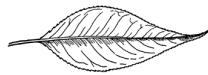


**“Within small compass”: Hawthorne’s Expansive Urban Garden
in *The House of the Seven Gables***

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Abstract: Nathaniel Hawthorne loved a garden. His writings consistently show his awareness of the garden’s complexity. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, his urban garden of “small compass” effectively envisions and then makes workable a model of co-existence that is inclusive of all life forms. The garden’s urban setting facilitates a diversity that resists facile oppositions between such concepts as nature and culture, the country and the city. The result is a restorative space in which Hawthorne’s characters engage respectfully with non-human life, and strive to enact a non-hierarchical human community that transcends gender and class distinctions.



Nathaniel Hawthorne loved a garden. In the writings of this highly-acclaimed, nineteenth-century American author, the garden often functions symbolically evoking humankind’s endless aspirations for Edenic fulfillment while also searching out the dark corners of human depravity. Throughout his career, Hawthorne struggled with his sense of personal responsibility for the brutalities carried out by his Puritan ancestors. To various degrees, his writings resist the tendency to read American literature through what William Conlogue, in *Working the Garden*, terms “a pastoral prism,” for Hawthorne’s work emphasizes the postlapsarian world in which few traces of harmonious and leisurely Arcadian pleasures remain.¹ The fate of the young lovers in “The Maypole of Merrymount” seems representative of Hawthorne’s outlook, since their “flowery garland . . . of the brightest roses” cannot protect them from “the difficult path which it was their lot to tread.”² His new world Adams and Eves confront American versions of the serpent regularly, and realize all too quickly that their paradisaical virgin land is a fallen one. The fallen world manifests itself also in the unbalanced artificiality of the garden where organic life seems to have disappeared into a rarified environment. In the garden of “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” the artificial and the natural become disturbingly blurred, with vitality imperceptibly turning into morbidity and bringing poison and death. But while Hawthorne’s gardens take up huge tracts of imaginative space in their symbolic and metaphoric import, they begin in physical plots of land and require laborers. Even as Giovanni takes in the sculpted beauty of the Rappaccini garden outside his window, he becomes aware of “a person . . . at work in the garden.”³ Among Hawthorne’s gardens, the Pyncheon garden of *The House of the Seven Gables* is, to use Michael Pollan’s words, perhaps the most “insistently real,” as it bears witness to the efforts of Phoebe and Holgrave, the garden laborers, to work it.⁴ No less than the house, the Pyncheon garden is central to the *Seven Gables*. In *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens*, Shelley

Saguaro contends that gardens “extend both the critique and perpetuation of particular ideological premises and practices, in ways that are not always obvious.”⁵ Her critical perspective seems particularly applicable to the Pyncheon garden, for Hawthorne himself works his urban garden to envision, and then make workable a model of co-existence inclusive of all life forms, and strives further to realize a non-hierarchical human community that transcends gender and class distinctions. Challenging the starkness of binary oppositions, the Pyncheon garden becomes a restorative space not by advocating rejection and inviting withdrawal, but by embracing and accommodating difference.

Hawthorne knows that gardening and gardens are rarely simple. As the product of humankind’s intervention in nature, gardens are sites of on-going conflict and require continual negotiation. They bring into close and intimate proximity plants and people, people and animals, animals and plants and the intricate interrelationships among them. The history of gardens, like Hawthorne’s stories themselves, suggests the difficulty of mediating between human imposition and non-human resistance, of balancing the forces of nature and culture to maintain a relevant and fulfilling presence for all life forms, human, animal, and organic. Saguaro points to the garden’s many complex manifestations each of which, she asserts, “gives rise to other issues.” Gardens “are extremely various,” she shows, in a full and familiar list of garden descriptors: “Edenic, Arcadian, pastoral, paradise, natural, wild, formal, plantation, vegetable, fruit, flower, botanical, physis, orchard, arboretum, allotment, walled, country, city, park” among others.⁶ The Pyncheon garden invokes not one term or another but several, resisting participation in any facile opposition between country and city. Its city setting is significant, for it expands the garden’s associations, suggesting gradations in the engagement between nature and culture, between non-human and human life. Hawthorne’s garden in the city finds room for both the wild and the farm. It embraces the diversity that tends to characterize urban spaces without relinquishing its valuing of nature’s forces.

