

# HAWTHORNE'S *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES* AND NATURE

—AN INTERPRETATION—

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## I

The gloom of sin, the latent evil in the human heart, alienation both as cause and effect of guilt, *hubris* of intellect leading to the unpardonable sin, opacity of experience that makes truth elusive—these are what give to Hawthorne's tales and romances the shade of utter darkness. Yet it is also true of him, as is apparent in "The Custom House," the introductory to "The Scarlet Letter," that he tried to introduce into his works some ingredients of light in order to relieve them of their pervading darkness.<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne's preference for *The House of the Seven Gables* implies that he was seeking to be understood as a whole entity, that the works with which he was then known to the world, e. g., *Twice-Told Tales*, *Mosses from An Old Manse*, and, especially, *The Scarlet Letter*, shocked even himself in their blackness, and that there was something of himself, as he thought, that remained unrevealed yet.

It is true that *The House of the Seven Gables* abounds in as much gloom as does *The Scarlet Letter*—influences of evil, the "dark necessity,"<sup>2</sup> hidden guilt, infringement of the private soul, and self- as well as social-alienation. So *The House of the Seven Gables* was often read

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1. See my article, "Hawthorne's 'The Custom House,'" in *Essays Presented to Naozo Ueno in Honour of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Tokyo: Nan-un Do, 1963), pp. 468-485.

2. *The Scarlet Letter*, Vol. V of *The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1883), p. 210.

either as the continuation, or the twin story, or the variation of *The Scarlet Letter*. Apparently Hawthorne's own words on the moral of this romance weigh heavily on the reader's mind: "the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief."<sup>3</sup> But just as the explicitly stated moral of *The Scarlet Letter* (i. e., "Be true, be true. . ."<sup>4</sup>) falls short of the meaning of *The Scarlet Letter*, so the moral of this romance does not convey its total meaning. In many respects *The House of the Seven Gables* is antipodal to, to use Hawthorne's own words, the "dark and dismal"<sup>5</sup> *Scarlet Letter*. The difference between *The Scarlet Letter* and this romance is the difference between the scaffold and the house as home, sin and love, death and regeneration, and between Pearl the demon-offspring and Phoebe the composite of man's spirit and the essence of nature, and finally, between Nature as moral wilderness and Nature as moral law.

It is because of these differences that Hawthorne believed, or tried to be believed, that *The House of the Seven Gables* is more characteristic of his mind, and more proper and natural for him to write.<sup>6</sup> The difference, as we shall see, derives from the affirmative values attached to nature in this romance. This paper intends to examine how significant a role nature plays in the history of the Pyncheons and suggests some crucial aspects of thematic lightness of this romance.

## II

The first chapter, "The Old Pyncheon Family," provides us with

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3. *The House of the Seven Gables*, Vol. III of *The Complete Works*, p. 14. Further references to *The House of the Seven Gables* are made to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

4. *The Scarlet Letter*, Vol. V of *The Complete Works*, p. 307.

5. Hawthorne's letter to James T. Fields, cited by Gordon Roper, "Introduction," *The Scarlet Letter and Selected Prose Works by Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Hendricks House, Farrar, Straus, c 1949), p. xv.

6. Cf. Hawthorne's letter to Horatio Bridge, cited by Mark Van Doren, *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: The Viking Press, c1949), p. 172.

the historical as well as the moral milieu of the story. It gives the general outline of the family history of the Pyncheons under Maule's curse, with descriptions of some chief members of the family from the first ancestor to the present. Besides these prefatorial functions, the first chapter establishes, just as the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* did, the basic pattern of imagery which contributes to the total meaning of the romance. The pattern may be discussed from the point of view of the color images, especially the light and the dark, or may be analyzed in terms of the forms of images.<sup>7</sup> But the images that are most basic and relevant to the whole story seem those of man and nature.

The first chapter begins with the juxtaposition of the most basic images of man and nature. Though famous and familiar to some readers, the beginning sentences are worth quoting:

Half-way down a by-street of one of our New England towns stands a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely peaked gables, facing towards various points of the compass, and a huge, clustered chimney in the midst. The street is Pyncheon Street; the house is the old Pyncheon House; and an elm-tree, of wide circumference, rooted before the door, is familiar to every town-born child by the title of the Pyncheon Elm. On my occasional visits to the town aforesaid, I seldom fail to turn down Pyncheon Street, for the sake of passing through the shadow of these two antiquities,—the great elm-tree, and the weather-beaten edifice. (p. 17)

The weather-beaten house speaks of the vicissitudes of the people who led their lives within it. So "the aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me," says the author, "like a human countenance" (p. 17). This is one of Hawthorne's techniques in metaphorical description,—"analogy" or "resemblance."<sup>8</sup> Once an analogy is drawn

7. See especially H. H. Waggoner, *Hawthorne* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 153-155.

8. The examples of this technique are too numerous to be enumerated here, but the following passage in "Dr. Rappaccini's Daughter" suggests Hawthorne's conscious efforts in this technique:

An analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain,—a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues. (*The Complete Works*, II, 119)

between the appearance of the house and human countenance, Hawthorne widens its implication, as he does often in other works:

So much of mankind's varied experience had passed there [in the old house], — so much had been suffered, and something, too, enjoyed,—that the very timbers were oozy as with the moisture of a heart. It was itself like a great human heart, with a life of its own, and full of rich and sombre reminiscences. (pp. 42-43)

The house, thus, is given the symbolic overtone of the inner life of human beings in general.

The great elm-tree, on the other hand, belongs to nature and literally stands for nature as the house stands for human beings:

In front, just on the edge of the unpaved sidewalk, grew the Pyncheon Elm, which, in reference to such trees as one usually meets with, might well be termed gigantic. It had been planted by a great-grandson of the first Pyncheon, and, though now fourscore years of age, or perhaps nearer a hundred, was still in its strong and broad maturity, throwing its shadow from side to side of the street, overtopping the seven gables, and sweeping the whole black roof with its pendent foliage. It gave beauty to the old edifice, and seemed to make it a part of nature. (p. 43)

Just as the elm is over the House, nature is over human being. Nature covers the entire history of human beings, man's physical body and senses, man's grief and joy, and human nature itself. Yet nature transcends all of these. Hence, man must conform to the law of nature, which in turn becomes the philosophical basis of human law and the criterion of man's conduct. And, nature comes to function as the frame of reference to human dramas in history. "The Pyncheon Elm," wrote the author towards the end of the romance, "whispered unintelligible prophecies" (pp. 377-378). The prophecies may be "unintelligible," but their implication is not difficult to understand once nature's role in this romance is discovered.<sup>9</sup>

The first chapter reminds us also of another implication of nature, in which nature is often equated with something outside us. According

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9. Cf. pp. 87-88 below.

to this idea, nature often refers to those parts of the material world which are unaltered by man, to everything in the physical, biological world except man, with which, however, man is related, consciously or unconsciously, and directly or metaphorically. This idea has many versions in the history of ideas, but the extremist of this idea in Hawthorne's day was Emerson. He remarked that anything except Soul is Nature :

