“Legends Malleable in His Intellectual Furnace”

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Wonder Book*, Mythological Adaptation, and Children’s Literature

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*, published in 1851, occupies an important position in the history of children’s literature because of its novel approach to the adaptation of classical mythology and its attitudes towards children as readers. While myth was commonly presented to children in the form of dictionaries or schoolbooks, Hawthorne was the first to use it as the inspiration for pleasurable storytelling. Writing stories intended for children to enjoy in a non-instructional setting, perhaps even along with their parents, Hawthorne heralded a shift in attitudes towards young readers that helped to define how juvenile literature has been written by future authors.

My thesis examines the *Wonder Book*’s creation and impact from multiple perspectives. Part I, “Juvenile Literature Matures,” provides a basic account of the beginnings of children’s literature and Hawthorne’s history with the juvenile market in order to pinpoint the *Wonder Book*’s significance. In part II, “The Bright Stuff,” I analyze the author’s use of a frame narrative to effectively address an audience of children and adults, and to realize his goals for the stories. This discussion extends into part III, “Hawthorne’s Pandora, Unboxed,” in which I identify strategies of adaptation employed in the *Wonder Book*, with a particular focus on its interpretation of the Pandora myth, entitled “The Paradise of Children,” and the episode’s reception of its ancient sources. Part IV, “Beyond Hawthorne’s Intellectual Furnace,” closes the paper with a brief look at Hawthorne’s influence on later authors, who have continued to employ his adaptive strategies as myth has become a widely popular form of storytelling for children.
Preface

“I have had in my head, this long time, the idea of some stories to be taken out of the cold moonshine of classical mythology, and modernized, or perhaps gothicized, so that they may be felt by children of these days. For instance, the story of Midas seems admirable for the purpose—so does that of Pandora, with her box—and a multitude of others. I know I could make a pretty volume of such materials.”
—Nathaniel Hawthorne, letter to Evert Duyckinck, April 15, 1846 (quoted in Pearce 1972 302)

Ever since antiquity, classical mythology has been a persistent presence in Western culture. Even when monotheistic religions have looked down on myth as the invention of misguided heathens, something about these stories has compelled us to continue to pass them down from one generation to the next. Their influence is readily apparent in art, theater, and literature from all time periods, raising numerous—and never fully answerable—questions about how societies relate to traditional myths and appropriate such stories to particular contexts. Today, mythical storytelling has also become quite popular as subject matter for young children. Some myths serve to acculturate children to a national identity; the stories of Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and John Henry come to mind as quintessential examples of American myths. But the classical myths still linger, inspiring countless narrative adaptations as well as encyclopedic handbooks of myth written with young audiences in mind. The proliferation of both types of books indicates a clear belief in contemporary society that children should not only know about classical myth, but also enjoy myth as story.

Such a belief is a relatively modern one (especially considering myth’s extended history), arising primarily in the aftermath of the 1851 publication of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys, a collection of six classical myths retold in a modernized style within a delicately crafted frame narrative. Hawthorne had written for the juvenile market before publishing the Wonder Book, from biographical sketches in magazines to an entire history of the
world ghostwritten for the popular Peter Parley series of books, and had never much enjoyed the work, but something about the Wonder Book was different. After spending years formulating the idea for a children’s collection of myths, Hawthorne wrote through the summer months—a time when he usually avoided writing—and completed the book in the space of just over a month. After years of producing the didactic and encyclopedic texts, intended for use in classrooms or other educational settings, demanded by a juvenile literature market that he found dull, Hawthorne was finally to execute the project with which, as he said in a letter to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow of March 21, 1838, he aimed to “make a great hit, and entirely revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature” (quoted in Pearce 1972 298).

Key to that revolution was the adaptation of classical myth for chiefly pleasurable reading. Very few of the widely available children’s books of the mid-nineteenth century were written with the reader’s literary enjoyment in mind; for Hawthorne to write a book that he conceived of as primarily entertaining, rather than strictly instructional, and that he envisioned young readers enjoying along with their families placed him in the vanguard of the approach to juvenile literature that has become standard. His liberal approach to adaptation, as well as his selection of material to adapt, has proven highly influential on subsequent writers of books for young readers. Many credit the Wonder Book with popularizing classical myth as a source of stories for children, an association that now seems obvious to today’s readers who have been brought up on such stories.

This primary aim of this thesis is to closely examine Hawthorne’s Wonder Book to see how the text illustrates and accomplishes the author’s goals of converting the classical myths into stories that children and their families could enjoy together and that would offer wholesome, non-sectarian moral instruction to the young readers. Through an opening discussion of the book
in its historical context, I hope to better pinpoint the book’s significance within the history of children’s literature. I will then move on to an analysis of the text itself, focusing on the framing narrative as well as on Hawthorne’s strategies for adaptation, in order to evaluate what sorts of readers Hawthorne anticipates, how he addresses these audiences effectively, and how he accomplishes the aforementioned goals of entertainment and enrichment for his readers. To close, I will look towards the Wonder Book’s long-term influence in order to make conclusions about the text’s effectiveness and legacy.
I. Juvenile Literature Matures: The Wonder Book in its Historic Context

Some introductory background on the history of children’s literature and the historical context in which Hawthorne produced his texts for young readers will be useful preparation for a more focused look at the Wonder Book as a text. People have always told stories to children, of course, but these stories have not always been transcribed and published for the marketplace; conversely, children have always read works that were not created and/or published particularly with young readers in mind. Thus, the term “children’s literature” is a somewhat ambiguous one. In this paper, it refers to stories that are written with the intention of being printed and distributed for consumption by a juvenile audience, a relatively new type of literature in Hawthorne’s time created in part by improvements in book-making technology and the rise of large publishing companies. This literature is distinct from the orally-transmitted stories of the nursery, which were long an important part of children’s upbringings, as well as from published texts that may have been popular amongst younger readers but were not created with a juvenile audience in mind.

When this mass-market children’s literature came into being is, unsurprisingly, the subject of some contention, but many scholars identify as a transformative moment the year 1744, when John Newberry began selling A Little Pretty Pocket Book. Peter Hunt identifies this title as “one of the first commercial books for children” (Hunt 1994 29). The introduction of this book into the market, Hunt says, began “a battle between the religious/educational and commercial interests for the market in children’s books” that was to last the remainder of the century (Hunt 1994 29). Indeed, as F. J. Harvey Darton indicates, such a dispute has marked the history of children’s literature well beyond the eighteenth century. Characterizing his history of Children’s Books in England, which begins with the fables of the Middle Ages and runs through
to the beginnings of the twentieth century, Darton observes, “There is really only one ‘text’ in these pages, and that is, that children’s books were always the scene of a battle between instruction and amusement” (Darton 1982 vii).

It is this apparent tension between reading for an instructional purpose and reading for personal enjoyment, and such a tension’s impact on the history of books for children, that is of primary interest when considering Hawthorne’s contributions to children’s literature, and the time during which he wrote. Over the course of his career, Hawthorne wrote a number of texts intended for young readers, and his personal development as a writer of children’s texts occurred more or less concurrently with a larger, observable shift in the ideology shaping the juvenile market, as Sarah Wadsworth observes:

[Hawthorne’s] studied transition from conventional works of pedagogy to innovative retellings of Classical myths closely parallels a radical, concurrent transformation of the juvenile literature market, as American children, sated with histories, geographies, and other nonfiction texts designed ‘for the instruction and amusement of youth,’ developed… an increasing taste for literature written expressly for their entertainment and delight. (Wadsworth 2000 2)

This transformation of the juvenile market was brought about by a combination of technological and social factors, some of which were not specific to the realm of children’s literature. David Hall describes “a major transformation of print culture” occurring between 1770 and 1850, a period distinguished by “new printing and paper-making technologies that reduced the price of books, improvements in how books were marketed, a rapid increase in the rate of literacy, and a general speeding up of communication” (Hall 1996 37). The impact of this transformation is best observed by Ellen Butler Donovan: “As books became more affordable and as literacy rates rose, people’s reading patterns became more voracious… when readers view books as consumable rather than as precious artifacts, then readers have the freedom to consider reading as play or pastime” (Donovan 2002 21). As a result of technological innovation in the process of
bookmaking,¹ books were more widely available, and as a result of social developments—
notably the increasing demand for and availability of public education²—there was a larger audience than ever before for these books. This changing relationship with books had a profound impact on the types of texts that were made available to children through the juvenile market.

Anne Scott MacLeod’s essay on “Children’s Literature in America, from the Puritan Beginnings to 1870” sets the stage for Hawthorne’s work by discussing the enterprise of successful publisher Samuel Goodrich, who was brought up accustomed to reading “for information more than entertainment” and who eventually took on the goal “to make ‘a reform—or at least an improvement—in books for youths’” (MacLeod 1995 111). MacLeod notes, “Authors might (and often did) characterize their work as entertaining, but never without also underscoring its moral purpose” (MacLeod 1995 112). Authors of mass-market juvenile literature at the time tended to minimize sentiment in favor of rationality and to discourage fantasy or imagination (MacLeod 1995 114). Goodrich’s massively popular Peter Parley series of books,³ which first appeared in 1827 with the publication of Peter Parley’s Tales About America, were didactic works, taking an encyclopedic approach to topics from geography (Peter

¹ By mid-century, “the cylinder or rotary press could print thousands of pages in an hour,” while
² Gail Schmunk Murray discusses the education reform movement as exemplary of social reform activity in the period from 1790-1850: “The public-school movement drew its energy from the efforts of Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and George Peabody. Even the South, which had generally consigned education to the private sector, saw the rise of common-school movements in cities like Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans. Not surprisingly, the push for public schools, as well as the more nurturing (or Pestalozzian) teaching methods advocated by educational reformers, found expression in children’s periodicals. An education was often portrayed as the route to success in life, and over a dozen magazines emerged to advocate common schools and educational reform” (Murray 1998 43). Horace Mann, certainly among the most eminent of these reformers, was introduced to Hawthorne through Mary and Elizabeth Peabody (Hawthorne’s future sisters-in-law), and eventually became the author’s brother-in-law when he married Mary.
³ “In his Recollections of a Lifetime, Or Men and Things I Have Seen (1857), Goodrich estimated that seven million of his books had been sold to date and that his books currently sold at an annual rate of three hundred thousand” (Wadsworth 2000 4).
Parley’s Method of Telling About Geography to Children, 1829) to mythology (Peter Parley’s Tales About the Mythology of Greece and Rome, 1839, a British adaptation of Goodrich’s 1832 non-Parley textbook A Book of Mythology for Youth). The books, some expressly designed for the use of schools and others intended for less formal reading (though even those books not intended for classrooms were sometimes later adapted to the use of schools), all held the education of the reader as their first and primary goal.

In doing so, however, Goodrich and his ghostwriters tried to incorporate “the attractive qualities of books of amusement,” as he explains in the introduction to Parley’s Method of Telling About Geography to Children: “As fiction derives its interest from its resemblance to truth, I can see no reason in the nature of the case, why matters of fact may not be presented in a guise to captivate youth, as well as matters of imagination” (Goodrich 1829 v). Goodrich believed that it was due to the unattractive “cold and formal style of most books of juvenile knowledge” that parents and educators had resorted to allowing children to read fiction in the first place, and so he attempted “to treat a subject usually presented in a systematic form, in a somewhat colloquial manner, taking often a story-teller’s latitude in the use of phraseology, in the method of illustration, and in the arrangement of facts” (Goodrich 1829 v). He also consciously incorporated elements of moralizing literature common in much of the fictional writing for children of the time, but less common in didactic non-fiction:

I hope I need make no apology for having availed myself of occasional opportunities to inculcate lessons of morality and religion upon the youthful heart… I fear that the moral part of children is too often neglected; for while the intellect is cultivated like a very garden, the source of feeling and sentiment is often left to run to weeds, and consequently shoots up into the wild, irregular, and sometimes over-masteryng passions. The sooner the juvenile bosom can be made to feel the gentle and genial influences of truth, love, humanity, and religion, the better. (Goodrich 1829 vi)
Yet despite these innovations of tone and content, the Parley books should not be viewed as anything other than educational materials. The book on *Geography for Children* is composed of distinct lessons, with review questions and exercises interspersed throughout. In his early children’s story “Little Annie’s Ramble,” Hawthorne described the Parley books as “tomes” (quoted in Wadsworth 2000 2), demonstrating the attitude towards these books as compendia of scholarly knowledge, packaged especially for young readers. Hunt’s assessment of the Parley books on the early history of children’s literature bluntly labels Goodrich’s texts as “unimaginative” (Hunt 1994 51).

Goodrich was a major figure not only in the juvenile literature market of the time, but also in Hawthorne’s own development as a writer. The publisher first made contact with Hawthorne after the anonymous publication of *Fanshawe* in 1828—the book’s publisher tipped off Goodrich as to the author’s identity—and expressed interest in Hawthorne as a potential contributor to *The Token*, “an annual gift book published for the Christmas and New Year’s trade” containing writing exclusively by American authors (Wadsworth 2000 3). At the time, Hawthorne, though his work had garnered some positive attention, was still very much an unestablished, struggling writer. Many of his early projects were shorts for periodical publications like *Youth’s Keepsake*, such as “Little Annie’s Ramble,” an example of “the lovingly sentimental hackwork that from the outset he was willing to undertake in order to make his way as a writer” (Pearce 1972 288). In his autobiography, Goodrich recalls that *Fanshawe* “seemed to me to indicate extraordinary powers,” which caused him to seek out the romance’s author (Goodrich 1857 270). He was subsequently put in touch with an ‘N. Hawthorne’:

This name I considered a disguise, and it was not till after many letters had passed, that I met the author, and found it to be a true title, representing a very substantial personage. At this period he was unsettled as to his views; he had tried his hand in literature, and considered himself to have met with a fatal rebuff from the reading world. His mind
vacillated between various projects, verging, I think, toward a mercantile profession. I combated his despondence, and assured him of triumph, if he would persevere in a literary career. (Goodrich 1857 270-271)

Hawthorne responded positively to Goodrich’s overtures, going on to produce twenty-seven pieces for the publisher between 1830 and 1838 (Wadsworth 2000 3).

For Hawthorne, however, the juvenile market was a means to an end—a source of aid for a struggling writer. For much of his career, he held a disparaging attitude towards the task of “perpetrat[ing] children’s histories and other such iniquities” or “concocting school books,” which he characterized as “drudgery” in letters to multiple friends, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Donovan 2002 19). He often found himself disappointed at the meager remuneration for these efforts, and sometimes felt exploited by Goodrich. Hawthorne accepted Goodrich’s offer to ghostwrite the two-volume *Peter Parley’s Universal History on the Basis of Geography*, on which he collaborated with his sister Elizabeth in 1836. Donovan characterizes this as “a task that reduced him to a hack writer following Goodrich’s specific instructions” (Donovan 2002 19). Hawthorne expected the work to be undemanding—he wrote to Elizabeth, “It need not be superiour [sic], in profundity and polish, to the middling Magazine articles”—and so he accepted it despite the “poor compensation” of $100 (Wadsworth 2000 4).

The *Universal History* is undoubtedly a Parley text, structured in the same way as the *Geography* text discussed above, but some suggest that the Hawthornes’ touch is perceptible. The comparison of the two texts offered in Appendix 1 illustrates how Hawthorne’s book largely adhered to the strict tone of the series, yet Ruth MacDonald notes “the goriness of detail that

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4 See Wadsworth 2000 18, n. 20.
5 Goodrich describes the process of working with freelance writers in his autobiography: “In my larger publications, I employed persons to block out work for me; this was read to me, and then I put it into style, generally writing by dictation, my wife being my amanuensis” (Goodrich 1857 281).
Goodrich might elsewhere have edited out” (quoted in Wadsworth 2000 19, n. 21) throughout the *Universal History*. Just as Hawthorne’s own approach influenced his contribution to the Parley series, his work on the series seems to have also left its mark on his later work. Roy Harvey Pearce observes that “From his work as a Peter Parley compiler… Hawthorne would have learned the technique of the single garrulous narrator, whose task is to focus the reader's interest, and thereby to keep the story going” (Pearce 1972 292). His *Grandfather’s Chair* series, published in three volumes in 1840, bears a number of similarities to the Parley books: “Both series consist of a sequence of framed narratives, and in *Grandfather’s Chair*, as well as in the ‘Peter Parley’ series, the narrator is an elderly gentleman addressing an audience of young boys and girls” (Wadsworth 2000 6). The *Biographical Stories for Children* series of 1842 is similarly constructed. Both series also “follow the pattern of ‘Peter Parley’ in relating, in a conversational style, factual material dressed in overtly moralistic trappings” (Wadsworth 2000 6).

Wadsworth observes that the *Grandfather’s Chair* series, written to tap into “the market for histories and inspirational biographies for children” that publishers like Goodrich and the American Tract Society had already established, began to raise the bar for the literary merit of books for children: “Considered alongside these earlier productions, Hawthorne’s histories clearly manifest a superior execution and a more sophisticated narrative style and structure” (Wadsworth 2000 6). Laura Laffrado observes, too, that in *Grandfather’s Chair*, “Hawthorne first located and acquainted himself with a reality where the real and the fabulous are conflated, a reality that lent itself to ‘a lively and entertaining narrative for children’” (Laffrado 1992 40). Though such innovation was largely absent from the subsequent *Biographical Stories for Children*, Laffrado takes it as a transitional moment that prefigures the eventual “renewal of
imagination and faith” (Laffrado 1992 66) that characterized the *Wonder Book* when it was released just over a decade later.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these innovations in Hawthorne’s work had parallels in larger shifts in literary approaches. In the middle of the century, MacLeod observes, there was a moment when literary conventions—particularly stylistic ones—more common to adult fiction began to take hold in writing for children as well. The most obvious shift for MacLeod is the move away from literary restraint:

[Early nineteenth-century writers] were not given to vivid descriptions, whether of landscape or characters. Even less were they likely to describe or depict strong emotion since they believed that ‘passions,’ as they liked to call them, should be governed not indulged. New writers, on the other hand, brought enthusiastic writing to children’s books, the more feeling the better. (MacLeod 1995 114)

While there was by no means a complete paradigm shift whereby this new style of writing—“sentimental and wildly overwrought by older standards” (MacLeod 1995 114)—immediately supplanted the old, new writing in this style, including Hawthorne’s, proved highly influential in further spreading this stylistic approach. Such an approach was typically characterized by vivid accounts of events, such as death scenes,\(^6\) that would previously have been described matter-of-factly; the romanticization of nature; a greater connection between characters’ physical appearance and their moral status;\(^7\) and new ways of looking at the world, “many of them more realistic and ambivalent, all of them less morally confident than those of earlier juvenile fiction” (MacLeod 1995 115).

