Interior Spaces, Public Resistance: Queerness in Dialogue with Normativity in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance,* and *The House of the Seven Gables*

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Abstract

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's canonical novels, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The House of the Seven Gables*, there exists a tension between the forces of queerness and normativity, found in the interpersonal relations between characters, and between these characters and their wider story worlds. What happens when this tension is examined through the lens of queer theory? The tension is brought to light, and expressions of queerness understood as resistance to heteronormativity, traditional gender roles, generational inheritance, and nuclear kinship networks can be read, and a queer future of alterity can be imagined. Though expressions of queerness are not always sustained in these novels, reading these works with an eye for such expressions creates space for queer identification and generative analysis.

Résumé

Dans les romans canoniques de Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance,* et *The House of the Seven Gables*, il existe une tension entre les forces du queerness et de la normativité, que l'on trouve dans les relations interpersonnelles entre les personnages, et entre ces personnages et leur histoire plus large mondes. Que se passe-t-il lorsque cette tension est examinée à travers la lentille de la théorie queer? La tension est mise en lumière et des expressions de queerness comprises comme une résistance à l'hétéronormativité, aux rôles de genre traditionnels, à l'héritage générationnel, et aux réseaux de parenté nucléaire peuvent être lues, et un futur étrange d'altérité peut être imaginé. Bien que les expressions de queerness ne soient pas toujours soutenues dans ces romans, la lecture de ces œuvres avec un œil pour de telles expressions crée un espace pour l'expression queer, l'identification et l'analyse générative.

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Introduction

Though queerness has always existed, its definition and those who fall under its purview were not always in the common vernacular. Indeed, what Nathaniel Hawthorne may have penned as simple difference in *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The House of the Seven Gables*, I aim to categorize as queer under the definitions of today's theorists. This thesis discusses how, in all three of these novels, the dialectic relations between queerness and normativity open up spaces where different types of queer existence emerge for critical reflection. Hawthorne's narrative framing may appear to introduce personal and social alterity that challenges normativity only to close such openings at the ends of the novels, but I afford these novels more interpretive subtlety. Such openings allow for many leading characters to express and define deviance in productive ways.

Within queer studies the term queerness has had a number of iterations and applications, some of which have been accused by critics, Valerie Traub to name but one, of being too vague and lacking historicity. I think it productive, however, to list a few of the term's critical applications to contextualize it before moving onto the narrower, more specific definition I will focus on in each chapter of my thesis. In his seminal book *In A Queer Time and Place*, Jack Halberstam most clearly defines queer time as "a term for those specific models of temporality" outside of "bourgeois reproduction and family… unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" (Halberstam 2-6). I believe this best indicates the range of queer dynamics that represent a few of the principal characters in Hawthorne's novels, and provides a base definition from which to build my analysis of them. Queerness in my thesis combines this rather broad definition with those of other theorists, primarily Sara Ahmed, Elizabeth Freeman, and José Esteban Muñoz, combining and distilling them into a working definition of my own,

which engages primarily with the ways in which characters resist heterosexuality or heteronormativity, its traditional life practices, and the conventional novelistic marriage plot; how certain scenes involving such characters typify queer time in relation to non-nuclear kinship networks and break free from novelistic temporality and linear inheritance; and indeed how such characters sometimes reject reproduction and normative gender roles entirely.

My thesis will chart specific scenes that typify queer openings (spaces for queer possibilities within otherwise heteronormative story worlds) for characters to enact specific ideas about queer organizations of time. Queerness is often defined in relation to heteronormativity and vice versa, and this remains key in my readings of the narrative dynamics in these three novels. I explore the tensions between queerness and normativity to highlight the interpersonal, social, and political power of resisting normativity and amplifying queerness, and certain characters' success in doing so. The characters I interpret as queer fall under this category because they do not follow socially normalized organizations of time governed by reproduction, and engage in homosocial relationships that invert normative, heterosexual, marital ones between men and women, often doing so within queered domestic spaces. Even the queer characters who do have children (namely Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale) maintain extended kinship networks outside of nuclear family organizations and raise children (namely Pearl) outside of rigid social principles, offering them an alternate vision of childhood and adulthood. It is this interpersonal and social deviance that marks them as outsiders, but that also allows them to open spaces for queer alterity, transforming normativity in ways that anticipate a queer future, which, as in the case of Hester Prynne, they themselves can only gesture towards rather than maintain within the worlds of the novels. This typifies how Hawthorne's story worlds break the ground for future generations to conceptualize gender and social relations in alternative ways. His queer

characters are not always celebrated within their story worlds for doing so, and indeed are often unable to sustain the resistance they perform, as I read some of the narrative endings as a reassertion of normative power structures onto queer characters and spaces. Whether the identification of queerness in his novels makes Hawthorne a radical, anticipatory literary figure, or whether the imposition of normativity onto queer figures ultimately makes him a cultural normalizer, I cannot say. What is certain, though, is that the tension between these two modes of existing in these story worlds creates space for queer expression, identification, and analysis.