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE.<sup>10</sup>

And he thought that Nature is the symbol of spirit.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, such an extreme idea of nature cannot be found, and, furthermore, art and artificiality are considered antithetical to nature. But one might suspect Emersonian tone in the fact that nature images are used with symbolic function more often than not. Even in the first chapter we see many natural images—an enormous fertility of burdocks, a fountain of water in the garden, the green moss over the projections of the windows and on the slopes of the roof, and Alice's Posies in the nook between two of the gables. They all belong to nature, and yet, they are closely related to the drama of man's soul to such an extent that they serve either as metaphors or symbols. Burdock, as is often the case with Hawthorne's other works, connotes something evil in the family history. The water of the fountain "which Nature might fairly claim as her inalienable property, in spite of whatever man could do to render it his own" (p. 112), is not favorable to the Pyncheons and it is now hard and brackish. Alice's Posies remind us of Alice Pyncheon, who, with all her European achievements and refined sensibility, was sacrificed for her father's worldly desires. The Posies suggest that, despite

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10. R. W. Emerson, *Works* ("Concord Editin"; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903), I, 4-5.

nature's sympathetic watch over the House, there is something wrong about it that repels nature's sympathy :

It was both sad and sweet to observe how Nature adapted to herself this desolate, decaying, gusty, rusty old house of the Pyncheon family ; and how the ever-returning summer did her best to gladden it with tender beauty, and grew melancholy in the effort. (p. 44)

Therefore, nature in *The House of the Seven Gables*, assuming moral dimension as the framework of human dramas in history, supplies at the same time the texture of the romance with images that have symbolic implications. In no other of Hawthorne's works are nature images with thematic relevance more abundant than in this work.

### III

The family curse of the Pyncheons, which inexorably determined their fate as a kind of dark necessity, derived from Colonel Pyncheon's sin. Colonel Pyncheon, the first ancestor of the Pyncheons, lived in the early Puritan colony, when man's relationship to nature was obviously direct. The founders of the new colony had, all by their own sturdy toil, to clear the woods, to cultivate the ground, and to build their houses. If they wanted more, they had to grapple the harder with wild nature. This law of nature the first ancestor of the Pyncheons violated.

Man of animal substance, Colonel Pyncheon was proud, coarse, cunning, merciless, and, above all, avaricious. Unlike other colonists, he did not fight against wild nature with his own hands, and yet, he was greedy of wealth. On the strength of his rank he asserted plausible claims to Matthew Maule's land, where Matthew had built a hut ~~by a natural spring~~ of soft and pleasant water. The colonel took possession of the land immediately after Matthew was hanged for witchcraft. His act was almost to the point of usurpation, although it was very difficult to regard it as illegal from the judicial point of view. From the point of view of nature, however, he sinned in two respects ; one in shirking direct contact with nature, and the other in

violating natural right of the actual settler, i. e., Matthew Maule who opened the land. For we find that, whenever the land is mentioned, emphasis is always not only on man's direct relationship with nature, but also on natural right. Referring to Maule's site, the author says that the land was "[an] acre or two of earth, which, with his [Matthew Maule's] own toil, he had hewn out of the primeval forest, to be his garden-ground and homestead" (p. 19); or, when the Colonel built his mansion on Maule's site, "why, then,—while so much of the soil around him was bestrewn with the virgin forest-leaves,—why should Colonel Pyncheon prefer a site that had already been accursed?" (p. 22)

What is important is that the Colonel's violation of the law of nature is described as an aristocratic folly. He used his rank and power for his own personal aggrandizement and for the satisfaction of his greed. Therefore, his act acquires a deeper significance in that it brought aristocracy face to face with nature. And, by extension, his acts suggests one of the underlying assumptions of this romance—the juxtaposition of democratic morality and natural law, or democracy and nature, which we will discuss later. For the present, suffice it to say that the colonel's violation of the natural law is due to his selfish, aristocratic sense of morality.

When Matthew Maule was hanged—it was the Colonel who had been most earnest in persecuting Maule as a wizard—Maule cried, pointing to the Colonel, "God will give him blood to drink" (p. 21). The Colonel, and later his descendants, suffered from the Maule's curse, which, however, ~~stripped of its superstitious colorings, turns out~~ Nature's curse on an aristocracy. As we will see later in some detail, almost all the Pynchons could not free themselves from the curse because repeatedly they committed the sin against the law of nature: they had no spontaneous relationship with nature, nor did they respect the legitimate natural right of others. Moreover, such social distinc-

tions as the Pyncheons thrived upon, e. g., rank, pride, gentility, etc., were not nature-given, but archaic and artificial. All of these was against nature and resulted in their failure to remove the curse and to secure the full blessing of nature and, consequently, in tragic and declining family fate.

In this connection, the large land in Waldo County, Maine, which Colonel Pyncheon failed to obtain before his death, fulfils the same function as the doubloon of *Moby-Dick* does. The doubloon serves as the mirror which reflects the inner man of those who look at it.<sup>11</sup> The Pyncheons' attitudes towards the land reflect, first, how they disregarded for generation after generation the direct contact with nature. The Pyncheons made efforts not only immediately after the colonel's death, but at various periods for nearly a hundred years afterwards, to obtain the land which they had never seen except only on the map. Secondly, the Pyncheons' greed reveals how they neglected the idea of the actual settlers' natural right for the sake of increasing their own wealth. Whenever the actual settlers of this land heard of the Pyncheons' claim, they "laughed at the idea of any man's asserting a right . . . to the lands which they or their fathers had wrested from the wild hand of nature by their own sturdy toil" (p. 33). Emphasis, again, is not only on man's direct contact with nature, but also on natural right born out of the direct contact. And, finally the land becomes the source of the self-delusion of family pride:

This impalpable claim [of the land]...resulted in nothing more solid than to cherish, from generation to generation, an absurd delusion of family importance, which all along characterized the Pyncheons. (p. 33)

~~Gervase Pyncheon, one of the descendants, tried to find the proof with which he could claim the land, but his act led to serious consequences, allowing Maule's grandson to dispose his daughter's soul as he wished. Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon of the present time committed sin in forcing to obtain the information about the proof from his~~

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11. Cf. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, chapter 99.

cousin Clifford. Even Hepzibah Pyncheon, the least avaricious, kept the ancient map of the land and dreams of obtaining it and becoming rich. As regards Clifford, the portrait of the Colonel conjured a fancy in his mind as a child, or a youth, that it "had spoken, and told [him] a rich secret, or had held forth its hand, with the written record of hidden opulence" (p. 373). Phoebe, on the other hand, did not know much about the land, nor was she familiar with "most of the family traditions" (p. 152). Thus, the land in Waldo County is the yardstick to apply to the Pyncheons to check whether they are free from the sin against nature. All the Pyncheons, excepting only Phoebe, are found unable to flee from nature's curse.

