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**Hawthorne's Unfinished Window:
Romance and Symbolic Fiction in His Late Work**

by

TERESA BARBERIO EDGE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
English in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

HAWTHORNE'S UNFINISHED WINDOW:

ROMANCE AND SYMBOLIC FICTION IN HIS LATE WORK

by

Teresa Barberio Edge

Adviser: Professor Felicia Bonaparte

Nathaniel Hawthorne's late works include two long, unfinished manuscripts that occupied him for more than a decade before his death. Sometimes written in the first-person, these works hold great autobiographical interest and also suggest something more. Taken together, they represent an extended review of his past themes and concerns; they help to put his last years in perspective; and they recast the work of his entire career in a clearer light.

As a pilgrimage over past ground, these fragmentary manuscripts reexamine such themes as estrangement, mysticism, and a deep distrust of art, putting these now into a final context. Gothic structures, deep moral questioning, and a symbolic ancestral home that is beyond reach are

eloquent reminders of the "power of blackness" that Melville discovered in Hawthorne's tales. The resulting work is a kind of prose poetry that assimilates romance. As Henry James may be understood, through Hawthorne's influence, to assimilate romance and realism toward psychological realism, here we see Hawthorne attempting to assimilate romance and realism toward a kind of romantic idealism and symbolic truth.

It is the inner mind rather than the outside world that Hawthorne is writing about in these pieces. Like Fanshawe, Hawthorne's first fictional hero, Septimius, his last, is unable to participate in the world. Withdrawn and pale, he is contrasted with society's standard, with, in Fanshawe, for example, the Edward Walcotts or, in the Septimius stories, the Robert Hagburns of this world.

Hawthorne's voice is personal in these final works. It expresses a tragic modernism; and although his use of third-person narrative allows him a degree of detachment, we feel his presence and the suggestion of his approaching death as he goes over and over old themes and struggles to put them into a final order. He is, however,

until the very end, the observer that James found him.

The direction of the unfinished works is toward transformation. They are part of the artist's process of imagination, and their reality lies as much in Hawthorne's imagining and reimagining them as in the final works themselves.

Preface

When Nathaniel Hawthorne died in 1864, two months before his sixtieth birthday, he left draft manuscripts of two long unfinished works that had occupied him for more than a decade. Sometimes written in the first-person, these fascinating and difficult works hold great autobiographical interest and significance, but they also suggest something more. Taken together, they represent for Hawthorne an extended review of his past themes and concerns; they help to put his last years in perspective; and they recast the work of his entire career in a clearer light.

A famous author, but one who was reluctant to reveal himself, he allows us here a somewhat unobstructed view as he discusses throughout the manuscripts what he wants and often by implication what he needs to do in these works. These unfinished stories are a journey to another place, a quest for origins and for destination as well. They assume the archetypal patterns of romance and myth, and they attest to a terrible power that pervades Hawthorne's vision.

As a pilgrimage over past ground, these fragmentary manuscripts reexamine such themes as estrangement, mysticism, and a deep distrust of art, putting them now, at the end, into a final context. The gothic structures, the deep moral questioning, and the symbolic ancestral home, which, in the fragments, is beyond his reach, are eloquent reminders of the "power of blackness" that Melville had discovered in Hawthorne's tales. Like Melville, Hawthorne called his fiction "romance." This designation, so claimed by two great writers who inherited a Bunyanesque tradition of emblematic fables, suggests that their work owes something to abstraction. Their books are not about people from the real world but are symbolic of them. The result, particularly in Hawthorne's unfinished works, is a kind of prose poetry that assimilates romance. As Henry James may be understood, through Hawthorne's influence, to assimilate romance and realism toward a psychological realism, here we may see Hawthorne trying to assimilate romance and realism toward a kind of romantic idealism and symbolic truth.

It is the inner mind rather than the outside world that Hawthorne is writing about in these

pieces. In each of the unfinished works, the author's interests are strongly psychological. Like Fanshawe, Hawthorne's first fictional hero, Septimius, his last, remains unable to participate in the world. Withdrawn and pale, he is contrasted with what society considers normal, with, in Fanshawe, for example, the Edward Walcotts, or, in the Septimius stories, the Robert Hagburns of this world.

Hawthorne's voice is personal in these final works. It expresses a tragic modernism; and although his use of third-person narrative allows him a degree of detachment, we feel his presence and suggestions of his approaching death as he goes over and over old themes and struggles to put them in order. He is, however, until the very end, the observer that James found him to be. And while Hawthorne's world was narrow and insular, it was perhaps all the more intense for its inward turn. As Fanshawe, Ilbrahim of "The Gentle Boy," and Hester Prynne all seek, as representatives of the "other," to escape from society, as Clifford and Hephzibah Pyncheon find themselves completely out of place in their ill-fated reentry into society, and as Zenobia chooses to separate herself permanently from society, so do the

characters in these late works stand apart from the world. Like Owen Warland in "The Artist of the Beautiful," Hawthorne tries to come to terms with the fragility and separation that surround the work of art. And like "The Artist of the Beautiful," the unfinished stories emphasize the destructive powers of art. In them, Grimshawe, whose name recalls Fanshawe, is an artist late in life, paying the high price, it would seem, for a life spent in search of its own meaning.

Surrounded by spiders, Grimshawe's world is Arachne's, a world of entrapment and evil; but it is also Athena's, a world of making and wisdom. And as Septimius walks figuratively on Hawthorne's own path behind the Wayside in Concord, reality and fantasy merge. As egoist, proud intellectual, and observer/spectator, he walks a strangely mutual ground between the mysterious and the real.

Hawthorne's final works suggest a reverse perspective of the artist's power of seeing: here the subject influences the maker. In "The Prophetic Pictures," for example, Hawthorne writes about a painter whose works of art affect the lives of their subjects. But in the last works, the characters, curiously, almost obstinately, autobiographical, exert a great influence over the

artist, at times becoming him. It is the maker, however, not the subject who is being seen; and art is looking at us. Hawthorne seems to use symbolism as a bridge between himself and his art, and the resulting work has a symbolic and emotional effect that cannot easily be quantified. The direction, however, is toward transformation, and the work's unfinished nature is richly suggestive. Its unfinished qualities transcend the actual works to allude to an underlying philosophical process.

Hawthorne is trying in these works to imagine a new way of working. He is writing about self-creation and self-examination. His goal, on one very important level, is self-knowledge. These stories have multiple tellings, suggesting an underlying palimpsest, an archaic version, an unerasable true form. In the last stories, strange, cryptic writings must be deciphered, further suggesting a true, underlying meaning.

Longfellow, Hawthorne's classmate at Bowdoin College, memorialized his friend in an elegy that closes on the subject of Hawthorne's unfinished works:

There in seclusion and remote from men
The wizard hand lies cold,
Which at its topmost speed let fall the pen,
And left the tale half told.

Ah! who shall lift that wand of magic power,
And the lost clew regain?
The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower
Unfinished must remain.

It is my wish to explore the unfinished window that Hawthorne left us, to try and understand the meaning of these unfinished works and the reasons for their fragmentary form. In attempting to do so, it is my intention to look closely at the works themselves, at their particular content and language. These separate works are drawn together by a mythic consciousness. The facts of the stories themselves, as well as our knowledge of their composition, are inadequate to explain them completely. They become part of the artist's process of imagination; and although realism does not appear to interest Hawthorne, reality does. The reality of these last works lies as much in his imagining and reimagining them, in the

creative process, as in the final, unfinished
works themselves.

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Chapter I. Hawthorne's Late Works

In the spring of 1858, Nathaniel Hawthorne began writing a story that he had been thinking about for at least five years. In it, Middleton, an American, is traveling in England in pursuit of an elusive goal. It is the story of a search for a personal history and an individual identity, of a journey through time and memory. And while it contains characters, themes, language, and settings that are all clearly of Hawthorne's creation, it is a work in which these very familiar elements do not come together in an artistic whole, in spite of the author's apparently intense efforts. Hawthorne called this work his novel of England and worked on it on and off from 1858 to 1861. He wrote a first draft, "The Ancestral Footstep," in April and May, 1858, and then put the work away for nearly three years. He started over in 1861, in a sketch called "Etherege," setting the novel earlier in time, beginning with Middleton's childhood in an old New England house filled with the debris of the past. New characters, new twists, and new turns of a

possible plot followed, but finally there were only more questions in Hawthorne's mind about what the story should be. In "Grimshawe," a third and final attempt, he started over and tried once again to work the story out, but what emerged was a strange tale of apparently conflicting dimensions. As it ran through Hawthorne's mind, the story became impossible to write.

Taken alone, this work and the circumstances surrounding it might not appear unusual. It could be read as nothing more than an unfinished work, begun before and carried on after a completed published work. But what makes this unfinished work and Hawthorne's situation particularly interesting is that the same thing happened to him again. In 1861, he began a second lengthy project that would also go awry. It is a long, introspective narrative, also consisting of three versions, and this work would be his last. In separate drafts, "Septimius Felton" and "Septimius Norton," a reclusive and studious young man distorts his life and endangers his vocation through obsessive and secretive efforts to translate an unintelligible manuscript. The prize that this ancient document offers him is the secret of immortality. In the last of these

fragments, "The Dolliver Romance," the immortality story has progressed even further into fantasy.

Although largely unknown to a wide group of readers, these fragmentary works, to which he devoted his last efforts, appear to be for Hawthorne among the greatest artistic challenges of his career. From the time he published The Blithedale Romance in 1852 until his death in 1864, his life was filled with great artistic absorption and activity, most often resulting in unfinished writings. The notable exception to this pattern of work, during a period of intense experimentation, is The Marble Faun, Hawthorne's last completed romance, published in 1860; and while this late novel is usually read as Hawthorne's last work, it is, I should like to argue, in fact the centerpiece of a final decade of searching fiction that preceded and followed it. The six fragmentary drafts of the unfinished romances are long and complex pieces, heavily edited by Hawthorne in manuscript. It is my view that, together with The Marble Faun, they represent a relentless effort on his part to produce works of art that were headed in a new artistic direction. And upon close inspection and careful reading, they offer a detailed account of

Hawthorne's preoccupations and concerns in his last years.

The unfinished works aimed at covering ground that Hawthorne had been over before. It seems odd that material so familiar would suddenly pose such difficulty for him. In the tales, for example, and in his first three romances, there is no apparent evidence of such difficulty. For in spite of such references in "The Custom-House" sketch, for example, he still seems to move through work after work, creating his characteristic fiction and bringing it to fulfillment. He had brilliantly developed the theme of the individual versus tradition in The Scarlet Letter, for example; and in The House of the Seven Gables, he had brought great artistic power to the story of a moral crime and its rippling effect through the generations of a family. Why, in his novel of England, did it become impossible to write about the outsider Middleton's search for his ancestral roots and an ancient crime that threatened to deprive him of his rights? He had also previously used such themes as immortality and magic elixirs with great success, especially in the tales. In "The Birthmark," "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment," and

"Rappaccini's Daughter," for example, such themes had become archetypal of his sensibility. Why, in the immortality work, did things stop working? Why, having thought through these unfinished works for many years, did he not bring them to completion? What happened to prevent his working as he previously had done?

These same questions must have puzzled Hawthorne. It is clear, for example, from long narrative passages written into the manuscripts of these fragmentary works, that he was struggling during this period with his own definition of a work of fiction. This intense struggle was forcing him to scrutinize his writing, putting it together and taking it apart again. There are passages in all of the fragments that stand out for their craft and beauty, and yet Hawthorne was unable to finish them. There are insurmountable tensions--between character and plot, between motive and moral--that resist artistic resolution. He is not sure of the ideas or the characters any more. What had changed?

I see Hawthorne striving in these works to create new works of fiction but unable to put his work into a final form. He begins over and over again, questioning his work at every turn, until

in the end he abandons two vast projects that he had hoped would be crowning literary achievements. He asks himself repeatedly, in sideline memoranda, what his characters are really like, what their motivations are, and what they actually want in these stories. He searches for answers but cannot come up with any that satisfy him. He appears at a loss to continue. In attempting to follow up his own line of questioning, where would we look for explanations of such difficulty?

It is true that the beginning of this period of writing coincides with Hawthorne's first trip outside the United States, in 1853, as American consul to Liverpool. The consulship was a political appointment made by President Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne's Bowdoin College classmate and lifelong friend, in appreciation of his campaign biography. His experiences in this job, however, seem to have strengthened his interest in writing a novel about England, giving him, as it did, daily contact with Americans abroad and with many levels of English life. There does not appear to be anything so unusual in the experience as to account for a sudden reversal of his artistic capabilities or to explain adequately this body of writing that would become his most misunderstood

work.

His notebooks for the next two years contain detailed accounts of his travel in England, recording the ruins and romance of the past that he saw everywhere. He took particular note of the surrounding English countryside, of churches falling into decay and of tombstones obscured by weeds and moss. He made detailed notes about local customs and traditions, some, such as the Liverpool Lord Mayor's Dinner, surviving from the Middle Ages, and about Leicester's Hospital, an almshouse dating from the reign of Elizabeth I. Hawthorne compiled all of this, he said, "for the side-scenes, and back-grounds, and exterior adornment, of a work of fiction."¹ His consulship also offered him an opportunity to save money for travel in Italy and to take home when the time came. Always less than financially secure, this income might be expected to have given him even greater freedom to write.

On a more personal basis, Hawthorne went to England as an American literary celebrity. Much anticipated by the Westminster Review, for example, as America's most famous active writer,

¹ Journal in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, February 16, 1855.

he arrived in England amid great admiration and clamor, more sought after abroad than he was accustomed to at home. The attentions of Browning, Macaulay, and others, for example, should only have bolstered his confidence and enthusiasm.²

In fact, coming to Liverpool, many observers agreed, would be a good thing for Hawthorne's writing. As Henry Chorley, editor of the Athenaeum, wrote, it would give Hawthorne the opportunity of "observing customs on a scale somewhat larger than those so wonderfully daguerretyped by him at Salem" And while the Westminster Review had called The Blithedale Romance "unmistakably the finest production of genius in either hemisphere for this quarter at least," there was also a feeling that Hawthorne had neglected to explore the moral problems that he raises in this book and failed to show the actual workings of the socialist experiment at Brook Farm. "It will be an excellent thing for his future books," the English writer Mary Russell Mitford had written to Hawthorne's publisher, James T. Fields, "the fault

² This article and others noted on this page are quoted in The Letters, 1853-1856, Centenary Edition, pp. 5-7.

of all his writings, in spite of their great beauty, being a want of reality, of the actual, healthy, every-day life which is a necessary element in literature" (Fields 320). Similarly, in a survey of American literature, in which Mosses from an Old Manse was reviewed, Blackwood's had noted: "Whereas Mr. Poe is indebted for whatever good effects he produces to a close detail and agglomeration of facts, Mr. Hawthorne appears to have little skill and little taste for dealing with matter of fact or substantial incident, but relies for his favourable impression on the charm of style and the play of thought and fancy" (Letters, 1853-1856 7).

Hawthorne inherited a culture that provided a background for his writing. An avid reader as a child, he admired and absorbed the writings of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Bunyan. He also read and reread Montaigne, he said, along with Addison, Steele, Fielding, and Smollett. He had only to get a copy of The Abbot, he wrote to his sister Elizabeth, to finish reading all of Scott. Hawthorne also knew the Persian, Arabian, and Indian fairytales of The Arabian Nights Entertainment, which he read in English after Galland's French translation.

As early as Fanshawe, he was writing in a romance

style, adapting to his stories the central quest of the romance form. To this basic structure, he would add specific imagery instilled by his knowledge and experience. The heritage of New England and a strong sense of place and of the past were materials that he would use and transform into a personal style. He developed an affinity toward fable, emblem, and allegory; and the Calvinist imagination, which places the individual at the center of a spiritual universe, enriched his work. The richness and clarity of the tradition of Christian allegory and picture making, from Pilgrim's Progress in particular, became integral to his content; and the authoritative voices of New England divines echoed in his style. He wrote romances informed by the ideas, tropes, and imagery of this legacy; and up until the writing of The Marble Faun, this process worked for Hawthorne. Why, following the successful completion of this work in 1860, does his writing depart so dramatically from this tested form?

Hawthorne came of age as an artist in the generation of writers who achieved what has been regarded as a high point in American literary excellence. The works of the mid-1800s are remarkable not only for providing the early

version of an American canon, as defined by Matthiessen more than half a century ago, but for continuing to provide insight into our literature as this narrowly defined canon has been extended in recent years. He also shared with other American writers of the early nineteenth century developments in the national culture in the decades following the Revolutionary War. Amid such issues as race, gender, and civic duty and responsibility, national questions arose about the nature of the individual, democracy and social class, self-sufficiency and tradition, the Edenic myth of American history and the belief in progress, and about our true beginnings and selected memory. Among his American predecessors, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper had begun to recreate a colonial iconography and folk history. And while he was neither a religious nor an historical novelist, Hawthorne used elements of history and religion to view the world with detachment and distrust. The end of the agricultural era and the rise of reform movements signaled a struggle between liberal eighteenth-century values and the rise of American commerce. Hawthorne had emerged from a background of Enlightenment liberalism into the early world of

American materialism.

It is to this general philosophical and literary context that we must look in order to understand the extent to which Hawthorne's last works constitute a new direction in his writing. With the Transcendentalists on the one hand and, on the other, a deepening populist voice growing out of intrinsic beliefs in the worth of the ordinary individual, Hawthorne was looking more closely than ever into society and into himself. And while the genius of his writing, as many have perceived it, may lie in its focus on the inner life of the individual, the external life of New England and the interior life of moral abstraction are in tension in his work, so much so that one must often be read against the other. There is an early and constant questioning of how things work in the face of accepted expectations, and the unaccountable element in these circumstances is inevitably the human one. Hawthorne scrutinizes the behavior and beliefs of his characters amid circumstances that he has created for them; and although these circumstances include such recognizable themes as original sin and humanity's fall from grace, Hawthorne's characters must always deal with them from their hearts.

Hawthorne felt the deepening sense of loss that helped to define the modern age. The theme of disinheritance runs through his works, from The Scarlet Letter to "The Dolliver Romance," and one response is found in a Dionysian figure, an emotional and creative character, out of place in the world as currently figured. Such, I should like to suggest, is the case in Hawthorne's Donatello, a delicate, mythological incarnation that attempts to restore to the world a symbolic legacy of belief.

One of the ways, then, in which Hawthorne attempted to deal with the loss of the transcendent is through symbolism. He sought to replace the lost worlds of permanence and faith with a mythology that could restore these values to the romance form. Seen in this historical and philosophical context, he was attempting to join elements of the real and the symbolic, and his work became a kind of poetic vision, one in which a fictional narrative and a "symbolic" narrative are interwoven. This is what Hawthorne wanted to do, and he speaks directly to this point in the preface to The Marble Faun: "Italy as the site of his Romance," Hawthorne writes, "was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or

fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and must needs be, in America" (MF 3).

For Hawthorne, the romance unites the precincts of poetry and prose. In "The Custom-House" sketch of The Scarlet Letter, for example, Hawthorne describes the landscape of the romance as a "neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" (SL 36). As Whitman writes that imagination and actuality must be joined, so Hawthorne seeks out this "neutral territory" in which the two may meet on common ground. Hawthorne's idea of the romance thus includes a symbolic ground and the possibility of a narrative in which character, plot, and theme may, must, function literally as well as symbolically.

Although what Hawthorne has written about the romance is known to most, it might be well to reconsider it in this context. In the Preface to The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne defines the romance like this:

"When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to

claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former-while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the Public" (HSG 1).

Similarly, his whole treatment of Brook Farm is

"altogether incidental to the main purpose of the Romance," Hawthorne writes in the Preface to The Blithedale Romance:

"In short, his present concern with the Socialist Community is merely to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives. In the old countries, with which Fiction has long been conversant, a certain conventional privilege seems to be awarded to the romancer; his work is not put exactly side by side with nature; and he is allowed a license with regard to every-day Probability, in view of the improved effects which he is bound to produce thereby. Among ourselves, on the contrary, there is as yet no such Faery Land, so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own. This atmosphere is what the American romancer needs. In its absence, the beings of

imagination are compelled to show themselves in the same category as actually living mortals; a necessity that generally renders the paint and pasteboard of their composition but too painfully discernible" (BR2).

Although Hawthorne had already been incorporating the form of the romance into his realistic narrative, what characterizes the works on which I want to focus is that the balance has shifted and that in them Hawthorne wishes to enter more deeply into symbolism and romance. One of the chief reasons that people have misunderstood them is because they have misunderstood this shift in balance. They have wrongly expected a degree of realism from Hawthorne and have proclaimed his work a failure when they have not found it. As the world became increasingly chaotic, it became more difficult to find a correlation between symbolism and the real world. Yet if Edgar A. Dryden is right to say that he finds in The Marble Faun "signs of a scattered and lost meaning" (Dryden, Poetics 23), it is because Hawthorne was beginning to look for ways to replace lost meaning with new. This is what was driving him to look for a new form and what made it increasingly difficult to find one.

Such concerns also made it difficult for Hawthorne to achieve closure in his late works. The last romances provide ample evidence of destabilization and resistance to closure, often providing, in fact, little else. This openness may, however, be approached as part of their nature. The works, for example, may be unfinished, but, at the same time, complete in themselves. As Marjorie Levenson writes, we find an increasing proportion of fragmentary poems since the start of the nineteenth century; and while these are not unique to the period, they do reflect a characteristically Romantic sensibility and form. As Levenson quotes from Schlegel in 1798: "the works of the ancients have become fragments; the works of moderns are fragments at their inception" (Levenson 10). Fragmentation and ruin received special emphasis in Romanticism. Coleridge's work, for example, is filled with detached fragments. "Kubla Khan" is subtitled "A Vision in a Dream," to which is added "A Fragment," suggesting an incremental breaking down of the work into a series of fragmentary entities. The Biographia Literaria, the Aids to Reflection, and The Friend are all in an unfinished artistic form, segments of original materials mixed with

the fragments of borrowings from other writers. Many such examples may be cited. Ruskin and later Nietzsche helped to develop a theory of imperfection in art, one in which imperfection is inevitable.

Fragmentation is part of the modern world, and I should like to argue that this concept not only influenced Hawthorne's final works but is essential in explaining why they are unfinished. Working within this context, Hawthorne increasingly made art about the making of art. He had always talked about art in his writing and had foretold some of the arguments of the fragments. In fact, throughout his works Hawthorne had pursued a consistent textual questioning of the deepest human relationships, none more difficult for him than the relation of the artist to his own work. In "The Devil in Manuscript," for example, he questions his bond to the products of his own intellectual labors; and in "Rappaccini's Daughter," he questions whether the powers of creation might not threaten to consume the maker himself. As he had written of Owen Warland in "The Artist of the Beautiful," "Thus it is, that ideas which grow up within the imagination, and appear so lovely to it, and of a value beyond

whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the Practical" (Mosses 454) and reduced thereby to "a small heap of glittering fragments" (Mosses 475). Whereas his earlier works had set limits to which the romance could go without losing contact with meaning, in the fragments he no longer sees those limits as valid.

The unfinished works provide a unique record of Hawthorne's fiction in progress since each set of drafts offers the reader three versions of a single story. It is not only these drafts, however, that make the puzzle of the unfinished romances so inviting. Hawthorne also left preliminary sketches and studies, twenty-two in all, in which he worked out plots and characters for the unfinished works. Of these studies, six are for the English novel and sixteen are for the immortality fragments. These exercises are reflexive memoranda of artistic intent, and they provide a valuable source of information about the construction of the fragmentary works and about Hawthorne's thinking as well.

Together, the fragments and the studies are works in which we not only see Hawthorne developing his fiction as he writes; we also have

Hawthorne writing about this process as it is under way. We have an important chance to see first-hand things that we usually must infer. We learn the weight that Hawthorne gives to various details in his writing, we watch him develop character and story line, and we are able to understand the difficulties that these works posed for him. It is crucial, in trying to come to some conclusion about these late works, to have the opportunity of watching him write them; for in an important sense these studies provide a private view of Hawthorne writing Hawthorne.

It shall be my purpose in this study to show that, in The Marble Faun and in the fragments, Hawthorne is experimenting with new ideas and new forms and that in them the very form of what he calls the "romance" changes. It is my thesis that, in The Marble Faun, myth and romance cross over into a symbolic landscape, the "neutral territory" that Hawthorne had been seeking since The Scarlet Letter. This symbolic terrain, "somewhere between the real world and fairy-land," is essential in this romance to a greater degree than in any of Hawthorne's other books. In The Marble Faun, its chief symbols--Donatello as Bacchus, for example, or Rome as the eternal realm

of art--develop almost independently of the narrative story, providing through mythology a meeting place for the imaginary and the actual. One of the chief functions of mythology in this context is its comment on the sameness of the human condition. So it is that memory of the past, mankind's passionate search for happiness, and the universal experience of sorrow are among the themes that Hawthorne addresses here through symbolic means. The connections between the concrete and universal levels of such a work become the means of understanding it, and in this book Hawthorne's examination of the past becomes the means of examining the form and the past of his own art as well.

Ivor Winters writes that Hawthorne's last works are filled with the "machinery" and "mannerisms of the allegorist." According to Winters, we are unable, however, to discern the substance of his communication, nor was Hawthorne himself aware of it. "We have the symbolic footprint, the symbolic spider, the symbolic elixirs and poisons, but we do not have that of which they are symbolic; we have the hushed, the tense and confidential manner, on the part of the narrator, of one who imparts a grave secret, but

the words are inaudible. Yet we have not, on the other hand, anything approaching realistic fiction, for the events are improbable or even impossible, and the characters lack all reality" (Winters 19).

Even so formidable a critic as Henry James expects realism from Hawthorne. Writing on The Marble Faun, for example, James says, "the element of the unreal is pushed too far, and . . . the book is neither positively of one category nor of another" (Hawthorne 144). I want to suggest that the distinction to be drawn here is not between romance and realism, as James seems to argue, but between what Hawthorne meant by romance and what it came to mean for him in the progressively symbolic fiction of his late works.

Such traditional assessments contrast vividly with Hawthorne's own remarks on meaning and realism. Speaking of the symbol of the scarlet letter, for example, in "The Custom-House," he writes: "Certainly, there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation, and which, as it were, streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind" (SL 31). Perhaps Hawthorne thought, as Emerson believed,

that we must learn to understand life through its symbolical nature.

Yet criticism of these late writings tends strongly to be on one side in its opinion. Edward H. Davidson, who was the first scholar to edit and comment extensively on the unfinished manuscripts, stated a view that was to become widely shared by later critics when he called these works "the relics an old man left behind him to testify to his failure in the last phase."³ Many critics held that from the time of his return to America in 1860 until his death four years later, Hawthorne accomplished no remarkable work other than Our Old Home. Two themes constantly tempted him, and although Hawthorne experimented with them at length, they argue, he could not fuse or complete them. The Civil War, in this view, had permanently interrupted his concentration, his physical vitality was breaking up, and his imagination was dissolving.

These works remain largely ignored by Hawthorne's commentators. Most recently, for example, although such critics as Donald E. Pease

³ Edward H. Davidson's book, Hawthorne's Last Phase, makes it clear that these unfinished works are fascinating, even though, in his own assessment, they ultimately represent a failed effort on Hawthorne's part.

have rightly called for a wider interpretation of Hawthorne's writing, pointing out that such artworks are open to many kinds of interpretive reading, the unfinished novels have not received attention. Pease writes that Hawthorne was able to come to terms with the challenges of modernism because he returned to American culture before the Revolutionary War for his sense of a collective life; for, as Lawrence had observed in Studies in Classic American Literature, American Renaissance writers needed a renewed sense of the past as a living tradition because they had inherited a culture based more on memory of the past than on actual beginnings. In spite of pointing in such a productive direction, however, Pease concentrates on Hawthorne's completed works.

Similarly, Terence Martin, who also has cited the importance for American writers to appropriate a beginning and to give it a clear purpose, does not consider Hawthorne's unfinished works, works in which one of the chief artistic concerns is interpreting the past. Martin's insightful commentary is likewise focused on the published romances; and like most of Hawthorne's critics, Martin concludes that Hawthorne was working at cross-purposes in the 1860s. The late romances,

he says, produced symbols devoid of meaning, imagination and invention that were undirected, and parts that did not fit together. In fact, his chronology of Hawthorne's life does not include the late works at all.

Richard H. Brodhead's commentary on Hawthorne's ambiguity and uncertainty might well lead into a full consideration of the last works. Hawthorne researched, Brodhead says, citing Howells, but found no solutions. It is my ambition to show that, on the contrary, the unfinished romances, far from being dispiriting failures, may in fact, in their fragmentation and despair, be read as a synecdoche for modern art.