The lens of queerness offers multiple vantage points from which to engage with two differing critical interpretations of Hawthorne's works. One line of recent criticism highlights the queer dynamics in these novels, while an opposite stream emphasizes the more normalizing forces also present in his fiction, asserting Hawthorne's authorial place as a key figure whose novels do the foundational cultural work of reinforcing newly dominant social and behavioural norms of the mid nineteenth-century. Joel Pfister, in *The Production of Personal Life: Class, Gender, and the Psychological in Hawthorne's Fiction* sees Hawthorne's works as key in categorizing and codifying new concepts of personal identity; Walter Herbert, in *Dearest Beloved: The Hawthornes and the Making of the Middle-Class Family,* argues that Hawthorne's writings play a major role in the making of the modern American family. Sacvan Bercovitch, in his pivotal analysis of the narrative dynamics of Hawthorne's first novel, entitled *The Office of the Scarlet Letter,* argues that although this novel is initially structured on the creation of narrative openings for diverse identities and voices that challenge a monolithic vision of cultural hegemony, it's ultimate "office," like that of the letter itself, is to introduce these openings only to control and shutter them, reinforcing a final normative hegemony. My thesis will likewise analyze the intersectional exchange of conflicting elements built into Hawthorne's narrative

forms, but will ultimately diverge from Bercovitch's conclusion to elucidate something entirely different. Since queerness and heteronormativity are so relationally intertwined by tension in these novels, and one cannot define itself without some reference of the other, the closure Bercovitch finds in reinforcing normativity is actually overshadowed by the narrative openings created for queer existence; these queer characters and counter-narratives resonate well past the close of what appears to be the hegemonic narrative frame. My thesis will thus bring these two schools of Hawthorne criticism into meaningful dialogue to explore the complex dynamics present in the novels. In my close readings I will examine which characters and scenes within them gesture towards different expressions of queerness and which ones do not, emphasizing the ways in which queerness and normativity relationally define one another.

Critics who do amplify the queer elements in Hawthorne typically focus on the characters of Miles Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance* and Roger Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*, highlighting the non-heteronormative sexuality they express. I do not associate queerness only with sexual identity in my thesis, as I believe that would be interpretationally limiting, and would mostly serve to repeat past scholarship. I believe a few of these characters express same-sex desire in interesting and complicated ways, but I aim to explore more than non-normative sexualities. I also extend my analysis beyond just these few characters in these two novels, as I believe the broader theoretical concept of queerness can help modern readers to interpret many different characters in a number of Hawthorne's major works. Relying on both streams of this past Hawthorne scholarship allows me to use them as a tool to put the multiple characters I view as queer into a dialogue with the framework of mid-nineteenth century normativity, highlighting their personal, social, sexual, and ultimately political deviance – often expressed in the alternative times and spaces of key scenes they inhabit – through contrast.

My first chapter focuses on *The Scarlet Letter*, analyzing the characters Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale, and Pearl, and their opposition to Puritan heteronormativity through queer time and space. Halberstam quite helpfully identifies the inherent tension or dialogue between queerness and normativity in his definitions of these two concepts, noting that each develops partly "in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction… according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity" (Halberstam 1). Hester has been married, yes, and she has a child, Pearl, so she is not queer in any sexual sense, though she certainly exists outside of the boundaries of traditional heterosexual marriage. What makes her queer is her response to normative social structures, rejecting them and living outside of their paradigms, imagining a future for herself and for the women who come after her that is not ruled by their subjugation. She anticipates the queerness Halberstam describes as "the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" that incorporates choice and possibility, rather than restriction (Halberstam 2). In this chapter I also locate queerness in the homosocial relationship between Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth, which I believe to be an expression of non-normative sexuality, as understood by the Puritans of the novel, and of Hawthorne the author. Though Dimmesdale fathers Pearl with Hester, his relationship with Chillingworth inside the queer space of their shared home is intimately homosocial, to the point of seeming homoerotic. Their closeness suggests that the interior spaces they physically share as housemates reflect certain aspects of their mental and emotional interiorities, a queered version of a normative marriage. One quasi-domestic scene is an exemplification of Chillingworth's invasion of