No wonder, then, that such a family is far from being fully blessed by nature. Nature imagery pertaining to the Pyncheons suggests always decay and degradation. The rose-bush, for example, in the garden of the House was covered with rare and very beautiful species of white rose, but on closer observation, a large portion of them reveals "blight or mildew at their hearts" (p. 93). The water of Maule's well, once soft and pleasant, grew, as have been pointed out, hard and brackish after the Colonel wronged Maule. The family members of the Pyncheons have decreased and only a few now remain: "in respect to natural increase, the breed had not thriven; it appeared rather to be dying out" (p. 39). Even Chanticleer and his family, the barnyard fowl, reflect the destiny of the decaying Pyncheons. Chanticleer, his two wives, and a solitary chicken "were pure specimens of a breed which had been transmitted down as an heirloom in the Pyncheon family, and ~~were said, while in their prime, to have attained almost the size of turkeys~~" (pp. 112-113). But the hens were now scarcely larger than pigeons and laid eggs only occasionally, and the one chicken looked small enough to be still in the egg:

Instead of being the youngest of the family, it rather seemed to have aggregated into itself the ages, not only of these living specimens of the breed, but of all its forefathers and foremothers, whose united excellences

and oddities were squeezed into its little body. (p. 183)

How, then, the Pyncheons can remove nature's curse is crucial to the resolution of the plot of this romance. In order to find what is mandatory to their regeneration, we have to look more closely at the situations in which the Pyncheons place themselves at present. And, because of the lack of multiplication of incidents, the analysis is naturally directed towards characters, especially their symbolic meanings as types. For they are presented as types to keep thematic significance of nature and the symbolic function of nature imagery always before us. Some are nature-blessed, and others are not. Clustered around the nature-blessed, as we shall find below, are beauty, simplicity, fertility, practicality, spiritualization, home and democracy. They are all united together to embody the brighter side of *The House of the Seven Gables* and suggest the kind of lighter quality in Hawthorne. Some of the Pyncheons fail to fulfil these nature-blessed qualities and show, instead, grossness, sterility, artificiality, unpracticality, degradation, alienation and aristocracy, all of which belong to the nature-cursed.

#### IV

Colonel Pyncheon, whose portrait is on the wall as "the evil genius of the house" (p. 138), is incarnated in Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon. Phoebe mistook the Judge's miniature daguerreotype for the Colonel's. Hapzibah, when talking to the Judge face to face, could not help adopting the insane belief that she was talking to the old Puritan ancestor. ~~The similarities between the Colonel and the Judge are much discussed by the author, but the most remarkable one seems to be their artificiality,—contrivance of nature. They both pretended kindness and hid their inner, essential man :~~

The ancestor [Colonel] had clothed himself in a grim assumption of kindliness, a rough heartiness of word and manner, which most people took to be the genuine warmth of nature making its way through the

thick and inflexible hide of a manly character. His descendant (the Judge), in compliance with the requirements of a nicer age, had etherealized this rude benevolence into that broad benignity of smile, wherewith he shone like a noonday sun along the streets, or glowed like a household fire in the drawing-rooms of his private acquaintance. (p. 150)

The Judge's contrived smile "was a good deal akin," says the author, "to the shine on his boots, and . . . each must have cost him and his boot-black, respectively, a good deal of hard labour to bring out and preserve them" (p. 144). Artificiality of the Judge's smile suggests contrived, misused nature. For, though his smile is often compared to the sunshine, in it neither harmony nor order of nature's natural beauty is found: "a smile, so broad and sultry, that, had it been only half as warm as it looked, a trellis of grapes might at once have turned purple under its summer-like exposure" (p. 156).

In describing the Judge's determined and relentless character, iron and stone images are often used as was the case with the colonel. The Colonel, the "iron-hearted Puritan" (p. 29), was "impenetrable" and as "massive and hard as blocks of granite, fastened together by stern rigidity of purpose, as with iron clamps" (p. 22). The Judge has also "a heart of iron" (p. 160), and in him "might and wrong combined, like iron magnetized, are endowed with irresistible attraction" (p. 289). When his disguise was dropped, he gave the impression "as if the iron man had stood there from the first, and the meek man not at all" (p. 277). "The effect was," says the author, "as when the light, vapory clouds, with their soft coloring, suddenly vanish from the stony brow of a precipitous mountain, and leave there the frown which you at once feel to be eternal" (p. 277). ~~With all this hardness~~ hidden within himself, the Judge always carries, in order to enhance the impression of gentility and respectability, a gold-headed cane, which is "a tolerably adequate representative of its master" (p. 76). In other words, the Judge is a gold-plated-iron-man. The soft, glittering gold of his appearance is but a mask of his heart of iron. "You

could feel just as certain," suggests the author, "that he was opulent . . . as if you had seen him touching the twigs of the Pyncheon Elm, and, Midas-like transmuting them to gold" (p. 77). Another instance of the contrivance of nature is his voice, which was by nature "as deep as a thunder-growl, and with a frown as black as the cloud whence it issues" (p. 155), but, "by dint of careful training, was now sufficiently agreeable" (p. 144).

The Judge's artificiality implies, besides his insincerity, something wrong within him that does not go with the course of nature in human history. This will be made clear if we go further on to compare him with the Colonel.

Much of the Colonel's evil nature survived in the Judge. The Puritan ancestor, we are told,

was bold, imperious, relentless, crafty; laying his purpose deep, and following them out with an inveteracy of pursuit that knew neither rest nor conscience: trampling on the weak, and, when essential to his ends, doing his utmost to beat down the strong." (pp. 151-152)

So was it with the Judge. Some thirty years ago, he stole into his uncle's room and searched his private drawers. When his uncle discovered the young Judge in his room, he fell of the shock of the surprise and died. Yet the Judge continued the search and found two wills of his uncle; one, of recent date and in favor of Clifford, the other, an older one in his own favor. The former the Judge destroyed and suffered the latter to remain. Before retiring from his uncle's room, the Judge craftily arranged the circumstances that Clifford, his cousin and his rival in heirship, should be suspected of his uncle's murder. At Clifford's trial the Judge remained silent without stating what he had himself done and witnessed. Thus Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon succeeded both in inheriting old Jaffrey Pyncheon's wealth and in keeping Clifford away from him in jail.

The Judge's "inward criminality, as regarded Clifford," was indeed "black and sinister" (p. 370). Now the Judge made every effort to

set Clifford free after thirty years' seclusion. It was because he thought that Clifford might tell him the whereabouts of the proof with which he could claim the proprietorship of the land in Waldo County, Maine. So he came to the House, which was given as an only inheritance to Clifford's sister, Hepzibah, and forced her to let him see Clifford. Refusing the Judge determinedly, Hepzibah cries, "Alas, Cousin Jaffrey, this hard and grasping spirit has run in our blood these two hundred years. You are but doing over again, in another shape, what your ancestor before you did, and sending down to your posterity the curse inherited from him!" (p. 229) What the Judge was trying to do is the same as what the Colonel did to Matthew Maule—the use of his rank and power for his personal aggrandizement and for the satisfaction of greed. It is a sin against democratic morality.

