Fiction," 58
- ⁴⁸ Cline, "Hawthorne and the Bible," 5
- ⁴⁹ Stock, "Studies in Hawthorne's Use of the Bible," vi-vii
- ⁵⁰ Cline, "Hawthorne and the Bible," 5
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 5
- ⁵² Ibid., 5-6

CHAPTER 2

SELECTED CHARACTERS AND THEIR BIBLICAL NAMESAKES

The New England in which Hawthorne lived, and especially the older New England of which he so often wrote, was fond of names from the Bible. To this day biblical names like “John,” “Paul,” and “Peter” are quite common; yet, these names do not necessarily warrant an investigation into their biblical backgrounds. However, there are names that draw attention to themselves for their uniqueness (such as “Aminadab” and “Hepzibah”), the role the named-character plays (such as “Pearl” and “Ethan”), and the plot contexts (such as “Reuben” and “Cyrus”). Of additional interest as to the choice of names comes from the fact that Hawthorne was familiar with George Crabb’s *Universal Historical Dictionary: or, Explanation of the Names of Persons and Places in the Departments of Biblical, Political and Ecclesiastical History, Mythology, Heraldry, Biography, Bibliography, Geography, and Numismatics*.¹ This text may have provided explanations of the meanings of biblical figures that appealed to Hawthorne. Also likely is the fact that through his connections at school and elsewhere in Concord, Salem, and Boston he had contact with enough people familiar with Hebrew that he could have gained insight into the meanings of some names. With this in mind I would like to consider the biblical and literary contexts that become entwined in the names Hawthorne chose for some of his characters.

Aminadab in "The Birth-mark"

"Aminadab" is an unusual name for Hawthorne to choose even for a denigrated laboratory assistant with little direct "purpose" in "The Birth-mark." The name, as Hawthorne spells it, is a variation of the Hebrew name "Aminadav," which means "My Nation is Noble."² This is an interesting choice of name considering that Aylmer, the mad-scientist of the story, speaks to him in a derogatory manner referring to him as "human machine," "man of clay,"³ and "clod! Ah earthly mass!"⁴ Aminadab is referenced twelve times in the Bible and is hardly remarkable in those references, which occur in the books of Exodus, Numbers, Ruth, and 1 Chronicles. In his article "Aminadab in 'The Birth-mark,'" W.R. Thompson makes the case that the choice of the name is highly significant because Aminadab is a "high priest and the head of a family, a Levite, of that tribe which could own no real property and to which was entrusted the priesthood of the Hebrew people."⁵ Thompson then goes on to make a cogent argument that such a name and background is highly significant when considered in the context of the plot in which the scientist and pseudo-priest Aylmer accidentally kills his wife, Georgiana, while attempting to remove her birthmark through his scientific skills. The story, then, becomes that of the subordination of religion to science, which, as far as the story goes, is hazardous and, ultimately, destructive. As Thompson argues, "Aminadab is a symbol of an early authority which is now discredited; the priesthood for which he stands is no longer significant."⁶ And in regard to Aminadab's comment that he would not attempt to remove the birthmark from Georgiana, Thompson asserts that "it is a remark rooted in compassion. The old authoritarian religion, in spite of its excesses, had a greater respect for the human personality than has amoral science." Overall, the points made by

Thompson are interesting and do add depth; however, there are two minor points of concern. First, the majority of the biblical references place Aminadab in the tribe of Judah, where his son Nahshon rose to prominence. Second, the references to Aminadab in 1 Chronicles 6:22 and 15:10-11, which suggest that Aminadab is a Levite, are possibly genealogical mistakes as they do not agree with the genealogy of the Levites provided in Exodus 6:16-25.* Regardless of the ambiguity it is possible that Hawthorne conceived of Aminadab as Thompson describes. There is, however, another aspect not addressed by Thompson or others.

As stated earlier, the name Aminadab means “My Nation is Noble” in the Hebrew language. With this meaning in mind why then allow Aylmer to talk down to him, and why describe him as one without nobility? The narrator first describes Aminadab as “a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace.”⁷ Later Aminadab’s responses to Aylmer’s directions are described as “harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones [...] more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech.”⁸ As the narrator repeatedly confirms, and as Aylmer echoes in his own observations, “with his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that incrustated him, he seemed to represent man’s physical nature; while Aylmer’s slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.”⁹ However Aylmer, the intellectual half, fails in his experiment, and Georgiana dies. The story ends with the sound of a “hoarse, chuckling laugh” attributed to the exultation of the “gross Fatality of Earth” in its inevitable

*The passages from 1 Chronicles at one point identify Amminadab as the son of Uzziel and then the son of Kohath neither of which is supported by the passages from Exodus.

Triumph over the immortal essence, which, in this dim sphere of half-development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not have flung away the happiness, which would have woven his mortal life of the self-same texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of Time, and living once for all in Eternity, to find the perfect Future in the present.¹⁰

The triumph of the earthly nature of man is not especially cruel or tragic, nor is Aminadab to whom the laughter is associated. A favorite saying of Hawthorne and his wife, etched into their window and written in his notebooks – “Man’s accidents are God’s purposes;” very similar to Romans 11:33, which states, “how incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!”— rings especially true in this story and especially in its biblical context.

The focal point is the repeated association with Aminadab and the earth and Aylmer’s reference to him as “man of clay.” Obviously, there is the association with Adam* and the earth. Also, and more fitting to “The Birth-mark,” are the images of clay and humanity expressed in the Book of Job and the Book of Isaiah. The final passage of “The Birth-mark” appears to echo Job 4:17-21:

Can a human being be righteous before God, a mere mortal pure before his Maker? If God mistrusts his own servants and finds his messengers at fault, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose

* God created Adam from earth in Genesis, and Adam’s name is a bit of word play as, in Hebrew, “adamah” means “earth.” Additionally, the English word “humility” – a trait exhibited by Aminadab but not Aylmer – is derived from the Latin “humus,” which means “earth,” “ground,” and carries connotations of “low and insignificant.” As a human, Aminadab recognizes his origins and his requisite humility in the face of God’s will.

foundations are in the dust, which can be crushed like a bird's nest, torn down between dawn and dusk. How much more shall they perish unheeded forever, die without ever finding wisdom!

The role of "clay" is mentioned again in Job 33:6 which reads: "In God's sight I am just what you are; I too am only a handful of clay." Job, a favorite of Hawthorne's according to his editor James T. Fields, is expressing the fact that as creations of God humans have no right to question God's work – creating us as "flawed" and mortal – or presuming to perfect God's work as Aylmer does.

This clay-human image is further expanded in the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah 45:9-11 is relevant to the plot of "The Birth-mark":

Will the pot contend with the potter, or the earthenware with the hand that shapes it? Will the clay ask the potter what he is making or his handiwork say to him, "You have no skill?" Will the child say to his father, "What are you begetting?" or to his mother, "What are you bringing to birth?" Thus says the Lord, Israel's Holy One, his Maker: Would you dare question me concerning my children, or instruct me in my handiwork?

Aylmer, unlike Aminadab, has lost sight of his earthiness and presumes to ask such questions and makes such instructions. The final observation of the story's narrator finds support in Isaiah 64:8, which admits "LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, you the potter, and all of us are your handiwork."

The birthmark, of course, is emblematic of human mortality and imperfection, the realization of which shocks Aylmer, who becomes obsessed with the idea of removing it from his beloved's cheek. When Aminadab first appears in Aylmer's laboratory and

learns of their next experiment, he looks upon Georgiana and mutters to himself, “if she were my wife, I’d never part with that birth-mark.”¹¹ The irony of the story is that Aylmer for all his intellectual and spiritual qualities does not have wisdom, which as the biblical passages suggest comes with the realization and acceptance that humans are clay in the hands of God, and as an “unwise” man he shall die without happiness. On the other hand, the denigrated Aminadab, whose nation is noble, accepts his earthiness and thus through him ennoble the physical and perceived imperfections of mortal life unnoticed by Aylmer.

Reuben, Dorcas, and Cyrus in “Roger Malvin’s Burial”

“Roger Malvin’s Burial” is firmly situated in the actual historical events surrounding “the well remembered ‘Lovell’s Fight’” and the Puritan settlement of the New England frontiers.¹² However, the names of the characters provide a deeper context for the events depicted in Hawthorne’s fictional tale. Reuben’s name calls forth the irony of his being a poor son to Roger and the death of his own son. Additionally, it connects the fictional character to the biblical relationships between fathers and sons played out among Isaac, Jacob, and Reuben. “Dorcas” is also used for “Tabitha” in the Bible and “as the charitable disciple raised by St. Peter, her names were endeared to the Puritans.”¹³ In Acts 9:36 Dorcas is celebrated as one who “filled her days with acts of kindness and charity.” The fictional Dorcas is just such a figure.* Overall, though, “Roger Malvin’s Burial” is very much about fathers and sons. Biblically speaking, there seem to be clear

* However, she also has connections to Jacob’s wife Rachel. In the tale the narrator notes that Dorcas prepared for the move “Reuben was accompanied by his son in the expedition, for the purpose of selecting a tract of land, and felling and burning the timber, which necessarily preceded the removal of the household gods” (351). The removal of the household gods is a focal point of Jacob’s flight from his father-in-law in Genesis 31 and 35. Further, connecting Hawthorne’s tale to the stories surrounding Jacob.

connections to Jacob, who is a central figure in stories relating to father-to-son blessings, vows, and pilgrimages.

Reuben Bourne's first name is biblical in origin, meaning "Behold, a son," which is the name of Jacob's firstborn son.¹⁴ The father-son relationship between Reuben and Roger Malvin is established early in the tale when Roger, wounded and dying, entreats Reuben to leave him behind, which Reuben does not wish to do:

"No, my son, no," rejoined his companion. "Let the wish of a dying man have weight with you; give me one grasp of your hand, and get you hence. Think you that my last moments will be eased by the thought, that I leave you to die a more lingering death? I have loved you like a father, Reuben, and, at a time like this, I should have something of a father's authority. I charge you to be gone, that I may die in peace."¹⁵

His father's authority allows Roger to convince Reuben to leave him behind, and to marry Dorcas, Roger's daughter. By claiming "a father's authority" and arranging the marriage of his daughter to Reuben, Roger makes Reuben his surrogate son and the heir to his wealth and his blessing, which go hand-in-hand. Aside from offering prayers before his death on behalf of Reuben and Dorcas, Roger offers this blessing to Reuben:

"Carry my blessing to Dorcas, and say that my last prayer shall be for her and you. Bid her have no hard thoughts because you left me here' — Reuben's heart smote him — 'for that your life would not have weighed with you, if its sacrifice could have done me good. She will marry you, after she has mourned a little while for her father; and Heaven grant you long and happy days! and may your children's children stand round your

death-bed! And, Reuben,' he added, as the weakness of mortality made its way at last, 'return, when your wounds are healed and your weariness refreshed, return to this wild rock, and lay my bones in the grave, and say a prayer over them.'¹⁶

As for wealth, Reuben finds himself in possession of "a farm, under older cultivation, larger, and better stocked than most of the frontier establishments."¹⁷ This blessing and inheritance echo the one received by Jacob from his father Isaac while posing as a surrogate firstborn son in place of Esau: "God give you dew from heaven and the richness of the earth, corn and new wine in plenty" (Gen. 27:28). However, the blessing and inheritance do not work out properly in the end for Reuben on account of his unredeemed vow.

Upon leaving Roger to die in the wilderness Reuben makes a vow to return and if unable to bring help to bury Roger's body. Reuben ties his handkerchief around a sapling near Roger: "the handkerchief had been the bandage of a wound upon Reuben's arm; and, as he bound it to the tree, he vowed, by the blood that stained it, that he would return, either to save his companion's life, or to lay his body in the grave."¹⁸ However, through guilt, fear, and anxiety Reuben does not fulfill his vow despite knowing its importance to Roger, himself, and their Christian religion. The importance of vows is confirmed often in the Bible as in Numbers 30:1-2: "Moses spoke to the heads of the Israelite tribes and said: 'This is the Lord's command: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or by an oath puts himself under a binding obligation, he must not break his word. Every word he has spoken, he must make good.'" An example of the seriousness of such vows is the one the biblical Reuben made to his father Jacob. Reuben needing to take his

youngest brother with him to Egypt vowed to safeguard him to their father, Jacob:

“Reuben said to his father, ‘You may put both my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to me, and I shall bring him back’” (Gen. 42:37). This is a heavy price for a vow unfulfilled, and, as it turns out, is the price that Hawthorne’s fictional Reuben pays.

Reuben’s sin of the unredeemed vow deeply affects him. He becomes sullen and misanthropic, which begins to ostracize him from his community. Additionally, the fertility of the farm, inherited from Roger Malvin, disappears: “while the lands of other settlers became annually more fruitful, his deteriorated in the same proportion.”¹⁹ These circumstances then require Reuben to move his family further out into the frontier to find a better home. Reuben unconsciously heads to the place of Roger’s death and sets up camp nearby. Reuben and Cyrus, his only child, hunt for food while Dorcas readies the camp. Reuben and Cyrus both circle around the site of Roger’s death unknown to each other; and, hearing a noise, Reuben fires a shot into the thicket, which kills Cyrus. Reuben finds the boy’s body and lays it upon the rock that serves as the gravestone to Roger’s unburied bones. Dorcas, curious as to their delay, finds her way to the rock and then falls insensible beside the body. The narrator observes that “Reuben’s heart was stricken” and the “vow that the wounded youth had made, the blighted man had come to redeem. His sin was expiated, the curse was gone from him; and, in the hour, when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne.”²⁰ The narrator’s specific observation as to the expiation of Reuben’s sin calls to mind both the biblical Reuben’s vow and the required satisfaction established by Moses in Numbers.

Cyrus, in the Bible, is the Persian king who conquers the Babylonians and upon doing so, frees the Jews from their captivity and encourages the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.* In “Roger Malvin’s Burial” Cyrus also serves as a liberator. Reuben’s vow was to bury Roger’s body or to lay his own in the grave beside him. He did not fulfill that vow, and his son became the satisfaction of that vow, thus freeing Reuben of both sin and curse. Thus, while history and Gothic inclinations can be identified as playing roles in “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” the biblical contexts evoked by the complementary names and situations of the tale suggest a deeper and more unified influence upon Hawthorne.*

Ethan in “Ethan Brand”

Ethan Brand is a character whose intelligence and rationality overcome his human emotions and spirituality. As the narrator of the story explains, Brand’s monomania began in his youth during his occupation as a lime-burner:

Many years, as we have seen, had now elapsed, since that portentous night when the IDEA was first developed. The kiln, however, on the mountainside, stood unimpaired, and was in nothing changed, since he had thrown his dark thoughts into the intense glow of its furnace, and melted them, as it were, into the one thought that took possession of his life.²¹

This monomania consumes Brand, whose object of devotion becomes not God or righteous living but the knowledge of the Unpardonable Sin. He, it becomes clear, in searching for the manifestation of such a sin, has coldly tested, observed, and judged

* The role of Cyrus is primarily told in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra chapters 1-6.

* In his dissertation Ely Stock makes connections to Saul (his death alongside his armor-bearer and his adoption of David), which, while not invalid, do not carry a sustained influence and connection to all aspects of the tale. Likewise, he makes the obvious biblical connection between Abraham and Isaac; however, Reuben’s actions were unconscious whereas Abraham was very aware of the situation (as detailed by Søren Kierkegaard). Also, Abraham was directly informed by God, whereas Reuben was not.

countless people in his quest, even to the point of harming a young woman “whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated, in the process.”²²

The Bible plays a large role in Hawthorne’s “Ethan Brand.” Ely Stock notes that “on the surface the chief biblical allusion is the concept of the Unpardonable Sin, but examination of the texture of the tale reveals a complex web of additional allusions, the most significant of which are related to the story of Cain.”²³ Aside from the biblical stories Stock also looks to the presence of the Wandering Jew and Lord Byron’s drama *Cain: A Mystery* in his study of “Ethan Brand.” As to the associations with Cain as an influence Stock makes a good point. Brand wanders on his quest for eighteen years and is referred to as a “wayfarer” and one who has “been all over the earth.”²⁴ Additionally, the son of the present lime-burner becomes frightened by some implied mark upon Brand:

There was something in the man’s face which he was afraid to look at, yet could not look away from. And, indeed, even the lime-burner’s dull and torpid sense began to be impressed by an indescribable something in that thin, rugged, thoughtful visage, with the grizzled hair hanging wildly about it, and those deeply sunken eyes, which gleamed like fire within the entrance of a mysterious cavern.²⁵

The allusions or implications of a connection to Cain – specifically Genesis 4:12-16 – are present in the tale, yet, I believe, are there to help give texture rather than determine the tone and theme of “Ethan Brand.”

Central to the tale is the idea of the Unpardonable Sin. Brand undertook “the dreadful task of extending man’s possible guilt to beyond the scope of Heaven’s else

infinite mercy” by attempting to conceive of and discover “the image of some mode of guilt, which could neither be atoned for, nor forgiven.”²⁶ In Matthew 12:30-32 the only unforgivable sin mentioned in the Bible is explained:

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Again, as Stock accurately notes:

Significantly, Ethan Brand never speaks against the Holy Ghost *per se*, as a discrete, disembodied emanation of the trinity. But his life style denies the validity of the concept of God’s spirit is at work in the world, in the hearts of men. He is a materialist and an empiricist and treats other people as things, overlooking the Holy in man.²⁷

Brand’s objective to go beyond God’s infinite mercy denies mercy along with denying the holiness within humanity. Mercy, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and the biblical source of the name Ethan, all combine to create the theme and tone of the tale.

Ethan Brand is aptly named considering Hawthorne’s appreciation of the Bible and irony. Ethan means “Strong” and is associated with the qualities of being firm or enduring.²⁸ This name, of course, fits the hardness of Ethan’s heart, which, turned to

stone, endures the intense heat of the lime-kiln. The name is first mentioned in the Bible in I Kings 4:29-31:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

This passage establishes that Ethan is associated with intelligence, although he is unable to surpass Solomon. Furthermore, it also makes the connection between head and heart, a common struggle depicted by Hawthorne. The biblical Ethan, then, is noteworthy for his intelligence but is ultimately lacking profound wisdom and largeness of heart.

Ethan the Ezrahite is also credited as the psalmist of Psalm 89, a psalm that provides significant context and influence to Hawthorne's character and the tale as a whole. The "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite" identified in Psalm 89:1 sets out to "sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations." The psalmist goes on in Psalm 89:14 to declare that "justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." The psalm celebrates God's omnipotence and his mercy. However, as the psalm concludes, the psalmist experiences alienation from God, a dissatisfaction with the breaking of the covenant and the loss of God's mercy and favor. The closing verses, Psalm 89:46-51, express this trouble:

How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

LORD, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people;

Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

The waywardness of the Jews results in the loss of God's favor and in turn the rise of their enemies and the appearance of "reproach" in the "bosom" of Ethan the Ezrahite.

Much like Ethan the Ezrahite, Ethan Brand begins his life in faithfulness to God and humanity. Brand, toward the end of the tale, reflects upon his life-mission:

He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and wo, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother.²⁹

However, the recognition of such desecration leads to Ethan's concern over the breaches in the relationships among humans and between God and humans. Ethan begins to consider how far those breaches could actually go, perhaps for the purpose of warning

others, perhaps simply for the knowledge. He set out to discover the Unpardonable Sin and thus “ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart.”³⁰ His monomania focused and increased his intellect, but at a high cost:

But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered – had contracted – had hardened – had perished! It ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.³¹

This obsession is his blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, a blasphemy that fully and intentionally severed the bonds between humans and between humanity and God. “Thus Ethan Brand became a fiend,” an enemy of God as described in Matthew 12:30-32.³²

As for the question of mercy and the reproach “I do bear in my bosom,” as Ethan the EzraHITE sang, Ethan Brand takes a different view and abandons the idea of mercy. When asked where the Unpardonable Sin resides, “Ethan Brand laid his finger on his own heart.”³³ Brand goes on to explain, “It is a sin that grew within my own breast [...] A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man, and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to my own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony!”³⁴ However,

rather than admitting his sin and attempting to make peace with God, seeking both forgiveness and mercy, Brand, unlike Ethan the Ezrahite, glories in the breach in relationship between himself and God. Brand declares, emphatically and unequivocally, “Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly, I accept the retribution!”³⁵

Without hope or faith or charity, Ethan Brand is lost in his sin, unwilling and unable to seek God’s mercy. He goes so far as to throw himself in the flames of the lime-kiln, which, after burning his flesh away, reveals “within the ribs – strange to say – was the shape of a human heart,” which the new lime-burner recognizes as marble.³⁶ This image, of course, brings to mind Ezekiel 36:26, which reads, “a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” However, in Ezekiel’s visions, God’s words of mercy follow the repentance and purification of the wayward Israelites, two things absent in the life of Ethan Brand. Additionally, it evokes the occasion when the disciples are on a boat with Jesus and realize that they have no bread. Jesus chastised them for their concern, and after reminding them of his previous breaking of bread and turning a few loaves into food for thousands with basketsful of leftovers, as recorded in Mark 8:17, asked them rather rhetorically, “perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?” For all of Ethan Brand’s travels and studies of people far and wide, he was unable to perceive or understand the strength of the relationship between God and humanity despite the minor breaches, and, as such, with a hardened heart, he could not fathom mercy or repentance and thus could gain none.

The role of the biblical Ethan the Ezrahite is crucial to the creation of the tone and theme of “Ethan Brand.” The name itself, with its connotations of firmness and endurance, becomes prophetic of Ethan Brand’s stone heart enduring the flames of the kiln. The psalmist Ethan the Ezrahite is commended for his intelligence but is unable to compare to the profound wisdom of Solomon, or Solomon’s largeness of heart (I Kings 4:29-31). Likewise, Ethan Brand, through his obsession with the unpardonable sin, cultivated “his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible; 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.”³⁷ However, he cannot truly understand God for he has committed himself to the pursuit of sin. This causes the narrator to rightly lament, “So much for the intellect! But where was the heart?”³⁸ The hardening of Ethan Brand’s heart, as Ethan the Ezrahite’s is filled with reproach, further reveals him to be far less than Solomon, whose mind and heart were equally large and focused on God’s will more than his own. The Bible, then, is a source of moral and philosophical context as well as powerful imagery that Hawthorne re-imagined in his tale of sin, repentance, and mercy.

Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*

Much of *The Scarlet Letter* reveals biblical sources and the names of “Pearl” and “Esther” confirm such important connections. Hester’s naming of Pearl is important as Hawthorne went to the trouble of making its source clear: “she named the infant “Pearl,” as being of great price, — purchased with all she had, — her mother’s only treasure!”³⁹ The “pearl of great price” appears in a parable of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 13:45-46: “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when

he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” The cost *and* value of Pearl are indeed high, for as the narrator observes,

How strange, indeed! Man had marked this woman’s sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself. God, as a direct consequence of the sin which man thus punished, had given her a lovely child, whose place was on that same dishonored bosom, to connect the parent for ever with the race and descent of mortals, and to be finally a blessed soul in heaven!⁴⁰

Randall Stewart further articulates the narrator’s observation by stating that “Pearl herself is also double: not only is she an innocent child of nature, but she is at the same time an agent of retribution (she insists that Hester replace the scarlet letter on her dress after having cast it aside).”⁴¹ The doubleness of Pearl as a character and as a symbol is effective on many levels; however, it is most effective in terms of the biblical inspiration for her name as can be interpreted from Hester’s own behaviors.

In consideration of the parables of treasure found in Matthew 13:44-46 scholars Charles H. Dodd and John Dominic Crossan arrive at similar conclusions, which reflect upon Hester’s life among the Boston community as a “Sister of Mercy.”⁴² As for the parables of treasure, Dodd notes that “for their interpretation the only real question that arises is whether the *tertium comparationis* is the immense value of the thing found, or the sacrifice by which it is acquired.”⁴³ This, of course, requires an understanding of just what is the acquired “thing.” As the parable suggests, the treasures are equated with the Kingdom of God, and thus Pearl herself is symbolic of the Kingdom of God for Hester.

In fact, the Reverend Dimmesdale suggests as much when, in defense of Hester raising Pearl, he says that Pearl serves “to keep the mother’s soul alive, and to preserve her from the blacker depths of sin into which Satan might else have sought to plunge her!”⁴⁴

Dimmesdale goes on to suggest that Hester is taught “as it were by the Creator’s sacred pledge, that, if she bring the child to heaven, the child also will bring the parent thither!”⁴⁵ So then, juxtaposed to the parable, Pearl is both the cost and the value and thus, the source of Hester’s further life-altering actions.

In connection to Hester’s transformation into being “self-ordained a Sister of Mercy” Dodd offers a compelling interpretation for the parables:

The implicit argument they contain is cogent, provided that the Kingdom of God is in some way identified with the cause of Jesus. They do not indeed indicate whether the possession of the Kingdom is immediate or in prospect. But with the fundamental principle in mind, that Jesus saw in His own ministry the coming of the Kingdom of God, we may state the argument thus: You agree that the Kingdom of God is the highest good: it is within your power to possess it here and now, if, like the treasure-finder and the pearl-merchant, you will throw caution to the winds: “Follow me!”⁴⁶

Certainly, in naming her daughter “Pearl,” Hester both recognizes the value of the child’s life and the sacrifice made in her own life. However, her later actions show that she has interpreted the parable and her own experience as Dodd suggests, and has thus decided to follow in the ways of Jesus.

Hester's status as an outsider due to being a known sinner makes things difficult for her indeed; however, though the community has by and large forsaken her, she refuses to forsake them. She "submitted uncomplainingly to [society's] worst usage."⁴⁷

Hester, enlightened by her sin and punishment, devotes herself to helping others:

None so ready as she to give of her little substance to every demand of poverty; even though the bitter-hearted pauper threw back a gibe in requital of the food brought regularly to his door, or the garments wrought for him by the fingers that could have embroidered a monarch's robe.

None so self-devoted as Hester, when pestilence stalked through the town.

In all seasons of calamity, indeed, whether general or of individuals, the outcast of society at once found her place.⁴⁸

In all, the narrator observes, "Hester's nature showed itself warm and rich; a well-spring of human tenderness, unfailing to every real demand, and inexhaustible by the largest."⁴⁹

And, after many years in the community, she, in turn, was visited by society's members, women especially. "Hester comforted and counselled them, as best she might. She assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."⁵⁰

These actions on the part of Hester may be compared to the parables of treasures, as interpreted by John Dominic Crossan. He examines the two parables and remarks that

The structural sequence of the two stories can be underlined by noting the main verbs: finds-sells-buys. We are confronted, for example in the

Treasure parable, with a man whose normalcy of past-present-future is rudely but happily shattered. The future he had presumably planned and projected for himself is totally invalidated by the *advent* of the Treasure which opens up a new world and unforeseen possibilities. In the force of this advent he willingly *reverses* his entire past, quite rightly and wisely he sells “all that he has.” And from this advent and this reversal he obtains the Treasure which now dictates his time and his history in the most literal and concrete sense of these words. It gives him a new world of life and *action* he did not have before and he could not have programmed for himself.⁵¹

Crossan, then, sees the process of advent-reversal-action as being the message of the parables. As noted above, the advent of Pearl sparks the reversal in Hester’s life and sparks the action, which as Crossan notes, and the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* would probably agree, would not have otherwise been undertaken.

Hester’s transformation into a selfless comforter of society signals her intent to follow Jesus’ ways and embrace the Kingdom of God. Certainly, she sinned and is punished for it; however, the assumption of the role of a “Sister of Mercy” places her in line with the “merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.” Pearl’s name reflects her role as a valued but costly aspect of Hester’s life, which is easily acknowledged by the narrator of the story. However, the depth of Pearl’s function as a character is intricately connected to the understanding of the hidden treasure parables of Jesus, as explained by Dodd and Crossan.

Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*

Hester Prynne's name and experience concerning her daughter link her to the biblical Esther. Esther means "Star," and as noted by Younge there are "occasional variations in English of Esther or Essie and Hester or Hetty."⁵² The Book of Esther is, in the King James Version, an Old Testament story situated in the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. There are some initial parallels that soon give way to clearer (and more important) connections between Esther and Hester. Mordecai, "who had been carried away from Jerusalem" by Nebuchadnezzar, "brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:6-7). The biblical Esther is orphaned and alone as is Hester Prynne who arrived in Boston without a husband or parents. After the king Ahasuerus disposed of his wife, he sought a new, more obedient, wife and after long deliberation and many prospective wives chose Esther. Upon becoming the queen, "Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it" (Esther 2:10). Both women keep their identities secret for their protection. Esther does not reveal her Jewish heritage. Hester does not disclose the identity of her lover, nor does she reveal the identity of her husband, the newly arrived leech, Chillingworth.

Shortly after Esther's becoming Queen a favored, though wicked in the eyes of God, courtier approaches the king with a plot against the Jews. Haman, the courtier, "said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them"

(Esther 3:8). He proposes that “if it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries” (Esther 3:9). The king, unaware that these lawless people are the Jews, much less that his wife is one of them, acquiesces and gives authority to Haman to enact his plan. This plot connects with that of the legislators of Boston who propose to remove Pearl from Hester’s care. As Chester E. Eisinger notes, “Illegitimate though she may be, the authorities of the colony are concerned for her spiritual well-being in the interest, again, of her immortal soul. It is this concern that impels the Governor to propose that Pearl be taken from Hester.”⁵³ Aware of the respective plots against them and their people, Esther and Hester must take action and seek a meeting with the authority despite the risks they face for defying that very same authority.

While Esther’s situation has more to do with Haman’s personal grudge against Mordecai* and all Jews, Hester’s situation stems from her moral and legal transgression. Esther, up against Haman’s plot as well as court etiquette, resigns herself to the risk stating, “I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Hester is also in danger when she decides to approach the Governor. For the Puritans of *The Scarlet Letter*, “obedience to civil law and repudiation of natural law assure an orderly existence within a stable state.”⁵⁴ Hester is already viewed negatively by the Governor and his men, with the notable exception of one, and could very well prove their suspicions of her correct through her protest.

* Haman builds a gallows on which to hang Mordecai although as it turns out Haman himself is hanged there, which is much like the scaffolds of *The Scarlet Letter* which serve to display Hester’s sin and set her apart from the community and is later used to unite her and Pearl with Arthur Dimmesdale. Similarly, each story structurally has the appearance of either gallows or scaffolds at beginning, middle, and end.

Hester had to seek the protection of Governor Bellingham and his legislators in a conference at his home, which is more comparable to “Aladdin’s palace, rather than the mansion of a grave old Puritan ruler.”⁵⁵ The palace-setting of Hester’s conference mirrors that of Esther in the palace of King Ahasuerus. Esther manages to receive the king’s blessing and upon entering the court makes her petition:

If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. (Esther 7:3-4)

Esther’s petition works and “the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen” (Esther 7:5-6). Haman is hanged for his deception and intrigues; however, there is still the matter of the pre-arranged attacks on the Jews throughout the kingdom, which are intended to annihilate them as a people. Once again Esther seeks Ahasuerus’s help:

If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or
how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? (Esther 8:5-6)

Again Ahasuerus acquiesces and Esther provides succor to herself and her people (which I shall return to and discuss a bit more below).

Hester in seeking assurances of Governor Bellingham confirms the plot to remove Pearl from her custody. Bellingham, surrounded by the luxuries of his home, explains that “the point hath been weightily discussed, whether we, that are of authority and influence, do well to discharge our consciences by trusting an immortal soul, such as there is in yonder child, to the guidance of one who has stumbled and fallen, amid the pitfalls of this world.”⁵⁶ He continues on to question Hester directly: “were it not, thinkest thou, for thy little one’s temporal and eternal welfare, that she be taken out of thy charge, and clad soberly, and disciplined strictly, and instructed in the truths of heaven and earth? What canst thou do for the child, in this kind?”⁵⁷ Impassioned, as was Esther in her plea, Hester responds, “I can teach my little Pearl what I have learned from this!” pointing to the scarlet letter, “this badge hath taught me, — it daily teaches me, — it is teaching me at this moment, — lessons whereof my child may be wiser and better.”⁵⁸ As with Esther, Hester requires a second attempt to attain full protection and after the disapproval of the governor she appeals once again asserting that Pearl is her gift from God given to her “in requital of all things else, which ye had taken from me. She is my happiness! — my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin? Ye shall not take her! I will die first!”⁵⁹ Her argument is

supported by Dimmesdale, and Hester manages to ensure her custody of Pearl, and perhaps a little less interference in general from the colonial government.

Hester's final plea brings her full success as is the case with the biblical Esther. Connections are also found in Esther's willingness to endure slavery but not death, which is similar to that voiced by Hester to Mistress Hibbins. Hester will endure being ostracized by the community at large, but "had they taken [Pearl] from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest, and signed my name in the Black Man's book too, and that with mine own blood!"⁶⁰ In each case, the respective woman must enact or threaten small rebellions against the human law controlling them in order to protect themselves and their people whom they feel are under God's rule – the Jews being the Chosen people, while Pearl being God's gift.

The last connection between the Book of Esther and *The Scarlet Letter* is the turning of the tables on the adversaries. Mordecai does not trust or respect Haman and thus will not bow before him though Haman is of a higher rank at court. Haman builds a gallows on which to hang Mordecai although, as it turns out, Haman himself is hanged there. Interestingly, the reversal is much like the scaffolds of *The Scarlet Letter* which serve to display Hester's sin and set her apart from the community but is later used to unite her and Pearl with Arthur Dimmesdale. Similarly, each story structurally has the appearance of either gallows or scaffolds at beginning, middle, and end. Another aspect of the Book of Esther along these lines of reversals, or retribution, is the establishment of the festival of Purim.

As succinctly discussed by Buckner B. Trawick in *The Bible as Literature: The Old Testament and the Apocrypha*, the Book of Esther explains the origin of Purim. "If

derived from the Assyrian *puru*, the word *Purim* means “Lots”; and the legend tells how anti-Semites cast lots to determine an auspicious date for massacring all Jews and how (by a turning of tables) they themselves were massacred on that date.”⁶¹ Purim thus celebrates a “day of deliverance.”⁶² This deliverance comes from Esther’s plea to the king who “granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” (Esther 8:11). In the end, over the course of two days, the Jews succeed in killing over seventy-five thousand of their enemies on the day of their own planned annihilation.

The reversal of fortune upon the enemies in the Book of Esther is mirrored, though on smaller scale, in *The Scarlet Letter*. When Hester and Pearl are on their way to the Governor’s mansion to seek the aforementioned conference, they are attacked by “the children of the Puritans” who said, “Behold, verily, there is the woman of the scarlet letter; and, of a truth, moreover, there is the likeness of the scarlet letter running along by her side! Come, therefore, and let us fling mud at them!”⁶³ However, victory will not be theirs despite their superior numbers. For,

Pearl, who was a dauntless child, after frowning, stamping her foot, and shaking her little hand with a variety of threatening gestures, suddenly made a rush at the knot of her enemies, and put them all to flight. She resembled, in her fierce pursuit of them, an infant pestilence, — the scarlet fever, or some such half-fledged angel of judgment, — whose mission was to punish the sins of the rising generation. She screamed and shouted, too,

with a terrific volume of sound, which doubtless caused the hearts of the fugitives to quake within them.⁶⁴

While this passage has clear echoes of numerous passages in the Bible – including the four horsemen of Revelation, the noise at the fall of Jericho, and other instances when hearts quake in battle – it matches perfectly with the reversal depicted in the Book of Esther.

Hester is a delightfully rich and complex character, and like the majority of Hawthorne's characters cannot be satisfactorily whittled down to one single inspiration or meaning. In terms of the influence of the Bible alone, Hester has kindred women in both the Old and New Testaments (to be discussed throughout following chapters). However, with this in mind it is still safe to point to the Book of Esther as a strong influence in Hester's development as a character and even in the development of the story depicted in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hester's name is a variation of Esther's and, additionally, Hester's story is a scaled down variation of Esther's. Both women confront plots against them and their people by meeting with the respective authorities of their communities and must draw the lines as to what they will and will not endure. Furthermore, their stories share images of justice – scaffolds and gallows – and acts of reversals as enemies are defeated. The Book of Esther, then, provides additional insight and depth into Hester and *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hepzibah in *The House of the Seven Gables*

Hepzibah is an interesting name for the elderly caretaker of the Pyncheon home at the center of *The House of the Seven Gables*. The name means “My delight is in her,” and as Younge acknowledges she “was the wife of Hezekiah, and it might have been in

allusion to her that Isaiah spoke of the land being called Hephisbah. It has been a favorite name in America.”⁶⁵ Hepzibah is mentioned only twice in the Bible. In 2 Kings 21:1 she is identified as the mother of Manasseh a king of Jerusalem. It is the reference in Isaiah, however, that contributes to a better understanding of Hawthorne’s treatment of her as a character.

The Book of Isaiah communicates the prophecies of Isaiah to the Jews in repeated moments of crises as the Assyrians gained power and control in the region. It is fitting that Hawthorne’s character finds herself in a series of crises as she must open a shop for her livelihood, protect Clifford, and contend with her powerful and malicious cousin Jaffrey. Her name is mentioned in connection with both Zion and Jerusalem in Isaiah 62:4: “thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hepzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” The prophecy clearly refers to the meaning of the name and this is also reflected in the sympathetic treatment Hepzibah receives from the narrator of *The House of the Seven Gables*. More importantly though, is the recovery of the land and the delight and marriage of the land mentioned in the verse connect to Hawthorne’s romance.

The entirety of Isaiah 62 compares well with the plot of *The House of the Seven Gables*. The first verse of Isaiah 62 introduces a theme of light and salvation that parallels Phoebe’s appearance at the old Pyncheon home: “for Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” The need for salvation and brightness in Hepzibah’s home is detailed throughout the first chapter of *The House of*

the Seven Gables, which provides a brief history of the mansion that is now “in its rusty old-age,” and, as the narrator notes, looking upon the home in this state makes it “more difficult to imagine the bright novelty with which it first caught the sunshine.”⁶⁶ The brightness and salvation that is to envelope the ancient mansion and the families whose history are entwined in the history of the house occur in a two-fold manner. In the first instance, Hepzibah, the aged and unmarried caretaker of the home having fallen upon hard times, is forced to take on a boarder and even open a shop on the first floor of the home to earn some money for her livelihood. In this respect she is exerting her own will and force – feeble and untried as they are – toward her own improvement. Similarly, she is communing once again with the world around her, which opens her up to the redemption found in the union of the Maule and Pyncheon families at the end of the romance. This redemption is furthered by the appearance of her “country cousin” Phoebe.⁶⁷

Phoebe, whose own name evokes the Greek sun god Apollo, is the physical manifestation of Isaiah’s “lamp that burneth.” Phoebe “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.”⁶⁸ The sunshine with which she is associated exemplifies her youth, her innocence, her honesty, and her kindness. These qualities in turn revive the Pyncheon garden and the inhabitants of the home. The garden is symbolically blighted by the sins of the ancestral Pyncheons, and this blight is depicted in the white roses growing by Phoebe’s window. After her first night’s stay in the home she notices “a rare and very beautiful species of white rose;” however, the flowers “had

blight or mildew at their hearts; but, viewed at a fair distance, the whole rose-bush looked as if it had been brought from Eden.”⁶⁹ The rest of the garden is likewise “in no flourishing condition” except for the efforts of Holgrave, the young man renting a room in the home, to ensure that the garden is “scrupulously weeded.”⁷⁰ Phoebe, with the help of Holgrave, restores the garden, and as the narrator notes, “It is wonderful how many pleasant incidents continually came to pass in that secluded garden-spot, when once Phoebe had set herself to look for them.”⁷¹ Hepzibah’s garden eventually loses all its forsakenness and desolation, as Isaiah prophesied.

Phoebe and Holgrave gradually fall in love and by the end of the novel have become betrothed. Holgrave is a descendant of the Maule family who originally owned the land and built the seven gabled mansion – both of which they were cheated out of by the ancient Pyncheons. The familial enmity and wrongdoings against one another are reconciled in the union of Phoebe and Holgrave which mirrors Isaiah 62:4-5: “...for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” God’s favor over Hepzibah and the marriage of the land is further established in Isaiah 62:10-12:

Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them,

The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called,
Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This favor is made manifest in *The House of the Seven Gables* when Hepzibah, her brother, Clifford, and the young lovers inherit all the Pyncheon family wealth. As an observer at the end of the novel sums up:

“My wife kept a cent-shop, three months, and lost five dollars on her outlay. Old Maid Pyncheon has been in trade just about as long, and rides off in her carriage with a couple of hundred thousand – reckoning her share, and Clifford’s, and Phoebe’s – and some say twice as much! If you choose to call it luck, it is all very well; but if we are to take it as the will of Providence, why, I can’t fathom it!”⁷²

Hepzibah is the heroine of *The House of the Seven Gables*, as Nina Baym suggests in her essay “The Heroine of *The House of the Seven Gables*; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?” Primarily, Hepzibah is the heroine for her attempts to protect her innocent and weakened brother, Clifford, from the malicious schemes of their cousin Jaffrey. Additionally, in her efforts to become independent from her cousin, by taking on a boarder – Holgrave – and accepting her cousin Phoebe into the home, enable the union to take place that rights all the past wrongs. And though Hepzibah is an old woman renowned for her near-sighted scowl the narrator is sympathetic to her and finds delight in her as does God, according to the prophecy in Isaiah 62.

¹ Kesselring, *Hawthorne's Reading, 1828 – 1850*, 48

² Kolatch, *Complete dictionary of English and Hebrew first names*, 15

³ “The Birth-mark,” X:51

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- ⁴ Ibid., 55
⁵ Thompson, "Aminadab in Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark,'" 412-413
⁶ Ibid., 414
⁷ "The Birth-mark," X:43
⁸ Ibid., 46
⁹ Ibid., 43
¹⁰ Ibid., 56
¹¹ Ibid., 43
¹² "Roger Malvin's Burial." X:337
¹³ Younge, *History of Christian Names*, 50
¹⁴ Kolatch, *Complete dictionary of English and Hebrew first names*, 196
¹⁵ "Roger Malvin's Burial," X:339
¹⁶ Ibid., 344
¹⁷ Ibid., 350
¹⁸ "Roger Malvin's Burial," X:344
¹⁹ Ibid., 350
²⁰ Ibid., 360
²¹ "Ethan Brand." XI:84
²² Ibid., 94
²³ Stock, "The Biblical Context of 'Ethan Brand,'" 115
²⁴ "Ethan Brand," XI:86 and 94
²⁵ Ibid., 86
²⁶ Ibid., 89
²⁷ Stock, "The Biblical Context of 'Ethan Brand,'" 119
²⁸ Kolatch, *Complete dictionary of English and Hebrew first names*, 75
²⁹ "Ethan Brand," XI:98
³⁰ Ibid., 98-99
³¹ Ibid., 99
³² Ibid., 99
³³ Ibid., 87
³⁴ Ibid., 90
³⁵ Ibid., 90
³⁶ Ibid., 102
³⁷ Ibid., 99
³⁸ Ibid., 99
³⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:89
⁴⁰ Ibid., 89
⁴¹ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 85
⁴² *The Scarlet Letter*, I:161
⁴³ Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 86
⁴⁴ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:114
⁴⁵ Ibid., 115
⁴⁶ Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 87
⁴⁷ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:160
⁴⁸ Ibid., 161
⁴⁹ Ibid.
⁵⁰ Ibid., 263
⁵¹ Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*, 34
⁵² Younge, *History of Christian Names*, 57
⁵³ Eisinger, "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," 328
⁵⁴ Eisinger, "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," 323
⁵⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:103
⁵⁶ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:110
⁵⁷ Ibid., 110
⁵⁸ Ibid., 111

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- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 113
⁶⁰ Ibid., 117
⁶¹ Trawick, *The Bible as Literature: The Old Testament and the Apocrypha*, 329
⁶² Ibid.
⁶³ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:102
⁶⁴ Ibid., 102-103
⁶⁵ Younge, *History of Christian Names*, 49
⁶⁶ *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:10
⁶⁷ Ibid., 69
⁶⁸ Ibid., 80
⁶⁹ Ibid., 71
⁷⁰ Ibid., 87
⁷¹ Ibid., 147
⁷² Ibid., 318

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL ANALOGUES

The Babylonian Captivity and Boston in “Young Goodman Brown”

The contrast between rural living and urban living plays a large role in Hawthorne’s “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” where Robin, now eighteen years old, heads to Boston because he “thought it high time to begin the world.”¹ And while his adventures coincide with American history and at times hint of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, of more importance and influence in the story is the Babylonian captivity of the ancient Israelites. Ely Stock, on the other hand, believes that in regard to “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” “the important Biblical book, in this connection, is the Book of Ruth, which provides several specific, interesting analogues for the journey-search plot.”² Stock also mentions, in connection with the historical circumstances in which Hawthorne situates the story, “a biblical source, the short prophecy describing the ‘burden of Nineveh;’ ‘the bloody city,’ in the Book of Nahum.”³ However, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” compares best, that is to say most consistently, with the exile and captivity in Babylon. As Jean Normand accurately notes, for Hawthorne Boston was “the great city, the labyrinth in which young Robin was lost, through which his relation Major Molineux, covered in tar and feathers, paraded his disgrace one rioting night, the former capital of the province in which the Governor’s Palace still stood, the Babylon of New England where the grandson of Puritans did not

scorn to drink his wine and smoke cigars.”⁴ The role and features of Boston are similar to that of Babylon. There is a clear use of the “whore of Babylon,” and the devil leads the revelry of Boston at the story’s end, which connects with the Book of Revelation. As with the Israelites exiled in Babylon, Robin is trapped and wandering without a guide or a destination within the bewildering streets of colonial Boston. Furthermore, his exposure to city life and the various types of people there encourage a reevaluation of his identity and his faith, which is prefigured by the Israelite’s* establishment of Judaism in Babylon. As the Israelites transformed themselves into the Jews during the Babylonian captivity, so too does Robin transform himself into an adult shedding some of his naïveté and learning how to discern the temptations of the world and the values by which he wants to live.

The Babylonian captivity lasted for seventy-five years, from 597 to 538 B.C., and became a source of numerous images in the Bible, which have permeated art and culture – especially that of the “whore of Babylon” from Revelation. The captivity and exile of the Jews at the hands of the Babylonians was prophesized by Isaiah and Jeremiah. In 2 Kings 20:17-18, Isaiah warns King Hezekiah that “the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” After the political relationship between Judah and Babylon broke down – due to God’s anger over the Israelite’s allowance of pagan religion to infiltrate and influence their own beliefs and worship – the Babylonian conquest began. 2 Kings

* While in captivity the Israelites formalized their religion into Judaism and became known as Jews.

24:2 tells that the “the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.” And “at that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged” (2 Kgs. 24:10). The conquest is detailed in 2 Kings 24:13-14, as Nebuchadnezzar “carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.” Babylon became symbolized, later in The Revelation of John, as a corrupter of nations (Rev. 17:2), as a persecutor of saints and martyrs (Rev. 17:6), as the center of wealth (Rev. 18:3), and as ruling over the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:18). These symbols are connected to the infamous “whore of Babylon” and suggest that Babylon is where earthly, not spiritual or heavenly, concerns reign supreme.

Boston is very much a Babylon in Massachusetts in that it is the seat of power and wealth, where one must be in order to move up in the world. Robin is not, as the Jews were, captured and forced into exile, but follows after those who have already relocated from the countryside to Boston. In consideration of Isaiah’s warnings in the above mentioned 2 Kings 20:17-18, the circumstances are roughly similar to those of Robin in his self-imposed exile to Boston due to the fact that his “elder brother was destined to succeed to the farm” and that Robin otherwise had nothing left to him from his father.⁵ And so Robin sets out for Boston to acquire earthly wealth, power, and fame.

Robin arrives in Boston late at night after a long journey from the countryside. However, soon after entering into the city “it occurred to him, that he knew not whither to

direct his steps; so he paused, and looked up and down the narrow street, scrutinizing the small and mean wooden buildings, that were scattered on either side.”⁶ And later in his searching for his kinsman Robin again “became entangled in a succession of crooked and narrow streets, which crossed each other, and meandered at no great distance from the water-side. The smell of tar was obvious to his nostrils, the masts of vessels pierced the moonlight above the tops of the buildings, and the numerous signs, which Robin paused to read, informed him that he was near the centre of business.”⁷ And by the end of his night, and with no success in his quest, Robin “roamed desperately, and at random, through the town, almost ready to believe a spell was on him, like that, by which a wizard of his country, had once kept three pursuers wandering, a whole winter night, within twenty paces of the cottage which they sought.”⁸ The wanderings of Robin, from a biblical perspective, will certainly evoke the wanderings of the Hebrews in the Book of Exodus. However, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” compares best with the exile and captivity in Babylon because Robin is trapped within a foreign city, far from home and without any power in the world as he has no money or marketable trade. Captive in Babylonian Boston, he must undergo ridicule and temptation as an outsider.