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\(^6\) MacLeod points to 1854’s *The Angel Mother* as one memorable example that “described in dramatic prose a mother’s death (‘even now the silver cord is loosening!’) and the prolonged mourning of her children” (MacLeod 1995 114).

\(^7\) “*Boy of Mt. Rhigi* (1848) by Catherine Maria Sedgwick contrasted the ‘Noble features, expressive of truth, decision and good temper’ of the worthy, with the coarse features, shambling gaits, and crooked teeth of the wicked and derelict” (MacLeod 1995 115).
These shifting attitudes were linked with new understandings of the concept of childhood. Murray reads Wordsworth’s poem “Intimations of Immortality” as articulating a “romantic construction of childhood as a brief, angelic state of innocence” which “permeated nineteenth-century culture and allowed writers either to see children as instruments of others’ redemption or to see childhood as a time of pleasure, escape, and freedom before the stultifying hand of adult responsibility changed the child’s life forever” (Murray 1998 53). Family audiences continued to expand, as “Victorian domesticity so valued shared family activities that reading aloud became common” (Murray 1998 53). Moreover, the young reader that children’s stories addressed was transformed as a result of shifting religious beliefs away from Calvinist philosophy of original sin towards a new belief in moral perfectionism:

No longer did society view children as the corrupted products of original sin, redeemable only through God’s ineffable grace… Not only might children be saved at a young age, children in fact embodied more of God’s grace than those who had had longer association with the ‘tainted’ world. Thus the new children’s literature romanticized the child’s innocence and gave her or him a role in the conscious improvement of adult moral character. The construction of childhood moved from society’s need to redeem the child to one in which the child became the redeemer. (Murray 1998 53-54)

These changing religious attitudes were also observable in what Richard Hathaway describes “the revolution in religious and secular education which was making school and church more child-centered and was softening the rigors of copybook memorizing” (Hathaway 1961 163). It is also worth noting Hawthorne’s belief, shared by Horace Mann, “that religious teachings in children’s literature should be nonsectarian” (Brazouski and Klatt 1994 4). Even as religious

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8 See Hoffman 1964 and Hathaway 1961 on Hawthorne’s romanticized conceptions of childhood.
9 Such a shift appears to be anticipated in works such as Thomas Day’s *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1789) and Maria Edgeworth’s *Rosamond* (1801), while Mrs. Sherwood’s *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) is a clear example of a work that presents the belief in children as corrupted and requiring spiritual redemption.
teaching remained an important part of children’s literature, the relationship between religion and childhood was shifting noticeably.

With a less puritanical filter shaping what reached the juvenile literature market, the limits of acceptable content expanded, and tales of the fantastical, best exemplified by the previously contentious genre of the fairy tale, became newly available to a mass-market audience. Attitudes towards such types of stories were typified by Goodrich, who had attempted to “reform” children’s books by “substituting such salubrious fare as histories, geographies, and the like for fairy tales, Mother Goose rhymes, and other ‘tales of horror,’ which he felt were ‘commonly put into the hands of youth, as if for the express purpose of reconciling them to vice and crime’” (Wadsworth 2000 8). Such stories were widely available in Europe, but took longer to take root in the American market. The stories of the Brothers Grimm first appeared in English in 1823, published in a volume entitled *German Popular Stories*, and in 1846, Hans Christian Andersen made his debut in translation in three separate volumes: *Wonderful Stories for Children*, *A Danish Story-Book*, and *Danish Fairy Legends and Tales* (Hunt 1994 51). These English-language translations were all initially published in England and took longer to gain an audience in America. Even once they did, collections’ titles emphasized the foreign status the stories held; fairy tale was not yet incorporated into the national tradition of American literature.

As Hawthorne continued to grapple with his “deep dislike to the character of the shoals of books poured out from the press” (Elizabeth Peabody, letter to Horace Mann, March 3, 1838, quoted in Wadsworth 2000 8), and in the context of the new role of folk and fairy tales in popular literature, he began forming the idea to write a book of myths for children. A notebook entry from late 1838 contains a fragmentary thought, “Pandora’s box for a child’s story” (Simpson 1972 181), and Hawthorne spoke to Longfellow several times about the idea, though
his wish to collaborate with Longfellow on the project never came to fruition. In an April 15, 1846, letter to the publisher Evert A. Duyckinck, Hawthorne said, “I have had in my head, this long time, the idea of some stories to be taken out of the cold moonshine of classical mythology, and modernized, or perhaps gothicized, so that they may be felt by children of these days.”

Myth-related texts were not uncommon at the time, and a contemporary Greek revival in architecture had expanded outward to include other art forms, including literary (Hathaway 1961 163), so that the classical influence on mid-century society was tangible. Nonetheless, myth had never been introduced “to children outside of the context of school” (Donovan 2002 22), and the prevalent texts on the subject were those such as Goodrich’s Book of Mythology for Youth that provided (to once again borrow Hunt’s description) “unimaginative” accounts of these highly imaginative stories.

The right moment for Hawthorne’s myth project finally arrived in 1851—over a decade after he first conceived of the idea—following the publication of The Scarlet Letter, which secured the author’s reputation and brought him the financial security from writing that had eluded him for so long, in addition to boosting the author’s self-confidence. Whereas his earlier writing for the juvenile market had been a “drudgery,” Hawthorne described writing A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys as a “pleasant task… a task fit for hot weather, and one of the most agreeable, of a literary kind, which he ever undertook” (Hawthorne 1851 vi) in the book’s

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10 See epigraph to the preface, above.
11 See Feldman and Richardson 505 on myth in the first half of the nineteenth century: “Popular handbooks on mythology proliferated… besides the classical dictionaries, there were endless handbooks that treated mythology grudgingly, and with distaste as mere heathen idolatry… there were also numerous handy reference books for women and school-children” (Feldman and Richardson 1972 505).
12 Citations of the Wonder Book correspond to the pagination of the 1893 edition—published by Houghton, Mifflin, and Co. and featuring illustrations by Walter Crane—which has proved more readily available, although the original edition was published in 1851 and dated 1852.
prefatory note. The description of the “hot weather” refers to Hawthorne’s completion of the project over the summer months, when he typically did not engage in the business of writing, illustrating the importance this project appeared to have to him.\(^{13}\)

Donovan speculates on several factors that might have transformed Hawthorne’s prior disdain for writing children’s stories into a sense of pleasure:

As the father of three young children—Una and Julian, ages seven and five, respectively, and infant Rose—he probably had more sympathy for the juvenile reader than he had expressed a decade earlier as a young bachelor. But it is clear that his professional life had also taken a turn for the better, allowing him more freedom to define and execute his projects. (Donovan 2002 20)

Julian Hawthorne recalls the ease with which his father crafted the book, and says that Hawthorne eagerly read the stories to the children as they were completed. His recollection is at some odds with Hawthorne’s own memory, however; the author reported to his publisher and sister that “he found the going difficult and wearying” (Pearce 1972 304). Nonetheless, despite the author’s complaints about the difficulties of the process, Pearce also focuses on the personal factors in Hawthorne’s life that contributed to the success of the project: “The Wonder Book, in conception and tone, derives from one of the happiest periods of his life… the spring and summer [of 1851] had been particularly fine, full of good times and good talks with friends… and a sense of idyllic closeness to his wife and children” (Pearce 1972 305).

The creation of the Wonder Book indicated Hawthorne’s direct engagement with “the contemporary reaction to the fairy stories and other noneducational stories that were proliferating at mid-century” (Donovan 2002 23), and marked a significant contribution to American literature as what has been argued to be “the beginning of the tradition of the American literary fairy tale”\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) On the basis of this, Alexander Kern’s assertion that “Even after the success of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne was pinched enough to carry out his plan of retelling classic myths for boys and girls in A Wonder Book” (Kern 1960 243) seems misguided.
The book’s importance has been articulated in a number of ways. Many make the suggestion that Hawthorne’s choice of subject matter was a novel choice for a child audience. Pearce says that when the Wonder Book was published, “‘No one realized… not even Hawthorne himself—that he had been the first writer in English to recast stories out of classical myth for children’” (Pearce 1972 311), and Hathaway says that Hawthorne’s myth adaptations “seem to bear the considerable distinction of being our first versions for children of the classic myths” (Hathaway 1961 161). Yet this characterization may need to be in some way qualified, when we consider Robert D. Richardson’s comments on myth collections written for a child audience in the early nineteenth-century, before Hawthorne’s book. According to Richardson, these books “approached the subject rather sourly as ‘heathen idolatry’ … At their best, these books treat their subjects much as a classical dictionary might, but for the most part they are cold, distant and austere when not downright hostile” (Richardson 1979 342).

This is clearly a very different project from Hawthorne’s own—Hawthorne, in fact, perceived the myths in their classical forms to be cold and distant, and viewed it as his job to remove such coldness from the stories, as will be discussed further in section II below—and so we need not let the significance of the Wonder Book be diminished by the existence of these earlier books. Yet they require a reformulation of what this significance is. If Hawthorne’s choice of classical myth as subject matter for children was not novel, his method of writing these myths certainly was. In the best-case scenario described by Richardson, these early nineteenth-century books of myth took the tone of a classical dictionary—neutral, unemotional, and

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14 The style of storytelling typical of the fairy tale, as popularized by European authors, was highly influential on Hawthorne, who was interested in writing myths as popular stories rather than as records of the past and its accepted moral wisdom (in fact, he went to some lengths to separate these stories from their ancient contexts, as I will discuss further in section II below). See Richardson 1979 for more on Hawthorne’s retelling of myth as fairy tale.
encyclopedic. Hawthorne’s book, meanwhile, chooses to retell far fewer stories than these earlier books, using a much greater level of detail and description in each of the six stories comprising the *Wonder Book*, and those that he does tell are filled with emotion. His adaptation of the Pandora story, for example, turns her decision to open the box into a deep psychological conflict that plays out over an extended period of time. The book thus becomes less of an academic tome and more of a pleasurable literary diversion. Along these lines, Donovan suggests that the *Wonder Book*:

…contributed to the shift in reading culture that allowed children to read with and for pleasure. By moving the myths from the arena of scholarship and the schoolroom to the family drawing room and by encouraging a playful rather than reverential response from readers, Hawthorne encouraged reading as a pleasurable pastime activity for children.

(Donovan 2002 20)

Donovan additionally points out that Hawthorne emphasized “an enlargement of imaginative horizons rather than the discipline of impulse” (Donovan 2002 35), thus underscoring the author’s goal of creating a book to be read first and foremost for sheer enjoyment, as opposed to primarily for moral or academic instruction. Though this was a relatively new idea at the time, Hawthorne was hardly the first to write a book that children were supposed to enjoy. He was, however, the first to use classical myth in doing so, and his venture helped contribute to the emerging attitude towards children’s literature that placed the reader’s enjoyment of the text as a top priority, as well as reinforce the role of such stories as myths, fairy tales, and fantasies in American writing for children.

Contemporary reviewers did not recognize Hawthorne’s significance in these specific terms, but his efforts were, in fact, very well received, and many reviews did acknowledge his unexpected choice of subject matter as well as his exceptional ability to address all audiences.¹⁵

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¹⁵ A selection of comments from reviewers is found in Appendix 2.
Many of the _Wonder Book_’s reviews make explicit mention of the book’s intergenerational appeal, and even more gesture towards the enjoyment all readers might garner from the stories.\(^{16}\) _Godey’s Lady’s Book_ wrote, “Even a ‘modern philosopher’ might peruse [the _Wonder Book_] with advantage” (_Godey’s Lady’s Book_ 1852 166), and Edwin Percy Whipple’s review in _Graham’s Magazine_ proclaimed, “It is intended for children, but let not the intention cheat men and women out of the pleasure they will find in its sparkling and genial pages” (quoted in Idol and Jones 1994 181).

Several reviews commented specifically on their surprise at Hawthorne’s mythological source material, including the _Boston Daily Advertiser_: “At the first glance one is afraid that the author has made a mistake in the class of subjects he has taken. But on examination it appears that the design and examination of the plan is excellent” (_Boston Daily Advertiser_ 1851 2). Puritanical attitudes towards myth popular at the time are made clear in the _Christian Register_’s review, which claimed “[Children] need to know much of the ancient mythology; but they may be made conversant with its power, richness and beauty, without being initiated into its revolting and hideous details” (_Christian Register_ 1851 186). The review commended Hawthorne’s ability to recast such potentially “revolting and hideous” stories in an acceptable manner. Indeed, his approach to adapting these myths for a modern audience (including the “Gothicizing” strategy he mentioned in his aforementioned letter to Duyckinck) was often praised, particularly by Thomas Starr King in the _Universalist Quarterly and General Review_:

> Such subtle appreciation of the soul of the old stories; such felicitous enlargement of them, not by mechanical additions, but as though the seeds of Greek fancy had just now found their fitting soul in Mr. Hawthorne’s soul, and sprouted to their true luxuriance of

\(^{16}\) My study of these critical responses is based on the list of reviews collected by John L. Idol, Jr. and Buford Jones (Idol and Jones 1994 181-183). Of the fourteen _Wonder Book_ reviews they have published or listed, I was able to examine all but the one that appeared in the _Boston Traveller_.
Horn 23

form… The author should be accounted a traitor to the spirit of beauty, and a thief of the world’s joy, if he leaves a single classic myth unimproved by Gothic dress. (King 1852 106)

Hawthorne’s myths, in this “improved” form, were even preferred by some critics to the common fare that was being regularly generated by the juvenile market. The National Intelligencer commented, “We have rarely met with better stories for children, in any sense of the word, than these revived antiquities, which, in spite of their two or three thousand years of actual existence, have a freshness for which many of our modern manufacturers of children’s books try in vain” (National Intelligencer 1851 1).

Even more dramatically, Henry Fothergill Chorley’s Athenaeum review used the opportunity of the Wonder Book’s release to weigh in on the importance of fantastical stories such as Hawthorne’s myths or Hans Christian Andersen’s “faëry tales” (quoted in Idol and Jones 1994 182). Aware that his judgment would be provocative (“Serious heads will possibly be shaken, and solemn eyes lifted up,” he wrote), Chorley declared his preference for texts like Hawthorne and Andersen’s over moral “homilies” such as “Cousin Kate’s” Margaret Cecil; or, “I can, because I ought.”: “We prefer the former fantasies,” Chorley wrote, “not because there is one single scruple of unsound principle or of uncharitable practice in the doctrine and illustration propounded by our authoress,— but from the utter unreality of her example,” for Cousin Kate’s Margaret Cecil is “such an earnest, self-sacrificing and self-helpful child as… we cannot believe” (quoted in Idol and Jones 1994 182). Hawthorne’s young characters in the Wonder Book—both in the book’s frame narrative and in the myths themselves—are (usually) not overtly mischievous, but they do have flaws that the author embraces. Such realistic portrayals of imperfect children as Chorley praises here were only just becoming acceptable in Hawthorne’s
time, and they serve as another manifestation of the influence of new ways of thinking about childhood that were appearing in the mid-nineteenth century.

This survey of critical responses to Hawthorne illustrates that the impact of the Wonder Book, tasked by its author with the weighty goal to “revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature,” was in fact quickly felt. Hawthorne challenged assumptions about what was appropriate subject matter for children and broke with common practice in how he chose to compose his work, but found vocal defenders in the press who were readily willing to recommend his work to a reading—and purchasing—audience. Hawthorne had tried to innovate before (though arguably never to this degree), and some of his older children’s stories had been positively reviewed. This time, when Hawthorne tried something more drastically different than he had before, as well as in significant part due to the reputation he gained from The Scarlet Letter, he achieved market success as well—4,667 copies were printed when the book was released in 1851, and 10,349 copies were in print by 1863 (Pearce 1972 308-309). I will later return to the longer-term influence of Hawthorne’s work; now, however, I will turn to the text of the Wonder Book itself, in order to examine the construction of Hawthorne’s imaginative text and how he approached the classical myths to make them speak to his contemporary audience.
II. The Bright Stuff: The *Wonder Book’s* Frame Narrative

Having now looked at Hawthorne’s text within its literary-historical context, we are well positioned to examine the *Wonder Book* itself in order to better understand the manner in which Hawthorne went about constructing his narrative and adapting his source material, as well as his intended purpose in doing so. The author begins to make his intentions known in a preface to the text, in which Hawthorne discusses his long-held “opinion that many of the classical myths were capable of being rendered into very capital reading for children”; notes the “great freedom of treatment… necessary to his plan”; and discusses his attitudes towards myths as “marvelously independent of all temporary modes and circumstances,” thus making them “legitimate subjects for every age to clothe with its own garniture of manners and sentiment, and to imbue with its own morality” (Hawthorne 1851 vi). He makes clear his intention not to “write downward” in order “to meet the comprehension” of his young readers, for, he explains, “Children possess an unestimated sensibility to whatever is deep or high, in imagination or feeling, so long as it is simple likewise. It is only the artificial and the complex that bewilder them” (Hawthorne 1851 vii). This preface serves as a useful articulation of Hawthorne’s ambition to write stories that will be enjoyable and useful for children, but that are written in such a way that they do not aim “downward” and discount adult readers as well. The author also registers his faith in classical myth to offer fitting subject matter for such stories.