In his physical constitution the Judge underwent a natural change of history from grossness to refinement:

The Judge's volume of muscle could hardly be the same as the Colonel's; there was undoubtedly less beef in him. Though looked upon as a weighty man among his contemporaries in respect of animal substance, and as favoured with a remarkable degree of fundamental development, well adapting him for the judicial bench, we conceive that the modern Judge Pyncheon, if weighed in the same balance with his ancestor, would have required at least an old-fashioned fifty-six to keep the scale in equilibrio. (pp. 148-149)

Furthermore, "a certain quality of nervousness" was more or less manifest, and it bestowed on his countenance "a quicker mobility" and "keener vivacity" (p. 149). These changes are natural products of human progress in the physical aspect.

On the other hand, the Judge's inner, essential man did not show any changes at all. No less refined in matters of morality than the Colonel, the Judge was also as sensuous as the Colonel who lived in the less refined colonial days. The Judge had, just as the Colonel had, something coarse, unrefined, and sensuous about him:

Owing ... to a somewhat massive accumulation of animal substance about

the lower region of his face, the look was, perhaps, unctuous, rather than spiritual, and had, so to speak, a kind of fleshly effulgence, not altogether so satisfactory as he doubtless intended it to be. (pp. 143-144)

This sensuousness appears most characteristically in his appetite. In reference to his "ogre-like appetite," it used to be said, as the author comments, that "his Creator made him a great animal, but that the dinner-hour made him a great beast" (p. 325). What with his inward criminality and this moral coarseness of his, he is made alien in matters of morality to the present age. For the natural course of history suggests moral as well as physical refinement.

Hawthorne did not believe, as his optimistic contemporaries did, in the characteristically nineteenth-century idea of progress. Neither did he, however, reject it thoroughly as a folly. He had his own version of the idea of progress. Observing the lilac shrubs under his study window, Hawthorne once wrote in "Buds and Bird Voices":

Old age is not venerable when it embodies itself in lilacs, rose bushes, or any other ornamental shrub; it seems as if such plants, as they grow only for beauty, ought to flourish always in immortal youth, or, at least, to die before their sad decrepitude. . . . There is a kind of ludicrous unfitness in the idea of a time-stricken and grandfatherly lilac bush. The analogy holds good in human life. Persons who can only be graceful and ornamental—who can give the world nothing but flowers—should die young, and never be seen with gray hair and wrinkles, any more than the flower shrubs with mossy bark and blighted foliage, like the lilacs under my window. Not that beauty is worthy of less than immortality; no, the beautiful should live forever—and thence, perhaps, the sense of impropriety when we see it triumphed over by time. . . . Human flower shrubs, if they will grow old on earth, should, besides their lovely blossoms, bear some kind of fruit that will satisfy earthly appetites, else neither man nor the décorum of Nature will deem it fit that the moss should gather on them.<sup>12</sup>

By the technique of analogy, he is apparently expectant of something in human growth. That is the change from grossness to moral refinement. "The advance of man," wrote he in a jocose mood in

12. *The Complete Works*, II, 173-174.

one of the notebooks, "from a savage and animal state may be as well measured by his mode and morality of dining as by any other circumstance."<sup>13</sup> What Hawthorne meant and expected in fact in human growth was moral progress, not merely of a man, but of human race. One of the passages of *The House of the Seven Gables* runs as follows, :

The great system of human progress, which, with every ascending footstep, as it diminishes the necessity for animal force, may be destined gradually to spiritualize us, by refining away our grosser attributes of body. (p. 149)

A well-known fact about him is that, whenever he referred to reform or a radical artificial progress, he always emphasized the importance of the purification of the human heart. From the point of view of this spiritualization, the Judge, whose ogre-like appetite made him a great beast, as we have seen above, is far behind the moral progress, and does not belong, as a result, to the present age.

With reference to the colonial days when the Colonel lived, the author points out "the general coarseness and matter-of-fact character of the age" (p. 23). It is Hawthorne's assumption that there is a harmonious order between the society and the people, between the age and those who lived in it. The Colonel was in this sense a unified character in accordance with his age. But, obviously, since the early colonial days American society has altered tremendously,—from that of the Puritan elite to that of the plebeian, from grossness to refinement, from theocracy to democracy. Though whether Hawthorne believed that his age had actually shown enough spiritual refinement is open to doubt, the Judge does not show in his moral nature ~~the process~~ toward the refinement. To the public, he is a Christian, a good citizen, a wealthy business man and a politician of some power. He is a gentleman representing utilitarian respectability of the civilized age.

13. Randall Stewart (ed.), *The American Notebooks by Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 248.

Yet, because of his inherent sensuousness, coarseness, and of his "inward criminality," he belongs essentially to a coarser age. He is, therefore, a misplaced colonial aristocrat disguised in the form of present-day practical gentility, and represents a type of moral degradation of the modern utilitarianism. His disguise, or artificiality, implies that not only does he contrive nature, but also is he out of keeping with the natural course of human history.

## V

Hepzibah is also a misplaced aristocrat, but she is more of the remnant of the past than the Judge, and, as we will soon observe, is not worthy of being blessed by nature. Because of her brother's misfortune she has now long been reduced to poverty and lives in the House. In order to make the livelihood of Clifford and herself, she opens a cent-shop, which provides the actual beginning of the story.

In contrast with her iron-hearted cousin, she was by nature warm in heart. Though "her singular scowl" (p. 50) had done her "a very ill office, in establishing her character as an ill-tempered old maid" (p. 50), she was kind and "her heart never frowned" (P. 51). Her heart "was naturally tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations; all of which weaknesses it retained, while her visage was growing so perversely stern, and even fierce" (p. 51). When she looked at her brother Clifford, there was "a strange mingling of the mother and sister, and of pleasure and sadness, in her aspect" (p. 180). She loved Phoebe, was genial to Uncle Venner, and kind to Holgrave, the lodger of the House. She is a contrast to the Judge's relentlessness.

However, there is something coarse about her, though not in the sense of moral depravity as in the Judge. She was far from being beautiful, and her voice was "naturally harsh" and "contracted a kind of croak, which, when it once gets into the human throat, is as ineradicable as sin" (p. 164). Furthermore, "there was an uncouthness

pervading all her deeds," as the author points out, "a clumsy something, that could but ill adapt itself for use, and not at all for ornament" (p. 165). No wonder, then, that "her natural inaptitude would be likely to impede the business in hand" (p. 99): she had no natural turn for cookery; with her nearsightedness and those tremulous fingers of hers, she could not be a seamstress at all; and her management of the cent-shop was a sad sight to look at.