The natives of the city offer little aid or sympathy to Robin in his quest. The first person he asks for help is an older gentleman who promptly turns Robin away with the threats of punishment, which elicits laughter from the men in the barber shop who witnessed the exchange. Following this shameful rejection Robin makes his way to a busy tavern in hopes of help there. The tavern offers a cross-section of city-dwellers and Robin’s presence there resembles the Jews in Babylon. Robin “entered the tavern, and was guided by the murmur of voices, and fumes of tobacco, to the public room. It was a

long and low apartment, with oaken walls, grown dark in the continual smoke, and a floor, which was thickly sanded, but of no immaculate purity.”⁹ There, in a foreign and unclean environment, Robin encountered

A number of persons, the larger part of whom appeared to be mariners, or in some way connected with the sea, occupied the wooden benches, or leather-bottomed chairs, conversing on various matters, and occasionally lending their attention to some topic of general interest. Three or four little groups were draining as many bowls of punch, which the great West India trade had long since made a familiar drink in the colony. Others, who had the aspect of men who lived by regular and laborious handicraft, preferred the insulated bliss of an unshared potation, and became more taciturn under its influence.¹⁰

The strange men and their copious amounts of rum represent the far-reaching empire with its influx of foreign goods, foreign people, and foreign ways. Robin, who is the country-born son of a clergyman, immediately feels out-of-place and fully aware of himself as a member of a distinctly separate group.

In the midst of the crowd there was a small group with which “Robin felt a sort of brotherhood.”¹¹ These “only guests to whom Robin’s sympathies inclined him, were two or three sheepish countrymen, who were using the inn somewhat after the fashion of a Turkish Caravansary; they had gotten themselves into the darkest corner of the room, and, heedless of the Nicotian atmosphere, were supping on the bread of their own ovens, and the bacon cured in their own chimney smoke.”¹² The self-conscious separateness of the countrymen is similar to that of the Jews in Babylon: “placed in the midst of heathen

and idolatrous surroundings the [exiles] recoiled from the abominations of their neighbors and clung to the faith of their fathers in the God of Abraham. Exposed to the taunts and the scorn of nations that despised them, they formed an inner circle of their own, and cultivated that exclusiveness which has marked them ever since.”¹³

Additionally, the decision of the captive Jews and the countrymen in the tavern to remain aloof and to eat of their own food recalls Joshua and the Gibeonites. After learning of the Israelite conquest of Jericho and Ai, the Gibeonites, afraid of being annihilated too, decided to trick the Israelites into a treaty and alliance. The Gibeonite ambassadors dressed in rags and carried moldy bread pretending to be from a country further away and seal the alliance by eating of the same food as the Israelites. The ruse is depicted in Joshua 9:14-15, where “the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.” The treaty is symbolized and actually ratified over the sharing of bread between the Gibeonite ambassadors and Joshua’s council. In sharing a meal the two parties are accepting one another and merging, in this case with the Israelites absorbing the Gibeonites. In “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” and the Babylonian captivity, it is the countrymen and Jews, respectively, who will be absorbed into and thus corrupted by the imperial population.

Along with the corruption of intermixing that comes with existing in the heart of an empire there is the temptation of sin, which, when considering the biblical representation of Babylon, means the “whore of Babylon.” The Book of the Revelation of John sees this whore of Babylon as the central entity in a world that has become devoted

to the sin and corruption of earthly concerns. She is described, in the rather unique style of the Book of Revelation, in Revelation 17:3-6:

I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

She is also described as sitting over waters, which “are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15). And she herself is representative of “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18). Robin used a ferry to cross over water and enter into Boston the home of mercantile and political power. Unsurprisingly, then, it is in Boston that he finds a scarlet-colored harlot.

The whore of Babylon is, as noted above, associated with a great deal of corruption and persecution. In Revelation 18:4-5 and angel reveals to John,

Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with

her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

During his search for his kinsman Robin came face to face with the evidence of the earthly power and concerns harbored in Boston as he came nearer to the “mother of harlots.” After being laughed out of the tavern by the strange men, Robin wandered the streets where he “encountered many gay and gallant figures. Embroidered garments, of showy colors, enormous periwigs, gold-laced hats, and silver hilted swords, glided past him and dazzled his optics. Travelled youths, imitators of the European fine gentlemen of the period, trod jauntily along, half-dancing to the fashionable tunes which they hummed, and making poor Robin ashamed of his quiet and natural gait.”¹⁴

Having witnessed the earthly “delicacies” that come from the corruption of the whore of Babylon, Robin meets her himself. After being surrounded by fashion and wealth Robin continues his search and passes by “a half-opened door, and his keen glance detected a woman’s garment within.”¹⁵ The door did not shut at his approach but remained slightly open “sufficing for the fair occupant to observe the stranger, without a corresponding display on her part. All that Robin could discern was a strip of scarlet petticoat, and the occasional sparkle of an eye, as if the moonbeams were trembling on some bright thing.”¹⁶ Robin, as he has done throughout his quest, asks for help locating his kinsman, which marks him as a “country youth” and thus an easy target for the scarlet woman. She comes outside to him revealing her “dainty little figure, with a white neck, round arms, and a slender waist, at the extremity of which her scarlet petticoat jutted out over a hoop, as if she were standing in a balloon. Moreover, her face was oval and pretty, her hair dark beneath the little cap, and her bright eyes possessed a sly freedom, which

triumphed over those of Robin.”¹⁷ She tells him that he has found the home of his kinsman and that he should come in and spend the night, as the Major is already in bed sound asleep and unable to greet him properly. Although Robin is enticed, a small part of him is doubtful of “whether that sweet voice spoke Gospel truth.”¹⁸ Her reaction to the appearance of the night-watchman confirms his slight doubts and so Robin, “being of the household of a New England clergyman, was a good youth, as well as a shrewd one; so he resisted temptation, and fled away.”¹⁹ Robin is saved from the corrupting fornication offered by the scarlet colored harlot by a coincidence, or, perhaps by Providence. However, he is no closer to his goal and remains hungry, lost, and despairing of his experience in the city far from home.

Further connecting Boston to Babylon is the presence of a devil. When in the tavern he sees a man whose

Features were separately striking almost to grotesqueness, and the whole face left a deep impression in the memory. The forehead bulged out into a double prominence, with a vale between; the nose came boldly forth in an irregular curve, and its bridge was more than a finger’s breadth; the eyebrows were deep and shaggy, and the eyes glowed beneath them like fire in a cave.²⁰

The shape of the face is disconcerting in its own right, but it is the glowing eyes that are reminiscent of Ethan Brand’s that confirm this to be a fiendish character. Robin runs into this character in front of the church and

Gazed with dismay and astonishment, on the unprecedented physiognomy of the speaker. The forehead with its double prominence, the broad-

hooked nose, the shaggy eyebrows, and the fiery eyes, were those which he had noticed at the inn, but the man's complexion had undergone a singular, or more properly, a two-fold change. One side of the face blazed of an intense red, while the other was black as midnight, the division line being the broad bridge of the nose; and a mouth, which seemed to extend from ear to ear, was black or red, in contrast to the color of the cheek. The effect was as if two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this infernal visage.²¹

Such descriptions clearly associate him with the devil and in returning to Revelation there are more similarities. Revelation 12:9 warns that "the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The consequences of this are explained in Revelation 12:12, "woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

The third time this fiend is seen he is at the head of a parade of debauchery. His coming is foretold by an uproar in which "the shouts, the laughter, the tuneless bray, the antipodes of music, came onward with increasing din, till scattered individuals, and then denser bodies, began to appear round a corner, at the distance of a hundred yards."²² He appears soon after leading the mass of demonic revelers.

A single horseman wheeled the corner in the midst of them, and close behind him came a band of fearful wind-instruments, sending forth a fresher discord, now that no intervening buildings kept it from the ear.

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 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.²³

Hawthorne is clearly drawing his inspiration for this character and scene from the beginning of the Apocalypse foretold in the Book of Revelation. The horseman of “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” is modeled on that of Revelation 6:8: “behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” The red and black colors on his face, aside from associations with fire, and smoke and shadows, also draws from Revelation 6:5-6: “there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. [...] and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.” The apocalyptic scenes found in the Book of Revelation mark the division between those faithful to God and those who are not; those who are not faithful are led and corrupted by the whore of Babylon and the horsemen, including Death. The Jews in Babylon – though far predating the Book of Revelation – and Robin in Boston are faced with the choice between faith and earthly corruptions. Robin is met with scorn, temptation, and intimidation by the various inhabitants of Boston, all while being lost and

alone unable to go forward or backward, which makes him increasingly vulnerable to the temptations of city life.

But enduring such troubles brings Robin closer to the possibility of some sort of spiritual growth and enlightenment. For after escaping from the temptations of the woman in the scarlet petticoat, he follows a path to the church. Robin, waiting for help, peers in through the window:

There the moonbeams came trembling in, and fell down upon the deserted pews, and extended along the quiet aisles. A fainter, yet more awful radiance, was hovering round the pulpit, and one solitary ray had dared rest upon the opened page of the great Bible. Had Nature, in that deep hour, become a worshipper in the house, which man had builded? Or was that heavenly light the visible sanctity of the place, visible because no earthly and impure feet were within the walls? The scene made Robin's heart shiver with a sensation of loneliness, stronger than he had ever felt in the remotest depths of his native woods; so he turned away, and sat down again before the door.²⁴

While the passage makes immediate reference to 2 Corinthians 5:1, it is the "visible sanctity" of the Bible that arrests Robin's attention.* As the Jews were told by their prophets to return to the proper worship of God in order to find redemption and freedom, the moonlight on the Bible fulfills the same purpose for Robin. The radiance around the Bible, clearly emphasizing its holiness, forces Robin to recall his family and the tradition

* 2 Corinthians 5:1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

in which he was raised and from which he is now far removed. He pictures his “father’s household” and

He pictured them assembled at the door, beneath the tree, the great old tree, which had been spared for its huge twisted trunk, and the venerable shade, when a thousand leafy brethren fell. There, at the going down of the summer sun, it was his father’s custom to perform domestic worship, that the neighbors might come and join with him like brothers of the family, and that the wayfaring man might pause to drink at that fountain, and keep his heart pure by freshening the memory of home.²⁵

His father’s household – be it literal or symbolic of God the father as in the New Testament – maintains the proper worship and embraces a holy communion of people in stark contrast to the ways of the city. Robin’s memories show

The good man in the midst, holding the Scriptures in the golden light that shone from the western clouds; he beheld him close the book, and all rise up to pray. He heard the old thanksgivings for daily mercies, the old supplications for their continuance, to which he had so often listened to in weariness, but which were now among his dear remembrances. He perceived the slight inequality of his father’s voice when he came to speak of the Absent One.²⁶

Robin, the “Absent One” remembered and prayed for by his family, desires to return home and to the way of life he left behind.

Sitting there on the steps of the church his situation parallels that of Psalm 137:1-4: “by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered

Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" Although the biblical captivity is harsh and miserable, some positive effects originated in the Babylonian exile as well. In Babylon the captive Israelites were allowed to form their own community within Babylon, from which Judaism was developed and the people became known as Jews. There, in captive exile, "they built up their nationality in their new surroundings upon the foundation of their religion. [...]The synagogue and the Sabbath came to occupy a new place in the religious practice of the people. These and other institutions of Judaism only attained to maturity after the Return, but the Captivity and the Exile created the needs they were meant to supply.²⁷ As Richard Hooker notes, "this period is marked by a resurgence in Jewish tradition, as the exiles looked back to their Mosaic origins in an effort to revive their original religion. It is most likely that the Torah took its final shape during this period or shortly afterward, and that it became the central text of the Jewish faith at this time as well."²⁸ The Jews used their time in Babylon to reflect, and in so doing, "they blamed the disaster of the Exile on their own impurity. They had betrayed Yahweh and allowed the Mosaic laws and cultic practices to become corrupt; the Babylonian Exile was proof of Yahweh's displeasure. During this period, Jewish leaders no longer spoke about a theology of judgment, but a theology of salvation."²⁹

These changes and images associated with Babylon provide the foundation of Hawthorne's short story "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," in which Robin's experiences in Boston parallel those of the Jews in Babylon and with similar effects of initiation into a

stronger faith and identity. While the story does not tell what will happen to Robin, it does at least end in calmness not otherwise seen in the story. Furthermore, Robin, having no option but to learn and grow from the experiences of that night, will be in a better position to succeed not just in Boston but anywhere he might find himself in the future. As the end of the story suggests, the memories of family and religion are strong for Robin and will serve as a buttress and guide for him throughout the rest of his life. Robin's memories highlight his values of family, community, gratitude, and compassion. These aspects may be lacking in his immediate surroundings in Boston, but because he still holds the memory of them he can choose to implement them in his own life. The older man who waits with Robin near the church and later provides some gentle counsel could very well be a man of similar values, with whom Robin may begin to find a community more amenable to his values. Such a foundation secures Robin's personal identity and his personal faith, which bodes well in both Hawthorne's fiction and the Bible.

Moses in "The Minister's Black Veil" and "The Man of Adamant"

The figure of Moses dominates the Bible as a law-giver and leader renowned for providing moral and physical guidance to the Hebrews from slavery to wandering in the wilderness to the threshold of the Promised Land. He maintains a direct relationship with God beginning with his encounter with the burning bush, and including his conferences with God atop mountains and in his tent. However, at the same time, Moses struggles to manage the Hebrews, who are all too prone to backsliding into idolatry and mutinous murmurings. Over time, Moses' ability to lead is enhanced by his communion with God, which, ironically, excludes him more and more from communion with his people. The

difficulty of balancing the divine and the human impulses that beset all people can be seen in the figure and circumstances of Moses. These impulses are often explored by Hawthorne, specifically in “The Minister’s Black Veil” and “The Man of Adamant” where he blends aspects of the biblical Moses into his parables about contemporary ministers struggling to reconcile their heavenly and earthly concerns. The Reverend Hooper and Richard Digby attempt to exhort their communities into more righteous behavior, yet in doing so, like Moses, they find themselves exiled from those very communities and subject to the punishment of exclusion. Hawthorne uses the biblical Moses to demonstrate that moral leadership fails when ministers lack both a sense of humility and an attachment to the community beyond that of their office.

The story of Moses centers on the journey from slavery to liberation, during which God (and Moses) leads the Hebrews from Egypt to the wilderness and then to the Promised Land. Concurrent with the physical journey is a moral one in which Moses and the Hebrews learn to become more faithful to and trusting in God. However, beneath the surface of the larger Exodus plot is the reality of Moses’ position between the people and God, which leaves him more and more isolated. In *Moses: The Man and His Vision*, David Daiches points out this paradox:

Moses was concerned with legislating for a people, and the reward of obedience to Yahweh promised in the Mosaic books is national prosperity just as the punishment for disobedience is national disaster. Yet Moses, as the biblical account repeatedly emphasizes, was a man who found his deepest insights in solitude. Here then is another paradox about him: he was essentially a community legislator and as such left an indelible mark

on the character and thought of his people, but the nature of the legislation he promulgated for the community was revealed to him in mystical isolation.³⁰

There are two memorable instances that exemplify the isolation Moses must endure. The first occurs in Exodus 33 when God speaks with Moses in his tent before the Hebrew people. As Daiches notes, “the picture [of Moses in the tabernacle tent with the cloud pillar of Yahweh at the tent entrance] accentuates the loneliness of Moses. The people watch in wonder and awe as he communes with God alone in his tent outside the camp: he is now further away from them and nearer the divine.”³¹

The second isolating instance occurs in Exodus 34 when Moses returns from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments. The result of such face-to-face dealings with God leaves Moses changed in the eyes of his people. When Moses descended from the mount

Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. (Exod. 34:30-33)

The veil over Moses' face physically signified his moral separation from his congregation as he alone was allowed to speak directly with God face-to-face. Moses becomes an object of awe and fear. Daiches remarks that the veil “is a fascinating symbol of the consequences of Moses' increasing communion with the divine: his lonely mystic

visions, while not impairing his leadership, were increasingly setting him apart from the people.”³² Such interactions with God carry a cost: “what emerges from the account in Exodus at this point is the price Moses has to pay for mediating between the divine and the human. He loses some of his ordinary human contacts as he becomes more engrossed in the divine.”³³

It is just this sort of estrangement from the human community that fascinates Hawthorne in “The Minister’s Black Veil” and “The Man of Adamant.” The main characters of each story are ministers and devoted to the Word of God, yet their devotion to God becomes the means of their own exile from their communities and, it would seem, from heavenly paradise as Moses was forbidden to enter into the Promised Land due to his perceived lack of faith (Num. 20:10-12). Rather than speaking to the rock as commanded, Moses uses his staff to strike the rock, which God interprets as a lack of faith and which we may also interpret as dramatic showmanship. If that is the case, then, it would seem that the position of moral leader has come to mean more to Moses than the purpose of moral leader, which is to guide the entire flock to the paradise of the Promised Land. Understanding the Reverend Hooper and Richard Digby against the backdrop of Moses further illuminate the morals of those works.

While Moses’ face is veiled from the glow of direct communion with God, Hooper’s wearing of the veil is mysteriously motivated although it works toward the same ends. Hooper’s veiled face resembles that of Moses in that it improves his legislative abilities but condemns him to seclusion apart from his community. Originally, Hooper has the “reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward, by mild persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither,

by the thunder of the Word.”³⁴ However, this reputation is changed forever once the minister dons the black veil, which “seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, farther than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things.”³⁵ The immediate reaction of the congregation is that of shock and revulsion at the awfulness created by Hooper’s “hiding his face.”³⁶ The tumult of the congregation is soon silenced by his sermon, which, thanks to the veil, more powerfully affects them. The sermon was normal as far as his “style and manner,” but “there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips.”³⁷ Through his mysterious change Hooper has succeeded in reinvigorating his sermon and his ability to properly reach his congregation. However, his change begins a process of severe separation that shall haunt his existence and purpose within the community.

Hooper is no longer invited to after-church meals and avoided on the streets by children and adults alike. Furthermore, Hooper himself is frightened by the veil as seen when he flees the wedding reception after viewing his own reflection. The veil becomes as effective as a wall in terms of separating Hooper from his community. Hooper is perfectly able to perceive the veil’s consequences, as “thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine” of everyone else’s life.³⁸ Soon enough, “Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear” to the people of the community, whose “instinctive dread caused him to feel, more strongly than aught else, that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape.”³⁹ The isolation and the loss of companionship take a horrible toll upon the sensitive Reverend Hooper, who asks

patience of his one remaining friend, and expected fiancée, Elizabeth. He cries to her desperately:

“Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil – it is not for eternity! Oh! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity for ever!”⁴⁰

As Clark Davis notes, “Hooper’s failed engagement to Elizabeth figures his larger failure to engage his community.”⁴¹ The role of black-veiled minister is too much for Hooper, who for some reason refuses to give up his position fearing for the backsliding of his congregation without his dark presence. Hooper resembles Moses in this fashion; for, as Daiches notes, “Moses belongs to his people (what else does the story of his intervening in favour of the Hebrew slave mean?) and at the same time he distances himself from them, for he has to preserve his special function and authority.”⁴² Similarly, Hooper desires contact and companionship yet refuses to remove the veil because he realizes it serves a greater good. “By the aid of his mysterious emblem – for there was no other apparent cause – he became a man of awful power, over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil.”⁴³

The black veil, according to Clark Davis, “divides him from the community, ruins his engagement and potential family life, and leaves him gloomy and possibly

deranged.”⁴⁴ Regardless of Hooper’s sanity, his ideology has failed him, and in turn he has failed as the moral leader of his community. Davis points out that

Hooper’s sympathy is for sin or darkness, for the hidden truth beneath the veil of secular history. In this sense it is less the sort of sympathy Hawthorne describes than it is the effect of what Hooper treats as absolute knowledge. The truth of Calvinist history is the sinfulness of humankind and its eventual redemption or damnation. As Hooper says at the end of the story, everyone sins and everyone hides it; therefore, the truth of every individual is hidden behind a false front, and every individual can and will be reduced to that hidden truth at the apocalypse.⁴⁵

In life Hooper separated himself from his community in large part because he reduced the members of his community to the sins he assumed they were hiding. While he may not be wrong in his certainty that all people sin and that people will be held accountable for their sins, Hooper errs in his inability, his refusal, to recognize that in the course of a life time good may be done as well, which must also be taken into account.

By the end of Hawthorne’s parable the narrator reveals an awful punishment that has come over Hooper due to his insistence upon wearing his veil. At Hooper’s death the narrator interjects into the narrative the observation that “all through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman’s love, and kept him in the saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.”⁴⁶ Hooper’s willful separation from his community is, in Hawthorne’s perspective, representative of separation from heaven

itself. The feeling of dread is continued in the last lines of the story by the recognition that “good Mr. Hooper’s face is dust; but awful is still the thought, that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!”⁴⁷ The separation in life from the community to which he belongs apparently ensures a further separation from communion in death. And this scene is reminiscent of God’s decision to punish Moses – for displaying of a lack of belief in God – by barring him from entering the Promised Land.

Like Hooper, Richard Digby also bares resemblance to Moses. Whereas Hooper reflects most upon the parallel of the veiled face and dual role of Moses, Digby adds the parallel of exile in the wilderness alongside social ostracism (another form of exile). Digby is a preacher who left the persecutions of England to be part of the New Jerusalem of America. Additionally, like Moses, he becomes exasperated by the inability, or unwillingness, of his community to be steadfast in their devotion and righteousness as he sees it.⁴⁸ Digby assumes his own righteousness and exiles himself into the wild so as to better focus on his study of the Bible and his prayer to God. In the wilderness he comes across a cave, “which, at first sight, reminded him of Elijah’s cave at Horeb, though perhaps it more resembled Abraham’s sepulchral cave at Machpelah.”⁴⁹ In his mind Digby, who envisions himself as a lawgiver such as Moses, places himself among other biblical heroes and expects God to treat him accordingly. But Digby, as the story makes clear, errs in his thinking.

The contrast with Elijah is especially striking due to the brief similarities between the biblical prophet and Digby. Elijah, having preached against the idols and having defeated the priests of Baal, is hunted by Jezebel and flees for his life to a cave in the

wilderness (1 Kgs. 19:1-4). Digby also flees to preserve his life but under much different circumstances:

Heaven's mercy to myself, that I hold no communion with those abominable myriads which it hath cast off to perish. Peradventure, were I to tarry longer in the tents of Kedar, the gracious boon would be revoked, and I also be swallowed up in the deluge of wrath, or consumed in the storm of fire and brimstone, or involved in whatever new kind of ruin is ordained for the horrible perversity of this generation.⁵⁰

Although circumstances suggest Digby is similar to Elijah, an immediate contrast is revealed through Digby's judgment of his community, specifically by his unyielding self-righteousness. Elijah, while aware of his faith in God, proclaims during his foray into the wilderness, "it is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kgs. 19:4). Elijah begins by finding fault with himself, a possibility well beyond Digby's self-perception or sense of faith. Digby has condemned and rejected those around him even though they share his religion in order to preserve himself, alone, for God's graces. Additionally, although Elijah left society for the wilderness he did not linger too long: "he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah" (1 Kgs. 19:9)? Elijah listened to that voice, which told him to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha (1 Kgs. 19:15-16). Thus Elijah returned to society and sought to accomplish his goals of restoring the true faith with the help of other men. Digby, on the other hand, rejects all others outright – even the small voice that attempts to speak to him as well in the form of Mary Goffe – and thus is not a true servant of God as are Moses and Elijah.

As with Hooper, Digby is isolated from human community and faces exile from the Promised Land. The opportunity for salvation appears in the guise of Mary Goffe – as it did for Hooper in the person of Elizabeth – yet Digby insists upon his orthodoxy and his salvation, which cannot be shared with others. Mary, whose angel-like descriptions evoke the voice that spoke with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:12, seeks to convince Digby to return to communion with humanity by asking that they drink of the same cup and pray together. Yet, Digby insists upon his rejection of all others for as he says to Mary: “what hast thou to do with my Bible? – what with my prayers? – what with my Heaven?”⁵¹ Digby’s self-centered outburst stands in stark contrast to Moses, who often said “my people” thus involving others in his faith and potential salvation rather than excluding others.

Having rejected such human companionship, Digby is turned to stone, an event reminiscent of “Ethan Brand” and, of course, biblical passages. Ezekiel 36:26 proclaims that through faith and adherence to God’s laws, “a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (echoed in Ezek. 11:19). Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 3:3 believers are reminded that the message of Christ is “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” The message of Christ, as echoed through the Gospels and the New Testament,^{*} centers on John 13:34, which is stated thus: “a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Digby lacks love for his God

^{*} Primarily echoed in: Mark 12:30-31; John 14:31 and 15:12. Also in: Romans 13:9; First Letter of John 3:23 and 4:21; and, Second Letter of John 1:5-6

and his fellow human beings through his prideful rejections of others and of God's grace. His stubborn arrogance hardens his heart and in turn transforms Digby into stone.

As the fable of "The Man of Adamant" concludes, the narrator suggests that "Friendship, and Love, and Piety, all human and celestial sympathies should keep aloof from that hidden cave; for there still sits, and, unless an earthquake crumble down the roof upon his head, shall sit forever, the shape of Richard Digby, in the attitude of repelling the whole race of mortals – not from Heaven – but from the horrible loneliness of his dark, cold sepulcher."⁵² The end that comes to Digby is very similar to that of Hooper as both men have cherished their position more than their community. The "Friendship, and Love, and Piety" absent from Digby and his cave is also absent in Hooper's life. Furthermore, that the three qualities mentioned by Hawthorne's narrator parallel so closely faith, charity, and hope from 1 Corinthians 13 is no accident. Charity is chief among these qualities: "charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:4-6). Digby, despite his office and despite his own self-righteousness, lacks charity and its attendant qualities, which clearly resemble a recipe for friendship, and love, and piety. These qualities are the foundations of a mature Christianity, which like Mosaic law requires a balance between the divine and the human, the individual and the social – a balance better achieved by Moses than Hooper or Digby.

Hooper and Digby evoke the figure and circumstances of the biblical Moses but, unfortunately, fall well short of Moses' venerated status. No doubt Moses, as Daiches says, "is presented in these [biblical] traditions as a man, and fallible."⁵³ Yet, he does not

forsake his duty or his purpose for his own benefit nor does he lose his sense of faith through the obligations created by his devotion to his God and his people. Hooper and Digby become enthralled with their own position – be it veiled upon the pulpit or unchallenged in the cave – and become focused on themselves. Daiches insightfully points out that “divine laws imply something about the relation of God to the universe and also about the relation of individual man to society.”⁵⁴ However, Hooper’s interpretation is filtered by his veil and thus he sees only sin and depravity in his community; likewise, Digby’s law – and salvation – is meant for him alone and no one else as he declares to the apparition of Mary Goffe. Their lawgiving not only condemns them to exile from their own communities, but enforces exile from God as all potential communion and the possible redemption it brings are nullified. Daiches states, quite succinctly, that

Some of the most emphatically delivered and repeated Mosaic laws are concerned with social justice and the relief of misery. The reiterated commands to assist the widow, the fatherless and the stranger, the concern with impartial judgment, the interest in the condition of servants, the provisions for alleviating poverty and for not pressing a poor man’s debt, these all sound like laws worked out by a compassionate human intelligence in order to further the particular social ends.⁵⁵

And it is the relief from misery and social aspect of justice that are found wanting in the views of Hooper and Digby. Despite the difficulties and the high cost of his position as mediator between divine and human, Moses did not lose sight of either responsibility whereas Hooper and Digby lost sight of all but their own personal situations. As Hyatt

Waggoner notes, for Hawthorne, “reunion after isolation came in his works to be both a symbol of and the literal means to salvation. No writer has ever placed a higher value on communion and community.”⁵⁶ For Hooper and Digby no reunion is available and thus no true hope for paradise. On the other hand, while Moses was barred entry into the Promised Land, he was granted a vision of it and both truly honored and truly mourned when his death came.

Moses as an analogue for Hooper and Digby highlights the role of mediator that Hawthorne values most in his characters. Moses withstands the pressures of being God’s prophet and servant, as well as the pressures of leading a stubborn and often unwilling congregation. He attempts to discipline his followers and yet seek mercy on their behalf from his God. Moses finds himself more alone and isolated, exiled from the exiles as it were, due to his communion with God, yet he never loses sight that he is of the people. This is established in the oft repeated instances where Moses tells Pharaoh to “let my people go” from Exodus 5 through Exodus 12; however, his attachment to his people is demonstrated elsewhere too. In Exodus 19:8 his role as mediator between the Israelites and God is shown: “and all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.” Furthermore, his commitment to them is proved, quite thoroughly, in Exodus 32:30 when “Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin,” which he does in Exodus 32:32 by asking for their forgiveness from God, going so far as to add “and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” Moses recognizes his difficult

position between God and the people, but he never abandons those people despite their doubts about him as a leader and their challenges to his authority and even his life.

Moses, then, is the ideal model for preachers to aspire toward for two important qualities that are absent in the figures and ministries of Hooper and Digby. First, Moses recognizes his role as a mediator, a bridge from the human to the divine, and as such attempts to remain as accessible as possible for all of his community. As Northrop Frye asserts, “Spiritual authority, which is alone real, [...] is an authority that expands and does not limit the dignity of those who accept it.”⁵⁷ Frye goes on to explain that “all personal authority in the spiritual world is self-liquidating: it is the authority of the teachers who want their students to become their scholarly equals, of the preachers who, like Moses (Num. 11:29), wish that all of God’s people were prophets.”⁵⁸ Moses has no desire to hoard his knowledge of God or his righteousness from his community, despite their stubborn and vexing ways. Second, and especially for Hawthorne, who tends to chastise and satirize the narrowness or one-sidedness of people’s views, Moses recognizes, from his time in Egypt and the wilderness, that there is sin and darkness in the world alongside the good and the light. In regard to this idea at work in “The Minister’s Black Veil” Richard Fogle remarks that “the minister has found a dreadful truth, while Elizabeth may have discovered a greater – that men are evil *and also* good. The meaning lies not in either but in both.”⁵⁹ Moses is able to reconcile both the evil and the good, both the human and the divine, which makes him admirable and heroic. Hooper and Digby are unable to make any reconciliations, and thus no true communion with either the human or the divine, and thus are condemned to their isolated exile.

Jerusalem and Salem in “Young Goodman Brown”

Hawthorne’s tale of young Goodman Brown’s errand into the wilderness draws immediate reference to “the Puritans’ ‘Errand into the Wilderness,’ a metaphor first enunciated in Samuel Danforth’s election sermon of May 11, 1670.”⁶⁰ That errand was the spreading of God’s word and the “true” faith, which becomes quite subverted by the story of “Young Goodman Brown.” However, equally subject to examination is the place from which this errand was launched. The Massachusetts town of Salem is named for Jerusalem, the epicenter of the Holy Land and a central holy site for the faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Salem, as cited in *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, means “peace” and is “commonly supposed to be another name of Jerusalem (Gen 14:18; Psa 76:2; Hbr 7:1-2).”⁶¹ In Genesis 14:18 and Hebrews 7:1 the King of Salem is considered the priest of the “most high God.” Additionally, Hebrews 7:2 refers to the King of Salem as both the “King of righteousness,” and the “King of peace.” And, finally, Psalm 76:2 sings of God, noting that “in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place is in Zion.” The first direction Hawthorne takes then in understanding and representing his hometown of Salem, is to consider how present righteousness and peace are in his Salem and its namesake Jerusalem, both of which influence the person and experience of “Young Goodman Brown.”

Kings of Jerusalem, many of whom were bad – as is recorded in 1 Kings and 2 Kings, primarily, as well as 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles – led Jerusalem into sin and idolatry through their own behavior. For example, it is told in 2 Kings 21:16-17 that “Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in

the sight of the LORD. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" Another example appears in 2 Chronicles 36:5, "Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God." As is noted in Trawick's *The Bible as Literature*, twelve of the twenty kings of Judah covered in 1 Kings and 2 Kings were considered "bad."⁶²

The prophets of the Old Testament have frequently warned and harangued the citizens of Jerusalem for their backsliding ways, or made use of past punishments against Jerusalem. However, the most pervasive, and the most compelling in comparison to Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," are the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, both of whom lived and prophesied in Jerusalem. The Book of Jeremiah begins its protestations against Jerusalem's errors quite early, stating in Jeremiah 1:16: "I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands." As the Book of Jeremiah continues its revelations of God's word and Jerusalem's troubles, it provides many points of comparison to "Young Goodman Brown."

The tale begins with Brown's explanation to his wife, Faith, that "of all nights in the year, this one I night I must tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise."⁶³ Faith, with her hair in pink ribbons, unsuccessfully asks her husband to postpone his journey and is crestfallen to learn that he will not be persuaded. Within this introductory dialogue the pink ribbons

that Faith wears are mentioned repeatedly. The ribbons, not to mention the choice of her name, evoke Numbers 15:38-40:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.

Though Hawthorne alters the color,* the name of “Faith” and the associations with the ribbons emphasizes the need for faith and obedience unto God and his laws, which Goodman Brown abandons as he abandons his wife. As something of an everyman of Salem, Brown symbolizes the communal loss of faith, or, perhaps more broadly, the communal neglect of God’s commandments. Thus, before the second page of the tale begins, Hawthorne has used the Bible and an apt name to signal that his concern is with the chosen people denying or losing sight of their God and the “true” faith they have come to spread.

Brown does not really believe, at the outset, that he is abandoning his Faith (in both senses) or that he is somehow beginning down a path of no return. Considering

* Furthermore, in relation to the end of the story and Hawthorne’s fiction as a whole, the color pink is made by mixing red and white, colors of sin and innocence in Isaiah 1:18, and thus pink symbolizes the *good and bad* in every person. Considering that Faith is wearing the ribbons when Brown returns home after seeing, or dreaming, her at the gathering further suggests that the mixture of good and bad impulses remains and that it is Brown who has chosen to acknowledge only the negative aspects of human nature.

Faith's concern over the journey into the wilderness Brown reflects on his purpose and its consequences:

What a wrench am I, to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought, as she spoke, there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But, no, no! 'twould kill her to think it. Well; she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night, I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to Heaven.⁶⁴

Brown does not consider himself in danger of any lasting trouble aside from temporarily troubling his Faith. But, in consideration of Jeremiah's warnings to the people of Jerusalem it is clear that very real and lasting trouble is approaching. In fact, Hawthorne's choice of words matches favorably with those of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 2:29-32:

Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

Here, God, referencing his past commands and experiences with the Hebrews – such as the backsliding of the people under Moses' leadership during the Exodus – notes that he has punished those who became wayward before; and yet, his so-called believers continue to turn from him. As he notes, a bride (such as one of three months like Faith) will never forget her ornaments (like ribbons, perhaps) but forget God and his laws with

ease. The parallels of Hawthorne's opening pages continue with Jeremiah 2:33-35: "why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." As Jeremiah prophesizes, and Goodman Brown shall learn firsthand, once turned from God it is hard to reach heaven, especially if one relies on the skirts of a fellow sinner no matter how pure they appear in public. Also, in the case of Brown and the Puritans of Salem, as well as the Hebrews of Jerusalem, the assumption of sinlessness leads to sin and such divine punishment as God deems worthy.

The actual purpose of Goodman Brown's errand is never directly established by Hawthorne; however, if the Bible is to be a guide then there are a couple of worthwhile passages. One option, though perhaps the least likely, is that Brown is something of a communal scapegoat as described in Leviticus 16:21: "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness." Though, if Brown is to be a scapegoat it makes more sense in conjunction with the end of the story that he becomes one on his return to town from the wilderness. Another option is expressed in two passages with similar ideas but slightly different perspectives. Deuteronomy 8:2 says, "thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." And, in Matthew 4:1, "then was

Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” The wilderness experience of Deuteronomy 8:2 is God’s testing of his followers’ faith and demonstrating that they need God; whereas the wilderness of Matthew 4:1 is the devil’s attempt at corruption. Brown is no Jesus; however, the actual events of “Young Goodman Brown” point to the passage from Matthew and thus to the conclusion that Brown fails his test. Overall, using these passages and, of course, the story itself, Brown’s journey is an effort to come to some understanding of his self, his family, and his community in relation to God.

On his journey into the wilderness Brown’s path becomes entangled in the darkness of the forest he has entered. And from that darkness appears his guide and companion, a fellow-traveler who is later revealed to be the “the devil” in the guise of “Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is.”⁶⁵ Such elements certainly call to mind the words of Jesus. Instructions from Jesus in Matthew 7:13-15 advise: “enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Brown, however, has fallen under the guidance of such a disguised false prophet and his way becomes quite wide as two clergy men later ride through side-by-side on horseback.

Over the course of their walk together in the woods young Goodman Brown speaks at length with his fiendish companion about the Brown family and the city of Salem itself. Brown is concerned about being in the woods at night with his companion

and laments, “My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs.”⁶⁶ However, the devil casually reveals,

I have been well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that’s no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it 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. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you, for their sake.⁶⁷

While it is well documented that such deeds were enacted by Hawthorne’s own ancestors, the point made in the story is clear. Salem, the place of peace and home of righteousness, has bred war, and strife, and the persecution of fellow Christians! Even so informed, Brown hesitates to believe, and insists that “we are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness.”⁶⁸ In response to Brown’s stubborn ignorance the devil reveals more: “wickedness or not, [...] I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The Governor and I, too – But these are state secrets.”⁶⁹

Brown’s Puritan family and society have been intimate with the devil and his works for generations. The Puritans, like the Hebrews of Jerusalem, have mistaken living

in a holy place or being a chosen people for thorough and innate righteousness. This attitude prompts the warnings found in Jeremiah 6:6-8, which proclaims:

For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Salem and Goodman Brown are subjected to the oppression of corrupt priests and legislators, whose poor examples have corrupted all else so that no genuine peace or righteousness can be obtained. The prophets, and the Bible as a whole, have attempted to remind all believers that faith and righteous behavior are required daily regardless of where one lives, or the social group to which one may belong. As is warned in Isaiah 59:2-4:

Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Such are the ways of Isaiah and Jeremiah's Jerusalem and of Goodman Brown's Salem. With the devil's seemingly unintentional help Brown realizes that his own family, his minister and deacon, and even old Goody Cloyse, who, as Brown admits, "taught me my

catechism” – all the pillars of Brown’s social and religious perspective are corrupted in some way by deviations from faith in God and the practice of His commandments.

Brown, himself corrupted in some way through his association with the devil at his side, decides he will travel no further. The devil acquiesces and leaves Brown alone in the dark woods. It is then that he witnesses the shadows of the minister and the deacon travelling down the same path in the direction the devil went, their recognizable voices conversing about “a goodly young woman to be taken into communion” that very night.⁷⁰ Then, just as quickly as they appeared,

The hoofs clattered again, and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered, nor solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying, so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down to the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky doubting whether there really was a Heaven above him.⁷¹

Considering all the revelations and doubts in Brown’s mind at the moment it is no surprise he feels so overburdened in his crisis of faith. Brown appears like Elijah in 1 Kings 19:4, who went “a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” For indeed, Brown’s doubts and his associations, his very existence in a corrupted society have corrupted him and alienated him from God.

All lingering hope of returning to his Faith and of finding some way to redeem himself or gain God's mercy is soon lost upon the wind. For with seemingly strong defiance Brown shouts "With Heaven above, and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!"⁷² However,

While he gazed upward, into the deep arch of the firmament, and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith, and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices.⁷³

Brown interprets the cloud as blotting out the moon and the sky and all hope, erroneously, for the cloud is a symbol from God of a different nature according to the Bible. In Exodus 16:10: "it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." And in Isaiah 44:22: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Instead of forgiveness Brown chooses further transgressions, and is aided in this choice by the appearance on the wind of something that "fluttered lightly down through the air, and caught on the branch of the tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon."⁷⁴ Seeing the symbol of his Faith (again, in both senses) Brown declares, "My Faith is gone!" and then concludes, "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! for to thee is this world given."⁷⁵

Brown, having denied both good and evil, is thoroughly without Faith or concern over God and his commandments. Such an attitude leads to both sin and judgment as prophesied in Zephaniah 1:12: “it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.” The sinful path Brown now takes is rampaging through the forest “giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy.”⁷⁶ Brown is consumed by a nihilistic despair matching that described in Isaiah 59:9-11: “we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.” Brown is certainly groping blindly in the darkness of sin and absent hope because his family and society have been shown as corrupt and sinful. His Faith, too, is corrupted. Salem is no home to peace or salvation, only crooked paths to destruction – like the one he now finds himself on heading to the devil’s communion after all his previous doubts and hesitations.

Brown’s actual path ends at a clearing that is to be the site of a subversion, or, more accurately, a perversion of Mark 1:4, which relates how “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Ely Stock states that in regard to “Young Goodman Brown” biblical motifs “function to set Brown’s actions in a framework which reflects two major biblical subjects, faith and witchcraft.”⁷⁷ Clearly this study and all other critics agree that faith is a central part of the tale, but I would modify Stock’s assertion. One example Stock points to is the devil’s meeting place, in which

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, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.⁷⁸

When Goodman Brown passes through the flaming timbers to reach the altar the narrator suggests he was led by the shapes of “his own dead father” and even “his mother.”⁷⁹

Stock then points to Deuteronomy 18:9-10, which decrees to the Hebrews, “When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.” Stock’s connection is insightful and valid; I would only adjust the perspective from witchcraft, a word that seems very specific both in terms of act and to the history of Hawthorne’s Salem, to include all heathen worship such as the blasphemy and idolatry decried by Jeremiah and Isaiah, whose prophecies complement the entire plot of “Young Goodman Brown.”

Jeremiah and Isaiah denounce the laxity with which their contemporaries approach the worship of God and practice his laws in righteous living. These concerns are addressed by Hawthorne when Brown is speaking with the devil while walking in the woods. This concern – more than witchcraft – is central not just to the story but to the

devil's baptism scene. For, gathered around that flaming altar is all of Salem, including the clergy and leading citizens. Brown, surprised in yet another revelation, sees quite clearly that

Irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see, that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered, also, among their pale-faced enemies, were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.⁸⁰

The scene is yet another testament to the communal corruption caused by self-satisfied people who, because they are Puritans, or, for Jeremiah and Isaiah's time, because they are Hebrews in Jerusalem, consider themselves sinless and above any corruption. This attitude of course inevitably leads to moral and religious laxity and thus to sin.

Stepping to his altar the devil gathers his followers' attention to himself and the two new converts, Goodman Brown and his wife, Faith, whom he bids welcome "to the communion of your race!"⁸¹ That race is sinful and corrupt despite its outward appearances. Gathered among the crowd around Brown and Faith, the devil reveals,

Are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness, and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are

they all in my worshiping assembly! This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds; how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bed-time, and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels – blush not, sweet ones! – have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral.⁸²

And, the devil continues, though Brown and Faith had been “depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped, that virtue were not all a dream. Now ye are undeceived! Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome, again, my children, to the communion of your race!”⁸³

These children and their race are shown to be sinners, to be willful transgressors against God and God's ways. That Salem is such a community, as Jerusalem was, at times, before it, is reflected in the appropriateness of Jeremiah 9:2-3: “Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.” As in Jeremiah, Hawthorne has placed an assembly of faithless transgressors in the wilderness under the leadership of the devil. Certain of their righteousness and their status as beloved of God, as Brown was in the early stages of the story, each of Salem's citizens became vulnerable

and then of equal rank with the outward sinners and pagans. Such transgressions are lamented in Isaiah 59:12-14, which reads,

For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

Although Brown and others of his community need the help of the devil to become undeceived as to the sinfulness of themselves and their neighbors, God needs no such help. For as is often celebrated throughout the Bible “the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Jeremiah 17:9-10 also acknowledges that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

God, knowing the sins of his people in ancient Jerusalem, used the Babylonians as his instrument of punishment as prophesied throughout the Book of Jeremiah. The case of young Goodman Brown is slightly different, for although he is also a representation of the entire community of Salem, he is but one man and his punishment becomes not the forced exile and removal from his home to a Babylon but an exile from communion with his community. Upon awaking alone in the forest but certain of the events of the night Brown returns home, “staring around him like a bewildered man” and shunning the

company of the minister, the deacon, old Goody Cloyse, and even his own wife: “he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, bursting into such joy at sight of him, that she skipt along the street, and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But, Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.”⁸⁴ Brown’s experience with the devil – a false prophet in disguise – leads to his acceptance of the devil’s proclamation that humanity is thoroughly sinful.

Thus Brown sees the sin of everyone around him; however, he believes himself to be initiated into the *awareness only* and not the sin – a classic example of what Jesus chastised and warned against in Matthew 7:3-5 (and echoed in Lk. 6:41-42): “why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” Brown, however, stands firm in his hypocrisy and suffers for it. He becomes an unhappy and isolated part of the Salem community and his situation is foretold in Jeremiah 9:4-6, which warns,

Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother:
for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with
slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not
speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary
themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit;
through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

Truly, it is through deceit that the community of Salem interacts with one another and it is through their deceitful outward appearances that they, like Brown, are hypocrites in relation to God. In Jeremiah 1:16 God promises “I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.” Brown is certainly one who has turned to other gods, as he has rejected goodness and sin and allowed “the Shape of Evil to dip his hand, and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon” his head.⁸⁵ God’s punishment – the separation from community and the promise of salvation – of Goodman Brown is thorough: “a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man, did he become, from the night of that fearful dream.”⁸⁶ Brown’s punishment is confirmed when after a long – presumably miserable or at least bitter – life “they carved no hopeful verse upon his tomb-stone; for his dying hour was gloom.”⁸⁷

Roy R. Male suggests that “Brown’s dying hour is gloom, then, because he fails to attain tragic vision, a perspective broad enough and deep enough to see the dark night as an essential part of human experience, but a part that may prelude a new and richer dawn.”⁸⁸ Male’s observation evokes Isaiah 45:7 in which God declares, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” As suggested earlier by Deuteronomy 8:2 and Mathew 4:1, Brown’s faith, his righteousness, and his humility were tested in the wilderness. Rather than recognizing that sin exists and determining to do all he could to avoid sin and to remain available for God’s mercy, Brown chooses sin and despair. Brown fails his test and turns his back on both God and humanity.

As an everyman representation of the Salem community, Goodman Brown marks Hawthorne as something of an Old Testament prophet who noticed something errant in the Chosen People's relationship to their God. As I have suggested, the crux of "Young Goodman Brown" is not so much witchcraft as the blasphemous and idolatrous loss of faith that once plagued ancient Jerusalem. Contentedness and self-righteousness create a moral laxity. As Marion Montgomery insightfully points out, "Hawthorne suggests that something known but ignored and then forgotten lurks ominously beneath the clean surfaces of that neat New England village Salem."⁸⁹ The clean and orderly surface disguises a reality which Salem's earlier fathers had associated with the dark forest – the wayward human heart. These Salemites, like those of ancient Jerusalem, have ignored their own sinfulness, or at least their own ability to sin, and in doing so have slowly allowed the transgressions like those of Brown's own family and those exposed in the devil's speech to exist without censure or repentance. Through "Young Goodman Brown," and the majority of his writing, Hawthorne's messages are not unlike those of Jeremiah to the Hebrews, specifically his neighbors in Jerusalem. Trawick notes two elements of Jeremiah's "principal theological teachings, which seemed revolutionary to most of his contemporaries."⁹⁰ The first point is that "Yahweh is a universal Deity who can be worshiped as well in Babylon as in the Temple at Jerusalem; he is not merely the tribal God of the Hebrews but the God of all peoples who directs history according to his purpose."⁹¹ The second point of Jeremiah's theological teachings is that

God is more interested in the righteousness of each person than in a national religion centering on the Temple. The old Covenant with Israel has been found ineffective; now God will establish a new Covenant

written upon the hearts of the people. Each one will have to answer for himself. Jeremiah lays great stress upon the spiritual communion between the individual and God, whom he depicts as a kind shepherd and an understanding father.⁹²

There is, then, a clear connection between Jeremiah's prophecies to the people of Jerusalem and Hawthorne's warnings to the people of Salem.