One of the first things we learn about the Pyncheon garden is that it has shrunk in response to urban growth. “The enclosure had formerly been very extensive,” Hawthorne writes, “but was now contracted within small compass, and hemmed about, partly by high wooden fences, and partly by the outbuildings of houses that stood on another street.”⁷ Though squeezed, it has defied elimination; its garden status nonetheless is being threatened as nature begins the process of reclamation spreading wildness over previous cultivations: the summer-house in the garden’s midst is now “a ruinous little structure” which a clambering hop-vine has just discovered.⁸ The water from the garden’s well, Maule’s well, named after the original owner, flows over “a rim of old mossy stones.” In the garden’s neglected state, nature begins its determined assertions over the human-made, claiming her “inalienable property, in spite of whatever man could do to render it his own.”⁹ The well, however, brings other reminders of connections that are not yet lost. It recalls its country origins as a “natural spring” set on a “cow-path . . . remote from what was then the centre of the village,”¹⁰ but at the same time, its flowing “over the rim of moss-grown stones . . . away under the fence” ends up not in a “channel” but in a city “gutter,” situating the garden in its contemporary urban setting.¹¹

These pending reclamations are part of a larger process that reflects the creative tension of gardens in several ways. In her first venture into the garden, Phoebe notices that “the decay of a long period of time; such as fallen leaves, the petals of flowers, and the stalks and seed-vessels of vagrant and lawless plants, more useful after their death, than ever while flaunting in the sun” has resulted in “the black, rich soil” that nurtures the garden’s present growth.¹² The garden’s organic life attests to the cycle of life and death – from the burial ground of the past grows the abundance of the present. The garden’s non-human life, moreover, cannot do this on its own. While the neglected roses that Phoebe gathers remain beautiful, “a large portion of them,” as Phoebe comes to realize, have “blight or mildew at their hearts.”¹³ The gardener is essential to the garden. In her first encounter with the

garden, Phoebe notes, too, that “the evil of these departed years would naturally have sprung up again, in such rank weeds . . . as are always prone to root themselves about human dwellings,” but “their growth must have been checked by a degree of careful labor, bestowed daily and systemically on the garden.”¹⁴ Her “must have been checked” proves true when she meets Holgrave and is affirmed in a different way later in the story when Hawthorne describes the Pyncheon garden’s quick turn to wildness during Phoebe’s brief visit to her mother:

The growth of the garden seemed to have got quite out of bounds; the weeds had taken advantage of Phoebe’s absence, and the long-continued rain, to run rampant over the flowers and kitchen-vegetables. Maule’s well had overflowed its stone border, and made a pool of formidable breadth in that corner of the garden.¹⁵

Hawthorne is also aware that human intervention in nature has the potential for destruction. The pure spring water of Maule’s well “entirely lost the deliciousness of its pristine quality” “very soon after the workmen began their operations”¹⁶ to build the Pyncheon family-mansion on the site of the “log-built hut of Matthew Maule”¹⁷: “Whether its sources were disturbed by the depth of the new cellar, or whatever subtler cause might lurk at the bottom, it is certain that the water of Maule’s Well, as it continued to be called, grew hard and brackish.”¹⁸ But the pointed diction that Hawthorne assigns to Phoebe’s initial observations on intervention in the garden in such words and phrases as “careful labor” and “bestowed” assumes that the human presence in the garden carries responsibility. “Weeding,” in Pollan’s view, “is the process by which we make informed choices in nature.”¹⁹ “To weed is to bring culture to nature,” he continues: “which is why we say, when we are weeding, that we are *cultivating* the soil. Weeding, in this sense, is not a nuisance that follows from gardening, but its very essence. And, like gardening, weeding, at a certain point becomes an obligation.”²⁰ Gardeners and weeds alike might do battle for dominance, but the garden’s ideal mandate is to facilitate the beneficial co-existence of human and non-human life alike.