Commentary on The Marble Faun has been more evenly divided. When it was first published, many praised it as one of Hawthorne's finest achievements.⁴ It was regarded as possibly his

⁴ James Russell Lowell, for example, wrote in the Atlantic in 1860 that The Marble Faun embodied "the most august truths of psychology, . . . the most pregnant facts of modern history, and . . . a profound parable of the Christian Idea." Elizabeth P. Peabody, writing in the same magazine in 1868, discussed the novel from a Transcendentalist point of view as "an interpretation of Christianity more vital than has been symbolized by any ritual, or systematized by any ecclesiasticism." Henry James declined to praise The Marble Faun above Hawthorne's earlier novels, but found in it "a great deal of beauty, of interest and grace."

More recently, such critics as Dorothy Waples,

most ambitious undertaking, the richest and most complex of his four completed works, and more far-reaching than his three earlier works, all of which had been set in America.

Others, however, have found in The Marble Faun direct signs of Hawthorne's disintegration as an artist.⁵ Critics cite among its shortcomings characters that fail to come to life, the lack of a believable plot, ambiguity in moral issues, and an excessive reliance on journal materials. It is considered half-romance, half-guidebook, some argue, revealing stresses that would in a few years make any sustained creative effort impossible for Hawthorne.

The interrelationships among the fragments and The Marble Faun are grounded in the idea of

Darrel Abel, and M. E. Brown have made strong arguments for psychological readings of The Marble Faun. Such readers as C. R. Smith and G. A. Barnett have centered their studies on structural elements, and Sheldon W. Liebman and Charles Feidelson, Jr., among others, have written on the various symbolic motifs in this novel.

⁵ The opinion that The Marble Faun is a failure is shared to some degree by such critics as Rudolph Von Abele, Marius Bewley, and Roy Harvey Pearce, among others. Pearce writes, however, that some of the very aspects that have led critics to concede the failure of this work also suggest the possibility of reading it differently. Sheldon Liebman, for example, finds Hawthorne's ambiguity in this work to be an effective technique.

the fragment and unfinishability as modern themes, inviting not only comparisons in structure and style but also of common concerns in the artist's final years. The themes of cultural and artistic disinheritance run through the American claimant manuscripts and The Marble Faun. The theme of spiritual longing connects the novel and the elixir of life fragments. In The Marble Faun, as in the fragments, the central quest may well be interpreted as the search for an idealized past, a "romantic" past amid a lifeless modern present, as an examination of a culture inflicted with loss, yet yearning after wholeness. These are works in which the present has exhausted the past and in which its forms have become symbolic ruins. I believe that, read as a group, the works of Hawthorne's last decade show his continuous development toward a new personal statement of fiction; and while he may not have altogether recognized it, the ideas, themes, method, and, in the end, the unfinished nature of much of this writing represent his movement toward an increasingly symbolic modern literature.

Chapter II. Signs and Symbols:

The Marble Faun

It is one of the chief functions of the "neutral territory" in The Marble Faun to provide Hawthorne the opportunity to talk about art. He says at the outset that, in this book, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that we are exploring the sphere of the imagination. Just as James cautions that Hawthorne's shimmering symbolic threads are likely to break as we handle them, so in The Marble Faun the narrator says, in describing Praxiteles' classical Faun: "Only a sculptor of the finest imagination, the most delicate taste, the sweetest feeling, and the rarest artistic skill--in a word, a sculptor and a poet too--could have first dreamed of a Faun in this guise, and then have succeeded in imprisoning the sportive and frisky thing, in marble. Neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground! The idea grows coarse, as we handle it, and hardens in our grasp" (10). I believe that The Marble Faun is Hawthorne's transitional work and the last work

in which he attempts to achieve the "neutral territory" that romance could provide him.

Donatello, a fantastic satyr-hero who combines animal and human characteristics, bears a symbolic resemblance to Praxiteles' Faun sculpture, an actual work of art with a mythological context. Donatello is a creature of extremes. His emotional and hence irrational behavior should not be mistaken for caricature, however. Hawthorne writes that Donatello's "extravagance of gesticulation" must be interpreted as "the language of the natural man; though laid aside and forgotten by other men, now that words have been feebly substituted in the place of signs and symbols" (IX 78).

It is a realm of sign and symbol that we are entering in this work. As stated in the Preface, Italy has provided Hawthorne with a setting in which "actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America" (3). In this novel, as in the fragmentary works that help to define it, Hawthorne is engaged in a quest mirrored in the fable that the work unfolds. He is, as an artist, seeking out his own relationship to the world of the mid-nineteenth century and to the world of art

within that age. His artistic creations are part of his efforts to discover his own place within a changing artistic universe. In this work, Rome is a guiding symbol of the living, mythical, creative tradition of art, embodying both vitality and decadence.

The idea for this book, Hawthorne writes, came from his experience of the Faun of Praxiteles in the sculpture galleries of the Capitol in Rome. The story opens inside its pantheon, where "around the walls stand the Antinous, the Amazon, the Lycian Apollo, the Juno; all famous productions of antique sculpture, and still shining in the undiminished majesty and beauty of their ideal life. . . ." (I 5) Hawthorne so infuses the opening chapters of this novel with a mythic consciousness that the characters and plot function, almost immediately, on an unconscious level. Metamorphosis, or transformation, a major theme and structural principle in much of Hawthorne's fiction, as in "The Maypole of Merry-Mount" and "The Artist of the Beautiful," for example, becomes here a chief element of meaning.

The genesis of the novel, then, is in the author's contemplation of a work of art in a setting that celebrates the themes and characters

of classical myth. An ancient and mysterious artifact, the Faun is above all a work of the imagination; and within the dialogue that he establishes concerning the meaning of the Faun, Hawthorne engages in an inner narrative concerning his own imagination and creativity. The antiquity of Rome envelops an ideal beauty combined with the inevitable corruption and decay of all living things, and Hawthorne's examination of the work of art explores this dual nature. As animal and human, real and unreal, pagan and spiritual are joined in the idea of the Faun, so are the complementary aspects of imagination and creativity explored within this story of four artistic friends. It is Donatello of the four, however, who compresses the essence of sylvan life, Attic legend, and memory, "along with the kindred qualities in the human soul" (I 10). As the embodiment of art, of the ideal within real life, the Faun is explored both as a work of art and as a reminiscence of a time when mankind's relation to nature, and therefore to all things, was close and vital.

In the first part of the novel, however, in which the foundations of a tragedy are laid, motivations are curiously vague and characters are

ambiguously presented. In this book, as in the fragmentary works that are discussed in the following chapters, Hawthorne is equivocal in drawing his characters and in accounting for their actions. The story opens with a chapter entitled "Miriam, Hilda, Kenyon, Donatello," the names of the four central characters whose life in Rome we follow for about a year. They are introduced as friends who are, like the narrator, touring the Capitol galleries. They break the narrator's aesthetic reverie, joining his contemplation of the past to the present. Miriam, Hilda, and Kenyon tease Donatello for his resemblance to the Faun sculpture. They question whether, in his resemblance to the Faun, Donatello's rusticity is the equivalent of innocence or of paganism, or a combination of both. Hawthorne presses the point of "resemblance" to the classical artwork, for Donatello, as the chief creative image in the novel, is not the same as Praxiteles' sculpture. In resembling it, however, he symbolizes it, for like the Faun, Donatello is a creature of great mystery, "standing betwixt man and animal, sympathizing with each, comprehending the speech of either race, and interpreting the whole existence of one to the other" (II 13). A

frolicsome sylvan creature, Tuscan nobleman, and innocent in matters of love and life, he yet becomes Miriam's criminal accomplice. Initially bringing an invigorating freshness to the stolid Roman art scene, he becomes by the mid-novel a central figure in a struggle for moral survival. The entirety of his life comprises the experience of each of the two sides that he represents. He is first developed as comic and shallow. An Italian nobleman descended from an ancient family, he has attached himself to the three artists, fixing his strongest attentions on Miriam, the most magnetically attractive of the group. He enjoys a special latitude among the members of the party, who treat him as an eccentric, recognizing that he possesses "an indefinable characteristic . . . that set[s] him outside of rules" (II 14).

Like Donatello, Miriam is surrounded by mystery. Although she would appear to be the book's most powerful character, she is the one least able to act. She is shrouded by questions in much the same way as the Veiled Lady is in The Blithedale Romance. Her background is unclear. Her family and even her nationality are unknown. She suffers, perhaps through her own actions, but more likely as a result of victimization. Her

relationship with Donatello is sketchy and meaningless until the moonlit night when they commit a crime that binds them together. Her hints at personal difficulties and her connection to a spectral figure who follows her from the catacombs are unresolved. She is a strong and passionate character, yet a weak and helpless woman. An iconoclastic heroine in the tradition of Hester Prynne, she asserts that she, more than the others, has need of the Faun's gift of innocence. The narrator describes her situation as an "ambiguity" (III 20), for although she is not held in particular esteem professionally by her fellow artists, she is admired for a natural warmth and creative passion; and although she is effusive and apparently tangible, she keeps society at a distance, remaining beyond its gaze. Stories have circulated in Rome about her possible origins: as a European heiress, who has come to Rome to escape an arranged marriage; as an American of Southern ancestry, well educated and wealthy, but an outcast in her own country; as an English noblewoman whose love of art has brought her to Rome.

In this early instance, Hawthorne compares possible story lines in an apparent attempt to

discover the true circumstances of his characters and story. Who is Miriam? Where did she come from? Has she committed some past crime? Is Donatello a real person? Who is the specter? What is his hold on Miriam? These are the kinds of questions that would intensify throughout the last works until, in the case of the fragments, they would overcome the works altogether. Whatever her true circumstances, Miriam is described as a sprite surrounded by a mist. So we have both Donatello and Miriam described in mythic terms, he resembling an archetypal mythic creature, she the modern embodiment of a mythic presence. These characters are larger than life, and their mythological natures keep them well above the fictional plane of the novel.

Hilda, by contrast, a young American artist whose chief activity in Rome has been working as a fine copyist of the great masterworks in the art galleries, has no such complications. Drawn in full opposition to Miriam as "a slender brown-haired, New England girl" (I 7) and as "a fair young girl, dressed in white," (VI 52), she lives in a battlemented medieval tower, far above the turmoil of the chaotic Roman streets. Her tower apartment is a shrine to the Virgin, and Hilda

must keep the tower's perpetual light burning, according to the ancient custom. A "dove" who inhabits a region of church domes, she is also, however, a daughter of New England and so performs her spiritual duties with Protestant simplicity. Kenyon, like Hilda, is also an American artist, a promising young sculptor, stable and composed, a bass voice, the narrator says, to Donatello's tenor.

It was the descent, some months before the novel's opening scene in the Capitol galleries, of the four friends into the underworld of the catacombs that propelled the tragedy on which The Marble Faun rests. In the catacomb of St. Calixtus, surrounded by the overwhelming monuments to mortality that the tomb holds, progressing downward, "into deeper and deeper recesses of the earth" (III 24), Miriam had become lost and separated from the other members of the group. This visit to the underworld underscores the significance of the mythic setting of the book; for it is in this region that the chain of events is set in motion that resolves many of the ambiguities surrounding the characters. When Miriam rejoins her friends, she points out a spectral creature who, she says, has guided her

back to them. The specter, dressed like a satyr himself in an animal-hide cloak and goatskin pants, claims that Miriam has called him back from the underworld and must now bear the responsibility for his reappearance in the world. These developments add new layers of meaning, including a dangerous relationship between Miriam and the specter. The questions add to the ambiguity already established in this work and mirror the ambiguity surrounding Donatello and Miriam. It is not really clear who these characters are or what their true motivations might be, and as Hawthorne weighed the actual meaning or meanings of creating works of art, this ambiguity came to play an increasingly important role in his later writing.

Miriam's explanations of her relationship to the figure from the catacombs take several turns, but Hilda and Kenyon accept the simple possibility that the specter is merely a beggar and that Miriam is overwrought as a result of her artistic work and its demands on her imagination. This is part parody, perhaps, but it also keeps open a key question regarding Miriam's knowledge of the specter. Donatello, however, true to his primal nature, feels an "instinctive, unreasoning" (IV

36) antipathy toward the stranger, like an animal's innate sense of danger. The specter's possible threat to Miriam brings out a violent side of Donatello, one that his friends have not seen in him before. The paintings and sketches in Miriam's studio add further symbolic references. Their themes are deeply violent: Jael driving the nail into Sisera's temple, Judith displaying the head of Holofernes, Salome triumphantly receiving the head of John, all works of art embodying great human passion and destructive power. Miriam has even painted herself into these works as a marginal figure. One particular painting, leaning toward the wall, appears to be a self-portrait, representing a beautiful, young woman with deep, dark eyes and abundant black hair. As the narrator notes, artists often divulge intimate autobiographical characteristics in self-portraits; this painting proves to be of Beatrice Cenci, adding sexual ambiguity to the inventory of artistic symbols of murderous passion in Miriam's studio. The Cenci legend of sixteenth-century Rome, revolving around incest and parricide, attracted many artists, including Shelley. In Hawthorne's thinking, Beatrice, who was executed for her father's murder, was an incest victim

and, if guilty, justified in her actions.

In establishing the main characters and themes of this book, Hawthorne contrasts the fiery nature of Miriam's work to the warm, human understanding that Hilda brings to her work as a copyist. Endowed with deep sensitivity, with a warm and rich "woman's sympathy" (VI 56) growing not from the intellect, but from the heart, Hilda, in her copies, goes directly to the master painter's point. Her gift is said to be the result of a physical condition that is "at once healthful and exquisitely delicate" (VI 57). She has also made a study of Beatrice Cenci, capturing what she calls a terrible guilt. Miriam, however, theorizes that perhaps Beatrice did not sin, but acted only with the most virtue that her circumstances allowed.

A garden setting, combining mythic and religious motifs, provides a pivotal scene in the early chapters. In the Borghese Gardens outside Rome, Miriam and Donatello are caught up in enacting an Arcadian legend. The gardens offer a grassy seclusion, a respite from the uneasy actual pavement of the Roman streets. Donatello takes particular delight in the garden's wild scenery as if it reminds him of an earlier existence, "such

as arrays itself in the imagination, when we read the beautiful old myths, and fancy a brighter sky, a softer turf, a more picturesque arrangement of venerable trees, than we find in the rude and untrained landscapes of the Western world" (VIII 71). It is an ideal woodland scene that might well be the work of a poet; and if the Faun were real, Hawthorne suggests, this setting might indeed be the one in which he would appear.

The ancient beauty of the garden is in ruin. Its marble fountains are overgrown with weeds, and broken columns are artfully placed as evidence of the historical passage of time. The resulting scene, which combines the actual and the artificial, is beautiful, dreamlike, and sad, one "that must have required generations and ages, during which growth, decay, and man's intelligence, wrought kindly together, to render it so gently wild as we behold it now" (VIII 73). The "final charm," however, in this idealized scene, the narrator says, is bestowed by malaria, which infests the garden each summer, bringing with it the threat of death and "a piercing, thrilling, delicious kind of regret in the idea of so much beauty thrown away, or only enjoyable at its half-development, in winter and early spring,

and never to be dwelt amongst, as the home-scenery of any human being" (VIII 73). We find that, like Eden, this dangerously beautiful garden contains the seeds of its own destruction, combining the possibilities of an exquisite beauty with extinction. Donatello takes all of this in. He races, leaps, and rolls in the grass, closely attuned to "the dance of the leaf upon the bough" (VIII 73-74).

The garden's freshness and beauty remind him of his pastoral home in Tuscany. The gardens are an Arcadian paradise in retrospect, and in them, Donatello and Miriam display an "eternal mirthfulness" (IX 84) that goes far back into Arcadian life, or "farther still, into the Golden Age, before man was burthened with sin and sorrow, and before pleasure had been darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief, and make it Happiness" (XI 84). Of Miriam, we learn that "catching glimpses of her. . . you would have fancied that an oak tree had sundered its rough bark to let her dance freely forth, endowed with the same spirit in her human form as that which rustles in the leaves; or that she had emerged through the pebbly bottom of a fountain, a water-nymph, to play and sparkle in the sunshine,

flinging a quivering light around her, and suddenly disappearing in a shower of rainbow drops" (X 85-86).

This high consciousness, however, comes at a price, for both Miriam and Donatello are subject to melancholy that seems to be based in their difficult circumstances. As Donatello declares his love for her, she warns him that anyone who draws close to her is in danger; but Donatello says that he fears nothing. When he says that their happiness can last forever, Miriam finds the simple expression of such a profound hope bewitching and perplexing. As nymph and faun, they draw a crowd of Romans and tourists who have come to enjoy the garden on a feast day. They are, the narrator says, like a bas-relief encircling an antique vase or decorating a sarcophagus, a symbolic bacchanal mocking its contents of "ashes and white bones" (X 88). As the symbolic coffin suggests, mirth and foreboding meet in this scene, as the figure from the catacomb returns, rivaling Donatello's animal agility as he prances and dances on tip-toe. As in the ebb and flow of a fantasy, the feast's revelers come together in high emotion and then disperse, seeming to break the Arcadian

spell, leaving the garden to itself once again.

In a chapter entitled "Fragmentary Sentences," Miriam and the specter are alone in the garden. They exchange angry warnings, but the specter assures Miriam that they are henceforth inseparable. He taunts her and commands her to leave her life in Rome, to exchange her present mask for a new one; and as the notion of masks and masquing suggests, this ill-fated meeting conceals an ending very different from its outwardly idyllic surroundings. In a setting that suggests the primal garden, they debate responsibility for their actions as they are joined in the "dreadful history of their former life" (XI 97). Miriam, a symbol of richness, ripeness, and the imagination, is thus constrained by a power that she does not understand and one that she cannot control. Her artistic powers emanate from this same dangerous zone, which, far beyond her reach, she can understand only in symbolic terms. The narrator attempts to piece together the "few vague whisperings of what passed in Miriam's interview, that afternoon" (XI 92), describing his own task as follows: "In weaving these mystic utterances into a continuous scene, we undertake a task

resembling, in its perplexity, that of gathering up and piecing together the fragments of a letter, which has been torn and scattered to the winds" (XI 92-93).

This image provides the strongest suggestion yet to appear in the novel that Hawthorne is engaged in a rearrangement of the form and meaning of his work; for just as the narrator must estimate to some degree the exchange that takes place between Miriam and the specter, as if a strong breeze blowing through the garden has made their words inaudible, so it is suggested here that Hawthorne must attempt to devise a means of telling a story in such a way as to resolve the artistic and philosophical issues that he is questioning. Long an explorer of the human psyche, of morality, and of the self, he probes how he might best continue that exploration as the ideas and values of modernism take their place, with religious and moral issues weighing in the balance, and with the end of the century hastening to overtake his own era.

Having already dwelled on some of these issues at length in the first of the American claimant fragments, which preceded this novel, and having found no clear answer or rationale,

Hawthorne attempts to make a transition in The Marble Faun from the loosely defined romance novels of his mid-career to a symbolic literature that would dominate his last period. In The Marble Faun Hawthorne attempted to use mythology and classical references to renew his fiction, and the entire action of this novel is structured to function on a symbolic basis, to create an epical quest for self-knowledge and vision that becomes self-referential to the making of his own art.

Civilization is dead in The Marble Faun. In the remnants of grandeur and divinity that have been transformed into "the commonest stuff of human existence" (I 6), the Temple of Minerva has become a bakery, and Roman laundresses hang out their wash in the "desolate Forum." Rome is described not only as dead and decaying, it is also said to be sterile; and its infertility is linked to crime and perversion. Miriam's mysterious relation to the specter, who may also be a monk or an artist's model, alludes to a possible sexual liaison that may be the genesis of the evil that pervades this story.

Beyond any mere function that might be served in plot or character, Hawthorne appears absorbed in the correspondences between the events of the

story--events of the external world--and their inner, human significance; and as old patterns are repeated from generation to generation, myth becomes the means of working out these meanings. Hawthorne moves beyond allegory to embrace a more philosophically symbolic mode of thought; for while allegory, it may be argued, moves from the real to the less real, symbolism, on the contrary, moves toward the real. In Platonic terms, the imagery of this novel points toward the philosophical forms themselves, toward the archetypes that exist within the references.

The shift by Hawthorne toward symbolism suggests his reaction to a modern conceptual framework. Modernism had emerged as the latest stage in the evolution from an age of belief to one of disbelief and loss.¹ Romanticism and symbolism provided him the means of reestablishing

¹ Ong describes the historical transformation of the word as a restructuring of "man's relationship to the physical world around him, to his fellow men, to his own thought, and to himself" (176) From antiquity through the eighteenth century, experience may be understood, he says, as consisting mainly of "external events in externally constituted realms." By the time of Giambattista Vico (1688-1744), however, thinking had taken an interiorizing turn. Ong points out that from the time of Auguste Comte (1789-1857), experience has been "more and more overlaid, or underpinned, by what might be called psychological history" (177)

a stable philosophical base. Such writers as George Eliot, Thackeray, and Hardy, for example, were redefining the philosophy of the novel, and Hawthorne had stated part of the problem earlier in "Young Goodman Brown": "My Faith is gone!" (Mosses 83). By 1850, as Hawthorne was publishing The Scarlet Letter, Tennyson's "In Memoriam" already contained images of modern loss and an assessment of mankind's insignificance and mutability: "Be near me when the sensuous frame/Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;/And Time, a maniac scattering dust,/And Life, a Fury slinging flame" (Tennyson 907).

Part of Hawthorne's task was to conceptualize a world in which works of fiction might at least continue to have a meaning, and one approach to this goal was through the past, a way that had always been open to Hawthorne. He explored old literary forms through a mythological context, for mythic contexts remained strong. Reinstating an epic vision became one means by which Hawthorne might transport the meaning of culture to the modern world.

Using mythology as the chief element of meaning in The Marble Faun, therefore, Hawthorne creates a symbolic language in which the action of

the novel is self-referential to the work of art that it is.² While he had long sought to extend his fiction beyond the limits of romance, and while realism did not represent to him a desirable alternative, Hawthorne found in symbolism the means that he sought to reinterpret the art of fiction. Mythology functions as concept in this work. In Nietzschean terms, the characters and the action in this novel represent the concept of fiction in an epical setting; it is not mythology that defines the characters, but the characters who define the artist's concepts. Such traditional arguments as those regarding Hawthorne's intentions about the "fall of man" theme, as inferred from the Faun legend, miss the point that these characters are acting out a

² Barthes argues that it is a characteristic peculiar to the last hundred years that literature began to reflect upon itself. "For centuries, our writers did not consider literature (the word itself is recent) as a language, subject, like any other, to logical distinction: literature never reflected upon itself (sometimes upon its figures, but never upon its being), it never divided itself into an object at once scrutinizing and scrutinized; in short, it spoke but did not speak itself." The last century, he writes, has been the era of the question, what is literature? And while this questioning may appear to destroy literature as an object, it does not destroy it as a metalanguage. "The truth of our literature is not in the practical order, but already it is no longer in the natural order: it is a mask which points to itself." (97-98)

theory of art, not reflecting a theory of art intended to illuminate them. We have here figures that serve to define an artform, not an artform designed to define characters.

The result is often an ambiguous lack of specific detail because Hawthorne's search for characters, which intensifies so greatly in the fragmentary works, tends to take precedence over his development of characters. The extent to which this is true may be seen perhaps more clearly in contrast with James's Roderick Hudson. Influenced by The Marble Faun, James also writes of four friends caught up in the nineteenth-century Roman artworld. James, however, presents dimensional characters and believable events in a novel of lucid social detail (Long 52). James, of course, knows exactly where his characters are headed, and although they grow out of the tradition of Hawthorne, they are distinctively James's own, assimilating and revising Hawthorne's abstraction into solid details.

Thus the fictional and the real readily cross over in The Marble Faun. The sense of history and of age that informs it creates the effect of time's unfolding. In the nineteenth century, the idea of history as a progression and the notion of

life as a pilgrimage had become questionable. In the crossing over of the real and fictional worlds, however, Hawthorne suggests the possible crossover of past and present as well, bringing from the past what might be meaningful to the present. Hawthorne wants to establish the continuing possibility of idealism, as against the relativism of the modern world; and he knows that this will prove to be a great difficulty. Miriam, Hilda, Kenyon, and Donatello are parts of an artistic whole. In their setting-- classical/modern--and in temperament-- Bacchic/Apollonian--the four personalities approach a creative totality.

Hawthorne sets the scene for working out the book's tragic and restorative outcome on the Pincian Hill, a repository of Roman antiquities, on a fragment of the Muro Torto, the oldest surviving Roman wall. From this vantage, so old that it appears "as if Time had crossed and re-crossed his own records till they grew illegible" (XII 101), Hilda and Kenyon see Donatello below; and then, separately, they see Miriam and the stranger. Kenyon, in general more realistic than the others, senses a wrong in the mysterious character's relationship to Miriam. Hilda,

however, who is more generous and forgiving, insists on their not judging Miriam's situation without knowing all that Miriam knows about it.

The specter's death occurs under unclear circumstances. The four friends have been on a nighttime excursion through the Forum to the Capitoline summit. Donatello witnesses in Miriam a brief madness, yet vows to stand beside her, whatever her need may require of him. Hilda, who has gone ahead, opens a courtyard door and looks inside at the very moment to witness an intense struggle between Donatello and the specter and to hear the cry of someone falling down the cliff. A clearer view, the narrator says, is not possible.

Later, in a meeting between Miriam and Kenyon in his studio, Miriam expresses the wish that she might know the coolness of his marble sculptures and, as he appears to do, separate herself from the complications of her conscience. Unlike the marble artworks, however, Miriam more closely resembles the clay of Kenyon's evolving statue of Cleopatra, "fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment" (XIV 127), symbolic here of art in its fullest expression. Miriam attempts to speak freely with Kenyon but detects

his reservation and breaks off. When she leaves his apartment, the specter is waiting for her. Fearing that Hilda witnessed the death, she goes to her tower shrine in the hope of receiving her friend's approving greetings; but she senses on the tower stairs that Hilda's doves are disappointed with her. Hilda has spent a sleepless and tearful night, for her loss of an innocent heart is the greatest loss of all. Providence sends a trusted friend, the narrator says, to teach the innocent of sin, and thus is sin personified.

With the painting of Beatrice Cenci still on her easel, Hilda sees her own face together with Beatrice's in the mirror. Such a powerful work of art, she thinks, can only be grasped by sidelong glances, not by straightforward stares, and Hilda equates her knowledge of the specter's death with Beatrice's knowledge of sin. At first inclined to avoid Miriam's visit, Hilda resolves to tell her that they can no longer be friends; and the former confidantes struggle with the personal loss that the specter's death at Donatello's hands has inflicted on them both. Hilda, however, stands on moral principle, afraid of Miriam's magnetism, which she believes that she must escape. Miriam

questions why fate has permitted an eyewitness to such a private act. Hilda is frightened and tells Miriam that before she saw the specter fall, she had seen a look pass from Miriam to Donatello, revealing the contents of Miriam's heart. Hilda says that she saw "a look of hatred, triumph, vengeance" and "joy at some unhoped for relief" (XXIII 210), and so Miriam knows that she had asked Donatello to kill the specter. Miriam advises Hilda to share her terrible secret with Kenyon, but Hilda vows to bear it alone and to die of it, unless she is able to achieve spiritual relief.

In the second half of the novel, a plot begins to work out on a more predictable fictional level. Characters speak out passionately from discernible motives, and the direction of their actions is clear. Hawthorne appears to have used the first part of the novel, up to the murder, to get a sense of plot and action. It seems significant, therefore, that the next part of the novel is set outside Rome, away from this central symbol of art, in Tuscany. Kenyon visits Donatello to find him living in an antique castle, battlemented and machiolated, but with a renovated residence extending behind the villa,

recently repaired with stucco and paint,
juxtaposed signs of the present and past.

Donatello has changed markedly since leaving Rome, and Kenyon is uncertain whether, in his transformation from rustic innocence to guilt, something has been lost or something has been gained. In Kenyon's journey from Rome, through the Italian countryside where he has stopped along the way to study medieval sculpture in old churches, Hawthorne extends his comparison of past and present time, as well as past and present art. Donatello, who is now a contemporary man, is no longer at home in his old-fashioned building, as he is no longer happy in the world outside, having truly experienced it. Parallel with other thematic concerns of the story, therefore, is the continuing Hawthornian exploration of the content of the human heart.