Jerusalem, up to the time of the Babylonian captivity, had fallen away from God on an individual level although maintaining a secure and righteous communal appearance. Likewise, the people of Salem clung to their communal reputation and appearance – not unlike Mark Twain's Hadleyburg – of faith and righteousness while allowing their personal behaviors to violate God's law. Both Salem and Jerusalem were established as political and religious centers for their respective peoples. Yet, these towns whose names suggest "peace" and whose purpose is righteousness are visited by violence from heathen forces (be they local Native peoples or Babylonians and Assyrians) as punishment for their unrighteousness. Thus the biblical history and prophecies concerning ancient Jerusalem provided Hawthorne with an insightful – and well supported – way to evaluate his ancestors and his own contemporaries. The censures of Jeremiah to Jerusalem are echoed and adjusted in Hawthorne's depiction of the fall from God in "Young Goodman Brown." Brown's fall into sin and despair – and away from salvation – is, in many ways, fostered by the Salem community in which he lives, and which Hawthorne knew so well. For as Montgomery remarks, to deny evil or sin's

Existence except as some strange aberration peculiar to oneself, as when it stirs in one's own heart, is a dangerous condition of mind with which to

encounter evil as everywhere discovered in the affairs of man. To find it present in those elevated exempla of the good that Brown all but worships with one side of his being is devastating. The risk of excessive reaction is the danger.⁹³

Thus Hawthorne, like Jeremiah before him, insists on each individual recognizing his or her ability to sin and to give their hearts to God, “to answer for himself,” and to embrace “the spiritual communion” with God. Biblical Jerusalem (during the times of Isaiah and Jeremiah) is, then, a foreshadowing of Hawthorne’s Salem and a key to understanding Salem’s role in Hawthorne’s moral philosophy and moral artistry.

In the case of “Young Goodman Brown” Hawthorne’s use of Salem’s namesake, Jerusalem, provides a better understanding of the fall of Goodman Brown. The biblical representation of Jerusalem informs the tale by providing additional contextual depth by which to communicate Hawthorne’s artistic and philosophical understanding of the human condition. While the exact cause of Brown’s errand into the wilderness is still uncertain, it appears that the significance of his journey, in light of the experiences of backsliding in biblical Jerusalem, is that one must assume accountability for the well being of one’s own soul. Moral and righteous behavior is not guaranteed by heritage or location but by the choices and actions one makes. For Hawthorne, then, it is apparent that personal accountability for righteousness must be acknowledged and accepted, especially in a world in which both good and bad exist – two points unrecognized by Brown.

Jael and Judith in Hawthorne's Romances

The rights and societal status of women are a common element of Hawthorne's fiction. His female characters are, more often than not, involved in two specific roles: that of redeeming or completing a male character; and or, struggling with the gender-based limitations and restrictions enforced by her society. Such actions are more complex than the common representations of women as found in the Bible. Yet, from time to time – in the Bible and in Hawthorne's fiction – a different kind of woman is invoked, a woman of inborn strength and assertiveness willing to confront not only individual men but societal oppression on the whole. Martin Cronin contends that in Hawthorne's novels these characters are

Women whose beauty, intellect, and strength of will raise them to heroic proportions and make them fit subjects for tragedy. Hester Prynne, Zenobia, and Miriam – these women are capable of tilting with the world and risking their souls on the outcome. With them in particular Hawthorne raises and answers the question of the proper status of women in society and the relation, whether subordinate or superior, that love should bear to the other demands that life makes upon the individual.⁹⁴

These female characters are connected, by Hawthorne, with biblical counterparts who are champions of womanhood. This defiant warrior woman is ideally represented in the Bible through Jael and Judith. These women defended their people by killing enemy generals. Hawthorne interweaves allusions and direct references to these biblical figures not only to account for female defiance but to celebrate the inherent dignity of women.

The three female protagonists created by Hawthorne that best suit the warrior woman imagery are Zenobia (*The Blithedale Romance*) and Miriam (*The Marble Faun*), as well as Hester (less directly). These women each confront male antagonists, challenge biases of patriarchal society, and even foster love. Such qualities of confrontation and love, however, should not be seen as oppositional to one another. Hawthorne balances the impulses in his characters so as to reach the fullest understanding of their experiences. Whether acting in defiance or for love, these women are above all else assertive in regards to their rights and feelings. William E. Phipps in his book *Assertive Biblical Women* defines “assertive” as “self-expression that enhances both individual freedom and social responsibility. Assertiveness implies neither self-centeredness nor belligerence. Because it is different from haughtiness, its antonym is not humility but rather passive acquiescence and self-effacement. Both assertiveness and humility can be integrated into the same personality.”⁹⁵ Remaining humble allows the women of the Bible and of Hawthorne’s fiction the ability to succeed in patriarchal societies without immediately triggering an authoritarian backlash. Further securing such assertive women are their undeniable capabilities of independence and strength. In fact, as Phipps points out, “Proverbs begins with odes depicting divine wisdom personified as a woman and ends with a twenty-two verse acrostic poem describing the ABCs of a vigorous, capable woman.”⁹⁶

In biblical times of crisis capable women often answer the calls of distress to protect their people. Of especial note are Jael and Judith. As recorded in the Book of Judges chapters four and five, the Israelites, through God’s intervention, are rescued from the oppression of Canaanite forces by means of Deborah and Jael. Deborah, a judge and

prophetess, joins Barak, the Israelite general, and leads the Israelite army to victory over the Canaanite forces led by Sisera, the Canaanite general, who had overseen the oppression of the Israelites for twenty years (Judg. 4:3). Sisera, however, survives the battle and “fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite” (Judg. 4:17). Jael greets Sisera, who believing he has come upon an ally, enters her tent:

And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. (Judg. 4:19-21)

Although the account in the Book of Judges stresses that the Israelite victory is the work of God and that Deborah and Jael are his means, Jael is nonetheless celebrated in Judges 5:24: “blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.” While there is no further commentary on her actions within the Bible itself, the distinction of her virtues “above women in the tent” suggests that there is opportunity for women to transcend the limitations of gender imposed by the society in which they live.

Similarly, Judith transcends the stereotype of meek and passive womanhood through her actions in the Book of Judith. King Nebuchadnezzar consolidates his forces in forming his Babylonian empire and sends his general Holofernes to conquer the

Israelites. When Holofernes's forces march on Bethulia, Judith, with the help of God, emerges to engineer victory. Annoyed by the ineffectualness and impiety of the Israelite leadership Judith prays to God (Judith 9) for his aid in delivering the Israelites from their enemies. As Toni Craven notes, "Judith is the only biblical woman who asks God to make her a good liar. In Jdt 9:10 and again in 9:13, she petitions God for "deceitful words" that will wound those who have planned cruelties against the Jerusalem Temple and their homeland. Judith is part of a larger company of women in the bible who practice deceptions that have positive national and personal consequences" a group that includes Rebekah, Tamar, Rahab, and Jael.⁹⁷ By means of those deceitful words Judith manages to convince Holofernes that she is an ally, intent on his victory and willing to betray the Israelites. Judith gains his trust over a course of three nights and eventually uses his lust for her against him. On the fourth night he hosts a banquet:

Evening comes and all withdraw from the tent, save Judith and Holofernes who is stretched out on his bed, dead drunk (13:2). Judith's maid waits outside, as instructed. Judith prays twice for God's help (13:4-5, 7), then taking Holofernes' own sword, she strikes his neck twice and cuts off his head (13:8). She gives his head to her maid, who puts it in the food bag, and the two go out of the camp, as was their nightly habit to pray, except this night they return to Bethulia (13:10).⁹⁸

As with Jael, so too is Judith honored by the Israelites awaiting her return to Bethulia. Upon seeing the severed head of Holofernes and Judith's own praise of God for his intervention

Ozias addressed Judith: 'Daughter, the blessing of God Most High rests on you more than any other woman on earth [...] May God make your deed redound to your honour for ever, and may he shower blessings on you! You risked your life for our nation when it was faced with humiliation. Boldly you went to meet the disaster that threatened us, and firmly you held to God's straight road.' (Jdt. 13:18-20)

Judith's actions are indeed bold; however, her transcendence of the gender-imposed boundaries is celebrated because it is righteous in its larger service to her people.

The actions of Jael and Judith are of defiance, against both their enemies and the limitations placed upon them as women. As Tikva Frymer-Kensky observes, Jael "confounds other expectations. The reader or the listener to the tale, seeing a general at war come into a woman's tent, fears for the woman, not for the man. Yet when the outside world of national battles comes into her domestic space, Jael takes up a domestic 'weapon of opportunity' and becomes a heroine."⁹⁹ It is no coincidence, then, that Hawthorne's direct references to Jael and Judith connect the biblical women to Zenobia and Miriam, who, as tragic heroes, likewise defy their domestic stereotypes and assert their dignity as women. Both of Hawthorne's characters struggle to maintain their dignity against the pressures of male oppressors who attempt to limit and control them. In fighting their own personal battles Zenobia and Miriam manage to win greater dignity for women in general, and to draw attention to the ill-fitting limitations imposed upon women through socio-cultural attitudes.

Zenobia's appearance in *The Blithedale Romance* is marked by frequent reference to her "remarkably beautiful"¹⁰⁰ form. However, it is also established that she possessed a

“fine intellect” and was, overall, “an admirable figure of a woman.”¹⁰¹ The primary object of her intellect is the subordinate status of women in society. When asked what roles had been assigned to the participants in the Blithedale experiment, Zenobia notes that “we of the softer sex” had indeed been given their roles.

We women (there are four of us here, already) will take the domestic and indoor part of the business, as a matter of course. To bake, to boil, to roast, to fry, to stew – to wash, and iron, and scrub, and sweep, and, at our idler intervals, to repose ourselves on knitting and sewing – these I suppose, must be feminine occupations for the present. By-and-by, perhaps, when our individual adaptations begin to develop themselves, it may be that some of us, who wear the petticoat, will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!¹⁰²

Although Zenobia offers an initial, albeit begrudgingly, acceptance of the domestic limitations placed upon women she does not hide her intentions to transcend all restrictions and limitations placed upon her due to her gender.

Jael’s appearance in *The Blithedale Romance* comes at the end of the fourth chapter upon Miles Coverdale’s first night at Blithedale. Following his conversations with Zenobia, Coverdale leaves the group to go to bed when he realizes that he has come down with an illness of some sort.

The night proved a feverish one. During the greater part of it, I was in that vilest of states when a fixed idea remains in the mind, like the nail in Sisera’s brain, while innumerable other ideas go and come, and flutter to-and-fro, combining constant transition with intolerable sameness. Had I

made a record of that night's half-waking dreams, it is my belief that it would have anticipated several of the chief incidents of this narrative, including a dim shadow of its catastrophe.¹⁰³

The following chapter reveals, ever so slightly, that Zenobia herself is central to Coverdale's feverish dreams. Coverdale had observed that Zenobia "made no scruple of oversetting all human institutions and scattering them as with a breeze from her fan. A female reformer, in her attacks upon society, has an instinctive sense of where the life lies, and is inclined to aim directly at that spot. Especially, the relation between the sexes is naturally among the earliest to attract her notice."¹⁰⁴ This possibility – the upheaval of the relationship between the sexes – disconcerts Coverdale. He admits that his feverish obsession "in the height of my illness, as I well recollect, I went so far as to pronounce it preternatural," and from this state he concludes that "Zenobia is an enchantress!"¹⁰⁵ Zenobia as a powerful, capable, and defiant woman is representative of both Jael *and* the nail driven into Sisera's (and figuratively, Coverdale's) head. Coverdale's dreams reveal an awkward fascination with such a powerful woman as Zenobia, who is alluring and in many ways comforting to Coverdale and other men, yet a clear threat to the patriarchy they represent and often times profit from.

The second direct reference to Jael occurs in Miriam's paintings in *The Marble Faun*. Here, too, Hawthorne uses the biblical history of Jael, as well as Judith, to provide additional depth and insight into the defiance and struggle of another female character. Miriam, like Zenobia, is an independent woman both in terms of intellect and financial means. She lives alone in Rome pursuing her art. Zenobia's defiance is most often directed against her society; although, she also struggles against the restrictions and

persecutions placed on her through the male figures of Westervelt and even Hollingsworth. Miriam, on the other hand, is conscious of the societal pressures, but her defiance is directed against the supposed Capuchin monk haunting her like a mad shadow. His negative influence casts a darkness over Miriam and affects her artistry. Hawthorne catalogs works in which she expresses her attitudes in regard to the relations between the sexes, noting that in all of them “there was the idea of woman, acting the part of a revengeful mischief towards man.”¹⁰⁶ The first sketch is that of Jael, which captures the precise moment of “Jael, driving the nail through the temples of Sisera. It was dashed off with remarkable power, and showed a touch or two that were actually lifelike and deathlike; 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.”¹⁰⁷ This initial description’s use of “murderous” and “bloody confession” provides a less than heroic account* of the biblical event that reflects conflict within Miriam and *The Marble Faun*. As the narrator observes:

Her first conception of the stern Jewess had evidently been that of perfect womanhood, a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty; but, dissatisfied either with her own work or the terrible story itself, Miriam had added a certain wayward quirk of her pencil, which at once converted the heroine into a vulgar murderess. It was evident that a Jael like this

* It is also ironic in light of the fact that the traditional New England Puritan opinion of Jael is quite high. For example, Cotton Mather invokes Jael in his account of Hannah Dustan’s violent escape from her Indian captors, an event celebrated as evidence of God’s favor upon the Puritan settlers in the new world. Jonathan Edwards also reflects positively upon Jael as an inspirational example to “those which shall have any Hand in the Destruction of *Babylon*” in the second section of his treatise *Some thoughts concerning the present revival of religion in New-England, and the way in which it ought to be acknowledged and promoted, humbly offered to the publick, in a treatise on that subject*, which was published in Boston in 1742.

would be sure to search Sisera's pockets, as soon as the breath was out of the body.¹⁰⁸

Such imagery portends the violence to come in the story and correctly identifies the direction Miriam's defiance is headed. Yet, this description also suggests that women start off as "lovely" and "lofty," but due to some outside persecution are "converted" to the vulgarity of defiance and even violence.

Following the sketch of Jael is a sketch of Judith* that likewise shifts from presenting a purely heroic woman. Miriam, as the artist, is described as having begun her sketch "with a passionate and fiery conception of the subject, in all earnestness, she had given the last touches, as it were, of the feeling which at first took such powerful possession of her hand."¹⁰⁹ Her sketch also appears to have imbibed the scorn and confusion that affected the artist's skill and vision. The narrator, with less focus on the woman depicted, emphasizes the results of her violent act. "The head of Holofernes (which, by-the-by, had a pair of twisted mustachios, like those of a certain potentate of the day), being fairly cut off, was screwing its eyes upward and twirling its features into a diabolical grin of triumphant malice, which it flung right at Judith's face. On her part, she had a startled aspect."¹¹⁰ Whereas the sketch of Jael clearly expresses the vengefulness of her act, the sketch of Judith – presumably considered in similar light due to the artist's mindset – demonstrates that the persecutions against her shall continue after her defiantly violent act. The intimations of the narrator's commentary express both the anger inherent in the feminine defiance and the seemingly unconquerable societal oppression against which both Zenobia and Miriam struggle.

* The story of Judith is found in the Apocrypha and thus she does not have a prominent role, as does Jael, in the New England Puritan tradition although she, like Jael, was a national savior for the Israelites/Jews, whom the New England Puritans considered their spiritual ancestors.

The violence of their biblical counterparts is repeated in the lives of Zenobia and Miriam. Zenobia dies from drowning in the river of Blithedale, and her body's somewhat grotesque contortion, due to the rigor mortis, suggests her struggle at the bottom of the river bed. Miriam, for her part, sanctions the murder of her persecutor by means of an affirmative glance. The repercussions of these women's defiance create tragedy rather than the reform of the limitations and restrictions placed upon women. Speaking of the violent crime she shares with Donatello, Miriam reflects, "Was the crime – in which he and I were wedded – was it a blessing in that strange disguise?"¹¹¹ However, her thoughts are regarded as leading to "unfathomable abysses"¹¹² from which she is rescued only by a severe and life-long penitence that removes her from the ordinary ways of the world and thus out of direct oppression by or defiance of the society she previously bristled against. Zenobia, seemingly foreseeing her own impending death, provides the moral(s) to her own story when she declares

That, in the battlefield of life, the downright stroke, that would fall only on a man's steel head-piece, is sure to light on a woman's heart over which she wears no breastplate, and whose wisdom it is, therefore, to keep out of the conflict. Or this: – that the whole universe, her own sex and yours, Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common cause against the woman who swerves one hair's breadth out of the beaten track. Yes; and I add, (for I may as well own it, now) that, with that one hair's breadth, she goes all astray, and never sees the world in its true aspect, afterwards!¹¹³

The harshness of Zenobia's outlook, confirmed by her death, is informed by successive failures: the failure of Blithedale experiment, the failure of her love affair with Hollingsworth, and her failure to evade the manipulations of Westervelt.

"Hawthorne's women," observes Lauren Berlant, "emerge as uncanny, paradoxical, politically unintelligible: as fantasy projections of patriarchal fear about the imminent end of male hegemony within the political public sphere, as occasions for serious critique of that same patriarchal culture, and as eroticized subjects who speculate that other forms of collective life might be imaginable, even within America."¹¹⁴ This complexity stems from the figures of Jael and Judith, whose actions were celebrated for their victories over the enemies of the Israelites; however, their actions are simultaneously celebrated as sources of shame for the enemies who were defeated by mere women. Hawthorne's development and dramatization of the complexities presented by capable and independent women in a repressive society brings the ambiguities of society and gender relations to the forefront. As Roy Male argues, the women in Hawthorne's fiction embody "an ambiguous promise of involvement and redemption, passion and purification. If the man will accept her, not deceived or stunned by this ambiguity, he may go on to higher insights, as Dimmesdale does in *The Scarlet Letter*."¹¹⁵ The ambiguity identified by Male is indeed potentially destructive or redemptive.

This potent ambiguity is perhaps best exemplified in the narrator's thoughts concerning Miriam's sketch of Herodias's daughter who, according to Mark 6:19-25, requested the head of John the Baptist on a charger as gift for her mother. While the women of this biblical event are a far cry from Jael and Judith and Hawthorne's

characters, the event in itself is another example of female vengeance and violence. Miriam chose to depict the moment the head was received by the young girl. In the scene “Miriam had imparted to the Saint’s face a look of gentle and heavenly reproach, with sad and blessed eyes fixed upward at the maiden; by the force of which miraculous glance, her whole womanhood was at once awakened to love and endless remorse.”¹¹⁶ These feelings are perhaps the two most humanizing of emotions, which further complicates Hawthorne’s treatment of his characters and his references to the biblical events that are analogous to their own lives. What becomes most clear with this sketch is the realization of a moral, not too unlike Zenobia’s: “that woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life.”¹¹⁷ This moral carries with it implications of heroism, tragedy, and necessity – aspects suiting the ideas of both “love and endless remorse.” Roy Male explains that “Hawthorne’s ability to create vital women in his fiction is inseparable from his understanding of tragedy. He knew that in order to find a home and a hope of heaven – in order, that is, to develop his full human potential – man must accept either the woman or the dual promise she represents: tragic involvement with sin but also the consequent possibility of redemption.”¹¹⁸

The situation facing the dignity of women and the balance of power between the sexes is a complex one. Hawthorne’s romances clearly show unease at the thought of female violence against men, but also recognition of the unfair and unjust treatment of women, which is nowhere more explicit than in Hester’s dark thoughts: “the same dark question often rose in her mind, with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them?”¹¹⁹ Following her own experiences of persecution by and defiance against her oppressive and authoritarian

society, Hester, at the end of the romance, takes to comforting and counseling other women. Hester “assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness.”¹²⁰ While this attitude is not exactly the ringing endorsement one might prefer, it is in line with Hawthorne’s view of life and its human ills.* While the biblical characters of Jael and Judith provide examples of capable and defiant women triumphing over men, they fail to bring about change either in their communities. Both Jael and Judith returned to relatively ordinary life after their great service to their people. They earned blessings and respect; yet they did not then stage revolution, but instead served as quiet but constant reminders that women were more than servants in the tents.

Hawthorne, unlike the tumultuous violence identified in the biblical figures and experienced by his fictional characters, opts for a gentler form of defiance, one that consistently but patiently pushes for a mode of human existence in which women gain a fair and equal position alongside men in both society and in the home. According to Martin Cronin, “within the framework of the female’s traditional activities, however, Hawthorne accords woman a place that is more than honorable. Indeed, he would, if we accept Miles Coverdale as his spokesman in *The Blithedale Romance*, extend woman’s historic role as the spiritual fortifier of man to include the professional ministry of

* An equally explicit view is noted by Sacvan Bercovitch in *The American Jeremiad*, in which he reveals that Hawthorne’s attitude towards the abolitionist movement of his era was to urge “them to adopt a different course of action – to consider ‘slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence’ will settle ‘in its own good time’” (206).

souls.”¹²¹ Cronin’s insight is based on Coverdale’s statements in *The Blithedale Romance* that

I have never found it possible to suffer a bearded priest so near my heart and conscience, as to do me any good. I blush at the very thought! Oh, in the better order of things, Heaven grant that the ministry of souls may be left in charge of women! The gates of the Blessed City will be thronged with the multitudes that enter in, when the day comes! The task belongs to woman. God meant it for her. He has endowed her with the religious sentiment in its utmost depth and purity, refined from that gross, intellectual alloy, with which every masculine theologian – save only One, who merely veiled Himself in mortal and masculine shape, but was, in truth, divine – has been prone to mingle it.¹²²

This reverence and respect for women is also strongly present in *The Marble Faun* wherein Kenyon, a man not too dissimilar from Coverdale, tells Miriam that he is unable to help Donatello as well as she can. Kenyon remarks that “I am a man, and, between man and man, there is always an insuperable gulf. They can never quite grasp each other’s hands; and therefore man never derives any intimate help, any heart-sustenance, from his brother man, but from woman – his mother, his sister, or his wife.”¹²³

These two statements reveal the dignity and reverence Hawthorne felt women rightfully deserved both within the home and in society at large. Jael and Judith gained eternal blessings in the Bible primarily for their violent actions; yet, while Hawthorne seems to commend the spirit of defiance, in his overall view of women, he seeks to adjust its expression from one of violence to one of love. Women possess a spiritual strength

and compassion – on display in Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam – that flows forth from their hearts. By defying men, specifically their dry, and heartless, sometimes self-absorbed rationality, women can restore the natural balance in humankind in general, as well as in terms of the relationship between the sexes. Women are able to forge lasting bonds between individuals and in turn unite communities wherein all can support each other and gain the “heart-sustenance” necessary to a full life.

Roberta Weldon argues that “Hawthorne’s fiction rests on some basic assumptions. The misery of men is related to the culture’s ideas about death and dying. The condition of men will not change until these ideas are changed. The suffering of women, while it may be different from that of men, is related to, and perhaps even contingent upon, male suffering, and it will also not be relieved until men change their assumptions.”¹²⁴ While it may be too much to suggest that all of Hawthorne’s male characters share a common concern with death and dying, it is accurate to note that the suffering of women cannot be relieved until men change their views and their ways. As the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* remarks, to make female existence worthwhile three steps would be necessary. First, “the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position.”¹²⁵ The final step requires the internal efforts and adjustments of women who must find additional strength in their hearts:

Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has

her truest life, will be found to have evaporated. A woman never overcomes these problems by an exercise of thought. They are not to be solved, or only in one way. If her heart chance to be uppermost, they vanish.¹²⁶

To this end Lauren Berlant argues that “the narrator concludes: female authority is located in passion and feeling and not in thought; sublimating feeling to the world of thought unwomans the woman, transporting her to a politically and semiotically luminal space that is both self-deluding and culture-threatening.”¹²⁷

The three steps identified by the narrator are no easy task. The first two steps require time, which Hawthorne recognizes in the counsel and comfort Hester provides women of the community. The third step, however, is available and necessary for all women. Hester embodies the third step through her compassion and endurance, which radiates through her actions and wins her, over a lifetime, the respect and acceptance of her community. She, like Jael and Judith, concentrated her abilities on communal service that simultaneously proved her personal dignity and worth, while also proving her commitment to her community, which may not yet be ready to reform its repressive or biased foundations. By refusing to foment a revolution or to otherwise disrupt the society in which she lives, Hester allows the community to become accustomed to her independence. Likewise, Hester is able to achieve a personal satisfaction in her life and the manner in which she is living it, especially after becoming a counselor to other women. Thus by using Jael and Judith as models of feminine defiance and independence Hawthorne is able to invoke the spirit but adjust its expression. Zenobia tried too directly to achieve her goals, and she failed to allow the internal changes of step three to occur.

Her experience was failure and death. Miriam likewise became too directly involved in her defiance, and though she avoided death, she undertook a lifetime of penitence that removed her from genuine membership in any community. Miriam instead becomes attached to and dependent upon Donatello as the two attempted to reconcile themselves with their crime. Hester alone balances individual defiance with communal service and through that balance she is able – as Coverdale, Kenyon, and presumably Hawthorne desired – to develop and provide the feminine “heart-sustenance” that mitigates the suffering of both men and women and proves the necessity of allowing women to exert a greater influence in the world.

Jericho and Psalm 51 in “Earth’s Holocaust”

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Earth’s Holocaust” is clearly well suited for examination against the various reform movements of the nineteenth century, which are implied within the story. And while the contexts of reform movements and America in the early nineteenth century are informative and insightful, the biblical contexts of this short story have been overlooked. With regard to the idea of reform Hawthorne observes that “no human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man’s accidents are God’s Purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for.”¹²⁸ In his *Life of Pierce* Hawthorne suggests that “there is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found

the way to rectify.”¹²⁹ While these views seem harsh and perhaps pessimistic, they are not without hope, or perhaps, more accurately, faith in the guidance and protection of a benevolent higher power. This is also demonstrated, as Sacvan Bercovitch makes note, in Hawthorne’s attitude toward the abolitionist reformers of his era, whom he urged “to adopt a different course of action – to consider ‘slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence’ will settle ‘in its own good time.’”¹³⁰ Hawthorne’s statements clearly indicate both his faith in the benevolent plans of Providence and his doubts of human ingenuity and popular reform.

“Earth’s Holocaust” is the embodiment of these very ideas, and the biblical contexts of the story illustrate humankind’s inability to overcome their imperfections independent of God. The Bible, of course, is believed to reveal God’s purposes as well as many of humankind’s accidents. Because the Bible is given a prominent role in “Earth’s Holocaust” it is thus reasonable to consider the biblical analogues that both inform the events of the story and shape its moral. The structure of the story is analogous to the story of the city of Jericho as related in the Book of Joshua. Additionally, the moral of the story is evocative of Psalm 51. By considering the story and its biblical analogues, we come to better understand not only Hawthorne’s influences but his purposes in re-imagining them for his own time and place. “Earth’s Holocaust” emphasizes not simply that humankind is flawed but that efforts to improve begin within each individual and can be guided by the truths available in the Bible.

The idea of sacrifice is central to “Earth’s Holocaust.” The reformers’ bonfire is a global version of the pyres found in the works of Homer and elsewhere in the writings of

the ancient world. The Old Testament is also replete with burnt sacrifices and burnt offerings to honor God. Robert J. Gillooly argues that

Sacrifice served many purposes in the lives of ancient peoples. It was supposed to appease the gods, to atone for sins and allay guilt, to secure advantage for one's self and one's community, and even to serve as a ransom paid to a devil – for the ancients were obliged to deal with the evil spirits as well as the good. The offering took many forms, but its value was often related to the importance of the request or occasion.¹³¹

George B. Gray, in his study *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, notes that “in communion, not in the making of a gift, is to be found the origin of many even of those rites which in the course of time developed so far or became so modified that they wore no longer the appearance of an act of communion or of social fellowship: for example, that offering which in Hebrew ritual was burnt whole on the altar.”¹³² Gray goes on to add that

It is the first part of the English compound expressions ‘sin-offering’, ‘guilt-offering’, ‘thank-offering’, ‘free-will-offering’, &c., that is alone really expressed in the Hebrew; it is not because these victims were given to God that they received these names; they were so called because, gifts or whatever else they were, they had some relation, which we do not at present more closely define, to sin, guilt, thanks, and spontaneity respectively.¹³³

With these views in mind we see that the “burnt offering” central to Hawthorne’s story is an ironic twist that both complicates and illuminates the relationship between humankind and God.

The experience of “Earth’s Holocaust” is revealed by an unnamed middle-aged man who begins in fairy-tale fashion: “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 overburthened with an accumulation of worn-out trumpery, that the inhabitants determined to rid themselves of it by a general bonfire.”¹³⁴ The bonfire is meant to consume and destroy the things humans now find accursed as the source of their corruptions and impurities are hardly worthy as a gift offering to God. The trumpery could be considered a “guilt-offering” to allay guilt as Gray and Gillooly suggest; yet, at the same time, the flames have no direct relation to God, who is never mentioned or referred to by the characters throughout the story. Instead the bonfire serves as an entertaining and zealous action in honor of human progress and morality. Hawthorne, through the course of the story, attempts to undermine the meaning and purpose of the holocaust, which lacks potency because the mass of reformers do not truly understand or engage their problems.

The problems and events depicted in the Book of Joshua provide three direct and important connections to better understanding “Earth’s Holocaust.” The first parallel is that of the purpose behind the efforts of the Israelites of the Bible and the would-be reformers of Hawthorne’s story. The Israelites under the leadership of Moses and then Joshua are attempting to gain the Promised Land, which after the establishment of Christianity, becomes associated with heavenly paradise. The reformers of Hawthorne’s story, through their holocaust, wish to attain a paradisaal state – perhaps pre-lapsarian or simply pre-industrial – in which they have freed themselves from vice and folly, as summed up in their declaration that “everything else on which human invention had

endeavored to stamp its arbitrary laws, should at once be destroyed, leaving the consummated world as free as the first man created.”¹³⁵ In order to gain the Promised Land of Canaan, the Israelites are given two specific directions to ensure their success. Those directions are present in Hawthorne’s story and provide the context of the failure of the reformers’ bonfire as well as the moral of the story.

The city of Jericho is on the Israelites’ route to Canaan and must be conquered in order for the Israelites to enter. In order to succeed in defeating the powerful and well-defended city the Israelites are encouraged to maintain their duties in accordance with God’s promise as recorded in Joshua 1:7-8:

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Success for the Israelites mission is found in adherence to God’s law and will as found in what will become known to Christians as the Old Testament. It is with great irony then that Hawthorne’s reformers espouse the idea that due to their higher state of civilization and intelligence “our faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime.”¹³⁶ After tossing in various symbols and devices of religious ceremony the Bible is next.

The inhabitants of the earth had grown too enlightened to define their faith within a form of words, or to limit the spiritual by any analogy to our material existence. Truths, which the Heavens trembled at, were now but a fable of the world's infancy. Therefore, as the final sacrifice of human error, what else remained, to be thrown upon the embers of that awful pile, except the Book, which, though a celestial revelation to past ages, was but a voice from a lower sphere, as regarded the present race of man? It was done!¹³⁷

The ultimate failure of the reformers' mission is found both in their violation of Joshua 1:7-8 and the reaction of the Bible to the flames.

The story's narrator is aghast that the Bible is considered expendable as false and misleading. His companion, however, reassures him by commenting that genuine truths will withstand the intense flames. This is confirmed when the narrator observes that on the pyre

Among the wallowing flames, a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the pages of which, instead of being blackened by the tinder, only assumed more dazzling whiteness, as the finger-marks of human imperfections were purified away. Certain marginal notes and commentaries, it is true, yielded to the intensity of the fiery test, but without detriment to the smallest syllable that had flamed from the pen of inspiration.¹³⁸

The Bible's ability to withstand, and in fact thrive in the flames invokes, in the reader's mind, 1 Corinthians 3:13, in which it is proclaimed that "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall

try every man's work of what sort it is." Thus Hawthorne both allows for some errors and "human imperfections" in the Bible but confirms his respect for it in the general sense. Furthermore, the fact that it endures the flames and shines the brighter reveals not just that it contains eternal valuable truths but that the perception and judgment of the reformers is quite poor. That which they considered false and misleading is in fact proved to contain truth and thus good guidance. Furthermore, in choosing to disregard the possibility of the truths of the Bible and its connection to God, the reformers have instead determined to follow new laws that are vague and of their own making, which implies that they carry flaws inherently. The reformers views and desires are entirely human centered and without need or reference to Providence. As is stated and implied throughout the story, the reformers believe that "in this advanced stage of civilization, Reason and Philanthropy combined will constitute just such a tribunal as is requisite," thus replacing faith in Providence with faith in human ingenuity.¹³⁹

The second directive effecting the success of both the Israelites of the book of Joshua and the reformers of "Earth's Holocaust" is recorded in Joshua 6:17-18: "the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD [...] And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." The burning of the cursed items will free the people of curses: in the case of the Israelites the curse of God's wrath or lack of His support against their enemies; in the case of the reformers, the curse of human vice and imperfection. After conquering Jericho the Israelites are soon defeated by the inhabitants of the city of Ai. God's protection had been withheld because the solemn ban of the accursed items had been violated. As Joshua 7:1 reveals, "the

children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, [...] of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.” The defeat, a consequence of the LORD’s anger, is explained in Joshua 7:12-13:

Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

In similar manner it is revealed that the reformers of Hawthorne’s story have also withheld an accursed item from the purging flames.

The earth’s holocaust, we are told, begins with “dry combustibles” but then grows on “all the rubbish of the Herald’s Office,” and all the many symbols of inherited worth separate from an individual’s own merits and virtues.¹⁴⁰ These are followed by, among other more personal items, the accoutrements of monarchy, warfare, and capital punishment, as well as liquor, tea, tobacco, and the like. Also included are books of all subjects and disciplines whose reactions to the flames express their worth to humanity (and, perhaps, Hawthorne himself). Despite the enthusiasm for the holocaust doubts are expressed by various onlookers. After the weapons and munitions of war are destroyed, an old veteran soldier remarks that “when Cain wished to slay his brother, he was at no loss for a weapon” and acknowledges that “the necessity of war lies far deeper than these honest gentleman suppose.”¹⁴¹ The issue is ironically implied in a reformer’s reaction to the gallows when he asks “how can human law inculcate benevolence and love, while it

persists in setting up the gallows as its chief symbol.”¹⁴² The problem exposed in these passages is that the reformers have fixed their attention and their efforts upon external and social symbols. Such symbols are merely representations or tools of vice and imperfection in humankind, not the source.

The source, then, is the accursed item that has been withheld from the flames. At the end of “Earth’s Holocaust” a “dark-complexioned” and “dark-visaged stranger” appears among the crowd near the narrator.¹⁴³ This stranger whose darkness aligns him with the euphemistic Black Man of *The Scarlet Letter*, and whose eyes, like those of Ethan Brand, “glowed with a redder light than that of the bonfire,” could easily be construed as the devil in disguise, or perhaps one of his minions.¹⁴⁴ The stranger assures those listening to him that “there is one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all,” that missing item being “the human heart itself!”¹⁴⁵ He explains, with a sinister joy, “unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will re-issue all the shapes of wrong and misery – the same old shapes, or worse ones – which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes. I have stood by, this live-long night, and laughed in my sleeve at the whole business. Oh, take my word for it, it will be the old world yet.”¹⁴⁶ Overhearing these comments, the narrator consumed with that thought reflects

How sad a truth – if true it were – that Man’s age-long endeavor for perfection had served only to render him the mockery of the Evil Principle, from the fatal circumstances of an error at the very root of the matter! The Heart – the Heart – there was the little, yet boundless sphere,

wherein existed the original wrong, of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types. Purify that inner sphere; and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms, and vanish of their own accord.¹⁴⁷

Thus it is clear that the human heart – the accursed item, the item needing to be sanctified, the item needing to be offered to God – has been withheld and thus brings a “curse” that causes the failure of all human enterprises.

The reformers of the story are enacting a sham, which has been ritualized. According to James G. Williams, “ritual reenacts and thus represents to the group the unifying energy of the founding moment. It reenacts the crisis in such a way that it is emptied of all real violence in order to arrive at the resolution, the production of peace.”¹⁴⁸ The bonfire indeed serves as the unifying force and the flames provide a “founding moment” that can resolve the problems facing humanity. But all the pomp and circumstances of the bonfire ritual fail to address the problem, which is internal to humans. Roberta Weldon insightfully explains that “because the ritual of sacrifice has a public or social purpose as well as a private dimension, the interpretation of the act is a crucial aspect of its meaning. If there is no collective understanding of the meaning of the act, sacrifice has no potency.”¹⁴⁹ Weldon’s observation perfectly describes the situation in Hawthorne’s story. Despite the outward behaviors of the reformers and the hopes of many that “that the illumination of the bonfire might reveal some profundity of moral truth, heretofore hidden in mist or darkness”¹⁵⁰ the ritual is without meaning because the

external symbols against which they enact their condemnations obscure the internal cause of the problems inherent in the human condition.

In *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, Randall Stewart contends that “man is a moral agent, and a tragic figure. The tragic aspect is brought out with special power in Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner.”¹⁵¹ This tragic aspect is found primarily in the struggle of humans against their condition, which is that of imperfection:

For man is an imperfect, nonperfectible being. He cannot be improved by technology. He is not a machine, but a very fallible human. Poor wayward creature, he appears even now to be plotting, with all ingenuity and speed, his own destruction. But his state, unless by his own perverse willfulness, is not beyond the reach of God’s redeeming grace. This is the essence of the human condition, and the Christian hope. And this is the meaning of the dramatizations of human experience by the greatest American writers.¹⁵²

Hawthorne dramatizes this experience in “Earth’s Holocaust.” While the crux of the story is analogous to events and ideas in the Book of Joshua the moral of Hawthorne’s story is found in the Book of Psalms, specifically Psalm 51 in which the proper response to the imperfection of humankind and the means of attaining God’s redeeming grace, in the words of Randall Stewart, is not found in sacrifice but in repentance.

Psalm 51 consists of three important aspects of reform and righteousness, all of which are noticeably absent in Hawthorne’s would-be reformers. The first aspect is seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness, which is expressed in the first two verses: “have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude

of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The second aspect is acknowledging sins and shortcomings, which is provided best in verse three: "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." And finally, genuine repentance is required, as witnessed in verses sixteen and seventeen: "thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51 becomes all the more poignant when juxtaposed with Hawthorne's short story. The psalm admits that burnt offerings are easy; however, reform, rather than convenience, is the point. The psalm calls for a "broken and contrite heart" as the only sacrifice worthy of God's acceptance; the heart is the one thing that the reformers avoid offering, thus demonstrating that their remorse and repentance are not genuine. Psalm 51 explains the ineffectualness of the holocaust and other such reform movements that focus upon outward forms and actions as opposed to inward reflection and reform.

Ultimately, Hawthorne's story and its biblical contexts place responsibility for moral reform and improvement at the feet of each individual who must inwardly assess his or her sins and imperfections and seek to improve upon them through repentance prior to attempting to reform the world and humankind. This attitude is expounded in Matthew 7:3-5: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." An anecdote parallel to both this Bible passage and Hawthorne's

own experience with reformers is found in Arlin Turner's *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography*. Turner explains

It was Hawthorne's nature to distrust enthusiasm and to ask that advocates of social reform consider the full and ultimate effects of the action they proposed. This he thought radical abolitionists failed to do. It was in such a context that he wrote Elizabeth Peabody from England, August 13, 1857, in returning an abolitionist essay of hers she had sent him in manuscript: "No doubt it seems the truest of truth to you; but I do assure you that, like every other Abolitionist, you look at matters with an awful squint, which distorts everything within your line of vision; and it is queer, though natural, that you think everybody squints except yourselves. Perhaps they do; but certainly *you* do."¹⁵³

Humans are temporal, mortal, unable to successfully maintain (for an extended period) a perspective adequately suited for the complexities of a universe filled with both good and bad, as well as mysteries not yet imagined. The Bible's representation as a surer and holier truth due to its reaction to the flames suggests that it can help humankind in their attempts to deal with their limitations and flaws.

Hawthorne's story demonstrates that crimes and offenses of various forms will always exist in the lives of humankind, regardless of any and all holocausts of this nature. As declared by the stranger, such crimes and offenses come from the heart and that true reform must take place there first. This attitude matches perfectly with Matthew 15:19 (and its counterpart Mk. 7:21), which reads, "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Sin, vice, and

imperfection are present in humankind. And though simple proscriptions are comforting they must not lead to the neglect of the root causes found within the human heart. In the case of Hawthorne's reformers it is easier to enact the ritual destruction of their sins, vices, and distractions by means of a massive bonfire while conveniently leaving the true source of those troubles obscured and hidden from the flames. As Hyatt Waggoner insightfully and succinctly explains, part of the meaning of "Earth's Holocaust" is that "reform is perennially needed, and we may well be grateful for many of the reforms of the past, but reform is superficial and impermanent unless it is accompanied by a change of heart. The source of evil is in the heart of man, not primarily in institutions. The devil laughs when man supposes that lasting progress toward the good can be brought about by merely external and social changes."¹⁵⁴ The biblical contexts of "Earth's Holocaust" provide both the author and his audience with a great depth of perspective as to how and where the limitations and flaws of humankind must first be addressed.

¹ "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," XI:225

² Stock, "Studies in Hawthorne's Use of the Bible," 105

³ *Ibid.*, 111. Stock views the Book of Ruth as a parallel as far as the journey-search plot of the tale is concerned. He sees the Book of Nahum as providing influence for the final scene in which Major Molineux is punished by the wrathful and vengeful crowd. While these points are not invalid they work in sections rather than throughout the story as the figure of Babylon and the Babylonian Captivity does.

⁴ Normand, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, 41

⁵ "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," XI:225

⁶ *Ibid.*, 210

⁷ *Ibid.*, 211

⁸ *Ibid.*, 219

⁹ *Ibid.*, 212

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 213

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Nicol, "Captivity."

¹⁴ "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," XI:215

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 217

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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- ¹⁹ Ibid., 219
²⁰ Ibid., 213
²¹ Ibid., 220
²² Ibid., 227
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid., 222
²⁵ "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," XI:222
²⁶ Ibid., 223
²⁷ Nicol, "Captivity."
²⁸ Hooker, "Exile."
²⁹ Ibid.
³⁰ Daiches *Moses: The Man and His Vision*, 173
³¹ Ibid., 139
³² Daiches, *Moses: The Man and His Vision*, 140
³³ Ibid., 139
³⁴ "The Minister's Black Veil," IX:39
³⁵ Ibid., 38
³⁶ Ibid.
³⁷ Ibid., 40
³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Ibid., 48
⁴⁰ Ibid., 47
⁴¹ Davis, *Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement*, 62
⁴² Daiches, *Moses: The Man and His Vision*, 151
⁴³ "The Minister's Black Veil," IX:49
⁴⁴ Davis, *Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement*, 58
⁴⁵ Ibid., 59
⁴⁶ Ibid., 50
⁴⁷ Ibid., 53
⁴⁸ "The Man of Adamant," XI:161
⁴⁹ Ibid., 162
⁵⁰ Ibid., 161-162
⁵¹ "The Man of Adamant," XI:167
⁵² "The Man of Adamant," XI:169
⁵³ Daiches, *Moses: The Man and His Vision*, 235
⁵⁴ Ibid., 104
⁵⁵ Ibid., 236
⁵⁶ Waggoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 13
⁵⁷ Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion*, 54
⁵⁸ Ibid.
⁵⁹ Fogle, *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark*, 6-7
⁶⁰ Christopherson, "'Young Goodman Brown' as Historical Allegory: A Lexical Link," 203
⁶¹ Easton, "Salem," *Easton's Bible Dictionary*.
⁶² Trawick, *The Bible as Literature: The Old Testament and the Apocrypha*, 117-118
⁶³ "Young Goodman Brown," X:74
⁶⁴ Ibid., 75
⁶⁵ Ibid., 79
⁶⁶ Ibid., 76-77
⁶⁷ Ibid.
⁶⁸ Ibid.
⁶⁹ Ibid.
⁷⁰ Ibid., 81
⁷¹ Ibid., 82
⁷² Ibid.
⁷³ Ibid.

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- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 83
⁷⁵ Ibid.
⁷⁶ Ibid., 84
⁷⁷ Stöck, "Studies in Hawthorne's Use of the Bible," 124
⁷⁸ "Young Goodman Brown," X:84
⁷⁹ Ibid., 86
⁸⁰ Ibid., 85
⁸¹ Ibid., 86
⁸² Ibid., 87
⁸³ Ibid., 88
⁸⁴ "Young Goodman Brown," X:89
⁸⁵ Ibid., 88
⁸⁶ Ibid., 89
⁸⁷ Ibid., 90
⁸⁸ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 79-80
⁸⁹ Montgomery, *Why Hawthorne was Melancholy*, 71
⁹⁰ Trawick, *The Bible as Literature: The Old Testament and the Apocrypha*, 191
⁹¹ Ibid.
⁹² Ibid.
⁹³ Montgomery, *Why Hawthorne was Melancholy*, 72-73
⁹⁴ Cronin, "Hawthorne on Romantic Love and the Status of Women," 89
⁹⁵ Phipps, *Assertive Biblical Women*, 1-2
⁹⁶ Ibid., 5
⁹⁷ Craven, "Judith 2," 105
⁹⁸ Ibid., 106
⁹⁹ Frymer-Kensky, "Jael," 97-98
¹⁰⁰ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:15
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Ibid., 16
¹⁰³ Ibid., 38
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 44
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 45
¹⁰⁶ *The Marble Faun*, IV:44
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 43
¹⁰⁸ *The Marble Faun*, IV:43
¹⁰⁹ *The Marble Faun*, IV:43-44
¹¹⁰ Ibid., 44
¹¹¹ Ibid., 434
¹¹² Ibid.
¹¹³ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:224
¹¹⁴ Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life*, 9
¹¹⁵ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 7
¹¹⁶ *The Marble Faun*, IV:44
¹¹⁷ Ibid.
¹¹⁸ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 54
¹¹⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:165
¹²⁰ Ibid., 263
¹²¹ Cronin, "Hawthorne on Romantic Love and the Status of Women," 95
¹²² *The Blithedale Romance*, III:121
¹²³ *The Marble Faun*, IV:285
¹²⁴ Weldon, *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*, 5
¹²⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:165
¹²⁶ Ibid., 165-166
¹²⁷ Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life*, 142
¹²⁸ "Chiefly About War-Matters," XXIII:431

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- ¹²⁹ *Life of Pierce*, XXIII:352
¹³⁰ Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 206
¹³¹ Gillooly, *All About Adam & Eve*, 142
¹³² Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 1
¹³³ *Ibid.*, 7
¹³⁴ "Earth's Holocaust," X:381
¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 394
¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 400
¹³⁷ *Ibid.*
¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 402
¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 391
¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 382
¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 391
¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 393
¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 403
¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 403-404
¹⁴⁸ Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence*, 11
¹⁴⁹ Weldon, *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*, 123-124
¹⁵⁰ "Earth's Holocaust," X:381
¹⁵¹ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 149
¹⁵² *Ibid.*
¹⁵³ Turner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography*, 352
¹⁵⁴ Waggoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 21

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL THEMES: BIBLICAL GARDENS

Gardens play an important and prominent role in the Bible as well as in the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Of the many ancient sacred gardens celebrated by various cultures in the Western world, none is as influential as the Garden of Eden. Eden has come to symbolize the place of peace and prosperity wherein the first humans lived in perfect harmony with one another, with nature, and with God. However, it also became a symbol of tragedy as the transgressions of those first human inhabitants cause the loss of such peace, prosperity, and harmony for all humankind. The double-edged symbolism of Eden carries over into other notable gardens in the Bible despite the preference of later generations of humans to view gardens as places of meditation and love. Additionally, the garden becomes sacred in part for its enclosure, for its special boundary separating the wilderness outside; yet after the Fall humans are expelled from Eden and forced to live forever outside the walls; thus humankind is vulnerable to the difficulties and threats of toiling in the wild world. Although Eden haunts all of Hawthorne's oeuvre and any other biblical garden, there are other gardens that provide additional specific analogues for his fiction, whereby the sacred setting becomes a moral battleground.