It is up to the myths themselves to prove this point, ultimately, but Hawthorne, following a traditional model exemplified by works such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (ca. 1350) and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (late 14th century), also draws upon the device of a frame narrative to continue to make a case for the usefulness of his stories and model the ideal responses of an audience that includes adults in addition to children. He creates an adolescent storyteller within
the text whose liminal status between childhood and adulthood enables him to establish the playful tone that characterizes Hawthorne’s new approach to mythological storytelling in a way that engages children and adults. Certainly, while the *Wonder Book’s* primary claim to fame has been as a collection of myth adaptations for children,\(^{17}\) we should be sure not to minimize the significant storytelling Hawthorne does in the book’s rather elaborate framing narrative, wherein one Eustace Bright is called upon in several different situations to tell stories to an audience of children (and in one case, adults as well). A student at Williams College, Eustace spends his breaks from school at Tanglewood, a country estate in the Berkshires, with the Pringle family. Tanglewood is, as the narrator describes it, “overflowing” with children—“brothers, sisters, and cousins, together with a few of their young acquaintances”—who require “the guardianship of some particularly grave and elderly person,” a role which Eustace, even at “the venerable age of eighteen years,” is apparently well able to fill (Hawthorne 1851 2-3).

In his previous stays with the Pringles, Eustace has gained a reputation amongst the children of the household “as a narrator of wonderful stories” (Hawthorne 1851 4) but, when called upon to tell another story at the start of the *Wonder Book,* has exhausted the store of fairy tales from which he has drawn for these earlier narrative feats. Seeking a new source of inspiration, Eustace endeavors to tell the children “one of the nursery tales that were made for the amusement of our great old grandmother, the Earth, when she was a child in frock and pinafore” (Hawthorne 1851 5-6). The myth of Perseus and Medusa is the first tale he relates to the children, under the title “The Gorgon’s Head,” and over the coming months, he finds occasion to tell five more: “The Golden Touch” (about King Midas and Marygold, his daughter

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\(^{17}\) Contemporary reviews of the *Wonder Book* focus primarily on the myths themselves and devote hardly any attention to the frame, save for a mention of the stories’ “apt accompaniments” (*National Intelligencer* 1851 1) and Henry Fothergill Chorley’s comment, “The framework, too, is at once pleasantly American and gracefully fantastic” (quoted in Idol and Jones 1994 182).
of Hawthorne’s invention), “The Paradise of Children” (Pandora and Epimetheus), “The Three Golden Apples” (Hercules and Atlas), “The Miraculous Pitcher” (Baucis and Philemon), and “The Chimæra” (Bellerophon and Pegasus). Each of these stories is located within an episode of the frame narrative, and is contextualized with an introductory and concluding passage describing Eustace’s interactions with his audience members and environs in and around Tanglewood.

This narrative structure necessitates some careful distinctions between the layers of authorship and narration present within the text. Most externally, this is Hawthorne’s text, and he is the ‘author’ in the traditional sense. Hawthorne writes a frame narrative in which an unidentified narrator figure introduces Eustace and describes how the college student tells his myth-inspired stories. Eustace’s internal tales, then, constitute the innermost layer of narration within the book. This is not to say, however, that these distinctions are impenetrable. Rather, the author himself maintains an ambiguous presence within each layer he creates. Eustace is, to some extent, linked with Hawthorne, as his age is exaggerated at times (we may recall that he is referred to as “elderly” at the age of 18, as mentioned above) and he is credited with the fine facility with adaptation that Hawthorne takes credit for in the Wonder Book’s preface when the frame narrator refers to the “excellent faculty he had in modernizing the myths of ancient times” (Hawthorne 1851 106). The narrator of the frame episodes, meanwhile, is indeterminate, never explicitly differentiated from Hawthorne but also never aligned with the author particularly closely. Both of these narrators are, of course, both authors and characters, and much as it is productive to consider their interactions with Hawthorne, the external author, it is also important to take care to maintain a separation in our thinking about these internal authors—and the implied author they help create—and the biographical one.
The frame narrator’s presence is most noticeable in the scene “Introductory to the Gorgon’s Head,” the first part of the frame in which Eustace and the children are introduced. The narrator identifies himself as an author, or storyteller, as he conveys (or consciously does not convey) details of the scenes apparently taking place before him. The first use of the pronoun “I” within the frame is when the narrator says, referring to the large number of children in the house, “I could hardly tell how many of these small people there were” (Hawthorne 1851 2). Shortly thereafter, he chooses to refer to these children by the names of flowers in lieu of using their real names:

I am afraid to tell you their names, or even to give them names which other children have ever been called by; because, to my certain knowledge, authors sometimes get themselves into great trouble by accidentally giving the names of real persons to the characters in their books. (Hawthorne 1851 2)

Two things are worthy of note here. First, the narrator’s comments attest to direct witness, thereby positioning him as physically present in the very events he narrates. Second, his deliberate refusal to name the young children, ostensibly arising from the rather practical concern of an author to avoid any accusations of libel, implicitly assert the reality of the children whose identities the narrator is concealing. The irony of doing so for these fictional characters calls attention to, rather than detracting from, this interest in portraying more realistic child characters, which can be attributed to the changing attitudes towards childhood discussed above, and which would seem to encourage stronger identification on the parts of Hawthorne’s actual young readers with their counterparts in the frame.18

Indeed, from the introduction of these characters at the start of the frame, Hawthorne is careful to prompt the reader to regard them as real individuals, rather than fictitious constructs.

18 Several of Hawthorne’s critics commented on his success in this endeavor. Thomas Starr King exclaimed, “Such genial sympathy with childhood!” (King 1852 106); see also the discussion of Chorley’s Athenaeum review in section I above.
To the same end as his ironic refusal to use the children’s real names, the narrator goes out of his way to note that Eustace’s real name is used, “because he considers it a great honor to have told the stories that are here to be printed” (Hawthorne 1851 3). Not only does he focus particular attention on the names of the characters, but continues to note his own physical presence at several points throughout the frame. After the initial episode discussed above, the narrator’s presence is certainly less emphasized, but he is particularly visible at several moments, notably at moments of transition between frame and story or between frame episodes. For example, after sparingly few uses of the first person in reference to the narrator in the scenes following “The Gorgon’s Head” and preceding “The Golden Touch,” the narrator appears in the tail end of the frame episode following “The Golden Touch”: “So away they went; all of them in excellent spirits, except little Dandelion, who, I am sorry to tell you, had been sitting on a chestnut-bur, and was stuck as full as a pincushion of its prickles. Dear me, how uncomfortably he must have felt!” (Hawthorne 1851 72). The two close uses of the first person call attention to the narrator as participating in the scene, even if only in a vague fashion. The same rough pattern subsequently repeats itself, with few intervening “I” uses through the next two stories up to the end of the introduction to “The Miraculous Pitcher,” where the narrator remarks, “As for the story, I was there to hear it, hidden behind a bush, and shall tell it over to you in the pages that come next” (Hawthorne 1851 143). These instances complicate the relationship between the oral storytelling that takes place within the frame and the written storytelling in which this author-narrator is engaged.

19 The three uses that do appear come in the “Golden Touch” intro. See “It was wonder-smitten, I suppose…” (Hawthorne 1851 43) and “But Cousin Eustace, as I think I have hinted…” (Hawthorne 1851 44).
In fact, Hawthorne has established a pattern in which the moments that the narrator’s presence is made particularly noticeable, which he accomplishes by emphasizing the first person narration of the frame, are separated by two intervening stories:

![Diagram of narrative structure]

Logically, if we are to apply this pattern forward, the narrator should be present at the frame’s conclusion following the story of the Chimæra. However, the pattern breaks here, and its disruption can be read as significant. Rather than the narrator’s asserting his presence, as we would expect, he actually seems to fade almost completely, as the final section of the frame consists primarily of dialogue between Eustace and the children. In this conversation, Eustace mentions some of the many literary minds for whom the Massachusetts countryside was home, including Longfellow and Melville, who sits a few miles away finishing *Moby Dick* (Hawthorne 1851 207). Hawthorne is mentioned only by the young Primrose, who asks, “Have we not an author for our next door neighbor? … I think I have heard of his having written a poem, or a romance, or an arithmetic, or a school-history, or some other kind of a book” (Hawthorne 1851 208). Eustace, however, quickly silences her, cautioning:

Not a word about that man, even on a hill-top! If our babble were to reach his ears, and happen not to please him, he has but to fling a quire or two of paper into the stove, and you, Primrose, and I… would all turn to smoke, and go whisking up the funnel! Our neighbor in the red house is a harmless sort of person enough, for aught I know, as concerns the rest of the world; but something whispers to me that he has a terrible power over ourselves, extending to nothing short of annihilation. (Hawthorne 1851 208)
Now that the *Wonder Book* has reached its conclusion, the artifice of the book can be exposed. The characters no longer insist on their reality, but rather concede their dependence on Hawthorne, the ultimate author who wields this “terrible power” to destroy the world he has created on a whim.

The narrator of the frame has largely vanished, meanwhile, and Eustace announces his plan to write his myth-inspired stories for publication. This is a process to which he will dedicate all his free time for the foreseeable future: “‘I mean to spend all my leisure, during the rest of the vacation, and throughout the summer term at college, in writing them out for the press’” (Hawthorne 1851 209). Though Eustace’s ambitious plan to finish writing quickly is clearly marked by his distinct identity as a college student that Hawthorne does not share, his willingness to give up his leisure time in order to complete the book is highly reminiscent of the expedited timeline on which Hawthorne wrote the book.20 Meanwhile, the reader is also faced with the fact that, even as Eustace plans to publish the book as quickly as possible, the author-narrator (whom we know not to be Eustace himself) has already written down Eustace’s stories, along with the contexts in which they were told, and published them as a finished product that the reader now holds in his or her hands. As the structural pattern regulating the presence of the narrator within the frame breaks down and an unresolvable conflict between Eustace and the author-narrator appears, the several layers of authors and narrators collapse onto each other, finally acknowledging the constructed nature of the framing content while also linking it closer than ever to Hawthorne’s own presence and process.

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20 Hawthorne typically did not write over his vacations, but in a July 10, 1851 letter to his sister Maria Louisa Hawthorne, he reports that he has “written a book for children, two or three hundred pages long, since the first of June.” Julian Hawthorne says that the *Wonder Book* was completed the week prior to this letter’s composition (Hawthorne 1884 408).
The frame that Hawthorne constructs for the *Wonder Book*’s mythological storytelling, with its emphasis on the act of storytelling and the reactions that a storyteller can elicit from an audience, as well as its careful attention to the reader’s investment in the reality of its characters, is critical for establishing a connection between the author and the reader, which allows Hawthorne to justify his novel literary venture of adapting myth for children while enacting his personal philosophy of myth. It should be noted, however, that Hawthorne’s purpose was not wholly different from all previous children’s writing, in that he still strove to tell stories that would foster the moral instruction of his readers. In some ways, therefore, his uses of the frame are quite typical for children’s books of the time. The discussion of internal episodes by young and old characters in frame narratives was a common device for modeling the possible responses to a story, critiquing any improper reactions, and approving of the one preferred by the implied author, thereby underscoring his or her intended outcome.

For example, Thomas Day’s *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1789) uses a frame story about the spoiled gentleman’s son Tommy Merton, who learns to better himself through the positive influence of Harry Sandford, the son of a farmer, as well as through physical labor and the tutelage of Mr. Barlow, Harry’s teacher. Harry regularly reads stories with moral content to Mr. Barlow and Tommy, and as Tommy learns to read himself, he can begin to participate as well. As he reads a story about two dogs to Mr. Barlow, the teacher pauses to check on Tommy’s reaction to the story thus far:

“…But what do you say to the story you have been reading, Tommy? Would you rather have owned the genteel dog that left his master to be devoured, or the poor, rough, ragged, meagre, neglected cur, that exposed his own life in his defence?” — “Indeed, sir,” said Tommy, “I would rather have had Keeper; but then I would have fed him, and washed him, and combed him, till he had looked as well as Jowler.” — “But, then,

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21 Hawthorne wrote to publisher James Fields in a May 23, 1851 letter, “Of course, I shall purge out all the old heathen wickedness, and put in a moral wherever practicable” (Fields 1871 59).
perhaps, lie would have grown idle, and fat, and cowardly, like him,” said Mr. Barlow: “but here is some more of it; let us read to the end of the story.” (Day 1789 43-44)

The relationship between the young reader and the older mentor within the text is easily appropriated by the actual young reader of Sandford and Merton, who is able to identify, at least on some meaningful level if not fully, with Tommy, and is therefore able to benefit from Mr. Barlow’s instruction just as much as Tommy does in the book. The frame constructs a surrogate adult figure to guide and critique the child’s interpretations of the stories contained therein.

Hawthorne’s use of this strategy is similar, though certainly not identical. The introductory and concluding episodes framing each myth provide opportunities for Eustace to discuss the stories with the children, and build upon the lessons of the previous ones in each new setting. As this happens, Eustace’s interactions with the children sometimes take unexpected turns, adding nuance to our understanding of his status as the adult guardian and causing us to refocus on his youth that has previously been de-emphasized. In these discussions of the myths, several of the individual children develop distinct personalities over the course of the book. Sweet Fern, one of the younger children, is identifiable for “always making particular inquiries about the precise height of giants and the littleness of fairies” (Hawthorne 1851 70), which Eustace playfully indulges rather than correcting the boy’s seriousness about the fantastical stories.

Other children are used only in specific instances. Periwinkle, a ten-year-old girl, appears most prominently in the frame conclusion to “The Golden Touch.” After telling the story of King Midas, Eustace asks the children, “Would any of you, after hearing this story, be so foolish as to desire the faculty of changing things to gold?” (Hawthorne 1851 70). Periwinkle, expressing the highly realistic child’s desire to have her cake and eat it too, smartly remarks that she would like “to have the power of turning everything to gold with my right forefinger; but, with my left
forefinger, I should want the power of changing it back again, if the first change did not please me” (Hawthorne 1851 70). Periwinkle then describes how she would use the golden touch, offering Eustace an opportunity to challenge her desires, but this challenge may not be the one the reader expects:

“I would touch every one of these golden leaves on the trees with my left forefinger, and make them all green again; so that we might have the summer back at once, with no ugly winter in the mean time.” “O Periwinkle!” cried Eustace Bright, “there you are wrong, and would do a great deal of mischief. Were I Midas, I would make nothing else but just such golden days as these over and over again, all the year throughout.” (Hawthorne 1851 70)

As in the example from Sanford and Merton, the frame provides a space in which the author could use a proxy figure to endorse the right lessons from the moral texts and ensure that the impressionable readers do not misinterpret the stories, but Eustace’s interaction with Periwinkle shows the adult—or, as we should remember, the young adult—getting taken up in the child’s fantasy and forgetting to condone a desire he so recently condemned as “foolish.”

It is readily apparent in passages like the one described above that Eustace has much in common with the children he watches over, and this helps promote the efficacy of Hawthorne’s stories, as Nina Baym explains:

Eustace is different from his young charges only in his greater intellectual store, and his stories therefore emanate from the same sort of imagination as that for which they are designed. From this point of view Eustace is a real technical triumph, for he resolves all Hawthorne's difficulties and is a perfect go-between for Hawthorne and his readers. (Baym 1973 41)

Eustace possesses the deeper knowledge of literature and culture necessary to draw upon in the act of storytelling, but does not have so little in common with his audience of children that he cannot react to his stories in the same ways as them. Thus, even as he clearly presents the messages of the tales, like the traditional responsible adult in moral children’s writing, Eustace’s
liminal status between youth and adulthood creates noticeable lapses in the book’s strictly instructional approach and promotes a playful tone more appropriate for the book Hawthorne intended to be read for fun, rather than in a traditional classroom setting.

In addition to modeling the moral lessons to be taken from the stories he tells, Hawthorne also uses the children to demonstrate and respond to critical reactions to the *Wonder Book’s* mythological content. This is often accomplished through the character of Primrose. One of Hawthorne’s best developed characters in the frame, the “bright girl of twelve, with laughing eyes, and a nose that turned up a little” (Hawthorne 1851 4) is quick to skepticism or outright criticism of Eustace’s stories, but her personal development over the course of the book causes her responses to change significantly by its end (this is a point I will return to below). In the frame conclusion to “The Golden Touch,” for example, Primrose is the first to respond to Eustace’s invitation for (what he presumes will be positive) feedback:

“Why, as to the story of King Midas,” said saucy Primrose, “it was a famous one thousands of years before Mr. Eustace Bright came into the world, and will continue to be so long after he quits it. But some people have what we may call ‘The Leaden Touch,’ and make everything dull and heavy that they lay their fingers upon.” (Hawthorne 1851 69)

Eustace, while “taken rather aback by the piquancy of her criticism,” uses this critique as an excuse to highlight what he has handled so well in his adaptation of the story, bragging that he has “burnished the old gold of Midas all over anew, and [has] made it shine as it never shone before… And how finely I have brought out and deepened the moral!” (Hawthorne 1851 69-70).

The incredible self-praise here exudes a tongue-in-cheek attitude on Hawthorne’s part, but the writing also embodies the author’s “flourishing self-confidence after the success of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850” that, in Roy Harvey Pearce’s opinion, factored critically in the *Wonder Book’s*
production (Pearce 1972 287). The audience Hawthorne creates in the frame narrative, then, does not solely provide an example of how to learn from the stories, but also illustrates how he would like his real-life audience to respond—or, in Primrose’s case, not to respond—to his stories as literary works.

One might question the need for an author to model a critical reaction for an audience of children who might not be particularly concerned with the finer points of literary adaptation. But one of the defining features of Hawthorne’s book is its notable ability to transcend the common divisions separating children’s books from adults’ and instructional writing from entertaining literary texts. By placing moral stories within a context of leisure—in the midst of playtime, as a respite while hiking, etc.—Hawthorne creates a work that is as useful outside the classroom (if not more so) as it is inside of it. In writing for children who he imagines reading at home, for pleasure, and potentially with their families, Hawthorne also chooses to include adults in his anticipated audience.