Dimmesdale's physical person and interiority, and what I contend is a pivotal queer opening in the novel. Finally, I identify Pearl as queer, as she and her mother's relationship plays out a clearly non-normative family structure and kinship network. While social ostracization is preliminarily imposed upon them by Puritanical New England, their response to it is a form of resistance to the hegemonic social structures of religion, sexuality, and gender roles, representing a queer way of interacting with the restrictive world around them. Pearl and Hester are able to queer normative symbols, transforming them into tools that bring about later cultural change. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which these queered characters and relationships evolve, end, and relate to society in the aftermath of such endings. In so much of Hawthorne's fiction, the disruption of normativity in interior spaces has political ramifications for queer characters in the outside world. When private interactions and relationships between queer characters become public and are observed by normative authority figures, those authorities attempt to impose rigid normativity back onto those who deviate. Some acquiesce, but I am particularly interested in those who do not. Dimmesdale's familial acknowledgement in his final scene reintegrates him back into heteronormativity, but Hester continues in her queerness, remaining separate from Salem in her cottage on the edge of the town. Her story arc thus breaks queer ground, gesturing towards future cultural change. She remains unmarried and unattached, as does Chillingworth after the death of Dimmesdale, the most intimate companion to them both. Pearl is the one who is most wholly normalized by the end of the novel, marrying and continuing the tradition of family, inheritance, and reproduction, despite her distinctly queer childhood. But while she appears to transform easily, this only occurs after what seems to be a distinct departure from the story world of *The Scarlet Letter.*

My second chapter concerns queer futurity in relation to *The Blithedale Romance*. Queer futurity is a concept that has been explored by multiple theorists, Lee Edelman to name but one prolific and compelling critic who argues that there is no future within this paradigm. While I am indebted to his foundational work, I push back against his theories in favour of critics like José Esteban Muñoz, Elizabeth Freeman, and Sara Ahmed, who identify a degree of hope within queer futurity. For Muñoz, in queer futurity there is "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future... a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (Munoz 1). In *The Blithedale Romance*, non-normativity and atypical kinship networks are further represented in the relationships between the characters engaging in social reform at Blithedale, and a form of queer futurity is imagined by the narrator, Miles Coverdale. Coverdale is a character I find most fascinating to read as queer, because his interiority and his actions afford a multiplicity of interpretations. He is queer in his non-normative sexuality, expressed in specific scenes that identify his attraction to and affection for both Hollingsworth and Zenobia. In that way, then, Coverdale's queerness suggests homosexuality, but I would argue that its power is in its fluidity and potential complications which disrupt rigid categories of identity, and gesture towards a futurity of fluid desire that has the potential to create social change. His bifurcated interiority vacillates between normative tendencies and more homoerotic thoughts, not unlike Roger Chillingworth's in *The Scarlet Letter*. Indeed, Coverdale and Hollingsworth's relationship shares many similarities with that of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale's, as they are two men who share an intimate, non-normative relationship in a non-normative interior space, while also sharing great affection for a close female character. While he himself never labels his sexuality, Coverdale gestures toward his preferences, and in doing so identifies Blithedale as a utopia of queer desire and connection, and

dreams of extending this acceptance outwards beyond Blithedale's boundaries. Elizabeth Freeman sees queerness "in terms of a drive toward connectivity, conjugation, and coalescence that produces new forms [of futurity], however momentary… which cannot be equated with the biopolitical understanding of life as that which must be optimized at the expense of those deemed unworthy of life" (Freeman 13). Coverdale's personal dream for Blithedale is much like this; a harmonious place of sexual freedom, a hope-filled queer future that can be imagined "as not antisocial or antirelational… but hypersocial" (Freeman 12). Coverdale embodies this in his own interiority, but it is ultimately unattainable, as he does none of the work necessary to sustain this, and these foundational errors are compounded by the plans of the other principal Blithedalers who do not share his vision. I find this especially pertinent to *The Blithedale Romance*'s project of queer futurity, though, as it fuses possibility with disappointment. Here I turn to Sara Ahmed, who muses that "perhaps the queer point would be to suggest that we [do not] have to choose between pessimism and optimism. We can explore the strange and perverse mixtures of hope and despair, of optimism and pessimism, within forms of politics that take as a starting point a critique of the world as it is and a belief that the world can be different" (Ahmed 161).