Garden imagery is well established in thinkers and writers who influenced Hawthorne, such as Bunyan, Milton, Spencer, and even Dante. Those writers, and their contemporary milieus, generally viewed gardens "as the scene of those privileged

moments when the self takes possession of the world, a sense of that interpenetration of self and world which is given its historically most definitive statement in the story of Eden.”¹ Terry Comito, in *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, further notes:

For man, the Christian tradition has always assumed that the paradigmatic place is Eden. Writer after writer, particularly those associated with the traditions of monastic thought, conceive the whole economy of salvation in terms of man’s return to this *locus voluptatis* (Genesis 2:10) – not merely a pleasant spot but pleasure’s own place, the place where man can achieve that fruition which constitutes true pleasure. In a fallen world his life is a Babylonian captivity, an unending exile in alien land, *regio dissimilitudinis*; Eden is man’s true homeland, the seat of his being.²

The Bible established the importance of the garden for the Renaissance artists who then passed that on to the future generations. In regards to the Song of Songs “from the beginning commentators held that the figure of the enclosed garden could be interpreted as either the Church in general or the individual soul.”³ This parallel between garden and individual soul is certainly applicable to Hawthorne, who presumably would have agreed whole-heartedly with the idea that “the task set for man was not an overpowering one; he was called to tend to his soul’s needs properly, to know himself, and to regulate his will with respect to the will of his Creator. When he failed at this task, his failure was a serious one indeed, for the failure brought to ruin land he did not own. In meditation man tended the garden of the soul.”⁴

Thus the garden becomes a crucial and repeated element in Hawthorne’s moralistic fiction. Eden is, quite naturally, the principal garden both in the Bible and in

Hawthorne's fiction. Aside from Eden, though in ways echoing Eden, are other biblical gardens of note that become focal points in Hawthorne's fiction: Naboth's vineyard and the garden of Susanna. These gardens, as with Eden, become the settings for the temptations of sin and the challenges to moral righteousness that so fascinated Hawthorne and yet have been passed over by criticism and scholarship.

Naboth's Vineyard in *The House of the Seven Gables*

The story of Naboth's vineyard, which is found in 1 Kings 21, provides the exact same plot and moral as found in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Naturally, Hawthorne expands the scope of the biblical story and includes additional focal points especially relevant to his contemporary New England community; however, his audience would be especially aware of the romance's basis in the Bible. Naboth's vineyard becomes the catalyst for the fall of King Ahab and his queen, Jezebel; in addition, it becomes the source of a divine curse from God (via Elijah) bringing justice upon the unjust and unrighteous pair of Ahab and Jezebel. The biblical story surrounding Naboth's vineyard is not just a similar story line to that of the Pyncheon and Maule families in Hawthorne's romance, but a foundation from which Hawthorne works, enriching both his abilities as a storyteller and as a morally concerned writer.

According to 1 Kings 21:1-2, Naboth's vineyard was adjacent to the palace of King Ahab who desired it for "a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house." Although Ahab offers to provide Naboth with a new vineyard elsewhere or to purchase it outright, Naboth refuses because "the LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (1 Kgs. 21:3). Ahab pouts and sulks over being rebuffed in his efforts to obtain Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel confronts Ahab about his

sulking, and suggests that his position and power should grant him whatever he wants. She comforts him by saying, “dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite” (1 Kgs. 21:7). In Ahab’s name Jezebel arranges for community elders and leaders to bear false witness against Naboth, swearing that he did “blaspheme God and the king,” (1 Kgs. 21:10) an offence punishable by death.* The accusations are lodged, Naboth is found guilty and stoned to death (1 Kgs. 21:10-14). Upon Naboth’s death Jezebel rejoices, telling Ahab, “arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead” (1 Kgs. 21:15).

This short biblical tale is echoed in the beginning chapter of *The House of the Seven Gables*, which covers “a chain of events, extending over the better part of two centuries.”⁵ These chains of events follow those depicted in 1 Kings 21. The Naboth of Hawthorne’s romance is a man named Matthew Maule, who though very poor was in possession of good piece of land on which there was “a natural spring of soft pleasant water – a rare treasure on the sea-girt peninsula.”⁶ The figures of Ahab and Jezebel are combined in Colonel Pyncheon, a “prominent and powerful personage” who found Maule’s land “exceedingly desirable” and “asserted plausible claims to the proprietorship of this, and a large adjacent tract of land, on the strength of a grant from the legislature.”⁷ Maule, like Naboth before him, held out in “stubborn defence of what he considered his right; and for several years, he succeeded in protecting the acre or two of earth which, with his own toil, he had hewn out of the primeval forest, to be his garden-ground and

* Coincidentally, “blasphemy” in the Old Testament has connotations of witchcraft; this too, provides a further connection to Hawthorne’s decision to blend the History of Salem and the Massachusetts Bay Colony with Old Testament events and figures.

homestead.”⁸ In Naboth’s case there is a religious taboo of sorts whereby the land is sacred and, by God’s command, not to pass out of Naboth’s family; for Maule, as the narrator notes, ploughing the land seemed “almost a religious act.”⁹ Unsuccessful in his attempts to acquire Maule’s land, Colonel Pyncheon succeeds in an oddly conspicuous manner when Maule is “executed for the crime of witchcraft”¹⁰ as was Naboth. Colonel Pyncheon an elder and a leader of his community is implicated in the lodging of false accusations of witchcraft (blasphemy) against Maule who is executed on the village gallows.

Power and social position justify, in their eyes, Ahab and Colonel Pyncheon’s desire for the land of another, especially of one who lacks wealth and social prestige. Additionally, their power and position appears to safeguard them from public censure although their means to acquiring the land are unjust. However, both land-robbers are faced with divine justice in the form of curses. In typical Old Testament fashion, God sends the prophet Elijah to Ahab, to inform the king: “thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine” (1 Kgs. 21:19). A similar bloody curse is uttered by Maule on the scaffold before his death: “‘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!’”¹¹ The shedding and consumption of blood is common to both curses; however, the curse of Maule goes beyond the Old Testament and draws upon the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 16:5-6 John records that he “heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O LORD, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For

they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.” The innocence of both Naboth and Maule, as with the persecution of saints and martyrs, requires God’s power to enact justice upon the wicked who use their power against those who are, according to their own means, defenseless.

In addition to the bloody curses uttered directly upon the wicked transgressors the curses carry over to their ancestors. Elijah tells Ahab, “Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD,” and “behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity” (1 Kgs. 21:20-21). The divine retribution extends beyond Ahab and Jezebel to affect Ahab’s descendants who shall struggle with the consequences of inherited sin, and, like Ahab and Jezebel, have bloody deaths. This generational curse is echoed in *The House of the Seven Gables* as Pyncheon builds his family mansion, where his ancestors will be born and raised, on land that is “accurst”¹² by the actions of Maule and Pyncheon. This suspicion of a curse is supported, in the community’s opinion, by the water* in Maule’s Well becoming “hard and brackish.”¹³ Colonel Pyncheon himself dies under mysterious circumstances with blood upon the ruff of his collar, a death experienced by his descendant Judge Pyncheon, which is rationally accounted for by the prognosis of apoplexy although the community believes it is the fulfillment of Maule’s curse.

The garden-grounds of Naboth and Maule, while in possession of the rightful owners, are sacred places that are, by both accounts, pleasant; yet, these grounds become desecrated by the wicked usurpers and accursed for generations. As Renato Poggioli remarks,

* This corruption of the spring also evokes the idea and image presented in Proverb 25:26: “a righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.”

The Biblical story deals with righteousness and unrighteousness, even more than with justice or injustice; and this is why its protagonist is Ahab the guilty rather than Naboth the guiltless. The victim is killed and therefore the restoration of right, or the rewarding of innocence, is no longer possible. What is still possible and always necessary is retributive justice, which brings punishment to the guilty and the wicked. Its instrument is a God who acts at once as avenger and as a judge.¹⁴

God's judgment in Old Testament fashion lasts generations. In regard to Ahab and Jezebel the retribution ends with the demise of Ahab's sons as foretold by Elijah in 1 Kings 21:29. Likewise, the fortune of the Pyncheon family diminishes every generation as long as the unjust possession of Maule's land is maintained. The Pyncheons at the center of the story, Hepzibah and Clifford, have fallen from the ranks of genteel aristocracy to the point of having to open a cent-shop to earn money. The familial mansion has also deteriorated, which is mirrored in the sparseness of the garden and the degeneration of the family's chickens. Of interest, is how the later generations struggle with their ancestor's sins and with God's judgment. Hepzibah, Phoebe, and Holgrave (heir to the Maule family) must reconcile their personal righteousness with that of their inherited situation. The opposition between righteousness and unrighteousness, as well as the concepts of justice and redemption that Poggioli identifies as central to the story of Naboth's vineyard are also central to *The House of the Seven Gables*.

A lesson of the story of Naboth's vineyard, according to Poggioli, is that "innocence and right are no safeguards against insecurity and wrong,"¹⁵ and though Poggioli does not discuss Hawthorne's novel, this idea is a central part of the overall lesson of *The House of the Seven Gables*. The initial transgression of Colonel Pyncheon against the innocence and rights of Matthew Maule is repeated throughout the history of the two families. Generations later, the

grandson of the original Maule ruins the life of Alice Pyncheon, the great-granddaughter of Colonel Pyncheon. Alice's innocence and willpower are overwhelmed and enslaved by the younger Matthew Maule who uses his power of mesmerism to possess and corrupt her as part of his scheme to regain his familial lands. Innocence is again under repeated attack generations later when Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon turns against his own family to further his greedy ends. Jaffrey frames his innocent and weaker cousin, Clifford, for the murder of their uncle. Decades later, Jaffrey threatens Clifford and his sister Hepzibah who he believes are withholding knowledge of the whereabouts of the fabled land grant. The general direction of the plot of *The House of the Seven Gables* casts shadows over the idea of righteousness, justice, and redemption as it appears that the wicked will continue to dominate the righteous innocents.

Quite often the Bible seeks to establish confidence in divine and universal justice. A good example repeated in the Bible occurs in 1 Kings 8:32, where it states, "then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness." Another instance, is found in Proverbs 11:8, which announces "the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead." Yet time and time again such justice is delayed, which casts the righteous sufferers into doubt and despair. This feeling, which is manifest throughout *The House of the Seven Gables* particularly in connection to Hepzibah, is articulated in the lament of Psalm 94, specifically 94:3-5: "LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage." Jaffrey Pyncheon is the embodiment of the wicked as he afflicts the heritage of the Maule family and his own cousins, threatens his cousins, and triumphs in his wealth and prestige.

Whereas the story of Naboth and Ahab is clearly emblematic of the Old Testament and its adherence to retributive justice, *The House of the Seven Gables* integrates the New Testament idea of redemption, which is achieved through the union of the Maule and Pyncheon families through the marriage of Phoebe Pyncheon and Holgrave. Hawthorne's version of the stolen garden incorporates the teachings of Jesus. Poggioli, in his assessment of the biblical story, explains thus,

The good tidings of the Gospel are the announcement that the soul may be redeemed and that man may be reborn into innocence; hence the symbol of the sacrificial lamb washing away all the evil of the world. [...] Whereas the Old Testament is an indictment of man's wickedness, of his inner injustice, the New Testament is a pledge of purification and a promise that man will achieve inner justice.¹⁶

The story of the enmity between the Maule and Pyncheon families finds its source in the Old Testament story of Ahab's unjust acquisition of Naboth's vineyard but finds its resolution in the New Testament teachings and exempla of Jesus. The "purification" and "inner justice" mentioned by Poggioli manifests itself in *The House of the Seven Gables* through the love between Phoebe and Holgrave, as well as Hepzibah's protective love for Clifford. Matthew 22:37-39 stresses love as the central principle of the two chief commandments recognized by Jesus. Hepzibah's love of her enfeebled brother defeats the wicked ends of their cousin Jaffrey, whose demise allows for the successful reconciliation of the Maule and Pyncheon families achieved by the love between Phoebe and Holgrave. By the end, Hawthorne has expanded the story of Naboth's vineyard into an edifying and hopeful story of redemption through love.

Susanna and Beatrice: Innocence in the Dangerous Garden

Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter" has been examined in comparison to Dante, to Milton, and to the Garden of Eden, all of which are valid and insightful points of explication. But as Sharon Deykin Baris notes, "in a richly suggestive way, it is possible to see that "Rappaccini's Daughter" repeats the patterns of the Susannah story. The two "elders" seeking to trap or defile Beatrice are the two old men, Baglioni and Rappaccini."¹⁷ Though Baris does not pursue this possibility further, it is clear that the story of Susanna is a likely source for "Rappaccini's Daughter." The story of Susanna is found in the Apocrypha and it is, by and large, a vehicle for establishing the wisdom and righteousness of the prophet Daniel (whose Old Testament book this particular episode is associated with). In the story of Daniel and Susanna, Susanna's garden becomes the setting for a conflict between the righteous and the unrighteous, a setting and plot that Hawthorne draws upon for "Rappaccini's Daughter."

Set during the Babylonian captivity, Susanna is described as "very beautiful and devout" because her "godfearing parents" raised her "according to the law of Moses" (Sus. v1-3). Her husband Joakim was very wealthy and distinguished among the Jewish community, and his home was a frequent meeting place. Susanna enjoyed walking in the garden and bathing there too from time to time. Two of the community elders appointed as judges frequent Joakim's home and become infatuated with Susanna's beauty and each separately intends to seduce her, but catching one another spying upon her in the garden combine their efforts. When Susanna next bathes in the garden without her servants the elders approach her and confront her with this scenario: "consent and yield to us. If you refuse, we shall swear in evidence there was a young man with you and that was why you

sent your maids away” (Sus. v20-21). Susanna’s dilemma becomes clear to her: “if I do this, the penalty is death; if I do not, you will have me at your mercy. My choice is made I will not do it! Better to be at your mercy than to sin against the LORD” (Sus. v22-23)! Upon her refusal she attempts to call her maids but the elders manage to convince the household of their claims. Although her devoutness and innocence is clear to the readers, Susanna falls victim to the manipulations of the powerful and devious judges.

In Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” the beautiful and innocent Beatrice is similarly set upon by the devious designs of two prestigious older men. Her father, Dr. Rappaccini, is embroiled in a fierce rivalry with Professor Baglioni over their oppositional attitudes regarding scientific means and ends. While Susanna’s persecutors work towards the same lustful end, Beatrice’s use her as a pawn in their separate pursuits. Her father has nourished her on poisons until her system was entirely immune to poison and is, in fact, poisonous to others. Rappaccini justifies his manipulations of her by declaring that he has set her above common people, which she should not reject: “dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?”¹⁸ Opposing Rappaccini is Professor Baglioni, who construes Rappaccini’s efforts as those of a “vile empiric” and resents Rappaccini’s disrespect of “the good old rules of the medical profession.”¹⁹ Baglioni presents Beatrice as an agent of death “as poisonous as she is beautiful;”²⁰ although he does admit that she is in all likelihood, “the victim of [Rappaccini’s] insane zeal for science.”²¹ The lust for power and prestige by the old men

disparages Beatrice's innocence and, as with Susanna, threatens her with death for their actions.

Ultimately the stories of Susanna and Beatrice are about innocence being vindicated. Susanna's innocence is vindicated by the prophet Daniel, who is, at the time of this event, "a devout young man" (Sus. v45). After the elders present their false evidence, Susanna cries out, "Eternal God, you know all secrets and foresee all things, you know that their evidence against me is false. And now I am to die, innocent though I am of the charges these wicked men have brought against me" (Sus. v42-43). Daniel, inspired by God, chides the Jewish community for so easily impugning Susanna's innocence "without making careful enquiry and finding out the truth" and demands they "reopen the trial" (Sus. v48-49). Daniel wisely separates the elders and questions them on the details of their accusations, specifically where they spotted Susanna with her supposed lover. Each man identifies a different tree thus exposing their lie and condemning them from "out of their own mouths" (Sus. v61). The wicked elders are executed for their lies while Susanna's innocence is vindicated and the honor of herself, her husband, and her family are restored.

Hawthorne's tale casts Giovanni in the role of Daniel – that is, as the judge responsible for examining the situation surrounding Beatrice and vindicating both her innocence and the love he and Beatrice share with one another. Unlike Daniel, however, Giovanni fails in his task. The evidence that Giovanni must weigh includes Baglioni's warnings and accusations, the odd events Giovanni witnesses in the garden, and Beatrice's own words. While watching Beatrice in the garden Giovanni witnesses her pluck a flower whose dew drips onto the head of a lizard and kills it instantly; shortly

thereafter he sees Beatrice gazing and breathing upon an insect that “grew faint and fell at her feet; – its bright wings shivered; it was dead – from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath.”²² These, and other similar events, support Baglioni’s claims that the garden and Beatrice are deadly poisonous. However, the case is complicated by Giovanni’s relationship with Beatrice. As they spend more time together Giovanni struggles with his feelings for her. Within him was “a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest.”²³ Beatrice herself demonstrates her feelings for Giovanni and admonishes him to “forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward sense, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini’s lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe!”²⁴

Susanna’s role in the biblical story is that of the victim to be saved by Daniel and to illustrate God’s justice; yet, aside from her refusal of the elders and her plea to God, she is silent. Beatrice on the other hand is an active, although not fully informed, participant in her own trial. She attempts to convince Giovanni of her innocence though she cannot deny the effects of the garden or her very breath, both of which betray her. Finding himself altered so as to be immune to the garden poisons and himself poisonous Giovanni accuses Beatrice of complicity in her father’s wicked experiment. She admits that she, and now he, are subject to the “awful doom” created by Rappaccini’s “fatal love of science,” but that she was an unwilling and unknowing participant in Giovanni’s

corruption.²⁵ Nonetheless, Giovanni, an equal pawn in the old men's rivalry, judges Beatrice guilty: "'Accursed one!' cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. 'And finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me, likewise, from all the warmth of life, and enticed me into the region of unspeakable horror!'"²⁶

Unlike Susanna, Beatrice must be her own witness to and protector of her innocence. Though she had professed her innocence to Giovanni before, Beatrice is forced to the same honorable resignation that Susanna ponders. Taking Baglioni's vial of antidote Beatrice drinks it, bringing about her own death. As she slowly dies Beatrice tells her father that she "would fain have been loved, not feared," and that she is now going "where the evil, which thou hast striven to mingle with my being, will pass away like a dream."²⁷ Her spirit was pure and innocent and her death removes her from the judgments of the men and vindicates her innocence to Giovanni, who should have done so himself.

The story's narrator confirms the vindication of Beatrice's innocence and love through poignant observations in Beatrice's favor. Aware of the true innocence of Beatrice, the narrator reveals that

With her actual presence, there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off; recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths, and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all

this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel.²⁸

The narrator emphasizes that Beatrice is in misery over Giovanni's accusations, and foreshadows a tragic end "after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words!"²⁹ Beatrice, at the end of the story is portrayed as the "poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom."³⁰ As Richard Fogle remarks, Beatrice "is essentially simple and good, her evil power a mere superficial disguise;"³¹ thus, Fogle's rightly concludes that "Beatrice dies saved, her soul untouched by the poisonous evil with which her earthly life has been so intimately entwined."³²

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is a deeply rich story with numerous influences. Although it has been overlooked by criticism the biblical story of Susanna in the garden is a source for the story. Hawthorne adjusts and expands his own story so as to further develop the female protagonist and to complicate the trial through the judgments of the lover. However, despite Hawthorne's adjustments, and the presence of other literary influences, he maintains the focus of the story of Susanna in his story of Beatrice: the vindication of innocence. Both Susanna and Beatrice are young and innocent women enjoying the assumed safety of their gardens when they are attacked by the false accusations of more powerful spying men. Their innocence is tainted by the sinful and wicked nature of their accusers but their innocence prevails through their insistence upon it. When given the option to relinquish their innocence, through "yielding" to either the lusts of the elders or the evil of the scientists, both women refuse. The clear theme of

Susanna's story, the vindication of innocence, is also the theme of "Rappaccini's Daughter" which, as Fogle notes "concludes with a demonstration of Beatrice's spiritual superiority after [having] undergone the severest possible trial."³³

Edens Lost and Found

The preeminent garden in the Bible, the Western tradition, and Hawthorne's writing is the Garden of Eden. The biblical and literary influences on Hawthorne's approach to the entirety of Eden becomes manifest in his fiction; however, of equal importance is his personal life and the times in which Eden is re-imagined in Hawthorne's personal writings. Hyatt Waggoner notes that "when, just after his marriage, he had experienced a happiness greater than he had ever known before, he inevitably thought of Sophia and himself in the Old Manse as a new Adam and Eve in an unfallen world."³⁴ Jean Normand emphasizes:

His whole being was enmeshed in a dream of Eden: the scent of the ripe fruit hanging in the light and sap-laden air, the dull thud of a great apple blown down by a gust of wind, the sweetness of life the contentment of loving, all these were its odors, its echoes, its image rediscovered in reality. Nathaniel and Sophia were the new Adam and Eve of Concord's golden Indian summer, where the serpent seemed to have no place. Eden's first couple were regenerated in the newlyweds by the bright newness of their love.³⁵

A letter from Nathaniel to his wife Sophia published by their son Julian demonstrates Hawthorne's fascination with Eden and the idea that he and Sophia were akin to Adam and Eve:

How happy were Adam and Eve! There was no third person to come between them, and all the infinity around them only served to press their hearts closer together. We love one another as well as they; but there is no silent and lovely garden of Eden for us. Will you sail away with me to discover some summer island? Do you not think that God has reserved one for us, ever since the beginning of the world? Foolish that I am to raise a question of it, since we have found such an Eden – such an island sacred to us two – whenever we have been together! Then we are the Adam and Eve of a virgin earth.³⁶

In this letter he simultaneously recognizes that there is no true earthly Eden available for himself and humanity in general, yet he does not refrain from hoping and believing in Eden. The Garden of Eden is transformed into an accessible creation by human love and union, perhaps more accurately, communion, although this too is not completely out of the shadow of the recognition that earthly Eden has been lost. The dual elements of loss and hope associated with Eden are very present in Hawthorne's personal and artistic outlook.

Hawthorne again envisions himself and his wife as another Adam and Eve, their home a new Eden in a journal entry from August 13, 1842, where he records:

My chief anxiety consists in watching the prosperity of my vegetables – in observing how they are affected by the rain or sunshine — in lamenting

the blight of one squash, and rejoicing at the luxurious growth of another. It is as if the original relation between Man and Nature were restored in my case, and that I were to look exclusively to her for the support of my Eve and myself — to trust to her for food and clothing, and all things needful, with the full assurance that she would not fail me. The fight with the world — the struggle of a man among men — the agony of the universal effort to wrench the means of life from a host of greedy competitors — all this seems like a dream to me. My business is merely to live and to enjoy; and whatever is essential to life and enjoyment will come as naturally as the dew from Heaven. This is — practically, at least — my faith.³⁷

This Eden affords “luxurious growth,” “the original relation between Man and Nature,” and “all things needful,” while at the same time sheltering Hawthorne from “the fight with the world” that exists outside his Eden. This is quite appropriate as far as the standards conceptions of Eden are concerned; however, Hawthorne’s thoughts betray a realization that Eden is past and gone. Even in his hopeful imagery blight is present in the garden and the “struggle of a man among men” looms on the boundaries of his Eden, threatening his repose and his enjoyment of life. As in the gardens previously discussed, Hawthorne is aware that the joys, virtues, and innocence fostered in the garden will at some point be challenged and the garden will become a moral battleground.

The biblical story of Eden presents the Fall of humankind from innocence into sin, death, and alienation from God. The Garden of Eden is the original home of humankind where the first humans walked with God and were, initially, without the

troubles of sin or death. The garden is first mentioned and briefly described in Genesis 2:8-10:

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

Eden is peaceful as well as plentiful in its resources and delights. Genesis 2:15 explains that the “LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,” a task that has forever sanctified gardens in both life and art. The one rule God establishes is that “of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). This single commandment is broken through the temptations of the serpent, which results not only in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden but curses to be borne by every generation of humankind to follow.* The curse common to humanity is revealed in Genesis 3:17-19, “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The curse of the first sin brings toil and death to

* Each will be discussed in greater detail in separate chapters: the serpent in the chapter entitled “Devilish Adversaries;” Eve in the chapter entitled “Women of Redemption;” and Adam in the chapter entitled “Prodigal Sons.”

all humans, and it brings also the desire to return to Eden, as found in Hawthorne's personal writings.

Eden is directly referenced in all four of Hawthorne's major romances as well as in numerous short stories like "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "The New Adam and Eve." Additionally, there are indirect references to Eden, paradise, or human perfection in "The Celestial Rail-road," "Earth's Holocaust," and "The Birth-mark." As Hyatt Waggoner makes clear in regards to Hawthorne, "a dream of lost power and innocence, a memory of Arcadia and Eden, runs through his works as a dominant theme."³⁸ This theme takes the form of two distinctively different perspectives towards regaining Eden in Hawthorne's fiction: the progressive humanistic perspective, and the penitent perspective. Regardless of which perspective the particular story or romance emphasizes, the natural environment is depicted in terms of the fallen world, the world outside the walls of Eden. Hawthorne's pastoral imagery – a major element in his fiction – is consistently filled with inversions of the Garden of Eden through references to death and decay. The focal point for Hawthorne's characters is not simply realizing the fallen world in which they live but their reactions to their world and their attempts to regain paradise.

As the characters in Hawthorne's fiction become more aware of the loss of Eden, they struggle to find a way of coping with that loss and the most popular manner – both in Hawthorne's fiction and real life – is what I will call the progressive perspective. This perspective relies upon human ingenuity and willpower focused on increasing knowledge and technology, which will then, presumably, allow humankind to recreate paradise and do away with all troubles. The other perspective explored by Hawthorne is the penitent perspective in which a person attempts to reconcile both the good and the bad that

characterizes the human condition, through genuine regret and humility for sins and errors. The progressive perspective is illustrated in many of Hawthorne's works and is usually very explicit, while the penitent perspective is established in a few works but with powerful effect. Although Hawthorne explores the possibilities of both perspectives he allows only one to be a likely mode of regaining Eden. Both perspectives seek to regain Eden, the difference being that the progressive perspective understands Eden in tangible terms whereas the penitent perspective (which Hawthorne favored) understands Eden in spiritual terms, and thereby offers a better chance of success.

The progressive perspective is clearly explored most often in Hawthorne's works. "The Birth-mark," "Earth's Holocaust," "The Celestial Rail-road," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and *The Blithedale Romance*, for example, all portray the progressive perspective in rather explicit ways. The common denominator is that the progressive perspective places humans on par with God, and, by and large, rejects the idea of Original Sin as an inherited obstruction to paradise. Instead the characters evincing the progressive perspective believe Eden (in the physical sense) can be regained through human progress in science, technology, and philosophy.

The scientific progress of humanity is recognized in "The Birth-mark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" but deplored when abuses of science overstep human bounds. Both Aylmer and Rappaccini seek to usurp the powers of creation from the divine creator. Aylmer, agonized by the birthmark he believes mars his wife's face seeks to use his science to remove the mark and create earthly perfection in the form of his wife. However his faith in science, his frustration with being human and thus imperfect, leads

Aylmer to not only doubt God but challenge God's divine plan. This, of course, leads to defeat, in this case, in the death of his wife.

Likewise, using his misdirected skills in science, Rappaccini creates a poisonous garden that "would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness, indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty."³⁹ The end result of this attempt at relying on human ingenuity to achieve creation and perfection, though seemingly to Rappaccini's mind alone, is once again death, this time of Rappaccini's own daughter. These attempts to regain perfection and the power of creation – a privilege connected to Adam's naming of the beasts in Genesis 2:19 and of Eve in Genesis 3:20 – presume that human ability and understanding rival that of God. As with the initial Fall, which cost all of humankind access to the actual Eden, such a mentality cannot succeed.

A variation of the reliance upon science is the reliance upon the progress of technology and philosophy found in both "The Celestial Rail-road" and *The Blithedale Romance*. An explicit story, "The Celestial Rail-road" demonstrates the inability of material progress to ensure moral progress. As the story's narrator relies more and more upon the innovations, comforts, and conveniences of the Celestial Rail-road, he drifts further away from the true path of pilgrimage he sought at the stories beginning. The original pilgrimage to the Celestial City, found in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, requires that the pilgrim confront difficulties – physical, emotional, and spiritual – in order to be worthy of entry into the paradise of the Celestial City. These difficulties are

avoided through the technology of the railroad, and the narrator's soul is in very real danger of damnation, saved only by the thinnest veil of possibility that the experience is "only" a dream.

In addition to the progress of science and technology there is, as is often celebrated in every generation, progress in thought. *The Blithedale Romance* centers on the improvements of the world to be wrought by the Blithedalers and their pseudo-Fourierism. Coverdale, among the rest, embraces the idea of physical toil on the Blithedale farm as a mode of purifying himself as an individual and in turn purifying humankind. Coverdale, the Adamic character of the romance, explains: "we meant to lessen the laboring man's great burthen of toil, by performing our due share of it at the cost of our own thews and sinews. [...] And, as the basis of our institution, we purposed to offer up the earnest toil of our bodies, as a prayer, no less than an effort, for the advancement of our race."⁴⁰ Quite eloquently, Coverdale embraces his toil and invokes the curse of Genesis:

The curse of Adam's prosperity – and, curse or blessing be it, it gives substance to the life around us – had first come upon me there. In the sweat of my brow, I had there earned bread and eaten it, and so established my claim to be on earth, and my fellowship with all the sons of labor. I could have knelt down, and have laid my breast against that soil. The red clay, of which my frame was moulded, seemed nearer akin to those crumbling furrows than to any other portion of the world's dust. There was my home; there might be my grave.⁴¹

But this belief in toil is merely posturing. The Blithedale's belief in the ennobling and renewing powers of toil to return them to Eden overlooks the fact that such toil was given over to the wild outside of Eden, and is simply fulfilling God's decree. In the end it becomes clear that none of the main characters were particularly committed to the project and instead had selfish reasons of their own for being there, with the selfish obsessions of Hollingsworth being the main force in Blithedale's demise. Coverdale and the rest desire to see a new Eden flourish under their scheme; however, "Blithedale, then, turns out to be an ironic name, thinly veiling what ultimately emerges as a pastoral wasteland."⁴²

Coverdale's friendships deteriorate, Zenobia dies, Hollingsworth's plans fail and break his will, and Blithedale itself disbands. These characters put their energies into a human scheme of utopian paradise but their very humanity undermines the project which ends, according to Roy Male, in "an abortive catastrophe."⁴³

The characters representing the progressive perspective all fail in their attempts to regain Eden because they mistake Eden for a physical place to be attained through human ingenuity. The progressive perspective, as shown in the works mentioned and others as well, relies upon human endeavors, but as James K. Folsom notes, "the irony of human endeavor, as Hawthorne interprets it, is that it directs its course toward temporal values while ignoring eternal ones, at least as reflected in our earthly existence."⁴⁴ These characters find faults in the world at large that can be corrected by whichever progress they believe is best suited for the problem; however, they rarely acknowledge and certainly never address the faults within themselves. "Earth's Holocaust" is the perfect summary example of the progressive perspective in that it shows reformers fixated on outward symbols to be destroyed or reformed while the cause of such troubles – the

human heart – is ignored. The reformers and schemers of the progressive perspective works enhance the good and diminish the bad, and from their pride and faulty logic, their efforts inevitably end in chaos and ruin, both morally and physically. Neal Frank Doubleday suggests “Hawthorne’s preoccupation with the theme of intellectual pride is a reaction to the spiritual attitudes of his generation,”⁴⁵ which is found in the works depicting the progressive perspective. In regards to such progressive attempts at reformation be it abolitionist or temperance, for example, Hawthorne writes in his *Life of Franklin Pierce* that “there is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.”⁴⁶ The issue Hawthorne has with this perspective becomes manifest quickly and clearly in all the works using this perspective: material progress does not equal moral progress. Too often human pride and optimism obscures the fact that sin and imperfection are a natural part of the human condition and experience. In overlooking the reality of the situation and the limitations of humankind the progressive perspective, no matter how innovative, is bound to fail and likely to increase the fallenness of the human world.

Countering the progressive perspective is the penitent perspective, which aspires for Eden in a spiritual sense. This perspective acknowledges the Fall, Original Sin, and the resultant human limitations yet it still strives to regain Eden through personal penitence and individual action that changes beliefs or actions rather than ceremonial public performances. The penitent perspective is similar to what R.W.B. Lewis calls tragic optimism: “a sense of the tragic collisions to which innocence was liable

(something unthinkable among the hopeful), and equally by an awareness of the heightened perception and humanity which suffering made possible.”⁴⁷ Although it is presumptuous to assume that there is an easy formula to (re)gain Eden – be it mental, spiritual, or physical – this perspective, as Hawthorne presents it, seems to be the only perspective that provides a genuine rise in the moral and actual positions of the characters. Central to Hawthorne’s depiction of the spiritual Eden, available to all, is John Milton’s description of the paradise within, which he describes in *Paradise Lost* as advice given to Adam upon his expulsion and the revelation of the future culminating in the death and Resurrection of Christ:

... Only add
Deeds by thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
By name to come called charity, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shall possess
A paradise within thee, happier far.⁴⁸

The penitent perspective is embodied in the characters of Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hephzibah in *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Donatello and Miriam of *The Marble Faun*. They follow Milton’s advice toward the inner Eden by adding those qualities after first finding both genuine regret and genuine humility – the key ingredients absent from the progressive perspective.

Hester’s adoption of the penitent perspective is made clear throughout the development of *The Scarlet Letter*. The romance is identified by the narrator as “a tale of

human frailty and sorrow,”⁴⁹ which begins with Hester’s guilt and shame displayed to the entire community from the height of the scaffold. Her punishment is to suffer disdain and isolation from the community. Rather than flee her punishment and the judgments she is daily bombarded with she bravely chooses to confront and deal with her sins as best she can: “Here, she said to herself, had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result of martyrdom.”⁵⁰ Unlike those of the progressive perspective she turns inward to find her spiritual redemption. As she tells the community elders who question her ability to be a parent, “this badge hath taught me, — it daily teaches me — it is teaching me at this moment, — lessons whereof my child may be the wiser and better, albeit they can profit nothing to myself.”⁵¹ Her mistakes will be examples for her daughter’s edification; the scarlet letter, forces her to know humility and sorrow, which enable her to transform herself as Milton suggests and achieve the paradise within.

Hester learns and displays the virtues of “strength and generosity,”⁵² which she exhibits by refusing to name her lover. These qualities are reaffirmed throughout the romance as are the virtues of patience and endurance. Throughout her life after the scarlet letter she endured the daily looks, comments, and actions of the community as they repeatedly judged and denounced her as a sinner, without growing angry. Furthermore, because she was outcast she developed an acute sense of compassion for others who were outcast in their own way. Her compassion grew from and fed her own strength and courage as her charitable works were often unappreciated and even resented: “Hester

bestowed all her superfluous means in charity, on wretches less miserable than herself, and who not unfrequently insulted the hand that fed them.”⁵³ Hester, through her understanding of the human condition and her access to the heart of humankind, “was quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of man, whenever benefits were to be conferred. None so ready as she to give of her little substance to every demand of poverty [...] None so self-devoted as Hester, when pestilence stalked through the town.”⁵⁴ Her personal trials and tribulations bring her face-to-face with human limitations, and more importantly, an acceptance of those limitations and a willingness to deal with them by means of her virtues of courage, charity, patience, and love.

Although she was clearly fallen, and while her good deeds did not remove her sin, she was not beyond some degree of redemption. Her good and charitable deeds came from her understanding of the human condition more so than her desire for personal and heavenly redemption. Ironically, over time, her actions changed the way many people saw her:

[Hester] was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy; or, we may rather say, the world’s heavy hand had so ordained her, when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her, — so much power to do, and power to sympathize, — that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman’s strength.”⁵⁵

Her redeeming transformation enables her to challenge and defeat the fiendish efforts of Chillingworth, in addition to securing a positive resolution to the relationships between herself, Pearl, and Dimmesdale.

Hester's ability to find the "paradise within" brings her peace and a satisfaction unavailable to the other characters. Hester, as the conclusion chapter suggests, returns to England where her daughter Pearl enjoys both wealth and a loving husband. Having seen to the prosperity of her daughter, Hester returns to Salem, for "here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be here penitence."⁵⁶ This penitence is encapsulated in service to others, for "as Hester Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble."⁵⁷ Hester, through her nearly lifelong penitence, manages to reach peace within herself as is attested by her ability to continue to serve others long after her public punishment was over. On the other hand, her lover, Dimmesdale is unable to find peace, instead finding "nothing but despair."⁵⁸ He admits to Hester: "Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none!"⁵⁹ He has felt sorrow for his sins, and desired redemption, and inflicted punishments upon himself but all to no avail. Such actions are, in a non-theological sense, penance; but he has not fully confessed his sin nor undergone a truly life changing process as penitence, which Hester has undergone to her benefit. Ultimately, Dimmesdale's sorrow and guilt consumes him and hastens his death.

Eden for Hester can only be a spiritual place, an inner peace and fulfillment that became available to her through her penitence. While her sin is not forgotten, nor ever fully excused, she uses it as the first step in a humbling process of penitence. A process

that, as articulated in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, grows through the addition of virtues that are not selfish – as the first sin, and, for that matter, all others – but selfless in serving God and others. Hester's willingness to confront her sin allows her to become a supporting companion to all others in her community who find themselves lost in confusion, sin, and despair. Her penitential life educates her, as she admits, and instills the requisite virtues of patience, compassion, love, and charity that create the "paradise within."

Hepzibah of *The House of the Seven Gables*, though for different sins, joins Hester as a character embodying the penitent perspective as Hawthorne sees it. The central issue of the text – the crimes and greed of Colonel Pyncheon against the Maule family and their own retaliation, specifically, against Alice Pyncheon – is already detailed in the first part of this chapter. That web of inherited sin and enmity, like Original sin, leads the narrator to ask: "whether each inheritor of the property – conscious of wrong, and failing to rectify it – did not commit anew the great guilt of his ancestor, and incur all its original responsibilities."⁶⁰ The families are disentangled from the inherited enmity primarily because of the efforts of Hepzibah who, in many ways, unintentionally, assumes responsibility and allows for the rectification of past sins. The key to her undoing of the familial curse stems from Hepzibah's defiance of her cousin Jaffrey and her penitent return to society.

Hepzibah's penitence begins with self sacrifice, specifically her sacrifice of the image of herself by stooping to opening a cent-shop and becoming self-sustaining through work. Additionally, this sacrifice allows her to take in Holgrave (a Maule descendent) and Phoebe, thus setting up their romance and the reconciliation of the two

families. Hepzibah, as noted by William B. Dillingham, is “the major symbol of a fallen aristocracy.”⁶¹ As Dillingham explains, “the decline of the Pyncheon aristocracy is indicated in terms of Hepzibah’s having to open a cent-shop in order to earn a livelihood. Hawthorne pictures the old maid sympathetically, but, by placing her in opposition to the life around her, also reveals her emptiness and the necessity of her coming out of her proud shell of tradition.”⁶² This process is admirable because it flies in the face of the social values Hepzibah has. Her act defies the evil of Jaffrey her wealthy and proud cousin and humbles herself before others, but it is no easy feat: “ashamed and penitent, she hid her face.”⁶³ The narrator reveals that “Hepzibah began to fear that the shop would prove her ruin, in a moral and religious point of view, without contributing very essentially towards even her temporal welfare.”⁶⁴ Although her fears are shown to be ill-founded, her agony and anxiety over the direction of her life is palpable. Concomitant with opening the shop is renting a room to Holgrave, who only at the end is revealed to be a Maule descendent. Baym interprets this act as allying her to the Maules: “her tacit alliance with the Maules is also reflected in her sympathy for Holgrave’s radicalism. Notwithstanding her obsession with privacy, she has rented Holgrave a room in one of the gables; she has let him into her space.”⁶⁵ Not only is she humbling herself by working for her living but by returning to sociability, and communing with the larger world outside her previously isolated home.

The acceptance of Holgrave, and then Phoebe Pyncheon, Hepzibah’s country-bred cousin into the accursed house begins the process of reconciliation between the two families. This reconciliation is symbolized by the home’s garden where Holgrave and Phoebe first meet and their romance begins. The garden, like the home and Hepzibah

herself, shows signs of degeneration and disrepair. There is a white rose-bush of “luxurious growth” yet, with closer inspection “had blight or mildew at their hearts; but viewed at a fair distance, the whole rose-bush looked as if it had been brought from Eden, that very summer.”⁶⁶ The fallen, or blighted aspect, of the garden is fully described at the beginning of chapter six:

The black, rich soil had fed itself with the decay of a long period of time; such as fallen leaves, the petals of flowers, and the stalks and seed-vessels of vagrant and lawless plants, more useful after their death, than ever while flaunting in the sun. The evil of these departed years would naturally have sprung up again, in such rank weeds (symbolic of the transmitted vices of society) as are always prone to root themselves about human dwellings.⁶⁷

The garden has deteriorated along with the Pyncheon’s seven gabled mansion but from the decay life has managed to survive, and as is shown, with some cultivation, can thrive once more.

Despite the death and decay that dominates the Pyncheon garden, there is some feeble life hanging on. The appearance of Phoebe at the mansion accelerates the rejuvenation process that had begun recently when Hepzibah decided to take in a boarder, a young man named Holgrave. He “checked by a degree of careful labor”⁶⁸ the growth of weeds in the garden. Likewise, his “care and toil” managed to keep “the soil so clean and orderly.”⁶⁹ Once she appears, and as romance between the two also takes root, the growth of the garden begins. For instance the hop-vine, the bean-vines, and flowers began to grow, which brought bees and hummingbirds into the garden for the first time in decades.

Likewise, the chickens, which had taken to Phoebe's presence, begin to flourish again as one of the hens long unable to lay an egg manages to lay a diminutive egg. The garden – and the household – springs back to life under the combined care of Holgrave and Phoebe. As the narrator remarks:

The author needs great faith in his reader's sympathy; else he must hesitate to give details so minute, and incidents apparently so trifling, as are essential to make up the idea of this garden-life. It was the Eden of a thunder-smitten Adam, who had fled for refuge thither out of the same dreary and perilous wilderness, into which the original Adam was expelled.⁷⁰

Hawthorne, in this passage, specifically acknowledges the loss of the original Eden through Adam's Fall and the possibility of Adam's progeny regaining an Eden after enduring the wilderness of the world. However, such physical Edens are only temporary refuges as is shown when much of the garden is undone by the storm that hits the home during Phoebe's absence. The lasting Eden, as for Milton and as for Hester, must be found within, in the spiritual sense.

The security of the conciliatory efforts of Holgrave and Phoebe rest upon the heroine of the romance: Hepzibah. As noted in an earlier chapter, her name is associated with marriage and the rebirth of the land in Isaiah 62, and she allows such things to happen through her self sacrifice. As Nina Baym argues, "if we take Hepzibah to be the protagonist, and think of the protagonist as heroic, we may then perceive that it is she who ultimately rescues the entire knot of characters from Jaffrey Pyncheon's evil clutches."⁷¹ Jaffrey clashes with Hepzibah three separate times in the romance, the last of

which proves his undoing happens during the storm. Jaffrey's greed and malice threaten to destroy the small community centered in the house of the seven gables. Hephzibah's penitential start to the romance builds her virtues of charity and love and gives her the courage to stand up to Jaffrey – the manifestation of the original Colonel Pyncheon and the curse he provoked – and in the process allow Holgrave and Phoebe to reconcile the inherited family curse.

Hephzibah's self sacrifice is two-fold. First, is her sacrifice of her self-image as a proud and genteel aristocrat above and apart from the larger community. The second and equally admirable sacrifice is her ironic courage in risking herself to protect her enfeebled brother Clifford from Jaffrey's menacing visits. The clashes between Hephzibah and Jaffrey are ironic in that he is a physically strong and socially powerful man who nevertheless is repeatedly challenged by an old lady who is physically and socially weak. She identifies him with the original colonel Pyncheon come again perhaps even so much so as "to draw down a new curse!"⁷² She sees through his façade and knows him to be vile and greedy and a genuine threat to both herself and Clifford. When Jaffrey first comes to visit Clifford, which will no doubt trouble the sensitive aesthete on account of Jaffrey framing Clifford for the murder of their uncle, Hephzibah barred his way. But the narrator betrays the truth that "the native timorousness of her character even now developed itself, in a quick tremor, which to her own perception, set each of her joints at variance with its fellow."⁷³ Despite her fear "Hephzibah spread her gaunt figure across the door, and seemed really to increase in bulk; looking more terrible, also, because there was so much terror and agitation in her heart."⁷⁴ And even after repelling Jaffrey's attempts to interrogate Clifford as to the location of the fabled lost family treasure

Hepzibah remains terrified. She confides to Phoebe, “that man has been the horror of my life! Shall I never, never have the courage – will my voice never cease from trembling long enough – to let me tell him what he is!”⁷⁵ Despite her fear and her weakness Hepzibah is steadfast in her defense of Clifford and her repugnance for the crimes of Jaffrey, and by extension, of the long deceased Colonel.

The final confrontation between Hepzibah and Jaffrey occurs during the storm that disrupts the garden. Jaffrey lets himself into the home and once again attempts to interrogate Clifford over the lost land deed. (Similarly, the Grimalkin hunting the chickens during the storm is symbolic of Jaffrey’s stalking of Hepzibah and Clifford.) Despite his efforts to persuade Hepzibah she declares her devotion to Clifford’s cause and finally gives voice to her judgment of Jaffrey:

In God’s name, whom you insult – and whose power I could almost question, sine He hears you utter so many false words, without palsyng your tongue – give over, I beseech you, this loathsome pretence of affection for your victim! You hate him! Say so, like a man! You cherish, at this moment, some black purpose against him, in your heart!⁷⁶

Unfortunately for Hepzibah, Jaffrey remains undaunted by her outburst, and in fact he seems something of an “iron man”⁷⁷ in his purpose to discover the lost deed. His purposes will be aided or he will use his considerable power to return Clifford to prison, a proposition that cripples Hepzibah’s physical defiance. However, she does manage to pronounce a final judgment upon Jaffrey – “God is looking at you, Jaffrey Pyncheon!”⁷⁸ – which proves to anger Jaffrey so much as to cause, medically at least, the reappearance of the familial curse of apoplexy. Jaffrey dies, as his ancestor the Colonel does, drinking

his own blood. Her defeat of Jaffrey is aided by outside forces – medical or divine, as you will – but it is founded in her humble yet fierce devotion to her brother. By placing Clifford above her self, Hepzibah managed to defeat Jaffrey and stem the continuance of the evil obsession that plagued the Pyncheon family.

Hepzibah's penitence leads her to sacrifice her self-image, despite her fear and weakness, through both defying Jaffrey and earning her own living. As Baym makes clear, "Hepzibah has no 'great end in view' and plays no part she would recognize in liberating Pyncheons, Maules, Uncle Venner – humankind, one might say – from bondage. Even so, things happen because of what she does."⁷⁹ Her actions are those of an individual confronting her situation in the world, not of someone seeking to perform a public ceremony – a penance along the lines the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale. This is a lonely, subjective situation to be in and Hepzibah's sacrifice is noble despite its often ironic presentation. Alfred J. Levy suggests that "a fundamental theme reveals that the past bequeaths a heritage that cannot be denied; nevertheless, the past need not dominate the present."⁸⁰ Hepzibah is fully aware of the past, and, in fact, her life is beholden to it until her defiance of Jaffrey, and in choosing to take ownership of the present through her self-sacrifice she restores dignity to herself and, perhaps most importantly, to her immediate family. This obsession with the past is what corrupts and, in effect, undoes Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon. Hepzibah while acknowledging the past but choosing the present secures the future; for though she did not intend such things to happen, the Maule and Pyncheon family are reconciled through the marriage of Holgrave and Phoebe thus ending the curse, and through Jaffrey's death they inherit his wealth and are able to retire to his country estate which, it is implied, shall be Edenic as the Pyncheon garden was

before. Nina Baym agrees that “there is both a disjunction and a connection between private acts and historical progress. Progress occurs in a manner the private individual can’t predict, in a time frame the individual can’t control. But if no one ever performs a benevolent private act, there will be no progress.”⁸¹

The penitent perspective favors this approach to life: awareness of the past, preference for the present, penitence for past guilts, and self sacrifice. Penitence is truly humbling, (as is shown in Hawthorne’s use of the word to describe Hepzibah in the romance), which is of the utmost importance as it maintains human dignity and encourages self sacrifice. Pride, too often the antithesis of self-sacrifice, encourages selfish behavior which obstructs the humility and self sacrifice necessary to release humankind from the bond of the past and thus open up the possibility of a return to Eden. Hepzibah’s humility, her renunciation of past sins, and her courageous love gives the necessary strength to her tragic optimism, which leads her to the “paradise within.” From the moment she becomes penitent, in Hawthorne’s view, she begins rebuilding her life based on new values and virtues in opposition to the inherited pride that began all the troubles initially. As with Hester, Hepzibah becomes a pillar of strength for others and, intentionally or not, nurtures positive virtues in those around her, and from such self-less actions finds herself at peace and prospering her new life.