Like Galileo at the outset of a new age, Donatello is also a star-gazer from his Tuscan villa tower. Inside the villa, however, which is described as an Etruscan tomb, Kenyon sees a seemingly endless vista of apartments, each opening into the next one. A large family once lived here, but now Donatello, the last one of his family to survive, lives here alone. The walls

and ceilings of the villa are painted with frescoes that echo the mythological scenes of the early chapters. A faded wreath of dancing figures decorates the cornice. It is a study in transformation and states a theme that Hawthorne stays with throughout his final works: "For it is thus, that, with only an inconsiderable change, the gladdest objects and existences become the saddest; Hope fading into Disappointment; Joy darkening into Grief, and festal splendour into funereal duskiness; and all evolving, as their moral, a grim identity between gay things and sorrowful ones. Only give them a little time, and they turn out to be just alike!" (XXV 226).

Overgrown as it is "with tangled and riotous vegetation" (XXVI 231), Donatello's family can be traced to early Christendom, and where records failed, tradition has supplied its own antecedents. As the original faun's wild blood mixed over and over for centuries with human blood, it lost the great vigor of its line; but Donatello is regarded as a Monte Beni in the original. He had lived a legendary childhood, like a child/god who pressed grapes, hence, like Bacchus, also a wine god. But Donatello does not fit into the contemporary world of the novel. In

a chapter entitled "Myths," he tells Kenyon the legend of an early knight of the Monte Beni family who discovered a sprite in a secluded spring on the family's land. The fountain sprite was ancient and had known the original faun, and she taught the knight to call her up from the waters. Once, however, the knight came to the fountain wounded and bathed his wound in the water, greatly offending the nymph. Donatello and Kenyon try to summon wild creatures by Donatello's special voice, a sad and plaintive song, but only a brown lizard responds. In contrast to the deeply spiritual relationships thus described, Donatello's room in the villa is filled with modern holy emblems, "ugly little prints" (XXVIII 255) of Christ's suffering and of the martyrdom of the saints. From the summit of the tower, they look out over the golden valley, at its hills, villages, fields, and vineyards. Kenyon undergoes an epiphany as he experiences the deep beauty of the land, but Donatello is not comforted: "It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language. When we ascend into the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment, they are only expressible by such grand

hieroglyphics as these around us" (XXVIII 258).³

Just as the nature of Donatello as a character posed difficulty to Hawthorne in creating him as a work of fiction, so is Kenyon hindered in his efforts to sculpt his bust of Donatello because his subject's character appears to be so changeable. He works passionately in clay until Donatello asks him to stop at a point when the work has "a distorted and violent look, combining animal fierceness with intelligent hatred" (XXX 272), a look, the narrator says, that Miriam or Hilda would recognize as the look on Donatello's face at the moment when he held his victim over the precipice. But Kenyon reworks the clay to change Donatello's expression; and the final work shows the antique Faun "illuminated with a higher meaning" (XXX 274).

Drawing toward a possible conclusion, Hawthorne develops the theme of Monte Beni as a primal garden, filled with voluptuous fruits. It becomes the means of reconciliation and transformation. Miriam has arrived here secretly

³ Irwin writes that the hieroglyph, much in the mind of the mid-nineteenth century, was understood by Hawthorne as a "linguistic analogue of an enigmatic external world whose shape was various enough to sustain almost any interpretation that man projected on it in the act of knowing." (239)

some days earlier, and Kenyon meets her in the villa's marble chapel, an exquisite setting that is brilliant and indestructible. In an unconvincing scene, however, he assures Miriam, who is dressed in mourning, that Donatello still loves her and that his intellectual abilities have so risen through his agony and suffering that he thinks only of making a lifelong penance for his crime. Kenyon senses a change in Miriam also, for whereas she previously considered Donatello merely an amusement, she vows now to share his guilt and his mortification. Kenyon plans for Donatello and himself to meet Miriam, as if by chance, in Perugia, where they are reconciled in a bond of guilt.

Ambiguity, as expressed in a tendency to draw near to one conclusion, but to propose another, is one of Hawthorne's most effective techniques in The Marble Faun. The "fall of man" theme, for example, is taken by many readers as the novel's most obvious motif; for paradise and Eden may reasonably be found to be evoked throughout the work, and the roles of Donatello and Miriam as Adam and Eve are at least strongly suggested. Miriam is well-established as a temptress, and Donatello's character is said repeatedly to

represent mankind's "innocent childhood, before sin, sorrow, or morality itself, had ever been thought of!" (II 13). It is also customary to read The Marble Faun as a study in the necessity of Original Sin, the fortunate fall. Miriam, in fact, reinforces this view, when she asks at the novel's end: "The story of the Fall of Man! Is it not repeated in our Romance of Monte Beni?" (XLVII 434). Yet this reading leaves out too much that is interesting and fresh in the novel, leading one to look for something else. Rome, sin, sexuality, the Catholic Church, and art are all ambiguously rendered here, and while one reading allows for the story's meaning to rest on Donatello's fall from innocence, another encourages us to focus on Hilda and Kenyon as young Americans exposed to European tastes and traditions. Their escape from the corruption of the ancient environment becomes its own fortunate event. Their exposure to Miriam and Donatello, amid a graveyard of the Western cultural tradition, holds a fascination for Hawthorne. Through these characters, he links sex and art, perhaps the chief point to be read in Miriam's relationship with the specter. Admittedly obscure, the tone of their relationship is set by

Hawthorne in the juxtaposition of Miriam with the portrait of Beatrice Cenci. Treated as a European, Miriam is permitted to be defined chiefly by her sexuality; and as associated with the symbolism in the paintings found in her studio, she is starkly contrasted with Hilda. And although Kenyon's love for Hilda must remain purely spiritual, still he is sculpting a statue of Cleopatra, full of "hot life" (XIV 127), fresh from his imagination. Miriam accuses him of turning "feverish men into cool, quiet marble" (XIII 119), of creating fertility symbols devoid of flesh and blood.

The subjects of the many works of art commented on in the novel--illicit love, sterility, castration, murder--foreshadow the castration/death that occurs in Donatello's murder of the specter. Beatrice Cenci, the archangel Michael's suppressing the dragon, and Kenyon's Cleopatra all bewilder Hilda, perhaps because they represent art that springs from corruption and death, not from noble sentiments. Donatello has left his rustic life to come to Rome, where he is tempted by Miriam, commits murder, and flees to reclaim the simplicity of his former life, but finds that it is changed forever. Kenyon and

Hilda are similarly changed by their exposure to the tragedy of this crime, yet they escape, unharmed, in time to learn from it. Their escape reinforces Hawthorne's ambiguity.

The Marble Faun is, among other things, an investigation of the nature of good and evil. Miriam asks whether the specter's murder might not be a hidden blessing, a means of education whereby the "simple and imperfect nature" of Donatello comes to "a point of feeling and intelligence, which it could have reached under no other discipline?" (XLVIII 434). She advances this possibility even further: "Was that very sin-- into which Adam precipitated himself . . . the destined means by which . . . we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave? Will not this idea account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can?" (XLVII 434-435). Kenyon openly recoils at this idea, and Hawthorne calls it merely a theory.

The timeless Roman setting, with its "vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a by-gone life, of which this spot was the centre, that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out," and in

which "our individual affairs and interests are but half as real, here, as elsewhere"

(I 6), provides spiritual support for the story of the Faun and establishes a connection between myth and subconsciousness. It is the Faun who connects the timeless and the subconscious, who breaks the bonds of morality and mortality. Perhaps, Hawthorne writes, "it is the very lack of moral severity, of any high and heroic ingredient in the character of the Faun, that makes it so delightful an object to the human eye and to the frailty of the human heart" (I 9). Donatello is personification in flesh, as the Faun is in marble, of an aspect of the mind; the specter of the catacombs symbolizes a darker aspect of unconscious thought. They may be seen as functioning as two parts of the human soul, the specter dwelling amid death and decay and the Faun holding out the possibility of an opposing life force. In the Borghese Gardens, Miriam is unsure whether Donatello is a creature of the upper or lower world. The specter, however, as a representative of death, helps to delineate Donatello as a creature of the living world.

Hilda alone is able to remain in Rome for the summer. She is not affected by the malarial air

of the city, and her apartment, high above the streets, is fresh and clean. Still she is victimized by a despair that she has not known before. The experience of evil continues to envelop her; and because she has no one to tell, she begins to feel as though she committed the crime of Donatello and Miriam herself. She continues to work in the palace galleries, drawn there by her affinity for the old masters' works. A wise artist warns her, however, that the old masters are tyrants and that Raphael's genius destroyed him by mid-life. He says that he fears that her own fire will consume her and that he will find her turned into a heap of ashes someday before Raphael's Madonna di Foligno. Hilda thinks that this would be a happy martyrdom, but her fear is that she is no longer consumed by fire but by torpor. She is cold and has lost her artistic insight. The ability to see great works of art demands a gifted simplicity, she says, which she had once, but which is now blocked by the experience of evil. She has become a victim of the Demon of Weariness, described by Hawthorne as an evil magician who destroys all other magic. While her despondency has made her see beauty less vividly, however, it has also made her feel truth

more profoundly. She begins to feel deserted by the monumental artworks that have sustained her. They now appear overly intellectual and lacking in human sympathy. Art in general has lost its consecration, and the galleries have become a prison.

Missing her home and a simple life, which stir her memory "like opening a drawer, where many things were laid away, and every one of them scented with lavender and dried rose-leaves!" (XXXVII 342), and also missing Kenyon, who, at the same time, feels her drawing him back from Monte Beni, Hilda makes a pilgrimage to the churches of Rome. Although a New England Puritan, she is touched nonetheless by the promise of forgiveness that the great Catholic cathedrals hold. In St. Peter's, she sees a young penitent pouring out his guilt, who, were he a Protestant, says the narrator, would have kept his torture pent up in his heart. She stops before a mosaic of Guido's St. Michael, an archetype of virtue's victory over evil, and she kneels and prays. She finds a confessional where an English-speaking priest guides her through a terrible release of passion and guilt; and, although she is not a Catholic, he effectively absolves her.

As Kenyon watches Hilda in the cathedral, he believes that she was led to the confessional by the virtues instilled in her New England upbringing. She tells Kenyon that if he had been with her the day before, she would have made her confession to him. In an emotionally heightened and highly imaginative state, Hilda envisions a mystical painting, "The Recovery of the Sacred Candlestick," in which a menorah lost in the time of Tiber Constantine is found and, as each of its seven branches is relit, illuminates the whole world. She says that she may suggest this idea, of a work of art that progresses from fragmentation toward wholeness, to a poet at home, or perhaps even to seven poets.

Because it is too early for the artists and tourists to return to Rome, Hilda and Kenyon feel secluded and seem to have wandered out of the ordinary world into a special city that they alone inhabit. In Kenyon's studio, artisans are carving his sculpture of Cleopatra, a stately and passionate work that embodies the fierceness of a tiger. Hilda admires it, but Kenyon, conscious of its shortcomings, says that despair is the reward and the punishment of artists who try to capture in their work a great or beautiful idea. Hilda

also sees a bust of Donatello that Kenyon has made from memory. She sees in it Donatello's moral and intellectual development, the growth of his soul. It was the contemplation of this imperfect portrait of Donatello that originally interested the author/narrator in his history and impelled him to discover from Kenyon what he knew of his friend.

Hilda shares her knowledge of the crime of Miriam and Donatello with Kenyon. She says that she does not know what mixture of good there may be in evil things and that, from his own viewpoint, a criminal's act may not seem entirely guilty. Kenyon carries this reasoning further. Perhaps, he says, Miriam and Donatello's act could be construed as heroism, or unselfishness on either's part, but Hilda is horrified by such a thought. The idea of a mixture of good with evil is more shocking to her than the thought of pure evil, she says, because good would thus be tainted. She maintains that right and wrong can never be mistaken, but Kenyon mediates this strict logic. Mankind is not like that, he says, leading Hilda to contemplate her friendship with Miriam and her duty to someone with whom she is united in her heart.

In February, at the end of winter and beginning of spring, Kenyon walks into the Campagna along the Appian Way. The warm weather sustains and excites him and reminds him of Hilda's breath against his cheek. He comes to an excavation along the road and, clearing away dirt and debris, discovers a broken marble figure. He finds the head, arms, and hands of the fragmented statue and reconstructs it, reassembling its idea.

Chapter III. Legend as Prism

The idea of writing a romance about an American claimant to an ancestral English estate held great interest for Hawthorne, as he expressed in his correspondence and journals. It began to occupy his imagination almost as soon as he established his residence in England. In writing it, he says, he would draw on his consular experiences with fellow-countrymen who called at the consulate to make just such possible claims. We see Hawthorne preparing to use his acquaintances made through the consulate in the work of fiction that he is proposing. It appears, however, that he had already made a commitment to this work before he reached England.

His publishers, William D. Ticknor and James T. Fields, had made some preliminary preparations for Hawthorne's arrival. In a reply to a letter from Fields in the summer of 1852, Mary Russell Mitford wrote that she looked forward to Hawthorne's arrival the following year and had already begun looking into state inheritance records to assist him in his stated plans for a

new work. An enthusiastic supporter of American literature and an admirer of Hawthorne especially, her reply suggests the direction that the new work might be taking. Shortly after arriving in Liverpool with his family and Ticknor the following July, Hawthorne wrote to Fields: "I wish you would call on Mr. Savage, the antiquarian . . . and ask whether he can inform me what part of England the original William Hawthorne came from" (Fields 320). James Savage, of Boston, had edited John Winthrop's History of New England from 1630 to 1649 and was then working on the book Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England. "I presume there are records still extant somewhere of all the passengers by those early ships, with their English localities annexed to their names," Hawthorne continues. "Of all things, I should like to find a grave-stone in one of these old church-yards with my own name upon it" (Fields 320).

During this same time, according to his notebook, Hawthorne learned through friends in Liverpool of a legend connected with Smithills Hall, an estate in Lancashire. He recorded the legend as follows: "The tradition is that a certain martyr, in Bloody Mary's time, being

examined before the occupant of the Hall, and committed to prison, stamped his foot in earnest protest against the injustices with which he was treated. Blood issued from his foot, which slid along the stone pavement of the hall, leaving a long footmark printed in blood; and there it has remained ever since, in spite of the scrubblings of all after generations" (Fields 106). This idea now appears to have captured Hawthorne's imagination entirely, coming together, quite possibly, with fragments of a story idea that he had recorded years earlier. In his notebook for 1842, for example, he had made an entry for a story about a bloody footstep: "The print in blood of a naked foot to be traced through the street of a town" (American Notebooks 239). Two of the major elements of the consuming English story appear, therefore, to have been in place by this time: the idea of an American claimant and the legend of the bloody footstep. It is difficult to judge which one may have been the more compelling of the two, but I would suggest that it was the legend; for it is through this legendary material that Hawthorne sharpens his focus and settles on the thrust of the work.

Hawthorne investigated the legend further,

reading in a county history that George Marsh, a Nonconformist clergyman, was tried for heresy at Smithills Hall and burned at the stake. These events occurred in April of 1555, three hundred years earlier to the month than Hawthorne's own investigation, a fact unlikely to have escaped Hawthorne's notice. In August, he accepted an invitation to the estate and examined this local curiosity for himself: "This miraculous footprint is still extant," he wrote in his notebook, going on to describe the flagstone in which it appeared as "a stone two or three feet square, set among similar ones, that seem to have been worn by the tread of many generations. The footprint is a dark-brown stain in the smooth gray surface of the flag-stone." Perhaps it was "all a humbug," as he wrote, but a good legend all the same, and sufficiently interesting to hold his imagination for several years (Stewart 194-195).

Hawthorne uses and expands on the bloody footstep legend, first developing what he calls the American side of the claimant story, which is set in an ancient house overlooking the Salem graveyard. In this first draft, he introduces Dr. Grimshawe, an unpredictable old man, and his two young wards, Elsie and Ned; and although their backgrounds and relationship are

shadowy, Hawthorne firmly establishes their connection to an English family. After only a few pages, however, he interrupts the narrative in order to work out what he considers some fundamental problems in plot and character. Twelve such sideline interruptions occur in this first of the two longer claimant drafts; and between the two sections, Hawthorne inserts a plot outline of more than 2,000 words. More than one-quarter of the piece is, therefore, taken up with his own interior monologues, totaling forty-six such asides in all. We see Hawthorne in these sideline debates working hard to give a form to this apparently difficult work. He looks at the story from top to bottom, side to side, reevaluates it, abandons it, and moves on.

Hawthorne made a fresh start at answering many of these authorial questions in a second long draft, in which he expanded the American scenes and attempted to focus his efforts on working out the role of the doctor. He also attempted to rework some of the English episodes. Elsie and Ned mix the details of the doctor's tales--about the bloody footstep and a secret chamber--into their childhood games. Hawthorne suggests that there is a deeper significance to Dr. Grimshawe's

evil mischief than is apparent in the first draft, a malevolent source, later in the fragment, of a mysterious spiritual transformation. Because of the combination of what the narrator calls too much brandy and a deep sense of evil, Dr. Grimshawe maintains an intense and secretive interest in keeping such ghostly legends in the children's minds. It was as if they came from a pit within, writes Hawthorne, where an everlasting fire burned. He is given to wild, roaring laughter that shakes the house, but which also seems to clear the air, replacing his questionable motives with a more gentle mood and with a greater kindness toward the children.

Dr. Grimshawe's character remains subservient to the idea of legend and its hold on Ned, particularly its power to shape his thinking and ultimately to direct his actions. Believing that he will soon die, the old doctor calls for a lawyer to put his will in order and leaves a final message for Ned. He tells Ned to forget the family legends and all the stories about England, including the legend of the bloody footstep, calling them all nonsense. When Ned, who has been sent for at school, comes home, Elsie has gone, as provided in the doctor's will. His will has also

provided for Ned's further education but has left no history of Ned's birth or family. Everything in the doctor's study "looked as formerly, yet with a sort of unreality, as if it would dissolve and vanish on being touched" (Claimant 438), Hawthorne writes. Ned remembers the documents that Dr. Grimshawe kept hidden in a wall niche, and he finds them and takes them away with him. These documents, he believes, may hold answers to many questions about his heritage and fate.

Hawthorne then comes to a transitional point, where he draws chiefly on the passage of time as a means of moving forward. He writes: "And now let the mists settle down over the trail of our story, hiding it utterly on its onward course, for a long way to come, until, after many years, they may disperse . . ." (Claimant 439). Beforehand, however, he breaks away from the narrative again to make a list of many of the details that he wants to go back to develop in the first part of the story, which he is preparing to leave, before he begins what he calls the English part: make more of the spiders, he writes; show the doctor as a wizard; check diary entries for descriptions of English landmarks; strengthen Ned's knowledge of family legends; and so on. In short, he wants to

develop the aspects of legend and legendary materials that he seems to believe will help to clarify the story.

Hawthorne begins the second part of the romance with Ned as a traveler emerging "out of the duskiess of vague unchronicled time . . . along a well trodden, though solitary path" (Claimant 441). This is the solitary path of those who must break new ground, find their own way, much as he apparently believes that he now must also do. He draws on his notebooks for descriptions of English weather in late spring, the footpath, a paradise of field grasses, "a network of creeping plants, and oftenest the ivy, of old growth, clambering upward, and making its own twisted stem almost of one substance with the supporting tree," in which mistletoe flourished, a tribute to "the poetry in which it was rooted from of old" (Claimant 442-443). In references to such fabled and mythic plants, Hawthorne shows his interest in and reverence for maintaining what he calls the old poetry while at the same time attempting to write new.

Ned proceeds "through a kind of dream" (Claimant 445), recognizing his surroundings as at once familiar and strange, proposing the desired

combination of fantasy and reality frequently stated by Hawthorne as his goal. Ned recognizes the lark's song, although he is not aware of having heard it before. He decides, therefore, that he must have been born here and that such recollection is the residue of childhood memory; then he hears a shot. Regaining consciousness, he is unaware that he has been the victim of a shooting. Reveries about his childhood are interwoven with a dreamy awareness of a small, oak-paneled room in which he lies in an antique bed. He sees the apparition of a child seated at his feet, but everything vanishes as he wakes. He sees a heraldic carving of a leopard's head, perhaps a reference to a Bacchic deity, whose symbols include the leopard. As his dreams intermingle, however, he begins to sense the pain of a gun wound and is recalled to the present. He discovers that he is in the care of an old man, whom he addresses from his dream or delirium: "Are you real? . . . or a spirit? or a fantasy?" he asks. "If flesh and blood are real, I am so," but "a spirit, too" (Claimant 450), is the old man's reply, achieving in effect a confluence of these two seemingly disparate states. "Make this whole scene very dreamlike and feverish" (Claimant

452), Hawthorne writes, while Ned continues to look on his situation as "an entanglement" (Claimant 451), "as a serious mockery; a state likely enough to exist just a little apart from the actual world, if we only know how to find our way into it" (Claimant 452-453). The push here is strongly toward this union of two worlds, such as may well exist in legend, but one that appears difficult for Hawthorne to achieve in this romance. The narrator continues: "Scenes and events that have once stained themselves, in deep colours, on the curtain that Time hangs around us, to shut us in from eternity, cannot be quite effaced by the succeeding phantasmagoria, and sometimes, by a palimpsest, show more strongly than they" (Claimant 453). This is the power that Hawthorne ascribes to legend, an ability to speak to us on a deep level and remain, in a fragmentary state, part of us, although seemingly erased on the surface. Such are the scenes and events that are interwoven in these fragmentary works, appearing and reappearing, altered, although not dissolved.

While Ned recovers from his wound through the old man's care, he recognizes him as the schoolmaster who had vanished from his childhood.

The old man recognizes his patient as Edward Redcliffe and tells him that he is in a hospital for pensioners established by a Sir Edward Redclyffe, a fighter in the English Revolution. Ned learns that he had been mistaken for a poacher on the estate grounds and shot. He presents himself to the hospital warden as the Honorable Edward Redclyffe, and the warden also notes the coincidence in family name. The Redclyffes hold Oakland Hall, he tells Ned, who learns that the warden is Hammond, a lawyer who had come to Ned's home in New England. Despite these connections in plot and character, however, and their potential for forging a story, it remains the legendary and amorphous material that holds Hawthorne's interest. Ned moves from the hospital into the warden's house, where he is surrounded by the English past, and it is through this past that he achieves an intense personal consciousness of his own journey.

Setting aside finally his plans for the claimant work, Hawthorne's correspondence with Fields suggests that he had begun sketching the first Septimius story by September, 1861. These fragments, which are set in the early days of the American Revolution, appear to be informed by

sentiments surrounding the beginning of the Civil War, including Hawthorne's implied ambivalence toward it. In the first of these, which is set in Concord in the spring of 1775, Septimius, a reclusive divinity student, is contrasted with Robert Hagburn, his boyhood friend and an enthusiastic and active participant in life. Hawthorne's studies for the Septimius stories revolve around a legend, passed on to him by Thoreau, he says, that the Wayside, Hawthorne's house on the outskirts of Concord, which he had bought in 1852, was once inhabited by a man who believed that he was immortal. "It is strange how these familiar places are haunted. We think that it is only by old memories; but my belief is that it is by ghosts of those who once dwelt here I could almost swear, for instance, that there is such a haunting spirit, gliding about . . . the house where I have taken up my abode. . . . Thoreau first told me about this predecessor of mine; though, I think he knew nothing of his character and history, nor anything but the singular fact, that here, in this simple old house, . . . here dwelt, in some long-past time, this man who was resolved never to die. He, at all events, did not mean to make of his earthly

abode a mere wayside rest, where he should sit while the sun threw his shadow a little further on the soil; he would sit there while oaks grew up and decayed; he would be always here" (Elixir 498-499). Hawthorne says that he meditated on this legend and tried to discover what kind of man this predecessor might have been. Fields wrote to encourage him to keep steadily at the new work, with the hope of beginning a serialization in the American Mercury, which Fields edited. Hawthorne wrote to Fields in October, however, that he had not yet begun the draft and that, in any case, he did not intend to submit the first chapters until the whole story was finished. His letters of that fall and winter continue to make references to his proposed work, but he was actually working on Our Old Home, the collection of articles on England that he wrote for the Atlantic Monthly.

In two Septimius fragments, together with his related studies and notes, Hawthorne develops a story about the discovery of a secret drink that promises immortality. Undergoing a number of plot and character changes throughout these two pieces, a continuous story emerges, nonetheless, in which Septimius kills a young British soldier and discovers in his possession a manuscript that may

contain the secret formula for an elixir of life. Septimius becomes so deeply absorbed in his efforts to decipher the document that he turns increasingly inward, becoming alienated from his family and friends, with the exception of his old aunt, who has supernatural knowledge of the magical powers of herbs.

Hawthorne keeps the focus early in these works on the unnatural extension of life aided by supernatural knowledge, an ambiguity that he plays out in these final pieces. Septimius succeeds, after great effort, in producing the secret drink; but when he convinces Sybil Darcy to share it with him, she dies because, as Septimius learns afterward, a single ingredient is missing. This flaw causes her death. The idea of such a flaw is reminiscent of "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment" and also suggests that a moral law limits even the effectiveness of such legendary material.

Septimius disappears from the village and, in a link to the earlier American claimant stories, may have settled in England, establishing a claim to an English estate through a family relationship to the officer whom he killed. Hawthorne also revives here other legendary aspects of the claimant story: the bloody footstep; an old

doctor like Grimshawe; an exotic old woman like Dr. Grimshawe's housekeeper; secret papers; and a silver key.

Toward a better understanding of the story, Hawthorne writes, he inserts a sketch of Septimius's ancestry. This, he says, must be done, with a mixture of legendary material, "such gossip as clusters round old truths, like gray lichens, or moss; having their roots and nourishment in what is true; and if ruthlessly separated, there remains only some thing very unpicturesque, sapless; and indeed it is these fanciful things, these lichens, and natural growth over dull truth, that after all constitute its value, as springing from whatever is rich and racy in it, and being a distillation from its heart, oozing out, and clustering in a sort of beauty on the outside" (Elixir 256-257).

An epic mist of "picturesque vapors" (Elixir 257) has gathered over the family's origins, the narrator says. Septimius Norton's first American ancestor was believed by his descendants to have been the first English settler in the new land. Hawthorne thereby gives Septimius direct descent from an American Adam, focusing attention on religious and political beginnings. When the

early colonists came to New England, the family legends held, they found a powerful Indian ruler, an intelligent and cultivated man, but one who was also regarded as a evil magician. A prophet and benefactor, he was able to bring the many original Indian tribes together into a great people, and he had many marvelous attributes, including the divine gift of healing and a mystical knowledge of herbs from which he could distill both deadly poisons and miraculous cures. This symbolically weighted formula gives the ruler an all-encompassing power for good or evil, one that he metes out to mortals as he pleases. It was also held by legend that this powerful ruler had endowed himself with a mysteriously long life, its exact duration, in fact, unknown to any living person. He remained unchanged, becoming neither silver-haired nor wrinkled with age, as Hawthorne had become. It was widely believed among the Puritans that this Indian magician worshiped Satan and that, for this reason, he was the enemy of their own true religion. The Puritans, therefore, resolved to destroy the Indian. Taking him by surprise, they savagely slew him with bullets and swords, mangling him, his wife, and their children. Upon examining his body after his

brutal death, however, they discovered he was European, not Indian as they had believed. They found among his possessions the heirlooms of a European family, including a coat of arms inscribed with the family name of Norton and a crystal goblet that had been used as a sacramental cup in witch communions. In a futile attempt to obliterate this evil thing, the Puritans destroyed the prophet's entire family, except for a child who survived. Fearing in his miraculous survival a sign of Satanic powers at work, they gave the baby to a Puritan mother to bring up in the Christian religion.

Building on this legend, Hawthorne lets the surviving half-Indian, half-Puritan grow up to become an idle man who squandered his time hunting and fishing. Like his ancestor, he also has a combined potential for good and evil. He burrowed into the hillside under the ridge where his father's wigwams had once stood. Incurable and disposed to drunkenness, he finally died in a stupor; but in his youth, this early Norton had married the daughter of one of the Puritan families, and his son had become a minister, a fiery preacher who was said to wield a "Tomahawk of Righteousness" and to "preach the religion of

peace as if he were battling to the death in savage fashion with an enemy" (Elixir 264). True to his father's moral weakness, however, he became a drinking parson, and his sister, who had inherited to a considerable degree the family's wild Indian characteristics, was burned as a witch.

For some time, the legend held, the Nortons had grown tame, settling into farming at the foot of the hill where their great Indian ancestor had dwelled. Septimius's Aunt Nashoba is the keeper of family legends and Indian lore, including a keen interest in, and a peculiar natural gift for, herbal medicines. This knowledge may have passed down through the family from the time of their English ancestor, who was an educated man and who, for reasons of his own, the narrator says, chose to live among the Indians. Some family legends hinted at an immortality drug, which was said to have been known in the family as late as the time of the ferocious Puritan divine. It was believed that his wife killed herself accidentally by drinking such a mixture as the minister was preparing it for himself, and Aunt Nashoba's own herb remedy is said be as close to the prized elixir as any had come in Septimius's time.