The Pyncheon garden is remarkably eclectic creating numerous mediating spaces between nature and culture. Flowers, fruits and vegetables of several varieties assert their presence, but they are also meant for human enjoyment and consumption. Among the “esculent vegetables,”²¹ Phoebe notices that the tomatoes occupy “a site so sheltered and sunny that the plants were already gigantic, and promised an early and abundant harvest.”²² The garden’s untamed, non-human life presents a snapshot of domesticity through the pair of robins who build their nest in the pear tree. Hawthorne repeatedly points to the garden’s harmonious co-existence of various species: the bees continually find their way to the garden, plunging themselves into the squash plant’s “great yellow blossoms” and giving out from thence “their sunny, buzzing murmur.” The bean-vines with their “spiral profusion of red blossoms” attract “a multitude of humming-birds” whose activities arouse in Clifford “indescribable interest, and even more than childish delight.”²³

Subject to nature’s wild side, and surrounded by and linked to its urban setting, the Pyncheon garden also partakes of the barnyard with the “hen-coop, of very reverend antiquity, that stood in the farther corner of the garden.”²⁴ The barnyard is, in a sense, the country equivalent of the urban garden; like the garden, the hen-coop, as representative of country cultivation, necessarily includes human intervention in the non-human, and the coop itself, with links to country structures of barns and farmhouses, forefronts, like the Pyncheon garden’s urban setting, the human-made in the midst of organic and non-human life. Hawthorne’s involving the hen-coop with and in the urban garden intensifies the challenge to the opposition of country and city values that each already represents. The inhabitants, moreover, of the hen-coop’s fowl space, “Chanticleer, his two wives, and a solitary chicken”²⁵ effectively challenge other distinctions, for once set free from the coop’s confines, they

proceed to make the entire garden their domain, eschewing human self-importance in favor of their own. Hawthorne details Chanticleer's enjoyment of the garden almost as fully as he does Clifford's. If, from Clifford's perspective, Chanticleer and his cohort are a source of great personal amusement "for the piquancy and rich variety of their manners," glimpses of Chanticleer's point of view make us aware of snails and worms and a garden populous much greater than we had first imagined, one, indeed, with its own agenda.²⁶

The introduction of a farming presence along side the land labors in which Holgrave and Phoebe engage reinforces the Pyncheon garden's impulse toward inclusiveness and equality. Conlogue's study of farm literature invokes not Virgil's pastoral *Eclogues* but his *Georgics*, the poem on farm work. Drawing on the insights of a range of Virgil scholars, Conlogue's summary of the georgic seems suggestively applicable to the activities and dynamics of the Pyncheon garden, which, in the place of "pastoral nostalgia," substitutes the georgic's "vision of cooperative effort to bring about a Golden Age in the future."²⁷ "In imagining varieties of work," Conlogue writes, "the georgic argues for the transcendence of 'social disparities,' working with and within nature, and for diversity – of plants, animals and humans."²⁸ Conlogue identifies the "landscapes" of the farm novel, which is the focus of his study, as "not simply settings for human action but places where the human, animal, plant, and nonorganic worlds interact in interdependent relationships. Characters are not passive in the face of the world they confront; they are active participants in creating or changing the world around them."²⁹ In the Pyncheon garden, these ideals, values and practices play themselves out in Phoebe's and Holgrave's engagement with the earth, with each other, and with all the forms of life around them.

Phoebe and Holgrave, the garden's self-appointed stewards, are necessarily, as gardeners, mediating figures, but their ways of thinking and acting bring about constantly expanding connections. Phoebe is associated with flowers, but as her name implies, also with sunshine. With her country background, she seems to be a kind of child of nature. She speaks the language of the chickens and sings like a bird, but she is also the one who brings books into the garden to read to Clifford and becomes "deeply absorbed" in them.³⁰ Holgrave, who supplies her with the books, seems too much a figure of culture, a being, according to Hepzibah, with certain "lawless propensities."³¹ He is an artist, for whom human creativity comes first; but as a professional daguerreotypist, he is dependent on the powers of nature. He, too, like Phoebe, is associated with the sun. Through his art, he uses the power of the sun to discover truths about humankind as his revealing portrait of Jeffrey Pyncheon attests. Holgrave expands on his portrait work to Phoebe:

"Now, the remarkable point is, that the original wears, to the world's eye—and, for ought I know, to his most intimate friends—an exceedingly pleasant countenance, indicative of benevolence, openness of heart, sunny good-humor, and other praiseworthy qualities of that cast. The sun, as you see, tells quite another story, and will not be coaxed out of it, after half a dozen patient attempts on my part. Here we have the man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and, withal, cold as ice. Look at that eye! Would you like to be at its mercy? At that mouth! Could it ever smile? And yet, if you could only see the benign smile of the original!"³²

Holgrave's art works with nature, part of the thematic tradition of "great creating Nature" that Shakespeare discusses in *The Winter's Tale* when his characters speak of the art "Which does mend Nature, change it rather; but / The art itself is Nature."³³

The meetings of these two in the garden, moreover, suggest a model of gender equality in human relations that mid-19th century America had not yet embraced. The Miltonic presence

becomes important here. Hawthorne directly invokes Milton several times in his romance, but also alludes to his work indirectly. Holgrave's suggestion to Phoebe for division of labor recalls Eve's practical plan in Milton's paradise. Hawthorne's variations are significant. In *Paradise Lost*, it is the female who makes the suggestion to work separately, and Adam protests fearing that the Foe will take advantage of a weaker Eve to work his evil. The Miltonic Adam's and Eve's dialogue forefronts the great inequality at the heart of the Edenic garden: "Hee for God only, shee for God in him."³⁴ Always considered the weaker being, denied first hand knowledge of the divine, Eve does not have a chance. Holgrave suggests to Phoebe at their initial meeting in the garden:

"If agreeable to you . . . it would give me pleasure to turn over these flowers, and . . . fowls to your care. . . . My own sphere does not so much lie among flowers. . . . and I will ask only the least trifle of a blossom, now and then, in exchange for all the good, honest kitchen-vegetables with which I propose to enrich Miss Hepzibah's table."³⁵

Hawthorne comments on his "odd kind of authority," and Phoebe is surprised at her own compliance. Holgrave certainly sounds somewhat authoritative if not outright authoritarian, but his principles are sound. "So," he concludes, "we will be fellow-laborers, somewhat on the community system."³⁶ His drive is for equality and mutuality not hierarchy. He shows no Adamic lack of faith in Phoebe's competence.

Holgrave seems nonetheless a dangerous figure. His undisclosed Maule ancestry that makes him a keen observer of the Pyncheon household also makes him suspect. Like humankind's great Foe, he seems the silent, sly presence in the garden watching and waiting for the right moment of seduction. He may act like a new kind of gender-blind Adam, but Hawthorne also hints that he is akin to Satan, and provides, moreover, links between Milton's Eden and the Pyncheon garden.³⁷ From Phoebe's bedroom window, Hawthorne situates the Pyncheon garden, like Milton's, to the "east."³⁸ Of his direct Miltonic references, the two that invoke *Paradise Lost* both occur in "The Arched Window" chapter, but, in a verbal echo, one seems a subtle indicator of the garden's Satanic associations. In describing the sound of the scissor-grinder's machine as it plies its trade in the street outside Clifford's window, Hawthorne recounts "an intense and spiteful prolongation of a hiss, as fierce as those emitted by Satan and his compeers in Pandemonium, though squeezed into *smaller compass*."³⁹ The Pyncheon garden, too, as we have already seen, is of "small compass" and while the link in references is perhaps somewhat tenuous, the echo makes the possibility that there is hissing in the garden also seem less remote.⁴⁰ Hawthorne keeps reminding us that the garden is the site of Satan's mischief.