Several moments throughout the frame demonstrate an expectation of an adult audience in addition to the child readers. After playing with the children out in the snow, Eustace finds himself alone in the woods to experience a moment of inspiration deriving from the natural world around him, at which point the narrator explains:

He was glad that the children were not with him; for their lively spirits and tumble-about activity would quite have chased away his higher and graver mood, so that he would merely have been merry (as he had already been, the whole day long), and would not have known the loveliness of the winter sunset among the hills. (Hawthorne 1851 104)

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23 For more on theoretical approaches to children’s texts addressing “the hidden adult,” see Nodelman 2008, particularly 206-210, where Perry Nodelman discusses how “the idea that children’s literature might have—indeed, might characteristically and even inherently and unavoidably imply—an adult audience as well as a childlike one is a key feature of some important theories of children’s literature” (Nodelman 2008 207).
Certainly, this passage could be seen as a pointed remark to a young reader, but it also seems to speak to an adult who would more readily understand how a guardian like Eustace might be glad for a reprieve from their young charges. Another telling moment in the frame is when the narrator fully recounts a discussion between adult characters, only to note that the children “understood not a word of it” (Hawthorne 1851 138). Nor is there any reason that they should have understood it, indicating that the conversation is most likely described for the purposes of an adult reader or a significantly older child. A significant feature of Hawthorne’s frame, then, is that it does not simply highlight the ideal responses of the children reading the *Wonder Book*, but readers of all different ages as well.

This becomes clear in the frame episode surrounding “The Three Golden Apples,” in which Eustace is called before Mr. Pringle, the father of the house and “a classical scholar,” who wants to hear one of the student’s stories, in Primrose’s words, “in order to judge whether they are likely to do any mischief” (Hawthorne 1851 105). There is a double play, of sorts, around the word “mischief,” since the reader cannot be certain if Pringle means mischief to the children or to the stories that are being adapted. Eustace initially worries about the older man’s likely reaction to one of his stories, fearing that “No man of fifty, who has read the classical myths in his youth, can possibly understand my merit as a reinventor and improver of them” (Hawthorne 1851 105). Preparing to tell Mr. and Mrs. Pringle his story about Hercules, the college student asks his adult audience members to “…be kind enough to remember that I am addressing myself to the imagination and sympathies of the children, not to your own” (Hawthorne 1851 107-108). Hawthorne’s acknowledgement of his adult audience is a defensive one; he does not seek to reshape his content in a way that will be necessarily acceptable to all readers, young and old. Instead, he writes stories for children that he hopes adults will read and enjoy as well.
For those adult readers from whom approval does not come readily, he embeds in the frame a justification for why these stories are as they are and why adults should approve of them, in addition to showing the expectations with which these adult readers should approach the text. Mr. Pringle does not make a less-than-ideal audience member because he is an adult, but rather because he is interested in the story as a specimen of “an attempt to render the fables of classical antiquity into the idiom of modern fancy and feeling” (Hawthorne 1851 107). From the start of the Wonder Book, meanwhile, as Eustace prepares to tell the book’s opening story of Perseus and Medusa, he is described as “incurring great obligations to Professor Anthon” while also “disregard[ing] all classical authorities, whenever the vagrant audacity of his imagination impelled him to do so” (Hawthorne 1851 6). When he is called before Mr. Pringle, Eustace fears that “‘…he will be sure to quarrel with the admirable nonsense that I put into these stories, out of my own head, and which makes the great charm of the matter for children’” (Hawthorne 1851 105).

These fears are, ultimately, warranted. After the story of “The Three Golden Apples” concludes, Mr. Pringle tells Eustace, “Pray let me advise you never more to meddle with a classical myth. Your imagination is altogether Gothic, and will inevitably Gothicize everything that you touch. The effect is like be-daubing a marble statue with paint” (Hawthorne 1851 137). Hawthorne has made no secret to his adult readers that this is, more or less, his very intention, noting in the preface to the text that “in the present version they may have lost much of their classical aspect (or, at all events, the author has not been careful to preserve it), and have perhaps

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24 Charles Anthon, a Columbia professor whose Classical Dictionary was a widely popular handbook of characters and stories from Greek mythology, was the primary source for Hawthorne’s adaptations. His influence on the Wonder Book’s version of the Pandora myth is discussed in section III below.
assumed a Gothic or romantic guise” (Hawthorne 1851 v-vi).25 Even here, Hawthorne is explicit about his Gothic influence but downplays the extent to which the Gothic style was fairly central to his conception of the project, as he described to his publisher James Fields in a letter from May 23, 1851: “I shall aim at substituting a tone in some degree Gothic or romantic, or any such tone as may best please myself, instead of the classic coldness, which is as repellant as the touch of marble” (Fields 1871 59).

Hawthorne’s recurring references to marble are not insignificant and will warrant more attention shortly, but it is worth first returning to Mr. Pringle’s critique, which is clearly constructed in order to provide Eustace, and Hawthorne, an opportunity to emphasize and celebrate the Gothic style’s influence on his modern myth adaptations in the face of more conservative adult readers who might disapprove. As Eustace does so, he reveals both a philosophy of myth as transcending the narrow setting of Classical Antiquity and a somewhat dismissive attitude towards the Ancient Greeks who popularized the stories upon which he draws. Speaking against the idea that these myths belong to the Grecians, Eustace tells Mr. Pringle, “An old Greek had no more exclusive right to them than a modern Yankee has. They are the common property of the world, and of all time… the immemorial birthright of mankind” (Hawthorne 1851 137-138). Here, he echoes Hawthorne himself, who in the book’s preface has said that while the ancient myths “have been hallowed by an antiquity of two or three thousand years,” “no epoch of time can claim a copyright in these immortal fables” (Hawthorne 1851 v). Even these ancient keepers of the stories, Eustace notes, “remodeled them at pleasure, and held them plastic in their hands” (Hawthorne 1851 138), and so in taking his own liberties with the

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stories, he continues the tradition of altering myths for his own times as the respected poets of antiquity did.

That these ancient poets deserved unqualified respect is a view to which Eustace can reasonably expect Mr. Pringle to subscribe, just as Hawthorne can expect of many of the adults who might read his book, but the college student soon reveals that he himself feels otherwise:

“And besides,” continued Eustace, “the moment you put any warmth of heart, any passion or affection, any human or divine morality, into a classic mould, you make it quite another thing from what it was before. My own opinion is, that the Greeks, by taking possession of these legends… and putting them into shapes of indestructible beauty, indeed, but cold and heartless, have done all subsequent ages an incalculable injury.” (Hawthorne 1851 138)

Present here is a theorization of myth that identifies a universal aspect to mythological storytelling; from who did the Greeks “[take] possession of these legends”? Baym explains, “Without going so far as to say that the Greek forms represent corruptions of a superior original, he goes beyond a simple relativism of taste to suggest that the fables have an intrinsic, original warmth and passion that the classic versions have somehow lost” (Baym 1973 40). Myth existed in some form well before the Greeks, but it was these ancients who packaged it in a “cold and heartless” fashion that affected how we have received such stories today.

Moreover, Eustace’s distrust is not limited to the ancients themselves, but also to the modern scholars who study them. He observes early on that it is a wonder how these stories he will tell have never before been written into picture books for young readers to enjoy, “‘But, instead of that, old gray-bearded grandsires pore over them in musty volumes of Greek, and puzzle themselves with trying to find out when, and how, and for what they were made’”

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26 See Caroline Winterer’s history of classicism in American intellectual life, which begins, “Next to Christianity, the central intellectual project in America before the late nineteenth century was classicism” (Winterer 2002 1). Donovan 2002 22 also notes that this classical culture, at least in New England, was one in which both men and women participated.
(Hawthorne 1851 6). This characterization, while not dammingly negative, does seem largely dismissive of the classicists’ enterprise. Eustace’s statement implies that trapping myth within this academic realm not only prevents myth from reaching those whom might benefit from it, but also has a deadening effect. The stories become trapped in their “musty” original language rather than being allowed to dynamically transcend linguistic and temporal borders, as he clearly believes them capable of doing.

The recurring use of imagery related to marble is also telling about Hawthorne’s attitudes towards the ancients and the scholars who study them. Hawthorne’s letter to Fields describes the touch of marble, the material most closely associated with the classical (and, in turn, neo-classical) aesthetic, as “repellant,” linking it with “classic coldness” (Fields 1871 59). Eustace also vocalizes this attitude in the Wonder Book’s frame: “My own opinion is, that the Greeks, by taking possession of these legends… and putting them into shapes of indestructible beauty, indeed, but cold and heartless, have done all subsequent ages an incalculable injury” (Hawthorne 1851 138). But what of Mr. Pringle’s likening of Eustace’s Gothicizing adaptations of myth to “be-daubing a marble statue with paint” (Hawthorne 1851 137)? Evaluating the significance of this statement, unfortunately, requires a fair amount of speculation about whether Hawthorne did or did not know that the marble sculptures of antiquity were, in fact, originally painted.27

Should Hawthorne have known that the popular ‘white-marble’ aesthetic, believed in the neo-classical period to have been the style in classical antiquity, was really a faulty construct, Mr. Pringle’s comment becomes heavily ironic. The scholar becomes representative of the “musty” classical establishment, standing in conservative disbelief of a challenge to the ancient

27 Knowledge of the phenomenon of classical polychromy did exist in Hawthorne’s time, though it was hardly unanimously accepted, let alone universally known. I am grateful to Alice Donohue of the Bryn Mawr College Department of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology for sharing her expertise on this topic.
past’s artistic legacy, while the author pokes fun at the fact that Eustace’s adaptations actually restore the myths to their ancient state. Yet this appears as if it may be inconsistent with Hawthorne’s attitudes as voiced in the passages quoted above, and so we should consider the other possibility that he was unfamiliar with the sculptures’ painted history. In this case, Mr. Pringle accuses Eustace of making a gaudy spectacle of stories that should be ornate and dignified, something Eustace is all too pleased to do.

It may be impossible to determine which of these two scenarios is the correct one in this situation, but in either case we can observe an opposition in play where Eustace and Mr. Pringle serve as each other’s foils via their attitudes towards the classics. Pearce identifies this relationship as follows: “Eustace Bright, who tells the stories, is Hawthorne as an eternally young father figure; Mr. Pringle, who has his scholarly doubts about them, is Hawthorne as aging skeptic” (Pearce 1972 305). Whether or not we choose to accept Pearce’s configuration of the two characters representing traits of Hawthorne himself, his description of these traits is useful nonetheless. In this foil relationship, Mr. Pringle represents age in contrast to Eustace’s youth, but Eustace is not so young that he cannot hold his own in the conversation between the two. He possesses the knowledge to make his case against the Greeks’ “cold” treatment of the myths, and the entire discussion is one that the children present during the conversation cannot understand. This once again emphasizes the college student’s transitional state between childhood and adulthood; we have previously observed Eustace’s ability to indulge in the fantastical nature of his stories just as well as his young audience, and here his ability to engage with a more mature audience becomes clear as well.

The age-based divisions that separate and stratify the different characters in the *Wonder Book*’s frame, unstable to begin with, also fail to hold throughout the entire book. The personal
development of Primrose, the oldest of Eustace’s young listeners, can be observed in her shifting responses to the college student’s stories over the course of the book. Though she is often dismissive and critical of Eustace early on, by the end of “The Chimæra,” in the closing episode of the frame, we see the girl crying, “for she was conscious of something in the legend which the rest of them were not yet old enough to feel” (Hawthorne 1851 206). The girl attributes her ability to feel the “ardor, the generous hope, and the imaginative enterprise of youth” (Hawthorne 1851 206) that Eustace has put into the story to their physical setting, on Bald-Summit. Indeed, as Sandra Burr points out, the ascent of a mountain during the last third of the book, during which “the children learn according to their respective pedagogical levels,” provides a literal enactment of “the pedagogical ascent that readers will climb by book’s end” (Burr 2010 86).

The younger children stop midway up the hillside, but the older children continue on to the top, where they “experience an epistemological change… because their spatial relationship to the world shifts significantly” (Burr 2010 87). They observe the changes the height has on the landscape around them, with the impact on their home being of particular note: “There, too, was Tanglewood, which they had hitherto thought such an important apex of the world. It now occupied so small a space, that they gazed far beyond it, and on either side, and searched a good while with all their eyes, before discovering whereabout it stood” (Hawthorne 1851 173). As she

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28 Lesley Ginsberg reads a romantic dimension into Primrose’s development as well: “When she suddenly distinguishes herself from ‘the children’… at the age of thirteen, Primrose’s latent womanhood makes a startling debut; the specter of her entrance into physical if not emotional maturity creates a special intimacy between Primrose and Eustace not shared by the other, younger children” (Ginsberg 1993 258).

29 Sandra Burr links the Wonder Book’s Bald-Summit to the top of Monument Mountain, which Hawthorne had hiked in 1850 on the day he first met Herman Melville, along with a group of other literary men: “The two writers literally and figuratively celebrated the heights of creativity and communality amid nature’s splendor and pointed to the inspired, life-changing ideas that mountains can evoke. This moment seems reinvented at Wonder-Book’s end” (Burr 2010 86).
cries upon the end of the Chimæra’s story, Primrose observes, “‘It certainly does elevate your ideas, to get your head above the clouds’” (Hawthorne 1851 207). Burr notes that “Comparing the process of learning to ascending a hill is a literary and pedagogical commonplace at least as early as Genesis, in which Moses climbs Mt. Sinai and returns with the tablets bearing the Ten Commandments” (Burr 2010 84). Thus, the transformative ascent of the mountain is a logical conclusion to a book that attempts to instruct its readers.

In the more specific context of the history of mythology, the idea of reckoning with myth as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of universal truths and ascending to a higher form of being was employed by a number of Renaissance-era writers with Neoplatonic philosophical approaches. The Italian Giordano Bruno, for example, in his 1585 *Gli Eroici Furori* (*The Heroic Frenzies*), presents two men engaged in an exercise in which they take turns presenting poems (which are often myth-inspired) and paired interpretive theories, with the ultimate goal of reaching towards “the ascension toward God and the return to the supreme unity of the soul through love” (Memmo 1966 17). By identifying and explicating the allegorical essence of the myths they discuss, Bruno’s characters seek to discover the truth they have longed after, subsume what they discover, and experience ascension to a more meaningful existence. The mountain climbing episode in Hawthorne’s frame is hardly as direct in its philosophical stance, but we can see the same sort of thinking influencing the narrative. In the discussions of the myths

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30 One myth that is analyzed from this approach is that of Actaeon, the unfortunate hunter who discovers Diana bathing in the woods and is punished, in many versions, by being transformed into a stag and devoured by his dogs. In Bruno’s reading of the story, the hunter’s death symbolizes a spiritual rebirth by which he ascends “to live by the intellect” and “lives the life of the gods” (Memmo 1966 126). Death is not the end for Actaeon, nor does he become immortal; rather, his self-destruction indicates the phasing out of his old desires and youthful ignorance so that he may live an elevated existence as a higher being. This sort of ascension, which is physically drawn out in the *Wonder Book’s* frame narrative, is linked to an internal transformation brought about by the discovery of personal truth.
related to the reader through the frame episodes, Hawthorne emphasizes the importance of considering the myths, both for their immediate moral content, which is immediately ascertainable following a particular story (the Midas story, for example, sends the simple message that greed is bad), as well as for their ability to promote larger cognitive development and ascension to higher mental capacity. The mountain climbing episode as a whole and Primrose’s personal moment of revelation both help demonstrate this philosophy of myth that leads Hawthorne to view the stories as “very capital reading for children” (Hawthorne 1851 v).

The construction of the Wonder Book’s frame, then, provides a venue in which Hawthorne can tailor his book to most effectively reach all different audiences. Through the character of Eustace, he creates a proxy for himself as storyteller who occupies the liminal state of late adolescence, fluctuating between childhood and adulthood, and is thus able to engage audiences of both young and older readers alike. Indeed, as moments throughout the frame demonstrate, Hawthorne does seem to anticipate a diverse audience, and he devotes some attention to illustrating his philosophy of myth and justifying it as reading material for children, an effort that appears to imply the expectation of an older audience when it sometimes becomes inaccessible to younger readers. Ultimately, the frame provides a stage for the realization of the author’s pedagogical goals for the stories, as the characters climb a mountain, metaphorically illustrating their own cognitive development.

Hawthorne did not opt to include such an elaborate frame in the Wonder Book’s sequel, the Tanglewood Tales. Julian Hawthorne speculates, “Either he thought a repetition undesirable, or else the idea had not satisfied his taste as well as he had expected” (Hawthorne 1884 470). Julian also mentions a February 10, 1853 letter from Robert Carter, who praises the Wonder Book as containing “a fresh fountain of new sensations and ideas” (Hawthorne 1884 471) before
going on to critique a number of aspects of the book, including some elements of the frame.\textsuperscript{31}

But since Hawthorne did not attempt to repeat this framing project in his second collection of myths, this first attempt becomes all the more valuable for interpretation. With an understanding of the *Wonder Book*’s frame and how the book situates its retellings of myth, we are now able to make a transition from the frame narrative to the inner narratives of the myths for a closer examination of Hawthorne’s strategies for adaptation and how these techniques complement the frame’s methods of addressing his audience discussed here.

\textsuperscript{31} Carter writes, “Though the contrast is striking between the Old World tales and the fresh young life of America, I should have liked it better if you had given the tales a Greek setting, and thrown back Eustace Bright and his auditors a couple of thousand years, to a countryseat of Attica, Ionia, or Sicily. As it is, Mr. Pringle and his wife are decided excrescences, who ought to be condemned to the preface, and with them your friends the publisher and artist, who are now sadly out of place. I want to see nothing in the ‘Wonder-Book’ that will not read harmoniously there a thousand years hence, or in any language of the world” (Hawthorne 1884 472-473).
III. Hawthorne’s Pandora, Unboxed: Adaptation in the *Wonder Book* and “The Paradise of Children”

The preceding discussion of the *Wonder Book*’s frame narrative has focused largely on how Hawthorne ties together his myth-inspired children’s stories in a way that engages his audience in a conversation, of sorts, about his purpose in adapting the classical myths for children. It is a natural next step, then, to more closely examine these adaptations themselves to see how the author executes the plan for which the frame builds the foundation. A full analysis of each myth contained in the *Wonder Book* is beyond the scope of this project, and so I will focus on “The Paradise of Children,” Hawthorne’s version of the story of Pandora’s Box, as a case study for examining some of his strategies for adaptation and their effects. First, however, some broader observations about the stories Hawthorne chooses and how he modifies them will be useful. Hawthorne’s approach to adapting myth is notable for its freedom in making liberal modifications to the stories he retells, including expansion or contraction of the stories and free departure from his source material, in order to promote a more enjoyable reading experience for his audience. He encourages readers to find points of identification in the stories by recasting the stories’ settings and characters in forms more recognizable for his intended audience, and allows himself greater authorial freedom to create pleasing morals that will entertain and educate his readers.