Hawthorne elaborates on the family's Indian heritage as Aunt Nashoba tells Septimius this legend of the Undying One, a great Indian king who had lived very long and who wanted to die. "Make this legend grotesque," Hawthorne writes to himself, "and express the weariness of the tribe at the intolerable control the Undying One had of them, his always bringing up precepts from his own experience, never consenting to anything new, so impeding progress, his habits hardening into him, his assuming to himself all wisdom,--his intolerable wisdom . . ." (Elixir 85).

According to the legend, the tribe tried to kill the wizard, but their weapons were powerless against him. After many attempts, they came upon the idea of plastering his nose and mouth with clay and turning him into a kind of sculpture, a work of art, whereby they succeeded in suffocating him, a potent comment on the fatal dangers inherent in art. Before the great king died, however, he passed on the secret recipe for a powerful drink, the continual use of which, "together with his abstinence from luxury and passion" (Elixir 85), had kept him alive for so long. All the ingredients, except one, which had never been discovered, had been handed down by

tradition through many generations, his aunt says, as she sips her elixir and dreams in the chimney corner. Septimius is interested in such legends, he says, which, "incrusted over with humanity, by passing from one homely mind to another . . . get to be true" (Elixir 92). This point of view would appear to be consistent with Hawthorne's belief in the power of legend to shape the form of his work; and in the telling and retelling of such tales, he hopes to make them true.

As Sybil Darcy retells the legend of the bloody footstep, in which the lord of an old English manor was thought to be a wizard, Hawthorne revives this legend from the claimant stories. The lord of the manor had secret powers, people believed, by which he might extend his life, but only at a dreadful price: he must sacrifice some other life in each generation in order to save his own. This man was not evil, Sybil says, only misguided, because in "his earnest wish to do something for the poor, wicked, struggling, bloody, nasty, uncomfortable race of man" (Elixir 94), Hawthorne writes, he also became an instrument of destruction. This legend must not be taken literally, Sybil says, because it would appear to be too ugly, "so I conceive its

spiritual meaning (for everything, you know, has its spiritual meaning, which to the literal meaning is what the soul is to the body . . .)" (Elixir 95). The spiritual significance of the bloody footstep legend, she says, is that the deep pursuit of science, perhaps of knowledge in general, demands the sacrifice of many of life's joys and that in the end, we must all give up everything to death.

The wildness of Sybil's story makes Septimius wary "of the fantasticalness of his present pursuit, and that, in adopting it, he had strayed into a region long abandoned to superstition, and where the shadows of forgotten dreams go, when men are done with them . . ." (Elixir 100). Perhaps in spite of himself, however, Septimius continues to apply himself to translating a cryptic manuscript. He decides that it has been made deliberately difficult and that the diligence and intelligence of the reader are required to unlock it. Recalling the image of Smithills Hall from the claimant fragments, Sybil, returning to the theme of time, tells Septimius that it is one of the oldest houses in England, a wood-framed house that is more than a thousand years old. It is decorated with ancient carvings displaying lost

skills and the relics of past arts, giving the entire place an ancient and ghostly aura. It is, Hawthorne suggests, legend that holds these past arts together, legend as a vessel and a source of lost skills.

Many legends have grown up about the origin of the bloody footstep, Sybil tells her listeners. Choosing a version that is as probable as any, she says, she relates that there was an ancient baron whose chief goal in life was the enlightenment of his own mind. Known as a wizard and sorcerer, he determined that if knowledge were truly worth having, his first task should be to lengthen his life so that he might learn more. He must extend his life for benevolent reasons, he decided; for without earthly immortality, he believed, death laughs at mankind's efforts, and our collective pursuit of knowledge becomes, in the face of death, little more than an unending series of beginnings. This idea poignantly reflects Hawthorne's recurrent pursuit of beginnings as he also faces what may appear at times to be his own laughable ending.

Although the baron discovered the secret of immortality, Sybil says, he also learned that it carried terrible terms: in exchange for an endless

life, he found, he must sacrifice another life in every generation and that the blood of this victim must be mixed with an herb drink that the baron had learned to make. Amid conflict, yet acting decidedly in his own interests, the baron settled on his beautiful young ward, also named Sybil, whose purity was the final ingredient of his immortality potion.

Legend and tradition, it is suggested, may thus be cruel. Apologizing for such a gruesome story, Sybil says that she believes that is really a symbolic story with a spiritual meaning. But while Sybil may interpret it symbolically, tradition is more exact, the narrator says; for the baron actually did resolve to murder his young relative. He deluded himself in the belief that he had an opportunity to do something wonderful for mankind and that he must act in the interests of human progress; and yet he knew that Sybil was kind and loving and undeserving of such a dreadful fate. In his madness, he tells her his plan; and out of love for him, she falls against his knife and stabs herself for his sake. According to the legend, he buried her at midnight, and as he left her grave, he stepped in her blood spilled beside the grave. Afterward, he left a bloody footstep

everywhere he walked. "Telling a story with the voice," Hawthorne writes, "you can run off into any wildness that comes into the head; whereas the pen petrifies all such flights" (Elixir 351).

One good legend, it would appear, deserves another, as Aunt Nashoba, who likes Sybil's story, offers one of her own. Her story, which is based on a family legend and was handed down to her by her grandmother, is also about a magical elixir, so that there must be some truth in the idea of a potion that can make us live forever, she says. And if telling might make it so, then perhaps telling and retelling might make it even more so. As Septimius listens carefully to his aunt's story, however, his New England common sense begins to take over, the narrator says, giving the entire enterprise at hand an air of absurdity. He sees the superstitious side of the idea of an immortality drink, and this perception has the effect of making him question all the seemingly real aspects of his life. And like Septimius, Hawthorne questions the fine line between reality and fantasy. The cottage, the hill, even Walden Lake and the surrounding woods and sky: "Is it real? Can I be sure of it? Did I not once behold it on the point of dissolving?" (Elixir 354). In

the tradition of his aunt's mixed Indian and English superstitions, Septimius says, it is characteristic to tell fabulous stories without really expecting them to be believed. It is also characteristic of romance writers and only a case of giving license to the imagination, Hawthorne says in Septimius's voice.

Although the story moves forward in the second Septimius draft, this draft also remains unfinished. It adds some details and fills in some of the story, but it stops short of either completion or a complete revision. Hawthorne appears to have stopped working on Septimius in the first half of 1863 and to have begun a final fragment based on the immortality legend between June and September, 1863. Of all these unfinished works, only this one was prepared for publication by Hawthorne. It was intended as the first chapter of a work, Hawthorne said, to which he refers in his correspondence as "the Dolliver romance." By October, he was able to tell Fields that his idea for the new story was coming along and that, in it, Thoreau's legend of the man who believed in his own immortality was taking a very different shape from the original one that he had used in the Septimius stories. Hawthorne asked

Fields to announce that his new work would begin to appear as a magazine series in early 1864; and although the title was not yet set in Hawthorne's mind, he told Fields to call the work "Fragments of a Romance."

Hawthorne sent Fields the first installment in December. Suffering from poor health during the winter, Hawthorne worked slowly on the new story. In January he wrote to Longfellow: "I have been much out of sorts of late, and do not well know what is the matter with me, but am inclined to draw the conclusion that I shall have little more to do with pen and ink. One more book I should like well enough to write, and have indeed begun it, but with no assurance of ever bringing it to an end. As is always the case, I have a notion that this last book would be my best; and full of wisdom about matters of life and death--and yet it will be no deadly disappointment if I am compelled to drop it."¹ By February, he had written drafts of two more sections. Later that month, however, he told Fields that "Dolliver" was an abortive romance and that he was unable to continue. His intended plot appears to

¹ January 2, 1864, MS, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

have been the reversal of aging, but his notes and studies show that he was unable to reach a satisfactory motive for this work, as had been the case in the unfinished Septimius drafts. He makes references in his studies to the legend of the bloody footstep, an old herb woman, and Smithills Hall, suggesting that some of these unresolved pieces of plot and character might at last be worked into a final structure. As in the claimant pieces and the Septimius stories, however, characters changed and motives shifted, producing, in the very end, another unfinished work.

Chapter IV. Alternate Versions:
Telling and Retelling

Hawthorne begins "The Ancestral Footstep" sketch, the earliest of the English fragments, on an ambiguous note. It is dated "April 1st. 1858. Thursday," suggesting that what follows could be read as an entry from Hawthorne's own journal; but this citation also functions in the sketch as the date of the action of the story. Its specificity suggests an intended faithfulness to real events, lending a documentary effect to what follows. Written in the third-person, however, the sketch immediately discourages the idea of a personal record, unless possibly as one of observation. At the outset of the claimant story, therefore, we see Hawthorne weighing various possibilities and working through the artistic process of making choices from among the various options open to him in writing this particular piece.

At the opening of the narrative, the subject of the diary entry, Middleton, an American, has been searching for a long time in England, guided in his search by an ancient, yellowed document

that he carries with him. This real document contrasts in tone with the ambiguity established in the diary sketch; and although the narrator describes Middleton's search as unreal, it appears to become increasingly real to him as his journey proceeds. The time-yellowed document is also suggestive of Hawthorne's own historical and artistic context as an American tourist searching for his family beginnings in England and, more importantly, as an American artist seeking meaning and continuity in his creative work.

In the process of working out his ideas about the claimant, Hawthorne changes the names of characters-- Middleton/Etherege/Redcliffe/Ned are all names for the claimant--introduces new characters, and changes story locations, sometimes with instructions to himself regarding placement and order. We are thus able to follow his efforts to construct a plausible fictional framework. These authorial monologues become frequent, and although many of the story's chief questions and concerns, such as past versus present, tradition, heritage, and legacy, for example, are asserted with greater control in the story's final draft, Hawthorne's questions come to outnumber his answers.

The Middleton of the present story, Hawthorne writes, goes to England carrying old documents and family relics to search out a family legend. He proceeds only partly in earnest, however, and partly in sport. His experiences are to be "strange and perilous" (Claimant 11), Hawthorne observes from the sideline; and, in the end, it will turn out that Middleton is the rightful heir to an estate that has passed to someone else. For his own part, however, Middleton says that he believes that it is better to choose his life in America, an unspoiled country, than to claim an inheritance in an ancient land that has been darkened by blood and misfortune. Hawthorne thus introduces the idea of the American claimant's denunciation of title and estate in favor of his American heritage; for although he denies what may be his by right, he clings to what he regards as an even greater legacy: his cultural independence and, in Hawthorne's case, artistic freedom.

Hawthorne interrupts this story to retell its background, unable apparently to come to terms with the family's earliest history. Middleton, he would like to assume, is descended from an old New England family, dating from the Pilgrims or, perhaps even earlier, from the Virginia colonists.

He wants to focus on an early dissension in the family, he says, over a love affair and a disagreement between two brothers attracted to the same lady, forced by her family into an engagement with one of them, but aligned in her heart with the other. The necessity of choosing presses Hawthorne, and we are presented with shifting motivations and possibilities. In one version at this point in Hawthorne's thinking, one of the brothers and the young woman disappear together just before their marriage and are never traced. Rumor and then tradition hold that they have gone to America together; and since the rejected brother never marries, the estate descends through the children of a third brother. In a second version that Hawthorne is considering, however, one brother is slain and the young woman enters a convent.

In this telling of the story, as in the first, the descendants of the third brother become the claimants to the family's ancient title and estate. Hawthorne chooses here between the two possibilities that he outlines: the second brother and his reluctant bride had come to America and, several generations later, Middleton is the surviving male heir. Hawthorne calls his

story a romance during this review and reflects on what the couple's life would have been like. It would have been a tragic love story, he says, theorizing about an old family secret and documents that Middleton's ancestors may have had. He asks himself what this secret was, as he works to put the pieces of the romance together. He tries again to sketch the necessary background events. He resolves that the story must include an account of a stately, palatial residence that Middleton understands to be his ancestral home, one with a secret chamber containing an ancient genealogical document, symbolic of the power of the past to exert an influence over the present. He presents Middleton as an accomplished young man who has served in Congress, but who has grown disillusioned with American politics. He has come to England for recreation, he says, but the discovery of a certain document has urged him to search for a family mansion. In this outline, Hawthorne is thinking, Middleton will bring half of the secret with him and find the second half in England.

Hawthorne says that he must make Middleton's side of the story as clear as if his protagonist had related it himself at the American consulate.

The resulting story must have an "uncontrollable fatality" (Claimant 52), he says. Hammond, Middleton's traveling companion, may be an American speculator who has ruined many men, including even Middleton's father. He has taken refuge in England, where he has become an antiquarian. Being an antiquarian, seeking out the past, is seen here to be an escape from reality and a possible means of escaping accountability. If this were true of Hawthorne's interests as well, he could be finding himself guilty of avoiding judgment, most likely his own. Acquainted through his studies with English family histories and also aware of the Middleton family legend because Middleton's father had been his friend, Hammond, however, may be the one who is able to put the two pieces of the story together. These theories allow for an interesting aspect of doubling, for now it is not only Middleton who is concealing his identity but Hammond as well.

Middleton might also be appointed a minister to a minor European court, Hawthorne proposes. He meets the present holder of the ancestral home at the mayor's ceremonial dinner, and the lord of the manor becomes suspicious of his intentions. Perhaps the present squire is a criminal, an

Italian villain, the narrator suggests. In establishing the squire's secret, whatever it may be, Hawthorne says, "the utmost pains must be taken with this incident to give it an air of reality; or else it must be quite removed out of the sphere of reality by an intensified atmosphere of Romance" (Claimant 81). The choice for Hawthorne here, however, remains one or the other: reality or fantasy. It is not clear to him now how to combine them.

Hawthorne asks how he can achieve the desired horror in the squire at Middleton's threat to his claim, as he still tries to resolve this and other questions. Echoing The Marble Faun, Hawthorne proposes that Alice, Hammond's daughter, may have been an artist in Rome, where she met the squire and his daughter; and the squire's life as an outsider may be used to mirror what Middleton's life would be like in England. Middleton wants to press his claim, he says, but to do so would not be compatible with his era or with his national character. What, then, is Hammond's role in the story? Is he an American by birth, connected with the ruin of Middleton's father? What is Alice's role? Hawthorne closes the sketch with a summary of instructions to himself: begin with an

introduction, including his own life at the consulate in Liverpool, and show the strange species of American whom he had met there-- Americans who had an idea of inheriting English property--concentrating on one man in particular.

Early in the claimant fragments, Hawthorne introduces a pensioners' home modeled after Leicester's Hospital, which he had visited. When Middleton rings at the master's door, he is ushered into a library. He observes and partly overhears the master speaking in heated tones with a visitor, who leaves angrily at the conclusion of the conference. Surprised but cordial on finding Middleton, the master says that the interview has been on the subject of a family title and a question about its descent. Many English secrets might be resolved in America, Middleton proposes, perhaps speaking for Hawthorne, "if the two threads of a story could be brought together" (Claimant 15). These two threads, however, resist Hawthorne's efforts to join them.

The master responds to Middleton's inquiries regarding the particular events of this story by telling another version of the family legend; and in the doubling of an already circuitous plot, the master tells Middleton that a recent claim to the

title has raised questions about these events after many generations. An heir from America, the master says, is claiming descent from a missing ancestor, who, although thought to have been murdered on the site of the bloody footstep, had, in fact, escaped to America. Middleton contradicts the plausibility of such a story. Why, he asks, would an American, a republican by birth and sentiment, care at all for an English title? The master replies that in each generation the father, on his deathbed, imparts a secret to his son, which has the effect of "making him ever after a discontented man, aspiring for something he has never been able to find" (Claimant 16), a psychological condition that Hawthorne surely understood. The master tells Middleton that the American has proof of his claim--a marriage certificate, a genealogy of the family in New England, and an ancient manuscript in his ancestor's hand. Middleton is secretly struck by this strange duplication of his own story and of his own purpose and search. Hawthorne then does an interesting thing: he lets Middleton think about the progress of the story. Having spent a considerable time on these issues himself, the author shares several moments with the claimant

outside the narrative. Hawthorne tries out a number of possible ways of dealing with his material, leaving it to Middleton to think about these questions; for regardless which brother had emigrated to America, he says, it is still Middleton who must decide what his purpose will be.

Hawthorne returns for a brief time to the idea of a novel of England. In a plot development peculiar to this sketch, the claimant is appointed to the diplomatic corps. He discusses his nomination with the warden, who urges him to accept it. When the warden invites Middleton to speak at the annual banquet at Braithwaite Hall, where, it is proudly recalled, James II is said to have feasted, he takes as his topic the need for friendly relations between England and America, a subject that he has pursued with the warden throughout his stay. Middleton is increasingly convinced that Hammond has been in America, and Hammond tells him a legend of brothers who quarreled more than two hundred years ago.

Hawthorne attempts to develop the plot surrounding the American ancestor, including his expulsion from England, his kidnapping, and his carrying away with him some family secret. He

reintroduces the story of a coffin filled with golden curls. This material, like the episode of the burial pit, works on a deeply psychological level, giving the story the bizarre and heightened quality that Hawthorne is striving for. The American ancestor's betrothed has died unmarried, the legend goes; and the family story holds that, in her coffin, she turned into a mass of golden ringlets. She directs in her will that her coffin should be locked with a silver key to be sent to her beloved in America, the same key that first Elsie and then Ned finds at the freshly dug New England gravesite.

Hawthorne's parallel goals of strangeness and a captivating narrative persist. He writes: "The narrative must be pitched in such a tone, and enveloped in such an atmosphere, that improbable things shall be accepted; and yet there must be a certain quality of homely, common life diffused through it, so that the reader shall feel a warmth in it" (Claimant 126). He moves between seemingly opposite poles, inextricably drawn toward dark themes and yet hoping for a bright and warm tale.

Hawthorne breaks off the story at this point to review it, wondering how the threads of such a story are yet to be interwoven. He again

catalogues the questions that he has raised regarding theme and plot: "a race missing from England," now established in America? The disappearance of an English heir? A grave in America and a corresponding one in England, filled with "ringlets of golden hair?" (Claimant 98). He introduces Mountford, an attorney, who arrives at Dr. Grimshawe's home in search of information about an English family and a man sent to America as a bond-servant. Mountford expects to identify a particular grave by means of certain tokens. The narrator says that another emissary had sought the same grave one hundred years earlier. Taking a particular interest in Ned, Mountford remarks on his intelligence and quick sensibility. They look at old pictures together in the doctor's collection, especially one of a young man dressed in a crude garment and wearing a badge of servitude. They wonder whether this man may be the one whose grave Mountford is seeking. Counting off the necessary paces, they look for the particular grave; when they find it, however, the old gravesite has been freshly dug for a new burial. Mountford abandons his search, but Elsie finds an old key at the grave, and Mountford asks that he might keep it. Hawthorne has second

thoughts about this and writes, in a memo to himself, that perhaps Ned should find it the following day and keep it. Hawthorne's thoughts also appear to turn to the idea of re-turning old depositories or narrative sources and style. He is digging at the very basis of this work, trying to remove extraneous debris in the hope of a clearer view.

A scene follows that Hawthorne says should come before Mountford's arrival: the old doctor entertains the children with stories about his youth, his travels abroad, and about European capitals, "old castles and houses, the delightful permanence of things" (Claimant 107). Elsie and Ned are both strongly drawn to such stories, which greatly stimulate their imaginations. Here, as in numerous similar instances, the past exerts its strong draw as the possible key to the future as well as an impediment to forward movement.

The old doctor's study is overrun by spiders, whose intricate weavings, the narrator says, are more valuable to him than gold. They dangle, lurk, and creep about his study, crisscrossing the room with their "mystic threads" (Claimant 350). The narrator questions whether he actually believes in the efficacy of their webs or

maintains them merely as a joke on believers. The doctor's sincerity is important because it echoes Hawthorne's sincerity, or lack of it, in attempting to work out this unwilling gothic tale.

One of the spiders, the doctor's treasure, is larger and uglier than all the others. It is called "the pearl of his soul," and a "demon to whom he had sold his salvation" (Claimant 350), again a double image of majesty and damnation. A truly hideous specimen, not unlike one that Hawthorne had examined in the British Museum and recorded in his journal, its legs measured as wide as a dinner plate and its head was the size of a doorknob. It was horrible to think of such a creature living, the narrator says, and just as horrible to imagine it dead.

The symbolism of spiders in this work is open to various interpretations. A subject of contrasting meanings, it carries connotations of both good and evil. Because of its artful, radially constructed web and its central position within it, it is believed in eastern religions to represent the cosmic order; and because it produces its web from the material of its own body, it is also thought to be a sun symbol. In the Bible, however, and in Christian tradition, in

particular, it is usually thought to be a symbol of vain hope and evil, a symbol of futility. This latter sense surely applies to the old doctor's spiders, for he is engaged in a futile quest. As a symbol of weaving and making, however, the spider may also be understood to speak here to the futility of making works of art.

There is also an abundance of spiders in the elixir stories. They greet Septimius on his arrival in Boston, where, upon entering a doctor's study, he finds that they have "spun their webs about the walls and ceiling, in the wildest apparent confusion, though doubtless each individual spider knew the cordage which he had lengthened out of his own miraculous bowels; but it was really strange" (Elixir 133). Here the spider symbolism seems more closely aligned with the weaver, who like the writer must produce an artifact from the material of his own imagination. Furthermore, a huge specimen, a monster, hangs over the doctor's head, "and he looked, with all those complicated lines, like the symbol of a conjurer or crafty politician in the midst of the complexity of his scheme" (Elixir 133). It makes Septimius wonder whether this spider might not be the type of the doctor himself.

When what Hawthorne calls the American part of the claimant romance ends, the work assumes a greater epic quality. The hero, who is now called the traveler and named Etherege, is in England and the narrative is strong and developed. In a closely observed study and with a rich description of the English countryside on an early summer's day, the story takes up the hero/claimant of the romance as a young man traveling in England, "a man of education and refinement," with "an indefinable air of authority and position about him" (Claimant 130). The story moves smoothly and convincingly, drawing the reader into the landscape and into the plot. Comparing England to America, "there was no wildness about, everything seeming to have been touched, handled, arranged, at some period or other, by man," unlike the "wild primeval forests" where the young traveler "had seen the red Indian in his original haunts, and coped both with bear and buffalo" (Claimant 130). The narrator speaks in the present and expresses an underlying sense of foreboding about the outcome of the traveler's search. Hawthorne wants this story to work itself out in an ordinary way, but his own interests and his demand for a marvelous atmosphere work against such an outcome.

Injured and ill, the traveler is taken into a nearby house and awakes in a feverish dream in an ancient room carved in heraldic symbols, including a severed leopard's head. This reference, suggesting Bacchus, provides a clue to the side of the Bacchic-Apollonian spectrum that Hawthorne is favoring. He is drawn toward the excitable and unpredictable qualities in his narrative and away from Apollonian decorum.

In a semidelirium, the hero believes that the leopard's head is a recollection from his childhood, "feeling that he had somehow gone astray into the past..." (Claimant 134). Is following the past necessarily to go astray? Hawthorne balances this question against the desire to preserve the past, if only in the romance form.

The traveler is watched over by Pearson, an old man who resembles an ancient palmer, adding a religious dimension to his character. He awakes with a fever that keeps him "in a visionary state" (Claimant 135), wandering in and out of his youthful memories. Pearson tells Etherege that, before coming to claim a place as a pensioner in the hospital, he had seen a great deal of the world. Once in his travels, he says, he saw a

great spider, thought by the Indians to be a devil whose web could foretell the future. Etherege recalls Dr. Grimshawe's studies and remarks at the strange similarity. "It is hard to tell, in this strange world," Pearson says, mirroring the present story, "what things are true, what false!" (Claimant 143).

Hawthorne reviews his original story idea and begins once again in the old house beside the Salem graveyard, with the doctor and the two children. Ned, who has been taken from an almshouse, will learn about his family traditions and about a legend surrounding the English estate. One of the important things at work in this version of the story, Hawthorne says, is the extension of the old doctor's influence after his death. Looking backward and forward at this same material, Hawthorne tries once more to give it a workable order. Pushing insistently toward the strange, however, a young woman in the present version of the story proves to be Ned's former childhood companion, Elsie, now called Alice, living in England by means of the inheritance left her by the old doctor in his will. She is to be the one who discovers at the warden's dinner, Hawthorne writes, that the present heir is

plotting to poison Etherege; and when Etherege makes his claim to the estate, Pearson, in a new turn, discloses that the old doctor exercised a secret malice toward Etherege. As a result, he is deprived of his inheritance and thus "left in a truly American condition" (Claimant 233).

Hawthorne feels this condition deeply; for as an American writer at a moment when the necessity of a new way of working is making itself felt, he may either regard himself as deprived of the legacies of writers who came before him or as renouncing this inheritance in favor of something quite different. The choice is a fault line of the late works and one that creates great difficulty for Hawthorne.

As Middleton, the traveler reconsiders the hereditary thread that propels his search. The mystery that he is seeking out revolves around sorrow, if not crime, he says, and he wonders whether the effects of crime and sorrow, although long buried, may not yet persist. He recollects, in one of many instances throughout this piece, the story of an old pit that had been dug up, disclosing a burial mound, a symbolic story that Hawthorne has probed before. The pit contained the victims of a pestilence, and when it was

opened, it produced a new plague that destroyed the descendants of the original victims. He wonders, from a moral view, which is never far from the author's thoughts, whether his own search might not likewise unwittingly produce such a dreadful ending.

Inside the ancestral mansion, Middleton hears someone approaching from the interior regions of the house: doors open and close, chamber by chamber, in a telescoping image of incremental clarity and meaning, similar to Kenyon's experience in the palatial apartments of Monte Beni in The Marble Faun. Middleton first thinks that it is Alice, but he perceives that it is an older and heavier step that he hears. He is surprised to discover the old man whom he had met along the road, his guide Rothermel, as he is called in this version of the story. Middleton is uncertain of his connection to the manor house but learns that he is Alice's father. If Alice is indeed Elsie, as she sometimes is in these fragments, then Rothermel or Hammond might also be Ned's father as well.

Alice surprises Middleton by asking why he delays his search. Her unexplained knowledge of his purpose adds to the ambiguity surrounding the

story, and her secret knowledge builds on this theme. Middleton, however, delays in answering her. He is unwilling, despite her apparent knowledge of a secret cabinet and the bloody footstep, to disclose the real purpose of his inquiries. Middleton wants her to help him in his search, but she rejects this idea. She cannot help him, she says, and tells him that he must proceed on his own, for only his unraveling of the riddle will solve the mystery that surrounds him. Following dinner, the claimant returns with the warden to his apartment and tells him the story of his early life. The warden believes, upon hearing this story, that he may have knowledge of the doctor, and he tells the traveler the same family legends that Dr. Grimshawe had told him as a child. It is the warden's addition in this version of the story that it was the doctor who was wronged in the family tragedy. To discover and educate an American heir would have displaced his enemy from the estate, the warden tells him. He encourages the traveler to press his own claim, but the claimant restates his American reluctance toward a family inheritance. In spite of his expressions of patriotism, however, his imagination dwells on the possibility of such a

claim.

The scene as the traveler, as Etherege, prepares to enter Braithwaite Hall is described both as a homecoming and as a real entry into a fantasy world, as the "delicious, thrilling uncertainty between reality and fancy" (Claimant 256). Etherege pursues Pearson's past. He remembers him, he says, as the English lawyer who came to the old doctor's house. When Etherege asks his advice, Pearson warns him to leave, but Etherege says that his English ties are part of his boyhood dream and that he longs for this past and for such an attachment.

It is one of Hawthorne's chief concerns in these works to probe the nature of language. Seemingly idyllic on the surface, and yet largely dark and despairing, "Septimius Felton" opens on a day in early spring, a "sweet genial time" (Elixir 3). In aside remarks immediately following the opening paragraph, however, Hawthorne indicates that he is thinking about things quite differently. The tenderness, beauty, and warmth evoked in these opening lines are all quickly countered by references to Septimius's "weird, half-supernatural genealogy" (Elixir 3). Hawthorne is writing these lines one way, but

thinking about them in another.

Set in Concord along the great Lexington Road, a highway both of practicality and human affairs, two young men and a young woman are seated outside on a spring day, along a ridge like the one behind Hawthorne's own house in Concord, a ridge where the first settlers had carved out shelter in the early years of New England, the narrator says. Hawthorne immediately sets out concerns about genealogy and tradition in a piece that is preoccupied with thoughts of artistic and spiritual alienation. Carried over from the claimant fragments are his continuing questions concerning the legitimacy of a private aesthetic or spiritual enterprise. Here are his reflections on the predicament of mankind: orphaned, cut off from nature, and only mortal, yet attempting against the odds to make some sense of life.