Eden and the Fall are much more overt as themes in *The Marble Faun*, the imagery of which is throughout the romance and so much of the criticism that it does not require repetition of the obvious, or previously stated, here. For, as Sheldon Liebman states, “the most obvious motif of Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun* is the Fall myth. Eden and Paradise are mentioned over and over again, and the similarity between Donatello

and Miriam, on the one hand, and Adam and Eve, on the other, is at least implicit in the novel.”⁸² And, Sidney Moss confirms:

As every reader of *The Marble Faun* knows, the romance is a modern retelling of the Genesis story. Miriam, for example, points out to Kenyon, “The story of the fall of man! Is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni?” [...] Thus we witness Adam-Donatello’s fall from paradisiacal innocence by the violation of a taboo (a crime in this instance, his murder of Miriam’s model), ambiguously tempted by Eve-Miriam – a fall that gives Donatello a moral sense that he did not have before and that initiates him, for better or for worse, into the human drama of sin and suffering.⁸³

With the fact of Eden and the Fall being easily and fully established in the text the focus naturally turns to the question of whether the Fall is fortunate, whether Eden can be regained?

The question of Eden and the possibility of the Fall being fortunate is fully articulated in *The Marble Faun*. As the four characters begin to become reconciled to one another again, Miriam confides, joyously, to Kenyon and Hilda that Donatello is “so changed, yet still, in a deeper sense, so much the same!”⁸⁴ She explains her thoughts tremulously, “was the crime – in which he and I were wedded – was it a blessing in that strange disguise? Was it a means of education, bringing a simple and imperfect nature to a point of feeling and intelligence, which it could have reached under no other discipline?”⁸⁵ (This sentiment is very similar to that of R.W.B. Lewis’s conception of tragic optimism, which he uses in describing Hawthorne’s work). Her flirtation with the acceptance of the *felix culpa* worries Kenyon and Hilda; yet Miriam persists, asking “was

that very sin – into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race – was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright grave? Will not this idea account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can?”⁸⁶ While the idea of the *felix culpa* is broached it is never fully embraced or denied, which leads to some critical controversy identified by Sidney Moss as regarding “whether (1) Hawthorne accepted the doctrine of the fortunate fall, whether (2) he rejected the doctrine, whether (3) he suffered a failure of conviction in treating the question, or whether (4) he deliberately left his answer ambiguous.”⁸⁷ The first three options identified by Moss are too one-sided for an author who clearly considered humankind to be a mixture of many impulses and qualities. The fourth option sounds too vague, as if Hawthorne left it ambiguous as part of an artistic ploy rather than for ideological conviction. Miriam’s statements and the critical dialogue, for Moss, “tends to be driven unawares to extreme answers – either that the fall was entirely fortunate or entirely unfortunate. Such a proposition is neither good logic nor good Hawthorne and should make us suspicious.”⁸⁸

Moss is correct in his suspicions. Hawthorne’s writing – both personal and professional – explores what it is to be human and invariably expresses the fact that humans have both good and bad qualities, both good and bad impulses, which do not allow for perspectives that ignore this essential truth of humankind. Perspectives that are too fixated on human depravity or too confident in human goodness and ingenuity (as expressed in the progressive perspective) ignore the reality of being human, and thus through the limitations of such perspectives no real progress – moral or otherwise – can be achieved. Therefore, as Hawthorne suggests through his writing in general and *The*

Marble Faun specifically, sin exists and the Fall is neither entirely defeating nor entirely fortunate but rather something to be dealt with accordingly. As Hilda exclaims to Miriam after the crime: “now I understand how the sins of generations past have created an atmosphere of sin for those that follow! While there is a single guilty person in the universe, each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt.”⁸⁹ Hawthorne sees a world in which sin has entered into long ago, the issue is not so much that it exists but how an individual reacts to its existence. Josiah Royce’s “The Knowledge of Good and Evil” articulates the situation that appears so often in Hawthorne’s fiction. In his article Royce explains:

Moral goodness, as an attainment, is doubtless something very different from innocence. And attained goodness is only won through a conflict with the forces of evil, which involves a pretty deep knowledge of evil. But knowledge of evil, in us men (and for excellent “psychological” reasons, too), frequently leads to sin, and very commonly does so, in any given individual, before it actually leads the individual himself to the possible goodness that lies for him beyond and above his knowledge of evil.⁹⁰

This struggle is integral to Hawthorne and is epitomized in the experience of Donatello and Miriam who learn that the Eden and the Fall are not simply single events at the dawn of humankind and history but repeated events occurring in every life.

This idea is expressed in *The House of the Seven Gables* when the Pyncheon garden is referred to as a new Eden for a “thunder-smitten Adam” and comes to equally

full expression in *The Marble Faun*. The narrator, while discussing Hilda's reaction to Miriam after the crime, observes that

The young and pure are not apt to find out that miserable truth, until it is brought home to them by the guiltiness of some trusted friend. They may have heard much of the evil of the world, and seem to know it, but only as an impalpable theory. 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.⁹¹

With each new 'Fall,' the Eden Adam believes himself to have recovered is lost until a new one is to be found; and as *The Marble Faun* makes clear, "every crime destroys more Edens than our own!"⁹² While one Eden is forever lost to knowledge gained from an experience, others, like the "paradise within," may open up along the lines of moral wisdom as Royce previously established. As Royce states, "to become morally wise, for instance (if moral wisdom involves an understanding of moral issues), involves becoming acquainted with impurity."⁹³ This knowledge allows for a genuine moral choice, which leads Royce to determine that "it is of the essence of moral goodness that positively good deeds should be the result of what we call choice, – that is, that morality should be a matter not of fate but of consciousness."⁹⁴

The question remains as to the Fall, as to the consciousness of Donatello and Miriam, and as to whether their experience is fortunate. "In general," Royce contends, it is not our "virtue that is responsible for our ignorance, but rather our inevitable ignorance

of life that limits the scope of our virtues.”⁹⁵ Such is the penitent perspective in Hawthorne’s fiction. Sin is an unavoidable fact, because it exists in the world if not in one’s own heart, and that existence, however far or near, requires effort from each individual to attain moral goodness and the widest possible scope for their virtues. This is the case for Hester, for Hepzibah, and finally, for Donatello and Miriam. Sorrow and humility are the foundations upon which virtues will be added and the end result will be akin to Milton’s “paradise within.” The penitent perspective is the perspective that best allows for this process to occur successfully. Penance, if thought of outside any particular theology, expresses the desire to be forgiven and may follow with some minor punishment. Penitence, however, is not simply the desire to be forgiven or the endurance of some disciplinary action; it is a genuine humility, accompanied by painful regret and sorrow for sin. Penitence arrives through a full face-to-face encounter with sin that should remove the ignorance and thus the limitations to a person’s virtues, which may in fact open up the gates to a new Eden.

Penitence takes a central role in the post-lapsarian lives of Donatello and Miriam. After retreating to his familial estates upon Monte Beni, Donatello is shown as extremely penitent and considered to have “an altered and deepened character; it told of a vivified intellect, and of spiritual instruction that had come through sorrow and remorse.”⁹⁶ Such changes affect Miriam who also, perhaps more gradually, “remorsefully questioned with herself” and asks of Donatello, “what repentance, what self-sacrifice, can atone for that infinite wrong?”⁹⁷ What Miriam learns, as the book progresses, is that penitence and self-sacrifice will atone for their crime and bring peace to them in this world. Kenyon, advising them in their plight, warns the pair that they are bonded “for mutual support”

and “for effort, for sacrifice, but not for earthly happiness!”⁹⁸ He explains to them that “if, out of toil, sacrifice, prayer, penitence, and earnest effort toward right things, there comes, at length, a somber and thoughtful happiness, taste it, and thank Heaven!”⁹⁹

Kenyon’s warning contains within it all the values espoused in the penitent perspective, and all the values absent from the works crafted in the Puritanical perspective or the progressive humanist perspective.

Penitence as Hawthorne describes it through Kenyon is difficult and a life-consuming perspective. If maintained genuinely throughout life, then such “somber and thoughtful happiness” seems inevitable, if Hepzibah and her immediate circle are taken as proof. Miriam relates of her haunting model that “nothing was stranger in his dark career, than the penitence which seemed to go hand in hand with crime. Since his death, she had ascertained that it finally lead him to a convent, where his severe and self-inflicted penances had ever acquired him the reputation of unusual sanctity.”¹⁰⁰ His attempt at penitence quickly deteriorates into penance, which is much more admirable to the populace though less reformatory or instructional for the moral growth of the individual, and he falls repeatedly back into his criminal ways. Miriam and Donatello, however, are genuine and devoted to their penitence. Hilda and Kenyon discover Miriam in a veiled garb a “penitent, kneeling on the pavement just beneath the central Eye, in the very spot which Kenyon had designated as the only one whence prayers should ascend.”¹⁰¹ Miriam and Donatello are joined in sin and penitence and the actions of one reflect the actions of the other as does the consequences of those actions. As Kenyon, in reference to Donatello, notes, “he perpetrated a great crime; and his remorse, gnawing into his soul, has awakened it; developing a thousand high capabilities, moral and

intellectual.”¹⁰² The awakening – that is, the moral growth – in Donatello and Miriam leads them to don penitent garbs together and even leads Donatello to turning himself in to the authorities so that proper justice and punishment may occur, while Miriam most likely waits for him no less penitent than before his conviction.

The Marble Faun does not necessarily make any overt efforts to guarantee that Donatello and Miriam have regained Eden; however, there is a conspicuous absence of threat and failure as found in the works of the progressive humanistic perspective. The toil Kenyon mentions as requisite for Donatello and Miriam’s atonement is inseparable from their penitence, from their self sacrifice, and this appears to be a better answer to God’s curse of toil upon humankind at Adam’s expulsion than simply working on a farm as the Blithedaleers interpret it. Penitence, as found in Hawthorne’s treatments of Hepzibah, Donatello, Miriam, and even Hester, makes individuals humble before God without debasing their humanity. It makes them not simply suffer in remorse and sorrow but change their ways and attempt to improve themselves and the world around them by placing others, by placing love, before themselves. The self-sacrifice that stems from their penitence provides their stories with the sense of a rising action, that the characters, fallen as they are, can attain moral goodness and moral wisdom. Thus there is a “somber and thoughtful happiness” that closes *The Marble Faun*, which we can sense, as Kenyon suggested, comes from Heaven on behalf of the genuine penitence exhibited and provides an “Eden within.”

Conclusion: Moral Growth in the Gardens

The three biblical gardens re-imagined in Hawthorne's fiction share common features beyond pastoral imagery. Every garden is held to be a special place, in some cases sacred; yet, Hawthorne's gardens inevitably become moral battlegrounds echoing the experience of the first humans in the first garden. This is reflected in Hawthorne's letters and journals, where he expressed the realization that one cannot always remain in the garden but must engage in the struggles of humankind in the larger world from time to time. The trick, it would appear, is for the garden to be within as suggested in *Paradise Lost*. Hawthorne, unlike his influences (Bunyan, Milton, and Spenser) is less concerned with theology proper than with moral growth. Melvin W. Askew explains that "pre-eminently," for Hawthorne, "the fall is intimate and personal, and its ramifications are worked out in the personal life-experience and existence of the fallen. And its greatest significance is the influence it exerts in the conduct and quality of that specific, individual life. The fall of man, then, freed from theology, becomes a figure of speech, a trope, a myth in Hawthorne's fiction for a universal human circumstance."¹⁰³ Humankind contains both good and bad, there is sin in a decent world, these opposing entities must be reconciled and must be ordered. This is clear in Hawthorne's fiction, and, as Royce believes, "this must be the case, not because of the weakness of man, but because of the organic dignity and consequent complexity of virtue; and not because the moral world is a mere maze of perplexing confusions, but because the very principle of every organic life is the combination in harmony of opposing tendencies."¹⁰⁴ Royce, like Askew and, ultimately, Hawthorne, argues that "moral choice is an inner one; the rejected alternative is not an external enemy but an internal 'spring of action.'"¹⁰⁵ Although this makes the

human condition and experience difficult, it is not hopeless because “the knowledge and presence of evil form, in very manifold and complex ways, a moment in the consciousness and in the life of goodness.”¹⁰⁶ As Hawthorne himself often states in his personal writings, “man’s accidents are God’s purposes,” a sentiment found throughout the Bible.*

Roy R. Male declares that “Hawthorne possessed what one of his friends called “the awful power of insight,” and his fiction remains valuable chiefly because of its penetration into the essential truths of the human heart. His one fruitful subject was the problem of moral growth.”¹⁰⁷ The story of Naboth’s vineyard, of Susanna and the elders, of the Garden of Eden are all used by Hawthorne to illustrate the need for moral growth and its challenges. As seen in the many stories I have identified as being of the progressive perspective, people are very skilled at concocting short cuts; however, as in those works, such *Celestial Rail-roads* will never move people to the right destinations. Moral growth is spurred by the daily, perhaps even hourly, decisions to do what is right rather than what is easy or popular. God, in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, says of humans that they were created “sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.”¹⁰⁸ Hawthorne’s writing supports this view, and his use of the gardens establishes the fact that standing is a daily task and challenge over a lifetime. Roy Male states: “The temporal interval between the sin and the redemption, Adam’s crime and Christ’s atonement, is crucially important. If obliterated, it leads to the fallacious formula of the Fortunate Fall. Hawthorne believed

* See: Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Chiefly About War Matters* and also *American Notebooks*; Brenda Wineapple’s *Hawthorne, A Life*; as well as James K. Folsom’s *Man’s Accidents and God’s Purposes: Multiplicity in Hawthorne’s Fiction*. For biblical examples see following, representative verses: Isaiah 45:7: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” 1 Corinthians 4:5: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

that moral growth cannot occur without sin and suffering; he never accepted [...] that sin is automatically redemptive.”¹⁰⁹ The key to such moral growth comes from acknowledging sin, then life-changing penitence and, finally, to the “paradise within.”

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- ¹ Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, xi
² *Ibid.*, 32
³ S. Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry*, 109
⁴ *Ibid.*, 124
⁵ *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:5
⁶ *Ibid.*, 6
⁷ *Ibid.*, 7
⁸ *Ibid.*
⁹ *Ibid.*
¹⁰ *Ibid.*
¹¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:8
¹² *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:9
¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.
¹⁴ Poggioli, “Naboth’s Vineyard or the Pastoral View of the Social Order,” 7-8
¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7
¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8
¹⁷ Baris, “Giovanni’s Garden: Hawthorne’s Hope for America,” 81
¹⁸ “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” X:127
¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120
²⁰ *Ibid.*, 118
²¹ *Ibid.*, 119
²² “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” X:103
²³ *Ibid.*, 105
²⁴ *Ibid.*, 112
²⁵ *Ibid.*, 123
²⁶ *Ibid.*, 124
²⁷ *Ibid.*, 127
²⁸ *Ibid.*, 122
²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126
³⁰ *Ibid.*, 128
³¹ Fogle, *Hawthorne’s Fiction: The Light & the Dark*, 91
³² *Ibid.*, 93
³³ *Ibid.*, 92
³⁴ Waggoner, *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, 209
³⁵ Normand, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, 57
³⁶ J. Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography*, 215-216
³⁷ *The American Notebooks*, VIII: 331-332
³⁸ Waggoner, *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, 1
³⁹ “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” X:110
⁴⁰ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:19
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 206
⁴² Male, *Hawthorne’s Tragic Vision*, 141
⁴³ *Ibid.*, 155
⁴⁴ Folsom, *Man’s Accidents and God’s Purposes: Multiplicity in Hawthorne’s Fiction*, 27
⁴⁵ Doubleday, “Hawthorne’s Criticism of New England Life,” 640
⁴⁶ *Life of Franklin Pierce*, XXIII:352
⁴⁷ Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, 7-8

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- 48 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, XII.581-587
49 *The Scarlet Letter*, I:48
50 *Ibid.*, 80
51 *Ibid.*, 111
52 *Ibid.*, 68
53 *Ibid.*, 83
54 *Ibid.*, 160-161
55 *Ibid.*, 161
56 *Ibid.*, 263
57 *Ibid.*
58 *Ibid.*, 191
59 *Ibid.*, 192
60 *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:20
61 Dillingham, "Structure and Theme in *The House of the Seven Gables*," 63
62 *Ibid.*, 61
63 *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:55
64 *Ibid.*, 55
65 Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 613
66 *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:71
67 *Ibid.*, 86
68 *Ibid.*
69 *Ibid.*, 87
70 *Ibid.*, 150
71 Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 609
72 *The House of the Seven Gables*, II:59
73 *Ibid.*, 127
74 *Ibid.*, 129
75 *Ibid.*, 131
76 *Ibid.*, 228
77 *Ibid.*, 232
78 *Ibid.*, 238
79 Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 616
80 Levy, "*The House of the Seven Gables: The Religion of Love*," 191
81 Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 616-617
82 Liebman, "The Design of *The Marble Faun*," 62
83 Moss, "The Problem of Theme in *The Marble Faun*," 393
84 *The Marble Faun*, IX:434
85 *Ibid.*
86 *Ibid.*, 434-435
87 Moss, "The Problem of Theme in *The Marble Faun*," 393
88 *Ibid.*, 395
89 *The Marble Faun*, IV:212
90 Royce, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," 49-50
91 *The Marble Faun*, IV:204
92 *Ibid.*, 212
93 Royce, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," 54
94 *Ibid.*, 57
95 *Ibid.*, 64
96 *The Marble Faun*, IV:320
97 *Ibid.*
98 *Ibid.*, 322
99 *Ibid.*
100 *Ibid.*, 432
101 *Ibid.*, 459
102 *Ibid.*, 460

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- ¹⁰³ Askew, "Hawthorne, the Fall, and the Psychology of Maturity," 336
¹⁰⁴ Royce, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," 56
¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 57
¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 69
¹⁰⁷ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 6
¹⁰⁸ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III.98-99
¹⁰⁹ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 9

CHAPTER 5

BIBLICAL THEMES: DEVILISH ADVERSARIES

The presence of the devil is implicated in a great many of Hawthorne's works and suggests levels of understanding and experience beyond those of his Puritan ancestors. William Stein contends that for Hawthorne "the devil is a myth: Black Man, Satan, Old Nick, Old Scratch, Beelzebub – whatever his disguise at given moment – he is the reflection of the dark shadows that invade the sunlight of human life. He is the necessary evil in the equation of human destiny. [...] he represents the impetus that propels history through its rhythm of rise and fall, of conquest and defeat."¹ I agree that Hawthorne utilizes the devil as a literary character, a mythic and archetypal figure to evoke doubt, dread, and, ideally, self-reflection; yet, the devil, for all his mutability and literary qualities, is still real for Hawthorne.* However, the figure of the devil both in Hawthorne's fiction and the Bible itself is varied. In regards to the biblical presentation of the devil – be it as Satan, Leviathan, possessing devils, the serpent – there is an evolution from the Old Testament through the New Testament, as well as traditions established outside of the Bible during the formation of the early church. Initially, as Neil Forsyth points out:

In Job the Satan is still in God's service; he roams [...] and strolls about with God's permission. Furthermore, it is Yahweh whom Job compares to

* Cotton Mather wrote in his "Addresses to old men, and young men, and little children..." (1690) that "we are to look upon the *Devils* as a *Wicked One*. That there are *Devils* in the world, is unquestionable" (54).

a lion stalking his prey. But by the time we reach the New Testament, the adversary has become entirely separate from Yahweh, an independent threat for the faithful to beware. Peter has no need to explain further, for by then everyone knew about the devil – to be on guard.²

This evolution not only requires clarification as to which incarnation of the Adversary is being invoked but also, and much more importantly, forces the question of the origin of sin and evil. When Jesus exorcises devils from people in the Gospels the question can be raised: did the devils “break in” to the victim as independent external beings of evil, or were they “invited in” by the presence of sin? The exorcisms “and the Eden story suggests the same dilemma: the serpent is within the garden, but is it therefore within Adam and Eve, or in the maker of the garden – in God himself? Such problems are the stuff of theology and the main source of strife within the developing Christian church.”³

While Hawthorne shies away from overt or orthodox theological doctrine he does immerse himself in the question of the origin of such sin and evil, though, of more importance to Hawthorne is the reaction to the presence of sin and evil in the world.

Richard H. Fogle recognized this aspect of Hawthorne’s fiction as well. His understanding of Hawthorne’s outlook leads to the same questions evoked by the ambiguities surrounding sin, evil and the devil:

The philosophy of Hawthorne is a broadly Christian scheme which contains heaven, earth, and hell. Whether heaven and hell are realities or only subjective states of mind is one of Hawthorne’s crucial ambiguities. I do not call him a Christian humanist, as do some excellent critics, for it seems to me that heaven and hell *are* real to him and play too large a part

in his fiction to be relegated to the background. In his mixed macrocosm, man is a microcosm also mixed. Man's chief temptation is to forget his limits and complexities, to think himself all good, or to think himself all bad. Either way he falls into spiritual isolation and pride. He needs a proper mixture of the earthly and the ideal.⁴

This mixture of good and bad, of earthly and ideal, within humanity creates ambiguity in regards to the presence of Satan the Adversary. Hawthorne's sinners and villains are quite often characterized by the following observation from "Young Goodman Brown": "the fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man,"⁵ which maintains the ambiguous relationship between humans and the devil, and the question of where the power lies. Nevertheless, legitimately satanic adversaries exist in the realm of Hawthorne's fiction.

"The essential role of Satan is opposition," according to Forsyth, who notes that both the names for Satan in the "Hebrew word *stn* and the Greek *diabolos* have root meanings akin to that of the English word "opponent" – someone or something in the way, a stumbling block."⁶ Forsyth notes that in regards to the use of *stn* in the Old Testament "the assumption is usually that the path is right and the opponent is wrong."⁷ Hawthorne tends to adjust this in his fiction. Primarily, the initial conflicts – desire, frustration, confusion, and strife – are internal, but sin and evil are fostered and coaxed out of the protagonist by a satanic adversary, whose opposition and "stumbling block" attributes are meant to steer the protagonist away from remorse and repentance that will lead to a positive change in behavior. That is, in Hawthorne's works the characters often begin down the wrong path easily, but the opposition arises most powerfully as the

characters consider trying to regain the right path they originally lost on their own. Either way, as is warned repeatedly in the New Testament, and specifically in 1 Timothy 3:7, all must be wary of falling into “the snare of the devil.”

While Hawthorne presents sin in all of his characters, not all sinners are villains nor are all villains devils, as Sister Jane Marie Luecke determines in her article “Villains and Non-Villains in Hawthorne’s Fiction.” However, there are devilish adversaries aplenty in Hawthorne’s fiction. In “Young Goodman Brown” and *The Blithedale Romance* we find serpents in pastoral-garden settings bringing temptation and causing chaos. Additionally, Hawthorne shows devils on parade in “Earth’s Holocaust,” “My Kinsman Major Molineux,” and “The Celestial Rail-road” that do not necessarily spread evil upon the earth but revel in the chaos and moral misdirection thriving in the world. Lastly, there are manifest devils in “Ethan Brand,” *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The Marble Faun*. The manifest devils in these works are true villains because Ethan Brand, Roger Chillingworth, and the Mad Shadow are each persons of “depraved and malevolent character devoted to base or evil acts,” and each one “deliberately plots and does serious harm to others.”⁸ Although the devilish adversaries that populate Hawthorne’s fiction are not all the same in their methods or their power, all are determined to undermine attempts at moral righteousness by exploiting the ambiguous mixture of good and bad within all human beings.

Serpents in the Gardens

Initially the serpent of the Genesis 3 account of the Garden of Eden is just that, a serpent. The serpent appears in the Garden of Eden narrative of Genesis 3:1 as “more

subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” This subtle serpent proceeds to speak to Eve and tempt her to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The serpent’s argument centers on the claim that the fruit is forbidden because “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Eve, of course, shares the fruit with Adam and both are punished by God with mortality, toil and pain, as well as expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:14-15 the serpent is also punished: “the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” While the early Christian church establishes the tradition of Satan’s possession of the serpent in order to engineer the Fall, the Genesis account does not intimate that event. Regardless of whether or not the serpent was Satan in disguise, the two are forever linked in image and in deed. And, although the serpent’s motive for tempting Eve and contradicting God is not established in Genesis 3, opposition to God’s plan and his followers is easily established through the aforementioned evolution of Satan from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The tempting serpentine adversary of Genesis is embodied in the devil of “Young Goodman Brown” and Westervelt of *The Blithedale Romance*.

Young Goodman Brown ventures into the woods outside of Salem in the middle of the night upon an “errand”⁹ of unstated purpose that places him in direct contact with the devil. Although the devil’s real identity is not confirmed until later in the story it is

hinted at from his first appearance as the mysterious “figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree”¹⁰ along the dark path Brown is walking. The man who joins Brown’s errand is equipped with a staff that “bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.”¹¹ The serpentine staff has a subtle sense of menace about it and the narrator soon refers to the figure as “he of the serpent.”¹² Such associations with the serpent and Brown’s own unease around his companion arouse suspicions in the readers who sense the danger of this mysterious figure. As foretold in Genesis 3:15 there is to be eternal enmity between humankind and serpents. This conflict takes on another dimension in the warnings of Revelation 12:9 in which “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” is “cast out into the earth” where he has ample opportunity to tempt, corrupt, and destroy unwary and unbelieving people.

The serpent staff comes into play elsewhere in the story and providing not just more biblical echoes but moral substance. While walking with the devil Brown sees an elderly lady, Goody Cloyse, on the road ahead of them. Afraid of being seen by her he hides and witnesses her interaction with his companion, whom she correctly identifies as the devil. To help hurry her on her way to the witch-meeting in the heart of the woods the devil offers her his staff: “he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian Magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance.”¹³ This explicitly brings the episode of Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh to mind. In Exodus 7:10 while attempting to gain the Pharaoh’s permission to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, Moses and

Aaron attempt to show God's power by casting down Aaron's rod, which "became a serpent." However, the Pharaoh counters by calling his Magi who "did in like manner with their enchantments" and "cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents" (Exod. 7:11-12). Hawthorne's narrator suggests that the devil gave such power to the Egyptian Magi, but if so, the Bible demonstrates God's power because in the Exodus account "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exod. 7:12). The devil (i.e. the pagan powers) lose in the Bible; however, in "Young Goodman Brown" the devil's serpent devours all else that would leave hope in goodness or God available to Brown. The devil's subtle words gradually encourage Brown to despair of God, to give "vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy," which causes the narrator to lament that "the fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man."¹⁴

By venturing into the dark wilderness – the dangerous world into which Adam and Eve were thrust outside the walls of Eden – Brown makes himself vulnerable to the devious efforts of "that old serpent." In meeting with the devil Brown violates basic warnings found in the New Testament. 1 Peter 5:8 warns "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," imagery that fits for the dark figure who was laying in wait upon the dark path Brown was walking. This is exacerbated by Brown's consenting to not simply walk a ways with the devil but to engage him in conversation. In doing so, Brown gives "place to the devil," which is warned against in Ephesians 4:27. Furthermore, having chosen to venture into the woods – the devil's lair – and choosing to allow the devil to be his walking companion Brown has refused to "put on the armour of God" and thus is, ultimately, unable "to stand against the wiles of the devil" as stated in Ephesians 6:11. For the devil

begins to speak with Brown about the Salem community, New England, and even Brown's own family, subtly revealing the sin and corruption that not only exists but thrives beneath the righteous façade of Puritan New England. By exposing such "wickedness"¹⁵ in Brown's ancestry and community the devil slowly convinces Brown to believe and declare that "there is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! for to thee is this world given."¹⁶ Once convinced of that there is no good and that the devil has total power over the earth Brown is fully in "the snare of the devil," (1 Tim. 3:7) which leads to Brown's satanic baptism into sin at the close of the story.

While the wilderness setting and the proximity of the devil to Brown evokes the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by the Satan in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, it is not a perfect match in that the devil has not truly tempted Brown with gifts. That tactic, perhaps, would be too easy for Brown to recognize and reject. Instead the devil takes an almost disinterested tone and casually undermines the righteousness of Brown's community allowing Brown himself to decide to forsake his belief in God. "Young Goodman Brown" appears to be an expanded and detailed depiction of the parable of the sower and his seed explained by Jesus in Luke 8:15. The seed, which is the word of God, lands in different places with different degrees of success in taking root and growing. In Luke 8:15 Jesus explains that "those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Brown is such a one as this who was heard the word of God but, while wandering in the wayside of the woods, allowed the devil to take the words away and with them all hope of salvation. Brown, upon his return to Salem, rejected the community who after his death "carved no hopeful verse upon his tomb-stone; for his dying hour was gloom."¹⁷

In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Paul tells the congregation “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Paul’s concern in this epistle is false teachings, a threat Brown falls victim to as well. The devil uses his subtlety and wiles to corrupt Brown through revelations that play upon Brown’s doubts and fears: “Depending upon one another’s hearts, ye had still hoped, that virtue were not all a dream. Now ye are undeceived! Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome, again, my children, to the communion of your race!”¹⁸ In “Young Goodman Brown,” Salem, an attempted “garden” in the wilderness, is shown to be infiltrated by the serpent once again, and Brown, an everyman of the community, is seduced into sin and despair through the devil’s wiles.

Westervelt, although a rather periphery character in *The Blithedale Romance*, is another serpent in the garden. Whereas Salem is founded as a home to Puritans from which to spread the Gospel to the heathens, Blithedale is founded as an attempt at a renewed paradise. And despite the Blithedalers attempts to establish boundaries like those between Eden and the wild, those between Blithedale and the fallen world are in fact nonexistent. Coverdale takes pride in “travelling far beyond the strike of the city-clocks, through a drifting snow-storm”¹⁹ to enter Blithedale. He, like the rest, believes himself outside the reach of time and social sin by his removal to the farm; however, the walls of separation are imaginary. The community is constantly visited by well-wishers, doubters, and converts. One visitor is the mysterious Westervelt who appears to Coverdale in the woods at the edge of Blithedale. Before his physical traits are detailed, he is described as having an “unseasonable voice” with displeasing tone and offensive sarcasm.²⁰ The

man's countenance "had an indecorum in it, a kind of rudeness."²¹ The man's hair and eyes were coal black and his teeth "remarkably brilliant."²² Additionally, Westervelt claims to be a professor and to prove so to Coverdale he puts "on a pair of spectacles, which so altered the character of his face that I hardly knew him again."²³ The suspicious appearance of Westervelt, specifically its apparent mutability, disconcerts Coverdale who may perhaps be remembering Paul's warning in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that "Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of light" in order to deceive and corrupt the world.

This warning is especially pertinent because Westervelt's "black eyes sparkled [...] as if the Devil were peeping out of them,"²⁴ confirming Coverdale's distaste. Later in the story Coverdale chances to observe Westervelt through a window in town; upon recognition Westervelt smiles, which this time, reveals to Coverdale a gold band indicating his brilliant white teeth are fake. As with the spectacles and the jet black hair, Westervelt appears to be entirely false. Coverdale remarks, still with distaste, "every human being, when given over to the Devil, is sure to have the wizard mark upon him, in one form or another. I fancied that this smile, with its peculiar revelation, was the Devil's signet on the Professor."²⁵ Further associating this man with the Devil is his walking stick, like that of the devil in "Young Goodman Brown," which had "a wooden head, carved in vivid imitation of that of a serpent."²⁶ In all, the sudden appearance of Westervelt, his subtle mutability, and his staff suggest a malign power in disguise.

Coverdale reflects upon that first meeting that Westervelt represented "worldly society at large, where a cold skepticism smothers what it can of our spiritual aspirations, and makes the rest ridiculous. I detested this kind of man, and all the more, because a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him"²⁷ Westervelt, the devilish adversary

of Coverdale, Zenobia, and Priscilla, is the purveyor of worldly wants and other petty desires. The earthly and the bad impulses within Coverdale are indeed responsive to Westervelt's outlook and values, and Coverdale must make a concerted effort to stave off the effects of his contact with Westervelt, who's attitude had quickly begun to tint Coverdale's perspective of the Blithedale endeavor.²⁸ However, Coverdale is not Westervelt's intended victim; like the original serpent in the Garden of Eden, Westervelt seeks to speak with Zenobia – the Eve of *The Blithedale Romance*. The original serpent offered knowledge rivaling that of God, in the Gospels Satan offers Jesus all the powers and wealth of the earth,* Westervelt has arrived with different temptations for Zenobia.

Zenobia is a woman of independent wealth who enjoys her luxuries and opulence. She has also fallen in love with the philanthropist Hollingsworth. Although Coverdale overhears very little of Westervelt's conversation with Zenobia – and understands very little of what he does hear – it is clear to the reader that Westervelt is aware of Hollingsworth's affections for Priscilla instead of Zenobia, and that Priscilla is Zenobia's half-sister and, should their father decide, the rightful owner of Zenobia's wealth. The readers will at some point guess that Westervelt reveals Zenobia's predicament and offers to remove Priscilla from Zenobia's way. Priscilla is susceptible to Westervelt's powers of mesmerism, and Westervelt needs Zenobia to betray Priscilla back into his control. The offer, if this is what it was, evokes an impassioned response by Zenobia who cries "with what kind of a being am I linked!"²⁹ She then laments "if my Creator cares aught for my soul, let him release me from this miserable bond!"³⁰ Westervelt dispassionately, even mockingly, replies "I did not think it weighed so heavily," to which Zenobia declares

* The temptations of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

“nevertheless, [...] it will strangle me at last!”³¹ Her heavy chain seems to be Westervelt not Priscilla, which casts Westervelt as the devil tempting and torturing Zenobia into a fatally wrong decision.

Following her “interview with Westervelt, Zenobia’s continual inequalities of temper had been rather difficult for her friends to bear.”³² The effects of her struggling with her conscience and her earthly desires take their toll upon Zenobia, who eventually chooses to protect her earthly interests by handing Priscilla over to Westervelt. Coverdale later attends the Veiled Lady show in which Westervelt uses Priscilla in his performance. When Westervelt takes the stage – unnamed, at this point, by Coverdale – he gives a speech that reveals his sinister and devilish powers. Coverdale reflects upon the speech:

Human character was but soft wax in his hands; and guilt, or virtue, only the forms into which he should see fit to mould it. The religious sentiment was a flame which he could blow up with his breath, or a spark that he could utterly extinguish. It is unutterable, the horror and disgust with which I listened, and saw, that if these things were to be believed, the individual soul was virtually annihilated, and all that is sweet and pure, in our present life, debased, and that idea of man’s eternal responsibility was made ridiculous, and immortality rendered, at once, impossible, and not worth acceptance.³³

The powers attributed to Westervelt are truly demonic and mark him as an evil one described in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 as “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” Coverdale’s chilling understanding of Westervelt recognizes the ultimate sacrilege of the human soul by the devil that violates the free will

of another through power and manipulation. Zenobia's queenly pride, oft remarked upon by Coverdale, is the vulnerability Westervelt uses to manipulate Zenobia into her treachery. This confirms the fears found in 1 Timothy 3:6 which warns against pride "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

In securing Priscilla for his show Westervelt succeeded in manipulating Zenobia into betraying her sister, which in turn causes her to lose her inheritance and the affection of Hollingsworth, and results, finally, in her death. After losing Hollingsworth and prior to drowning in the river, Zenobia speaks of herself as "a miserable, bruised, and battered heart, spoilt long before [Hollingsworth] met me! A life, too, hopelessly entangled with a villain's!"³⁴ A sentiment that, now in the closing of the romance, confirms Westervelt's maliciously haunting presence in Zenobia's life before and during her time at Blithedale. At Zenobia's grave Coverdale encounters Westervelt once more; there, Westervelt remarks, in a telling echo of his devilish precursor Roger Chillingworth of *The Scarlet Letter*, "she is now beyond my reach."³⁵ This statement, so similar to Chillingworth's at the death of Dimmesdale upon the scaffolds, infuriates Coverdale who prays that "Heaven deal with Westervelt according to his nature and deserts! – that is to say, annihilate him,"³⁶ a justice worthy of a devil indeed.

The devilish adversaries in "Young Goodman Brown" and *The Blithedale Romance* both manipulate their victims by distracting and beguiling them with earthly concerns. As Forsyth notes, when in opposition to humans the devil is not just a tempter but a tyrant, and "in the New Testament wilderness episode, Satan can tempt Christ only because he has the power to offer Christ an earthly kingship: Satan is already the tyrant, the 'god of this world.'"³⁷ The adversary in "Young Goodman Brown" is, indisputably,

the devil, and he keeps Brown's attention constantly focused on the corruption and wickedness of Salem and Brown's own family. The devil poisons Brown's hope and faith by repeatedly demonstrating the fallibility of those whom Brown believed were good and righteous. Westervelt, too, poisons Zenobia's will power – in this case to protect Priscilla – by threatening her earthly concerns of beauty, love, and wealth, which allowed him to manipulate her. These adversaries encourage their victims to stumble into various degrees of pride and isolation and then obstruct their attempts to turn back through repentance or faith. Furthermore, Forsyth contends that “the story of Eden is, in the manner of liturgical myth, reenacted continually in the life of every Christian as the devil continues to insinuate himself by suggestion.”³⁸ This is the experience depicted by Hawthorne, especially as his devilish adversaries work most effectively off the power of suggestion. Like the original serpent in the garden these adversaries approach their victims in pastoral settings and use their superior powers of knowledge, rhetoric, and logic to distort the understanding of Brown and Zenobia, thereby leading to poor choices in which faith is lost and righteous behavior is abandoned.

Devils on Parade

Revelation 12:12 warns, “therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” And in that short time, Revelation 12:17 reveals, the dragon cast out of Heaven and now in earth “went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Nathaniel Hawthorne, in “Earth's Holocaust,” “My

Kinsman, Major Molineux,” and “The Celestial Rail-road,” depicts various incarnations of devils rejoicing in the chaos of Satan’s war against humanity, especially the fact that humans are so often willingly abetting this chaos.* Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as the “god of this world,” and as Forsyth explains, Satan is believed, especially by the Puritans, to have taken “over the whole earth as an extension of his empire, and rules it through the power of sin and death.”³⁹ In these three short stories the devils presented do very little in the way of corrupting humanity through temptations or overwhelming power. Instead they simply participate, with a perverted glee, in the moral ignorance and misdirection exhibited by the inhabitants of earth. The actions of humankind depicted by Hawthorne are not in any way very extraordinary, and as such the moral misguidance inherent in them are likely invisible to many; therefore, Hawthorne includes devilish incarnations to symbolize and signal the moral chaos in which humankind is mired and further entangling themselves.

“Earth’s Holocaust,” as we have seen, is a satirical treatment of the multitude of reform movements flourishing in nineteenth-century America. The reformers of the story create a massive bonfire for the purpose of destroying the vast vice-producing items of society, as well as the hope that the bonfire “might reveal some profundity of moral truth, heretofore hidden in mist or darkness.”⁴⁰ Only after a great many things have been thrown into the flames, including the Bible and religious emblems, does the devil appear in the story. As all the vices and devices of humankind appear to have been consumed by

* Cotton Mather in his “Addresses to old men, and young men, and little children...,” asserts that “the Devils are *many* for *Number*; their Troops amount unto many *Regions*. We read in Luc 8. 30. about a *Legion* of them, that kept a Garrison in one single person; though a *Legion* contained perhaps twelve thousand and five hundred in it. Very probably there are far more Devils than men in the world; and they swarm like the Frogs of *Egypt* in every one of our Chambers. Yet are they *one* in their *design*, *one* in their *Interest*; they make as it were *one* grand: Enemy of Mankind & *one* mystical body of Wickedness” (55). Though perhaps imagined differently, Hawthorne certainly allows for a great many devilish adversaries in the world although he tends to have his characters contend with one at a time.

the flames of the bonfire the hangman, the Last Thief, the Last Murder, and the Last Toper lament their situation and consider drinking the last of the alcohol spared from the flames and then hang themselves on a nearby tree.* This plan is halted and disparaged by a mysterious new member of the onlookers around the bonfire. The stranger is described as being “dark-complexioned,” and “dark-visaged,” “with a portentous grin.”⁴¹ Most remarkable of his features are his eyes, which “glowed with redder light than that of the bonfire,” a trait that signifies the demonic in Hawthorne’s fiction (as in “Ethan Brand,” “The Celestial Rail-road,” and “My Kinsman, Major Molineux”).

The stranger derides the suicide pact for being shorted sighted, and assures them thus: “be not so cast down, my dear friends; you shall see good days yet.”⁴² The wording of this statement is suspicious for multiple reasons. First, the decision to use “cast down” rather than “downcast” seems to deliberately echo the biblical language so prominent in the Book of Revelation’s frequent mention of the casting down of Satan and his angels from Heaven. Second, in speaking to a hangman, a murderer, a thief, and a drunk the stranger refers to them as “good fellows” and as “dear friends,” a curious group with which to associate oneself or goodness, for that matter.⁴³ Additionally, the stranger promises them “good days yet,” which would suggest that they shall have ample opportunities to return to their vices. Such ideas and language show the stranger to be a devil indeed.

The evil foreshadowed in the demonic stranger’s grin is the fact that for all the pomp of the bonfire, nothing in the world has truly changed. The stranger excitedly informs his listeners that “there is one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw

* This imagery could possibly be borrowed from Matthew 27:3-7 when Judas Iscariot hangs himself in despair and remorse for his betrayal of Jesus. Here, however, the suicidal despair is for the loss of the ability to apply their vice-ridden trades.

into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all – yes; though they had burnt the earth itself to a cinder!”⁴⁴ That mysterious item is the human heart, the description of which brings the evil grin to the stranger’s face. He explains:

Unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will re-issue all the shapes of wrong and misery – the same old shapes, or worse ones – which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes. I have stood by, this live-long night, and laughed in my sleeve at the whole business. Oh, take my word for it, it will be the old world yet!⁴⁵

This devil rejoices in the futility of humankind’s efforts to reform the world of their vices. The devilish stranger knows and revels in the foulness to be found within humankind. The farcical efforts of the reformers makes them “the mockery of the Evil Principle” represented by the stranger who laughs all night in devilish glee.

Unlike the dark stranger of “Earth’s Holocaust” who observes and enjoys the errors of humankind, the devil in “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” leads the chaotic revels himself. Rather than repeating much of my treatment of this character (Chapter 3), I shall touch briefly upon his role in the chaos of the story’s ending. This devil is described in language drawn from Revelation 6:4-8 in regard to both his physical appearance and his use of a horse to organize and lead the rabble of discordant people through Boston. This devil orchestrated the pandemonium in order to unleash and enjoy the havoc people so eagerly want to cause, and, also, to crush Robin’s hopes, perhaps encouraging him to become a fellow reveler in mischief and chaos. The final revelation provided by the parading devil caused a “bewildering excitement” to seize upon Robin

that “affected him with a sort of mental inebriety.”⁴⁶ The pandemonium sown by the devil is likened to a plague (further evoking the four horsemen) as a “contagion” that spread “among the multitude” and then “it seized upon Robin, and he sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street; every man shook his sides, every man emptied his lungs, but Robin’s shout was the loudest there.”⁴⁷ Robin succumbs to his frustrations and disappointments, in despair and self-mockery of himself, and in mockery of the fall of his mighty kinsman, he loses himself in the moment and his own demonic laughter. In the end Robin’s quest into the city – the home of pandemonium, this night evoking Milton’s own Pandemonium of *Paradise Lost* – means that he can never return, as foreshadowed in his dream vision, to his pastoral home and way of life again after the experiences of that night.

The final instance of devils on parade in Hawthorne’s fiction is found in “The Celestial Rail-road” in which the narrator enjoys a modernized pilgrimage from the city of Destruction to the Celestial City. The narrator finding himself in the city of Destruction decides to embark on the railroad for his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Having boarded the train he meets and is befriended by Mr. Smooth-it-away who is “a director of the rail-road corporation, and one of its largest stockholders”⁴⁸ and very knowledgeable about the railroad and its surrounding areas. Mr. Smooth-it-away is depicted as a very impressive and civilized “gentleman”⁴⁹ whose “testimony”⁵⁰ is to be believed and respected. This image fits well with his ability to smooth away any doubts the narrator might entertain about the surrounding areas or the changes to the pilgrimage brought about by the railroad.

However, the narrator himself does not seem to want to entertain any doubts either and is quite relieved to have Mr. Smooth-it-away's reassurances. From time to time he smoothes his concerns away for himself as when the train enters the tunnel through the "Dark Valley."⁵¹ As the narrator recounts,

In the dark of intense brightness, grim faces, that bore the aspect and expression of individual sins, or passions, seemed to thrust themselves through the veil of light, glaring upon us, and stretching forth a great dusky hand, as if to impede our progress. I almost thought, that they were my own sins that appalled me there. These were freaks of imagination – nothing more, certainly, – mere delusions, which I ought to be heartily ashamed of – but, all through the Dark Valley, I was tormented, and pestered and dolefully bewildered, with the same kind of waking dreams.⁵²

The images are only too accurate. The faces appearing through the light of the gas-lamps are indeed those of devils, the personifications of sins and vices in their true form, which is in sharp contrast to the faces of his companions outside of the gas-lit tunnel. The fact that the narrator continues to discount his concerns shows his unwillingness to hold himself to account for his own sins and faults – an attitude that promotes the continuance of such negative qualities in the world.

Undeterred by his short-lived doubts the narrator continues his pilgrimage on the railroad with his new companions to Vanity Fair – the home of "Prince Beelzebub himself"⁵³ – where he stops a few days to enjoy the city. The city "exhibits an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay, and fascinating, beneath the sun," so much so that, as the narrator relates, "such are the charms of the place, that people often affirm it to be the

true and only heaven.”⁵⁴ The charms and splendor are mainly found in the bazaars at the heart of “this great capital of human business and pleasure.”⁵⁵ The primary problem for the narrator of this story – and the characters of so many other Hawthorne fictions – is the fixation on human business and pleasure; that is to say, absorption with the earthly and materialistic aspects of humanity rather than the spiritual, or, at least, a more balanced mixture. This overwhelming fixation with the earthly is attested to by various trades and barterers witnessed by the narrator in which the people coming to Vanity Fair make incredibly poor bargains and inevitably lose all “possessions” of real value to themselves. The Vanity Fair bazaar is epitomized by Prince Beelzebub “bargaining with a miser for his soul, which, after much ingenious skirmishing on both sides, his Highness succeeded in obtaining at about the value of sixpence. The prince remarked, with a smile, that he was the loser by the transaction.”⁵⁶ As elsewhere in Hawthorne’s fiction, the devil’s smile comes from the sinister enjoyment of the errors and excesses so eagerly displayed by humankind.

While in Vanity Fair the narrator encounters two old-fashioned pilgrims who walk and carry their burdens themselves as did Christian from Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. These pilgrims warn the narrator that Vanity Fair and the Celestial Railroad are “nothing but a miserable delusion,” and that to continue under his present circumstances he, the narrator, is in danger of losing his only valuable possession, his “own soul.”⁵⁷ However, Mr. Smooth-it-away reappears to interject “Poh, nonsense!” and accuses the pilgrims of libel and reassures the narrator.⁵⁸ While the suspicions of the narrator have been aroused by the ghastly faces seen in the train car in the Dark Valley, the events of Vanity Fair, and the warnings of the old-fashioned pilgrims, he continues on the final

portion of his journey with Mr. Smooth-it-away. Coming to the ferry to take him over to the Celestial City the narrator notices that a great many of his fellow passengers are, at this point, in states of “great perturbation” causing them to despair; yet, what most concerns him is Mr. Smooth-it-away’s refusal to board the ferry. Mr. Smooth-it-away reveals “with a queer smile, and that same disagreeable contortion of visage, which I had remarked in the inhabitants of the Dark Valley,” that he travelled “thus far only for the sake of your company.”⁵⁹ With that Mr. Smooth-it-away laughs at the narrator, which fully reveals him to be a devil charged with accompanying the narrator to his own damnation: “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 a red blaze. The impudent Fiend! To deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his breast!”⁶⁰

Returning to Jesus’ parable of the sower and the seed, which is the Word of God, the narrator is one fitting the description of Luke 8:14’s explanation of the seed among the thorns: “Among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” The narrator placed himself in the city of Destruction, and chose to pursue the pilgrimage via the railroad, and to tarry in Vanity Fair. His obsession with and preference for the earthly is what placed him in danger and under the guidance of Mr. Smooth-it-away, the disguised devil. Mr. Smooth-it-away’s role in the near damnation of the narrator’s soul – it is revealed to be a horrible dream at the end – is reactive. As his name suggests, Mr. Smooth-it-away smoothes out the potential doubts and concerns that would obstruct the narrator’s journey away from the wrong path the narrator already followed. Additionally,

the narrator is well familiar with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, yet he neglects to truly learn from it and he chooses not to acknowledge the obvious warning signs he encounters. The narrator through his earthly concerns placed himself in the "devil's snare" and made no genuine efforts to extricate himself. 2 Timothy 2:21-26 explains how one can "recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Ti 2:26). The most necessary is found in 2 Timothy 2:22, which instructs "flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." The narrator however remains lustful for ease and comfort, for popularity, and for all the brilliance of human business and pleasure⁶¹ as clearly shown during his time in Vanity Fair. The devil's task in this story is an easy one; the narrator, like the other humans, comes, on his own, willingly to the devil and his snare. The devil through his minions like Mr. Smooth-it-away must simply be present to give the necessary encouragement from time to time to assure the complete corruption and damnation of those souls.