The *Wonder Book* retells six myths: “The Gorgon’s Head,” “The Golden Touch,” “The Paradise of Children,” “The Three Golden Apples,” “The Miraculous Pitcher,” and “The Chimæra.” Hugo McPherson attempts to separate these stories, as well as the stories told in the

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*Tanglewood Tales*, into three separate categories (McPherson 1969 14-15). The first is the narrative of the hero’s quest, as exemplified by the stories of Perseus, Hercules, and Bellerophon. Next is the story of the “attractive female who, like Eve, appears to be responsible in one way or another for mankind’s fallen state,” a figure McPherson calls the “Dark Lady” (McPherson 1969 15), which only Pandora represents in the *Wonder Book*. Finally, we see the more parable-like stories illustrating “the ideas that man’s happiness is inextricably involved with the happiness of his fellows; men must learn to be brothers” (McPherson 1969 15). The stories of Midas and Baucis and Philemon are of this type. Whether or not Hawthorne conceived of his chosen myths according to this specific typology as identified by McPherson, it is highly probably that he differentiated the stories along roughly these lines, as is evident in the order in which the stories are told—the three hero’s quests come in the beginning, middle, and end of the book, separated by the ‘brotherhood of man’ stories, as well as the one Dark Lady story which comes between those of Midas (the first brotherhood story) and Hercules (the second hero).

In seeking myths that could be most efficaciously “rendered into very capital reading for children” (Hawthorne 1851 v), Hawthorne likely sought particular qualities that would help facilitate the production of stories of sufficient interest and appropriateness to his young audience. Robert D. Richardson observes, “Hawthorne characteristically chose stories that turn on—or could be made to turn on—magic or transformation, stories where violence is limited to humans fighting monsters and where sex is simply not prominent” (Richardson 1979 344). The first of these criteria indicates the influence on Hawthorne’s literary sensibilities of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, one of the most influential ancient works that has shaped the reception of myth in Western art and literature ever since its completion in 8 CE. Gregory Staley notes that, while

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33 The stories of Circe and Proserpina in the sequel are additional examples of this type.
Hawthorne likely did not encounter Ovid during his studies in Latin at Bowdoin College since the author was not a part of the college’s standard curriculum at the time, he nonetheless knew Ovid’s stories of transformation through other authors, such as Shakespeare, who had subsequently retold them. As the result of this exposure, Staley suggests, “Hawthorne's aesthetic is conceptually and terminologically indebted to Ovid and to his myths about art: ‘transformation’ is the process of creating art, of sculpting new shapes” (Staley 2013 127).

Despite Hawthorne’s lack of direct familiarity with Ovid’s work, then, it is fair to say that Ovid was a significant influence on the author, and it is a sensible to view the similarities between the two writers’ styles of myth-making as more than simply coincidental.

Hawthorne’s approach to adapting myth is, at times, very much like Ovid’s, as when he emphasizes the physical transformations wrought by Midas’ golden touch. More generally, though, Ovid’s influence can be observed in the fact that Hawthorne develops an approach to adapting myth in the first place. Richardson explains that Hawthorne draws upon classical myth as his source material, but the material “has been selected and altered in important ways, and when compared to earlier or analogous retellings, Hawthorne’s can be seen to be much more than just another retelling. It is in fact a major reshaping of the old materials to new purposes, as creative in its way as Ovid’s” (Richardson 1979 342). In other words, Ovid’s project of taking established myths from another time and place and repurposing them, with any degree of modification he deemed necessary, is a functional precursor of Hawthorne’s. It very well may be Ovid who Eustace has in mind when he speaks of the ancient poets reshaping myths at will, thus providing him with adequate justification to make liberal modifications to the stories.

These changes are certainly in part stylistic, as could be expected in transposing myth from an ancient to modern setting and adapting the stories for a younger audience, but
Richardson observes, “Hawthorne’s originality is much more than a matter of style. He did change the style, indeed, but he also changed the characters, the settings and the actual plots” (Richardson 1979 343). At times, these modifications suggest the intention of bowdlerizing the myths, as when violent or sexual plot elements were removed from stories. This is well illustrated by the characters whom Hawthorne converts from mature adults to young children, as with Pandora and Epimetheus, or to immature adults, as with Midas, who must be old enough to have a daughter but demonstrates little other evidence of having developed past the psychological state of a young child.

This removal of objectionable content is to be expected in any process of adaptation for children, of course, but Hawthorne makes additional changes to the stories’ settings and characters that will create easy opportunities for his readers to find points of identification in the text by reducing the perceived distance between the readers’ world and that of the story. To this end, “all the settings have been changed. Greece is never mentioned and it all could be happening in the Berkshires. Characters too are changed. Hawthorne converts heroes and heroines into children and ordinary people” (Richardson 1979 344). The myths are not localized in the same sense as the frame, where specific geographic locales are depicted in a highly realistic level of detail deriving from notes he made in his notebooks, but they are detached from their Greek setting and positioned closer to Hawthorne’s New England, perhaps owing to the influence of the fairy and folk tales proliferating at the time. These stories often took place in generalized locales that were usually undifferentiated from the reader’s own world but for the

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34 Editor Claude Simpson writes that the notebook entries “written straightforwardly as diary record proved happily adaptable to fictional needs… the linking passages between myths retold in A Wonder Book vivified the Lenox setting observed in notebook entries describing seasonal progressions through the autumn, winter, and spring of 1850-51” (Simpson 1972 680). The book’s concluding sentence even mentions a neighbor of Hawthorne’s, Luther Butler, who provided the writer’s family with milk (Simpson 1972 655, n. 439.31).
insertion of fantastical elements. Removing the myths’ Hellenic context and following the fairy
tale example of setting them in a vaguely familiar locale makes them easier for a young
American audience to imagine, and fits in nicely with Hawthorne’s interest in a distinctly
American myth-making throughout his writing career.35

The characters, too, are brought physically closer to the young readers in that they
become younger or lose special designations of royal or semi-divine status. In fact, divinity is
more or less absent from the Wonder Book, as “Gods become mysterious strangers or eccentric
adults” (Richardson 1979 344). The closest we come to meeting a member of the Greek
pantheon is Quicksilver, a stand-in throughout the book for Hermes/Mercury (note the elemental
joke from which Hawthorne’s name for the character derives). The man, always initially
identified in each story as a stranger even as the reader becomes more familiar with him, has a
noticeably un-contemporary look about him, and maintains the distinctive iconography that
would make him readily identifiable to a reader familiar with classical myth: he is described as
“a brisk, intelligent, and remarkably shrewd-looking young man, with a cloak over his shoulders,
an odd sort of cap on his head, a strangely twisted staff in his hand, and a short and very crooked
sword hanging by his side” (Hawthorne 1851 12).

Quicksilver appears frequently in “The Gorgon’s Head” and “The Miraculous Pitcher,”
as well as maintaining a peripheral presence in “The Paradise of Children.” He also speaks of his
sister, identified no further beyond her designation as “very wise” (Hawthorne 1851 14), as he
guides Perseus in his quest for Medusa’s head, and is accompanied by another unidentified
stranger—Zeus, in the ancient version of the myth—when he reaches Baucis and Philemon’s

35 See McPherson 1969, especially section I, “The Shape of Hawthorne’s Myth.”
house in “The Miraculous Pitcher.” An unnamed stranger\textsuperscript{36} appears to Midas in “The Golden Touch” to give, and later take, the gift of the golden touch to the King. This stranger is explicitly identified as a supernatural being of some sort: “As Midas knew that he had carefully turned the key in the lock, and that no mortal strength could possibly break into his treasure-room, he, of course, concluded that his visitor must be something more than mortal” (Hawthorne 1851 49). Eustace, narrating the story, explains that for such beings are not uncommon in the realm of myth, for:

In those days, when the earth was comparatively a new affair, it was supposed to be often the resort of beings endowed with supernatural power, and who used to interest themselves in the joys and sorrows of men, women, and children, half playfully and half seriously. Midas had met such beings before now, and was not sorry to meet one of them again. (Hawthorne 1851 49-50)

Eustace stops short of any further identification, however, prefacing the above explanation to his readers, “It is no matter about telling you who he was” (Hawthorne 1851 49).

The gods, then, are by no means altogether removed from Hawthorne’s myth. The employment of key iconography (such as Quicksilver’s staff) or epithets (as with the invocation of Athena simply as Quicksilver’s “wise” sister) often ensures that these figures are readily identifiable to a reader with the necessary background knowledge. In the case of the unknown stranger who comes to Midas, the author leaves the persona ambiguous but is clear that there is “something more than mortal” about the character. The author does not, however, ever provide any explicit identification of these characters as divinities. The reader is encouraged to conceive

\textsuperscript{36} While Hawthorne’s text is ambiguous, echoing an earlier description of Quicksilver (Hawthorne 1851 13) by referring to a “a young man, with a cheerful and ruddy face… [whose] aspect, indeed, was so good-humored and kindly, if not beneficent, that it would have been unreasonable to suspect him of intending any mischief” (Hawthorne 1851 49-50), Crane’s illustrations—which indicate the illustrator’s understanding and interpretation of the text—depict Quicksilver, with his iconic staff and winged cap (Hawthorne 1851 50). Meanwhile, the original myth has Bacchus bestow the golden touch upon Midas.
of them as supernatural, and there is nothing to prevent a reader from considering them as gods, should he or she wish to do so, but divinity per se is not a fundamental part of these characters’ identities. Hawthorne thus creates characters who, depicted as playful and helpful sidekicks more often than as all-powerful divinities, may be more readily accessible to his young readers, while also further detaching the myths from their Greek context and avoiding the pitfalls of presenting pagan religion to a puritanical Christian audience.

With all these changes to the stories’ settings and characters, it comes as little surprise that Hawthorne felt readily able to modify the plots of the myths as well. Generally speaking, these modifications, which Richardson suggests are “perhaps the most important of Hawthorne’s many changes,” are made with the intention of making the outcomes of the stories more palatable. An obvious example of this comes in Hawthorne’s version of the Midas myth. In Ovid’s account of the story (Ovid Metamorphoses XI.85-145), which is in fact less tragic than might be expected, Midas realizes the folly of the golden touch as he tries in vain to eat a meal. He makes a plea to Bacchus, the giver of the fatal gift, who does in fact take back the power. The god sends Midas to purify himself in the river Sardis, where, in a typical Ovidian metamorphosis, “the power of the golden touch imbued the water and passed from the man’s body into the stream” (visa ulla tinxit flumen et humano de corpore cessit in amnem, Ov. Met. XI.142-143). Midas learns his lesson about greed, but goes on to have further misadventures in which he offends Apollo by judging Pan a better musician, and suffers the consequence of

37 Richardson continues this point by saying that these new outcomes are more like those of fairy tales: “Hawthorne changes the characteristically tragic plots of myth into fairy stories with their characteristically happy endings” (Richardson 1979 344). Yet this seems to ignore the fact that the fairy tales of the Grimms and Andersen—those Hawthorne would have encountered before writing the Wonder Book—are sometimes bittersweet or downright unhappy. At the same time, in many instances they do often represent a softening of the unhappy outcomes of their sources; one example of this is the Grimms’ Little Red-Cap.
having his ears turned into those of an ass (Ov. *Met.* XI.146-193). Midas is, like many characters in the *Metamorphoses*, a cautionary figure, and the outlook for his fate—while decidedly better than that many of his counterparts in Ovid’s text—is less than positive.

In the *Wonder Book*, on the other hand, Hawthorne introduces the figure of Marygold, King Midas’ daughter, whose transformation into gold—which may in fact be more horrific than any part of Ovid’s story—shows the King the error of his ways and provides him with the incentive to seek to rid himself of the ill-conceived power. After Marygold’s transformation, Midas, acting on the advice of the same stranger who gave him the golden touch, submerges himself in a nearby river, washing away the hateful ability to turn objects to gold, and comes out with a pitcher of water that he can sprinkle over any object he wants to turn back from gold to its former state, including his daughter. She is restored to life with no lasting effects except for that her “hair had now a golden tinge” that “was really an improvement, and made Marygold's hair richer than in her babyhood” (Hawthorne 1851 67). While Ovid’s story ends on a somber note, the Midas story as told by Eustace has a happy ending that concludes with Midas telling this story to his grandchildren, showing that the episode described in the tale has taught him a valuable lesson he has carried throughout his life and implying that Marygold ultimately found a husband, had children, and lived happily ever after.

This is not what we expect from a traditional myth, but rather displays the clear influence of the fairy tale, as Richardson argues: “It may be a little surprising to find Hawthorne, whose main reputation is for his tragic vision, so resolutely insisting on happy endings. But he does insist on them, and the happy ending is one of the clearest differences between most fairy tales and most myths” (Richardson 1979 345). In the *Wonder Book’s* context, written as the collections of the work of the Brothers Grimm and newly released stories of Hans Christian
Andersen were at the height of their popularity, it makes sense that he would draw inspiration from the fairy tale, and the intersection with this genre and its conventions also helps to indicate the audiences for which he intended his writing.

Hawthorne’s liberality in adaptation is particularly evident in the significant expansion of several stories, into which he added elaborate levels of detail in describing the stories’ settings, characters, and events. While Eustace’s versions of heroic tales often present severely abridged accounts of the material available in their ancient sources, his take on the Midas story, which occupies just over 20 pages of the book, provides an example of how Hawthorne’s approach to adapting simpler stories, told in the space of less than a hundred lines in the ancient sources, could cause stories to expand well beyond their original scope. That these less developed stories “gave Hawthorne’s imagination freer scope” (Hathaway 1961 165) is particularly evident in the Wonder Book’s “The Paradise of Children,” which recasts Pandora and Epimetheus as small children living in an Edenic paradise and turns a relatively short digression from Hesiod’s Works and Days about why life is hard into a lengthy cautionary tale about the dangers of curiosity. The story of Pandora is an especially worthwhile myth to focus on within Hawthorne’s larger project, since it is one of the first stories the author contrived to adapt for children. That the myth held such a strong appeal to Hawthorne that he was interested in converting it into a children’s story more than ten years before actually writing the Wonder Book indicates that it is most likely especially ripe for close reading, since it was one to which Hawthorne clearly devoted substantial thought and interest.

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38 See footnote 37.
39 Recall the 1838 fragmentary notebook entry: “Pandora’s box for a child’s story” (Simpson 1972 181).
Eustace sets the stage for the story by taking his audience back to “…when the world was as new as Sweet Fern's bran-new humming-top. There was then but one season in the year, and that was the delightful summer; and but one age for mortals, and that was childhood” (Hawthorne 1851 76). As the story opens, Pandora, a young orphan, is sent—by an unnamed actor—to Epimetheus, another parentless child, “to live with him, and be his playfellow and helpmate” (Hawthorne 1851 78). As soon as Pandora enters into Epimetheus’ home, she finds herself immediately intrigued by the very first thing she notices in the cottage—a mysterious box:

And almost the first question which she put to him, after crossing the threshold, was this,—“Epimetheus, what have you in that box?” “My dear little Pandora,” answered Epimetheus, “that is a secret, and you must be kind enough not to ask any questions about it. The box was left here to be kept safely, and I do not myself know what it contains.” “But who gave it to you?” asked Pandora. “And where did it come from?” “That is a secret, too,” replied Epimetheus. (Hawthorne 1851 78)

While she finds the box “provoking,” Pandora also has an adverse reaction to the box, calling it “ugly” (Hawthorne 1851 78). But she remains entranced by the box and its secret; in fact, at a time when the earth knew nothing of “those ugly little winged monsters, called Troubles, which are now almost as numerous as mosquitoes,” (Hawthorne 1851 79), Eustace says, it is likely that “Pandora’s vexation at not being able to discover the secret of the mysterious box” was “the very greatest disquietude which a child had ever experienced” (Hawthorne 1851 80). The narrator’s sense of foreboding is made manifest in the physical landscape of the Paradise, as well, through the employment of the pathetic fallacy: as Pandora’s frustration grows, so does “the faint shadow

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40 Daniel Hoffman observes that Eustace’s version of the Pandora helps us infer “that Eustace Bright’s romantic views of both childhood and pre-history are sentimental illusions.” This is supported by the episode’s ironic titling: “Characteristically, in A Wonder-Book, Hawthorne has Eustace give his tale of the coming of woes into the world an optimistic title, ‘The Paradise of Children’” (Hoffman 1964 200).
of a Trouble,” until eventually “the cottage of Epimetheus and Pandora was less sunshiny than those of the other children” (Hawthorne 1851 80).

The majority of the story is devoted to chronicling, in great detail, Pandora’s consuming obsession with the box. Epimetheus attempts to distract her from this fixation with the pleasures of the paradisiacal world in which they live, but the utopia of their world has already been destroyed for Pandora:

“I wish, dear Pandora, you would try to talk of something else. Come, let us go and gather some ripe figs, and eat them under the trees, for our supper. And I know a vine that has the sweetest and juiciest grapes you ever tasted.” “Always talking about grapes and figs!” cried Pandora, pettishly. “Well, then,” said Epimetheus, who was a very good-tempered child, like a multitude of children in those days, “let us run out and have a merry time with our playmates.” “I am tired of merry times, and don’t care if I never have any more!” answered our pettish little Pandora. “And, besides, I never do have any. This ugly box! I am so taken up with thinking about it all the time.” (Hawthorne 1851 80)

At Pandora’s continued insistence for whatever information Epimetheus has about the box, we soon discover that Quicksilver, ever identifiable by his “curious staff… like two serpents twisting around a stick” (Hawthorne 1851 81), was the one who delivered the box to Epimetheus. As Quicksilver was also the one to bring Pandora to the house, she concludes, “No doubt he intended it for me; and, most probably, it contains pretty dresses for me to wear, or toys for you and me to play with, or something very nice for us both to eat!” (Hawthorne 1851 82).

Epimetheus remains firm in his belief that he and Pandora have “…neither of us any right to lift the lid of the box,” and goes out, giving up on trying to convince his playmate to come with him; we see that he has become fed up with Pandora, for “So perseveringly as she did babble about this one thing! The box, the box, and nothing but the box!” (Hawthorne 1851 82).