We find Septimius Felton, Rose Garfield, and Robert Hagburn, who are childhood friends, on a day that promises renewal in a location that Hawthorne identifies with his own home. In a brief introduction that is written as his own observations, he remarks that the exact location of these sites is so well known to him that he has planted sunflowers in the earthen cavity that was

left by Rose's old cellar. He thereby establishes a close personal connection to this writing and makes a claim to first-hand knowledge of it. Septimius, who must try to decipher a secret document that promises eternal life, worries about his pallor and wishes that he could be heroic like Robert. Robert and Septimius love Rose, who in the second elixir fragment becomes Septimius's sister. In transferring Rose from lover to sister, Hawthorne not only suggests an ambiguous sexual meaning but also raises a question about the loss of a creative energy. To lose Rose as a romantic figure may symbolize the loss of Romanticism itself, a loss of great significance to the writer and one of the chief difficulties that Hawthorne encountered in the unfinishability of the fragments.

A theme that receives great attention in the claimant and the immortality fragments is the difficulty of communication between characters, between character and writer, and between writer and reader. Seeing, for example, that Septimius grieves deeply for wounding him in self-defense, the dying British soldier forgives him and gives him his few possessions, among them an ivory-framed miniature portrait of a young woman and

some old documents "closely written in a crabbed hand" (Elixir 30). We know from the claimant fragments that this crabbed handwriting represents the intensely personal aspects of writing and the peculiarities of the artist. The documents were given to him by his uncle, the soldier says, but he has never taken the time to read them beyond the first lines.

As they gather herbs in the woods for her tonic, Aunt Nashoba wants to give Septimius the inherited family recipe for her life-extending herbal concoction. Except for one missing ingredient, she says, it is the recipe for an immortality drink. Septimius is startled to hear about the elixir again, and from another source, because it is the topic on which his thoughts have been fixed for a long time. It is not his secret alone, then, but a family secret as well. Septimius deliberately delays in receiving the knowledge of his aunt's drink, however. He is also interrupted from looking into the manuscript any further for a time, "for it may be observed, that a man no sooner sets his heart on any object, great or small, be it the lengthening out of his life interminably, or merely writing a romance about it, than his fellow beings, and fate and

circumstances to back them, seem to conspire to hinder, to prevent, to throw in each his obstacle . . . so inevitably does a mistiness settle between us and any such object, and harden into granite when we attempt to pass through it; so strongly do mocking voices call us back, or encouraging ones cease to be heard, when our sinking hearts need them most; so unaccountably, at last, when we feel as if we might grasp our life-long object by merely stretching out our hand, does it all at once put on an aspect of not being worth our grasp" (Elixir 293).

Returning to his work in deciphering the secret writings, Septimius finds that they are written in a scholarly language that combines Latin, Greek, and ancient English. The classical languages, the narrator says, seemed to provide the means of clearest expression and formed a kind of patchwork with vernacular passages.

"Invariably, too, when the author seemed on the verge of some utterance that would illuminate his whole subject, and make all its obscurities . . . blaze out into vivid meaning, and wreathe them together, from beginning to end, by a chain of light, its golden links all a-flame, there came in an interval of cryptic writing, a tract of dense,

impenetrable darkness, on the other side of which appeared a disconnected radiance, which could not be brought into relation with what had gone before" (Elixir 316).

The intention of such writing, as far as Septimius can tell, is to test the earnestness of the one seeking to understand it. He writes out the parts that he is able to decipher, but his mind is not altogether healthy, the narrator says. The war has had a very disturbing effect on him because, like the author, he is given to feelings of morbidity and to the exaggeration of his own thoughts. Septimius's transcriptions from the manuscript surprise him. They consist of maxims of behavior and belief, and he decides that they have "a symbolic value, which he should by and by discover, and also what tendency and force they had towards his great object of earthly immortality" (Elixir 318-319).

Septimius meditates on the golden rules contained in the manuscript. Called "Precious Maxims from an Unknown Intelligence," the inscriptions provide a further means of meditation for Septimius: "Bask daily for a convenient time in whatsoever sunshine thou shalt find Have no friendship . . . with a melancholy man . .

. . Practise thyself in a certain continual smile
 Search not thy head nor thy beard to see
 if there be gray hairs lurking among the brown
 ones; scrutinize not thy forehead in quest of
 wrinkles, nor the corners of thine eyes for
 crowsfeet. . . . Desire nothing too fervently . .
 ." (Elixir 319-322), and so on. Septimius
 understands them to mean that man must restrain
 himself from human passion, as angels do, in order
 to live well and to live long.

The luxuriant growth of flowers on the dead
 soldier's grave encourages Septimius to work
 harder on the manuscript: "once, to say the truth,
 in moments of despondency, he took an entirely
 different view of the whole thing, and was
 inclined to believe that some mystic, under the
 guise of inventing a drink of immortality, had
 been prescribing the methods (in the language of
 parables and symbol, under which the wise hid
 their wisdom, in days of darkness) . . ." (Elixir
 399-400). Septimius clings to his idea, however,
 even though he fears it may well be a delusion.

Hawthorne develops the idea of the power and
 danger embodied in cryptic writing early in the
 elixir stories when Rose charges Septimius with
 despising women's thoughts and of having no need

of a woman's affections. Septimius denies it, but "even while he spoke, there was something that dragged upon his tongue; for he felt that the solitary pursuit in which he was engaged carried him apart from the sympathy of which he spoke, and that he was concentrating his efforts and interest entirely upon himself, and that the more he succeeded, the more remotely he should be carried away, and that his final triumph would be the complete seclusion of himself from all that breathed . . ." (Elixir 65). Septimius devotes himself to the manuscript, whose "recurring passages of complete unintelligibility seemed to be necessary to the proper understanding of any part of the document" (Elixir 66).

Thoughts on writing help to focus the reader's attention on the importance of this physical aspect of narrative. One is on the quality of Dr. Grimshawe's handwriting, of manuscripts "all bescribbled over with that crabbed handwriting, so small, so enigmatic, that you conceived of it as treating of strange matters" (Claimant 120). The focus here is on strangeness and enigma. Hawthorne wants to get far away from reality, but the second allusion to writing indicates that he may also be thinking of

where all of this may lead. It is on the doctor's mode of composition. Writing away into the late night, "there came a period where it had no business to be; and that was in the middle of a sentence" (Claimant 120). The doctor has died at his work, on the verge, Hawthorne says, of communicating his great discovery on the medical properties of spiders; but it is revealed in this version that the spider is no more than a shell, perhaps even the devil in a spider's shape, who had caught the doctor's soul and departed with it. He has given up his life in an effort to communicate the truth only to have it discovered that his subject was merely a sham, or worse, an evil lure posing as the truth.

As Septimius examines the document given to him by the dying soldier, he discovers that it is a mysterious manuscript, with passages in Latin, Greek, and English, but that, "on the whole it was an unintelligible mass, conveying somehow an idea that it was the fruit of vast labor and erudition, emanating from a mind very full of books," in a handwriting "full of puzzle and bewilderment," a manuscript that has come to Septimius through circumstances that combine "tragedy and mystery" (Elixir 49).

The unintelligibility of the manuscript reinforces the theme of Hawthorne's investigation of the meaning of his own work. Essentially a reflexive probing of "how" a work of art means as well as "what" a particular work might mean, this inquiry is particularly interesting since other efforts to determine what Hawthorne has meant in this work appear to have missed such an important aspect of its meaning. The author makes it clear in these passages that meaning is closely aligned with the symbolic in an effort to reach a higher level of understanding, if in fact any understanding may be reached at all. Septimius is able finally to decipher only one sentence, "but that sentence, of mystic meaning, shone out before him, like a transparency, illuminated in the darkness of his mind" (Elixir 51). The mystery of the manuscript is thus not easily solved. In a dream, however, when his imagination is free, he is able to read it and to discover that it is about immortality, "the mode in which man might be restored to his originally undying state" (Elixir 52).

Septimius also discovers papers concealed in an antique box. These too are written in an ancient handwriting, which he recognizes as the

same as the handwriting in the manuscript. He is disappointed, however, to find only family papers and to discover no new information about the elixir. The past has not provided a solution, but as he lingers over the names listed in the genealogical papers, he suddenly discovers a verse of secret writing that he believes clarifies the elixir recipe given in the manuscript: "His mind had a flash of light upon it; and from that moment, he was enabled to read not only the recipe, but the rules, and all the rest of that mysterious document, in a way which he had never thought of before; to discern that it was not to be taken literally and simply, but had a hidden process involved in it that made the whole thing infinitely deeper than he had hitherto deemed it to be" (Elixir 163).

Septimius becomes a raving enthusiast in his work with the manuscript; and growing more and more eccentric, he comes under the suspicion of the village. Finally, after another season of secret work, during which his patriotism is questioned further by his neighbors, as Hawthorne's was for his lack of enthusiasm for the Civil War, he succeeds in combining the materials of the recipe. Following a long denial, Septimius

impetuously opens the parchment package. An antique silver key falls out. It is decorated with the cypher H. N., which stands for H. Norton, but which the reader sees may also stand for N. H. in reverse. Laying it carefully away, he opens the papers and begins to sort them. The mysterious packet contains a collection of old deeds and legal documents, which Septimius does not readily understand. The pages of a folded manuscript appear to be "wholly illegible" (Elixir 287), but as he turns them over, "(which, old as they were, were crisp, and had a kind of newness, as if nobody had ever fingered them before till this day)" (Elixir 288), he believed that he could read one sentence, which stood out as much for its absurdity, the narrator says, as for any other reason. Upon reflection, however, Septimius believes that he may have merely imagined that he was able to read it. Back and forth, therefore, Hawthorne indicates the possibility and impossibility of understanding this document.

Applying himself with diligence during the winter, Septimius finally succeeds in deciphering large portions of the manuscript. He accomplishes this in spite of the great skill of "ancient writers in the sublime art of hiding meanings

under a veil of words. . . " (Elixir 368). The more he thinks he understands the meaning of the manuscripts, however, the more he believes that the meaning is intertwined with all other knowledge, so that all learning is needed to decipher only a little writing. "So it is ever with what seems an idle tale, that, too, slight as it is, wreathes its tendrils about human knowledge, belief, superstitions, hopes, efforts, and, being taken for a flower growing wild on a hill-side, with a fragrance of its own, we find that we have life and death, and burdens, and all the questions that men ever argued about, twining with its tendrils, so that here, too, we have hold of the moral universe" (Elixir 368-369).

Continuing to make progress in translating the manuscript, Septimius discovers a code to deciphering the mystical writings. If he had learned the proper lessons of nature, the narrator says, he would have understood that mankind's exhilaration with the world's rebirth in spring, rising up out of its own death in winter, would be impossible if summer were to last forever. New life from death, he says, is the best interpretation of immortal life; and even Septimius recognizes the truth and wholesomeness

of this explanation of the life cycle.

In the last immortality fragment, Dr. Dolliver also deciphers a mysterious formula from the manuscripts of his mentor, Dr. Swinnerton; and when he produces it, the mixture brings a sweet fragrance to the entire room. He too puzzles over the elixir. His intention is merely to comfort the ailments of old age, the narrator says, but Dr. Dolliver realizes that others might want to experiment with the recipe because of its legendary properties. Sipping small quantities of the cordial through the winter, his condition changes. His sight improves so greatly that the intensity of his gaze affects his granddaughter, Pansie, in her sleep. Undecided as to whether his improved condition is the result of the cordial or of small quantities of rum, he nevertheless continues to drink the cordial. He also continues to enjoy improved health, and his neighbors observe that he appears to be growing younger.

Dr. Swinnerton also left Dr. Dolliver a treatise on the use of certain garden herbs; but because it is an old and illegible manuscript, Dolliver has never made use of it. In keeping with the integrity of his character, the narrator says, he has tended the herbs without realizing

any benefit from them. Dolliver's wife had worn the flowers of one of these plants, a "tragic reminiscence," writes Hawthorne as an aside (Elixir 469).

In what are only bits of dialogue, an adversary demands Dr. Dolliver's recipe for the elixir, accusing the doctor of robbing him of his inheritance. The man who gave him the illegible parchment had spent his lifetime trying to translate it, he says; a gap in the writing, however, had made a true translation impossible, in spite of this great effort.

Chapter V. Glimpses, Glimpses:
Metafictional Issues

As Middleton arrives at the manor house from which his ancestors may have emigrated to America two hundred years earlier, he must make a great decision: whether to press what he believes is a rightful claim, forsaking his native tradition of American freedom and justice to become English, or to renounce his possible English ancestry and return to America. I would like to suggest that Middleton's dilemma is symbolic of Hawthorne's choice of a new art form and that the choices facing the claimant are a commentary on Hawthorne's own thought processes. Unwilling, or perhaps even unable, to rely any longer on Romanticism or the romance form, he must try to decide at this point what to do.

Hawthorne's appointment as consul ended in 1857 at the end of Pierce's presidency, and for the next three years, he traveled with his family in England, France, and Italy. Late in 1857, as he prepared to leave England for Italy, he packed his notebooks, including his ideas for a novel of

England, and left them with his friend Henry Bright. The background preparation was sufficiently fixed in his thinking, however, to allow him, in April and May of the following year, to begin sketching out the American claimant narrative. Hawthorne intended this work to be a narrative based on American-English relations.

He had told his friend Horatio Bridge as early as October, 1852, that he planned to start a new work: "In a day or two, I intend to begin a new romance, which, if possible, I mean to make more genial than the last" (Letters, 1843-1853 604). His letters from England, however, show that he was wholly absorbed in his duties at the consulate, and he made no further mention of this work in his correspondence until January, 1855. In April of that year, Hawthorne outlined in his notebook plans for the new work: "In my Romance, the original emigrant to America may have carried away with him a family secret, whereby it was in his power (had he so chosen) to have brought about the ruin of the family. This secret he transmits to his American progeny, by whom it is inherited throughout all the intervening generations. At last, the hero of the Romance comes to England, and finds that, by means of this secret, he still

has it in his power to procure the downfall^[1] of the family. It would be something similar to the story of Meleager, whose fate depended on the firebrand that his mother had snatched out of the flames" (Stewart 107). Hawthorne's reference to Meleager is telling, for Meleager's secret knowledge of her son's vulnerability was insufficient to save his life.

Hawthorne reflects on the types of people he had met in his work at the consulate. "I have not yet struck the true key-note of this Romance, and until I do, and unless I do, I shall write nothing but tediousness and nonsense. I do not wish it to be a picture of life; but a Romance, grim, grotesque, quaint" (Claimant 58). This sense of dependency and fatality is familiar in Hawthorne. What makes these instances unusual is the degree of difficulty that he is experiencing in bringing his stated intentions to fruition. As he begins to work through the many details of the claimant work and the numerous artistic decisions that this work necessitates, he interrupts the narrative with frequent memoranda to himself: "abstract of the plot," "present aspect of the story," "as the story looks now," and so on. In each of these asides, embedded in the narrative,

he attempts to discover how to move the story along; but he ends the sketch with even more pages of possible plot variations. Time after time in this work, Hawthorne steps back from the text to offer these aside observations. They are reminders to himself, cast in a metafictional context, referring as much to the writing of the piece as to that which is being written. They produce, I believe, what has been described as a hybrid text.¹

Similar breaks occur as Hawthorne puts together a possible outline of what he calls the explanation segment of the book. He creates a new family legend, one in which the custom of preparation for an expected guest is the result of two lovers having been parted, one of them kidnapped and taken to America. In this legend, the man settles in America and is either in fact or by suspicion guilty of some crime or treason. Because his letters to his beloved are intercepted, she never hears from him; but in her will, she directs that a room always be kept ready

¹ De Man writes that in the shift in criticism from relevance to reference, the stress is increasingly on the interplay between the "fictional status of literature and categories that are said to partake of reality, such as the self, man, society." The result, he says, is an emphasis on hybrid texts. (3)

for him. Considering the possible implications of this story line, the hero of the story, Hawthorne says, will thus find this room ready for him.

Following a brief dialogue between Dr. Grimshawe and the children about this custom, Hawthorne breaks into the narrative again. "There is still a want of something, which I can by no means get at, nor even describe what it is--which, indeed, would be almost equivalent to supplying the want" (Claimant 115-116). He resolves to give a deeper characterization of the doctor, deciding that he should have a brother, who must be introduced early in the romance. The brother might have been a man of fortune and affairs, but someone who has fallen in life to the place of hospital pensioner. Hawthorne considers other such possible story variations: perhaps the brother plotted to transfer the English family heritage to the American descendant and called on the doctor to seek out and educate the boy for his future station in life; perhaps Elsie is the doctor's granddaughter. It is clear in any case that these critical relationships have not yet been determined by the author and are still open to artistic consideration. Postponing such decisions as these, even while he continues to

write, strongly suggests that for Hawthorne, at this particular moment, the act of writing is in itself more important than the details of the narrative and that the forward progress of this work is not necessarily dependent on them.

Concluding the aside, Hawthorne insists that the tale of the bloody footstep "must be made wild, shadowy, and mythical, and yet be so handled that the story shall have all the advantage of its effect" (Claimant 117). He decides that Ned's early memories of the almshouse will be mixed with memories tied to the family legends and that they must mingle with them in a dream-like way.² The narrative continues with domestic scenes that remark on the great spider that sits with the doctor like a companion, as Ned dreams of his childhood. The doctor, meanwhile, is described as "black, wild-bearded, heavy-browed, red-eyed, wrapped in his faded dressing-gown, puffing out

² Hawthorne's insistence on dream-like qualities in these late works suggests a parallel with Rousseau. In writing on the opposition of dream and wakefulness, Derrida quotes from Emile, where "after having once more cautioned us against books, writing, signs ('What is the use of inscribing on their brains a list of symbols which mean nothing to them?'), Rousseau adds a note: 'I do what others fail to do, I give my dreams as dreams, and leave the reader to discover whether there is anything useful in them to those who are awake.'" (316)

volumes of vapor from his long pipe, and, making, just at that instant, application to a tumbler, which, we regret to say, was generally at his elbow, with some dark-colored potation in it . . ."
." (Claimant 355).

Ned is stricken and ashamed to learn, when he questions Dr. Grimshawe about his family history, that the doctor had taken him from an almshouse and that his parents are unknown. When he becomes deeply angered by the doctor's story, weeping uncontrollably, Dr. Grimshawe changes his story and tells Ned that although he was indeed taken from an almshouse, he is really from an old English family and that he will help him trace his background. He shows the children old pictures and tells them that Ned comes from an ancient and noble line. He tells them stories about an English village, the one in which he had presumably been born and had grown up, a place of great age and beauty. He tells them about the surrounding countryside, an old hospital for pensioners, and an old mansion with a secret chamber that is still in use. He also tells them about the English revolutionary wars that divided families and of one such family in which brothers fought against each other. A bloody footstep

still remained on the doorstep of an old manor house, the doctor said, imprinted there by a traitorous brother who had struck off the king's head on the scaffold. Grimshawe continues to tell the children this story, which Hawthorne describes as a "family-history, or tradition, or fantastic legend, whatever it might be" (Claimant 365), again displaying reluctance to decide exactly what the tale is based on. Grimshawe tells Ned that this renegade son had been sent to the Virginia colony and sold as a bondservant, but that he had escaped to New England, where he left heirs who might even now hold a claim to the old English title and estate.

It is a matter of reflexive speculation basic to these works that they must be deciphered by Ned himself. He puzzles over the possible and various interrelationships of the claimant story, wondering about the nature and significance of the doctor, Elsie, and the present lord of the ancestral hall. He seems to be under a spell. Nervous and frightened, he comes to believe that some witchcraft ties him to an old mansion. The house seems to be built over the cave of Trophonious, he says, "one visit to which made a man sad forever after" (Claimant 299).

All of this runs through Ned's mind, the author says, but he does not really believe any of it because he has a sense of inviolability that makes it difficult for him to see himself as the object of another person's wrongdoing. He determines, therefore, to tell the present squire the truth about his personal motivation. The squire responds coolly to Ned's disclosure, pointing out that just as he has taken up his own proof of claim at some personal price, so he must expect some proof from Ned. He appears to mock Ned's expressed intentions to give up his American life--a life that is so promising--for a far less desirable life in an old English manor house. The claimant says that while he may, in fact, have better prospects in America, the old house holds a sad brooding interest for him, one that strongly attracts him. So it seems does the romance, an equally brooding sad house, hold a strong attraction for Hawthorne. He has known many successes in this antiquated edifice and is reluctant to leave it behind.

As Ned drinks a glass of a rare Italian wine, a symbol in The Marble Faun of an intoxicating awareness and enlightenment, he falls unconscious and awakes in an old chamber amid strange

circumstances. He hears the sound of breathing and a low moan nearby. Unable to tell whether he is sleeping or awake, he looks up dreamily at the squire and finds a sense of long time about him. In his visionary state, an unclear figure becomes the old doctor and falls apart in a heap on the floor. The doctor, who may not only represent Hawthorne on some level, but on whom he had hoped to hinge this gothic-styled romance, is gone. It may be that the claimant's heightened state has dispensed with any further need of this sad, old, real man.

In the context of the squire's continental tastes, he and Middleton talk about art. It was a subject about which Middleton knew very little, Hawthorne writes, a characteristic that he shares with this American abroad. "Taste seems to be a department of moral sense; and yet it is so little identical with it, and so little implies conscience," he says, "that some of the worst men in the world have been the most refined" (Claimant 74).

Bringing all of these details together, however, posed great difficulty for Hawthorne, for while he had initially expressed the intention of exploring the differences between America and

England by contrasting the values of a democracy and of a society built on a system of social and economic classes, the center of such a story never materialized. Still, he continued to question, within the narrative of the text, how to bring all of this together in a single work and get it ready for the press, as he had already promised Fields that he would do. In doing so, he breaks away from this draft sixty-nine times to make notes to himself and to try to work out basic questions about how to proceed; and it is clear, as a close look at the claimant drafts shows, that Hawthorne is engaged in an examination of this very process. By sensibility and habit, the narrator associates the subject of this sketch with the author: "he loved indeed the solitude of his way; but likewise he loved the facility which his pursuit afforded him, of coming in contact with many varieties of men; and he took advantage of this facility to an extent which it was not usually his impulse to do" (Claimant 4).

Giving, in his own voice, what he calls an abstract of the plot, Hawthorne describes Middleton's ancestor who had emigrated to America two hundred years earlier as a moody man who arrived in the new world with a sad and beautiful

young wife. There grew up among their descendants a legend surrounding an heirloom, a tradition that had been passed down in the family now for two centuries, although some of the connecting links had been lost. Hawthorne catalogues the legend: it involved a murder, the expulsion of a brother from the ancestral household, and a bloody footprint impressed on the threshold of the English manor house. It maintained that the Middleton who had emigrated was not altogether blameless in the family tragedy and that a shadow of wrongdoing had followed him from England to America. Perhaps it was this shadow of guilt, Hawthorne says, like his own inherited guilt for the witch-burning Hawthorns of Puritan New England, that led him to take up such gloomy religious views in the colonial American wilderness.

The old doctor, also like the author, is described as being peculiar in habit, solitary, and removed from general society. A fairly clear image emerges of this character, dressed in old-fashioned clothing and carrying a gold-headed walking stick. Hawthorne thus layers the opening lines of this work with alternating vagueness and detail, drawing the characterization of the doctor, at this early point in the narrative, with

considerable visual concreteness. Hawthorne presents him as a learned man, known as a doctor and scholar among the people of the town. His scholarly reputation is based in part on his collection of Greek and Latin classics, editions so old that they consist of bound parchment sheets, and also works by English writers. The old doctor sits, as a famous romancer might, among his books, satisfying his scholarly tastes and indulging his strong intellectual interests. The doctor, writes Hawthorne, is organically a part of these surroundings, breathing in the dust of the dead from the surrounding graveyard and clothed in cobwebs as if they were garments. We have, thus graphically set out, the image of the old doctor, sharing Hawthorne's claustrophobia, entombed in the dust of crumbling books and a dead society, absorbed in the knowledge of the past.

There follows a passage of several pages in which Hawthorne, now in the first-person, records his thoughts on how to write the story and how he sees the plot. He provides in this aside the most detailed account yet of the story as it unfolds. He sketches out the doctor's domestic circumstances: the girl is his niece and the boy has been adopted from an almshouse. The doctor's

eccentricities, including his belief in the curative powers of cobwebs, make him appear grim and queer; but underneath this taut exterior, he is a simple and loveable old man. Dust and cobwebs cover everything in the house. The doctor's brother must appear to be a man of worth and position. The boy must be shown to have a sensibility beyond his humble origins; he is, in fact, to be shown as displaying "imaginative and poetic tendencies; but yet young America shall show a promising blossom in him--there shall be a freedom of thought, a carelessness of old forms of things..." (Claimant 123). The girl is to have the same freedom of thought. When the English lawyer is introduced into the story, the character of the boy will begin to emerge with regard to dim legends and traditions that he will observe later in England. "Early and forcibly--," Hawthorne writes, "let the deep, unconquerable interest, which an American feels in England, its people, and institutions, be brought strongly out" (Claimant 124). A story interwoven with contrasts between England and America still interests him, but the need to write a strange and dream-like novel is stronger.

Hawthorne reaches a dead end. For all the

possible legends, mysteries, and outcomes that he considers, each one examined in detail within the narrative of the work itself, he does not reach a conclusion and starts over, taking a long, parallel view of the story. Elsie, he says, must know that Ned's claim is baseless, perhaps from the doctor's deathbed confession, which she had witnessed as a child. Still perplexed by the motive of the original emigrant in abandoning his inheritance, however, Hawthorne sketches in another possible plot whereby the young heir is forced to leave with his son after killing his wife in jealousy. This family line, transported to America, comes to the doctor's knowledge through old documents. A pensioner may also have old papers to prove his claim; and Ned may become the victim of the doctor's forgery.

We see Hawthorne wrestling here with questions of how to vitalize the plot. He acknowledges again the need to give the lord of the manor a diabolical character, wicked and "miserable under a show of all possible glory and splendour, and grace, and gaiety. Could I but achieve this, I should feel as if the book were plotted; otherwise, not. Something monstrous he must be, yet within nature and Romantic

probability--hard conditions," he writes, adding "a moral of the strange things that happen, when the accident of birth puts people into places for which they are most unfit" (Claimant 265).

Reaching even further into the improbable, Hawthorne considers the idea of a vampire plot: "A cannibal? A ghoul? A vampire?" (Claimant 265), he theorizes, a monster who craves the blood of the young and beautiful Elsie? This idea has some appeal for him as he thinks about how to make the romance more gothic. Perhaps his character is not really a monster, but a victim surrounded by suspicion and evil. Perhaps "he has yielded to some great temptation," perhaps even to "The Unpardonable Sin" (Claimant 266). But what present attribute, Hawthorne asks, will help to explain the squire's character? "Alas me! Virtuous, beautifully behaved, he may be, in all respects except one, which shall throw a devilish aspect over him, and make the whole romance wild and weird. How? how? how? The key of the Romance ought to be here, in this one little peculiarity; so it must have reference to the past" (Claimant 267). It is toward the past, therefore, that Hawthorne continues to look in this consuming effort to give life to a key component of his

story. The character, Hawthorne resolves, must come out in the course of events that take place after the traveler enters the manor house.

Building toward such a conclusion, Hawthorne brings Ned finally to Braithwaite Hall. He looks in great anticipation for the bloody footstep at the mansion's threshold but does not find it right away. Shown into a comfortable and inviting room, a welcoming setting of antique furnishings, he thinks about the family's history and his possible place in it. He fantasizes about what his ancestors' lives may have been like in this very room. Exploring the manor further, he finds it to be not so stately as one of Ann Radcliffe's castles, the narrator says, but quite ghostly all the same. Ned has the sensation of walking in circles as he proceeds through the interior of the house. He meets Father Angelo, the house chaplain, who already knows of him as the visiting American diplomat. As they talk in the library, Hawthorne attempts to introduce the spider theme into the present story line, as the two men discover a spider much like the old doctor's favorite specimen. The lord of the manor arrives, however, breaking into this scene. He has a face, Hawthorne says, that is intellectual but

unfeeling, lacking in heartiness, and gracious only by design, perhaps reflecting the author's rather severe judgment of his own demeanor.

As Ned tours the grounds of the great hall, he comes to the place in the park where, in a previous draft, he had been wounded. He continues to question his motivation with regard to claiming his inheritance, but still finds the idea quite appealing: "again came silently swelling over him like a flood all that ancient peace, and quietude, and dignity, which looked so stately and beautiful as brooding round this old house; all that blessed order of ranks, that sweet superiority, and yet with no disclaimer of common brotherhood, that existed between the English gentleman and his inferiors; all that delightful intercourse, so sure of pleasure, so safe from rudeness, lowness, unpleasant rubs, that exists between gentleman and gentleman What could there be in the wild, harsh, ill-concocted American approach to civilization which could compare with this?"