"Her natural inaptitude" is her sole inheritance from the aristocratic family:

It is very queer, but not the less true, that people are generally quite as vain, or even more so, of their deficiencies than of their available gifts; as was Hepzibah of this native inapplicability, so to speak, of the Pyncheons to any useful purpose. She regarded it as an hereditary trait; and so, perhaps, it was, but, unfortunately, a morbid one, such as is often generated in families that remain long above the surface of society. (pp. 100-101)

Gentility is man's contrivance. It is an institution that nature has nothing to do with. If the Judge represents a type of modern utilitarian gentility with inner depravity, and, therefore, a forcible type of depraved artificiality, Hepzibah represents a type of un-practical, archaic gentility completely discordant with, and alienated from, the modern world. Artificiality and lack of direct contact with nature are the common denominators in both persons. But there is a difference in quality. The Judge's artificiality is built upon a disguise of his essentially coarse men, while in Hepzibah there is no disguise nor falsehood. Artificiality is rooted in her lady-like gentility as part of her own nature and education:

~~To find the born and educated lady . . . we need look no farther than~~ Hepzibah, our forlorn old maid, in her rustling and rusty silks, with her deeply cherished and ridiculous consciousness of long descent, her shadowy claims to princely territory, and, in the way of accomplishment, her recollections, it may be, of having formerly thrummed on a harpsichord, and walked a minuet, and worked an antique tapestry-stitch on her sampler. (p. 104)

Everything that pertains to her is contrived and artificial, and there

is no natural, plebeian simplicity. When she had tea with Phoebe, she brought out an archaic China tea-set "painted over with grotesque figures of man, bird, and beast, in as grotesque a landscape" (p. 99). When she began to prepare meals, she took out an old cookbook, "full of innumerable old fashions of English dishes, and illustrated with engravings, which represented the arrangements of the table at such banquets as it might have befitted a nobleman to give in the great hall of his castle" (p. 123). But, with this book, she could not prepare the meal. Old gentility cannot adapt itself to availability. This is represented also by her collection of old rags which are of little use now.<sup>14</sup> And, despite the warmth in her heart, she has never fallen in love with man. Full of natural dignity, old gentility is sterile and barren.

She told Holgrave: "I was born a lady, and have always lived one; no matter in what narrowness of means, always a lady!" (p. 63) But, unlike Alice who had a lady-like interest in flowers, Hepzibah did not show any interest in the direct contact with nature. For she had no taste nor spirits for the lady-like employment of cultivating flowers, and—with her recluse habits, and tendency to shelter herself within the dismal shadow of the house—would hardly have come forth, under the speck of open sky to weed and hoe among the fraternity of beans and squashes. (p. 111)

The love of children, too, who are generally believed closer to nature than the adult, "had never been quickened in Hepzibah's heart, and was now torpid, if not extinct" (p. 56).

Holgrave said to Hepzibah that "these names of gentleman and lady had a meaning, in the past history of the world, and conferred privileges, desirable or otherwise, on those entitled to bear them," and that "in the present—and still more in the future condition of society—

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14. Cf. also, the episode of the discovery of the long-sought proof to claim the proprietorship of the land in Maine. It turns out to be of no practical value at the present day. (p. 374)

they imply, not privilege, but restriction!" (pp. 63-64). Her unavailability, clumsiness, and unworthiness for the natural blessing may be counted as her restriction. Her isolation from the society and its effects are also her restrictions. Her cent-shop, however, is a step from her "sphere of unquestionable superiority" (p. 75) where she has long dwelt down to the level of the plebeian, and has an implication of taking away her restrictions. For, besides being cut off from the direct contact with nature, she secluded herself so long from society that she "has lost all true relation with it, and is, in fact, dead" (pp. 257-258); and, therefore, "she needed a walk along the noon-day street, to keep her sane" (p. 80). Though the cent-shop turns out a failure, it has an implication of the removal of her restrictions, and, as such, it signifies the efforts towards the dissolution of aristocratic isolation, the return to life where the democratic, nature-blessed, utilitarian plebeianism is now respected. Before she could remove the Maule's curse, which was Nature's curse on an aristocracy, she had to gain the direct relationship with nature and come into contact with the world, however "sordid" (p. 56) it might seem to her.

## VI

"Another dead and long-buried person" (p. 258) is Clifford, whose reunion with mankind is more crucial than Hepzibah's. Victim of the Judge's greed, he spent thirty years in jail and now reduced to "intellectual apathy" (p. 371) and to the "suspended animation"—that is, the "loss or suspension of the power to deal with unaccustomed things, and to keep up with the swiftness of the passing moment" (p. 194). When he came to the House to live with Hepzibah, he could hardly grapple with reality:

Continually, as we may express it, he faded away out of his place; or, in other words, his mind and consciousness took their departure, leaving his wasted, gray, and melancholy figure—a substantial emptiness, a material ghost—to occupy his seat at table. (p. 131)

His inertness, forgetfulness of the purpose, lack of force and his indecision mark a remarkable contrast with the Judge's determinedness. As is with Hepzibah, he is antipodal to the Judge's practicality, and about him was also something antique and archaic. "All the antique fashions," wrote the author, "of the street were dear to him" (p. 194). He loved the old rumbling and jolting carts, the butcher's cart, the fish-cart, the countryman's cart of vegetables, the baker's cart, a scissor grinder, etc. And, he is in "an old-fashioned dressing-gown of faded damask" (p. 129). "This old, faded garment," says the author, "with all its pristine brilliancy extinct, seemed, in some indescribable way, to translate the wearer's untold misfortune, and make it perceptible to the beholder's eye" (pp. 131-132). The garment suggests that "how worn and old were the soul's more immediate garments" (p. 132).

With his spirit "that could not walk" (p. 129), he sometimes gave the impression of coarseness, and appeared "to become grosser, —almost cloddish" (p. 139). The most remarkable instance of his coarseness was when he was at table: "He ate food with what might almost be termed voracity; and seemed to forget himself, Hepzibah, the young girl [Phoebe], and every thing around him, in the sensual enjoyment which the bountifully spread table afforded" (p. 133). His enormous appetite is the only ancestral inheritance and has come to the surface of his personality because during his long enclosurement his other spiritual activities have almost suppressed and extinguished. His sensibility to the delights of the palate "would have been kept in check," says the author, "and even converted into an accomplishment, and one of the thousand modes of intellectual culture, had his more ethereal characteristics retained their vigor" (p. 133).

However, Clifford's inner, essential man is far different from the other Pyncheons. He is by nature docile and gentle. "Soft, mildly, and cheerfully contemplative, with full, red lips, just on the verge of

a smile, which the eyes seemed to herald by a gentle kindling-up of their orbs" (p. 80) — this was the Clifford painted in Hepzibah's imagination. "Feminine traits" (p. 80) were most remarkable in him. In other words, different from the iron-hearted Colonel, or the masculine, hard-hearted Judge, "he never was a Pyncheon" (p. 80). From his youth he was "the instinctive lover of the Beautiful" (p. 165), and this trait has survived from the thirty years' life in jail. Through the veil of his intellectual inertness, his love and necessity for the beautiful now glittered at times. "Beauty would be his life," says the author; "his aspirations would all tend toward it; and, allowing his frame and physical organs to be in consonance, his own developments would likewise be beautiful" (p. 134). So, after thirty years' seclusion, he was now in a state of "second growth and recovery" (p. 208), and became "a child again" (p. 180). He delighted in blowing soap-bubbles (cf. p. 206), and is often described by the child images. "A mother," says Phoebe, "might trust her baby with him; and I think he would play with the baby as if he were only a few years older than itself" (p. 154). Therefore, different from Hepzibah, "he had sympathies with children, kept his heart the fresher thereby, like a reservoir into which rivulets were pouring not far from the fountain-head" (pp. 205-6). Because of his love of the beautiful, his second childhood, and his love of children, he is brought into close relation to nature, and, consequently, many nature images cluster around him. This suggests that, though he is the victim of the Judge and therefore the victim of the family curse, nature spares no sympathy towards the wronged<sup>15</sup>