The devils on parade in "Earth's Holocaust," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and "The Celestial Rail-road" share basic features that identify them as devils, and the stories in which they appear as morality tales. Each devil is noted for the same two remarkable traits: the glowing red eyes and the odd smiles. The glow of their eyes is symbolic of their hell-fired hearts and the odd smiles foreshadow impending chaos and moral failures. The sinister smiles of the devils correspond to the fact that they are simply chaperoning the human soul's self-corruption and self-damnation. Each of these stories' protagonists suffers from various degrees of self-delusion and material concerns that endanger their souls. Whenever people place higher values on their earthly status,

wealth, or enjoyment they become entangled in the devil's snare and drift away from faithfulness and moral righteousness, as Hawthorne sees it. On the periphery of human self-destruction the devils add the necessary reassurances and encouragements that work upon the human impulse for vice and continue their moral waywardness. The devils on parade simply enjoy this materialistic inspired self-delusion, self-corruption, and self-damnation that humans seemingly seek out all too eagerly.

Manifest Devils

While the aforementioned devils are portrayed as assuming human form and manipulating humans into sin and error, there are, in Hawthorne's fiction, humans who transform themselves into manifest devils through their devotion to sin and violating the sanctity inherent in humankind. These manifest devils – Ethan Brand, Chillingworth, and Miriam's Mad Shadow – are more than simply unpardonable sinners. The unpardonable sin, as presented in "Ethan Brand," centers on breaking "the magnetic chain of humanity"⁶² and denying the power of God's mercy. The idea of the unpardonable sin has its biblical basis in Matthew 12:30-32 (as discussed in Chapter 2). The unpardonable sin, as Sister Jane Marie Luecke notes, includes: "The triumph of intellect over heart, a monomania or one ruling passion, pride, isolation of the sinner, loss of respect for the sanctity of the human heart and soul, and whole-hearted dedication to evil while asserting a power which belongs properly to God."⁶³

As Luecke contends, the unpardonable sinner "must have passed into that stage in which with evil intent he uses men and women for his own criminal purposes before he can be called a villain. Before that stage, he may be simply a well-intentioned (even

monomaniacal) reformer, an intense (even violently single-minded) scientist, or simply a proud and sinful person, and may never pass to the second stage.”⁶⁴ Luecke makes a good point, one that Hawthorne’s writing supports as his manifest devils do not simply cut themselves off from humanity and God but seek to violate and torture – mentally and spiritually – other people. In their selfishness and their dedication to evil practices Hawthorne’s villains transform themselves – mentally and physically – into actual devils.

The two most widely studied and discussed of Hawthorne’s devilish villains are Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth. Hawthorne himself makes it explicit that both are devils (he specifically refers to each as fiends). They share their source in monomaniacal obsessions that not only estrange them from God but encourage them to terrorize other people. Additionally, as each man follows his evil course with a seemingly ironclad resolve, he undergoes a physical transformation that, perhaps echoing the mark of Cain, identifies him less as a human and more as a devil. As these characters have been quite thoroughly discussed within the realm of Hawthorne studies I shall be brief and to the point in identifying their transformations into devils.

The monomaniacal obsessions that begin their transformations into fiends are accompanied by a fatalistic outlook that develops over the course of their respective stories. Ethan Brand’s monomania is the Unpardonable Sin. His obsession is reported to have developed through Brand’s conversations “with Satan himself” whereby “the Man and the Fiend each laboring to frame the image of some mode of guilt, which could neither be atoned for, nor forgiven.”⁶⁵ Chillingworth’s obsession is vengeance upon Hester’s adulterous lover who has shamed both Hester and Chillingworth. He declares to Hester that though she will not reveal her lover, “I shall seek this man, as I have sought

truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. [...] Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!”⁶⁶ As each man undertakes his respective mission to satisfy his respective obsession he comes to look back upon his deeds with a stunning fatalism. Having achieved the unpardonable sin that he had sought Brand openly admits “freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly, I accept the retribution!”⁶⁷ As the narrator observes, Brand has come to see himself as “a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment,”⁶⁸ the only option for one such as himself. Likewise, Chillingworth declares to Hester that “it has all been a dark necessity,” and that as far as their struggle over Dimmesdale is concerned, “it is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may!”⁶⁹ Towards the end of their stories both Brand and Chillingworth absolve themselves of guilt and responsibility for their evil deeds through suggesting the designs of fate are the cause of their sufferings and their actions toward others.

Their evil actions thus begin with monomania and are furthered by fatalism. Once they are comfortable in the belief that they are not truly to blame but are simply playing their parts, both Brand and Chillingworth allow themselves to enact evil upon others. In the case of Brand, he was “a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.”⁷⁰ A study that apparently specifically targets a young woman named Esther, “whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated, in the process.”⁷¹ As the narrator concludes, “thus Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his

intellect.”⁷² Chillingworth is believed by some in his community to be “Satan himself, or Satan’s emissary, in the guise of old Roger Chillingworth. This diabolical agent had the Divine permission, for a season, to burrow into the clergyman’s intimacy, and plot against his soul.”⁷³ His act of violation against Dimmesdale, like Brand’s own against Esther, is the catalyst for Chillingworth’s transformation into a devil; as the narrator explains:

In a word, old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man’s faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake a devil’s office. This unhappy person had effected such a transformation by devoting himself, for seven years, to the constant analysis of a heart full of torture, and deriving his enjoyment thence, and adding fuel to those fiery tortures which he analyzed and gloated over.⁷⁴

As Hawthorne makes explicit, the perspectives from which Brand and Chillingworth view the world fosters in them the ability to dominate and abuse other individuals, which is the final element contributing to their transformations into devils.

The transformation of both Brand and Chillingworth is emphasized by their physical appearances. Brand, upon returning to his home town after completing his eighteen year quest, is a changed man. His hosts, the new lime-burner and his son, look upon Brand with fear in part because of a mysterious mark upon his face. As I have noted elsewhere, the fire in the cavernous eyes symbolize, in Hawthorne’s fiction, a heart hell-fired with sin. Additionally, the mark evokes the vague image of the mark placed upon Cain for his crime as well as the change that befell Lucifer upon his expulsion from

Heaven. Chillingworth is marked from his first appearance in *The Scarlet Letter*, where he is described as having “a writhing horror twist itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them.”⁷⁵ However, after the years of persecuting Dimmesdale the misshapen old man has a more sinister appearance when Hester comes to confront him.

He now betrays

An eager, searching, almost fierce, yet carefully guarded look. It seemed to be his wish and purpose to mask this expression with a smile; but the latter played him false, and flickered over his visage so derisively, that the spectator could see his blackness all the better for it. Ever and anon, too, 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.⁷⁶

Again, as elsewhere in Hawthorne, the devilish villain is betrayed by the red-glow of his eyes. The transformations of Brand and Chillingworth into devils are explicit simply through Hawthorne’s frequent identification of them as fiends and devils, which is further supported by their shared perspectives and physical changes.

Whereas both Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth seem to make Faustian bargains with Satan to achieve their goals and thus choose to become devils through their intellect and actions, the nameless Mad Shadow haunting Miriam in *The Marble Faun* is a different case. At times Hawthorne presents him as a devil in human form, at other times as a mentally deranged man. This disparity leads Sister Jane Marie Luecke to conclude:

The Mad Shadow of Miriam's past is a different matter, yet his presence in the romance is too shadowy for clear analysis. The man is mad, or insane. We are justified in calling him a villain only because we never know for sure whether he has only moments of insanity and other moments of volition, or what was the degree of his responsibility in either of his double lives. At the same time, his insanity is a perversion toward evil, and he has certainly perpetrated evil in Miriam's life.⁷⁷

While Luecke's point is well founded the Mad Shadow is a villain, and, I believe, a devil. His devilishness is twofold. In his sanity he can be seen as clearly embodying the role of Satan in the Garden of Eden. Additionally, his insanity bares with it many similarities to those insane people possessed by devils throughout the Bible. The Mad Shadow, no matter which state of mind he is in at that moment, is bent upon terrorizing and tempting Miriam as her own personal devil.

The Mad Shadow first appears in *The Marble Faun* as the "Spectre of the Catacomb." As the legend goes, the Spectre "was a pagan of old Rome, who hid himself in order to spy out, and betray the blessed Saints, who then dwelt and worshipped" in the catacombs, yet for his sinister purpose he is punished: "a miracle was wrought upon the accursed one; and, ever since, (for fifteen centuries, at least,) he has been groping in the darkness seeking his way out of the Catacomb!"⁷⁸ He is believed to be haunting the catacombs seeking "to beguile new victims into his own misery" by prevailing on a visitor to lead him out. "Should his wiles and entreaties take effect, however, the Man-Demon would remain only a little while above ground. He would gratify his fiendish malignity by perpetrating signal mischief on his benefactor, and perhaps bringing some

old pestilence or other forgotten and long-buried evil on society – or, possibly, teaching the modern world some decayed and dusty kind of crime.”⁷⁹ His appearance with Miriam is certainly foreboding. While the onlookers debate whether he is in fact human or the Spectre of the Catacomb, he tells them “inquire not what I am, nor wherefore I abide in the darkness,” a disconcerting statement compounded by his attachment to Miriam: “Henceforth, I am nothing but a shadow behind her footsteps. She came to me when I sought her not. She has called me forth, and must abide the consequences of my re-appearance in the world.”⁸⁰ A sinister pronouncement that implies his devilish nature is very much in line with the legend of the catacombs.

True to his word the Mad Shadow follows Miriam from the Catacombs and back into the city; though he leaves her from time to time, he is a constant lurking presence. In the course of his shadowing Miriam he serves as an occasional model for her painting as is discovered in Chapter XV “An Aesthetic Company.” Looking over Miriam’s rendition of Guido’s painting of the Archangel Michael casting out Lucifer her friends notice differences from the original. For one thing, as Kenyon remarks, Miriam’s copy has a “more energetic Demon” than Guido: “what a spirit is conveyed into the ugliness of this strong, writhing, squirming dragon, under the Archangel’s foot!”⁸¹ Upon noticing the combative energy of Satan, Kenyon, Hilda, and Donatello notice the face of the devil is different too, “it is Miriam’s model,”⁸² the Mad Shadow. Later while discussing the painting with Kenyon, Miriam acknowledges that she sees Guido’s rendition of the Heavenly battle as “child’s play.”⁸³ She, on the other hand, imagines it much more fiercely, with Michael’s wings and armor tattered and bloody from the struggle. As she sees it, “he should press his foot hard upon the old Serpent, as if his very soul depended

upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half-over yet, and how the victory might turn!”⁸⁴ Her rendition and imagination of the casting of Lucifer from Heaven is personalized to match her own battle with the devil tormenting her. In thinking of the devil it is the face of the Mad Shadow that she sees. In thinking of the defeat of the devil she can see nothing other than a hard fought battle upon which her soul depends and from which the only outcome can be death.

The question, naturally, becomes, “Whose death?” As is known, after being cast out of Heaven Satan took to the earth to bring sin and death to humankind through his temptations of Eve and, by extension, Adam. In Chapter XI, “Fragmentary Sentences,” Miriam speaks with her devil. Hawthorne’s narrator notes “that there seemed to be a sadly mysterious fascination in the influence of this ill-omened person over Miriam; it was such as the beasts and reptiles, of subtle and evil nature, sometimes exercise upon their victims.”⁸⁵ He tempts her to abandon her friends and Rome going with him where he pleases, telling her “it is in my power, as you well know, to compel your acquiescence in my bidding. You are aware of the penalty of a refusal.”⁸⁶ Miriam indirectly refuses, by saying that the end she sees of their relationship is “Death! Simply, death!”⁸⁷ But such sentiments do not deter her persecutor who replies, undaunted, “I allow that you are mortal. But, Miriam, believe me, it is not your fate to die, while there remains so much to be sinned and suffered in the world. We have a destiny, which we must needs fulfil together.”⁸⁸ His ominous prognostication confirms him as her Satan, her fiendish adversary, seeking to tempt her and force her into corruption. Though he suggests he wanted to avoid their involvement together he is all too willing to call it fate and destiny and submit to its evil ends. Following the main threads of *The Marble Faun* such

associations are explicit and without need of further explication. What is of interest, though without critical inquiry to this point, is his connection to New Testament depictions of demonic possession and insanity.

As Luecke admits, the question of the Shadow's sanity is problematic. Hawthorne himself, as he always does, suggests other explanations for the events that are to unfold. The Mad Shadow serving as Miriam's model could very well be a "Roman beggar," or an "outlaw"⁸⁹ who finds security in the catacombs. Hawthorne then suggests, "he might have been a lunatic, fleeing instinctively from man, and making it his dark pleasure to dwell among the tombs, like him whose awful cry echoes afar to us from Scripture times."⁹⁰ Such an allusion suggests to me that Hawthorne's creation of the Mad Shadow is more sophisticated than simply recreating a Satan to corrupt the inhabitants of Eden. While that simple Satan character allows for the progression and transformation of Donatello and Miriam, it does not account for the further appearances of the Shadow later in the novel. After being cast off the cliff – reminiscent of Satan being cast from the heights of Heaven – the body of Miriam's tormentor is discovered in a church dressed as a Capuchin. And at the end of the novel his original relationship to Miriam is revealed. Within *The Marble Faun* his story is fragmented but as morally powerful and important as the story of Donatello and Miriam.

The Mad Shadow is introduced not simply as a demon emerging from the dark bowels of the earth but as an antithesis to Saul of Taurus. The Shadow's appearance is likened to the legendary phantom of the catacombs; although we learn that the Shadow is a man and not a phantom, the legend's spiritual situation, that is, the condition of his soul, is an accurate representation of the Shadow's soul. The pagan's name was Memmius and

“this man, or demon, or Man-Demon, was a spy during the persecutions of the early Christians, probably under the Emperor Diocletian.”⁹¹ Like other characters in Hawthorne’s fiction, there came a moment of repentance, a moment to embrace faith, which is rejected. In the catacombs “by Divine indulgence, there was a single moment’s grace allowed to Memmius” but “he resisted the impulse.”⁹² In consequence of his willfully choosing to oppose God, “the light of the consecrated tapers, which represent all truth, bewildered the wretched man with everlasting error, and the blessed Cross itself was stamped as a seal upon his heart, so that it should never open to receive conviction.”⁹³ Memmius is then an antithesis to Saul of Tarsus later known as Paul.

In the many epistles of Paul, which comprise the bulk of the New Testament, he relates his conversion experience to establish the context of his Christian ministry. From his accounts, particularly in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:12-15, and Acts 9:1-18, it is clear that he and Memmius start on similar paths but end in very different situations. Saul of Tarsus was vehemently opposed to the early Christians and harassed and persecuted them; as he later admits in 1 Timothy 1:13, he was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious” to the Christian church. He even goes so far as to label himself as a chief sinner in 1 Timothy 1:15. However, while on the road to Damascus that all changed. As is recorded in Acts 9:3-6:

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou

persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? ...

Later, in his own words Paul says of himself in reference to his conversion experience, “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Paul and Memmius both begin as unbelieving persecutors of the Christian church, yet both men have moments of grace from God made available to them through blinding light. Saul of Tarsus answers the call, and becomes Paul, now seen as a monumental figure in Christianity through his efforts to build Christianity up. Memmius on the other hand rejects the grace and is cursed with eternal spiritual blindness and becomes the Spectre of the Catacombs. While Paul becomes a defender of the faith and an opponent to the devil; Memmius, as described in the legend, becomes a Man-Demon perpetuating evil on the innocent and the world at large.

While Miriam’s Mad Shadow is not literally Memmius, his close association argues that he shares Memmius’s spiritual blindness. The Mad Shadow, we are led to believe, has had the opportunity to embrace faithfulness, goodness, and God’s grace, but has instead submitted himself to a fatalistic outlook and thus justified, to himself, his evil deeds.* As Memmius became a Man-Demon so too did the Mad Shadow. Jesus warns in Matthew 3:27, a parable related to demonic possession, that “no man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.” In rejecting God’s grace, as Memmius and the Mad Shadow do, they bind themselves and prepare the way for demons, that is to say, evil impulses, by rejecting that which is good and holy. Without faith in God there is an emptiness within

* See all of Chapter XI, “Fragmentary Sentences,” where the Mad Shadow speaks at length with Miriam.

humankind that, as Jesus explains in Matthew 12:43-45, is inviting to an evil spirit that will then “taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” These ideas are the basis of the Mad Shadow’s character in *The Marble Faun*.

The story of Mad Shadow shares similarities with an incident recorded multiple times in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (thus certainly familiar to Hawthorne), which involves a man possessed by many demons who approaches Jesus on the shores of a lake.* The possessed man dwelled among the tombs, outside of the city’s limits, and was fettered in chains that he often broke through the power of the demons within him, “and always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones” (Mk. 5:2-50). Likewise, the Mad Shadow is first seen issuing forth from the catacombs on the outskirts of Rome. He too is equated with chains, except that these do not attempt to bind him away from society as in the gospel account. The chains of the Mad Shadow are figurative and spiritual and link him to Miriam. The narrator describes their bond as an “iron chain, of which some of the massive links were round her feminine waist, and the others in his ruthless hands – or which perhaps bound the pair together by a bond equally torturing to each – must have been forged in some unhallowed furnace as is only kindled by evil passions and fed by evil deeds.”⁹⁴ Finally, the possessed man’s incessant crying and self-mutilation are also echoed in the actions of the Mad Shadow. At the close of the novel, Miriam admits:

* Matthew refers to the location as Gadarenes, and that the incident involved two men. Mark and Luke identify the country as Gerasenes and the incident involving only one man. In all three gospels, Jesus expels the many demons into a herd of swine that promptly charge into the lake of Galilee and drown. I will use Mark’s account.

She now considered him a madman. Insanity must have been mixed up with his original composition, and developed by those very acts of depravity which it suggested, and still more intensified by the remorse that ultimately followed them. Nothing was stranger in his dark career, than the penitence which often seemed to go hand in hand with crime. Since his death, she had ascertained that it finally led him to a convent, where his severe and self-inflicted penances had even acquired him the reputation of unusual sanctity...⁹⁵

The self-mutilation, which could be attributed to demonic possession or insanity – the two conditions are often conflated – reflect a frustration within the troubled souls attempting, perhaps, to exert some power or control over their situation due to their recognition that their actions or condition are not what they truly want.

The problem of the Mad Shadow is that his penance lacks the support of genuine faith or genuine repentance. This stems from his rejection of faith and is attested to by his horror to the idea of prayer, as explained in Chapter IX:

In this man's memory, there was something that made it awful for him to think of prayer; nor could any torture be more intolerable, than to be reminded of such Divine comfort and succor as await pious souls merely for the asking. This torment was perhaps the token of a native temperament deeply susceptible of religious impressions, but which had been wronged, violated, and debased, until, at length, it was capable only of terror...⁹⁶

While the cause of his disbelief – insanity, possession, or some other incident – is unclear, Hawthorne stresses his belief in an evil destiny. The Mad Shadow insists to Miriam: “Our fates cross and are entangled. The threads are twisted into a strong cord, which is dragging us to an evil doom. Could the knots be severed, we might escape. But neither your slender fingers untie those knots, nor my masculine force break them. We must submit!”⁹⁷ Although he insists in his fatalism and will not swerve from it, Miriam echoes Hawthorne’s own beliefs when she tells the Mad Shadow: “You mistake your own will for an iron necessity.”⁹⁸ This iron necessity is the foundation upon which the devilish transformations of the Mad Shadow as well as Ethan Brand and Chillingworth take place.

To Brand, Chillingworth, and the Mad Shadow, all is fate, and though they recognize the evil of their thoughts and deeds they shun repentance as well as the cessation of their efforts. Brand allowed his “dark thoughts” to become focused through his monomania into “the one thought that took possession of his life.”⁹⁹ The Unpardonable Sin, which Brand committed in his vague but evil deeds against Esther, being founded upon fatalism, leads not to remorse but his declaration: “Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly, I accept the retribution!”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Chillingworth declares to Hester: “It has all been a dark necessity,” and that as far as their struggle over Dimmesdale is concerned: “It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may!”¹⁰¹ For these villainous characters the dark necessities are both the causes and the excuse for the evil that they encounter and enact. As Luecke comments, Hawthorne’s villains consistently attempt to propound “a doctrine denying free will,” and she concludes that “Hawthorne must have felt it necessary that a man have a fatalistic outlook

if he were to be truly confirmed in sin, because the ugliness and suffering as well as the poignant humanness of the sinful condition must otherwise move [the villain] to tears.”¹⁰² However, for Hawthorne, such fatalism is more than an artistic ploy: it is what transforms these villains – and everyday people – into devils.

The fatalistic outlooks of Ethan Brand, Chillingworth, and the Mad Shadow isolate them from God, from others, and even from their own actions. Such fatalism makes them devils as described in 1 John 3:10: “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” Assuming a fatalistic outlook leads these villains to transform into devils by denying God’s power and willingness to forgive and show mercy. Furthermore, each man presumes that he alone recognizes the plan established by fate and thus embraces the dark necessity in which he may be embroiled. Fatalism, as employed by these characters, discourages genuine remorse or repentance for their evil deeds against others – specifically, Esther, Dimmesdale, and Miriam. As they allow their fatalistic outlook to harden into their sole perspective they continue their sinful ways with a purpose and resolve that mirrors that of Satan as he, too, determined to oppose God through his rebellion and his efforts to corrupt humankind. James 4:7 advises “submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;” however, Brand, Chillingworth, and the Mad Shadow submit themselves to fate, which encourages the devil within them, their evil impulses, to surface and thrive rather than flee. These villains are in fact manifest devils because they have not only given their actions over to evil impulses but have foresworn their humanity and in some ways usurped Satan’s role,

for as Ethan Brand remarks: "What need have I of the devil? I have left him on my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself."¹⁰³

Hawthorne's decision to make these villains into manifest devils supports his overall message of morality. This message, as it appears in various forms throughout his fiction, naturally begins with a broadly Christian warning about the devil. As Forsyth remarks, and no doubt Hawthorne would have agreed, "the adversary still has enormous power," and that as Paul and Augustine proposed one must turn the combat's "setting inward [...] to overcome, if hesitantly, its deterministic implications. 'The Devil is not to be blamed for everything: there are times when a man is his own devil.'"¹⁰⁴ Hawthorne consistently uses his fiction to impress upon his audience three ideas that are, approximately: 1) All are flawed and guilty but not necessarily damned. 2) One must recognize and embrace the common bonds of humanity. 3) One should not reject the power of repentance, confession, or forgiveness. These ideas all support Hawthorne's broadly Christian outlook and are empowered by his use of the devil. As William Stein asserts, the idea of the Christian combat myth is "a simple mythic formula based on the devil-archetype [which] provides him with the medium of inquiry into the symbolic interaction of God and the devil as they mutually contest the integrity of man's soul."¹⁰⁵

The presence of the devil, as an encouraging onlooker or a companion, or even as a tyrant within one's own breast, sets the stage for Hawthorne's moral fiction. According to Stein, Hawthorne's audience, through devilish characters like Ethan Brand,

Learns that intercourse between man and man is impossible without love, tenderness, and sympathy. These qualities are the chief ingredients of universal morality. As ethical principles, they are flexible enough to cope

with man's radical imperfections. [...] Thus, as an operative force in life, evil is not to be condoned nor is it to be condemned: it is to be understood as an unavoidable portion of human destiny.¹⁰⁶

Hawthorne presents these fiends as explicit examples of the sinister selfishness, enabled by fatalistic outlooks, which is an anathema to the wellbeing of individuals and society at large. Stein, accurately explains that

To the degree that that the individual recognizes the clash of good and evil as the tragic condition of his existence, Hawthorne contends, he acquires the self-knowledge that releases the flow of vital love into the endless stream of life. In sum, by willingly accepting the responsibilities of *all* choices of conduct, he sacrifices his personal ego to the greater demands of his active role in society as a contributor to its stabilizing energies. Thus, in a unique symbolic idiom Hawthorne expounds a philosophy for living that parallels the message of Christ's parables.¹⁰⁷

The devil in all his guises becomes, in Hawthorne's capable hands, the symbol of the evil impulses within humans. In his explorations of these devils and their interactions with their intended victims he forewarns his audience of the dangers of monomania, of selfishness, and of pride. Hawthorne's devils demonstrate Hawthorne's belief that everyone must not only guard themselves against their own destructive impulses but band together and share in their common humanity, which includes sin, so as to support one another.

¹ Stein, *Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype*, 8

² Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, 122

³ *Ibid.*, 303

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- ⁴ Fogle, *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark*, 5-6
⁵ "Young Goodman Brown," X:84
⁶ Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, 4
⁷ *Ibid.*, 113
⁸ Luecke, "Villains and Non-Villains in Hawthorne's Fiction," 551
⁹ "Young Goodman Brown," X:75
¹⁰ *Ibid.*
¹¹ *Ibid.*, 76
¹² *Ibid.*
¹³ "Young Goodman Brown," X:79
¹⁴ "Young Goodman Brown," X:84
¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77
¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 83
¹⁷ "Young Goodman Brown," X:90
¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 88
¹⁹ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:11
²⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-91
²¹ *Ibid.*, 92
²² *Ibid.*
²³ *Ibid.*, 96
²⁴ *Ibid.*, 94
²⁵ *Ibid.*, 158
²⁶ *Ibid.*, 92
²⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-102
²⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-103
²⁹ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:104
³⁰ *Ibid.*
³¹ *Ibid.*
³² *Ibid.*, 120
³³ *Ibid.*, 198
³⁴ *Ibid.*, 225
³⁵ *Ibid.*, 241
³⁶ *Ibid.*
³⁷ Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, 6
³⁸ *Ibid.*, 424
³⁹ Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, 5-6
⁴⁰ "Earth's Holocaust," X:381
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 403
⁴² *Ibid.*
⁴³ *Ibid.*
⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
⁴⁶ "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," XI: 229
⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 230
⁴⁸ "The Celestial Rail-road." X:186
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187
⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 194
⁵² *Ibid.*, 196
⁵³ *Ibid.*, 200
⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 197
⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 199
⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 200-201
⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 202
⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 206
⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶¹ Ibid., 199
⁶² "Ethan Brand," XI:99
⁶³ Luecke, "Villains and Non-Villains in Hawthorne's Fiction," 553
⁶⁴ Ibid., 554
⁶⁵ "Ethan Brand," XI:89
⁶⁶ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:75
⁶⁷ "Ethan Brand," XI:90
⁶⁸ Ibid., 100
⁶⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:174
⁷⁰ "Ethan Brand," XI:99
⁷¹ Ibid., 94
⁷² Ibid., 99
⁷³ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:128
⁷⁴ Ibid., 170
⁷⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:61
⁷⁶ Ibid., 169
⁷⁷ Luecke, "Villains and Non-Villains in Hawthorne's Fiction," 556
⁷⁸ *The Marble Faun*, IV:26
⁷⁹ Ibid., 33
⁸⁰ Ibid., 31
⁸¹ Ibid., 140
⁸² Ibid.
⁸³ Ibid., 184
⁸⁴ Ibid.
⁸⁵ Ibid., 93
⁸⁶ Ibid.
⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ Ibid.
⁸⁹ Ibid., 35
⁹⁰ Ibid.
⁹¹ Ibid., 32
⁹² Ibid., 33
⁹³ Ibid.
⁹⁴ *The Marble Faun*, IV:93
⁹⁵ Ibid., 432
⁹⁶ Ibid., 95
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Ibid., 96
⁹⁹ "Ethan Brand," XI:84
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 90
¹⁰¹ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:174
¹⁰² Luecke, "Villains and Non-Villains in Hawthorne's Fiction," 555
¹⁰³ "Ethan Brand," XI:89
¹⁰⁴ Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth*, 434
¹⁰⁵ Stein, *Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype*, 9
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 97-98
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 142

CHAPTER 6

BIBLICAL THEMES: WOMEN OF REDEMPTION

Women in Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction dominate his long romances but remain largely peripheral in the majority of his short stories and sketches. Regardless of the length of the work in which they appear, or the degree of focus placed upon them, women in Hawthorne's fiction are always at the center of his stories. In *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*, Roberta Weldon contends that Hawthorne's fiction is informed by the Christian struggle with mortality: "In Hawthorne's fiction, death denial is primarily male work. To make death yield meaning, the male protagonist is frequently willing to overlook, reject, and sacrifice women. More often than not, the male protagonist's fear is not that he will be parted from his lover but that their union will drag him down to the grave."¹ As Weldon insightfully notes, "Hawthorne's fiction asks us to consider the condition of women, women hurt and pained by men, oftentimes dead women. [...] His novels assert the dominance of the male order at the same time that they invite a dialogue with suffering and dead women."² Gender, therefore, is crucial to Hawthorne's fictional dealings with mortality because "nineteenth-century New England society is so markedly defined by its Christian culture."³

Weldon's book is excellent within its context; however, my context moves this study in a direction less adjacent to Weldon's. As I consider Hawthorne's female characters in connection with the Bible it appears that the questions Weldon suggests

Hawthorne raises about the plight of women in relation to men lead to the theme of redemptive and redeemed women. Northrop Frye, in reference to the story in Hosea 1, suggests “the forgiven harlot, who is taken back eventually into favor despite her sins, is an intermediate bridal figure between the demonic Whore and the apocalyptic Bride, and represents the redemption of man from sin. She appears in the Gospels as the ‘sinner’ of Luke 7:37-50, often identified with the Mary Magdalene who appears in the next chapter.”⁴ There are of course the fallen women – fallen through infidelity or idolatry, acts that are often conflated in the Bible – who go unredeemed, such as Jezebel. These unredeemed women find their counterparts in Hawthorne’s woman in the scarlet petticoat of “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” proud Lady Eleanore of “Lady Eleanore’s Mantle,” and the young woman of “The Hollow of the Three Hills.” But such characters’ actions and roles are explicit and thus lack the thought-provoking, perhaps more accurately, the soul-searching, possibilities afforded by the redeemed women both in the Bible and in Hawthorne’s fiction. It is in the consideration of Hester Prynne, Miriam, and even Zenobia that Hawthorne’s artistic and moral concerns can build upon the Bible and provide material that reveals the way toward some form of redemption. I will align Hawthorne’s redeemed female protagonists with separate biblical women even though all share a common theme (ultimately derived from Eve) of suspicion, trial, and vindication: Beatrice with Susanna and Tamar; Miriam with Rahab; Hester with the woman of John 8:1-11; Zenobia with the woman in Luke 7:37-50

This concept of woman as means of redemption is supported in general terms by the Bible and Hawthorne’s own broadly Christian outlook. The transgression of Eve, which brought sin and death, is redeemed through the Virgin Mary who brought Jesus

into the world to preach, to heal, and to redeem humankind's many sins. Within this general polarity women played a number of specific and important roles in the Bible despite the patriarchy inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Hawthorne's women often occupy multiple roles within his fiction as they encounter both their own situations and the (re)actions of the male protagonists with whom they exist. As embodied in the figures of Eve and the Virgin Mary women offer both sin and redemption, a confusing predicament for the male characters and central to Hawthorne's outlook, which accepts a fallen world that must be overcome through a unity, a communion based on love, on shared acknowledgement of guilt, and on shared forgiveness.

The Vindicated Woman

The fallen woman who becomes vindicated is a repeated theme in the Bible, appearing in the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Apocrypha. Invariably the women are primarily associated with lust and adultery, which is the source of their "fallen" status; however, the women who have "loved much" (Lk. 7:47) appear to be well suited for redemption through God's commands and the actions of Jesus. All of the fallen women appear as variations of the first woman. According to Carol Meyers,

[Eve's] prominence comes not only from her role in the Garden of Eden story itself, but also from her frequent appearance in Western art, theology, and literature. Indeed, the image of Eve, who never appears in the Hebrew Bible after the opening chapters of Genesis, may be more strongly colored by postbiblical culture than by the biblical narrative itself.

For many, Eve represents sin, seduction, and the secondary nature of woman.⁵

“Eve is the mother of us all and the helpmeet of man, a creature of God, and therefore good,” but as Gloria Chasson Erlich further notes, “Eve is thus herself both innocent and deadly. She initiates no evil, conceives none, desires none, but it is her willingness to disobey authority and operate on a morality of her own making that makes it possible for Satan to get through to man.”⁶ According to Erlich, as the model for many of Hawthorne’s female protagonists, “Eve comprises both of Hawthorne’s conflicting feelings about woman – that of her splendid desirability and her danger, the two hopelessly intertwined.”⁷ This duality is also noted by Roy Male who states that “Hawthorne’s ability to create vital women in his fiction is inseparable from his understanding of tragedy. He knew that in order to find a home and a hope of heaven – in order, that is, to develop his full human potential – man must accept either the woman or the dual promise she represents: tragic involvement with sin but also the consequent possibility of redemption.”⁸ The ability of women to simultaneously be both dangerous and redemptive is an oft-repeated element of Hawthorne’s fiction and a frequent image in the Bible.

Beginning with Eve and echoed in other female figures, women are repeatedly suspected, tried, and vindicated in the Bible and this pattern unfolds just as frequently in Hawthorne’s fiction. As mentioned in the previous chapter “Hawthorne’s Biblical Gardens,” the story of Beatrice in “Rappaccini’s Daughter” bears a significant resemblance to Susanna. One could further tie Beatrice to Tamar from the Old Testament because her story is likewise determined by the accusations and interference of an older,

more powerful, male figure. Following Beatrice are the more substantial characters of Miriam and Hester who likewise have strong connections to other women of the Bible who endure questionable pasts and are vindicated in their faith and their actions. Both Miriam and Hester have roots in the figure of Eve. Sheldon W. Liebman contends:

Miriam is an “Eve” character more by action than by description.

Bewitching and “Oriental,” she is of mysterious origins, but we learn little of her. Only her resemblance to Kenyon’s statue of Cleopatra gives us a more precise hint of her character – the same method which Hawthorne uses with Donatello. Yet Miriam’s role as temptress is repeated sufficiently to give her the identity of Eve. Donatello would never have entered the catacombs except that Miriam’s “attractive influence alone had enticed him into that gloomy region.” Later, Miriam beckons Donatello into the shadowy corner of her room. Finally, she lures him out of his innocence into the world of sin, into the darkest corner of darkness, when he heaves the body of the spectre from Traitor’s Leap.⁹

Equally significant, however, is the fact that Miriam’s situation in *The Marble Faun* is quite analogous to that of Rahab, the harlot who aids the Israelite conquest of the city of Jericho. Despite her beauty and her artistic talent Miriam harbors dark secrets that become embodied in the madman monk shadowing her throughout the first third of the novel and whose death presents her with a choice resulting in her decision to embrace faith. Ultimately, the secrets and sins of Miriam’s past do not outweigh the possibility of her redemption, as is the case with Rahab.

Rahab first appears in the Book of Joshua as the Israelites are attempting to enter into and conquer the Promised Land. Joshua sends spies to the heavily fortified city of Jericho to gather information that will be useful in conquering the city. The spies “came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there” (Josh. 2:1). However the king of Jericho is aware of the spies in his city and sends to Rahab to turn them over, faced with danger of disobeying her king she chooses to hide the spies and help them to escape. While hiding the spies Rahab tells them “I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you,” and that she recognizes “for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Josh. 2:9-11). Rahab secures the mercy of the invading Israelites for herself and her extended family as when the invasion begins it is declared in the Israelite camps that “the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (Josh. 6:17). Rahab’s role in the fall of Jericho not only secures her life and the lives of her family but provides their conversion to the religion of the Israelites, wherein “Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father’s household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day” (Josh. 6:25).

Rahab’s story is relatively short and succinct but her figure is much larger in the Bible and Christian tradition. “Rahab, who begins as triply marginalized – Canaanite, woman, and prostitute – moves to the center as bearer of a divine message and herald of Israel in its new land,” as Tikva Frymer-Kensky notes, which makes her “remembered in Jewish tradition as the great proselyte, as ancestress of kings and prophets, and, in the New Testament, as ancestress of Jesus.”¹⁰ Following the Book of Joshua she is elsewhere

presented as symbolic of faith and good works. Hebrews 11:31 declares “by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” And in James 2:25 it is declared “likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” Dante also recognizes her virtue and places her in paradise in his *Divine Comedy*. The ultimate honor, however, is her place in the genealogy of Jesus. Regardless of whether or not she is an ancestor of Jesus, her faith and her actions – both in terms of aiding the Israelites and giving up her profession as a harlot – redeem her from her sins and her pagan past. While Miriam’s beauty lacks the obvious sexual connotations of Rahab’s reputed occupation as a prostitute, Miriam likewise overcomes her past to become emblematic of faith and good works in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

As in the case of the sinful woman in Luke 7:37-50 and Rahab, the looming issues of the past are of secondary importance to the decisions Miriam makes at the crucial moment: redefining her life within faith. Miriam’s frequent beauty and mirth are dispersed by the appearance of the Mad Shadow, the man hauntingly embodying her past guilts. Her persecutor holds her in his power through the threat of exposing her past, and he persists in disrupting her present life through his frequent appearances and seemingly endless following of her movements. This persecution brings her to a point of despair in which she doubts God; but it is resolved by the intervention of Donatello, who, driven by his love of Miriam, casts the Mad Shadow to his death from Traitor’s Leap. Although she suggests that his crime was “well done” because “innocent persons were saved by the destruction of a guilty one, who deserved his doom,” they both undergo powerful transformations.¹¹

Miriam's moment of crisis – when her past and present meet in powerful conflict resulting in murder – provides her, like Rahab, the opportunity to choose her future through her (re)dedication to faith. Miriam realizes “it was my doom, mine, to bring [Donatello] within the limits of sinful sorrowful mortality,”¹² and she desires to help him through “none but pure motives” that would even, if necessary, compel her “complete self-sacrifice for his sake.”¹³ She becomes a true penitent taking on the appropriate garb and prayer for her pilgrimages to shrines. She makes herself available to him in his time of need: “I willingly fling my woman's pride at his feet. But – do you not see? – his heart must be left freely to its own decision to recognize me, because on his voluntary choice, depends the whole question whether my devotion will do him good or harm.”¹⁴ By devoting herself to her own penitence and by devoting herself to the aid and succor of Donatello they both rediscover happiness; an experience that leads Miriam to broach the subject of the Fortunate Fall in her joyous telling of the positive changes affected upon Donatello. In the story of herself and Donatello she sees

The story of the Fall of Man! Is it not repeated in our Romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy farther? Was that very sin – into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race – was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave?¹⁵

It is clear that for Miriam the Fall is indeed fortunate, as she has successfully helped Donatello through the dark gloom of his sin to a better life – one in which his faith is bolstered and sufficient enough to lead him to confess his crime to the authorities and go to prison. *The Marble Faun* explicitly echoes the book of Genesis and casts Donatello

and Miriam as another set of Adam and Eve. Additionally, Miriam echoes Rahab in that despite her unsavory past she too becomes vindicated by her faith and good works as does Rahab in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25.

Another character clearly linked to Eve is Hester Prynne of *The Scarlet Letter*. Her illicit love for Dimmesdale, which is heavily associated with the wild forest outside the town of Salem, immediately evokes the story of Adam and Eve. As Roberta Weldon argues:

The biblical story of Eve, a prototype of Hester, identifies women as the cause of sin and death and explains the need for redemption by a male Christ. Seen in light of this tradition, Dimmesdale's love for Hester is rooted, as Chillingworth asserts, in his "animal nature," which is associated with corruption and death. [...] While granting Dimmesdale his spiritual nature despite his moral failings, the novel resists spiritualizing Hester and links her instead to the counter qualities the Christian culture associates with women.¹⁶

The counter qualities of the body and materialism certainly are emphasized aspects of Hester's character; however, Weldon's perspective does not do Hester or Eve proper justice. There is more to each woman, especially Hester whose virtues are extolled throughout the latter half of *The Scarlet Letter* as her former persecutors slowly fade from sight. As with the other female protagonists in Hawthorne's fiction, and in the Bible, her story shares vast similarities to another figure, the woman caught in adultery from John 8:1-11.

This parallel is exceptionally dealt with by Larry J. Kreitzer in his chapter “‘Revealing the Affairs of the Heart’: Sin, Accusation and Confession in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*,” in *Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of the Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7.53–8.11)*. Kreitzer notes that “although the biblical story of the woman taken in adultery is never mentioned within *The Scarlet Letter*, there are a number of places within the novel where Hawthorne makes deliberate allusion to biblical passages and images,”¹⁷ especially that of the woman taken in adultery. * Kreitzer finds numerous points of parallel and depth provided between *The Scarlet Letter* and the biblical story found in John 8:1-11. For Kreitzer:

The way in which he handles the tale of the adulteress Hester Prynne hints at more than just a passing familiarity with the New Testament account. One astonishing feature of the story of the woman taken in adultery which cries out for an explanation is the absence of the woman’s partner. In his own way Hawthorne addresses precisely this question. He has chosen within *The Scarlet Letter* to offer his own version of the age-old story of an adulterous relationship, and in so doing he focuses the narrative on the quest for the identity of the missing partner.¹⁸

Thus Hester “is dually complicit, as indeed the woman taken in adultery apparently is within the New Testament story. This conspiracy of silence stands as one of the most intriguing points of contrast between Hester Prynne and the unnamed adulterous woman. Both women are caught out in their sin; both women protect equally guilty partners,”¹⁹

* Other notable biblical references include: Pentecost in chapters 11, 17, and 23; Cain and Abel as well as the prophet Daniel in chapter 3; Matthew 9:9 in “The Custom-House;” Matthew 13:25-26 in chapters 6 and 8; and David and Bathsheba in chapter 9. And, of course, there are numerous references to the Virgin Mary, which I shall address below.

which in Hester's case compounds her problems. The concern with public confession, however, is given much more emphasis and value in Hawthorne's work than it is in the biblical story. There is also the importance of the temple setting in the biblical story in comparison to the scaffold setting, as Hawthorne makes clear, both temple and scaffold represent the sacred locations of religion and law "as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical."²⁰ Kreitzer stresses this fact in connection with the crowds of accusers because such a use of a sacred setting "makes their hypocrisy and failure to exhibit divine compassion and mercy all the more ironic as a result. The way in which the woman is treated by the scribes and Pharisees not only represents a violation of sacred space, but it also dehumanizes her as a person."²¹ Additionally, Jesus' scribbling of mysterious ciphers in the sand (Jn. 8:6-8) is answered by the ambiguous significance of the scarlet "A" on Hester's bosom.

Of most importance in our present examination of the biblical context of *The Scarlet Letter* is the issue of condemnation and punishment. In John 8:10-11, "Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." The woman is vindicated in large part because although she is a sinner, she is not alone in sinfulness. Kreitzer insightfully observes:

Both the woman taken in adultery and *The Scarlet Letter* present us with an image of the condemnation of an offender by the religiously minded community of which they were a part. The judgment of the adulteresses by the crowd is an indictment of their lack of sympathy and understanding,

illustrating what happens when mercy is sacrificed for inflexible law. In Hawthorne's novel the Puritans of Boston are an embodiment of this attitude.²²

Throughout *The Scarlet Letter*, and the majority of his works, Hawthorne takes great pains to demonstrate that sin is present in the community and in the lives of each person. Hester, in the end, is no longer condemned by her community because of her many great and self-less deeds. The burdens of her past sin, as represented in her scarlet letter, teaches her a great many lessons on humanity through humility and sorrow. Yet, from such lessons she is enabled to become "a self-ordained Sister of Mercy" at the aid of her community so much so that "such helpfulness was found in her, — so much power to do, and power to sympathize, — that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength."²³ Although Hawthorne does not excuse Hester's sin he emphasizes the possibility of her future acts of goodness and charity, which will, in his mind, eventually outlast the sin.

The stories of Beatrice, Miriam and Hester all follow the basic pattern of suspicion or accusation, trial, and vindication derived primarily from the figure of Eve and supported by similar women in the Bible. This pattern is also present in *The Blithedale Romance*, except within this pattern Zenobia is the most ambiguous of the vindicated women. *The Blithedale Romance* links her consistently with Eve (as well as Jael), which is fitting because of Eve's own ambiguous role as both the mother of all living and as the means of sin and death in humankind. In addition Zenobia compares with the woman of Luke 7:37-50 whose sin was to love too much. Like Eve, Zenobia is

in an Edenic environment – the pastoral Blithedale – where she is approached and successfully tempted by the devilish Westervelt into betraying her half-sister, Priscilla. The key to her vulnerability to Westervelt, and perhaps her own redemption in the eyes of Coverdale and Hawthorne’s readers, is her ability to love. While this seems paradoxical it is already established in the Gospel of Luke, wherein Jesus, dealing with the informal trial of a sinful woman, suggests an excess of love is better than a deficiency.

According to Luke’s account of the story, Jesus was invited to dine at the home of Simon, a Pharisee, where he encountered a sinful woman, who is implied to be a prostitute. Once Jesus sat at the table “a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (Lk. 7:37-38). Her actions are clearly genuine and express her humility, her repentance, and her faith in Jesus’ message. Simon, however, is unimpressed and thinks to himself “this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner” (Lk. 7:39). Sensing the disapproval, Jesus tells a parable about a creditor who forgave two debtors, one who owed fifty pence and one who owed five hundred pence, the conclusion being that the man with the bigger debt was more appreciative and loving than the man with the lesser. Moving from that example to the situation before him Jesus explains to his host that

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not

ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. (Lk. 7:44-46)

Jesus, as with the previous parable, concludes, “wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Lk. 7:47). With that Jesus forgives her of her sins and assures her: “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Lk. 7:50).

Summarizing the exegesis of this passage from other commentators, John Kilgallen, in his article “John the Baptist, the Sinful Woman, and the Pharisee,” suggests that the woman was already forgiven – through baptism at the hands of John the Baptist – prior to entering the house, thus, her actions were of deep gratitude, and directly opposed to Simon and the other Pharisees who rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus. However, Kilgallen, although he is confident in his understanding of the passage, notes “a simple story, simply told, should not have to depend on a presumption for which there are only a few hints for its discovery.”²⁴ The passage as a “simple story, simply told” tells of a prostitute who is sensitive to and aware of her many sins, and humbles herself in penitence before Jesus. The word “love” can be seen as euphemistic for her sexual profession as well as for her gratitude for forgiveness. The importance of the passage, however, is her awareness of her sinfulness. This awareness enables both forgiveness and loving gratitude. In the dynamic between Zenobia and Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hollingsworth is clearly Simon the Pharisee whose inability to love or be grateful earns him no forgiveness from Coverdale or the audience.

A central and repeated element of *The Blithedale Romance* is the concept of a woman’s love, specifically, Zenobia’s ability to recover from her mysterious heart-

breaking past and love Hollingsworth. Coverdale, during his feverish sickness, became obsessed with the allure of Zenobia: “pertinaciously the thought – ‘Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!’ – irresistibly that thought drove out all other conclusions, as often as my mind reverted to the subject.”²⁵ Such a past – specifically sexual – colors Coverdale’s impression of Zenobia throughout the romance. Love was “rife” among the Blithedaleers, to Coverdale’s approval, but he forebodingly observes that “for a girl like Priscilla, and a woman like Zenobia, to jostle one another in their love of a man like Hollingsworth, was likely to be no child’s play.”²⁶ Echoing the text of Luke’s passage, Coverdale considers Zenobia: “with all her faults, (which might have been a great many, besides the abundance that I knew of,) she possessed noble traits, and a heart which must at least have been valuable while new.”²⁷ In Coverdale’s opinion Zenobia is tainted by her sexuality and her sexual past, which contributes to her betrayal of Priscilla over love of Hollingsworth. And while Coverdale is concerned about this, he avoids the disdain and judgment depicted in Simon the Pharisee, a role best-suited for Hollingsworth.

The complicated idea of love is at the heart of Zenobia’s story, and it appears to be her greatest weakness (as it pertains to sexuality) as well as her vindication (as it pertains to her humanity). In Chapter XXV, “The Three Together,” the story of the sinful woman in Luke clearly comes to the surface of Hawthorne’s romance. Coverdale, who Zenobia accuses of having too often made a game of “groping for human emotions in the dark corners of the heart,”²⁸ comes upon Zenobia, Priscilla, and Hollingsworth at the foot of Eliot’s pulpit, which provides the ensuing scene with a sense of religious trial and judgment. Zenobia greets Coverdale rather half-mockingly with the revelation that he just

missed witnessing is long-sought after human emotions being “dragged into the daylight” in, as she calls it, the “trial for my life.”²⁹ Though Zenobia laughs, Coverdale sees something much more serious, if not sinister: “I saw in Hollingsworth all that an artist could desire for the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate, holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft; – in Zenobia, the sorceress herself, not aged, wrinkled, decrepit, but fair enough to tempt Satan with a force reciprocal to his own.”³⁰ Again, Zenobia is portrayed in association with her sexual power at the fore and as proof of her own sinfulness. However, as the scene unfolds and the story resolves itself Zenobia’s sexual connotations transform into associations of love and genuine human emotions, those capable of forgiveness and redemption.