Hawthorne himself as well as contemporary critical commentators saw *The House of the Seven Gables* as a much more cheerful work than its immediate predecessor, *The Scarlet Letter*. Robert S. Levine points out that "reviewers and readers . . . were nearly unanimous in celebrating the novel for its literary mastery, grace, and cheerful perspective on life's possibilities." The ending's "dear homeliness and satisfaction" pleased Sophia Hawthorne, and Hawthorne himself wrote "Evert Duyckinck that the novel is a 'more natural and healthy product of my mind'" than Hester's story.⁴¹ These assessments of the *Seven Gables*' brighter aspects are especially true if we consider Hawthorne's revisioning of the story of the Fall through Phoebe and Holgrave. Possessing the Maules' powers of mesmerism, Holgrave, later in the romance, finds himself in the position of repeating his ancestral sins, specifically Matthew Maule's enthrallment of the proud Alice Pyncheon, an enthrallment that led to Alice's death and that echoes Satan's mesmerizing seduction of Eve. As late one afternoon in the garden, Holgrave reads to Phoebe his story of Alice, his seductive powers begin to take effect, recalling Satan's enchanting "words repeat with guile"⁴²:

With the lids drooping over her eyes—now lifted, for an instant, and drawn down again with leaden weights—[Phoebe] leaned slightly towards him, and seemed almost to regulate her breath by his. Holgrave gazed at her, . . . and recognized an incipient stage of that curious psychological condition, which, as he had himself told Phoebe, he possessed more than an ordinary faculty of producing. A veil was beginning to be muffled about her, in which she could behold only him, and live only in his thoughts and emotions.⁴³

This is Holgrave's chance, as Hawthorne points out, "of acquiring empire over the human spirit."⁴⁴ His is the demonic opportunity to control the will and soul of another; to make another comply with his choice of sin and evil. But Holgrave resists the role of Satan. He offers Phoebe instead "the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality," establishing thereby an alternative mode of human interaction to the one that took place in the mythical garden not only between Eve and Satan but also between Eve and Adam.⁴⁵ Through Holgrave's resistance, the Pyncheon garden becomes the site of a startling possibility as Satan transforms into a non-hierarchical Adam and instead of seducing Eve into sin, comes eventually to marry her in mutuality and respect.

But we should also give Phoebe her due. Perhaps there is some truth in her ready assertion at Holgrave's arousing her, "Me asleep! How can you say so?"⁴⁶ Perhaps both the narrator and Holgrave overestimate her vulnerability to Holgrave's seductive powers. Phoebe is no Eve; nor is she at all like her proud, aristocratic ancestor, Alice. Phoebe has powers that Alice never possessed. Hawthorne talks about Phoebe's "natural magic that enables these favored ones to bring out the hidden capabilities of things around them."⁴⁷ Perhaps her magic works on people, too. According to Holgrave's story, Alice had great faith of self-protection in her pure womanly powers. "With maidenly dignity," she asserts to Matthew Maule, "neither do I conceive that a lady, while true to herself, can have aught to fear from whomsoever, or in any circumstances!"⁴⁸ Again a Miltonic cross-reference from later in the book provides a significant commentary on this incident of Alice seated before the powerful and vengeful Matthew Maule in her father's study. In Chapter XVIII, "Governor Pyncheon," the narrator exhorts the dead Judge Pyncheon to "start at once out of the oaken chair, which really seems to be enchanted, like the one in *Comus*."⁴⁹ As the editor's note directs us, in Milton's masque, "a 'Lady' is imprisoned in an enchanted chair by Comus, the Roman god of drinking and revelry, so that he may test her virtue."⁵⁰ Alice Pyncheon fails – either her pride lessens her virtue or her Comus is too strong. But in the echoing scene of potential enchantment between Phoebe and Holgrave, it is really Holgrave who is being tested. The focus is not on Phoebe, for, as Hawthorne has Hepzibah emphasize, Phoebe is no "lady," having taken "everything from her mother!"⁵¹ And as Holgrave gazes at "this good, pure, and simple child," Hawthorne implies that Phoebe's influence liberates him from the Satanic temptation that enchants and controls the daguerreotypist.⁵²