Clifford delighted in "the quivering play of sunbeams through the shadowy foliage" (p. 135), and listened to the humming-birds with pleasure. His feeling for flowers was very exquisite, and "seemed not so much a taste as an emotion" (p. 178). And,

not merely was there a delight in the flower's perfume, or pleasure in its

15. See p. 45 below, especially note 18.

beautiful form, and the delicacy or brightness of its hue; but Clifford's enjoyment was accompanied with a perception of life, character, and individuality, that made him love these blossoms of the garden, as if they were endowed with sentiment and intelligence. (p. 178)

"This affection and sympathy for flowers," points out the author, "is almost exclusively a woman's trait. Men, if endowed with it by nature, soon lose, forget, and learn to despise it, in their contact with coarser things than flowers" (p. 178). Bees, too, interested him. When he heard their buzzing murmur "he looked about him with a joyful sense of warmth, the blue sky, and green grass, and of God's free air in the whole height from earth to heaven" (p. 179).

Though, however, he now felt happiness surrounded by the beauty of nature, his happiness was "a kind of Indian summer, with a mist in its balmiest sunshine, and decay and death in its gaudiest delight" (p. 180). With his delicate sensibility and sensitivity for the beautiful, Clifford was a man, who "should have nothing to do with sorrow; nothing with strife; nothing with the martyrdom" (p. 134). And, because of his long seclusion and martyrdom, the need for the dissolution of his isolation and the return to the breathing world was the stronger. When a political procession passed under the arched window of his room, he was on the point of throwing himself down from the balcony into the middle of the procession. A similar yearning "to renew the broken links of brotherhood with his kind" (p. 201) was observed in his effort to go to church with Hepzibah. What was needed to such "a lonely being, estranged from his race" (p. 200), and to Hepzibah as well, who was also alienated from the fellow human beings, was not to set out on an aimless trip by train as described in Chapter Seventeen. What they needed was "the love of a very few" (p. 370), through which they are bound with the world, and with which they are in possession of the sense of reality without flying in the world of the beautiful or in the world of archaic artificiality.

Who, then, can supply Clifford with what he is in need of? The agent must satisfy his love of the beautiful, and, at the same time, render him to regain the communion with other human beings. It must remove the restriction of gentility and dissolve artificiality. In order to fulfil this function, it must be in accord with the process of nature in human history; that is, it must show enough spiritualization and observe the democratic morality. It must deserve full blessing of nature and conform to the law of nature. It must, finally, be practical and not sterile, too. Hepzibah falls short of this agent because she has herself to be rescued. It is Phoebe, who can be the agent, removing the family curse, and giving aid to Clifford and Hepzibah. Phoebe is the resolution of this romance, satisfying all the requirements.

## VII

A robust country girl, Phoebe loves everything in nature, and nature, in its turn, claims her kinship with itself. In describing her, nature images are abundantly used either as similes, or as metaphors, or symbols. She is like a bird, sunshine, or fire-light:

She was very pretty; as graceful as a bird, and graceful much in the same way; as pleasant about the house as a gleam of sunshine falling on the floor through a shadow of twinkling leaves, or as a ray of firelight that dances on the wall, while evening is drawing nigh. (pp. 103-104)

She sings like a bird (p. 168), and walks "as light-footed as the breeze" (p. 166). She is often compared to a "fountain" (p. 168), "a young fruit tree" (p. 172), and "a running vine" (p. 264). She gives the impression "as if the garden flower were the sister of the household maiden" (p. 178). When she awakens, she is described as the sister to the Dawn (p. 92). She is literally "a young rosebud of a girl" (p. 144). To these might be added many other nature images that make Phoebe Hawthorne's version of Rousseauian child of nature.

Seeing Phoebe described by these nature images, however, one

would certainly remember Pearl of *The Scarlet Letter*, who is also endowed with nature images and presented as a child of nature. But Pearl is radically different from Phoebe. The nature images with which Pearl is associated are almost invariably those of wild nature. And, she is not a social being until the very end of the novel: "no law, nor reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong"<sup>16</sup> can be expected from her. On the other hand, it is said of Phoebe that "wildness was no trait of hers" (p. 174). Phoebe belongs from the beginning to "the trim, orderly, and limit-loving class" (p. 161), and "a part of [her] essence . . . was to keep within the limits of law" (p. 109). Or, unlike Pearl who has only "the freedom of a broken law,"<sup>17</sup> Phoebe is "so fresh, so unconventional and yet so orderly and obedient to common rules" (p. 90). Different from Pearl who is often referred to as an elf-child or demon-offspring, Phoebe is a humane, social being, and has "a church-going conscience" (p. 186). "She was like a prayer" (p. 202) and would, says the author, "hardly have been at ease had she missed either prayer, singing sermon, or benediction" (p. 186). Her religious feeling was so deep and lively that when she was observed on a Sunday morning she becomes to Hephzibah and Clifford "a religion in herself, warm, simple, true, with a substance that could walk on earth, and a spirit that was capable of heaven" (p. 202).

Phoebe's representation of the "essence" of nature is the heart of Phoebe as the Hawthornesque version of the child of nature:

Phoebe, whose fresh and maidenly figure was both sunshine and flowers, —their essence, in a prettier and more agreeable mode of manifestation.  
(p. 135)

She is the "essence" of nature because she represents the substantial values of nature in human shape. In a passage Phoebe is compared to a flower, such as of "garden-roses, pinks, and other blossoms of

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16. *The Scarlet Letter*, Vol. V of *The Complete Works*, p. 164.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

much sweetness" (p. 174). These flowers are suggested to be the products which "nature and man have consented together in making grow from summer to summer, and from century to century" (p. 174). She is, by implication, the product of collaboration of man and nature, and is the composite of man's spirit and nature's "essence." Hence, she is the only person that is nature-blessed among the nature-cursed Pyncheons and is capable of regeneration by removing the family curse. Without her, nature would not be perfect; with her, nature would be perfect. For example, among the rose-bush, which, as we have pointed out, bore flowers with "blight or mildew at their hearts" (p. 93), Phoebe now finds a new kind of rose and collects its flowers, "the most perfect of them all, not a speck of blight or mildew in it" (p. 137). On the other hand, when she is away some time from the house, the plants in the garden go riot and an easterly storm sets in, shutting off sunshine. The same is true with human relationships in the House. Without Phoebe, Clifford and Hepzibah feel no sense of reality and comfort, and Maule's curse weighs heavily on their hearts.