When Zenobia asks Coverdale to judge between herself and Hollingsworth she suggests that he will find two guilty parties. Although Coverdale, and the reading audience, is never privy to the depths of the relationship between Zenobia and Hollingsworth, nor the charges leveled in this pseudo-trial, the concept of two guilty people evokes Jesus’ parable of the creditor and debtors which informs the events in Luke 7:37-50. The parable of Jesus and the events surrounding his dinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee both emphasize awareness of sin (or debt). The sins of the woman are, apparently, very well known, but Simon too is sinful despite few knowing or his own recognition of the fact. Hollingsworth, like Simon the Pharisee, is not simply unaware of his own errors and sin but is all too eager to recognize and perhaps even act upon the sins of others.

In Luke 7:39 Simon reveals his judgment upon the sins of the woman. In a more detailed but similar manner, Hollingsworth, as Zenobia’s judge, explains, “I have an

unquestionable right or judgment, in order to settle my own line of behavior towards those, with whom the events of life bring me in contact. True; I have already judged you, but not on the world's part – neither do I pretend to pass a sentence!”³¹ While Hollingsworth, like Simon, suggests he does not actively sentence the woman in question both men judge harshly, consequently their behavior and their influence in society will create an informal but nonetheless efficient sentence. This is exposed by Zenobia, as the accused woman, who answers Hollingsworth's “right of judgment”:

What strange beings you men are [...] It is the simplest thing in the world, with you, to bring a woman before your secret tribunals, and judge and condemn her, unheard, and then tell her to go free without sentence. The misfortune is, that this same secret tribunal chances to be the only judgment-seat that a true woman stands in awe of, and that any verdict short of acquittal is equivalent to a death-sentence!³²

Through the pains of her own experience on trial Zenobia reveals the injustice and the hypocrisy of judgment – not simply of men upon women who are sensual or independent but of one person over another person. As in Luke's Gospel account, though one debt is bigger than another each has a debt.

Despite her accurate insight into the situation Hollingsworth refuses to forgive her faults or to acknowledge his own. In the face of his stubborn righteousness, Zenobia passionately declares “God judge between us [...] which of us two has most mortally offended Him!”³³ Zenobia, without the specifics of her crime, acknowledges that she is a woman “with every fault, it may be, that a woman ever had” and she identifies those faults as being “weak, vain, unprincipled,” as well as “passionate” and cunning.”

Hollingsworth however is another matter, as Zenobia makes clear: “But how is it with you? Are you a man? No; but a monster! A cold, heartless, self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism!”³⁴ Hollingsworth’s lack of heart is a deficiency emblematic, in Hawthorne’s writings and Jesus’ teachings, of a lack of humanity and redeem-ability as well. As with Simon the Pharisee, Hollingsworth is guilty in part because of his self-deception as to his own righteousness in life. In the case of Hollingsworth, and perhaps indirectly in the case of Simon as well, this self-delusion leads to larger sins – primarily, mistreating others. Zenobia announces to Hollingsworth that beyond his treatment of Coverdale and herself, “foremost, and blackest of your sins, you stifled down your inmost consciousness! – you did a deadly wrong to your own heart! – you were ready to sacrifice this girl.”³⁵ Priscilla, the symbol of innocence and in many ways helplessness, was jeopardized by both Zenobia and Hollingsworth, although he was clearly intended to be her protector. In response to her comments Hollingsworth disregards her words, rather disdainfully, as “a woman’s view,” which he summarizes as “a woman’s, whose whole sphere of action is in the heart, and who can conceive of no higher nor wider one!”³⁶ To which Zenobia counters, “you know neither man nor woman! [...] a great and rich heart has been ruined in your breast.”³⁷ Hollingsworth, like Simon the Pharisee, lacks a heart capable of acknowledging its own sin, agonizing repentance of that sin, nor of the joy of forgiveness for sin.

While Zenobia’s unspecified sins are not overtly forgiven by an overt Jesus figure, she finds redemption in the view of Coverdale and the humbling of Hollingsworth. Additionally, Hawthorne may have felt no need for any overt forgiveness due to the familiarity his audience would have had with the biblical story. After the trial

and confrontation between Zenobia and Hollingsworth she sobs convulsively at the foot of Eliot's pulpit, which moves Coverdale, and, most likely, the majority of the readers, to sympathy and good will towards the woman scorned. Coverdale reflects at this moment, "As Zenobia leaned her forehead against the rock, shaken with that tearless agony, it seemed to me that the self-same pang, with hardly mitigated torment, leaped thrilling from her heart-strings to my own. Was it wrong, therefore, if I felt myself consecrated to the priesthood, by sympathy like this, and called upon to minister to this woman's affliction, so far as mortal could?"³⁸ Though Coverdale is a far cry from Jesus, the scene recalls the sinful woman at the feet of Jesus in the home of Simon the Pharisee. Jesus informs her, and Simon, that her sins are forgiven before sending her off with the words "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Lk.7:50). While Coverdale's sympathy allows him to forgive her in his own mind, perhaps even as a priest, it is his belated rescue of her body that seems to suggest her faith saved her. It is unclear if her drowning was suicide or a melodramatic accident, but it is important to note that Coverdale leads the recovery efforts that rescue her from the "devil."

Coverdale rallied Silas Foster and Hollingsworth in the middle of the night to search for Zenobia in river at the heart of Blithedale, where in prodding for the body they dislodge a sunken tree stump. It was "all weedy and slimy, a devilish-looking object" that Foster admits he thought "was the Evil One on the same errand as ourselves – searching for Zenobia!"³⁹ Coverdale immediately declares that the devil "shall never get her," which suggests her redemption beyond forgiveness for her sins and faults. Her recovered body, proof of the devil's inability to claim her as his own, "had grown rigid in the act of struggling, and were bent before her, with clenched hands; her knees, too, were bent, and

– thank God for it! – in the attitude of prayer.”⁴⁰ Although fearful doubts enter his mind over Zenobia’s death, Coverdale concludes she was in prayer and “the flitting moment, after Zenobia sank into the dark pool – when her breath was gone, and her soul at her lips – was as long, in its capacity of God’s infinite forgiveness, as the lifetime of the world.”⁴¹ Further supporting her salvation is the grim observation “that the grass grew all the better’ on her grave than elsewhere in the pastures.”⁴²

Zenobia is Eve like in her complexity, and the sinful woman in her situation. Zenobia’s sexuality is ever-present as too is the stain of sin and lust surrounding sexualized women. Yet her beauty and her agony provide Coverdale with genuine humanity from which to live his life and perhaps better craft his art. Additionally, her death reveals to Hollingsworth the futility and error of his obsession, which he gave up upon her death. The moral that Coverdale (and Hawthorne) provide for *The Blithedale Romance* reflects upon and expands the moral of Jesus in Luke 7:37-50: the human heart and philanthropy “should render life sweet, bland, and gently beneficent, and insensibly influence other hearts and other lives to the same blessed end.”⁴³ Hollingsworth and Simon the Pharisee lived otherwise. Simon passed cold judgment upon others and offered Jesus no genuine hospitality. Likewise, Hollingsworth had no care or compassion for those unwedded to his own obsession. The simple story of Jesus at the home Simon the Pharisee and the more complex story of *The Blithedale Romance* reveal the vindication of women for their immense powers of the heart. They sin as all humans do, but the deep and abundant ability to love provides a means of reparation and redemption, which should not go unheeded by the men and the patriarchal institutions of authority in society that in closing off the heart shuts out humanity, communion, and redemption. Beatrice,

Miriam, Hester, and Zenobia all exist in similar storylines that are fundamentally based on Eve, but present in other biblical women. Hawthorne's characters and the Biblical figures all experience accusations and judgments from their communities – especially the male authorities – but manage to gain vindication through both perseverance and a re-dedication to their faiths.

Biblical Matriarchs

Although many of Hawthorne's female protagonists do struggle to overcome the stigmas of sin, of lust, of the associations of Eve, they still manage to reveal hope and virtue to the men with whom they share their stories. Gloria Chasson Erlich identifies the commonalities inherent in the Eve characters:

Beauty to passion to adultery – the route is clear and is slyly marked by signs infallible to the initiate in all of Hawthorne's dark ladies – Hester's love of flaming color and her pagan embroidery, Zenobia's hothouse flower (unnatural because worn whether in or out of season), and Beatrice's affinity with the gorgeous, flourishing, and tainted flowers. And hovering in the background of each of these women is a diabolic older man capable of some kind of magic aimed at a third person, a magic which becomes effective only with the innocent collaboration of the woman.⁴⁴

However, Hawthorne gives plenty of thought and respect to the blameless woman, the Virgin Mary. Erlich observes that Hawthorne's

Answer to such beautiful and dangerous women, it seems, is the Virgin, the image of motherhood without the stain of sex. The redemption of the vain and foolish Eve is through Mary. The alternative to Zenobia is Priscilla; to Miriam, Hilda, the Protestant girl who is also the tender of the lamp of the Virgin, the lady of the doves, pure and safe womanhood. As with Hester holding up her sin-born child on the scaffold, Eve calls up visions of Mary, her redemptive alter ego.⁴⁵

The Virgin Mary is the source of redemption. She is pure, she is trustworthy, she is devoted and compassionate, and she is strong and enduring. The Virgin Mary is the good mother who supports and shelter's her child – in Catholicism she shelters and guides all – in a fallen, that is, human world. Hawthorne's reverential attitudes toward the Virgin Mary are revealed in *The Marble Faun* when Hilda, the care-taker of a shrine to the Virgin Mary defends her actions on the grounds that "a Christian girl – even a daughter of the Puritans – may surely pay honour to the idea of Divine Womanhood, without giving up the faith of her forefathers."⁴⁶ Later in a passage reminiscent of those from his Italian notebooks, Hawthorne's narrator remarks that "it was beautiful to observe, indeed, how tender was the soul of man and woman towards the Virgin Mother, in recognition of the tenderness which, as their faith taught them, she immortally cherishes toward all human souls."⁴⁷

Derived from the Virgin Mary, then, is the idea of the matriarch who, in addition to her direct nurture, provides the link to society that is necessary for the salvation of the male protagonists in Hawthorne's fiction. His male characters are wandering pilgrims endangered by their will and their individuality. The matriarchal females reunite the

males with society, communion, and thus the promise of salvation. The biblical matriarchs share many qualities of the “virtuous” woman as described in the book of Proverbs. In regards to the virtuous woman of Proverbs, William E. Phipps briefly notes:

Proverbs begins with odes depicting divine wisdom personified as a woman and ends with a twenty-two verse acrostic poem describing the ABCs of a vigorous, capable woman. Both the actual and the ideal woman are “more precious than jewels.” As would be expected in most societies, and especially in a rural, preindustrial one, the virtuous woman is involved with children, charity, and cooking. She imparts her God-given wisdom to those for whom she is responsible.⁴⁸

As described by Leila Leah Bronner “the mother of the Bible is a figure of power. She influences the course of life in her home and, in some cases, wider society. The biblical mother is a force to be reckoned with in social, political and religious spheres. Her power stems in part from her role as wife, but far more so from the nurturing and influential relationship she has with her children.”⁴⁹ Separate from the Virgin Mary who is the supreme embodiment of the matriarch in Christianity are the many “mothers of Israel” from the Old Testament, including: Deborah, Sarah, Rachael, Rebekah, and Ruth. Whether actual or symbolic matriarchs, these biblical women “play a crucial role in the advancement of their people. They are administrators of God’s plans, protectors of the community, and givers of wise and much needed counsel at momentous points in Israel’s history.”⁵⁰ Such is the role of many of Hawthorne’s female characters who protect and counsel those they come across.

Leading up to Hester, Hawthorne's most direct and profound representation of the matriarch, are moments in other romances and short stories in which the redeeming purpose of the women characters are touched upon or hinted at. Erlich already mentioned one prominent case, that of Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*. Zenobia recognizes Priscilla for what she is while chastising Hollingsworth: "Foremost and blackest of your sins, you stifled down your innocent consciousness! – you did a deadly wrong to your own heart! – you were ready to sacrifice this girl, whom, if God ever visibly showed a purpose, He put into your charge, and through whom He was striving to redeem you!"⁵¹ Although Hollingsworth stubbornly dismisses Zenobia's words he too recognizes their truth after Zenobia's death. When Coverdale seeks to confront Hollingsworth at the close of the novel he observes

In Hollingsworth's face a depressed and melancholy look, that seemed habitual; the powerfully built man showed a self-distrustful weakness, and a childlike, or childish, tendency to press close, and closer still to the side of the slender woman whose arm was within his. In Priscilla's manner, there was a protective and watchful quality, as if she felt herself the guardian of her companion, but, likewise, a deep, submissive, unquestioning reverence, and also a veiled happiness in her fair and quiet countenance.⁵²

Unrelenting in his obsession with the reformation of criminals Hollingsworth strayed from a genuine communion with his fellows culminating in his mistreatment of both Coverdale and, tragically, Zenobia. Yet, he is rescued from the very pit of despair through the agency of Priscilla, whose slender physical frame belies the vast emotional

and spiritual love and support that she provides. Through her Hollingsworth regains perspective – specifically, sorrow and remorse – that returns him to the common bonds and lot of humanity, which will be his salvation as suggested by Coverdale’s own admission that upon seeing Hollingsworth so change, “tears gushed into my eyes, and I forgave him.”⁵³

Like Priscilla, three other female characters attempt to redeem the men in their lives. Elizabeth from “The Minister’s Black Veil,” Mary Goffe from “The Man of Adamant,” and Rosina from “Egotism; or, The Bosom-Serpent,” all reach out to their respective male counterparts and attempt, with varying degrees of success, to guide them off their self-destructive paths back to communion with humanity wherein lies the meaning and salvation they mistakenly seek elsewhere in their obsessions.

In “The Minister’s Black Veil” the Reverend Hooper becomes obsessed with sin, which he sees in every member of his congregation and which he symbolizes in the black veil he wears over his own face. Hooper vows never to remove it and explains to Elizabeth, to whom he was once betrothed, “this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!”⁵⁴ Despite her efforts he does not back down from his vow. When Hooper is upon his deathbed Hawthorne notes that Elizabeth is once more by his side before remarking that “all through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman’s love, and kept him in the saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen

the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.”⁵⁵

Such an observation emphasizes the errors of his way, which persist beyond his death as he is buried with the veil still upon his face. The remarks of the narrators suggest that the focus should not have been on the sin and the damnation in the world but in the joy and salvation represented by Elizabeth. Richard Fogle insightfully points out that “the minister has found a dreadful truth, while Elizabeth may have discovered a greater – that men are evil *and also* good. The meaning lies not in either but in both.”⁵⁶

A similar failure to rescue an obsessed man is depicted in “The Man of Adamant,” in which the preacher Richard Digby becomes obsessed with his own righteousness. Convinced that “his creed was like no one else’s, and being well pleased that Providence had entrusted him, alone of mortals, with the treasure of a true faith, Richard Digby determined to seclude himself to the sole and constant enjoyment of his happy fortune.”⁵⁷ Determined to “hold no communion with those abominable myriads” any longer he takes shelter in cave to avoid “whatever new kind of ruin is ordained for the horrible perversity of this generation.”⁵⁸ Upon his withdrawal from society Digby’s heart begins to ossify, yet he persists convinced of his righteousness. One day Mary Goffe appears to him – her appearance is associated with angels and she is later revealed to be the spirit of the deceased woman on a mission for his salvation similar to Dante’s Beatrice – and attempts to cure him of his disease through praying together and offering him a cup of water to share. He violently rejects her overtures by knocking the cup from her hands and shouting “tempt me no more, accursed woman!”⁵⁹ However, upon his final and vehement rejection of love and society his “heart ceased to beat,”⁶⁰ and he hardened entirely into a dreadful stone figure. Digby’s demise, the narrator asserts, would have

been avoided had he trusted and embraced Mary because she embodied “Friendship, and Love, and Piety, all human and celestial sympathies” that would have staved off “the horrible loneliness”⁶¹ to which he condemned himself.

One woman who succeeds in her efforts to save the man in her life is Rosina of “Egotism; or, The Bosom-Serpent.” Roderick Elliston became infected and drastically changed by a bosom-serpent that gnaws at him unceasingly. The presence of the bosom-serpent, and Roderick’s present troubles began “shortly after Elliston’s separation from his wife – now nearly four years ago.”⁶² Although the cause of Elliston’s condition is not immediately known, it is implied to have been his profligacy: “What could it be, that gnawed the breast of Roderick Elliston? Was it sorrow? Was it merely the tooth of physical disease? Or, in his reckless course, often verging upon profligacy, if not plunging into its depths, had he been guilty of some deed, which made his bosom a prey to the deadlier fangs of remorse?”⁶³ Initially Elliston “estranged himself from all companionship;”⁶⁴ however as his condition worsened he sought more interaction in society where he could not only draw more attention to himself and his condition but acknowledge the bosom-serpents in others of the community. Like Hooper, Elliston becomes dangerously fixated on sin in himself and others, and in fact comes to cherish his bosom-serpent. The narrator explains:

This craving for notoriety was a symptom of the intense morbidness which now pervaded his nature. All persons, chronically diseased, are egoists, whether the disease be of the mind or of the body; whether it be sin, sorrow, or merely the more tolerable calamity of some endless pain, or

mischief among the cords of mortal life. Such individuals are made acutely conscious of a self, by the torture in which it dwells.⁶⁵

His condition so oppresses him that in addition to clutching his chest and muttering “it gnaws me,” Elliston walks in a serpentine manner, and is heard to hiss while he speaks.

George Herkimer, friend to Elliston and cousin of Rosina, arrives to visit Elliston, bringing a message from Rosina and intending to learn more about the mysterious condition. Upon seeing Elliston he mutters to himself, “my poor Rosina, Heaven grant me wisdom to discharge my errand aright! Woman’s faith must be strong indeed, since thine has not yet failed.”⁶⁶ Herkimer’s words provide proof of Rosina’s care and devotion despite the nearly four year long separation and the apparent degradation of Elliston. Herkimer, concerned and appalled by his condition directly asks him the cause, which Elliston simply admits is the “the poisonous stuff in any man’s heart.”⁶⁷ Elliston also reveals that the cure, which he considers an “impossible one,” is for him to “for one instant, forget [him]self.”⁶⁸ At this revelation and his writhing in agony upon the ground Rosina appears and bids her husband “forget yourself in the idea of another!”⁶⁹

Rosina had emerged from the arbor, and was bending over him, with the shadow of his anguish reflected in her own countenance, yet so mingled with hope and unselfish love, that all anguish seemed but an earthly shadow and a dream. [...] Roderick Elliston sat up, like a man renewed, restored to his right mind, and rescued from the fiend, which had so miserably overcome him in the battle-field of his own breast.⁷⁰

Rosina is the virtuous woman, the motherly wife, whose forgiveness, compassion, devotion, and “unselfish love” saves Elliston from himself. His obsession was turned

entirely upon himself in a “diseased self-contemplation”⁷¹ that ostracized him from others and from the goodness also present in the world.

Beyond embodying the ideal of the virtuous woman, Rosina expresses a sentiment that unites Eve and others like her to Mary, which is hope and faith in future redemption. When Herkimer questions whether Elliston’s heart can recover and be purified enough for love again Rosina answers definitively in the positive: “‘Oh, yes!’ said Rosina, with a heavenly smile. ‘The serpent was but a dark fantasy, and what it typified was as shadowy as itself. The past, dismal as it seems, shall fling no gloom upon the future. To give it its due importance, we must think of it but as an anecdote in our Eternity!’”⁷² Rosina’s words not only apply to the story of herself and Elliston but to Eve and all the other accused women who are saddled with blame and guilt for the presence of sin in the world. If such sins and faults are properly answered – as exemplified in her own devotion, forgiveness, and love – then heavenly Eternity, salvation will be attained.

Hepzibah’s role as the heroine in *The House of the Seven Gables* casts her as a symbolic matriarch. The biblical Hepzibah is briefly mentioned in part because of the deficiencies of her son, however, her name “appears as a designation for Zion restored, in Isa 62:4.”⁷³ Such an association suggests a role as “mother Israel” itself. Two other notable “mothers of Israel” are Deborah and Esther. Deborah “is one of the major judges (meaning charismatic leaders, rather than juridical figures) in the story of how Israel takes the land of Canaan;” and, as “the only female judge, and also the only judge to be called a prophet, Deborah is a decisive figure in the defeat of the Canaanites, a victory told in two accounts, a prose narrative in Judges 4 and an ancient song known as the Song of Deborah.”⁷⁴ A heroine similar to Deborah is Esther, “a young Jewish woman living in

exile in the Persian diaspora, who through her youth and beauty becomes queen of the Persian Empire, and then by her wits and courage saves the Jewish people from destruction.”⁷⁵ Deborah and Esther assume matriarchal roles to counsel and care for their people in times of crisis. Their devotion and leadership not only brings success in their respective struggles but reaffirms the faith of their dependents.

Hepzibah, who is not a biological mother, assumes the role of matriarch as she seeks to protect her enfeebled brother Clifford, primarily, as well as the well-being of Phoebe and Holgrave from the threats of her overbearing cousin Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon. As Nina Baym remarks, Hepzibah is “usually seen as a figure of mingled parody and pathos.”⁷⁶ However, Baym reminds us that “the narrator tells readers that Hepzibah is both a heroic character and his heroine,” and that taken as such “we may then perceive that it is she who ultimately rescues the entire knot of characters from Jaffrey Pyncheon's evil clutches.”⁷⁷ Without the military resources of Deborah or the political influence of Esther, Hepzibah achieves her success through devoted love to her friends and a stubborn defiance of her enemy, which culminates in her ability to call the judgment of God down upon Judge Pyncheon.

Her initial act of defiance is to open a cent-shop in the old familial home with the intent of earning enough money to be beyond the need of aid from Judge Pyncheon. Aware of his witnessing her behind the counter she mutters to herself “take it as you like,”⁷⁸ which denotes him as her adversary and her willingness to battle him in her own frail way. Later, after her brother has returned from a long prison term Judge Pyncheon arrives to interrogate Clifford as to the whereabouts of long lost inheritance. Rightly afraid for Clifford’s wellbeing, “Hepzibah spread her gaunt figure across the door, and

seemed really to increase in bulk; looking more terrible; also because there was so much terror and agitation in her heart.”⁷⁹ Although she only succeeds in delaying the confrontation, Hawthorne’s narrator showers her with praise that highlights her qualities in a manner reminiscent of the virtuous matriarchs of the Bible. Hepzibah is described as being “high, generous, and noble,”⁸⁰ qualities befitting a matriarch leader her people.

In her own behalf, she had asked nothing of Providence, but the opportunity of devoting herself to this brother whom she had so loved – so admired for what he was, or might have been – and to whom she had kept her faith, alone of all the world, wholly, unflinching, at every instant, and throughout life. And here, in his late decline, the lost one had come back out of his long and strange misfortune, and was thrown on her sympathy, as it seemed, not merely for the bread of his physical existence, but for everything that should keep him morally alive. She had responded to the call!⁸¹

Hepzibah’s redeeming role is triumphantly allied with Providence through her unselfish love and devotion. As the narrator recounts, “how patiently did she endeavor to wrap Clifford up in her great, warm love, and make it all the world to him, so that he should retain no torturing sense of the coldness and dreariness, without!”⁸²

Ennobled and empowered by her devotion and love Hepzibah is resolved to continue her defiance of Judge Pyncheon, which escalates in two more direct confrontations encapsulated in chapter XV, “The Scowl and the Smile.” Judge Pyncheon returns to the seven-gabled home and demands an interview with Clifford despite the protests of Hepzibah. Although he professes to hold her and her brother in highest

regards and concern, Hepzibah rejects his false words: ““In God’s name, whom you insult – and whose power I could almost question, since He hears you utter so many false words, without palsyng your tongue – give over, I beseech you, this loathsome pretence of affection for your victim!””⁸³ Her words, in content and tone, evoke the anger of Old Testament prophets dealing with pagan foes and backsliding Israelites. And, like Deborah and the other prophets and leaders of Israel, Hepzibah is unable to achieve victory on her own and calls upon God. Hepzibah cannot dissuade or force Judge Pyncheon from his purpose so, before retrieving Clifford, she warns him: “Be merciful in your dealings with him! – be far more merciful than your heart bids you be! – for God is looking at you Jaffrey Pyncheon!”⁸⁴ Her words resonate not only with the Old Testament but with the Pyncheon family curse, and coincidentally (or not), initiate Judge Pyncheon’s death. His reply is lost in a choking sound as she leaves the room. As Baym explains, “Hepzibah has heard not words but the choking that signals the onset of the fit that kills Jaffrey – kills him either while she is out of the room looking for her brother or, perhaps, even before she has quite quit it. Jaffrey’s purple-black brow indicates a fatal surge of blood to the brain; his choking, a death rattle.”⁸⁵ Whether simply coincidence, the family curse, or God’s response to Hepzibah’s need, either way judge Pyncheon is dead and Hepzibah, the matriarch, has conquered her enemy and protected her loved ones.

The ultimate matriarch in Hawthorne’s world of fiction is Hester Prynne and she quite often evokes the ultimate matriarch of Christianity, the Virgin Mary. As Robert E. Todd admits, “From the moment when she first appears, a maternal image with the babe at her breast, Hester's kinship with the Great Mother is strikingly evident.”⁸⁶ After describing the beauty, grace, and dignity of Hester as she stood upon the scaffolds before

the crowd the narrator remarks “had there been a papist among the crowd of puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent.”⁸⁷ Hester as Divine Mother shines through principally in the scaffold scenes. The first of which, mentioned above, makes use of “the traditional imagery of Madonna and child, based on New Testament stories of Jesus’ birth and infancy (Mt. 1–2 and Lk. 1–2).”⁸⁸ The final scaffold scene answers this twice over. First, “when like the Mother Mary standing at the foot of the cross, Hester stands ‘statue-like at the foot of the scaffold.’”⁸⁹ And second, when “Dimmesdale dies on the scaffold of the pillory with his head cradled in Hester’s bosom. Several commentators have suggested that the picture painted here corresponds to the traditional imagery of the *pietà*, thus reinforcing the presentation of Hester as a Madonna figure.”⁹⁰ Both instances juxtapose Hester with the imagery of the Virgin Mother. Beyond the imagery though are their shared qualities. While Hawthorne never depicts Hester as sinless, she can aspire to Mary’s faithful devotion, compassion, and her protective love. Hester does do this; and, she does so not only for her daughter, Pearl, or her lover, Rev. Dimmesdale, but for all the members of the community – especially the women – until her death.

Although her similarities to Eve and the adulterous woman of John 8:1-11 are never downplayed – in fact in chapter eight Governor Bellingham goes so far as to liken her to the Whore of Babylon – Hester’s virtues are equally powerful and enduring in her legacy. She is charitable with her skills as a seamstress as well as the money she earns, she is charitable to with her time and her compassion as she comforts the sick and the

needy of Salem. The narrator notes that “the blameless purity of her life, during all these years in which she had been set apart to infamy, was reckoned largely in her favor.”⁹¹

This sentiment is borne out by the change in the community’s interpretation of her scarlet letter: “Such helpfulness was found in her, — so much power to do, and power to sympathize, — that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman’s strength.”⁹² After the death of Dimmesdale Hester and a time in England, Hester returns to her home at the edge of Salem:

Hester Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble. Women, more especially, - in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion, - or with the dreary burden of a heart unyielded, because unvalued and unsought, - came to Hester’s cottage, demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy! Hester comforted and counselled them, as best she might. She assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness.⁹³

Hawthorne’s repetition of counsel and of comfort as the primary actions of Hester recalls Leila L. Bronner’s description of biblical matriarchs as “administrators of God’s plans, protectors of the community, and givers of wise and much needed counsel at momentous

points in Israel's history."⁹⁴ More importantly though, the final image of Hester that Hawthorne creates and leaves us with is that of Hester in as an analogue for the Virgin Mary – similar to how he describes her in *The Blithedale Romance* when Coverdale, Hawthorne's facsimile, admits: "I have always envied the Catholics their faith in that sweet and sacred Virgin Mother, who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat of His awful splendor, but permitting His love to stream upon the worshipper, more intelligibly to human comprehension through the medium of a woman's tenderness."⁹⁵

Conclusion: The Gift of Redemption

The end result of Hawthorne's adaptation of female types found in the Bible is an emphasis upon womanly tenderness. This quality exudes compassion, devotion, and love. The women are often tainted by real or imagined sin – fundamentally rooted in the act of Eve and the sinful connotations built up around her over time in the Christian tradition – but are vindicated by their tenderness. In this manner every Eve is answered by the Virgin Mary. Every woman may carry the seeds of sin as did Eve, but so too does every woman offer the possibility of communion and redemption. In a similar vein but in slightly different terms Morton Cronin explains:

Within the framework of the female's traditional activities, however, Hawthorne accords woman a place that is more than honorable. Indeed, he would, if we accept Miles Coverdale as his spokesman in *The Blithedale Romance*, extend woman's historic role as the spiritual fortifier of man to include the professional ministry of souls, for, as Coverdale puts it, 'I have

never found it possible to suffer a bearded priest so near my heart and conscience as to do me any spiritual good' (p. 511). In *The Marble Faun* Kenyon gravely expressed the same feeling: 'man never derives any intimate help, . . . from his brother man, but from woman, – his mother, his sister, or his wife.'⁹⁶

The women provide moral counsel and awareness, which is, as Hawthorne both believes and presents it, sanctified because his idealized women do not want for themselves but for their union with the others in their lives. Women, as Hawthorne repeatedly and explicitly argues in both *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*, are inextricably linked to men, thus, all are joined in a human (fallen) world and all must work together towards their improvement and salvation. Whereas men are prone to individualism and fanaticism in dangerous degrees, the women provide a stabilizing and communal foundation from which men like Holgrave can then build their homes and look less to themselves or to sin but to goodness and hope.

¹ Weldon, *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*, 4

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 5

⁴ Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, 141

⁵ Meyers, "Eve in the Hebrew Bible," 79

⁶ Erlich, "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," 168

⁷ Ibid., 169

⁸ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 54

⁹ Liebman, "The Design of *The Marble Faun*," 63

¹⁰ Frymer-Kensky, "Rahab in the Hebrew Bible," 141

¹¹ *The Marble Faun*, IV:170

¹² Ibid., 320

¹³ Ibid., 283

¹⁴ Ibid., 317

¹⁵ Ibid., 434

¹⁶ Weldon, *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*, 19

¹⁷ Kreitzer, "'Revealing the Affairs of the Heart,'" 151

¹⁸ Ibid., 202

¹⁹ Ibid., 160-161

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- ²⁰ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:50
²¹ Kreitzer, "Revealing the Affairs of the Heart," 168
²² *Ibid.*, 163
²³ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:161
²⁴ Kilgallen, "John the Baptist, the Sinful Woman, and the Pharisee," 676. Kilgallen sums up and expands upon the commentaries of Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, J. Jeremias, and H.G. Wood.
²⁵ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:47
²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72
²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79
²⁸ *Ibid.*, 214
²⁹ *Ibid.*
³⁰ *Ibid.*
³¹ *Ibid.*, 215
³² *Ibid.*
³³ *Ibid.*, 217
³⁴ *Ibid.*, 218
³⁵ *Ibid.*, 218
³⁶ *Ibid.*
³⁷ *Ibid.*, 219
³⁸ *Ibid.*, 222
³⁹ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:233
⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 235
⁴¹ *Ibid.*
⁴² *Ibid.*, 243
⁴³ *Ibid.*
⁴⁴ Erlich, "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," 171
⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 174
⁴⁶ *The Marble Faun*, IV:54
⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 297
⁴⁸ Phipps, *Assertive Biblical Women*, 5
⁴⁹ Bronner, *Stories of Biblical Mothers: Maternal Power in the Hebrew Bible*, ix
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 78
⁵¹ *The Blithedale Romance*, III:218
⁵² *Ibid.*, 242
⁵³ *Ibid.*, 243
⁵⁴ "The Minister's Black Veil," IX:46
⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50
⁵⁶ Fogle, *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & the Dark*, 6-7
⁵⁷ "The Man of Adamant," XI:161
⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 161-162
⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 167
⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 169
⁶² "Egotism; or, The Bosom-Serpent," X:270
⁶³ *Ibid.*, 271
⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 273
⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 268
⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 282
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 283
⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
⁷¹ *Ibid.*
⁷² *Ibid.*
⁷³ Burnette-Bletsch, "Hephzibah 1," 92

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- ⁷⁴ Frymer-Kensky, "Deborah 2." 66
⁷⁵ White Crawford, "Esther," 75
⁷⁶ Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 608
⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 609
⁷⁸ *The House of the Seven Gables*, III:58
⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 129
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 133
⁸¹ *Ibid.*
⁸² *Ibid.*, 134
⁸³ *Ibid.*, 227-228
⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 238
⁸⁵ Baym, "The Heroine of "The House of the Seven Gables"; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?," 612
⁸⁶ Todd, "The Magna Mater Archetype in the Scarlet Letter," 422
⁸⁷ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:56
⁸⁸ Kreitzer, "Revealing the Affairs of the Heart," 152
⁸⁹ Todd, "The Magna Mater Archetype in the Scarlet Letter," 424
⁹⁰ Kreitzer, "Revealing the Affairs of the Heart," 152
⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 160
⁹² *Ibid.*, 161
⁹³ *Ibid.*, 263
⁹⁴ Bronner, *Stories of Biblical Mothers*, 78
⁹⁵ *The Blithedale Romance*, II:121-122
⁹⁶ Cronin, "Hawthorne on Romantic Love and the Status of Women," 95-96

CHAPTER 7

BIBLICAL THEMES: PRODIGAL SONS

Whereas Hawthorne's female protagonists come to embody Eve or Mary (sometimes both), his male protagonists generally appear as variations of the prodigal son (of which Adam can be viewed as the first). The male protagonists are consistently depicted in the midst of an initiation; the initiations are not simply of a youth entering into manhood, but of the naïve and innocent becoming aware of, perhaps even intimately familiar with, the presence of sin and evil in the world. The question that results in Hawthorne's stories is not whether such sin and evil truly exists but how the protagonist will deal with its existence. While this story pattern is easily secular, Hawthorne's story patterns are Christian because of their biblical contexts, which demonstrate time and again that sin and error exist and that the end goal is understanding and redemption. This is an idea not dissimilar to that expressed by Jonathan Edwards when, in a treatise, he explains:

The prodigal Son spends all he has, and is brought to see himself in extreme Circumstances, and to humble himself, and own his Unworthiness, before he is reliev'd and feasted by his Father; *Luke 15*. Old inveterate Wounds must be searched to the Bottom, in order to Healing. And the Scripture compares Sin, the Wound of the Soul, to this, and

speaks of healing this Wound without thus searching of it, as vain and deceitful.¹

This searching is, as Edwards suggests, internal; however, Hawthorne's artistry often utilizes external journeys as metaphors of the internal searching, as in the case of Reuben Borne in "Roger Malvin's Burial." Hawthorne's fiction, on the whole, matches quite well with Stephen Cox's observation that

Christian literature habitually challenges travelers to a *change of perspective* – often a reversal of perspective, from confusion to clarity, doubt to belief, entrapment by the natural to liberation by the supernatural. The challenge is, in a way, the reason for the literature's existence. By showing other people's journeys, other people's conflicts, other people's doubts and hesitations, Christian literature offers a new perspective on the reader's own journey.²

Hawthorne's writing revolves around expressing the challenges of changing perspective, which F. O. Matthiesen identifies as "one of his most fertile resources, the device of multiple choice."³ Through the multiple possibilities of perception Hawthorne maintains "the ambiguous connection between the psychological, the moral, and the religious," which Hyatt Waggoner believes "is one of the principal reasons why his works seem so relevant to us."⁴

The basis of the prodigal son parable is easy to grasp: the father joyfully accepts the return of his once wayward son. In this way Adam is humankind's first wayward son whose return to his Father is accomplished, in part, through the death and resurrection of Christ. "The temporal interval between the sin and the redemption, Adam's crime and

Christ's atonement," according to Roy Male, "is crucially important. If obliterated, it leads to the fallacious formula of the Fortunate Fall. Hawthorne believed that moral growth cannot occur without sin and suffering."⁵ Speaking generally of Hawthorne's works in light of the Fall, Male explains:

The original tragic action may thus be described as a three-fold movement: first the parental bond is established; it is broken as the individual proudly asserts his independence from the father and accepts a new bondage to his mate; and finally, after the terrible human cost of sin, agony, and death, some degree of spiritual purification and re-establishment of the original bond is achieved.⁶

As Male suggests, the time "away" from the Father is when the prodigal son comes to a realization, an understanding, of what sin is and most importantly how to respond to its presence. The son could lose faith (as young Goodman Brown does), or the son could repent of and reject his wrong decisions thereby returning to his faith through new actions, thoughts, and behaviors that literally or metaphorically realign him with his Father (as Donatello and Owen Warland do in their respective stories). The concept, if not the actual parable, of the Prodigal Son is the central influence of the vast majority of Hawthorne's male protagonists.

The parable of the prodigal son appears in Luke 15, along with two lesser parables about an owner seeking a lost sheep, in one instance, and a lost coin, in another. These parables are direct responses to criticism of Jesus' keeping company with known sinners: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with

them” (Lk. 15:1-2). Jesus concludes his parable of the recovered sheep saying “that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Lk. 15:7). The parable of the recovered coin is followed by the similar conclusion that “likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Lk. 15:10). While the scribes and Pharisee’s emphasis the public sins of those around him, Jesus, instead accepts that people will sin but emphasizes the ability and glory of repentance.

Luke 15:11–32 records the parable of the prodigal son in which the younger son demanded his inheritance of his father and left for a far off country and “there wasted his substance with riotous living” (Lk. 15:13). The son then becomes a swineherd in wretched conditions before coming to himself (Lk. 15:17) and deciding to return to his home in hopes of becoming a hired servant of his father’s household. Upon his nearing home, “his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him;” whereupon the prodigal son said to his father, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Lk. 15:20-21). The Father’s response – giving the returned son shoes, a ring, the best robe, and a feast in his honor – puzzles both the prodigal son and the older son who remained by his father’s side. The father explains his actions thus: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Lk. 15:24). The actions and the reasons of the father not only reaffirm the morals or lessons of the preceding parables but explicitly explain Jesus’ own actions among the sinners who flock to his message. The situation described in the parable of the prodigal son is one in which the temptations of the world – materialism – overrule the morality – spiritualism – instilled in the young man by his father. This

situation is natural to the human condition – as demonstrated by Adam and Eve, as the first humans – and cannot become the point of short sighted focus; instead, repentance and a return to the Father (spiritual or physical) should be the focus of every individual and of society at large.

According to Stephen Cox, the parable is one that “most people recall as a lesson about repentance from sin. Correct – but the story is much more than that.”⁷ On the surface, the parable is “a typically Christian *story* about a *journey* that includes *progress* and a *change of perspective*.”⁸ Cox continues on to explain:

The significance of the story increases greatly when one recognizes it as *symbolic of reconciliation* between God and humanity. The Father is not content to wait until humanity returns to him; he takes action to bring his children home. That is the point Jesus makes when he says that when the prodigal was still far away, his father “ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” God in his *providence* runs to meet the needs of humanity. There could be no finer symbol of *division* and *unity*, of people first *separated* from God, then united with him, than the picture of the father seeing his son at a distance and running happily to meet him.⁹

In the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, characters “get lost” and frequently there seems to be evidence of Providence attempting to guide them back home. The question lies in the powers of interpretation: does the character recognize that he is lost? Does he consider his “return home” as a possible solution to his problem(s)? The prodigal son made the decision to return home and in that mindset clearly saw and recognized his father.

Richard Digby in “The Man of Adamant” assumed himself to be in the correct place –

physically and spiritually – and thus did not recognize Mary Goffe as the sign by which he was to return to his true place. Likewise, young Goodman Brown interpreted the cloud overhead and the fluttering pink ribbons not as evidence that God and Faith found him in the middle of the wilderness but that God and Faith were no more, and instead that the world was given over to the devil. In a more positive example, Hyatt Waggoner contends that “Robin’s encounter with sin becomes a fortunate fall in ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineux.’ The innocence of this self-reliant and naïve country boy proves inadequate to guide him to his destination through the mazes of the city’s streets, but thanks to a kindly Providence, he finds he may rise, after his fall, without the help he sought.”¹⁰

As Waggoner notes, there are several of Hawthorne’s stories, which “we generally think of as stories of initiation [that] are equally stories of the fall.”¹¹ Of these many stories and characters that follow the same storyline as the prodigal son, Hawthorne’s “The Artist of the Beautiful” is perhaps the best example. Owen Warland is a “young man” devoted to “love of the Beautiful,” elsewhere referred to as “the Beautiful Idea.”¹² Hawthorne crafts Owen’s story along the same lines as that of the prodigal son except that it is expanded to include multiple obstacles from which Owen must “come to himself,” in the words of the parable, again and again in order to return to his Father, in this case the divine and spiritualized ideal. Owen is a watchmaker who has devoted his skills and energy to the supposed impractical task of making his “bright conceptions [...] visible to the sensual eye.”¹³ His attempts, difficult as they inherently are, face threats from the representatives of the material world, in a way analogous to the worldly temptations that beguiled the prodigal son.

As Owen admits to his pseudo-rival Robert Danforth, a blacksmith, “strength is an earthly monster. I make no pretensions to it. My force, whatever there may be of it, is altogether spiritual.”¹⁴ Owen speaks truly because prolonged exposure to the denizens of the material world weakens Owen’s skills and ruins his project. The first instance is Danforth’s visit to the workshop when, despite his well wishes, “the influence of that brute force”¹⁵ bewilders Owen into crushing the object of his toilsome project. The narrator intrudes upon the story to encourage Owen, or any artist for that matter, to “keep his faith in himself, while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius, and the objects to which it is directed.”¹⁶ But Owen struggles, repeatedly, to keep his faith, and he “succumbs to this severe, but inevitable test. He spent a few sluggish weeks, with his head so continually in his hands.”¹⁷ Owen falls into his practical business to the pleasure of the material world that now had reliable time by which to measure and regulate their lives. His change meets the approval of his antagonistic former boss, Peter Hovenden, who glories in the practical and especially in the demise of the ideal and spiritual to which Owen is dedicated. Hovenden’s presence deeply affects Owen so much so that “Owen groaned in spirit, and prayed fervently to be delivered from him.”¹⁸

His desire to return to the path he intended to be upon rescues Owen from the grasp of the material world. “As the summer advanced, he almost totally relinquished his business,” his ties to the material world, and enjoys nature where he finds inspiration for his project. Having embarked once more in his attempt at the “spiritualization of matter” he makes great progress and dares to reveal it to Annie Hovenden, “the only being whom he loved.”¹⁹ Unfortunately she does not appreciate his efforts as he had hoped and her

curious touch destroys his work once more. After his second major setback, roughly half-way through the story, “The Artist of the Beautiful” begins to directly mimic the parable of the prodigal son:

The decease of a relative had put him in possession of a small inheritance. Thus freed from the necessity of toil, and, having lost the steadfast influence of a great purpose – great, at least to him – he abandoned himself to habits from which, it have been supposed, the mere delicacy of his organization would have availed to secure him. But when the ethereal portion of a man of genius is obscured, the earthly part assumes an influence the more uncontrollable, because the character is now thrown off the balance to which Providence had so nicely adjusted it, and which it, in coarser natures, is adjusted by some other method. Owen Warland made proof of whatever show of bliss may be found in riot.²⁰

Owen, like the prodigal son in the words of Luke 15:12, “wasted his substance with riotous living.” Owen’s distractions with wine and riotous living last until the following spring when “he was redeemed by an incident” in which a butterfly “fluttered about his head.”²¹ Coming to himself once again, Owen returned to his project dedicated to the Beautiful.

The narrator clearly states that this incident is not one of chance. The butterfly that visited Owen as “he sat with the rude revelers, was indeed a spirit, commissioned to recall him to the pure, ideal life, that had so etherealized him among men.”²² Unlike, Goodman Brown or Richard Digby, Owen answers his calling and returns to his efforts. Once again his dedication to his impractical project draws the ire of the townsfolk who

conclude that “Owen Warland has gone mad!”²³ These judgments and pressures of the material world lead the narrator to assert that “from Saint Paul’s days, down to our poor little Artist of the Beautiful, the same talisman has been applied to the elucidation of all mysteries in the words or deeds of men, who spoke or acted too wisely or too well.”²⁴ Associating Owen with Saint Paul – another easily seen as a prodigal son regarding – lends Owen and his project a more explicit Christian or spiritual emphasis.

However, Owen is confronted and defeated by the material world once more. He discovers that his beloved Annie has become betrothed to Robert Danforth. The news is crushing to Owen’s spirit and results in his destruction of “the little system of machinery that had, anew, cost him months of thought and toil.”²⁵ As before, Owen finds himself in the metaphorical “pigsties of despair” that he shares with the biblical prodigal son. “He went through a fit of illness. After his recovery, his small and slender frame assumed an obtuse garniture of flesh than it had ever before worn. His thin cheeks became round,”²⁶ all in evidence of his becoming more and more a part of the material world. “It was as if the spirit had gone out of him.”²⁷ The narrator remorsefully observes:

Poor, poor, and fallen Owen Warland! These were the symptoms that he had ceased to be an inhabitant of the better sphere that lies unseen around us. He had lost his faith in the invisible, and now prided himself, as such unfortunates invariably do, in the wisdom which rejected much that even his eye could see, and trusted confidently in nothing but what his hand could touch. This is the calamity of men whose spiritual part dies out of them...²⁸

The pity felt for Owen is not unlike that felt for the foolish prodigal son. Both young men have good beginnings but become waylaid by the material world through its temptations and its judgments. And, at heart, both know better. In Luke 15:17 the prodigal son came to himself and realized that he was better off with his father. Owen likewise manages to come to himself.

In regard to the biblical parable, Stephen Cox asserts that “this *journey*, like many others in the New Testament, is accompanied by the *reversals* of values, emphasized with the help of *irony*. The young man’s pride and pleasure turns into something exactly the opposite – abject humiliation.”²⁹ Cox explains that “this is an irony of *individualism*: the prodigal claimed the right to make his own decisions; now, it seems, he is sinking into the crowd of people who are dependent on someone else’s good will.”³⁰ Hawthorne’s use of irony is well documented; and, in the “The Artist of the Beautiful” his irony also deals with the struggles of individualism in society and the values espoused by each side. The practicality espoused by the majority is viewed as debilitating to the spiritual wellbeing of each individual, and yet the society rails against the individual, like Owen, who pursues the spiritual instead of the practical. However, the irony of the parable and of the short story is based in hope not despair.

Jesus says that at the prodigal’s great moment of decision, when he recognizes his need for his father, “he came to himself.” There is something precious about the individual self, after all. [...] In his shame, the prodigal looks inside, discovers something more important in “himself” than his lust for pleasure, and decides to humble himself and go home. This is a moment of *revelation* and *conversion*, and it is

accompanied by a *change of perspective* and a *transformation* of circumstances.³¹

The coming to himself, the true self, and the reevaluation of the inner and the outer allows Owen to return to his seemingly sacredly appointed task with more energy and strength than ever before.

Owen's successful creation is a mechanical butterfly infused with his very spirit. He houses it in a wooded box that he has decorated with the story of his own life – a pursuit of a beautiful butterfly that leads from the earth to the clouds and the clouds to the “celestial atmosphere.”³² In Owen's craftsmanship, “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, for child-angels and the spirits of departed infants to disport themselves with.”³³ Owen gives the butterfly to Annie as his belated wedding gift to the pleasure and amazement of Annie and Robert Danforth. However, the butterfly meets with the scorn of Peter Hovenden and is soon thereafter crushed by the Danforth baby. Yet in this final catastrophe Owen remains unperturbed. The narrator concludes the story with the insight that Owen “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.”³⁴

“The Artist of the Beautiful,” through the biblical context, takes on a deeper significance similar to that of the parable of the prodigal son. Cox believes that the parable is elevated through the symbolic reunion of a sinner and his God, as is implied throughout Luke 15. That reconciliation between man and God is repeated in

Hawthorne's story. Owen struggles to overcome the human materialism that distracts and detracts from his spirit, which is the original connection to God. Hawthorne refers to this as the "unseen sphere" around us. But such spiritual joy and value is often and easily obscured by the tangible pleasures and values of the material world, especially when those values are so strongly supported by the communities in which one lives. Cox places emphasis both on the effort of God the Father running to meet the returning son *and* the son's recognition of his errors and his decision to return. This recognition and return is the crux not only of "The Artist of the Beautiful" but nearly all of Hawthorne's stories.