Holgrave's invocation of "community" when he speaks of the garden's division of labor is significant, for from the private space of two young people's growing love for each other, the Pyncheon garden expands into a site of social gatherings that include not only the Pyncheon family and their tenant, but at least one other figure, Uncle Venner, from the broader community. Despite the failure of his Brook Farm experience, Hawthorne maintained an interest in the beneficent potential of communal living as his exploration of the subject in the later *Blithedale Romance* indicates. The communal garden scene of *The House of the Seven Gables* seems another examination of the workings of shared living, one that augurs a greater hope of success than any of his others.⁵³ While limited to Sunday afternoons, "this oddly composed little social party" assembled under the "ruinous arbor"⁵⁴ for "a sober little festival"⁵⁵ speaks tellingly of the Pyncheon garden's principle of integration and co-existence on several fronts. In *Gardens in Art*, Lucia Impelluso discusses some of

the implications of “sitting in the garden” pointing out that an object in the garden, like a garden seat, can “either impose its own presence in the garden or blend in with the surroundings.”⁵⁶ In this social scene, the arbor blends in with nature, and the human presence seems to blend in with the arbor, as an expected part of its composition. Though as we discussed earlier, the sense of nature reclaiming its own informs the deteriorating structure, the arbor here does not impose “itself as a separate, symbolic presence,” beyond its function as an integral part of the garden.⁵⁷ The scene takes for granted the simultaneous inclusion of the garden, the arbor and other non-human life forms as well as the human presence to present a scene of ordinary life, charged only with the notion of enjoying an afternoon in the garden. Even some of the festive food that Phoebe fetches at Hepzibah’s behest reflects integration. The domesticated and the wild, culture and nature are all present in the “loaf of bread and a china bowl of currants, freshly gathered from the bushes, and crushed with sugar.”⁵⁸

Hawthorne seems to focus, moreover, on the possibility of, and potential in harmonious human co-existence. He puts forth a vision of a communal, social model of inclusiveness and equality. The Pyncheon garden, under Alice’s stewardship, began in the long European tradition of an aristocratic garden, but by the time we come upon it with Phoebe, “aristocratic flowers, and plebeian vegetables” exist in it side by side.⁵⁹ Hawthorne makes us aware of the garden’s democratic impulse, for the members of the Sunday gathering represent a wide range in class status. Class distinctions are not exactly elided but rather thoroughly mixed here. Hepzibah, with current ownership rights to the garden, is “the immemorial lady—two hundred years old, on this side of the water, and thrice as many, on the other” who is reduced now “to be the hucksteress of a cent-shop.”⁶⁰ She makes no pretensions to commonality, as we see in her hostessing, though Hawthorne implies, that, like her aristocratic chickens, perhaps her “race had degenerated, like many a noble race besides, in consequence of too strict a watchfulness to keep it pure.”⁶¹ Uncle Venner is a figure of need in several ways, necessary in his urban environment to do the many useful chores that city people assign to others, such as repairs, running errands, splitting wood, shoveling snow or whatever else requires doing that no one else will do, but he functions on the social outskirts of urban life, allowed in, but kept out. Through her father, Phoebe partakes of the Pyncheon’s aristocratic blood, but it has been diluted by the “young woman of no family or property” who is her mother, and thus, she takes on another mediating position, here between social classes.⁶² Though intelligent and well-read, Holgrave, as he tells Hepzibah, “was not born a gentleman . . . neither . . . lived like one.”⁶³

The inclusiveness of this social group is perhaps best suggested by Clifford, for while he is a Pyncheon, he is also a social outcast, whom the laws and judgments have declared to have forfeited his place in society. He is a criminal, a convicted murderer, whose failed attempts to move outside confined spaces suggest the damage that has been done to his sensitive spirit. The social circle that gathers in the garden, then, includes an old aristocratic lady who has turned common shop keeper, her cousin Phoebe, with her mixed background of country and city attachments and aristocratic and common blood, and the artist Holgrave, with his radical, intellectual ideas and common Maule background. The two disadvantaged figures in the group, Uncle Venner, and the displaced convict brother, are placed by the rest of society on the margins, but here they occupy the centre along with the rest of the gathering. The Pyncheon garden facilitates this formation of equal, reciprocal communion in social relations.