What characterizes Phoebe, the nature-blessed, is her plebeian simplicity and practicality, which are antithetical, and antidotal as well, to Hepzibah's gentility and artificiality as her restriction. When she could not prepare breakfast with her old cookbook, Phoebe made a simple, but delicious breakfast of an Indian cake. Where Hepzibah is clumsy and uncouth, Phoebe is brisk, cheerful and practical. Unlike Hepzibah, Phoebe belongs to the new age, in which being practical and democratic are the first requirements:

Instead of discussing her claim to rank among ladies, it would be preferable to regard Phoebe as the example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist. (p. 104)

Seeing Hepzibah and Phoebe side by side, one is given the impression, as the author puts it, of "a fair parallel between new Plebeianism and

old Gentility" (p. 104). By the aid of Phoebe's "spontaneous grace" (p. 106), Hepzibah, who has felt her superiority degraded by the plebeian rusticity of the customers of her cent-shop, comes down from her aristocratic aloofness.

Home or hearth plays an important role in Hawthorne's many other stories as the smallest unit of human brotherhood. What Phoebe does produces always the effect of a cheerful hearth or a habitable home, where loneliness melts away and isolation is expiated by the love of the families. When she entered a room of the House, she was successful within half an hour "in throwing a kindly and hospitable smile over the apartment" (p. 94). She had "the gift of practical arrangement" or "a kind of natural magic" to give "a look of comfort and habitableness to any place" (p. 94), and succeeded in changing the atmosphere of the house completely.

Now, Phoebe's presence made a home about her,—that very sphere which the outcast, the prisoner, the potentate,—the wretch beneath mankind, the wretch aside from it, or the wretch above it,—instinctively pines after,—a home! She was real! Holding her hand, you felt something; a tender something; a substance, and a warm one: and so long as you should feel its grasp, soft as it was, you might be certain that your place was good in the whole sympathetic chain of human nature. (pp. 170-171)

To be linked with other human beings by sympathy and love is to retain, as Hawthorne illustrates in his romances and short stories, human nature and be a humanity. Home is a place where sympathy and love unite families one another and make everybody feel the sense of reality. Therefore, home serves as the opposite of alienation, which is at once the cause and the effect of sin and which leads to the loss of the sense of reality.

The effect of home produced by Phoebe was especially potent on Clifford whose isolation was the deeper and the more dangerous after thirty years' seclusion. Besides satisfying his "abortive" (p. 258) love of the beautiful, she works on his inert spirit as a force of living reality:

All her little womanly ways, budding out of her like blossoms on a young fruit-tree, had their effect on him, and sometimes caused his very heart to tingle with the keenest thrills of pleasure. At such moments,—for the effect was seldom more than momentary,—the half-torpid man would be full of harmonious life. . . . He read Phoebe, as he would a sweet and simple story; he listened to her, as if she were a verse of household poetry, which God, in requital of his bleak and dismal lot, had permitted some angel, that most pitied him, to warble through the house. She was not an actual fact for him, but the interpretation of all that he had lacked on earth brought warmly home to his conception; so that this mere symbol, or lifelike picture had almost the comfort of reality. (p. 172)

In other, and simpler, words, “the reality, and simplicity, and thorough homeliness” (p. 170) of her nature were a powerful charm to Clifford.

As Holgrave aptly told Phoebe, “whatever health, comfort and natural life, exists in the house, is embodied in your person. These blessings came along with you, and will vanish when you leave the threshold” (p. 257). When she left the house on an business at her home in the country, the order of the house was lost, and the Judge succeeded in forcing himself into the house.

The only nature-blessed family member, and an embodiment of “new Plebeianism,” Phoebe performs an important function of the purification of the House:

The grime and sordidness of the House of the Seven Gables seemed to have vanished since her appearance there. . . . The purifying influence (was) scattered throughout the atmosphere of the household by the presence of one youthful, fresh, and thoroughly wholesome heart. (p. 166)

On entering the bedroom, Phoebe “purified [it] of all former evil and sorrow by her sweet breath and happy thoughts” (p. 95). When she entered the House, it was compared, as relevant to what her name in Greek suggests — “shining” —, to the falling of “a ray of sunshine” (p. 90) into the dismal place. In reference to her function, it is no wonder, she is given the image of God’s angel. Uncle Venner, the village philosopher, said, “I never knew a human creature do her

work so much like one of God's angels as this child Phoebe does!" (p. 106).

Moreover, her brightening and purifying influence extends to cover the fate of the family by her marital engagement. If the Judge's death, and his son's death by cholera, too, stand for the final act of Maule's curse upon the aristocracy and give another example of the sterility of the aristocracy which is not blessed by nature, the extinction of the curse was due not so much to the Judge's death as to the engagement of Phoebe to Holgrave, the descendant of Matthew Maule. For Holgrave is another nature-blessed person and his engagement to Phoebe turns out to be the remission of Maule's curse on the Pyncheons.

As befitted the descendant of the Maules, Holgrave was "somewhat of a mystic" (p. 259), as he told himself, and was endowed with a hereditary faculty of mesmerism. For Phoebe he had a similar power as Maule the carpenter who mesmerized Alice to captivate her soul, but he never wielded that power. Despite of his variegated and chequered career, "he had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him" (p. 212). Also, he had "the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality" (p. 253). Though he is not religious, and not as conservative as Phoebe was, he is a type of modern spiritualization. It is ironical enough that he, the descendant of Matthew Maule who was hanged because of his suspected witchcraft, should represent a type of modern spiritualization. With his disposition at once speculative and active,

the true value of his character lay in that deep consciousness of inward strength, which made all his past vicissitudes seem merely like a change of garments; in that enthusiasm, so quiet that he scarcely knew of its existence, but which gave a warmth to everything that he laid his hand on; in that personal ambition, hidden—from his own as well as other eyes—among his more generous impulses, but in which lurked a certain efficacy, that might solidify him from a theorist into the champion of some practicable cause. (p. 217)

In fact, he marks a remarkable contrast to the Pyncheons with whom he now lives in the House. He is the new man of self-reliance; not dependent upon the dead past, or alienated neither from society nor from fellow human beings. Once he gave Phoebe the impression of being cold-hearted, and being "in quest of mental food, not heart-substance" (p. 213), but he did not commit the sin of *hubris*. After knowing Phoebe for some time, his attitude towards life suffered a change, and he now regarded it more cheerfully, confessing his willingness to conform himself "to laws and the peaceful practice of society" (p. 363).

Like his partner, Phoebe, he is always with nature. He preferred plebeian vegetables to aristocratic flowers, and he felt always, as Phoebe did, the need for direct contact with nature. He told Phoebe how his relationship with nature was:

I dig, and hoe, and weed, in this black old earth, for the sake of refreshing myself with what little nature and simplicity may be left in it, after men have so long sown and reaped here. I turn up the earth by way of pastime. My sober occupation, so far as I have any, is with a lighter material. In short, I make pictures out of sunshine. (p. 115)

He referred to his daguerreotype which *uses* sunshine, saying that at the sea-shore he "*misuse[s]* Heaven's blessed sunshine by tracing out human features through its agency" (*italics mine*, p. 64). Producing on his daguerreotype what is usually hidden from human sight through the "wonderful insight in Heaven's broad and simple sunshine" (p. 116), he knows that Clifford is innocent of his uncle's murder and that the Judge is the sinner. Therefore, though he humbly refers to his *misuse* of sunshine, he actually helps nature to "bring out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it" (p. 116). Hence, his qualification to be connected with Phoebe.