The story of initiation, of the Fall, of education through experience, that captivates Hawthorne and others in the parable of the prodigal son can be generalized into that of the pilgrim. Pilgrim and pilgrimage are words frequently found in Hawthorne's writing, perhaps most notably in "Roger Malvin's Burial," and "The Celestial Rail-road." As with Owen Warland, the majority of Hawthorne's male characters are seeking something. Alan Morinis asserts that "pilgrimage is born of desire and belief. The desire is for solution to problems of all kinds that arise within the human situation. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. All one must do is journey."³⁵ However, as Morinis notes, "the pilgrim's goal need not be located in time and space."³⁶ Some of Hawthorne's characters sought goals outside time and space: for Owen it was Beauty, for Ethan Brand it is knowledge, for Aylmer it is perfection. Others, like Coverdale, Reuben Borne, and the narrator of "The Celestial Rail-road" sought actual destinations. Regardless of the end goal, Hawthorne's male protagonists struggle in their pilgrimages. Jean Normand contends that

All Hawthorne's heroes are also pilgrims, but they will all knock upon the Interpreter's door in vain: there is no guide for them, and no certainty. This very modern aspect of the nobility and wretchedness of man was revealed to him by Shakespeare more than anyone else. So that we often find his heroes confronted with a terrible alliance of implacable destiny and crushing predestination. His human dramas were to be dominated by a metaphysical necessity and a poetic fatality at the same time.³⁷

Morinis concludes that "because the essence of pilgrimage is concerned with the pursuit of ideals and salvation within the human condition, many pilgrimages are oriented toward initiation, in the sense of both change of social status and transformation of personal state."³⁸ Such changes are central to the experiences of Hawthorne's male protagonists who attempt to find their proper place in the world in relation to themselves and their God. This experience has a firm basis in the Bible, not only in the events of the prodigal son, but in the Exodus and the Babylonian Captivity, as well as Jesus' forty days and nights in the wilderness. These events ingrain the ideas of wandering and suffering into any pilgrimage – events that are inevitable in any life.

That Hawthorne's male protagonists are nearly all young men (sometimes young in understanding rather than age) allows them to all be viewed, I believe, as the manifestations of a single character – called at one time an Adam, a prodigal son, or a pilgrim. The young-man character, as Roy Male believes, is continually

Acting without understanding his actions, chiefly concerned with new particulars and not much interested in their relationships. Like the young Oedipus, his "outsight" is excellent but his insight is extremely limited. He

penetrates into space and is a master of locomotion; the undisciplined dance of gesture and attitude is his natural mode of expression. He keeps playing new roles, wearing new uniforms, hoping to find one that will fit his inner self. In short, his angle of vision is essentially protestant, revolutionary, and spatial; when fully informed, it is an attitude that is crucially important for changing men's minds.³⁹

The struggle between the internal and the external, the spiritual and material are certainly hallmarks of Hawthorne's fiction as well as the Bible, particularly in Jesus' pronouncements in Matthew 22:21 to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's;" and in Luke 4:4 that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Between these requirements lies the source of struggle for these protagonists: they seek to understand, and they seek to control the impulse within them and the pressures exerted upon them by society and the environment.

"Hawthorne," according to Roy Male, "possessed what one of his friends called 'the awful power of insight,' and his fiction remains valuable chiefly because of its penetration into the essential truths of the human heart. His one fruitful subject was the problem of moral growth."⁴⁰ In the experiences of the numerous male protagonists discussed throughout this work it is clear that moral growth is the principal event – the point of Hawthorne's focus and thus, the point he wished his audience to focus on as well. The pilgrimage that brings about moral growth is, as Hawthorne presents it, fraught with ambiguity and temptations. Donatello, Dimmesdale, Goodman Brown, Owen Warland, Robin Molineux, Rev. Hooper, Ethan Brand all struggle – by themselves – in

confusion as to what is real and what is not, as to what is valuable and what is not. Within their confusion they hesitate and waver as to their next course of action and as to where responsibility falls, and what possibilities lay ahead. In these moments they need faith, and they need courage; for, as demonstrated in the parable of the prodigal son and their own respective stories, Providence attempts to meet them halfway.* Returning to the analogy of Oedipus and the Sphinx, Male suggests:

When a man's life is stretched out in time, when the narrative rhythm is preserved, there is no lack of resolution and no ambiguity except the final mystery, namely the full turning of the wheel and the complete perception come only as man's life ends. Donatello, for example, moves from morning to the afternoon of his life; Dimmesdale, from the afternoon to the evening. As Hawthorne's very style indicates, each step is fraught with alternative possibilities, but the way itself is perfectly clear. Man solves the riddle of the sphinx by moving from action through passion to perception, a cycle that leads up to his death. He may attempt to avoid this tragic rhythm, but if does so he is consumed, like Ethan Brand, too soon.⁴¹

When the characters decide to make the effort to return to God, to privilege the spiritual and the moral over the material, they gain the necessary perception to recognize the path of their pilgrimage and the worthiness of its destination. The circumstances of these

* This aspect of the story of the prodigal son is crucial to Jonathan Edwards. In "Sermons, on the following subjects..." (1780), Edwards asserts that "as long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of CHRIST and continue in a christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort; but in whatever circumstances you are, you will be miserable; you will be like the prodigal that in vain endeavored to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: the wrath of GOD will abide upon and misery will attend you wherever you go, which you never will by any means be able to escape. CHRIST gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace, that continue in their sins" (219).

pilgrims, these prodigal sons, demonstrate, as Male believes, “the perception gained in the evening of man’s life, grows out of the action of his youth and the passion that ushered in his maturity” and “only then does he see the very sins and aberrations that separate him from others are the one universal bond of humanity.”⁴² Such maturity of experience and perception returns the prodigal sons home to humanity (as characterized in Hawthorne’s fiction through women characters) and to God as the refuge from human restlessness.

However, in the parable of the prodigal son there is also the figure of the elder brother who remained at home and lived morally as he was taught. Although this character appears easy to recognize and understand, Stephen Cox makes a necessary distinction:

The good son is no more God’s disciple than the bad son was; he just has his own way of refusing to be one. True, the good son never departs for any distant countries or commits any obvious sins; but as usual in the New Testament, what happens on the *inside* is more important than what happens on the *outside*. The good son’s anger shows the spiritual distance he has traveled from his home. He has grown too “good” even for his father.⁴³

In Hawthorne’s writing this figure is sometimes separate from the protagonist, like Hollingsworth, and at other times the figure the protagonist transforms into while on his journey, like Richard Digby. Hollingsworth occupies a role similar to that of elder brother to Miles Coverdale the vague and wandering protagonist of *The Blithedale Romance*. Hollingsworth, unlike Zenobia or Coverdale, avoids vacations from Blithedale;

yet, he does not truly believe in their project. His presence in Blithedale is selfish. He believes his philanthropic scheme of reforming criminals to be more righteous and more practical than the utopian visions already at work there. Thus he sets out to undermine the utopian project and establish his own. Hollingsworth, like the good son, presumes a higher degree of righteousness and goodness than is warranted, which separates him from the community and, ultimately, causes him to suffer.

The spiritual transformation away from the father is found, for example, in Goodman Brown, Richard Digby, and Rev. Hooper. All three assume a greater understanding of sin and righteousness than others, and in their arrogance they become further removed not only from human society but from spiritual communion with God. This separation or alienation is pervasive in Hawthorne's works. Gloria Chasson Erlich argues:

The assorted male artists (Kenyon, Holgrave, Coverdale, and Warland) seem to be linked to the Faustian and demonic scientists in their failure to share the common human experience. The sin of cold, dispassionate observation and ruthless experimentation is common to Ethan Brand, a thinker, Miles Coverdale, a poet, Holgrave, a photographer, Kenyon, a maker of graven images, as well as to the scientists, Chillingworth, Aylmer, and Rappaccini.⁴⁴

Whether artist, preacher, scientist, or philanthropist, these characters strive "to assume a god-like function – creation."⁴⁵ Such characters are "dissatisfied with the world as given by Providence" and instead desire "to create, to perfect, to understand more than it is man's province to understand or to create."⁴⁶ While Hawthorne clearly sees such attitudes

and behaviors as innately human, he does not necessarily validate or excuse them. As with all else in life there are consequences. Erlich concludes that “thus all of these aspiring characters separate themselves from their own lives, look on themselves and others from the outside, and see their own nakedness. The punishment is instantaneous with the act – it is knowledge of evil, which brings with it alienation, distrust, separation from paradise.”⁴⁷

The parable of the prodigal son serves as foundation and even a touch stone for Hawthorne’s own male protagonists. Will they come to themselves and return home? Will they remain in the pigsties? Will they leave the pigsties but find new ones elsewhere as they wander further from home? The prodigal son, whether in the additional guise of Adam or a lost pilgrim, is ubiquitous in Hawthorne’s fiction. Using Hawthorne as a prime example, Roy Male, asserts that “the search for a home in America has consistently been a physical manifestation of a psychological and spiritual pilgrimage, directed toward finding an identity and integrated religious experience.”⁴⁸ The biblical parable of the prodigal son is just that. The moments of recognition amidst the struggles and confusion become the opportunities for redemptive enlightenment. As Larry Kreitzer explains,

In Hawthorne’s thought human sinfulness was not simply an inherited condition, as the Calvinistic theology of the Puritans would have us believe. On the contrary, for Hawthorne, sin was something generated by the conscious will, and thus its was not simply to be reduced to the sinful act itself. Neither was sinfulness to be encouraged, as if by committing acts of sin people assisted the divine cause by giving a reason for good to be made manifest. Rather, human sin was an occasion for good to be

injected into the equation of life, through the power and agency of divine mercy and grace.⁴⁹

This injection of grace, or as Cox suggests, transformation of evil into good, can only occur on the pilgrimages of the prodigal son. Though the prodigal sons come face-to-face with sin and evil in the world, there are opportunities, too, in which to recognize and choose the good, and to accept the grace of good fortune available. As Cotton Mather suggests,

Retire, and *look inward*; consider, whether you have yet made your *peace* with God, and whether you are yet arriv'd unto a blessed *Union* and *Communion* with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let every young person become like that *Ephraim*, and that Prodigal, whom in the Bible we find considerably bemoaning of themselves. If the Devil offer you at any time a B[ai]t, presently consider whether some cruel *Hook* be not covered with it; and be able to say like that *young Saint*, in Psal. 119. 59. O Lord, *I thought on my ways, and I turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.*⁵⁰

Hawthorne's male protagonists, as prodigal sons must endure the wandering and wayward pilgrimages in the world and come to an understanding of their self, God, and the world at large. From this personal journey, both internal and external, one may determine the world in which one will exist and the rewards that he or she shall reap.

¹ Edwards, "A treatise concerning religious affections, in three parts," 56

² Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 25

³ Matthiesen, *American Renaissance; Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, 276

⁴ Waggoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 17

⁵ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 9

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 41

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- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid., 41-42
- ¹⁰ Waggoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, 209
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² "The Artist of the Beautiful," X:447 and 450
- ¹³ Ibid., 458
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 453
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 454
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 456
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 459
- ²⁰ Ibid., 460-461
- ²¹ Ibid., 461
- ²² Ibid., 462
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 463
- ²⁶ Ibid., 465
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 466
- ²⁹ Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 43
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² "The Artist of the Beautiful," X:470
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 475
- ³⁵ Morinis, "Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of pilgrimage," 1
- ³⁶ Ibid., 13
- ³⁷ Normand, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation*, 102-103
- ³⁸ Morinis, "Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of pilgrimage," 14
- ³⁹ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 7
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 6
- ⁴¹ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 18
- ⁴² Ibid., 17
- ⁴³ Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 44-45
- ⁴⁴ Erlich, "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," 175
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 176
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 11
- ⁴⁹ Kreitzer, "Revealing the Affairs of the Heart," 158-159
- ⁵⁰ Mather, "Addresses to old men, and young men, and little children," 79

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

At the Heart of Hawthorne and the Bible

The Bible and Nathaniel Hawthorne share a fascination with the human heart. Hawthorne's fiction frequently refers to the "heart," "breast," and "chest" of various characters as well as humankind in general. Those ubiquitous references in his short stories and romances are physically descriptive on occasion, but, primarily, express moral and spiritual concerns. In the King James Version of the Bible the word "heart" occurs 833 times within 765 verses. As found in Hawthorne's fiction, the presence of "heart" in the Bible does provide physical description from time to time, but, here too the majority of references are not literal but figurative. While the presence of the heart in the Bible and Hawthorne's fiction is too profuse to cover en masse, it can be distilled into three main ideas. The first main idea is the concept of the heart as home to sinful impulses. Second is the concept of hard heartedness. The third is the concept of searching the heart for sin and iniquity. These ideas, in both the Bible and Hawthorne's fiction, establish the importance of the human heart in regards to sin, love, and the relationships between humankind and God.

Prior to examining the three conceptions of the human heart pervading both the Bible and Hawthorne's fiction, it is necessary to understand Hawthorne's conception of the human condition, which he symbolizes in the human heart. In his preface to *The*

House of the Seven Gables Hawthorne defines his art as “romance” and sets forth some of its parameters and its differences from the novel form. Specifically, Hawthorne declares that a romance “sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart.”¹ Hawthorne’s statement clearly establishes his idea of the human heart as central to his oeuvre; however, while its importance is clear the human heart and its truth may be slightly more complicated in practice. Clark Davis raises questions about the implications of Hawthorne’s statement:

How do we locate the truth of the human heart? through thought or feeling? Can it be expressed in a statement, a moral? Or can it only be shown indirectly, through metaphor? In other words, is this a truth susceptible to the inexpressible at the same time? And what does it mean to “swerve aside” from it? Is it a beacon, a guide, something distant but not necessarily attainable in itself? Or is it the path itself, suggesting a way but not limited to a specific place or moment?²

While Davis follows these questions in a different direction, one based upon his course of interest and study, I believe the answers to these questions are best answered by Hawthorne himself.

In a notebook entry, Hawthorne offers a detailed image of the human heart that clearly reveals his view of the human heart and its troubles:

The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern; at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers[e] kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered,

and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You press towards it yon, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect.

These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is this eternal beauty.³

Hawthorne's conception of the human heart is a sharp but balanced mixture of good and bad, light and dark, hope and despair. His entry takes the form of a journey, which suggests an active engagement with the complexities of human nature and experience. The sunny entrance soon giving way to darkness and later perfected at the furthest depths indicates an immature and superficial view of the human condition. The naïveté gives way to bewildering and hellish gloom of monsters is representative of the bulk of life in which fuller recognition and understanding of sin and evil in both the world and within humankind occurs. This is the place in which Goodman Brown and many more of Hawthorne's characters succumb to despair because of their recognition of sin and evil. While Hawthorne's familiarity with the gloomy darkness is a well remarked upon hallmark of his fiction since Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses;" it cannot be said that Hawthorne lacked a firm faith that a true happiness could be achieved despite the surrounding darkness. He believes it to be there, but difficult to reach as demonstrated by the struggles of Hester Prynne as well as Donatello and Miriam. This is the truth of the human heart from which romance must not swerve.

The journey of the human heart – that is, the experience of the human condition – as Hawthorne imagines it, is supported by numerous corresponding passages from the Bible. The entrance of Hawthorne's cavernous heart is quickly passed upon the

recognition of sin. The human heart as the home of sin and sinful impulses, the first category I have identified, is constant throughout the Bible. This idea is first established in Genesis 6:5 wherein it is recorded that “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” That evil and sin are located in the heart of humankind is further supported throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Ecclesiastes 9:3 declares “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live.” It is lamented in Jeremiah 7:24 that too many “walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.” In the New Testament the human heart is specifically blamed for various sins and crimes in Matthew 15:19 (echoed in Mk. 7:21): “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” These few but representative verses demonstrate that the human heart is to be considered, first and foremost, where one comes to confront sin and evil whether it is in the world at large or in the life of an individual.

From the basis of these general passages Hawthorne creates specific analogous stories and morals that relate to specific biblical passages regarding the sinfulness of the human heart. “Young Goodman Brown,” for all of its rich complexities, can also be viewed as the enactment of Jeremiah 16:12, which warns “ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart.” In the dark woods Goodman Brown realizes that his ancestors each committed sins and that those sins continue in Brown’s own time and community. From this realization comes the connection to Luke 6:45, which concludes that “a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his

heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Once recognizing the presence of sin, Brown erroneously concludes that humankind is entirely sinful, and thus he sees only sin in others because he recognizes the presence of sin in his own heart and bloodline. The moral of “The Minister’s Black Veil” is similarly informed by the observation in Ezekiel 14:3 that “these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face.” The idol of Hooper’s heart appears to be the sinfulness of humankind and the hypocrisy of human life. This becomes his veil which in turn becomes his stumbling block to his full-membership in his community and his love with Elizabeth. Hooper’s experience is echoed in Proverbs 40:12, which laments “innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” The moral and the actions of “Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent” are drawn from Matthew 12:34 which declares “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;” an image and idea that is embodied in Roderick Elliston whose own heart is consumed by evil – represented as a serpent – and whose interaction with his society is marked by his ability to speak only in insults and insinuations of sin. Lastly, Judge Pyncheon is a certain violator of the admonition in Zechariah 7:9-10 that people “execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” Judge Pyncheon’s heart harbors evil against his spinster cousin Hepzibah, his enfeebled cousin Clifford, and his youthful

and innocent cousin Phoebe. And, having imagined evil against them in his heart Judge Pyncheon is punished by his death and the failure of his schemes.

In these instances it is clear that Hawthorne found the general biblical concept of the human heart as the home of sinful impulses to be accurate. Following Dimmesdale's dramatic death scene in which he exposes his chest, and possibly, as some witnesses assert, the outline of a scarlet letter created by his remorse, Hawthorne declares one of the morals of the story to be "put only this into a sentence: — 'Be true! Be True! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred.'"⁴ This moral as Hawthorne applies to Dimmesdale is applicable to many of Hawthorne's other characters who attempt to diminish their own sinfulness by either exaggerating the sinfulness of other thereby allowing their own sin to be of less significance in the face of the depravity of all humankind or by exaggerating their goodness or sinlessness in the presence of their community. What is unavoidable in the larger realm of Hawthorne's writings is that each person is sinful either by his or her own actions or by the inheritance of ancestors as suggested in the moral offered in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. The struggles of the recognition that humankind consistently harbors sin within the heart leads to two courses of action: allowing the heart to harden, or to search it out for its iniquities.

The hardening of the heart is not only a common image in the Bible and in the fiction of Hawthorne, but it is an outcome of the heart being the home of sin.* The most

* This image of the hard heart is popular in Puritan sermons. For instance, Jonathan Edwards's 1758 sermon, "The great Christian doctrine of original sin defended...", emphasizes this connection: "it appears, that every Man in his first or natural State is a Sinner: for otherwise they would then need no REPENTANCE, no CONVERSION, no Turning from Sin, to God.—And it appears, that every Man in his original State has a Heart of Stone; for thus the Scripture calls that old Heart, which is taken away, when a NEW HEART and NEW SPIRIT is given" (310).

frequent reference to the hardened heart, in the Bible, is the Pharaoh who refused to capitulate to Moses. The image and impact of the hard heart is extremely straightforward. Separate from reference to the Pharaoh of the Book of Exodus, there are three specific mentions of the hardened heart in relation to the recognition of sin and evil in the world and the consequent inability to maintain faith either in God or in the ability of humankind to discover redemption. In relationship especially to “the Man of Adamant,” but also applicable to other works by Hawthorne, is Ezekiel 11:19, which reads “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh,” and is repeated again in Ezekiel 36:26 as a sign of the importance of this idea. The fleshy heart and the new spirit signify the potential of humankind for renewal and for redemption. For a living heart, as opposed to a stony heart, there is the ability of change, the ability to give and receive love because it is open to communion with the world around it rather than existing in a closed off state. Richard Digby, the man of adamant, becomes closed off in regard to his narrow-minded view of faith and in his deliberate self-exile from others. In regards to Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth, among other similar characters, their hearts harden around one obsessive idea that yields to nothing else be it ideas, emotions, or people.

A similar biblical passage that is perhaps more revealing than that of Ezekiel is found in 2 Corinthians 3:3: “forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” This passage expresses the belief that humankind is intended to embody the message of Jesus – love and faith, to concisely summarize Mark 12:30-31 – which is impossible for the stony hearted. Additionally this

passage communicates the sanctity of the human heart because it is where the message and presence of faith and moral goodness is located. This sentiment is voiced emphatically by both Hester and Dimmesdale when they recognize that they have sinned but that their sin was one of passion rather than of ruthless obsession as is the case of Chillingworth who “violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart.”⁵ This violation is the downfall of Chillingworth, of Hollingsworth, and of Ethan Brand, as they dismissed the sanctity of humankind. Likewise, the hard hearted characters in Hawthorne’s fiction all dismiss the sanctity of humankind and instead limit human kind to some varying degree of depravity that cannot be overcome.

The creation of the hard heart is never depicted as uniform in Hawthorne’s fiction; yet, as in the Bible the circumstances are all but variations of a single emotion: despair. Despair in the face of adversity or of sin results in the loss of hope and or faith. Such optimism could be directed to humankind, it could be directed toward God; however, it is instead abandoned for a simple polarized view. An example occurs in “Rappaccini’s Daughter” when Hawthorne observes Giovanni’s internal turmoil upon the realization of Beatrice’s poisonous attributes. Within Giovanni’s heart is a turbulent and powerful emotion:

A wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be

they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.⁶

The narrator previously noted that Giovanni's heart had not yet been tested, which is an indication as to why the "simple emotions" are praised. When something is clearly good or clearly bad a decision can be made without agonizing and without doubt. Yet the world is seldom so easy and simple. The situation facing Giovanni, like that of, say, Goodman Brown, requires deep thought and reflection and the painful choice of an impure hope or love. These immature male protagonists recognize one sign of impurity either in the object of love (Beatrice) or the objects of admiration (Brown's ancestors and community members) and conclude that all is entirely corrupt, an attitude that hardens the hearts of a great many of Hawthorne's characters.

The third general category of the reference to the human heart in the Bible is that of the act of inspecting the heart. Frequently, God reveals his power to do so, as in Jeremiah 17:10, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." A frequent refrain in the Book of Psalms is the offerings of the heart for divine examination. The simple and direct offering of the heart to God is articulated in Psalm 26:2, "examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart," as well as in Psalm 139:23, "search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts." However, such inspection is not for God alone, though God alone may be infallible in that inspection. Responsibility falls upon each individual to likewise examine the contents of his or her own heart, actions, and desires. Psalm 77:6 declares "I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search." But this introspection is no

easy task. Faced with the intermixture of emotion Giovanni chose poorly assuming that all was poisoned between Beatrice and himself. So too did Goodman Brown conclude that ““there is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil! for to thee is this world given.””⁷ The Book of Ecclesiastes suggests that such heart-searching is a necessary and important aspect of being human: “I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.” Now this process is daunting and uncomfortable, and as such some are distracted and seek instead to examine others as was the case for Brand, Chillingworth, Digby, and Hollingsworth. And in the course of self-examination one must confront both the good and the bad; as recorded in Ecclesiastes 7:25 “I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.” In the course of such self-examination one must, inevitably, come face-to-face with both the good and bad aspects of the self, and one must reconcile the presence of both while, hopefully, choosing to nurture and develop the good.

The three biblical categories of the depictions of the human heart trace the layered journey Hawthorne recorded explicitly in his notebook and expressed implicitly in his fiction. The Rev. Leonard J. Fick sees this layered view of human nature as the key to Hawthorne’s tragic artistry. Fick interprets Hawthorne’s depiction of the human heart as providing “three successive stages to a mature resolution of life’s frustrations: crack the outer shell of natural bliss, peer through the gloom and darkness, and pass beyond it to the core. Viewed from this central position, the gloom and darkness do not, it is true, disappear, but they do assume their rightful proportions.”⁸ Fick asserts that “Hawthorne

posited a tragic democracy: all men, though not all in equal measure, are tragic figures in the sense that the dichotomy is present in them all.”⁹ Fick believes that the “difficulties and tensions and frustrations” of Hawthorne’s fiction “tell a tale of man’s restlessness – until the heart of man comes to rest in God. That was Augustine’s belief centuries before it became Hawthorne’s.”¹⁰ F.O. Matthiesen agrees that Hawthorne is a skilled tragedian. In Matthiesen’s view:

Unless the author also has a profound comprehension of the mixed nature of life, of the fact that even the most perfect man cannot be wholly good, any conflicts that he creates will not give the illusion of human reality. Tragedy does not pose the situation of a faultless individual (or class) overwhelmed by an evil world, for it is built on the experienced realization that man is radically imperfect. Confronting this fact, tragedy must likewise contain a recognition that man, pitiful as he may be in his finite weakness, is still capable of apprehending perfection, and of becoming transfigured by that vision. But not only must the author of tragedy have accepted the inevitable co-existence of good and evil in man’s nature, he must also possess the power to envisage some reconciliation between such opposites, and the control to hold an inexorable balance. He must be as far from the chaos of despair as he is from ill-founded optimism.¹¹

This assessment of tragedy is accurate in its connection to Hawthorne, as it echoes both Fick and R.W.B. Lewis who likewise noticed and praised Hawthorne’s tragic optimism.* For, as Fick emphasizes in his study of Hawthorne, “beneath the crust of human

* See: *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. See also: *The Power of Blackness* by Harry Levin, and *Hawthorne’s Fiction: the Light and the Dark* by Richard H. Fogle.

happiness do indeed lie gloom and despondency. Man's moments of deeper insight are those in which he sees the darkness and frustration beneath the camouflage of happiness. But his moments of deepest insight are those in which he penetrates beyond the blackness, to discover that 'deeper still is the eternal beauty.'"¹²

Understood in this way, the dominance of the human heart in Hawthorne's writings suggest his view of a perpetual but worthwhile struggle to navigate the darkness and attain the deeper light and beauty. The presence of sin is undeniable and the confrontation with sin is, ultimately, unavoidable. Those circumstances call for a genuine moral engagement with the world that cannot be substituted or avoided: each individual must undergo that journey. Drawing upon a letter written by Hawthorne, Rev. Fick corroborates Hawthorne's commitment to the self-examination of the human heart and the consequent responsibility for cleaning it of its sinfulness:

Less than a year before his death, he wrote to Samuel H. Emery Jr., defending himself against the charge of having deliberately maligned the "reverend clergy." In the course of the letter, dated November 6, 1863, he restated the true moral of the offending sketch, namely, "that no man is safe from sin and disgrace till by divine assistance he has thoroughly cleansed his heart – which few of us take pains to do, though many satisfy themselves with a shallow and imperfect performance of that duty."

Certainly, this constitutes a clear affirmation of man's freedom: he, not God, though God grants assistance, must cleanse his heart; and if but few men take the pains to do it, then it is surely within man's power to take those pains.¹³

Although the “offending” character is a minister, Hawthorne’s words apply to every person, and firmly establish his assessment of both the human condition and of human responsibility. Hawthorne’s letter and Fick’s explication evoke the conception of repentance and the offering of a “broken and contrite heart” found in Psalm 51:17.

Psalm 51 expresses a pattern of moral experience and understanding that corresponds to Hawthorne’s human heart as cavern metaphor. The psalm is composed, as suggested in the first verse, after the prophet Nathan’s confrontation with King David to David’s affair with Bathsheba.* Psalm 51:3, “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me,” corresponds to the crossing of the first threshold in the heart-cavern. The recognition and acknowledgement of sin shatters the thin veneer of sunshine before the cavern and ushers in the darkness. That darkness grows and its monsters, as Hawthorne imagined, gain dominance as one moves further into the cavern as is the case in Psalm 51:5 in which it is admitted “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Such a realization is dark, gloomy, and unnerving; accordingly the psalm wavers between hope of redemption and fear of being cast into the darkness forever (Ps. 51:11). The journey onward is aided by the hope and the faith that God, according to Psalm 51:6, “desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.” The inward and hidden parts in which wisdom is found, according to the psalmist, equates quite clearly with the inner sanctum of Hawthorne’s heart-cavern in which the sunshine images are in their perfect forms and “eternal beauty” is attained.

* These events are depicted in the tapestry hanging in Rev. Dimmesdale’s home, which adds further relevance to the theme of adultery and redemption in *The Scarlet Letter*. Furthermore, the use of the biblical story adds significance to the idea of confessing one’s sins in genuine repentance and the following rededication to faith that Dimmesdale struggles to achieve.

The motivating desire expressed in Psalm 51 is the desire for the cleansing of the iniquities of the human condition. Psalm 51:10 asks “create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me;” however, this cannot be accomplished without first acknowledging – and addressing – the failings of the human condition in which the original heart succumbed to iniquities and the original spirit likewise became embroiled in doubt and despair leading away from righteousness. The psalmist acknowledges that God “desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” But a “broken spirit” and a “broken and contrite heart” cannot be offered until one has confronted the failings of the human condition. The journey through the heart-cavern of Hawthorne’s imagination is the necessary process for properly breaking the spirit and heart as well as developing genuine contrition.

The treatment of the human heart in the Bible is varied in its acceptance of both good and evil within the heart. Hawthorne, it is clear, accepted these representations as accurate because it did not skirt the issue of human potential for both good and bad deeds. Hawthorne’s views are balanced in a tragic optimism that accepts the existence of sin but believes that some can overcome it to undergo the radical and painful regeneration of heart and spirit. The key to this journey includes acceptance of responsibility by every individual who will, at some point or another, be forced to enter beyond the superficial first layer of the heart. Following that entrance is the necessary resistance against allowing the sinful heart to harden to stone in the face of darkness and sin. A great many fail to retain hope and to retain remorse, and instead assume that all is sinful and all is darkness. Yet, for those who steadfastly recognize sin, locate it in their own hearts, and

formed by a study of the masters. For it seems to suggest the important esthetic law that the use of Biblical materials should always be made with extreme delicacy if the effect is not to become banal to the point of actual embarrassment. This is not of course to say that religious ideas may not be legitimately and movingly dealt with in fiction. Yet it is to insist that a writer who turns to a Biblical episode for any metaphorical or illustrative purpose ought to be content to treat it allusively, to allow it to operate in the realm of suggestion, unless he is willing to vulgarize his source, or to count on windy rhetoric to carry his point.¹⁷

Hawthorne's fiction consistently honors the Bible and respects the individuality of each member of his reading audience.

This study stems from the conviction that Hawthorne's primary concern is with the relationship between humankind and God as revealed in the Bible. The biblical contexts explored here, in turn, reveal the depth of Hawthorne's works as they explore the complicated relationship between humankind and God as well as the consequent moral growth that results from individuals attempting to understand that relationship. Joseph Schwartz asserts that "the works of Hawthorne, America's ablest romancer, are a rich source for any ideological investigation. The whole range his fictions and nonfiction reveals a rare personality, a man of various interests and profound speculation. His chief interest was in the moral and religious character of man. Almost every short story or novel shows this searching concern."¹⁸ His concern finds a foundation and a source in the Bible.

yet retain hope in the possibility of redemption and God's mercy there is a greater experience of the human condition. "The record shows," according to Fick, "then a gradual darkening of the shadows of gloom and despondency that lie beneath the crust of purely human happiness. But the effect of this darkening serves only to accentuate the contrast between it and the "eternal beauty" that is deeper than the blackness."¹⁴ This journey is at the core of a great many biblical stories as well as a great majority of Hawthorne's fiction. As Rev. Fick concludes, Hawthorne is "at his artistic best in those tales in which he strives to penetrate beyond the layer of gloom and despondency to the eternal beauty beneath. The more pronounced the blackness, so much the greater his apprehension that he may never be able to thread his way through the blackness to the light beyond."¹⁵

Faith in the Inscrutable: "Man's Accidents are God's Purposes"

"In Hawthorne's writing at its best," concludes Hyatt Waggoner, "the meanings of the images are partly determined by their analogy with historic myth, mostly Christian, and partly determined internally, by context. And always, again when he is writing at his best, they are to some degree ambiguous."¹⁶ Hawthorne's Christianity was not based upon church membership but study of the Bible and a personal relationship with God. This "religion" requires and encourages meditation and reflection as an individual assesses the events within his or her own life in comparison with the Bible. The biblical contexts of Hawthorne's fictions communicate his Christianity as well as the ambiguity that requires reflection and faith from the audience. Carlos Baker observes:

The method of Hawthorne is instructive for any reader whose religious commitment is deep rather than loud, and whose taste in fiction has been

The Bible is the epicenter of the convergence of the mundane and the sublime, the human and the divine. Richard Singer acknowledges that

The influence of the Bible on Western thought is immeasurable. The stories and attitudes and ideals expressed in Holy Scripture have become an inseparable part of Western history, art, philosophy, and science. Biblical references form a framework for literary creativity and a standard of conduct, sometimes accepted, sometimes rejected, for social goals. The Bible is everywhere; its narratives and attitudes cannot be ignored if we would know in any depth the society in which we live today.¹⁹

This is especially true of Hawthorne's own socio-cultural milieu. As such it is a dominant source for Hawthorne's meditation over the tension created by the gulf between the actual and the ideal, which is central to all of his fiction. He accepts that the Bible communicates universal truths, however, the primary truth, to which all others are subordinate, is the truth that God's ways are mysterious and beyond complete human comprehension. The phrase "man's accidents are God's purposes" which Sophia and Nathaniel Hawthorne etched into their window at the old manse "very aptly summarizes Hawthorne's own attitude toward the relation between God and man, or, to expand the definition, between ultimate Reality and reality as it is knowable in its finite, experiential forms."²⁰ Explaining this attitude further, Rev. Leonard J. Fick observes that for Hawthorne "belief in God the Father and in His essential goodness was in no way contradictory to his acceptance of the Pauline exclamation: 'How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!' (Rom. 11:33)."²¹ Recognition of this

human situation allows for the irony and ambiguity prevalent in Hawthorne's art, as well as his satirical view towards those who insist upon human power and certainty.

The centerpiece, then, of Hawthorne's biblical context is the Book of Job, where individualism, suffering, and the inscrutability of God all combine in, for Hawthorne and many others, a powerfully accurate expression of the human condition. In his book, *Yesterdays With Authors*, James T. Fields, one of Hawthorne's publishers, recalls

Hawthorne was a diligent reader of the Bible, and when sometimes, in my ignorant way, I would question, in a proof-sheet, his use of a word, he would almost always refer me to the Bible as his authority. It was a great pleasure to hear him talk about the Book of Job, and his voice would be tremulous with feeling, as he sometimes quoted a touching passage from the New Testament.²²

Unfortunately, Fields does not mention particular aspects about the Book of Job that Hawthorne spoke upon, but clearly it would seem that Hawthorne had given that book considerable thought and attention.* The Book of Job, according to Richard Singer,

Is the Biblical tale of man's personal conflict with the agonizing contradictions of religion and life. It is man's repeated cry of questioning indignation: How can a good God permit evil to exist in His world? Is there no divine consideration given to the man of decency and honor? Is his life equated by God with the life of an evil man? If God does not reward man for the good he does, then surely God will not punish him for evil which he has not done!²³

* Interestingly, Job does not seem to serve as a direct model for Hawthorne's characters or fiction. In Hawthorne's stories the characters have some direct connection to the cause of their sufferings and obstacles, which is not an element of Job's experience.

Martin Buber also acknowledges the importance of this attempt to question and understand not simply the universe God created but the relationship God has with each individual. In Buber's view:

The question of the generation, "Why do we suffer what we suffer?" had from the beginning a religious character; "Why?" here is not a philosophical interrogative asking after the nature of things, but a religious concern with the acting of God. With Job, however, it becomes still clearer; he does not ask, "Why does God *permit* me to suffer these things?" but "Why does God *make* me suffer these things?" That everything comes from God is beyond doubt and question; the question is, How are these sufferings compatible with His godhead?²⁴

The existence of God is not doubted by Hawthorne. Instead his doubt resides in the human interpretation and understanding of the relationship with God, with the human relationship to good and evil, and with the relationship between life and suffering.

While this study has identified biblical themes by which to guide the reading and understanding of Hawthorne's works, even these fall into a more general category: suffering. F.O. Matthiesen contends that "not sin, but its consequence for human lives is Hawthorne's major theme."²⁵ The consequence of sin is suffering; whether it be guilt, punishment, or some other variation, people are sinful and suffer. But in Hawthorne's mind and his works such reality is not validation of Puritan ideas of innate depravity or any other determinism. Suffering, here, is tragically optimistic. Randall Stewart notes that "suffering is pretty much absent in Emerson. There is suffering in Whitman, but more often than not one's attention is drawn not so much to the sufferer and his suffering as to

the sympathetic vibration of the narrator. Suffering is central in Hawthorne: it is more than a means of setting in vibration a sympathetic response; it is educative, chastening, retributive, expiatory.”²⁶ This view is echoed by Roy Male who claims in life and writing “Hawthorne adhered to his “one idea:” that moral conversion, which is the only kind that really matters, cannot be achieved through intellectual schemes, incessant industry, or technological progress. A spiritual sea change must be *suffered*; this is unfortunate, but there is no other way.”²⁷

Returning to the Bible, Job, like Adam, is an example of growth through suffering. Richard Singer argues that “Job stands symbolically for the man of faith who does not accept his fate blindly. Job questions, and he finds that ready answers which satisfied his friends – ideas of divine reward and punishment for man’s deeds – do not satisfy him. Job must find new answers, not necessarily final or absolute, but answers closer to his personal needs as he grows in understanding.”²⁸ Job, as understood by Singer, compares well to Hawthorne’s Donatello, Owen Warfield, and Hester Prynne, to name but a few. Stewart provides a more comprehensive Christian context through which to understand Hawthorne’s acceptance of suffering:

St. Paul had raised the same question. “Shall we continue in sin,” he asks, “that grace may abound?” And answers, “God forbid.” But he has previously said that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Allied to this view is the doctrine of the *felix culpa*, the happy fault, or fortunate fall, which regards the fall of man as fortunate because, if he had not fallen, he would never have known the inestimable benefits of redemption. The doctrine is an old Catholic one, of course, and we have

seen its elaboration by Milton and Hawthorne. If sin may seem to abound more than grace in Hawthorne, and the fall appear more often unhappy than happy, it must be borne in mind that in an inquiry of this sort, we are not concerned with superficial or worldly criteria. If there is spiritual growth, however painfully achieved (and it cannot be achieved without pain), grace can be said much more to abound, and the fall can be said to have been fortunate. Grace much more abounds, for example, and the fall proves fortunate, in *The Scarlet Letter*, though a worldly appraisal would point to a different view.²⁹

Thus the enveloping biblical theme of Hawthorne's work is centered on the Fall and on the Job-like experience of suffering, yet moving through the pain and confusion to a fuller revelation of God and humanity.

James K. Folsom observes that "the irony of human endeavor, as Hawthorne interprets it, is that it directs its course toward temporal values while ignoring eternal ones, at least as reflected in our earthly existence."³⁰ This is demonstrated in nearly all of his works, as I have shown in previous sections of this study. In his miscellaneous non-fiction Hawthorne himself writes of this very phenomenon with a reserved calm that betokens a higher faith in God. In his essay "Chiefly About War Matters, by a Peaceable Man," Hawthorne concludes that "no human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's Purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for."³¹ Elsewhere, in his *Life of Franklin Pierce*, Hawthorne writes "there is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great

moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.”³² Such distrust of human abilities of interpretation and understanding of the superhuman, that is, of God, reveals the ideas behind Hawthorne’s distaste for the obnoxious self-righteousness that pervades various reform movements and even some churches.

Hyatt Waggoner asserts that “Hawthorne believed in Providence even while he found it unintelligible. Confronted with the problem of evil in the form of diseased and suffering English children, he concluded a *Notebook* entry with ‘Ah, what a mystery!’ But he trusted there was a higher purpose, a final meaning in a dark and bewildering world, even if we could not *clearly* know it.”³³ That higher purpose is worked towards not through assumptions of righteousness but suffering and reflection and the efforts of the individual to deal honestly with his or her own self first, as Hollingsworth discovers at the end of *The Blithedale Romance*. Fick accurately states that “Hawthorne’s concern, therefore, lay primarily in the conflict arising from a divergence in man’s point of view and God’s point of view. When the former prevailed, when man insisted upon his own touchstones of happiness, the result was frustration, tension, sin; when man submitted his judgment to the long-range wisdom of God, then happiness would come ‘all unawares.’”³⁴ From this assessment Fick concludes that “the keystone, then, of Hawthorne’s theology is an unshakable belief in an inscrutable Providence; and it is from the vantage point of this belief that he reconciles man to the problem of evil.”³⁵ Hawthorne’s fiction, then, becomes enriched by the human and the divine in combination, as seen in the Book of Job for example. Hawthorne’s fiction relies heavily

upon his “deepening the shadows and the gloom; and in so far as he increases the darkness, so much the more does he accentuate the wisdom and mercy of God, who whatever men may think to the contrary, does all things well. For God’s omniscience and omnipotence are in no way limited by man’s failure to comprehend the full implications of such attributes.”³⁶

Hawthorne’s Christian faith was personal, he shied away from attending Church, as did Milton, but took the Bible and Christian thought very seriously. As he felt he found the entire world in New England, he no doubt surmised that he felt all the virtues and vices existed in his own heart. By cleansing himself he would make a more positive impact upon the world than he would by expending that energy in some organized popular movement. Likewise, at the core of each of Hawthorne’s works is an individual struggling to come to grips with his or her role in the world – often conflated with his or her immediate society. The individual must make sense of the frustrations and difficulties without losing sight of the higher faith and thereby risking an eternal ruin as found in “The Celestial Rail-road.” Hawthorne’s writing is Christian, in part, because it is concerned with the central problems of Christian thought, which Father Harold C. Gardiner, SJ identifies as: “the question of the ‘oneness’ of the universe and of man’s place in it as the lord and summation of creation; the particular oneness, of men as brothers; the indwelling of god in the soul and in the sweep of material creation; the nature of sin and responsibility and the role of freewill in responsibility; the relationship of the individual to society.”³⁷ This individualism not only gains guidance from the Bible but vindication. As Stephen Cox argues:

Christianity has been analyzed so frequently as a social and intellectual phenomenon that it is important to stress that the New Testament's stories are largely concerned with individuals, not with philosophical ideas or social concepts. For the New Testament writers, Jesus is not a diffuse God-power or the expression of a people's religious and social aspirations; he is a unique individual. All the New Testament's significant figures are portrayed as individuals, often as curious and eccentric ones; and conversion, like salvation, is presented as an individual matter.

Individualism – a respect for the individual life and a commitment to studying it – is a major emphasis of Christian literature.³⁸

Here, then, we find the basis for Hawthorne's concern with the sanctity and inviolability of the individual's heart by the prying eyes of society or another reckless person.

The individual is, in Hawthorne's fiction, "a moral agent, and a tragic figure."³⁹ In the Christian view, the individual, according to Randall Stewart, "is a battleground. For man embodies both good and evil. God and the Devil are still active in the world, and man's spiritual victories are won with God's help, and in Hell's despite."⁴⁰ Found in the Bible and also in Hawthorne's fiction as well as his personal thoughts recorded in journals and essays is the truth that "man is an imperfect, nonperfectible being. He cannot be improved by technology. He is not a machine, but a very fallible human. Poor wayward creature, he appears even now to be plotting, with all ingenuity and speed, his own destruction. But his state, unless by his own perverse willfulness, is not beyond the reach of God's redeeming grace. This is the essence of the human condition, and the Christian hope."⁴¹ Hawthorne reflects this attitude frequently in his works as he depicts

characters placing faith in their human ingenuity – through science, technology, and popular movements – yet failing to genuinely improve morally, and often materially as well. The issues of sin and mortality are internal and individual. Everyone must deal with them directly and faithfully as Job does when he resists his friends’ suggestions and explanations and instead perseveres until he confronts God directly. Job, as Martin Buber points out, “does not regard himself as free from sin (7:20; 14:16f.), in contradistinction to God’s words about him in the Prologue (1:8; 2:3). But his sin and his sufferings are incommensurable.”⁴² Thus with faith in God and recognition of his human sinfulness Job challenges God’s justice. Initially, “in vain Job had tried to penetrate to God through the divine remoteness,” yet enduring he succeeds in recognizing “the God of revelation, [who] works from His godhead, in which every reason and purpose held by man are at once abolished and fulfilled.”⁴³

Similar to Job, each individual must endure the situations in which they exist while maintaining faith in God. This, as it appears Hawthorne believed, requires the recognition of the limits of human understanding and the ability to place reason and ingenuity in abeyance and instead come to terms with a genuine faith. Integral to understanding and becoming reconciled to the human condition and experience is accepting the presence of sin. Rev. Fick records of Hawthorne that

Less than a year before his death, he wrote to Samuel H. Emery Jr., defending himself against the charge of having deliberately maligned the “reverend clergy.” In the course of the letter, dated November 6, 1863, he restated the true moral of the offending sketch, namely, “that no man is safe from sin and disgrace till by divine assistance he has thoroughly

cleansed his heart – which few of us take pains to do, though many satisfy themselves with a shallow and imperfect performance of that duty.”

Certainly, this constitutes a clear affirmation of man’s freedom: he, not God, though God grants assistance, must cleanse his heart; and if but few men take the pains to do it, then it is surely within man’s power to take those pains.⁴⁴

Fick additionally emphasizes the fact that because each individual is provided “with reason and free will, it follows that he is the master of his life and destiny. It follows, too, that ‘his being is a shrine and a holy of holies which is strictly his own, into which no one, except his Creator, can enter.’ For since man is a free agent, he is something ‘sacred and inviolable,’ possessed of inalienable rights and responsibilities.”⁴⁵

Faith in the inscrutable begins in the heart of each person. The events of the Original Sin and the Fall reoccur in the life of every individual. Likewise, every individual must suffer, endure, and search as Job did in order to come to a better understanding of their condition and their faith. These events, as shown in the Bible, create moral growth in the individual that succeeds in undertaking the challenges. In so doing, Hawthorne believed, individuals improve themselves first and foremost in order that they can then improve the larger world in which they live. Without firsthand knowledge or understanding of sin and its effects one cannot properly combat sin or improve upon the human condition. Ultimately such faith and thinking stems from Jesus’ stricture: “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in

thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Lk. 6:41-42).^{*} The Bible is replete with instances of individuals coming to terms with their human condition as directly as Jesus here states it. Hawthorne's writing is developed and enriched by his use of the Bible to artistically yet effectively express the same concerns and ideas that he found at the heart of Christian experience.

¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, III:1

² Davis, *Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement*, 41

³ *The American Notebooks*, VIII:237

⁴ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:260

⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, I:195

⁶ "Rappaccini's Daughter," X:105

⁷ "Young Goodman Brown," X:83

⁸ Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 56

⁹ *Ibid.*, 46

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54

¹¹ Matthiesen, *American Renaissance; Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, 179-180

¹² Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 55-56

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62

¹⁴ Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 174

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 175

¹⁶ Waggoner, *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, 260

¹⁷ Baker, "The Place of the Bible in American Fiction," 61

¹⁸ Schwartz, "God and Man in New England," 121

¹⁹ Singer, *Job's Encounter*, 190

²⁰ Folsom, *Man's Accidents and God's Purposes: Multiplicity in Hawthorne's Fiction*, 13

²¹ Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 13

²² Fields, *Yesterdays With Authors*, 94-95

²³ Singer, *Job's Encounter*, 7

²⁴ Buber, "Job," 92

²⁵ Matthiesen, *American Renaissance; Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, 343

²⁶ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 71

²⁷ Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 139

²⁸ Singer, *Job's Encounter*, 9

²⁹ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 83

³⁰ Folsom, *Man's Accidents and God's Purposes: Multiplicity in Hawthorne's Fiction*, 27

³¹ "Chiefly about War Matters, by a Peaceable Man," XXIII:431

³² *Life of Franklin Pierce*, XXIII:352

^{*} This passage is also given, with slight variation, in Matthew 7:3-5

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- ³³ Waggoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 14
³⁴ Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 173
³⁵ Ibid.
³⁶ Ibid., 174
³⁷ Gardiner, "The Era of the Half-Gods in American Literature," 10
³⁸ Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns*, 36
³⁹ R. Stewart, *American Literature & Christian Doctrine*, 149
⁴⁰ Ibid.
⁴¹ Ibid.
⁴² Buber, "Job," 94
⁴³ Ibid., 97
⁴⁴ Fick, *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, 62
⁴⁵ Ibid., 66

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