Pandora, meanwhile, is finally left alone with the box, and Eustace describes her fixation as it intensifies, bordering on outright fetishization. Though Pandora “had called it ugly, above a hundred times,” the box is finely crafted, “made of a beautiful kind of wood, with dark and rich
veins spreading over its surface, which was so highly polished that little Pandora could see her face in it” (Hawthorne 1851 83). The box’s adornments—several faces intermingled with designs of flowers and leaves—are described in great detail, and one of the faces seems to almost speak to her. Though the mouth does not actually speak, she is certain that:

Had the mouth spoken, it would probably have been something like this: — “Do not be afraid, Pandora! What harm can there be in opening the box? Never mind that poor, simple Epimetheus! You are wiser than he, and have ten times as much spirit. Open the box, and see if you do not find something very pretty!” (Hawthorne 1851 84)

For a long time, Pandora flirts with the temptation to open the box, until it seems all but certain that this intense curiosity will eventually get the better of her. Epimetheus, meanwhile, discovers that he is unable to enjoy his outing without Pandora and decides to return home. As he opens the door, he discovers Pandora with her hand on the box’s lid. In a pivotal moment in which, “If he had cried out, Pandora would probably have withdrawn her hand, and the fatal mystery of the box might never have been known” (Hawthorne 1851 91), he remains silent. For despite his lectures to Pandora on the moral impropriety of opening the box, Epimetheus is resolved not to allow his playmate to possess such knowledge that he does not, and “if there were anything pretty or valuable in the box, he meant to take half of it to himself” (Hawthorne 1851 92).

The box is opened, then, after a failure of willpower on the part of both Pandora and Epimetheus. The cottage becomes dark, and “There had, for a little while past, been a low growling and muttering, which all at once broke into a heavy peal of thunder” (Hawthorne 1851 92). As Pandora raises the lid fully upright:

It seemed as if a sudden swarm of winged creatures brushed past her, taking flight out of the box, while, at the same instant, she heard the voice of Epimetheus, with a lamentable tone, as if he were in pain. “Oh, I am stung!” cried he. “I am stung! Naughty Pandora! why have you opened this wicked box?” (Hawthorne 1851 92)
Epimetheus faces the immediate consequence of Pandora’s deed, as one of “a crowd of ugly little shapes, with bats’ wings, looking abominably spiteful, and armed with terribly long stings in their tales” (Hawthorne 1851 93) stings him, and the room fills with “a great many huge flies, or gigantic mosquitoes, or those insects which we call dor-bugs, and pinching-dogs” (Hawthorne 1851 92-93). Pandora nearly receives a nasty sting on her forehead, but Epimetheus rushes over to chase the “odious little monster” (Hawthorne 1851 93) away just in time. Eustace explains that these creatures were the “whole family of earthly Troubles,” including all kinds of “evil Passions… Cares… Sorrows… Diseases… [and] more kinds of Naughtiness than it would be of any use to talk about” (Hawthorne 1851 93). From that moment onward, the world is forever transformed. “It was impossible,” says Eustace, “that the two children should keep the ugly swarm in their own little cottage” (Hawthorne 1851 94), and the Troubles soon become firmly entrenched throughout humanity. The world will no longer be a Paradise of Children, filled with eternal youth and bliss, but has become a place where people cry, age, and experience hardship.

In the frenzy, Pandora lets the box’s lid fall shut, trapping inside one remaining creature. After the swarm of monsters disperses—Pandora and Epimetheus open the windows to let them out, which saves the central figures from further pain but assists the Troubles in spreading throughout the world—this creature knocks on the box’s lid, asking to be let out. Pandora has realized the severity of her action and is thus understandably skeptical, declaring, “‘I have had enough of lifting the lid! You are inside of the box, naughty creature, and there you shall stay! There are plenty of your ugly brothers and sisters already flying about the world. You need never think that I shall be so foolish as to let you out!’” (Hawthorne 1851 95). Yet the creature persists, and Pandora, realizing that she can do little further harm beyond that which was already done, finds herself compelled by the “kind of cheerful witchery in the tone, that made it almost
impossible to refuse anything which this little voice asked” (Hawthorne 1851 96). With Epimetheus’ help, she raises the lid once more, releasing a “a sunny and smiling little personage… [who] hovered about the room, throwing a light wherever she went” (Hawthorne 1851 97). This woman, who introduces herself as Hope, removes the pain of the children’s stings with her touch and explains that she was “packed into the box, to make amends to the human race for that swarm of ugly Troubles, which was destined to be let loose among them” (Hawthorne 1851 97-98). She promises that, despite the grim realities of the world that the children may now face, she knows of “something very good and beautiful that is to be given you hereafter” (Hawthorne 1851 98). She will not reveal what this thing is, but asks the children to have faith in her. They do, as “has everybody trusted Hope, that has since been alive” (Hawthorne 1851 98). The world is not restored to the youthful utopia it once was, but Hope’s continued presence leaves the heroes, and the audience, with a glimpse of optimism for the future.

Taking a structural approach to myth and breaking the story down into component parts, we can focus our comparisons of versions of the Pandora myth around the following core story elements: Pandora’s origin, the nature of her relationship to Epimetheus, and, if the variant contains a box: the origin of the box,41 the imposition (or lack thereof) of a prohibition regarding the box, Pandora’s role in opening the box, Epimetheus’ role in opening the box, and the outcome of opening the box—specifically, the negative result of opening it and what counters or

41 The vocabulary in different versions of the story often switches between referring to a “box” and a “jar.” In discussing a particular variant of the story, I will use the word used in that context. In general discussions of the larger story tradition, I will default to using “box” because it has become the more popular of the two, to the extent that “Pandora’s box” has entered the lexicon as a widely used phrase.
tempers this negative result.\textsuperscript{42} While Hawthorne’s access to the ancient versions of the myth was mediated by a contemporary text, Charles Anthon’s \textit{Classical Dictionary}, as will be discussed further below, it is nonetheless useful to examine these ancient sources in order to better understand the Pandora myth as a larger story tradition. Examining the ancient variants of the Pandora myth written by Hesiod, Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Hyginus with these elements in mind will reveal a tendency towards placing increasingly less significance on the box, resulting in more positive characterizations of Pandora that focus more on her importance as the first woman than as a cause of evil in the world.

Meanwhile, we will see that as Pandora’s box vanished out of her story, it entered back into ancient literature through an allusion in Apuleius’ \textit{Golden Ass}, and the reception of this allusion helped to reshape the story of Pandora around the new motif of feminine curiosity. By the time the story reached Anthon and Hawthorne, this version of Pandora as a more or less benevolent figure with the fatal flaw of curiosity had become common, and it is this Pandora who appears in Hawthorne’s “Paradise of Children,” most likely owing to Anthon’s influence. Hawthorne, in turn, takes deliberate steps to link Epimetheus and Pandora to Adam and Eve, repurposing the recognizable lessons of the biblical episode for his own story. Thus, the Pandora myth as told in the \textit{Wonder Book} becomes a story about the dangers of curiosity and the loss of innocence associated with a romanticized vision of pure childhood, and is thus well equipped to offer an entertaining message to both young and older readers.

Beginning with the ancient sources, the most fundamental comparison should be made to Hesiod’s early account of Pandora in his \textit{Works and Days} (Hesiod \textit{Works and Days} 54-105), the

\textsuperscript{42} The action of opening the box is not included as its own story element, since no versions of the story exist that do contain a box but do not include its opening. Generally, it is considered a rule of narrative that any such specialized prohibitions are likely to be transgressed.
oldest extant version of the story. Like Hawthorne’s “Paradise of Children,” Hesiod’s account opens on a utopian setting of the world in its infancy. He describes how “the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sickness which bring the Fates upon men” (Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ... νοῦσων τ’ ἄργαλεων, Hes. W&D 90-92), until Prometheus deceived Zeus to steal fire and Zeus subsequently retaliated by ordering the creation of Pandora. This creature is an “evil thing” (κακόν, Hes. W&D 57) in which, Zeus proclaims, humanity “may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction” (ὅ κεν ἄπαντες / τέρπωνται κατὰ θημόν ἐόν κακόν ἄμφαγαπῶντες, Hes. W&D 57-58). The first human woman, then, is significantly created as a punishment for men; unlike Hawthorne’s Pandora, who is sent as a solace to the lonely Epimetheus, Pandora’s delivery to humanity is malicious in intent.

Hesiod describes Pandora’s creation as a collaborative process between all the gods, resulting in an amalgam of “all gifts.” She is the original femme fatale, a dangerous combination of beauty, desire, and “a shameless mind and deceitful nature” (κόνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἡθος, Hes. W&D 67), delivered to the unsuspecting Epimetheus who fails to remember his brother’s warning not to trust gifts from the gods. Once she has infiltrated the...

43 The passage in Works and Days is the first full version of the story; Hesiod places an extended allusion to Pandora in the Theogony, where he refers to “scatter-brained Epimetheus, who from the first was a mischief to men who eat bread; for it was he who first took of Zeus the woman, the maiden whom he had formed” ( ámbartinoν τ’ Ἐπιμεθέα, / ὅς κακόν ἐξ ἄρχης γένετ’ ἁνδράσιν ἁλφηστήσι, Hes. Theogony 511-512) and goes on to describe the woman’s creation as a punishment for mankind (Hes. Theog. 570-616). Pandora is never named, however, nor is there any discussion of the box.
44 All Greek and Latin texts and translations are from the relevant Loeb editions cited in my bibliography unless otherwise noted; all Greek text has also been verified in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.
45 In Greek, “παν δῶρα,” the derivation of Pandora’s name.
46 “κόνεόν,” translated in Evelyn-White’s Loeb edition as the more neutral “shameless,” is also linked to the term meaning “of a dog,” thus resulting in its translation as “bitchy” in subsequent translations such as that in Trazaskoma and Smith’s 2004 Anthology of Classical Myth.
realm of men, she opens a jar that she was given at her creation, releasing all evils into the world.

But, as in Hawthorne’s version, there is, quite literally, Hope:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{μούνη} \ \delta' \ \alphaντόθη \ 'Ελπίς \ εν \ 'Αρρήκτοις \ δόμοισιν \\
&\text{ἔνδον} \ \εμινε \ πίθου \ υπό \ χείλεσιν, \ οὐδὲ \ θύραξε \\
&\text{ἐξέπτη.} \ \πρόθεν \ γὰρ \ ἐπέλλαβε \ πῶμα \ πίθου \\
&\text{[αὐτῆς Διὸς νεφεληγέρταο] } (\text{Hes. } W&D \ 96-99)
\end{align*}
\]

Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds.47

While Zeus contrives to ruin mankind’s paradisiacal existence via Pandora’s actions, he takes some pity, allowing Hope to remain within the reach of humanity. Pandora is in no way responsible for this one positive result, however. She is, at Zeus’ will, an agent of punishment, and it is only at Zeus’ will that Hope’s detention in the jar offers some antidote to the evil that Pandora’s actions have wrought. As for Pandora, as Richard Hathaway observes, “Her act is an expression of the mischief-making nature given her by the gods, apparently unmotivated even by the curiosity which later authors injected into the story” (Hathaway 1961 170). Hesiod thereby illustrates that the reason that life is hard is, simply put, women—or, rather, the original woman.

The Pandora myth is notable in how infrequently it is retold, at least in extant sources. Several Greek mythographers of the 1st or 2nd century CE make general reference to Pandora. In the Bibliothèque, Apollodorus alludes to Pandora’s story while offering the genealogical history of Prometheus’ line. Deucalion, “reigning in the regions about Phthia, married Pyrrha, the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora, the first woman fashioned by the gods” (οὗτος βασιλεὺς τῶν περὶ τὴν φθίαν τόπον γαμεῖ Πύρραν τὴν Ἐπιμηθέως καὶ Πανδώρας, ἦν ἐπλασαν θεοὶ πρώτην γυναῖκα,

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47 The significance of hope remaining in the jar has been the topic of some debate, which goes well beyond the scope of this discussion. Since Anthon and Hawthorne appear to interpret this part of the story as hope’s remaining as mankind’s “chief support and comfort” (Anthon 1848 969), I will take such an interpretation in my analysis.
Apollodorus *Bibliotheke* 1.7.2). Such an account seems largely deferential to Hesiod’s and offers no contradictory interpretation of the story, though the lack of reference to the highly negative elements of Hesiod’s portrayal of Pandora is notable. Similarly, Pausanias, who tended to take a rationalizing approach in the face of myth’s tendency towards fantastical storytelling, explicitly acknowledges Hesiod’s account as he observes a relief sculpture of Pandora on a pedestal of a statue of Athena: “Hesiod and others have sung how this Pandora was the first woman; before Pandora was born there was as yet no womankind” (πεποίηται δὲ Ἡσιόδῳ τε καὶ ἄλλοις ὡς ἡ Πανδώρα γένοιτο αὕτη γυνὴ πρώτη, Pausanias 1.24.7).

The lack of any commentary on Hesiod’s story’s possible distortions or exaggerations is surprising, yet all Pausanias acknowledges from this version of the myth is Pandora’s status as the first woman. Once again, the negative elements of Hesiod’s story—Pandora’s inherent wickedness and the consequences of her opening the jar—go unmentioned. It seems safe to say that this omission in the works of both 1st/2nd-century mythographers is not caused by a lack of familiarity with Hesiod’s text. Instead, we may observe that the significance of Pandora’s figure to writers, and perhaps more broadly, to audiences in this period, was primarily on her as the original woman, whose creation was pivotal in beginning the genealogical chains that eventually helped produce the world as they knew it. This trend continues in Hyginus’ *Fabulae*, a later myth handbook completed during the 4th or 5th century CE, which recounts Pandora’s creation and delivery to mankind without any mention of Prometheus’ deception of Zeus, Pandora’s box, or the coming of troubles into the world. After Prometheus was created from clay:

*Prometheus Iapeti filius primus homines ex luto finxit. Postea Vulc anus Iovis iussu ex luto mulieris effigiem fecit, cui Minerva animam dedit, ceterique dii aliud donum dederunt; ob id Pandoram nominarunt. Ea data in coniugium Epimetheo fratri; inde nata est Pyrrha, quae mortalis dicitur prima esse creada.* (Hyginus *Fabulae* 142)
Later, Jupiter ordered Vulcan to make out of clay the form of a woman, to whom Minerva gave life and the rest of the gods their own personal gift... she was given to Prometheus’ brother Epimetheus in marriage, and they had a daughter named Pyrrha, who is said to have been the first mortal begotten by birth.48

While these accounts of the story are of relatively minor significance compared to Hesiod’s, which has remained vastly better known, they did serve as Classical dictionaries of their times and, since they were often consulted as sources for information on mythological tales, were able to exercise some influence. These authors offer examples of a shifting attitude towards Pandora that help set the stage for different interpretations of her actions in future adaptations.

The Pandora myth appears never to have become popular in Latin literature. However, one Latin text is worth our attention before moving ahead to Hawthorne’s contemporary source for myth. Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, also known as the *Metamorphoses* and written in the 2nd century CE, tells the story of Cupid and Psyche, which has no known antecedents before Apuleius’ version. While hardly an interpretation of the Pandora myth, it takes up the topic of curiosity and its dangers (one of the earlier appearances of the ‘feminine curiosity’ motif that would become popular in folklore) that we can recognize as present in Hawthorne’s “Paradise of Children.” The story, either directly or through its subsequent reception in art and folklore, appears to have had some influence on Hawthorne’s sources for his interpretation of the Pandora myth. Psyche, a girl of incredible beauty, incurs the wrath of Venus after she earns so much devotion from her admirers that they begin neglecting their worship of the goddess in favor of the mortal. Venus orders Cupid to execute her plans for revenge. Soon, an oracle delivered to Psyche’s father warns that his daughter will be married to a monstrous creature. In fulfillment of the oracle, she is brought to a rocky precipice and left to be carried away by the wind. Zephyr

48 Latin text comes from The Latin Library (http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/hyginus/hyginus5.shtml) and the translation is that of Trzaskoma and Smith 2007.
brings her to far away place where she lives in luxury with a mysterious husband who treats her well but will not allow her to look at him in the light. When Psyche’s sisters visit, they are jealous at her happy marriage and try to convince Psyche that her husband must be a monster; she must look at him in order to protect herself and the unborn child she now carries.

Psyche is consumed by this curiosity her sisters planted in her, and the language Apuleius uses to describe her curiosity is similar to that of flaming passion: “With this blaze of words they inflamed their sister’s burning heart, for in truth it was already on fire…” (“Tali verborum incendio flammata viscera sororis iam prorsus ardentis deserentes ipsae protinus, Apuleius Metamorphoses V.21). Psyche is “left alone” (reliqua sola, Ibid.) by her sisters soon after, but the character narrating the story remarks that “a woman driven by hostile furies is not alone” (infestis Furiis agitata sola non est, Apul. Met. V.21). Fully consumed by her curiosity, Psyche plans her next move, experiencing a manic mix of emotions: “She felt haste and procrastination, daring and fear, despair and anger” (“Festinat differt, audit trepidat, diffidit irascitur, Apul. Met. V.21). and one night, she carries a lamp and dagger into the bedroom, only to discover the beautiful Cupid. He is forced to flee, and Psyche must endure a number of trials before the two can be reunited.