Some of Hawthorne's queerest characters are seen in *The House of the Seven Gables*; a pair of elderly siblings, Clifford, the gentle and effeminate brother wrongly convicted of a crime and newly released, the sister, Hepzibah, who has never married and openly disdains traditional spousal relationships and motherhood. My third chapter focuses on this novel, and as with *The Blithedale Romance*, my queer reading begins with an analysis of these two characters' non-normative sexualities. I then extend this analysis of their social difference, arguing for an interpretation of Hepzibah Pyncheon's queerness that is premised initially on her transgression of

gender roles, finally moving on to her rejection of reproduction and relationality with normative characters. She does so first in favour of personal solitude and then in favour of relations with other queer characters, creating an atypical kinship network that promotes queer sociality. Following this, I move on to an analysis of Clifford Pyncheon's alterity in terms of his non-adherence to normative masculinity, a propensity that was present as a youth but amplified as a result of his experience in the nineteenth-century penal system. He is presented as overly feminine in appearance and interiority, also transgressing normative boundaries of gender expression. Elizabeth Freeman contends that within the framework of queer time and sociability,

> biological reproduction need not be the telos of the life drive: its point is to mix substances, to coalesce with others, to self-extend and thus retroactively transform the self, to renew living on different terms and in ways that need not culminate in the schemes of personhood we know today but may pass through styles of affiliation that we can learn from… [This] discombobulate[s] the status quo as long as its practitioners remain ironic enough not to let the social forms they generate petrify and become inevitable. (Freeman 13-14)

The Pyncheon siblings embody these tenets in expressions of their queerness, but these expressions are then offset by the moderating forces of normativity expressed by Phoebe Pyncheon and Holgrave, which overshadow and supplant them, preventing them from disrupting the status quo Freeman mentions. Phoebe and Holgrave's quick romance and tidy marriage plot at the end of the novel impose a normative framework on the Pyncheon siblings' queer openings, further removing them from having any queer effect on the wider public within this story world, subsuming them within normativity, reconstituting them into inheritance, and reinforcing the

novel's traditional ending. This chapter contrasts these relationships and reconciles their conflicting influences through an analysis of these narrative dynamics.

Queer people have always existed, yet their reflection in canonical Western literature has often been obscured. They and the non-normative potentiality they embody can be illuminated when their subtleties are highlighted by a queer reading of the margins. Doing so can extend the queer canon, expand the current interpretation of the traditional canon, and confer recognition on formerly marginalized groups. In *The Scarlet Letter*, I contend that Roger Chillingworth, Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Pearl are queer. In *The Blithedale Romance*, I read the narrator Miles Coverdale as queer. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, I argue that Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon are the queerest of the principal characters. But asserting that these characters are queer is not the only critical aim of this thesis. I show how they influence more normalizing characters and forces also present in these story worlds, subvert normative categories of being, and underline the arbitrary constructivism and inherent instability of these categories. Despite the strength of the queerness that emerges through these narratives, a normative balance is asserted at the end of these three novels. My thesis gauges the queer characters' navigation and rejection of normativity within the larger social collective, highlighting the queer forms of existence in Hawthorne's fiction, and exploring the enduring power of such queer openings within the complex workings of his narratives.

Chapter I:

"The scarlet letter had not done its office": Hester Prynne's Queer Futurity, Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale's Queer Relationship, and Pearl's Queer Childhood in *The Scarlet Letter*

Queerness in *The Scarlet Letter* is most clearly exemplified in the characters of Hester Prynne, Pearl, and Roger Chillingworth. Though each typifies a different aspect or kind of queerness, and some not particularly positively, they are the most clearly non-normative characters, based on the theoretical definitions previously explained, and by their deviation from the social norms of the Puritanical Boston community to which they belong. Hester's relationship with Arthur Dimmesdale occurs out of wedlock and results in the child Pearl, along with her infamy as the wearer of the scarlet letter. We as readers are never privy to the length of the relationship between Hester and Arthur, unsure of whether or not it was a fleeting or prolonged affair, but it is certainly queer. First, it is non-normative in its potentiality, or lack thereof – Hester arrives in New England a married woman, and so can have no future with Dimmesdale. An alternative futurity of their relationship, however, is embodied in Hester's imagining of a queer future of equitable gender relations, sympathy, and possibility, but also in Pearl, the product of their relationship. She is the willful, whimsical, unorthodox child whom the authority figures of the Puritan settlement attempt to use as a tool of normative punishment. Raising Pearl and wearing the letter have similar effects; a punishment, a reminder of Hester's sin, and a constant imposition of rigid normativity and shame. But while this attempt to label, shame, and excommunicate her is made, the Puritanical church authorities still cannot account for Hester's queer nature, which constantly defines itself as at odds with authority, and indeed, reshapes normativity to better fit her queerness.