(Claimant 281-282). Taking a path back toward the house, he discovers another entrance and, with a terrifying thrill, sees the bloody footstep.

"Here I come to a stand still!," Hawthorne writes. He questions the squire's true intentions

toward Ned and how the ancient cabinet might be discovered. "I have not the least notion how to get on," he writes. "I was never in such a sad predicament before" (Claimant 285-286). He thinks that perhaps the old doctor's spider web should signify a great plot through which he has affected all the actors in this story, continuing even after his death as Maule's curse descends on each succeeding generation in The House of the Seven Gables. He proceeds through a long list of possible turns that include criminal plots, monstrous schemes suggesting a Frankenstein romance, and an inevitable, violent death. In this vein, the doctor emerges as a madman; Elsie, as a glimmer of "healthy and natural light" (Claimant 291), unlike the artificial, artistic light surrounding this story. The claimant, however, must not know until the end of the story, Hawthorne writes, that his life has been distorted by the doctor's mad scheme of revenge.

"Now, if this great bleakness and horror is to be underneath the story, there must be a frolic and dance of bacchanals all over the surface; else the effect will be utterly miserable. There may be," Hawthorne says, "a steam of horror escaping through safety-valves; but generally the tone must

be joyous" (Claimant 292). We have to conclude that such a safety-valve was not within reach and that both the underlying horror and superficial frolic may suffer for its absence. Hawthorne considers an idea to intercut the chapters of the present story with episodes about a prisoner's being held by the doctor in England. This is an interesting idea that he does not develop. It comes very close to what Hawthorne actually writes, however: a sequence of parallel stories in which the episodes are overlapping rather than intercut.

The end of this story fragment looks back to the concealed chamber: "Still dim--perhaps as dim as ever--but our eyes, or our imagination, have gained an acquaintance, a customariness, with the medium; so that we can now discern things, now, a little more distinctly than of old. Possibly, there may have been something cleared away that obstructed the light" (Claimant 338). It appears to be Hawthorne's wish that such an obstacle might indeed be cleared away. Hung around with antique tapestries of saints or devils, the distinction between them being unclear, the room is dark and the scene is obscure. It contains a spider and various instruments of death--pistols, a dagger,

and perhaps a poison. A young man is an inmate here. By turns sullen and indifferent, then frenzied and enraged, he contemplates suicide, but is calmed by a voice outside the door.

Hawthorne wrestles with questions concerning his characters, and he breaks into the story often to review them. What is a character, he appears to ask, as he sketches the doctor within the story narrative. This old scientist has devoted his life to the perfection of cobweb science, Hawthorne writes. His youth, in which he went abroad to finish the studies that he had begun in America, was promising; but on his return, he secluded himself in the old house by the graveyard, as Hawthorne had secluded himself in the Manning family home of his mother in Salem after finishing college. The doctor may have met with some misfortune in Europe or committed some crime, but which, is not clear. There was town gossip about the doctor and his brother, who had also gone abroad, but who never returned. It was said that the doctor always kept a room ready for his brother's return, living in perpetual anticipation of this event.

Hawthorne tries repeatedly to delineate this character. Depicted as shabby, dismal, and gray,

Dr. Grimshawe is contrasted with his ward, Ned, a "remarkably pretty and vivacious boy," and of Elsie, "a perfect rosebud" (Claimant 343) of a girl. They live beside the town cemetery, the most ancient site in an old town that is familiar to the narrator. In one hundred and fifty years, he says, sextons have turned over generations of townspeople, some of them eminent citizens, others ordinary women and men; and the crude, ghostly carvings on their gravestones are the young children's imaginary playmates. The dreariness of Dr. Grimshawe's surroundings is substantially offset by his young wards. Hawthorne gives Elsie the stronger temperament of the two children. Congenial and impish, this child of three or four years is able to break through the doctor's hard crust; and she is loved by Dr. Grimshawe as if she were his own daughter.

In working through his difficulty in deciding how to present Dr. Grimshawe, Hawthorne considers making this pivotal character a magician, a grotesquely weird character, someone who has the power to direct other people's lives. He weighs two possible morals: that Americans have to give up the idea of advantages of birth, an idea that held great importance in the past, he says; and

that the golden locks of hair are a symbol that beauty and substance are only superficial. He puzzles over the role of the great spider as well and theorizes that it should symbolize the doctor's craft and wickedness. Possibility follows possibility as Hawthorne rearranges his ideas about the silver key, the golden locks, an ancient crime, a violent death, the bloody footstep, a love triangle, deep family hatred, and a great unresolved mystery that continues to evade him. He concludes in a long aside passage that Ned is not really the heir to an ancient estate, "but a son of nobody, with all the world for his ancestry;" and tomorrow, Hawthorne writes, he will "arrange the chain of events" (Claimant 229).

The character of the old doctor continues, however, to occupy him. Is he a mysterious figure, with magical powers and secret knowledge or simply an ordinary old man? It is hard to decide, Hawthorne writes, concluding that he must explain and particularize. He rethinks the original crime in political rather than moral terms. Perhaps Grimshawe was a Puritan in a Catholic family. "I suppose I shall have to write him into the story before I can make out what he is to be," he says, describing exactly what he is

trying to do but without success. "Yet his character must be capable of being delineated in richly picturesque colours" (Claimant 202). Hawthorne approves the idea of incorporating religious persecution into the story. The bloody footstep, he says, can be made to exemplify this theme. "Glimpses, glimpses," Hawthorne writes. "Not yet 'Eureka'; but it will be so" (Claimant 205).

Hawthorne runs through the story again from the beginning: the old doctor and the two children, as before; the boy placed into the doctor's care by his friend, the old pensioner, with enough money for his education. Ned is imaginative and grows up with the belief that he is the heir to an English estate. He learns the legend of the bloody footstep as a child. After the doctor dies, and following a long interval, Ned goes to England to find a villainous "Italianized" Englishman holding the estate. Forewarned of his presence and, being an unprincipled man, he plans to murder the claimant to preserve his personal interests. Ned escapes this attack only by accident and finally comes under the pensioner's care. He is taken in by the warden, entertained, and introduced to the present

holder of the estate. The Italianized squire comes into information that makes him believe that Ned and the pensioner represent a double threat to him and so resolves to destroy them both.

Hawthorne briefly considers introducing a gothic theme, with the idea of the possible torture of the pensioner in a ghostly chamber.

Hawthorne interjects six brief aside remarks immediately following only a short introductory paragraph to the second claimant fragment. These remarks include further instructions to himself regarding the characterization of the old doctor and about Hannah, the doctor's part-Indian house servant. He also adds a note about the spiders, who, because they are affected by the weather, act as barometers, he says. He returns quickly to the narrative, however, with an extended description of the graveyard and the doctor's adjoining house, an old structure of barely acceptable respectability, within genteel limits, but no more than this, redoubling in this episode his efforts to imagine this old man. The doctor distills an extract of cobwebs, which he believes has the power to cure diseases. He is to be at odds with the town, Hawthorne writes. He is strange, ugly, and an outsider; but his medicinal

concoction is sought by the public, even though he is considered to be a quack. He is a New Englander neither in speech nor appearance; he has a wild, reddish beard and is unkempt in dress; and while barely middle-aged, he seems old. He is, like the author, "so stiffened into his own way . . . so incrustated with fables and traditions" (Claimant 349), that he appears to have left youth far behind.

Hawthorne has more success in writing Ned. He is, early in the story, reflective and subdued. Like the author, he has been subject from a very early age to "fits of musing," to "vague reverie," or "waking dreams" (Claimant 354). As Hawthorne describes this picturesque group in its most complete detail: "the beautiful, grave boy of a brown cast, slender, with his white brow, and dark, thoughtful eyes, so earnest upon some mysterious theme; the prettiest little girl, a blond, round, rosey, so truly sympathetic with her companion's mood, yet unconsciously turning all into sport by her attempt to assume one similar; these two, standing at the grim Doctor's footstool" (Claimant 355). A remarkably bright and quick student, Ned's abilities and bearing, as confirmed by his extraordinary refinement and

beauty, suggest a background more cultivated than his sad history in the almshouse. He loves knowledge and is strongly attracted to the doctor's old books; and besides this intellectual ability, he has an even greater gift, the narrator says, an impulse "to mix with men," and thus to learn "something fresher from their intercourse than books could give him." (Claimant 371). This seems to be one of Hawthorne's chief points in his characterization of Ned. Already bearing a physical resemblance to the author, he now takes on intellectual similarities as well. Too self-absorbed in youth, as in middle age, he seems to feel that he lacks the freshness and wisdom that might have come from mixing with society.

The doctor, however, in spite of his apparent coarseness, is a scholar. He teaches Ned manners as well as the academic subjects, which is a great curiosity, given his rude exterior. He seems to love Ned as his own child, given this "beautiful, slender, yet strenuous, intelligent, refined boy, with such a high bred air, handling common things with so refined a touch, yet grasping them so firmly; throwing a natural grace on all he did" (Claimant 377-378). Their relationship is problematical, however, because of

painful memories connected with "this sun-flickering child" (Claimant 378), and a possible blood-tie between them is overlaid with an old resentment.

Ned grows into a bright but grave young man, thoughtful and "a little pale," although "without positive unhappiness" (Claimant 409). He becomes a "poetic youth" (Claimant 424), "of a poetic and singular mind . . . with a brooding habit taking outward things into itself, and imbuing them with its own essence, until, after they had lain there awhile, they assumed a relation both to truth and to himself, and became mediums to affect other minds with the magnetism of his own" (Claimant 425). Living too much inwardly, however, Ned develops an overwrought imagination. His seclusion, the narrator says, had a customary effect on him: "it had made him think ridiculously high of his own gifts, powers, attainments, and at the same time doubt whether they could pass with those of others; it made him despise all flesh, as if he were of a superior race, and yet have an idle and weak fear of coming in contact with them, from a dread of his incompetency to cope with them; so he at once depreciated and exalted, to an absurd degree, both

himself and others" (Claimant 426). Such a dread of incompetency seemingly threatens to overcome Hawthorne in these fragments. Incessantly questioning how to proceed, how to make his characters fit into works from which they tend to maintain some distance, and how to determine what all of this means, he concludes over and over that not only are completion and closure unlikely to him at this time, they seem alien to him at present.

Ned, as the author sees him, is quite remarkable for his "personal beauty . . . the most intelligent and expressive face that can be conceived, cheering, in those early years, like an April day, and beautiful in all its changes, dark, but of a soft expression, kindling, melting, glowing, laughing--a varied intelligence, which it was as good as a book to read" (Claimant 95-96). The doctor is a genealogist and collector of relics, and Ned takes a special interest in these antiques, not only because he is imaginative by temperament, but out of a strong personal curiosity as well: "And so the boy's thoughts were led to dwell on by-gone things; on matters of birth and ancestry, and connections of one family with another; and blood running in such intricate

currents; sometimes sinking into the ground and disappearing forever; sometimes, after a long-hidden course, reappearing, and ascending prominently like the gush of a fountain. And probably it was such meditations as these that led him to think, occasionally, what had been his own origin; whence came that blood that circled through his own veins. I presume there are more people occasionally occupied by such speculations in a democracy, where all claims of birth are nominally annulled, than in any land of nobility and hereditary honors; because, in the former, there is an uncertainty that admits all to claim even royal blood" (Claimant 98).

Elsie, by contrast, is happier than Ned. She has benefitted from his schooling, learning many of the same lessons at his side; but, unlike Ned, she has access to two kinds of knowledge. In addition to her school work, she learns needlecraft from Hannah, through whom she develops a streak of wildness. Elsie is all Ned has "to keep life real, and substantial," and yet she, too, is led by him through the "dream scenery" (Claimant 426) in which he lives. Not having known the early love of a mother, the narrator says, Ned has had only Elsie to teach him about

life. She was "the boy's preserver, being childhood, sisterhood, womanhood: all that there had been for him of human life" (Claimant 429). And because of the deprivations that he had suffered, Ned is not all that he might have been, there being "in abundance, great, uncultivated wastes and wildernesses in his moral nature, tangled wilds where there might have been stately venerable religious groves" (Claimant 430).

The character of the doctor and Ned are interdependent. Dr. Grimshawe enrolls Ned in a country school, where he leaves him to begin his "free circulation," "to be drawn out of himself, and made to share the life of many" (Claimant 430), where he would learn a new loneliness, "the loneliness of a crowd" (Claimant 431). Without Ned, however, the doctor appears to have lost a reason to live. He drinks excessively, his mind wanders, and he sometimes calls out for the schoolmaster, Seymour, who entered and then abruptly left the life of the old house. Grimshawe hired Seymour to teach the two children, and he proved to be another link with a possible English past. The descendant of an old New England family, his own traditions included a bloody-footstep legend, although different from

the one Dr. Grimshawe had told Ned. This family kept a tradition about a silver key, which would open a locked coffer containing a family treasure.

When Ned, as Middleton, arrives at the manor house, he is warned to avoid the squire, who has a volatile temper. The squire, presented as a Catholic villain, is almost as much a stranger in England, the narrator says, as Middleton is, and the old story of the bloody footstep and of possible family madness are attached to him. When he discovers Middleton, however, they talk about many things, including the American character. The squire says that he has "sympathy with what is strong and vivacious to-day; none with what was so yesterday" (Claimant 67). He grants Middleton permission to enjoy the estate grounds, but reacts violently when Middleton, referring to the legendary bloody footstep, calls it a mere stain. Hawthorne breaks into this segment to summarize, and he proposes a new chapter on the squire, one in which he might be portrayed as a shy and morbid man.

To his growing list of musings and ponderings Middleton adds his relationship with Alice. She puzzles him. She seems more American than English; and judging by her free spirit, she is

unlike the young English ladies he observes. He wonders whether her father may have been an American, someone who had come to England. Hawthorne sketches in a tentative plot in which her father may have some connection to Middleton's own father. He may even have caused Middleton's father's ruin. It is Alice, finally, who guides Middleton to the estate. When she takes him into the house, he experiences a dream-like feeling; and with Alice steadying him, he enters a room with an ancient cabinet. This cabinet proves to be the stately palace of the family legend, a diminutive mansion, a double for the palace of the ancient tradition that Middleton hopes to follow through to its conclusion. Middleton recognizes in the cabinet the imaginative center of a tradition, of reality in miniature, a palace only four feet high. Alice tells Middleton that he holds the key to the cabinet. Dreamily he opens it and presses downward on its interior floor, revealing only an empty secret chamber.

Hawthorne appears to be commenting here on the difficulty in finding an answer to his search, throughout these pieces, for a way to tell the story. The narrative keeps coming up empty, even though many intermittent signs point him in

possible directions. He steps back again to speculate on the characters and on the story as currently framed. He offers a preview of possible plot developments, moving forward his idea of the old pensioner, now called Hammond, as a man of dignity and venerable aspect, Hawthorne says, one who commands attention and respect among the other residents of the hospital. Only the master of the hospital and its trustees may know of his true circumstances, and he should appear to warrant special courtesy from them. Hawthorne wonders, what if each beneficiary of the hospital's charity since its founding had kept a record of the events that had brought him here? The idea of such a true narrative based on their personal histories appeals to him, and, as he expresses in his notebooks, he wishes that he had recorded their stories. Hawthorne sees, between Middleton and Hammond, the possible attraction of two strong men with cultivated minds. They will talk about the affairs of their two countries, and Hammond may show a knowledge of America. Perhaps he has even been to America, for he has more than the standard English appreciation of the American character, the narrator says. Hawthorne uses their relationship to insert an extended

pronouncement on American-English relations, stating, in part, that England can never understand America because two hundred years of separate life, different climates and circumstances, and the mixture of nationalities in every part of America, except New England, has led to a new type of national character. And while the two countries may both boast noble men, it is the American who has the breadth of thought to appreciate England, even though this appreciation may not be reciprocated.

A new view emerges of Alice, whom Middleton has seen several times in his travels around the countryside. Her seeming independence and freedom make him wonder about her station in English society. She goes out alone, for example, not in the company of a companion as the young English women do. She sketches historic scenes in the surrounding villages, scenes that Hawthorne especially appreciated--old churches, ivy-covered ruins, and an old elm tree. Middleton wonders how it could be that, like Hammond, she has some knowledge of him and of his search. And like the old pensioner, Alice also has American characteristics. Her liveliness and slight beauty associate her with America, not England, in

Middleton's and in Hawthorne's thinking. And although she may appear to be "a beautiful devil," the narrator says, Alice will ultimately be shown to be "an angel of light" (Claimant 57).

Hawthorne continues to review her character. While developments show that Middleton is in fact the rightful heir to the estate and title and that the present holder of the estate will die tragically, amid ruin of his own making, Middleton will renounce his inheritance and leave England with Alice to "become the Adam and Eve of a new epoch" and agents "of a new social faith" (Claimant 58). Hawthorne continues, however, to puzzle over her. She remains a mystery to Middleton as well, free and fearless in spirit, not English in manner; polite, yet neither shy nor reserved. Striking a modern chord, Hawthorne says that she reminds him "of the theories of those, in our own country, who believe that the amelioration of society depends greatly on the part that women shall hereafter take, according to their individual capacity, in all the varied pursuits of life" (Claimant 70).

Middleton's character is developed further in contrast with that of the hospital warden. He is received as a guest in the warden's private

apartments, which are handsomely and comfortably furnished. Enjoying such hospitality, he talks at length about himself. He was educated in the law, he says, but turned to a career in politics, serving in Congress for a term and losing his reelection bid. Believing himself to be too sensitive by nature for a political career, he has come to visit England. And as a sensitive American, he says, he cannot fail to respond to many elements of his English heritage. He shows an extraordinary interest, for example, in the warden's books on genealogy and heraldry. "Age is our novelty," he says, "therefore it attracts and absorbs us" (Claimant 148). Studying county histories, he comes across the history of the founding of the hospital and a reference to the ancient founding of the family; and this account includes mention of the bloody footstep legend, of which he has a vivid childhood memory.

Ned, it turns out, holds considerable appeal for the warden, who thinks that he is more like the English, than the Americans. He talks to him about English emigrants to America, of unsuspected relationships that must exist between many families in England, and of unknown ties with the new world, where the family tree now existed, with

a new vigor, which the growth in England had lost. History, he said, proves that people need to be renewed every few generations. And still, for all of the warden's appreciation of the new world, the narrator says, he shares the English prejudice against Americans, for while Americans are superior to the English in manner, he adds, they do not come off well abroad because their peculiarities become exaggerated.

Ned enjoys the warden's company. As he regains his health, they tour the countryside together, visiting old churches and other historic sites. Ned becomes an enthusiastic lover of old things, closely observing the manor grounds, which is a deer park of great beauty. He is both charmed and repelled, however, by the English domestication of nature. "There is nothing really wild in your whole island I should have a madness for something genuine something that had not the touch and breath of man upon it" (Claimant 185). He responds with great emotion to the ancient family home, where generations of the same family had lived, each one, he thinks, making the most of their lives.

As Hawthorne continues to clarify for himself what he calls the actual chain of events, he makes

another lengthy review of his characters and of possible plots, pondering how deeply to conceive the story outline with regard to the original events. He reviews the relation of the legendary brothers. Perhaps two conspired to murder a third, but perhaps he was not really murdered, but sent away to America and thus cut off from his family. Isolated and in a strange land, he became stern and ascetic, despising worldly things, leaving an American family and a document that held clues to his origins. He questions the characters of the old doctor and the palmer. Who are they? he asks himself, in an apparent effort to determine for himself what the histories of these two will be in the finished work: descendants of a younger son, messengers sent in search of family ties? Something is needed here, he writes, to account for an "action for the story" (Claimant 197), something to propel it artistically. He says that he wants to make it appear "as if dead men's business, that had been buried with them, came to life again, and had to be finished now...." Hawthorne answers his own query: "Truly this is hard; --here's the rub; and yet without it, the story is meagre and barren" (Claimant 198).

Hawthorne steps back again: "This old man-- what could he possibly be? . . . The story must not be founded at all on remorse or secret guilt-- all that I've worn out. Alas me! . . . There is a latent something lying hereabouts, which, could I grip it, 'twould be the making of the story. . . . I don't see my way yet, nor anything like it. But if I could get rid of any great crime on the part of the family, it would be better. Here, then, is a meek, patient, unpretending, wise old man, who developes peculiarities which draw the attention of profound observers upon him; though others see little that is remarkable in him. This is a better aspect than what I at first thought of. Follow out this clue stubbornly, stubbornly" (Claimant 198-99).

But Hawthorne is unsatisfied with the results. "Try back again;--Raise the curtain as before . . ." (Claimant 323), he writes, beginning once more. The setting is again the old house by the graveyard on Charter Street. This time, the spiders must be emphasized, he says, as the analogy of a plot suggested by their web. In what would be the last version of this fragment, Hawthorne writes, the pensioner must be introduced early, and Hammond must appear to be under the

doctor's influence. The doctor, who has been wronged, seeks revenge and somehow enslaves Hammond as his prisoner. "So easily said--so impossible to do" (Claimant 325), Hawthorne writes. And again: "I can't possibly make this out, though it keeps glimmering before me" (Claimant 327).

Hawthorne reflects often in this work on the character of the pensioner. "This wretched old pensioner keeps recurring to me, insisting that I have . . . not given him motive enough--or any indeed." Without sufficient motive, he says, the character "will not move" (Claimant 218). He considers starting at the pensioner's deathbed and working backward. While the story up to now suggests that Ned is the heir, the last hours of the pensioner's life might disclose that, in fact, he is the true heir. All of Hawthorne's proposed possibilities about the pensioner, however, need a central idea to pull them together: "I want a character to put him into" and "it must all be incidental to some main incident" (Claimant 219), he writes. In this same exploratory passage, Hawthorne writes: "The object of the book, to find the treasure-chest, which the silver key, found in the grave-yard . . . will suit"

(Claimant 220). The key unlocks a young woman's coffin, which is filled with locks of golden hair. Under her head is a rolled document, but its contents have been obliterated by the passage of time. He may hold a second silver key, he may come to "symbolize the strife which benevolence inevitably provokes, because it disturbs everything around it" (Claimant 220). Hawthorne works through possibility after possibility, looking for the rationale behind the pensioner's role in the story. Ned wonders, as the story resumes, what the lord of the manor is really like and what his secrets might be. Hammond tells him that, although the doctor left England nearly thirty years ago, he believes that the old man still exerts an influence over his life. Like the author in this case, however, he "could make nothing of it, nor reconcile the two characters in the least" (Claimant 295).

Hawthorne inserts a brief aside concerning the arrival of a stranger named Mountford, who, he says, may turn out to be the master of the hospital for pensioners later in the story. A "fresh-colored . . . young man" (Claimant 411), politely aloof, Mountford enters the narrative almost immediately, while Hawthorne works out,

parenthetically, what his appearance should be: "a refined, agreeable, genial young man, of frank, kindly, gentlemanly manners" (Claimant 412). Mountford is a lawyer who has come to see America, but who also has a particular errand that has brought him to the doctor's house. He is searching for a grave, and he tells Dr. Grimshawe another version of the family legend, explaining his search for a surviving heir. The grave marker that Mountford is seeking bears the sculpted impress of a foot, he says. Ned and Elsie, who know the grave markers intimately, take him to its exact location. When they find it, however, the grave has been freshly redug. After Mountford leaves, Ned and Elsie show the doctor a silver key that they found beside the fresh grave. Grimshawe gives the key to Ned, telling him that he will be the heir to whatever the key unlocks. The vagueness of this promise--whatever the key unlocks--mirrors the unresolved issues that Hawthorne is attempting to answer. Grimshawe does not know what the key unlocks because Hawthorne has not yet been able to discover it himself.

This same process of probing carries over into the Septimius fragments. Reflecting on these stories, Hawthorne writes in his first substantial

aside remarks in these fragments: "Our story has for its central object, to record the dreams, or realities, whichever they might be, of a young man who staked whatever prospects he had in life upon a strange pursuit in which he was encouraged by strange concurrent artifices, or delusions, which he followed with a deep, sombre enthusiasm that led to strange results. In the course of a narrative running along like a vine sometimes leads us amid historic events, and twines its tendrils around some of them, we accept the necessity of alluding to such, only because it is unavoidable; not really caring much for anything that took place outside of Septimius's brains, or merely as helping us to develop and illustrate what passed within it" (Elixir 209-210). This transition in thematic plan, from one of grim, grotesque quaintness in the claimant fragments to one of an internal narrative in the immortality fragments, indicates the shift that is taking place in Hawthorne's thinking. And while it indicates that the balance between fantasy and reality has finally moved toward the realm of imagination, Hawthorne continues to question the distinctions between dream and reality, as if to say that arriving at this special precinct is

still his goal.

Both Septimius and his opposite, Robert Hagburn, feel an affection for Rose, a character developed, like Hilda in The Marble Faun, as one of Hawthorne's model New England girls. Hagburn, who is ruddy and handsome, is known for his athletic ability and considered very fit for rural life. His house is situated close to the village, and he is thus delineated early as standing closer to society, less cut off than Septimius, who lives in an old gabled house, a two-storied New England dwelling with an air of sturdiness and permanence, but separated from the town, Hawthorne suggests, by the hold of the past. Septimius is like Hawthorne, brooding and meditative, with "a dissatisfied, wild look" in his eyes (Elixir 6).

In language that he had long applied to himself, Hawthorne confines Septimius within a characteristic seclusion that mirrors his own intellectual remoteness and lack of interaction with society. Robert and Rose, by contrast, talk easily of the public difficulties caused by the coming Revolutionary War. The two young people debate the older villagers' prevailing wisdom that the Americans have become weak and less courageous than their ancestors, but Septimius is too

preoccupied with his own concerns to join in their conversation. He believes that life is too short to matter, he says, "so much trouble of preparation to live, and then no life at all; a ponderous beginning, and nothing more" (Elixir 7). This argument might apply to writing as well: so much thought and preparation for works that are resistant to being written, all beginnings and no endings.

Rose speaks out of a traditional religious sentiment to challenge Septimius's gloomy outlook: it is worthwhile being born, she says, if only to enjoy a morning such as the one at hand; and that, moreover, God gives us many better things when this life is past. Septimius says that Robert and Rose might judge as well as he about the truth of conventional theological beliefs. Whatever proof there is of such spiritual matters, he says, is accessible to all, and the more one delves into these mysteries, the less wise one is likely to become.

Septimius is surprised by the appearance on his hill of a strange character named Alice, also called Sybil. She is a spiritual creature "simply unlike anything that had before come there" (Elixir 59). He discovers her beside the

soldier's grave, and she makes a mysterious claim to the path up the hillside as her own. She has been brought to the village from Boston by Robert to recover in the country from some great grief, the narrator says, thereby giving Robert knowledge that Septimius lacks. Aligned with the fantasy side of this story, Hawthorne says, she impresses Septimius more than if she "had been a thing of ghostology and witchcraft" (Elixir 63). He talks about this spirit-girl with Rose, who expresses a warm sympathy for her; but he responds coldly to her intrusion on his hill because she interferes with his meditations. He needs the help of a scientific man, he says, to help enlighten him in his study of "the bases and foundation of things, as to cryptic writings, as to chymical elements, as to the mystery of language . . ." (Elixir 64-65). Hawthorne suggests a wish for a quantitative solution to this dilemma, but he knows that art is too complex to hope for a scientific answer.

On his first spring walk up the hill, Septimius finds another stranger, Dr. Ormskirk, there. A chemist in the British army, who has stayed on in Boston after England's defeat, he is Sybil's guardian, he says; and especially interested in local botany and native spiders, he

talks at length about his scientific achievements. Septimius feels foolish at the thought of discussing the manuscripts with him, and he takes the stranger home with him where he sees Francis Norton's sword. Aunt Nashoba offers the doctor a taste of her herbal drink, and as they talk about herbal medicine, she repudiates his scientific talk with her own belief that natural remedies are worth more than learned science.

His last work, in which he explores the theme of an elixir that holds the promise of immortality, gives Hawthorne the opportunity to explore questions of life and death and to confront thoughts of his own mortality. Within this broad area, one that Hawthorne might call a moral universe, there is also ample room for other familiar observations: on the unpardonable sin of intellectual pride, the errors of social alienation, and the great dangers inherent in aesthetic pursuits. But as Hawthorne writes as an aside, the elixir story is chiefly "an internal one, dealing . . . with outward events, and taking hold of these, only where it cannot be helped, in order by means of them to delineate the history of a mind bewildered in certain errors" (Elixir 15-16). What kind of story would this be, he asks,

for although an "inward history" has no need of lively outward surroundings, "it is necessary" to include in it "the circumstances of the time" in which this history takes place (Elixir 16). The question that he poses to himself appears to be how to fit this internal story, unlike the stories that he has written before, into the romance form in which he is accustomed to working. This question becomes the greater part of the general investigation that Hawthorne makes in these pieces about the validity of his vocation and an urgent need to find a new way of working.