## VIII

Holgrave's engagement to Phoebe, which is often considered un-

convincing, is no logical contradiction to the development of the plot. It suggests, as have been pointed out by critics, the balance between the mind and the heart, or the balance between the radical and the conservative. But more significantly, and relevantly from our point of view, it is the welding of a nature-blessed with another nature-blessed, and as such it has multiple implications. It suggests, first, the triumph of simple, practical, democratic, and spiritualized plebeianism, which is in accord with the natural course of human history. It implies, secondly, the settling of a home where love unites the family and alienation is dispelled. Thirdly, it anticipates renewal of fertility which has long been absent in the nature-cursed Pyncheons. And, finally, the union of the nature-blessed brings in the expectation of the Divine favor with sins absolved and evils expiated. This is metaphorically described by the image of Eden: "They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it" (p. 363).

Therefore, their engagement serves as the resolution of the plot. Clifford and Hepzibah find new home with this couple and are going to move into the house in the country to make a new home, where the romance ends. Obviously they are now capable of being blessed by nature. The two hens of the Chanticleers, which had already been transported to the country house, began "an indefatigable process of egg-laying, with an evident design, as a matter of duty and conscience, to continue their illustrious breed under better auspices than for a century past" (p. 372). Maule's well, on the other hand,

was throwing up a succession of kaleidoscopic pictures, in which a gifted eye might have seen foreshadowed the coming fortunes of Hepzibah and Clifford, and the descendant of the legendary wizard, and the village maiden. (p. 377)

The "unintelligible prophecies" (p. 378) that the Pyncheon Elm whispered are taken as suggesting their happiness full of nature's

benevolence, which, however, is ascribed finally to God's grace.<sup>18</sup>

That Clifford's and Hepzibah's regeneration is heteronomous has an implication of the Hawthornesque "dark necessity." Suggesting that there is no radical and positive nullification of this principle, the author wrote:

It is a truth (and it would be a very sad one but for the higher hopes which it suggests) that no great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right. Time, the continual vicissitude of circumstances, and the invariable inopportunity of death, render it impossible. If, after long lapse of years, the right seems to be in our power, we find no niche to set it in. The better remedy is for the sufferer to pass on, and leave what he once thought his irreparable ruin far behind him. (p. 371)

In other words, the wages of sin is always death; Clifford and Hepzibah cannot be regenerated completely, nor do they have perfectly autonomous capability. They have to be helped and comforted from outside as they are by Phoebe. One may suspect, also, in the Judge's inherent evil nature the dark necessity rendered to such a degree as might be called inexorable heredity. In reference to the Judge's hereditary evil nature, the author points out that—

the weaknesses and defects, the bad passions, the mean tendencies, and the moral diseases which lead to crime are handed down from one generation to another, by a far surer process of transmission than human law has been able to establish in respect to the riches and honors which it seeks to entail upon posterity. (p. 147)

Almost all the Pyncheons are under the influence of this hereditary principle except Phoebe, who is not under it because she is "no Pyncheon," as Hepzibah says; "she takes everything from her mother"

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18. The idea of God revealing himself through nature is seen everywhere in this work as well as in other Hawthorne's works. See, for example, the reference made to a bird in the following passage:

A bird, in whose strain of music we recognize the voice of the Creator as distinctly as in the loudest accents of his thunder. (p. 168)

Or, behind nature's sympathy as towards Clifford, God's grace is expected: "God sent them [i. e., bees] thither to gladden our poor Clifford." (p. 179).

(p. 103) who was not a Pyncheon.

If we are preoccupied to see only the darker aspect, the theme of the historical effect of evil is obviously apparent, and this work may be classified as the variation of, or the continuation of, *The Scarlet Letter*. But, as we have seen, the implications of nature and the descriptions supported by symbolic as well as metaphorical uses of nature images suggest the dominance of the multiple significances of the nature-blessed. Phoebe fulfils, in this connection, as we have pointed out, the most important function, although she is not a protagonist.

In every respect, it is true, Phoebe lacks depth and falls short of Holgrave's match. She lacks such a tragic sense of life as Hepzibah has. She is not sensitive enough to fly to the Ideal as Clifford would, remaining within the boundary of "the Actual" (p. 170) and the commonplace. She is less perceptive and apparently less intelligent than Holgrave, too. As a character, we must admit, she is the least convincing. Shortly before her engagement to Holgrave, her maturity is suggested, but her initiation into experience, into the dark and the depth of life, lacks dramatic intensity. If Hawthorne failed in Phoebe, however, it is not because "'in his heart' he did not really believe in her"<sup>19</sup>; but because, it seems, he believed too much in her, — in her everyday-life qualities which are humanly acceptable and socially satisfactory.<sup>20</sup> Different from other spotless maidens in Hawthorne's

19. H. H. Waggoner, *Hawthorne*, p. 167.

20. Examining Oberon's final repinings in the "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," Millicent Bell observed:

His (Oberon's) censure springs from Hawthorne's deep humanist sense of the values of sociality. The "deep and warm realities," the "common path," the "gladness of a man by his own fireside," and, finally the love of woman — these are the life-values which Hawthorne poses against the spiritual exaltation of the lonely seeker. (*Hawthorne's View of the Artist* [New York: State University of New York, 1962], p. 142)

What Phoebe represents is the same life-values, which are alien to such lonely figures as Owen Warland, Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, and which the alienated such as Clifford and Hepzibah instinctively yearn for.

works — Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, or Hilda in *The Marble Faun* — she is the nature-blessed, and as such, ranks higher than the others.

For, as we have seen above, the nature-blessed embody, in contrast to the nature-cursed, the basic values of man and man's institution. Beauty, simplicity, fertility, practicality, spiritualization, home and democracy are the requirements of the new, finer age, and they cluster around the nature-blessed inseparably from one another. Any one of them alone does not deserve the blessing of nature, and, therefore, does not meet the requirements of the new age. The Judge, for example, was really a practical man, but he does not fulfil the other requirements and consequently he falls short of nature's blessing and belongs essentially to a coarser age.

The implications of the set of ideas may be interpreted in various ways. They suggest that the sanction and the foundation of American democracy are in nature; that democracy is the product of the collaboration between man and nature; that beauty must be embodied in the practical, and that the practical must be simple and spiritualized. From the point of view of the individual life, home—the foundation of human brotherhood and the opposite of alienation—must be in accord with the law of nature, and it must also be solidified by love, by reverence for God, and by natural blessing. Of all Hawthorne's works, therefore, *The House of the Seven Gables* affirms most positively the values of nature in man, man's life, and man's institution, and those ideas clustered around the nature-blessed suggest the kind of light as antithetical to the pervading darkness in Hawthorne's works.