And yet, at the same time, the members of this social unit are allowed their full individuality. The interactions in the garden are marked by kindness and good will, and each member of the community gathering expresses the best in him or herself with the help of the others. Hepzibah has long accepted the socially-inferior Uncle Venner as “a kind of familiar of the house,” but his sojourn in the Pyncheon garden is of a different nature, for he comes not as a hired hand but as an invited guest, an equal member in the social gathering.⁶⁴ He is given his full due. The rest of the company

acknowledges the “vein of something like poetry in him,” and recognizes the wisdom he dispenses in his role of “patched philosopher.”⁶⁵ They listen to him carefully, and take him seriously. Hepzibah, in turn, remains as “stately as ever at heart, and yielding not an inch of her old gentility, but resting upon it so much the more, as justifying a princesslike condescension,” exhibits “a not ungraceful hospitality,” bringing all the good qualities of her aristocratic past to her role as hostess of this democratic gathering.⁶⁶ Holgrave, with some mixed motivations, but nonetheless “by an impulse of kindness” that reflects his own humane potential, takes “some pains to establish an intercourse with Clifford,”⁶⁷ subtly touching “some chord that made musical vibration” in the broken man. Clifford as a result grows, temporarily, “to be the gaiest of them all,” suggesting what he might have become had calamity not overtaken him:

Indeed, what with the pleasant summer-evening, and the sympathy of this little circle of not unkindly souls, it was perhaps natural that a character so susceptible as Clifford’s should become animated, and show itself readily responsive to what was said around him. But he gave out his own thoughts, likewise, with an airy and fanciful glow; so that they glistened, as it were, through the arbor, and made their escape among the interstices of the foliage.⁶⁸

And Phoebe, always attuned to the wonders of this “secluded garden-spot,” provides with her presence a spiritual sustenance going beyond the food that she provides.⁶⁹

At the end of Hawthorne’s romance, the evil cousin Jaffrey, who has been responsible for Clifford’s wrongful conviction, dies, and the considerable Pyncheon estate devolves on Clifford, Hepzibah and Phoebe, his closest living heirs. Their collective decision, with Holgrave’s approval, “to remove from the dismal old House of the Seven Gables, and take up their abode, for the present, at the elegant country-seat of the late Judge Pyncheon” seems to undermine the efficacy of the city garden in which so many of the novel’s events, both external and internal, take place.⁷⁰ The long-standing privileging of the country over the city seems to have won out. But Hawthorne’s presentation is perhaps more complicated. The retreat to the country occurs among characters who have somehow already grown whole and already established a just and harmonious society among themselves in the Pyncheon urban garden. This social unit leaves behind no one. Uncle Venner, though no family relation, retains his prominent place in this community and does not have to join a new one at the proposed “farm.”⁷¹ For Clifford, Hawthorne writes, the earlier “garden-scenes, that seemed so sweet to him, would look mean and trivial in comparison” to “all the appliances now at command to gratify his instinct for the Beautiful,” but, as we have seen, the urban garden re-aroused those instincts in him.⁷² It should come as no surprise, moreover, that Hawthorne entitles the chapter, in which Phoebe and Holgrave declare their love for each other at a moment of crisis within the mansion’s gloomy interior, “The Flower of Eden,” for the origins of their transformative love lie in their interactions in the urban garden. When Holgrave, as the descendant of the Maules, finally gets his due through marriage to Phoebe, the event marks not so much the fulfillment of the Maules’ desire for revenge as it affirms an attitude that resisted the aggressive appropriation of choice lands and territories for the value of a “garden-ground.”⁷³ The Pyncheon garden that Phoebe sees on her first morning looking east from her bedroom window promises and delivers a fulfillment beyond the Pyncheon longing for that illusory, “vast extent of territory at the eastward.”⁷⁴ In “The Custom-House Sketch” of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne writes that “neither the front nor the back entrance of the Custom-House opens on the road to Paradise.”⁷⁵ He tries to make sure that at least one side of the Pyncheon mansion does.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, healing, regeneration and restoration take place in the city garden of “small compass.”⁷⁶ Hawthorne indeed reverses the process of spiritual renewal. It is not the brief sojourn in nature that revivifies to allow a return to the tensions of urban life, but the powerful effects of the urban garden, in its eclectic nature and inclusive vision, that allow Hawthorne’s characters to retreat to the country in triumph. The Pyncheon garden expands to include the country. Ultimately, Hawthorne is less interested in the separations of country and city, culture and nature, and other binary oppositions, as he is in their breakdown through the balance inherent in his urban garden. He saw, well before the concept of city gardens revolutionized city planning, that, as Ebenezer Howard put it at the turn into the 20th century, “human society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together.”⁷⁷