Among these trials is a trip to the underworld, where, in a likely allusion to the Pandora story, Psyche must fill a box with some of Proserpina’s beauty to bring to Venus (Apul. Met. VI.16-21). Proserpina warns Psyche not to look into this box, or even to think about the treasure that she carries (“Sed inter omnia hoc observandum praecipue tibi censeo, ne velis aperire vel inspicere illam quam feres pyxidem, vel omnio divinae formositatis abditum arbitrari curiosius thesaurum, Apul. Met. VI.19). Unsurprisingly, Psyche disobeys, and is overcome by a deep sleep that filled the box instead of beauty (Apul. Met. VI.20), from which Cupid must rescue her. The
similarities between the stories of Psyche and Pandora story are clear, and, as Dora and Erwin Panofsky demonstrate, have resulted in some confusion between visual representations of the two stories:

A ceiling decoration executed in 1745 by Jacob de Wit … does not show, as stated in the catalogue, ‘Pandora Dispatched to Earth by Jupiter’ but the Apotheosis of Psyche according to Apuleius, VI, 23. And a drawing by C. A. Teunissen… officially described as Pandora and the Fettered Prometheus [but actually entitled Psyche Before Persephone], represents in reality the very incident that, we believe, gave rise to the whole confusion: in the foreground Psyche is shown receiving the pyxis from Persephone… and in the background she opens it while Cupid, prepared, prepared for the inevitable emergency, looks on from a mountaintop. (Panofsky and Panofsky 23-26)

Given this recurring tendency for the two stories to become confused in visual depictions, and the original allusion present in Apuleius’ text to begin with, it is not surprising that some further conflation of the plots themselves might occur, a point to which I will return shortly.

Indeed, in Hawthorne’s story of Pandora, the morals of the original Pandora story and the Cupid and Psyche story are swapped so that Pandora’s tale is ultimately about the pitfalls of curiosity, which gets the better of Epimetheus as well as Pandora, and the importance of obeying the rules, rather than the evil that women bring to society. Hawthorne’s portrayal of Pandora and Epimetheus as young children similarly follows a trend in depictions of Cupid and Psyche in art and literature produced after Apuleius’ story became influential. There are likely several explanations for this trend. As Cupid became more exclusively portrayed as a putto, it seems reasonable to expect that Psyche would be represented at a similar age. There may, however, be a moral purpose in this as well, as the youth of the characters demonstrates their naïveté and need for moral instruction. For Hawthorne, of course, it also follows that in writing for an audience of children, he would want to make his characters identifiably young, and we see him do so in several instances throughout the stories (as previously discussed).
It could be said, then, that Hawthorne effectively accesses Hesiod’s text via a filter of Apuleius’ story and its subsequent reception. The similarities to the Cupid and Psyche story are identifiable without any direct reference to this story, and these similarities provide a filter through which Hawthorne receives and reshapes the Hesiod story. This is not, however, Hawthorne’s own innovation, but rather demonstrates the influence of yet another intermediary source, Charles Anthon’s *Classical Dictionary* of the 1840s, a highly popular compendium of classical myths, biographies, and other facts. The extent to which Hawthorne relied on Anthon’s *Dictionary* has been the subject of some debate, as will be seen below, but it is generally accepted that “Hawthorne, whatever his previous reading in classical myth had been, followed the outlines of the accounts as Anthon gave them, referring when necessary to cross-referenced material. He deleted what he felt was inappropriate to the innocence of his readers and developed the stories as freely as ‘his imagination impelled him to’” (Pearce 1972 307-308). That Hawthorne used this source at least to some extent, however, is explicitly acknowledged in the text, when Eustace incurs “great obligations to Professor Anthon” (Hawthorne 1851 6). This reference also likely demonstrates the popularity of Anthon’s handbook, since it seems to indicate an expectation that readers were familiar with the text.

Anthon briefly identifies Pandora as “the first created female, and celebrated in one of the early legends of the Greeks as having been the cause of the introduction of evil into the world”

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49 The full title of this work is *A Classical Dictionary: Containing an Account of the Principal Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors, and Intended to Elucidate All the Important Points Connected With the Geography, History, Biography, Mythology, and Fine Arts of the Greeks and Romans*, and it was republished regularly throughout the decade. Hugo McPherson’s analysis relies upon the 1845 edition of this work, with the disclaimer that, “Hawthorne may have used an earlier edition of this work, but the attribution of the source is not in doubt” (McPherson 1969 14 f.11). While I was unable to find the 1845 edition, I did find versions from 1842, 1848, and 1849, and a comparison of the Pandora entries in all three found them identical. Thus, I will use the 1848 edition here.
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(Anthon 1848 969). He provides a version of events highly similar to that of Hesiod’s (though he uses the Roman versions of the gods’ names), as he tells of Jupiter’s anger with Prometheus over the theft of fire and the gods’ collaboration to create the woman with “beauty” as well as “an impudent and artful disposition” (Anthon 1848 969). Mercury brings Pandora to Epimetheus, who ignores his brother’s warning “to be on his guard, and to receive no gifts from Jupiter,” and “dazzled with her charms,” he marries her (Anthon 1848 969). Trouble begins soon after:

The evil effects of this imprudent step were speedily felt. In the dwelling of Epimetheus stood a closed jar, which he had been forbidden to open. Pandora, under the influence of female curiosity, disregarded the injunction, raised the lid, and all the evils hitherto unknown to man poured out, and spread themselves over the earth. (Anthon 1848 969)

Here, we see the source of many of the differences between Hawthorne’s Pandora and Hesiod’s. Those differences that are not explicitly provided by Anthon’s text—for example, that Hawthorne has Quicksilver deliver the box to Epimetheus—are logical additions responding to gaps created in Anthon’s modifications to the story.

Most importantly, we can see clearly the addition of the feminine curiosity motif, as observed in the Cupid and Psyche story, to the Pandora story. It is worth noting that this was not Anthon’s doing, as this addition also appears in the earlier popular mythological handbook Tooke’s Pantheon, first published in 1698 and still in use by the 1800s. In Tooke’s version, Pandora is not a gift herself to Epimetheus, but rather is sent by Zeus, box in hand, to deliver the box to Epimetheus’ wife, who, “out of a curiosity natural to her sex, opened it, which as soon as she had done, all sorts of diseases and evils, with which it was filled, flew among mankind and have infested them ever since” (Tooke 1698 154). Furthermore, Tooke’s work was translated—without acknowledgement—from the Latin of François Pomey’s Pantheum Mysticum (Tooke 50).

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50 Fully titled Tooke’s Pantheon of the Heathen Gods, and Illustrious Heroes, Tooke’s handbook presents an encyclopedic account of many Greek myths intended for use by students, contextualized by a moral disapproving discussion of idolatry and heathen religion.
Pomey died in 1673, the same year of Tooke’s birth, which places the addition of the feminine curiosity motif into the Pandora story further back. Regardless of which author first described Pandora as curious, such an interpretation of the character is likely indebted to the allusion to Pandora present in Apuleius’ story of Psyche, where Psyche foolishly opens her own box and narrowly avoids the consequences.

Anthon’s account of the Pandora myth concludes in the spirit of the later discussions of the story that downplayed or ignored Hesiod’s allegation against the first woman of malicious intent in opening the jar. In Anthon’s version, “In terror at the sight of these monsters, she shut down the lid just in time to prevent the escape of Hope, which thus remained to man, his chief support and comfort” (Anthon 1848 969). This ending is one that Hawthorne’s story clearly mirrors, despite the small difference that Hawthorne’s Hope must be let out of the box in order to help mankind. In trapping Hope in the jar, Anthon’s Pandora does humanity a valuable service, and thus her character is changed at a fundamental level from Hesiod’s. Despite Hawthorne’s use of the word “box” in place of Anthon’s use of “jar,” Hugo McPherson takes this treatment of the character, and other dissimilarities from Hesiod’s version of the myth, as evidence to support Hawthorne’s use of Anthon as a source for the story:

The very simplicity of the events, as Hawthorne gives them, would seem to support the idea that he used Anthon as the source of this tale. In Hesiod, for example, there is striking detail which Hawthorne might well have used had this been his source. Hesiod, moreover, treats Pandora as a creature expressly created as a punishment upon mankind. (McPherson 1969 59)

While differences between Anthon and Hawthorne’s accounts of the Pandora myth do exist, the *Wonder Book*’s version of the story nonetheless “bears a skeletal relation” (McPherson 1969 60)

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51 Anthon himself addresses this debate: “It is also deserving of notice, that Hesiod and all the others agree in naming the vessel which Pandora opened a jar (πίθος)… yet the idea has been universal among the moderns, that she brought all the evils with her from heaven, shut up in a box (πυξίς)” (Anthon 1848 970).
to that of Anthon. Given these foundational similarities between the two, as well as Hawthorne’s explicit acknowledgement of Anthon as a general source, it appears highly likely that Anthon might be the source Hawthorne used for this particular story.

If Hawthorne did refer to Anthon’s entry on Pandora in the *Classical Dictionary*, he would have found not only Anthon’s summary of the myth’s plot but also a full discussion of the myth as it relates to one of the pivotal stories of Judeo-Christian theology, that of Adam and Eve and humanity’s fall from grace, which may provide insight into Hawthorne’s creation of the “Paradise” in which his story takes place. Anthon offers a lengthy discussion of the attempt to liken Pandora’s tale to the biblical episode of the “fall of our first parents, as detailed by the inspired penman” (Anthon 1848 969). Such an attempt is often made, he says, using logic that is “extremely ingenious, but, unfortunately, not at all borne out by the words of the poet from whom the legend is obtained,” for “the resemblance it [Hesiod’s account] bears to the Scripture account is very unsatisfactory: Eve was tempted, Pandora was not; the former was actuated by a noble instinct, the love of knowledge, the latter by mere female curiosity” (Anthon 1848 969-970).

Hawthorne, however, was less likely to be concerned with a perfect textual correspondence between mythical and biblical tales, and more interested in how best to use the resonance between the two stories in order to appeal to his readers. As with the removal of the Greek gods from the myths, the insertion of an Edenic setting helps appeal to a predominantly Christian audience that might be uncomfortable with, or at least disinterested in, a myth with pagan origins. Eustace never creates any explicit tie between his “Paradise of Children” and the biblical garden, but cues to liken the two abound. The story takes place “thousands of years” ago, in a Golden Age of the earth’s youth, when:
There was no danger, nor trouble of any kind, and no clothes to be mended, and there was always plenty to eat and drink… No labor to be done, no tasks to be studied; nothing but sports and dances, and sweet voices of children talking, or carolling like birds, or gushing out in merry laughter, throughout the livelong day. What was most wonderful of all, the children never quarreled among themselves; neither had they any crying fits; nor, since time first began, had a single one of these little mortals ever gone apart into a corner, and sulked. (Hawthorne 1851 79)

Considering that Hawthorne’s adaptations generally attempt to downplay the differences between the worlds of the myths and the audience, the emphasis on such difference here is notable. In devoting such attention to what the world was in Pandora’s time, and in the descriptions of this world, Hawthorne prompts his readers to envision an Edenic setting without ever mentioning the quintessential Paradise by name.

In forging a link between the story’s setting and the Garden of Eden, Hawthorne in turn invites a comparison between the myth’s central couple of Pandora and Epimetheus and Adam and Eve. The relationship between the children Pandora and Epimetheus is not sexualized and thus less focused on gender, and the sole blame Hesiod places on the woman for society’s evils is not recreated in Hawthorne’s story. As Epimetheus sees Pandora about to open the box, he does not act, and so Eustace says, “after all his sage speeches to Pandora about restraining her curiosity, Epimetheus turned out to be quite as foolish, and nearly as much in fault, as she. So, whenever we blame Pandora for what happened, we must not forget to shake our heads at Epimetheus likewise” (Hawthorne 1851 92, emphasis added). Hawthorne reminds us that both characters are guilty, even if not equally, in opening the box—a feature of many readings of the Genesis story.

52 Though it should be noted that Walter Crane’s illustrations of the text in the 1893 edition, in the act of interpreting Hawthorne’s text into pictures, clearly pick up on a suggestion that the relationship between the two characters has sexual elements.
There is still, however, a strongly gendered aspect to the story, as evident in Pandora’s role in opening the box. Even if Epimetheus does not act to stop Pandora’s misdeed, it is still Pandora’s idea in the first place, and she is the one to physically execute the unfortunate action. She foolishly ignores the foreboding signs from nature that offer warnings of grim things to come:

As Pandora raised the lid, the cottage grew very dark and dismal; for the black cloud had now swept quite over the sun, and seemed to have buried it alive. There had, for a little while past, been a low growling and muttering, which all at once broke into a heavy peal of thunder. But Pandora, heeding nothing of all this, lifted the lid nearly upright, and looked inside. (Hawthorne 1851 92)

Neither Pandora nor Epimetheus seems to fare especially well at Hawthorne’s hands. Epimetheus holds out against the temptations of the box for longer, but in doing so becomes even more hypocritical when he gives in; he is portrayed as greedy, and spineless. Pandora, on the other hand, is more directly accountable for the escape of evil into the world. She is responsible for allowing her curiosity to spiral out of control and get the better of her, and makes one poor judgment after another.

A number of critics have identified areas of interest or concern with regards to depictions of gender in the “Paradise of Children” episode. Laura Laffrado observes that Hawthorne goes out of his way to extend Pandora’s (ultimately harmful) curiosity to the female members of his audience: “She felt just as anxious to take a peep as any of these little girls, here around me, would have felt” (Hawthorne 1851 86-87). Thus, “Her behavior is explained as gender-specific, and the story’s female audience is thereby implicated in the fall. Epimetheus has misbehaved, but Pandora, alas, has been true to her nature” (Laffrado 1992 84). McPherson says that Hawthorne does not blame Pandora for her actions—an assertion that should be questioned based on Eustace’s remark about “blam[ing] Pandora for what happened” quoted above—but echoes
Laffrado in saying that the author sees the girl as “obeying the promptings of her nature” (McPherson 1969 114).

At the same time, Ken Parille reads Hawthorne’s Epimetheus as presenting a negative portrayal of the young boy. When trying to make a wreath of flowers for Pandora, Epimetheus finds his physicality an impediment, for he can only assemble it “with as much skill as could reasonably be expected of a boy” (Hawthorne 1851 91). Parille says:

The history of “the boy”—charted from the mythical past to Hawthorne’s present— predicts a history of the typical male child; both document a trajectory of loss as the boy leaves infancy and enters boyhood… [The girl] is always “now,” while boys were “rather better” in the past “than… now.” As a result, the girl can spiritualize away the problems of materiality, as does the “lovely and lightsome little figure of Hope!” in “The Paradise of Children.” (Parille 2010 130-131) Parille’s full discussion of Hawthorne’s treatment of childhood gender draws on examples from throughout the author’s corpus in order to demonstrate a widespread discomfort on Hawthorne’s part with boyhood, expressed simultaneously with a “celebration of the spiritual girl” (Parille 2010 113). Through this lens, Epimetheus becomes emblematic of all that is troublesome about “the material boy.” Yet to what extent should we consider this character a representative “boy” at all? In this early version of society, perhaps Epimetheus is better able to make Pandora a flower wreath because social conditioning has not yet come into existence to show the boy that arranging flowers should not be his concern. The cowardice ascribed to his character in his failing to intervene to stop Pandora’s misdeed is more typical of a stereotypical portrayal of a female character. If Epimetheus is feminized by his flaws, this would in fact seem to add credence to Laffrado’s concerns.

This is not to say that the goal of Hawthorne’s story is to condemn women and his female readers. Rather, what seems to be a common thread throughout these critical interpretations is the overarching idea that what is at stake for Hawthorne in “The Paradise of Children” is the loss of
an idealized vision of childhood, which he romanticizes. Hawthorne preferred a belief in a “pure childhood of the world,” as he would go on to describe in the preface to the *Tanglewood Tales* (Hathaway 1961 161)—a period of “unspoiled innocence” (Hathaway 1961 170) that ends with the transition into adulthood. The construction of his characters may well participate in “a conventional socializing didacticism, inculcating feminine and masculine virtues appropriate to the places assigned to the sexes in society” (Baym 1973 39), but to focus exclusively on how Hawthorne treats his young male and female characters differently ignores the remarkably similar way he holds them both responsible for a misdeed attributed solely to Pandora in the earlier accounts of the story. Nor is opening the box a total misdeed for Eustace, either; he remarks, “I cannot help being glad that our foolish Pandora peeped into the box. No doubt—no doubt—the Troubles are still flying about the world, and have increased in multitude… But then that lovely and lightsome little figure of Hope! What in the world could we do without her?” (Hawthorne 1851 99). The formerly ruinous deed of opening Pandora’s box becomes a collaborative act, and not a wholly damning one at that.

Baym remarks, “A Homeric Greek would have been astonished at the virtues that Hawthorne makes these tales demonstrate” (Baym 1973 38). Indeed, Eustace’s Pandora in the “Paradise of Children” is hardly the villain of Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. Divorced from the Prometheus myth, her character no longer makes sense as a punishment for humanity. The addition of the feminine curiosity motif to the myth, wherever in history it occurred, provides Hawthorne with an easy opportunity to retell Pandora’s story as a moral tale, but he expands the moral beyond the dangers of an exclusively feminine curiosity, holding Epimetheus responsible for character flaws similar to those that afflict Pandora. This provides a natural link to the

53 See Hathaway 1961 171 for a discussion of Hawthorne’s depiction of the Fortunate Fall.
biblical episode of Adam and Eve, and by connecting Eden with his own “Paradise,” Hawthorne’s story channels the sense of loss present in Genesis. In the bible, the Fall marks the end of a pure, child-like innocence for mankind; that Hawthorne’s version should have his characters realize this child-like state not just emotionally but also physically makes sense, especially given his primary audience of young readers. Baym, meanwhile, identifies the difficulty Pandora and Epimetheus face as “an inability to play together nicely” (Baym 1973 39). This points us back to the continued theme of Hawthorne’s interest in providing points of identification between the reader and the text, as the author strives to create characters who represent a childhood to which the *Wonder Book*’s audience can readily relate.

As elsewhere, Eustace deemphasizes what makes these characters so special in the original myths; here, Pandora is no longer the first woman, and she and Epimetheus are not responsible for generating the entire human race. Rather, they are two kids, experiencing the world only as children who have never known hardship can, until the introduction of hardship into their lives changes their perspective. In this way, their misadventure represents a common truth about the transition into adulthood, which is inevitably not without its challenges and mistakes. As Hawthorne revels in the timelessness of myth in the *Wonder Book*’s preface, he seems to delight in the universality of this story’s thematic concerns, which finds a common ground between heathen mythology, Judeo-Christian theology, and the life experiences his readers have already had or will soon experience.