Throughout the Septimius fragments and continuing into "The Dolliver Romance," a melancholy man reflects on his life and work. Near the end of the first of these pieces, Septimius Felton, who resembles Hawthorne and whose thoughts are often intertwined with Hawthorne's own sentiments, assesses the importance of the various parts of this story, of which he is himself one. He questions the meaning of a text in which much appears to him to be wild and fantastical, and the thought occurs to him that the bloody footstep legend told by the spirit-character Sybil, a story "which looked so wild, might be all of a piece with his own present

life; for Sybil herself seemed an illusion, and so most strangely, did Aunt Keziah, whom he had known all his life . . .the grim Doctor, with his brandy and his German pipe, impressed him in the same way; and these, altogether, made his homely cottage by the wayside, seem an unsubstantial edifice, such as castles in the air are built of, and the ground he trod on unreal; and that grave, which he knew to contain the decay of a beautiful young man, but a fictitious swell formed by the fantasy of his eyes. All unreal; all illusion In short, it was a moment, such as I suppose all men feel (at least, I can answer for one) when the real scene and picture of life swims, jars, shakes, seems about to be broken up and dispersed, like the picture in a smooth pond, when we disturb its smooth mirror by throwing in a stone" (Elixir 100-101). Fantasy is juxtaposed to the real "picture of life," pursuing within these fragments an investigation of the nature of reality and illusion and their effects, as well as the effects of investigating them, on the writer's mind. This internal story becomes nothing less than an artistic analysis of the workings of Hawthorne's own thought process.

It is unclear why Septimius, in possession of

a possible elixir recipe, should want to live forever. He does not appear to enjoy life nearly so much as Robert does, nor does he feel himself to be a part of life to the degree that Robert does. In fact, the story implies that Septimius has been tested and found wanting, not in the least by himself, a fact that presses heavily on him in probing his predicament. What is he living for? Is religion a comfort or a burden to him? Are there any higher truths in which he can put his trust? Is life worth living at all, much less forever? His friends, Rose and Robert, both of whom stand firmly on the side of practical good sense, are skeptical about the wisdom of such a wish. Robert says that he believes it would be unfair to live forever, for we would be taking up places intended for others. The beauty of the physical world, he reminds Septimius, comes partly from the changes that take place in nature, from the fact that there is a time for everything, even for themselves.

Such conventional optimism appears, momentarily, at least, to have a positive effect on Septimius, and as the party disperses, he stops on his way home to enjoy the spring day. The atmosphere in the open air is very different from

the artificial light of his study, and he pauses in the doorway, half in the natural world, half in the artificial intellectual world that he has constructed for himself, acutely aware of its seemingly disparate real and unreal elements. This imbalance of feelings is a persistent theme in Hawthorne's writing, one which, from the early tales, expresses the idea that being cut off from ordinary life and from popular feelings and interests is unwholesome and not in the best interests of the individual or society. Like Hawthorne, Septimius pauses between two worlds, one of which is open, free, and accessible to all, and the other, private and cloistered, devoted to personal interests, not to the common good.

We see in Septimius's relationship to the circumstances of his day a cynicism in his dealing with his own difficulties. Already cynical about life, he is becoming cynical about the war as well; for although the British have taken Lexington, murdered the villagers, and burned the meeting house, he wonders only what difference such events make in so short a life. Reluctantly, however, Septimius joins in the excitement that the war has brought to the village. These turbulent events serve to heighten Septimius's

feelings of remoteness: "he felt himself strangely ajar with the human race, and would have given much, either to be in full accord with it, or to be separated from it forever" (Elixir 23). And yet, while his morbidity and seclusion continue to make him feel as if he is cut off from the world, he is wrong, Hawthorne writes, to believe that he is not caught up in the feelings that have excited his fellow villagers. "He was restless as a flame; he could not fix his thoughts upon his book; he could not sit in his chair; but kept pacing to-and-fro, while through the open window came noises to which his imagination gave diverse interpretation" (Elixir 23). If we accept the strong suggestion, for example, that Septimius shares some of Hawthorne's feelings toward war, as offered in "Chiefly about War Matters," we may appreciate the urgency that Hawthorne expresses for Septimius's dilemma of needing, but being unable, to take action. Septimius's unresolved wants and needs mirror Hawthorne's own unanswered searching.

The young British soldier whom Septimius kills also begs for Hawthorne's attention. "Make him very fascinating" (Elixir 218), Hawthorne writes to himself. When the young officer, half

playfully, challenges Septimius to a duel, they both fire and Septimius, without malice, strikes a fatal blow. Septimius has deprived him of life, perhaps even of living forever, the soldier says, and Septimius reflects on his life. He thinks about the killing, about Rose and Robert, whose houses are visible from his ridge, and about the young British officer's grave, which is still stained with his blood. Septimius sees and is seen from the remote territory of his hilltop, where his walking up and down the ridge has worn a path. This is Hawthorne's own path and he knows it well, as he also knows the inner turmoil that produces such restlessness.

Septimius's immersion in deciphering the manuscript is broken only by meetings with Rose, who restores his sense of reality: "she reconciled him, in some secret way, to life as it was, to imperfection, to decay; without any help from her intellect, but through the influence of her character, she seemed, not to solve, but to smooth away problems that troubled him . . . she softened the stoniness that was gathering about his heart" (Elixir 56-57). These words sound as if they come from deep within Hawthorne's heart, from a solitary man also in a close relationship

in which he feels that he must withhold himself. Septimius, however, has been confined to his study too long, Hawthorne writes; and in the fall, he sets out on the Lexington Road to Boston. The trip will be a good change for his frame of mind. Hawthorne interjects: "I have had it oftentimes myself, when long brooding and busying myself on some idle tale, and keeping my faith in it by estrangement from all intercourse besides, I have chanced to be drawn out of the precincts enchanted by my poor magic; and look back upon what I have thought, how faded, how monstrous, how apart from all truth it looks, being seen now apart from its own atmosphere, which is entirely essential to its effect." He adds, "put the above in the third person" (Elixir 130).

Hawthorne deepens Septimius's belief that it is his destiny to discover an elixir. Word circulates in the village that he is consumed by some important work. His indifference to the war going on around him, his intense intellectual endeavors, and his seclusion from society have cut him off further "from the common bond and destiny" (Elixir 149). He is engaged in a lonely pursuit; and if he should succeed in his efforts to discover immortality, he would become even

lonelier, as all he knew passed away, "so the longest life would be but an aggregate of insulated fragments, which would have no relation to one another, and so it would not be one life, but many unconnected ones" (Elixir 150), a statement subtly mirroring the relation of the fragments themselves.

Amid such circumstances, Septimius, his now half-sister Rose, and Robert Hagburn are talking in the early morning about the coming war. As Robert prepares to join the town militia, Septimius feels coolly detached. As an aspiring clergyman, he says, he must remain a man of peace. He could never murder, not even in the name of his country, because life is too precious to him. It is the effect of such turmoil on human life, says the narrator, that deep feelings make themselves known, suspending the ordinary rules that govern our behavior. Rose and Robert are driven to express their mutual affection for one another; and as Septimius observes their tenderness toward each other, he feels sympathy for their sentiment, although, in terms that describe the author, "out of the cold estrangement into which his morbidly meditative habit had led him, a sort of prisoner," lighting up his "dark, brooding brow" with a smile

(Elixir 214).

Hawthorne continues to examine contrasts between England and America. Debating with Robert whether or not Americans have become weaker than their English ancestors, Septimius says that he believes Americans may be intended to develop higher qualities and finer attributes and that he could never regret the loss of "brutal strength and brutal hardihood" (Elixir 215). He brings his thoughts up to the present for a moment, comparing the days before the outbreak of two great wars, in Septimius's case, the Revolutionary War, and in Hawthorne's, the Civil War, which had erupted two years before: "We stand afar off, but still may know sorrow best, from the experiences of our own day, of what emotions were in the atmosphere of that April morning, nearly ninety years ago. Ominous as the time was, it was a good time, as everybody felt, to be alive; a time when life was richer and dearer than yesterday, or even before, and yet could be flung down, as a thing of slightest moment, in lieu of other theories that appealed to the higher nature of those who had hardly been conscious of a nature higher than was concerned with the daily, homely, toil, till now; there was a nearer kindred, a sense of closer

sympathy from man to man, of higher love between man and woman; a sense of the sacredness of country" (Elixir 216-217). The past, he suggests, was a richer, more wholesome, and more meaningful time, a time of heroism, one in which human hearts "conspire together for something beyond their own selfish ends" (Elixir 218).

So it is that in spite of his efforts to maintain composure and indifference, Septimius is stirred by the excitement of so many people caught up in a collective passion. He is, however, like Hawthorne, detached from the tumult of his times, "a man of brooding contemplation, when the world around him is in a state of intense excitement, which he finds it impossible either to sympathize with, or wholly to avoid. He seemed to be strangely ajar with human sympathies, dissevered from them, incapable of being thoroughly stirred by those motives of patriotism, public spirit, or their cunning counterfeits, which were setting other people into such active motion" (Elixir 223-224). Septimius tries to take consolation in his studies, but he is disturbed by unpleasant thoughts. He thinks, romantically perhaps, that his strange detachment is a sign that he has been singled out for an exceptional destiny and that

this was why he so often "brooded unripenly on dark matters" (Elixir 224). "Why is it my doom to be only a cold spectator in life, standing apart, and gloomily brooding over what really concerns me not?" (Elixir 224), Hawthorne asks for Septimius. Septimius throws himself into his work, perhaps a little mad as a result of the unsettling wartime situation in which he is living, as well as from having murdered, even though he believes that it was in the name of duty. It is hard for him to return to his previous life, and at Rose's urging, he goes to look for Robert, as much to avoid the "quiet, sober influence in Rose, a sort of domestic influence, that he had often felt, that made him wish to escape her, when he had anything wild in his mind" (Elixir 256). He finds Robert wounded, but safe. They have both killed.

Septimius paces on the hill until he wears a broad path among "the calm, quietest landscape anywhere to be seen, not worth looking at once, yet good to have before one's eyes, day after day, and year after year, because it never thrusts itself forcibly in amongst the thoughts of a meditative man, asserting its claim to a place there, but always is ready for him, with a calm, mild sweetness, like the face of a placid,

sympathizing friend, when he turns to it for sympathy" (Elixir 283).

As he goes to Boston to consult a chemist regarding the elixir formula, Septimius sits along the way, "bewildered, fearing that he had lost his right of citizenship among men, a stranger on this solid earth, a companion of fictitious beings, and creatures of fable, a sham that ought to vanish with the morning mists; because, by such long energy and concentration of thoughts as he had applied to what had no existence, though he had done nothing towards making that real, he had at least exhaled this substance out of his own being" (Elixir 446). All men have felt the same despair, the narrator says, as our schemes rise up with an architectural magnificence, only to vaporize and then dissolve. "Perhaps none are more subject to it than Romance writers," writes Hawthorne, who "make themselves at home among their characters and scenery, and know them better than they know anything actual, and feel a blessed warmth that the air of this world does not supply, and discern a fitness of events that the course of human life has not elsewhere; so that all seems a truer world than they were born in; but sometimes, if they step beyond the limits of the spell, ah! the sad

destruction, disturbance, incongruity, that meets the eye; distortion, impossibility, everything that seemed so true and beautiful in its proper atmosphere, and nicely adjusted relations, now a hideous absurdity" (Elixir 446-447). It is difficult to know whether the absurdity is the lack of coherence that Hawthorne finds in his late works or in the whole of his effort as a romance writer; but it is clear that he believes that he belongs to a separate world that is apart from the real world, and one that is increasingly out of his reach.

Much of the Septimius story reads as a reverie. From his hill, Septimius sees the village from the summit behind his house, where the path has been worn by his "long series of meditative walks" (Elixir 226). He finds a scene "full of sunny and slumbrous peace," so "that the warlike pageant of the morning seemed a dream, such as, for many months past, had been passing through the excited brain of the country with every drumbeat and fantastic gleam of banners and weapons . . . without its possessing any real existence, although perhaps prophetic, and in the measured tramp, and the ruddy visages &c &c," (Elixir 227), as Hawthorne lets the story trail

off. Looking down on the village from his private spot, he hears shots and watches as the townspeople take aim at the enemy. "They seemed other, & the same," the narrator says (Elixir 228); in his morbid and cynical view, there appears to be something comic in their actions, and Septimius laughs out loud. He then falls into a deep meditation: seeking immortal youth, he has grown to resemble an old man. Has he sacrificed all that was precious to him for a meaningless fantasy? He suddenly feels the terrible doubts of reality: "You are a dreamer. . . . You are deluding yourself. You are toiling for no end" (Elixir 416). Robert was wiser, Septimius thinks, for choosing real life; he has been heroic and he is in love with Rose. Septimius, dejected, believes that he has denied himself love, which contains within it the kernel of immortality. He has sacrificed the reality for a delusion.

Chapter VI. By-gone Things

As a locus of decay and ruin, the graveyard receives detailed attention in both the claimant and the immortality works. "Grimshawe," for example, the last version of the claimant story, opens in a setting that is described as permeated by the "dust of the primeval ancestors" (Claimant 344). The old doctor's household, which is a symbol of contrasting youth and decay, literally breathes the dust of those who have preceded them, the Englishmen of the Puritan era, who, while their ancestors lay far away in battlemented Norman churchyards, had given their own "rich Saxon mould" (Claimant 344) to help civilize the wild forests of the new world. It is, as the repository of the original English settlers, "more English than anything else" (Claimant 344), a fact of perhaps little importance to their American descendants, the narrator implies, but one that is significant to Hawthorne in establishing a sense of the transforming quality of the passage of time. American soil, which was once English, he says, has become what Americans have made of it.

The land is still claimed by time, however, continuing to be in essence what it had been in the past. Generation rests upon generation, until the grass itself, says the narrator, is more human than vegetable. The doctor's house, which stands in the corner of the graveyard, is also old, but not so ancient as the town's seven-gabled houses of earlier date, representative in Hawthorne's earlier work of New England's colonial past.

The meaning of the past also impinges greatly on Septimius's spiritual dilemma. He tells the town minister that he feels unfit to become a clergyman, but his mentor and benefactor says that he has many qualities that suggest his fitness: his inherited Puritan sanctity, for example, a meditative turn of mind, grace, and a reputation for scholarship. Septimius still feels a genuine lack, he says, but the minister encourages him and urges him to prepare himself to serve the church, as has long been expected of him. The dilemma that he faces, Septimius says, is the same one that he has spoken of to his friends, the belief that life is too short either to be comprehended or appreciated: "The whole race of man, living from the beginning of time, have not, in all their number and multiplicity and in all their duration,

come in the least to know the world they live in!
And how is this rich world thrown away upon us,
because we live in such a moment" (Elixir 11-12).

This heartfelt questioning of the meaning of life, given, for each individual, its incomprehensible brevity, is one of Hawthorne's chief concerns in the last fragments. How can a human being, in the short time allotted, hope to achieve either personal happiness or success or to contribute toward the progress of the human race? For Septimius, who, it has been assumed, intends to take on the traditionally sacred role of clergyman, the question opens an even deeper void, one in which he truly doubts his faith. At home before his fireside and among his books, many of which had been passed down to him from his learned ancestors--"good and earnest divines" (Elixir 13)--he feels as if his doubts outweigh his belief and that only "a thin veil of reverence" (Elixir 13) keeps him from questioning his faith even more deeply than he already has done. Thoughts of death suggest to him that perhaps the world would be enough for man if he did not have to die. However, in spite of his mentor's advice to live more fully in the world, Septimius, like Hawthorne, remains secluded and immersed in his

books, in a world in which meaning is as removed from reality as pressed leaves are from a living plant--"brown, brittle, sapless," even though they seemed, "when the writer had gathered them . . . so beautifully colored and full of life" (Elixir 13-14). The true legacy of the fall of man, he thinks, has been to shorten our earthly life, "so that our life here at all is grown ridiculous" (Elixir 12). All of the routine and incidental activities of his life, in fact, have become searing reminders to Septimius of the sad outcome awaiting mankind. Hawthorne writes: "how I hate the thought and anticipation of that contemptuous sort of appreciation of a man, after his death. Every living man triumphs over every dead one, as he lies, poor and helpless, under his mound; a pinch of dust, a heap of bones, an evil odor!" (Elixir 15). The dark side of human experience, as pursued in Romanticism through images of death, ruin, and decay, gains prominence in this piece. Septimius is warned by his aunt against the ruin of wizardry and the black arts practiced by the devil, "though you," she says, as if describing the author, "with your dark complect, and your brooding brow, and your eye veiled, only when it suddenly looks out with a flash of fire in it, are

the sort of man he seeks most, and that oftenest serves him" (Elixir 122).

Hawthorne's final works also return to the theme of humanity's futile efforts to overturn nature. His scientists--wizards, herbalists, alchemists, and quacks, among them--often focus on ways to transcend the limits of mortality and ordinary human knowledge. He explores these characters from the early tales forward, focusing on the self-centered aspects of their sinister designs. In *Aylmer* and *Rappaccini*, for example, he had created men of science whose selfish experiments distorted their own humanity, leaving them willing to sacrifice the lives of others for the sake of their own knowledge. Hawthorne is always skeptical about the motivation of these characters, who, in reckless self-interest, seek out their own versions of the truth. As he comes back to this theme now, he is still stirred by the moral questions that it raises and by the mercurial nature of truth as he continues to dissect it in these last works.

Within Middleton's ancestral hall, for example, the narrator observes the process of history's repeating itself: ancestral trophies, family pictures, "beds that had been marriage beds

and dying beds, over and over again" (Claimant 46). As a touring party comes to a room that, in the past, had served as the master bedroom of the manor house and which, in the lore of the estate, is now called the haunted chamber, Middleton finds a room rich in antique appointments. The room's central object is an ancient cabinet of ebony and ivory, its contrasting black and white design suggesting the opposing directions that Middleton's apparent choice might take. Hammond steers Middleton toward this family heirloom and describes it in language associated with the family legend. It represents to him "a stately mansion, with pillars, an entrance, with a lofty flight of steps, windows, and everything perfect" (Claimant 46). He finds in it the representation, on a diminutive scale, of something he remembers from a dream, an actual copy of his imaginary vision of the lost family mansion. The lord of the manor invites Middleton to examine it closely, in effect inviting his enemy into his own house. Doors open upon smaller doors, leading to the interior of a miniature palace. The squire explains freely to Middleton that the cabinet is said to have contained an ancient secret, which, if found out, might throw

into question his claim to the hereditary line.

Middleton is overcome by such a discovery and feels faint in the presence of the miniature; and as the party departs, Hammond points out the fabled bloody footstep. Middleton expresses some skepticism about its reputed origins and concludes that it is indeed no more than a natural stain. He cannot resist, however, as he passes by, to measure his own footstep within the outline of the legendary coloration, like Electra measuring her own foot in the footprint of Orestes, a suggestion rich in literary history and one that foreshadows violence.¹

It is also one of Hawthorne's main objectives in these final writings to consider the legacies of the past. In the final elixir fragment, for example, Dr. Dolliver's predecessor, Dr. Swinnerton, an "ancient physician," was said by some in the town to have practiced "remedies of mysterious composition and dangerous potency," which were perhaps more likely to kill, than to cure, in less-skilled hands. He still prepares cures for some old-timers, and ladies patronize

¹ I am grateful to Felicia Bonaparte for calling my attention to this image, which, I believe, helps to suggest the possibility of a fruitful reading of the mythological implications of this material.

him for rose-water and other scented articles for their dressing tables. Ladies also appreciate his gentle manners, although, in recent years, his refinement has been replaced by "an almost rustic simplicity, such as belonged to his humble ancestors" and which "appeared to have taken possession of him, as it often does of prettily-mannered men in their late decay" (Elixir 460-461). Having grown absent-minded and no longer completely trustworthy to combine delicate mixtures that might prolong a life or at least guard against death, his age has replaced his former professional skill as a subject of public interest. He is regarded by the town as its oldest citizen, the one who remembers the great fires and snows, the one who traces his beginnings back to "the whole company of sainted Pilgrims" (Elixir 462).

On one particular morning, Dr. Dolliver and Pansie weed the doctor's small herb garden in which he grows a variety of medicinal plants. This little plot, which has been borrowed from the graveyard, contains many herbs well-known in European medicine as well as some adapted by the New England settlers from the Indian medicine-men. Combining the two is not without its dangers, says

the narrator, because the Indian doctors were thought to have derived their herbal knowledge from the devil himself. In Dr. Dolliver's private opinion, however, the Indian remedies are less dangerous than the Western cures that are used freely in society, because, as Hawthorne suggests repeatedly, the closer to nature they are, the closer they are to the imagination.

On his deathbed, Swinnerton called these rare plants to his pupil's attention and told him that they were the most valuable plants in the collection, worth more than all the others. Dolliver's grandson had believed his grandfather's stories about the legendary virtues of herbs, and they had a remarkable effect on his life. Precocious as a child, he devoted himself to research on the efficacy of his grandfather's scientific powers, and the herbs thrived under his care. He also delved into the scientific writings that Swinnerton had bequeathed to him and discovered that the manuscript was a combination of scientific writings and the words of ancient sages. As a result of his serious application to the apothecary trade that he inherited from his grandfather and his lengthy investigations of the manuscripts, the grandson's business thrived,

although by questionable means. He developed new medicines that became popular and very profitable, and the symbolic Brazen Serpent of the apothecary shop shone brightly once again. Such serpentine knowledge, association with darkness and evil, is equated here with scientific knowledge, which in this story is at odds with a traditional moral view.

Dolliver's grandson greatly exceeded his grandfather's success; and in spite of the old man's objections, built up a great prosperity with the profits from questionable goods. This prosperity came at great cost, however, for the grandson met a disastrous end. He was found dead one morning beside the hearth, among the ashes of Swinnerton's manuscript, only a few pages of which had escaped the fire. One of his last acts had been the destruction of the secret writings. When it was determined that he appeared to have died from taking his own poisonous drugs, the town believed that his cures had been evil and that the sign of the Brazen Serpent had become a sign of his iniquity. Because he had squandered a sizeable estate on his research, no legacy was left for Pansie, except for a few bottles of questionable medicine.

Middleton, accompanied by the old man whom he has met along the way, compares his companion to one of the itinerants Wordsworth describes in "The Excursion," someone who has learned a great deal from his journey and whose knowledge of life exceeds the learning gained from books and formal schooling. The old man has a knowledge of actual men, a great virtue in the world of the present story, where so much is either unknown or unknowable. Middleton is impelled on his journey by a wild story, Hawthorne's description of this work as well as of Middleton's impetus, drawn on, the narrator says, after two hundred years across the Atlantic to discover its truth or falsehood. Middleton, however, does not know how to proceed. He does not wish to conceal his identity nor the purpose of his search, but he feels that he has a right to safeguard his secret. Middleton speaks for Hawthorne and Hawthorne speaks for Middleton, and the center of the story continues to shift.

The family documents in Middleton's possession, the master tells him, show that his ancestor had encouraged the belief that he had been slain, but that he had actually fled to America, where he hoped to found a new race, unconnected with the past. This "new-Adam" theme

recurs to Hawthorne as a possible final disposition, but it is the working out of the intervening story that detains him. The brother instructed that the manuscript not be opened for two hundred years following his death. And in a tone and in language closely associated with his earlier romances, Hawthorne writes: "For seven generations, the family had vegetated in the quietude of English country gentility, doing nothing to make itself known, passing from the cradle to the tomb amid the same old woods that had waved over it, before his ancestor had impressed the bloody footstep; and, yet, the instant that he came back, an influence seemed to be at work that was likely to renew the old history of the family. He questioned within himself, whether it were not better for him to leave all as it was; to withdraw himself into the secrecy from which he had but half emerged; and leave the family to keep on, to the end of time perhaps, in its rusty innocence; rather than to interfere with his wild American character to distract it" (Claimant 18).

In this meditation on the past, Hawthorne continues to question whether Middleton is right to disturb things or whether it might not be

better to return to the secrecy that he had jealously guarded. A strong ambiguity emerges over Middleton's desire for secrecy, on the one hand, and his alternating desire to make his purpose known. The narrator recalls the story of the burial pit, and it is Middleton now who expresses the fear that the hatred and crime of the attempted murder will escape from the ground as he digs it up. The squire's accidental death has the effect of making Middleton's secret safe again. Where there had been two who knew it, there was now only one, Hawthorne says. Middleton weighs how best to deal with the accidental shooting. Would he not be suspected of acting in his own interests in killing the squire? Would someone else be blamed if he should deny knowledge of the real events? Alice discovers the shooting and displays an unaccountable knowledge of the events of the story. The squire's death at Middleton's hand was foreordained, she tells him, by his digging into the old pit of family secrets.

Hawthorne probes the old hospital and its ancient surroundings, which interest him greatly. It was so old that it seemed to him fresh and new. Middleton's interests are keenly aroused because

he feels close to the place that he has dreamed of since his childhood and in which he has believed he would discover his hereditary home. He thinks that there might be a possibility of living a quiet life here, in contrast to the turbulent life that he had lived in America. He savors the atmosphere of the past. He relates that he is living in an old farmhouse, from which he is gradually involving himself in the life surrounding him. Among this network of life, he expresses a strong interest in the hospital and the monotonous life of the old men under its protection. He becomes absorbed in books about county histories and local antiquities. Middleton engages one of the pensioners on topics of local English history, comparing it with New England lore, and on the vastness of the United States, which, he says, no one may truly know intimately. America, Middleton says, can never hold as much human interest as English soil kept in English families for generations. The pensioner questions Middleton directly about his purpose in pursuing their local history and makes a sharply chastising speech on American and English differences. Only Americans look back to England for their roots, he says, while European emigrants in England melt

into a homogeneous mass. Middleton, however, notes that in history, literature, and memory, Americans remain bound to England. And returning to the image of the burial pit, Hawthorne warns again that perhaps it is better to leave the secrets of the past buried. Alice warns Middleton that they are actors in "a deep, sad tragedy" (Claimant 56-57), and that responsibility for the extent of the catastrophe to follow rests with him. But Middleton says that he must let events take their own course.

In a conclusion that contains Hawthorne's most complex speculation on the plot of the claimant story, Middleton spends a night in the room containing the old cabinet and, on awaking, believes that he has dreamed about it. He presses a square on the cabinet's miniature floor, disclosing a key-hole. Using an antique key already in his possession, he opens a secret compartment that contains old documents. He feels compelled to close the cabinet, however, and not to look further into its contents. The moral, if there is one, the narrator says, is to "let the past alone" (Claimant 56).

Similarly, Septimius's wished-for scientific man appears as the eccentric doctor who startles

Septimius on his ridge. He has sought out Septimius for information and to engage him in conversation as a young man of learning. The two share a cynical regard for the value of knowledge and specifically, Hawthorne writes, for empiricism, placing the value of intuition and inner knowledge above that of outward truth perceived through the senses. The doctor is a student of spiders and herbs and has stopped on the hillside to examine local specimens. Going home with Septimius, he discovers the young British officer's sword there, and Septimius tries to protect his secret. "I care more for the present & future than for the past," he tells the doctor; but the doctor replies, "it is all one" (Elixir 74).

When Septimius shows the doctor a list of herbs that he has translated from the manuscript, the doctor warns him that the search for secret knowledge is a mistake, a folly of youth that is understood only later in life. Part of the problem, the doctor says, is the lack of discipline in youth and the loss of opportunity in maturity. Youth is a time apart, its own season, the doctor says. "In short, while young, the possessor of the secret found the terms of

immortal life too hard to be accepted, since it implied the giving up of most of the things that made life desirable . . . and when he came to a more reasonable mind, it was too late" (Elixir 77). Hawthorne may well have believed that as a young writer he had the ability and opportunities to develop his art more meaningfully, but that in his present circumstances, when he has the greatest need of innovation, these are denied to him. Septimius insists that the doctor read him the list of herbs. He finds nothing remarkable in the ingredients, the doctor says, which consist chiefly of commonly available components, but with the addition of some unusual ones. He warns Septimius that it may already be too late for "the Great Medicine" to work for him because he detects in Septimius "a great toughness, and hardness, and bitterness, about the heart . . ." (Elixir 79).

True to her symbolic name, Sybil replaces Septimius's aunt as a source of occult knowledge in the elixir stories. She lets Septimius know that the application of the crimson flower must be precise--"everything depends on its being applied in the proper way" she tells him (Elixir 126). Septimius understands the necessity of proceeding

correctly. "A danger always waits on everything that is very good," he says (Elixir 126), just as dragons and other wild and fiendish creatures guard gold and diamonds.