¹ William Conlogue, *Working the Garden: American Writers and the Industrialization of Agriculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6. Conlogue provides a good summary of the “pastoral impulse” (6) in significant studies of American literature.

² Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Maypole of Merrymount” in *Selected Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Ed. Alfred Kazin (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1966), 44.

³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” in *Selected Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Ed. Alfred Kazin (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1966), 115.

⁴ Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardener’s Education* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 1.

⁵ Shelley Saguaro, *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2006), xii.

⁶ Saguaro, ix.

⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), intro. Mary Oliver (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 76.

⁸ Hawthorne, *House*, 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ Pollan, 115.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Hawthorne, *House*, 76

²² *Ibid.*, 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 128

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁶ Hawthorne, *House*, 130.

²⁷ Conlogue (8) is quoting Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1865), 138-39. He also refers to Christine G Perkell, *The Poet’s Truth: A Study of the Poet in Virgil’s Georgics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 20. (Low 138-39; see Perkell 20); Conlogue, 8.

²⁸ Conlogue, 8; Perkell, 20 quoted in Conlogue, 8.

²⁹ Conlogue, 20.

³⁰ Hawthorne, *House*, 126

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

³² *Ibid.*, 81.

³³ William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale* (New York: Signet, 1988), 4.4.88; 96-97.

³⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* in *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis and New York: Odyssey Press, Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), IV.299.

³⁵ Hawthorne, *House*, 82.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ In *Nature and Its Symbols*, Lucia Impelluso writes that “for some . . . the pear tree can be identified with the famous tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden” [(Tran. Stephen Sartarelli; Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2004), 154], but Impelluso gives no direct source for this assertion and I have not been able to substantiate it. In the context of my reading of Hawthorne’s garden, which has its own “pear-tree” (76), it is a suggestive idea.

³⁸ Hawthorne, *House*, 62; Milton, IV.595.

³⁹ Ibid., 139. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 76

⁴¹ Robert S. Levine, “Introduction” to Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2006), ix.

⁴² Milton, IX.733

⁴³ Hawthorne, *House*, 182.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 235.

⁵⁰ Gretchen Short, “Notes” to Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 284.

⁵¹ Hawthorne, *House*, 71.

⁵² Ibid., 182.

⁵³ The dynamic of the *Seven Gables* garden offers a suggestive commentary on the inadequacy of the Blithedale experiment, and its fated ending, for while the latter, too, tries to balance culture and nature, Hawthorne suggests several times that its members are playing at the “pastoral” and thus remain overly committed to artifice. *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), ed. Seymour Gross and Rosalie Murphy (New York: Norton, 1978), Ch. 6, 40.

⁵⁴ Hawthorne, *House*, 134

⁵⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁶ Lucia Impelluso, *Gardens in Art*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2007), 167.

⁵⁷ Impelluso, *Gardens*, 170.

⁵⁸ Hawthorne, *House*, 135.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁶¹ Ibid., 78.

⁶² Ibid., 23.

⁶³ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 134.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 136

⁶⁹ Ibid., 127

⁷⁰ Ibid., 270

⁷¹ Ibid., 57

⁷² Ibid., 270.

⁷³ Ibid., 272.

⁷⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 30.

⁷⁵ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 30.

⁷⁶ Hawthorne, *House*, 76.

⁷⁷ Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1902; London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 48.

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