Whatever sources Hawthorne had access to and consciously considered when writing the “Paradise of Children,” he combines them in such a way as to offer the cautionary moral that curiosity has its pitfalls, which would be of interest to his young readers, alongside a lament for the loss of childhood’s innocence that adult readers would receive sympathetically. For all of
these readers, too, there is an inspirational ending to the tale, for since the world was young, the story reminds us, we have always had Hope, which “spiritualizes the earth” and “shows it to be only the shadow of an infinite bliss hereafter” (Hawthorne 1851 99). In this way, Hesiod’s explanation of “Why Life is Hard” is truly transformed into a story of a “Paradise of Children,” a major effort on Hawthorne’s part towards achieving goal of entertaining and educating a diverse audience using classical mythology.
IV. Beyond Hawthorne’s Intellectual Furnace: Concluding Thoughts on the Wonder Book’s Legacy

The Wonder Book’s significance in the history of children’s literature is clear, yet the fact remains that Hawthorne’s book of myths is relatively little known in the twenty-first century. When Robert Richardson Jr. wrote about the Wonder Book in the late 1970s, he reported: “At least a hundred and twenty-four separate editions, not counting reprintings or editions of single stories… editions in German, French, Italian and Spanish, and at least twenty-three different sets of illustrations have been produced… Four different editions are still in print in 1978” (Richardson 1979 341). In 2013, several editions are in print, but many of these mark the work as a “classic” of the past, emphasizing its historical significance over its entertainment value and risking the suggestion that it has become dated. An Amazon.com search for the Wonder Book returns a Dover Classics edition,54 which retitles the work “A Wonder Book: Heroes and Monsters of Greek Mythology,” perhaps revealing an editorial opinion that Hawthorne’s original title was not exciting enough to capture a modern reader’s attention; a Yesterday’s Classics edition55 (the name of this series speaks for itself); and a more elaborate hardcover edition published as part of the Iona and Peter Opie Library of Children’s Literature,56 in addition to a number of reproductions from online vendors who republish public domain texts.57 Of these, the only edition to include supplemental content discussing the work and its importance is the Iona and Peter Opie Library edition. It is not insignificant that this volume’s physical packaging is far more aesthetically appealing than the others, which are designed for economy over appearance.

These thrift-friendly editions, most of which eliminate all illustrations from the book, acknowledge the text’s importance as a historic classic, yet seem to preserve the text more as a relic for an adult audience than as a potential source of literary enjoyment for readers of all ages.

All this is to say that the Wonder Book is far from actively circulating today, and many children will never come across it. It has largely vanished from children’s bookstore shelves, and a quick WorldCat search indicates that it is more often held in academic libraries as a subject of study than in public libraries as popular reading. Nonetheless, the book remains an important object of study because of its role in transforming understandings of children as readers in American culture. Ellen Butler Donovan explains that, while “its coy style and sentimental tone are too saccharine for today’s children, and advances in printing technology have made the large format picture book a more popular medium for myths and legends,” the Wonder Book retains its historical importance “because it contributed to the shift in reading culture that allowed children to read with and for pleasure” (Donovan 2002 20). Of course, since Hawthorne’s approach to his myth stories was a product of new understandings of childhood in the mid-nineteenth century, it is only logical that changing views of childhood, influenced by continuing advances in the science of child psychology and cognitive development in the following 150 years would foster new authors’ attempts at similar literary ventures.

Even while the Wonder Book has itself faded from prominence in the juvenile market, it is clear that Hawthorne’s decision to write classical myth for a young audience was a highly influential one. The popular myth collections of Charles Kingsley (The Heroes; or Greek Fairy Tales for My Children, 1855) and Thomas Bulfinch (The Age of Fable, 1855) were published within several years following Hawthorne’s, supporting the changing attitude towards myth Hawthorne began to bring about. Feldman and Richardson’s Rise of Modern Mythology
addresses the impact of the three authors jointly and connects the influence of their works:

“These men were not students so much as retellers of myth, and they managed apparently independently, to uniformly recast Greek mythology into a genteel Victorian subject” (Feldman and Richardson 1972 505). Subsequent adaptations of mythological subject matter for children often worked forward from the approaches taken by at least one of these three authors. As time went on, the next generation of authors—including those who had been brought up on Hawthorne’s myths themselves—began writing their own versions of classical myths for children. Thus, Richardson notes, “The concept of myth embodied in Hawthorne’s works has been transmitted to innumerable young readers whether they knew it or not” (Richardson 1979 342).

These heirs of Hawthorne’s, according to Deborah Roberts, “still feel the need to justify myth as appropriate reading for children” and often recall Hawthorne in doing so, as they do in many of their adaptive strategies (Roberts 2009 66). These heirs, Roberts says, are “those who emphasize the narrative delights of myth and treat the stories with greater freedom” through “retitling… adding characters… and giving both speech and characterization a contemporary flavor” (Roberts 2009 71). Numerous examples can be found of authors engaging such an approach towards adapting classical mythology in the time since Hawthorne’s book was published, each reflecting the social mores and cultural developments of their own times.59

Continuing to use the Pandora myth as our example for the sake of continuity, we can see a number of contemporary myth adaptations treating the story as “plastic in their hands”

58 For more on the impact of Kingsley and Bulfinch, see Feldman and Richardson 1972 505-507 and Brazsouski and Klatt 1994 4.
59 Brazouski and Klatt’s selected bibliography of Children’s Books on Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology directly observes Hawthorne’s influences in its entries on Baker, 1913; Beckwith, 1896; Blyton, n.d.; Childcraft, 1937; Clark, 1968; Fahs and Spoerl, 1958; Gates, 1972; Hamilton, 1988; Kottmeyer, 1952; Peabody, 1897; and Price, 1924.
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(Hawthorne 1851 138). Hawthorne’s notable expansion and elaboration of the story, by which he turns a relatively minor mythological episode into a more engrossing compelling story with a richly developed moral, is echoed in several books that use Pandora’s story as the sole narrative, such as Lisl Weil’s *Pandora’s Box* (1986), Rosemary Wells’ *Max and Ruby in Pandora’s Box* (1993), and perhaps most notably in Kate McMullan’s full-length chapter book, *Keep a Lid on It, Pandora!* (2003), book six in her *Myth-O-Mania* series.\(^{60}\) The story is also greatly expanded in Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen’s *The God Beneath the Sea* (1970), although this book contains many other stories as well. Several recent titles have emphasized the playful potential of the mythological material by converting Pandora’s story into a graphic/comic format; they include Marcia Williams’ *Greek Myths for Young Children* (1991), Danielle Blood’s *Greek Myth Mini-Books* (2001), and Michael Townsend’s *Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders* (2010).

The thematic concerns of Hawthorne’s “Paradise of Children” show their influence just as much as his technical achievements. William Byron Forbush, in his *Myths and Legends of Greece and Rome* (1928), follows Hawthorne’s example in detaching the Pandora story from that of Prometheus, placing the former’s tale—which he calls “How Hope Came Into the World” (Forbush 1928 1)—before the description of the latter’s theft of fire, thus removing all potential stigma against Pandora as a punishment for Prometheus’ deception of Zeus. Meanwhile, Pandora’s susceptibility to a feminine curiosity is depicted at its most extreme by Louis Untermeyer’s *The Firebringer and Other Great Stories* (1968), where, while chastising Pandora for opening the box, Epimetheus says, “After all, you are what you are—only a woman—and what else could one expect of a woman” (Untermeyer 1968 16).

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\(^{60}\) See Murnaghan 2011 345-348 for more on the *Myth-O-Mania* books.
Other authors have toyed with various takes on Pandora’s fallibility in the story, following Hawthorne’s example in exercising significant freedom over their interpretation of the story. In Bernard Evslin’s *Heroes, Gods, and Monsters of the Greek Myths* (1966), Pandora tries to resist her curiosity by burying the box in the garden, but later impulsively digs out the box in order to open it (Evslin 1966 60-62); in this narration, she is arguably more valiant for her resistance, but when she gives in to her desire to discover the box’s contents, her misdeed requires significantly more effort and dedication, and thus the story holds her more accountable for her actions. Olivia Coolidge’s Pandora, in her *Greek Myths* (1949), is severely punished for her misdeed, as she is forced to see “something of the misery that her thoughtless action had brought on her descendants,” and is “paralyzed with fear and horror” (Coolidge 1949 74). Though this is a stern treatment of the character, it is also one that inspires some sympathy, as does Eric Kimmel’s in *The McElderry Book of Greek Myths* (2008)—his Pandora ends up bloodied and bruised after being attacked by the evils she unleashes from the box (Kimmel 2008 10). Cynthia Rylant’s take on Pandora in *The Beautiful Stories of Life* (2009) minimizes the woman’s flaws: “Pandora was perfect in every way, perfect in all ways, except one. She lacked one quality that none of the gods ever needed and so could not have given her. Pandora lacked patience” (Rylant 2009 8). While the outcome of the story is no less severe than in other versions—her impatience still results in her opening the box and releasing trouble into the world—her character flaw is more minor and common, and it is easier for a reader to imagine him or herself in the same position. This concern with the reader’s ability to identify with the flawed characters in the story, and a subsequent tempering of Pandora’s flawed nature, seems to find a precedent in Hawthorne’s version of the story as well.
In addition to demonstrating several specific ways in which Hawthorne’s “Paradise of Children” has influenced subsequent accounts of the Pandora myth for children, this brief survey, which could quickly turn into a project distinct from my own, illustrates the tremendous freedom with which authors after Hawthorne have approached myth adaptation following in the example of his Wonder Book, which was pivotal in establishing such a close relationship between children’s literature and classical mythology. This relationship, as Sheila Murnaghan and Roberts point out, has profound implications for the reception of myth—and even for the entire discipline of classical studies—in a world where these myth adaptations for children have become popular. Such versions of mythological storytelling, which are certainly more accessible than the original source texts at least on the basis of language if not content as well, “displace their sources [and] take on the authority of originals” (Murnaghan and Roberts, forthcoming, 19). They become the first introduction to the ancient world for many, including those who will go on to interpret the classical tradition through artistic—as well as scholarly—channels: “Childhood versions are often the main inspiration for reworkings of myths by adult artists and writers… and thus play a powerful, often overlooked role in classical receptions for audiences of all ages” (Murnaghan and Roberts, forthcoming, 19). Thus, an understanding of Hawthorne’s venture and legacy within the literary field, such as I hope to have provided, can help illuminate the broader impact his work has had on our understanding of classical myth today.

I began this paper by evoking the fascination of myth’s continued influence even thousands of years after these stories first came into existence, and it seems appropriate to end on a similar note. Throughout the history of Western culture, the Greek myths have always found a role to play, as etiological explanations for the way the world is, inspiration for countless artistic ventures, negative exempla of a morally depraved heathen culture, a currency of cultural capital,
and so forth. When Nathaniel Hawthorne identified these stories as “very capital reading for children,” he identified a new role that they could come to fill. Using the strategies analyzed above, Hawthorne’s *Wonder Book* created a new link between children’s literature and classical mythology, and, in helping to set the stage for an emphasis in the juvenile market on reading for pleasure over strict moral or factual instruction (and, in fact, using this literary pleasure to better accomplish such instruction), contributed to a shift in cultural ideas of what the goals of this “children’s literature” should be.

The big questions of what myth really is and how it is open to such malleability may be unanswerable ones, yet in understanding Hawthorne’s work, we can better understand how myth became so closely associated with the juvenile mind in modern society. We can also reveal the philosophy of myth held by one of the most influential mythographers of the modern era, and see the value Hawthorne placed in myth as a literary form that could benefit all readers young and old, making a contribution to children’s moral and cognitive development as well as offering his entire audience the pure enjoyment of reading. Ultimately, Hawthorne’s innovative methods for adaptation—which were, in a sense, as Eustace points out in invoking the ancient poets’ free retellings, highly traditional—set a crucial model for how classical myth could be made accessible and relevant to a modern American audience. His success in this endeavor is a testament to the role of myths as timeless stories that transcend cultural and chronological contexts, even as they are adapted into, and transformed for, specific time periods and contexts.
Appendix 1

Extended excerpts from Samuel Goodrich’s *Parley’s Method of Telling About Geography to Children* (1829) and Nathaniel and Elizabeth Hawthorne’s *Peter Parley’s Universal History on the Basis of Geography* (1837).

**Goodrich, 1829, pages 11-12:**
1. Here is a picture of the World, or the Earth we live upon. It is round you see, and seems to swing in the air like a great ball. It is surrounded by the heavens, or a sky and stars.

2. The surface of the world is divided into land and water, as you will see by the picture. Men live on the land, and build towns and cities upon it; animals of various kinds also live on the land; vessels sail on the water, and fish live in the water.

3. Vessels sail around the world on all sides of it, as a fly would crawl around an apple. If you look at the picture, you will see vessels sailing in various directions.

4. Men and animals live on the land on all sides of the world. They have a sky and stars above them, let them be in what part of the world they may. If you were to go to Asia, or Africa, or any other country, there would still be stars over your head.

5. Now geography is a description of the world; it tells us of its shape, and how it is divided; and it describes the men and animals that live upon it. Geography is therefore a very useful and interesting study.

**Hawthorne and Hawthorne, 1837, pages 5-6:**
4. I shall, in the progress of my story, tell you how the first man and woman were made, how they had a large family, how those increased and spread themselves throughout different countries. I shall tell you of great nations that have existed, of great battles that have been fought, and of the deeds of celebrated persons.

5. But, before I proceed, I must remind you that the world is round, and that men and animals live upon the surface; that the face of the earth is divided into land and water; that on the land, trees, grass, herbs, and flowers, grow; that on the land, men and animals dwell; that on the land, towns, cities, and villages are built.

6. A high piece of land, you know, is called a mountains or hill; a low piece of land is called a valley. You often see water running in a stream through a valley, which is called a river; and you sometimes see a still piece of water, surrounded by hills, which is called a lake.

7. About one-third of the face of the earth is land, and two-thirds are water. The land is divided into two great continents: the eastern continent consists of Europe, Africa, and Asia; the western of North and South America.
Appendix 2
Selection of critical responses to the Wonder Book

Albany Argus, 14 November 1851
“This little work—the production of one of the most gifted minds of the day—is designed to render certain beautiful legendary tales available to the entertainment and improvement of children. The author has worked them up with admirable skill…”

Athenaeum, 17 January 1852
“His Wonder Book is meant for children,—yet, like the faëry tales of Hans Christian Andersen, grown people will be glad to devour its wonders themselves… Serious heads will possibly be shaken, and solemn eyes lifted up, when we repeat our judgment that we had rather preach to our children from Mr. Hawthorne's new version of the Chimæra… than from a homily like Margaret Cecil; or, 'I can, because I ought,' by Cousin Kate. We prefer the former fantasies, not because there is one single scruple of unsound principle or of uncharitable practice in the doctrine and illustration propounded by our authoress,—but from the utter unreality of her example.” —Henry Fothergill Chorley

Boston Daily Advertiser, 13 November 1851
“At the first glance one is afraid that the author has made a mistake in the class of subjects he has taken. But on examination it appears that the design and examination of the plan is excellent.”

Christian Register, 22 November 1851
“A wonderful book this is indeed. We doubt whether any man living, except Hawthorne, could have written it; and he seems to us to have transcended his former self in its production. It is modestly designated as ‘for girls and boys’; but we can hardly imagine girlhood so faded or boyhood so obsolete as to be beyond the scope of its entertainment and instruction… [Children] need to know much of the ancient mythology; but they may be made conversant with its power, richness and beauty, without being initiated into its revolting and hideous details.”

Christian Watchman and Reflector, 27 November 1851
“The author has, in this volume, succeeded finely in reproducing some half a dozen fables of classical antiquity… Although the [unreadable text] for young people, children of larger growth will read them with interest.”

Godey’s Lady’s Book, February 1852
“A very neat volume, with many beautiful illustrations, the contents of which will be most acceptable to the younger class of readers, for whose amusement and moral instruction it has been prepared, but which even a ‘modern philosopher’ might peruse with advantage.”

Graham’s Magazine, January 1852
“Hawthorne may have written more powerful stories than those contained in this volume, but none so truly delightful. The spirit of the book is so essentially sunny and happy, that
it creates a jubilee in the brain as we read. It is intended for children, but let not the intention cheat men and women out of the pleasure they will find in its sparkling and genial pages.” —Edwin Percy Whipple

*Harper’s Monthly*, December 1851

“Mr. Hawthorne never writes more genially and agreeably than when attempting to write for children. He seems to find a welcome relief in their inartificial ways from his own weird and sombre fancies… A vein of airy gayety runs through the present volume, revealing a sunny and beautiful side of the author’s nature, and forming a delightful contrast to the stern, though irresistibly fascinating horrors, which he wields with such terrific mastery in his recent productions. Child and man will love this work equally well.”

*Literary World*, 29 November 1851

“Natural, because he is sincere, his stories for children are at once entertained by the youthful mind… The volume absorbs in a corner all noise and confusion as its secret influences penetrate the youthful reader, who, with amusement, drinks in unconsciously the wisest lessons of biography, or the purest susceptibilities to poetry.” —Evert A. Duyckinck

*National Intelligencer*, 18 December 1851

“While we were supposing that every possible resource for the production of children’s books had been ransacked and exhausted, and that no genius or invention were equal to the task of producing anything decidedly new in that difficult department of literature, Mr. Hawthorne surprises us with this volume of stories, particularly original in design and felicitous in execution… we have rarely met with better stories for children, in any sense of the word, than these revived antiquities, which, in spite of their two or three thousand years of actual existence, have a freshness for which many of our modern manufacturers of children’s books try in vain.”

*Southern Quarterly*, January 1852

“A pleasant mode of dressing up Heathen mythology with a Christian moral—teaching old fable and modern allegory in the same connection,—a pretty book for the young.”

*Springfield Republican*, 17 November 1851

“When Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the best novelists America ever produced, condescends to write for children, let all boyhood rejoice.”

*Universalist Quarterly and General Review*, January 1852

“Such subtle appreciation of the soul of the old stories; such felicitous enlargement of them, not by mechanical additions, but as though the seeds of Greek fancy had just now found their fitting soul in Mr. Hawthorne’s soul, and sprouted to their true luxuriance of form… The author should be accounted a traitor to the spirit of beauty, and a thief of the world’s joy, if he leaves a single classic myth unimproved by Gothic dress.” —Thomas Starr King
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