Leaving Boston and heading back toward his home, Septimius thinks that "he had not seemed like himself, during the time that elapsed since he left it, and it seemed an infinite space that he had lived through and traveled over But now, with every step that he took, he found himself getting insensibly back again into the old enchanted land. The mist rose up about him; the pale mist bow of ghostly promise arched before him; and he had trod back again, poor boy, out of the clime of real effort into the land of his dreams and shadowy enterprise" (Elixir 146).

Hawthorne reestablishes a romance in the story, but it is not to have a happy ending. Septimius begins to think about Sybil with tenderness and wonders whether he should not choose love and happiness with her over immortality. Finding a silver key that he had removed from the slain officer and remembering the doctor's strong urging that he investigate an iron-clasped box that his aunt had kept, he searches and finds the box among the cast-away

contents of the attic. The box has a medieval-looking design, "a representation of Adam and Eve, or of Satan and a soul; nobody could tell which; but at any rate an illustration of great value and interest" (Elixir 154). The exact meaning of this ancient and possibly religious imagery appears, at the moment, unimportant; and the very lack of any specific detail attributes to the past an amorphous influence. Perhaps the past offers Septimius the means of dealing with the difficult manuscript, perhaps this repository of the ages holds an answer to his investigations; but Robert, the strongest representation that we have in this story of the present, interrupts Septimius just as his search promises to yield the mystery of the box's contents. Handsomely dressed in the uniform of the militia, he is distressed to find Septimius looking so sad. Septimius studies too much, Robert says. He urges his friend to come with him and join in the war. Septimius, however, says that he has another destiny, but Robert warns him that theirs "is not a generation for study, and the making of books . . ." (Elixir 158). As soon as Robert leaves, Septimius returns to the locked box. The silver key opens it, revealing an ivory lining, carved in medieval images "representing

some mythical subjects" (Elixir 160). The quasi-religious images of the exterior have yielded to mythical subjects on the inside, perhaps giving to myth a greater power to resolve this search for meaning.

In the evening, Septimius again takes out the secret document, "that bewitched, mysterious, bullet-penetrated, blood-stained manuscript, the secrets of which might be expected to fade under the light of noon, or any glimpse of the natural sun, and only to shine out in lurid light, phosphorescent, glimmering, when other means of seeing and interpretation were withdrawn" (Elixir 303). He thinks of the parchment manuscript as a ruined Gothic building, as a series of intricate vaults that are dimly lit and hard to make out. Then his eye comes across the same single sentence that he has seen before. It is not written in the form of a normal sentence, however, but as words sprinkled over a page waiting to be brought together: "Plant the seed in a grave, and wait paitently for what shall spring up. . . . wondrous rich, and full of juice" (Elixir 304). In disposing of the slain soldier's property, Septimius conceals the parchment package, arguing with himself that perhaps he should destroy it.

He knows, however, that his thirst for knowledge, particularly hidden knowledge, assures that sooner or later he will open the document and read it.

It was said that one of his ancestors had communicated with the devil by writing on scraps of paper and tossing them into the fire, and Septimius wonders whether fate may not have brought the manuscript into his possession.

Septimius believes himself to be untroubled by his conscience and has no horror of the grave on his hilltop, but he smoothes the mound to make it less noticeable. From his vantage, he sees Rose and Robert and his emotions are complicated. Toward Rose, his half-sister, but with whom he was brought up as a brother, he felt "a kind of intimate strangeness, that had thrills of a more poignant delight in it. It was a kind of affection, not unsusceptible of a degree of jealousy" (Elixir 276).

Growing ill and aware of all that Septimius has suffered to learn the secrets of the manuscript, his aunt wants to tell him the recipe for her herbal drink, but she is dying. Hawthorne shares in the prospect of the aunt's death, because she is as much a symbolic reference to himself as Septimius and Sybil are. Her

knowledge, like the artist's, lies outside reality. And when she has finished giving Septimius the list of magical herbs, he discovers that it is the same one that he has toiled so long to decipher from the secret document.

So it is that, returning to his study, Septimius tries to arrange his thoughts. He looks at himself in the mirror for the first time in a long while and sees himself as another person: "the most obvious mark that the past months of intense mental action had left upon him, was a deep furrow, or corrugation, or fissure, as it might almost be called, which was cut perpendicularly between his eyebrows . . . but besides this deeply engraved word, there were various smaller and slighter scribblings, in which he could read the cares that had consumed his bloom, quite as distinctly as any portion of the old manuscript" (Elixir 415).

Chapter VII. Transformation

Hawthorne's hope of transforming the final works into a new form of writing is expressed directly and also implied in a number of ways. As Ned's moral instructor, for example, Dr. Grimshawe develops a great capacity for expressing religious and moral sentiment, so much so that he often appears transfigured by this heightened state. He returns to his base nature, however, to an "uncouth, wild-bearded, rough, earthy, passionate man" (Claimant 375), who tries to deny any real importance to the spiritual. His housekeeper, who is imbued with magical powers, blames the giant spider for exerting an evil influence over the doctor. The children are, nevertheless, sufficiently touched by his occasional preachings to become religious, the narrator says; but they keep their feelings secret from this unpredictable guardian. The basis of Dr. Grimshawe's transformation is unreliable, therefore, and it is exacted at a considerable emotional cost.

Deeply disturbed in his dealings with the schoolmaster, Dr. Grimshawe undergoes another

transformation. He is portrayed as seething and burning, smoldering at the thought of the possible outcome of his situation. Hawthorne compares him to Aaron, as having cast his thoughts into a hot furnace and anxious about the form in which they might emerge. Such an analogy might also describe Hawthorne's state as, time after time following completion of The Marble Faun, he mounts a great effort to overcome the limits that his work appears to impose upon him. The importance that Hawthorne places on achieving the doctor's true character suggests that the ability to transform and to become transformed is crucial to this truth.

Grimshawe is greatly agitated in an exchange with the schoolmaster, who perceives that the doctor is suffering considerably. The old man tries to communicate the depth of his concern over a matter that has obsessed him. "What would I be likely to do," asked Doctor Grim, "supposing I had a darling purpose, to the accomplishment of which I had given my soul--yes, my soul--my hopes in life, my days and nights of thought, my years of time; dwelling upon it, pledging myself to it; until, at last, I had grown to love the hideous, to bed it, and not to regret my own degradation.

I, a man of strongest will. What would I do, if this were to be resisted?" (Claimant 401). While this rhetorical question may appear overly dramatized, at its most simple it speaks to an underlying question besetting Hawthorne: what is he to do, having pledged himself to works that will not be written and facing questions that refuse to be answered? These final works demonstrate the extent to which Hawthorne pledged himself to achieve such answers and the corresponding extent to which his efforts were resisted. As Grimshawe grows increasingly strange, further demonized by alcohol, rumors spread among the townspeople of a violent nighttime transformation in which he became the embodiment of evil, his "fragmentary curses" described as "boiling lava, scorching and scintillating stones, and a sulphurous atmosphere, indicative of its inward state" (Claimant 403). In their fragmentary state, these stories may well have seemed like "fragmentary curses" to Hawthorne.

In a passionate episode evoking reconciliation, Hawthorne lays the groundwork for yet a further transformation. Grimshawe expresses deep disappointment in Ned for not becoming the man the old doctor wants him to be. Ned thinks

too much, he says, and has failed to develop a manly character. He says that he regrets rescuing him from the almshouse, becoming more and more deeply enraged until finally he tries to strike the young man. These dual concerns--of manliness and of the outsider, both sound embodiments of Romantic themes expressed in the novels of Scott, for example, books that Hawthorne admired--resist the author's efforts to make something more of the character of Ned. For his part, however, Ned, although ashamed and embittered, withstands Grimshawe's verbal and physical attacks, summoning what Hawthorne calls a Roman calm and dignity that make him appear less childish. The doctor is amused by Ned's resentment and by the bitterness that his attacks have unleashed; but he seems genuinely sorry for hurting Ned and tells him that he has put all of his hope into bringing Ned up to accomplish what he has been denied an opportunity to achieve. This confession opens another round of strong emotion between Grimshawe and Ned, and their earlier anger gives way to a warm affection, resulting in a cathartic release in which the two orphaned children and the solitary Dr. Grimshawe felt something like "that delicious embarrassment of two lovers, at their first meeting after they

know all" (Claimant 428). Hawthorne draws a connection here between sexual love and brotherly affection, a fusion of eros and agape. The connection, however, suggests an incestuous union and a need for separating such forces in a secular age.

In "Septimius Norton," the second immortality fragment, the landscape, like the hero of the story, has been transformed. Opening in a meditative tone in a setting that looks toward sunset on the ridge behind Septimius's--and Hawthorne's--house, there is a broad view of the river, which, although sluggish now, once shone like a gleaming lake. This was his favorite place, where he walked every day, as he turned over in his mind thoughts on subjects that might occupy a young man who has recently completed his undergraduate education at a venerable New England college. Mixed into these meditations, however, are other thoughts rising "insidiously or violently" (Elixir 196) like weeds invading the careful cultivation of his Puritan training. Here it is that this "young man of a slender and alert figure, a dark, brooding brow, and eyes that usually seemed looking inward, except when called especially to outward objects, when they glittered

with a quiet gleam like Indian eyes . . ." (Elixir 196), a description compatible with a younger Hawthorne, goes to think.

A mysterious transformation occurs when Septimius tries to make the young British soldier comfortable and waits with him while he dies. Lying on the ground near the wounded man, he thinks about the strangeness of the passing circumstances and of his part in them: "It seemed so dreadful to have reduced this gay, animated, beautiful being to a lump of dead flesh, for the flies to settle upon, and which in a few hours would begin to decay . . . that delicious beauty for women to love, that strength and energy to make him foremost among men--all come to nothing" (Elixir 31). This unflinching gaze into the face of death is personal, and Hawthorne searches for possible amelioration. When Septimius returns, for example, the soldier is dead, but his face appears radiant and triumphant: "It was an expression contrived by God's Providence, to comfort, to overcome all the dark auguries that the physical ugliness of death inevitably creates, and to say, by this divine glory on the face, that the ugliness is a delusion" (Elixir 33).

Later, as Septimius meditates on the life

that he has ended, he rationalizes that it was not a murder, but a patriotic act. Privately, however, he shudders at the reality, "for reducing that gay, beautiful boy to a lump of dead flesh, which a fly was already settling upon, and which must speedily be put into the earth else it would grow a sensible horror . . ." (Elixir 240). What a waste death is, thinks Septimius. "This beauty of form, and bright intelligence of feature, to be exchanged for some mode of being intangible, invisible Would it not be the easier work for the Creator to make an entirely new being, than to change this one into anything so excellent and beautiful as he had already been, and had ceased to be" (Elixir 240). As Septimius and his aunt bury the soldier, Septimius believes that his victim's face is transfigured, becoming angelic and enraptured. He theorizes that the dead man's blissful visage may be only "a token of that contemptuous kindness (it was Septimius's expression, not ours)," the narrator says, "which Nature shows, in innumerable ways, for our physical comfort, never giving us a needless anguish; and so, when death is inevitable, then she has contrived that the bitterness of it should be past, and that the last effect of life, and the

last sensation of the body, before feeling quite deserts it, should be a thrill of the very highest rapture that the body has ever experienced" (Elixir 246).

Aunt Nashoba lays a bed of evergreen branches in the bottom of the grave and covers the soldier's body with another layer of the green boughs before they fill the grave with soil. The reference to evergreens, symbolic of the mythic power of nature's perpetual life-force, may also refer to the Resurrection, placing this event in a dual context. Ancient traditions may compensate for religious doubt here, for Septimius is unwilling to put his complete faith in the religion of the church. Nature, however, no matter how harsh, is also sustaining.

His aunt gives Septimius a parchment case that is tied and sealed with wax and advises him to keep it, perhaps as proof of an inheritance, since they may be burying a Norton relative, she says. Septimius, however, is more interested in discovering whether the packet may have some connection to the dying soldier's mysterious remarks about being robbed of an unending earthly existence; and in spite of the dying man's wish that his papers be buried with him, Septimius

decides to examine the contents of the case first. The present, therefore, exerts a stronger influence than either the past or the future; and it is within this present that Hawthorne must continue his efforts.

Rose and Sybil, although quite different, adapt well to each other. As opposites, Rose is the gentle New England girl; Sybil is wayward and impulsive. But even in her wildness, the narrator says, it is her nature to bring the two young women close, an example of a relationship, as in that of Hilda and Miriam, which has transforming qualities. Rose believes that Sybil may be in love with her brother, "for Septimius, with that Indian grace of his figure, that dark, expressive face of his, with a certain natural courtesy towards woman, which distinguished him, was not ill-calculated to make an impression on an imaginative girl's heart" (Elixir 390).

The exotic flowers that grow on the soldier's grave, like the corpse itself, have only a transitory reality. The thought occurs to Septimius that the dead soldier has been transformed into the wildflowers growing on his grave plot, giving them some of his own characteristics and bringing him back to life in

their deep color and delicate fragrance. When Sybil appears on the hilltop, pulling up flowers out of the grave, it strikes Septimius, from the young woman's odd behavior, that she may be a little mad, as she searches intently for a particular flower. He wonders whether she may not be one of the many types of wanderers who pass through country villages, drifters who help to tie together distant parts of the world. Overcome by a wild mood, Sybil tears up the flower and throws it away. Deeply shaken by the loss of something that he has taken to be a powerful sign from nature, Septimius comes close to madness himself. In the morning, however, the grave is overrun with the exotic blossoms, which "lasted but a day in perfection, and the next morning were decayed, and their pleasant, though heavy fragrance changed to something disagreeable . . ." (Elixir 398-399). Hawthorne comments here again on the transforming power, for better or worse, that nature holds over mankind and, by extension, on the necessity of transformation. Upon examining a specimen of the crimson flower, Septimius's sought-after doctor tells him that it is not really a flower at all but a rare fungus, so rare as to be thought fabulous and surrounded by superstition.

Hawthorne undertakes journeys in each of the last works. As the elixir ripens in a crystal globe, for example, Septimius thinks that he can see the future and the past in it: the witches' meetings, the old English hall, his aunt dying, and Sybil beckoning to him to come into the sphere. To share his immortality with Sybil becomes symbolic of joining the parts of himself, for she appears to be the true means of his self-knowledge. They share an understanding that they will undertake the mystery of the elixir together. Combining, as their characters do, elements of the exotic and the pale, Hawthorne lets them talk about how their life together will be once they are immortal, of their great triumphs, and of the extraordinary things that they will achieve for mankind. Sybil foresees that after many ages, Septimius will finally be ready to take up the sacred profession for which he has long prepared himself.

In a conclusion that succeeds in leaping out of the indecision that marks much of these stories, this mysterious pair comes at last face to face with the power of the elixir. As Septimius works in his study, Sybil appears at the doorway. They look at the elixir together, and

she tells him that she loved the young soldier whom he killed. Her first thoughts toward Septimius were of revenge, she says, but she has abandoned her original purpose. Quickly taking up the goblet and drinking the mixture, she mocks Septimius with her eyes and lets the glass fall on the hearth, breaking and spilling the remaining contents. She warns Septimius to watch the effects that the elixir has before mixing it again. There were two potions, she tells him, one a secret immortality drink, the other one a poison. Although she had once hoped to see Septimius poisoned, she says, she loves him now and has drunk the mixture herself to save his life.

Similarly, one of the final images in the Dolliver fragment is also of a marvelous transformation. Removing a silver stopper from the bottle, Dr. Dolliver empties a drop of the mixture into a glass of water. It is miraculously changed: "it dropped into it with a dazzling brightness as it fell, like a spark of ruby flame, and subtly diffusing itself through the whole body of water turned it to a rosey hue of great brilliancy, which he held up between him and the light, and seemed to admire and wonder at it"

(Elixir 480-481). And it is, symbolically, between himself and the light that Hawthorne holds up this story, the better to see and understand it.

In each of the three final pieces, Hawthorne talks about the limits of the earth to destroy. He reflects on death and on how it may be a good thing, but not without frequent and highly charged emotional rejections of the inevitable. Septimius, for example, is joined on the hillside, his peaceful and solitary retreat, by the village minister, who shares in a general expectation for Septimius's success in preparing himself for the ministry. Now, however, expressing doubts about his faith, he tells the minister that faith is easier for him in his study. Outside his books, he says, he finds many doubts and troubling thoughts waiting for him, "a wild growth, that springs up, do what I will, from seeds that I have not sown wilfully" (Elixir 198). Running counter to the view of Hawthorne as a Puritanical moralist writer, these thoughts are personalized in the autobiographical image of "Septimius's dark forehead, where there were already indications of a perpendicular furrow between the eyebrows. . . ." (Elixir 199). The minister counsels Septimius to

ignore his doubts and to act as if he has faith. Septimius cannot accept this advice, however, for he is haunted by doubts that he must examine. "What if I find that what I took for Belief, is but a slothful mental habit, an early prejudiced impression never faithfully examined, a formality, a surface, a fossil, a dead root that was alive in some other person's mind . . .," he says (Elixir 199-200).

Such doubts seem to be not only a growing part of Septimius's outlook but of Hawthorne's as well. Expressing shock and concern at such words when Septimius says them, the minister questions the possible connection between this line of thinking and his family legend about an ancestor who actually achieved immortality. In spite of his aunt's wild stories, and partially dismissing such an idea, Septimius says, he truly believes that the creator of the world intended that mankind, so elaborately wrought, should not die without fulfilling a great destiny. What a waste, Septimius declares, to receive such a world as ours only to relinquish it in the short lifetime that we each receive. It must have been the creator's original idea to offer mankind eternal life, he says; so the true effect of the fall of

man has been to deprive us of our promised existence by shortening human life to only a few years. These thoughts put a different light on the fall theme and on Hawthorne's use of Adam and Eve; for at the end of his life, he expresses disappointment at its brevity and anxiety over its unfulfilled promise. We sense a personal understanding as Septimius's mentor urges him to get away from his books, from his dismal routine, even from his hilltop, where, as a spectator, he watches the coming and going of the villagers around him.

Yet so long as the possibility of a longer life exists, if only in magic or in books, Hawthorne seems to maintain, it is possible to entertain the idea of a limitation on the power of the earth, which gives us life, to destroy us. So Septimius's absorption with thoughts about immortality intensifies as his aunt tells him stories about his Puritan ancestors and of his Indian predecessors as well. His great-grandfather was a great Puritan divine, she says, who, in language reminiscent of "Young Goodman Brown," "made the very leaves wither on the trees, and sent them flying over the sky, with the fierce blast of his denunciations against the wicked"

(Elixir 207). Yet this great preacher, his aunt says, is no longer remembered by anyone.

Septimius dwells on his aunt's memory of the old Puritan preacher, hating the thought, he says, of the professed appreciation of the living for the dead. He has a great antipathy toward death, he says: "Death is an alien misfortune, a prodigy, a monstrosity, a foul and cowardly defeat . . ."

(Elixir 208). In an uncharacteristically "heroic mood" (Elixir 208), however, he vows to redeem himself from such a terrible fate; but this brilliant mood soon passes, and Septimius spends another evening among his books.

Observations on death are woven throughout the immortality fragments: how long is too long to live and what is the sense of life? Septimius explores such questions when, in an effort to escape his aunt's supernatural influence, he goes up to the hilltop, where he finds Rose and Sybil. A sibyl, of course, has the power to prophesy the future, and Septimius has a very great need of such knowledge. Sybil says that heroism is possible only because we are mortal and life is uncertain; but Septimius disagrees. Life is a farce, he says, and the grave inevitably takes us at an inopportune moment.

In the presence of death, Hawthorne conveys a horror that can be escaped only by retreating to the trusted solace of his hilltop. So it is that when Septimius's aunt dies, clasping his hand, "he sat watching her, and gazing at her, and wondering and horrified, touched, shocked by death, of which he had so unusual a horror . . . " (Elixir 124). Escaping to the hilltop, his "refuge on all occasions when the house seemed too stifled to contain him" (Elixir 125), Septimius finds that crimson flowers now cover the soldier's grave, crimson, a traditional color of the church in recalling Christ's passion prior to his sacrificial death. He wonders whether the flowers that he added to his aunt's herbal recipe may have caused her death, and he decides that in the interests of science, and perhaps of art as well, such a risk is justified. Hawthorne lets Septimius meditate further on death, on all the good that it does and on all the wrong that it prevents. Without death, the same minds would always rule politics, even literature, he thinks, "and admit no new ideas, no new tastes and imaginations, but keep new minds down, and never allow anything but the same wearisome old style . . . " (Elixir 127). Coming back again and again

to the idea, an absurd one, the narrator says, of earthly immortality, the hardest necessity of life, the narrator adds, is dying wholly unsatisfied: "if I had ever once been happy, methinks I could contentedly be shot to-day," Hawthorne writes in an aside. "Let Septimius say this," he adds again (Elixir 225). And though Septimius appears quiet, he is, the narrator says, like a spinning top, in "a frantic whirl" and "restless as a flame" (Elixir 225).

An old man known to Septimius since childhood, who has come to his aunt for an herbal treatment, enlightens him on the infirmities of old age, in terms that Hawthorne appears to understand well. Even though he knows that he is growing old, the man says, he still thinks of himself as he was before, still sees the same image of himself, "the real me," Hawthorne writes (Elixir 296). "I am tired of old things, and don't like new ones. When I was younger I should have told you these things in some sort of order and classification, but now, as you see, I turn them out like emptying the contents of a rag-bag (--I have a great many nameless aches all over me, that come and go, and no questions asked; for I have found out that they mean nothing, except that

my machine is pretty near worn out)" (Elixir 299).

More than twenty years earlier, in his notebook for 1837, Hawthorne had made the following observations: "Curious to imagine what murmurings and discontent would be excited, if any of the great so-called calamities of human beings were to be abolished,--as, for instance, death" (Arvin 23); "the advantage of a longer life than is allotted to mortals--the many things that might then be accomplished;--to which one lifetime is inadequate, and for which the time spent is therefore lost" (Arvin 241); "the advantages, or otherwise, of having life assured to us, till we could finish important tasks on which we were engaged" (Arvin 242). On his daily walks up the hill, Septimius often encounters Sybil; and as an unpredictable relationship grows between them, Hawthorne makes her eloquent in defense of death. Death is "the best friend of all of us," she says (Elixir 331); but in the end, even she denies the redemptive powers of death.

Hawthorne replaces Septimius's name with the name of Hillard Veren, and Hillard Veren feels that he is growing old very fast. He compares himself with a dried leaf pressed between the pages of a book. He must have the immortality

drink now, he thinks, or it will not be of any use. He examines his face in the mirror and sees that he is very pale. Going to his aunt's bedside, he begs her in a rush of emotion not to leave him. He will be inconsolably lonely, he says, and out of place in the world; but she tells him that it is best that she die, "it's no such terrible business as we think" (Elixir 430). When she falls asleep, Hillard knows that she will not wake. Death seems real to him now, and life seems like a dream.

Hillard goes up on the hill, in the end his only retreat, where he finds Sybil. She wishes that she could have seen his aunt die, she says, for she has never seen anyone die. She asks Hillard about it: was his aunt renewed, had there been a resurrection of her youth? She had, in fact, seemed changed, Hillard thinks, but he is unsure whether she appeared as she once had been or as she would someday be. Sybil asks him how he would have felt if his aunt had risen up from her bed, young and beautiful, instead of dying; but Hillard answers that such a thing would have been impossible.

In "The Dolliver Romance," the last immortality fragment, the young people of the town

look on Dr. Dolliver, as the youthful often do the old, as one who must be accustomed to infirmity and feebleness and tolerant, therefore, of its impediments. Such, however, is not the case with Dr. Dolliver. He has not grown used to being old, for "he still retained an inward consciousness that these stiffened shoulders, these quailing knees, this cloudiness of sight and brain, this confused forgetfulness of men and affairs, were troublesome accidents that did not really belong to him" (Elixir 463). He may even have hoped that his aged condition might go away, for he believes that "youth, however eclipsed for a season, is undoubtedly the proper, permanent, and genuine condition of man," and that age is "a sombre garment, woven of life's unrealities" (Elixir 463), one that keeps us from knowing our true selves. The title of doctor is only an honorary one granted by the town; for like Grimshawe, he is not a doctor by formal training. And like a famous author, his public acclaim depends as much on public opinion as it does on his own merit.

Dolliver is conscious within his aged body of the young man he once was and is often, upon waking, disappointed to rediscover his white hair and furrowed brow and to remember that his

predicament is not a dream, but that he has somehow become enchanted by "the melancholy mask of Age . . ." (Elixir 464). Such terrifying thoughts reflect Hawthorne's circumstances as truly as any expressed in these works. His health had unmistakably failed, and he was struggling to finish this promised book. As it may well have seemed to the public eye only a matter of time, in Dr. Dolliver's case, before his life would end, and "walking the streets seldom and reluctantly, he felt a dreary impulse to elude the people's observation, as if . . . he had gone irrevocably out of fashion, and broken his connecting links with the network of human life . . ." (Elixir 464). The doctor wears a symbolic robe that is an artistry of patchwork, fragments of cloth all sewn over the remnants of his wedding waistcoat and his dead wife's silk wedding dress. Such a garment, like life, is composed of its passing events, and "it had an eastern fragrance . . . a smell of drugs, strong-scented herbs, and spicy gums, gathered from the many potent infusions that had from time to time been spilt over it; so that, snuffing him afar off, you might have taken Dr. Dolliver for a mummy, and would hardly have been undeceived by his shrunken and torpid aspect, as

he crept nearer" (Elixir 454). And perhaps like Hawthorne, immersed in such thoughts, "it often happened that his eyes filled with tears at a sudden perception of what a sad and poverty-stricken old man he was, already remote from his own generation . . ." (Elixir 458), transformed by time.

It may be argued that, in the late works, form figures meaning. Middleton follows a tradition in his family, he says, a fragment of history that has brought him to England; and as the great hall in the manor house is being prepared for the banquet at which he is invited to speak as a representative of America, he discovers old glass window panes repaired with antique glass fragments. These patches leave something to be desired, he says: "a piece of a Saint, from some cathedral window, supplying what was lacking of the gorgeous purple of a mediaeval king . . ." (Claimant 212).

Donatello, like Orpheus, has mythic powers to charm wild beasts, and like Orpheus, his "head" is figuratively severed, as a result of his experience of the real world, bringing him closer in spirit to the strain of lyric poetry than to the world of fiction in which he exists. As an

art form, Donatello is ruined by his contact with the modern world. In The Marble Faun, the Golden Age is no longer a distant time, but a foreign land. Rome, symbolic of the eternal city of art, is in ruin as a result of modern life, a ruin in which the Romantic artists see reflected their own sense of the ruined self. In Hawthorne, the ruined artifact, palimpsests, illegible manuscripts, notes burned in a fireplace--all speak to the reflexive nature of the fragmentary.

It is characteristic of poetic language to be indirect, even ambiguous and evasive, to follow a circuitous path, as Bakhtin observes. Poetic language is distinctly opposed to practical language, and this tendency toward poetic language is always strong in Hawthorne. It is not entirely clear, for example, what Hawthorne means by romance, if we include in this category all of Hawthorne's works; for as others have observed, Hawthorne is enigmatic, and a kind of indefiniteness always surrounds him.

Hawthorne scrutinizes the English countryside, which appears garden-like on the surface. Within it, however, a carefully cultivated order supersedes the chaos of reality, and of art, and guides the subject toward the

object of his search. Art, as a pervasive subtext suggests in the claimant work, is not orderly like the outward appearance of the English landscape. But like the tangle beneath the landscape's well-tended surfaces, it is, like the narrator's search, a struggle for meaning and order. Hawthorne reinforces this notion as Middleton looks out of a window into an old-fashioned garden, old-fashioned, perhaps, because of its order and quiet beauty.

To the fragment that he called "the Dolliver Romance," Hawthorne gave the subtitle "Fragments of a Romance," recognizing in this short and final piece the fragmentary nature of the work that he was doing. And as Dolliver "shook his silvery head at his own image in the looking-glass . . ." (Elixir 453), we witness an episode in which Hawthorne senses his own reflection. This symbolic self-referential quality constitutes a kind of meditation on the imperfect. This was not new for Hawthorne, for his work had always dealt with social and psychological forces that produce fragmentation and incoherence. What is new here is the extent to which the entire process has moved into symbolic terrain.

Never a prolific writer, Hawthorne wrote only

a small number of works, particularly works of fiction, by nineteenth-century standards: three novels, an annual production, from 1850 to 1852, and for the remaining twelve years, only one additional published work of fiction. He did not write fiction at all from 1852 to 1857, but worked very hard from 1858 to 1864, perhaps harder than ever before. But these works were not conceivable as stories. They became instead symbolic of themselves as works of art.

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