We as readers are first introduced to Hester as she emerges from behind the prison doors, the scarlet letter on her chest and baby Pearl in her arms, bearing these two symbols of her

punishment for transgressing the social, moral, and religious codes of Puritan New England; what can be understood in this novel as normativity. She is an adulteress, and is being led to the pillory to stand up to public shame as part of her punishment by the town beadle, "this personage [who] prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law, which it was his business to administer in its final and closest application to the offender" (Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* 162). The beadle is a symbol of this normativity imposing itself on Hester in an attempt to both punish and reintegrate her within its strict framework. This individual leads Hester out, but "on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will" rejecting his authority to lead her and indicating her inherent separateness, what I argue constitutes her queerness (162). Hester must appear to accept her punishment with weak acquiescence, but in so doing, she actually sets herself up in opposition to it and the normativity it represents, and eventually transforms it into a tool of generative queerness that gestures towards the queer future she spends so much of the narrative imagining. This is our first indication of her queerness, and our second follows soon after, in Hawthorne's narrator's description of the scarlet letter itself. When Hester is

> revealed before the crowd, it seemed to be her first impulse to clasp the infant closely to her bosom… that she might conceal a certain token, which was wrought or fastened into her dress… [H]owever, wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm and, with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at her townspeople and her neighbours. On the breast of her gown, and in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. (163)

In this one gesture, Hester boldly declares that she will not be shamed, and indicates her power to transform aspects of normativity so that their meaning and their effects are changed – her power to queer things. Here Hester queers the scarlet letter and her daughter Pearl, transforming them through her art into symbols of her resistance to normativity. Her queering of the letter is apparent, as she takes a symbol of shame meant to set her apart in a negative way into a symbol of beauty that will set her apart in an ultimately positive way. The scarlet letter as she wrought it "had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself" (164). The letter is what precipitates her banishment to the edges of society, but her physical marginalization affords her interiority – that "sphere by herself" – time to think of her queer vision of the future, and how to implement such social change. The scarlet letter Hester creates for herself is "so artistically done, and so with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony" (163). She creates something both beautiful and transgressive here, and as we later come to see in the course of the narrative, she has done the same thing with Pearl. In her raising of Pearl, and allowing her daughter's queer nature to flourish uninhibited by church doctrine, social codes of children's behaviour, and gender norms based on expectations of girls' behaviour and aspirations, Hester transforms Pearl into a force for cultural change that will, hopefully, endure past the novel's close and beyond Hester's lifetime.

Before she was a queer heroine, though, Hester was a young woman confined within the impositions of normativity. Hester looks back upon her heteronormative days with derision and self-loathing. In one memory of an interior scene of their marriage, she reflects on the recurring image of when Roger Chillingworth, in

> those long-past days, in a distant land… used to emerge at eventide from the seclusion of his study, and sit down in the fire-light of their home, and in the light of her nuptial smile… Such scenes had once appeared not otherwise than happy, but now, as viewed through the distant medium of her subsequent life, they classed themselves among her ugliest remembrances. (269-70)

This normative tableau is one that is often contrasted in the novel with Hester's current fireside, with her work in her lap and her child asleep beside her. Because she was young and had no frame of reference for alternative ways of being in the world, Hester accepted the normativity of a heterosexual marriage, socially and religiously prescribed by Puritan society. The narrator suggests she had no strong feelings against this personally, as a participant in this marriage, or against marriage as an institution. It is only with the benefit of many years' experience and hindsight that she comes to regard her past life as contemptible. Hester marvels at "how such scenes could have been! She marvelled how she could ever have been wrought upon to marry him!" (270). It was because of adherence to normative institutions of authority that she agreed to marry Chillingworth, without much convincing, it would seem. Since that time, and because of how much her interiority changed within it, she now cannot fathom a return to her former way of being. She suffers ignominy and punishment for her later choices, but this does not cow her. Indeed, it appears to strengthen her resolve and solidify her queerness. Alison Easton contends that, for Hester Prynne, "the rights and wrongs of marriage in emotional and sexual terms… condemn both parties to that loveless contract" and that "she has evolved an even more radical position that swings from agonized responsibility for Chillingworth's psychological destruction to revulsion (triggered by ugly sexual memories) at his 'fouler offence'" (Easton 89). Hester does not consider her adultery to be her greatest sin. Instead, Hester

> deemed it her crime most to be repented of, that she had ever endured, and reciprocated, the lukewarm grasp of [Chillingworth's] hand, and had suffered the smile of her lips and eyes to mingle and melt into his own. And it seemed a fouler offence committed by Roger Chillingworth, than any which had since been done him, that, in the time when her heart knew no better, he had persuaded her to fancy herself happy by his side. (270)

No, the greater transgression was her weak acquiescence to normativity.

Hester is a single mother, and consciously chooses to remain so. When she emerges from the prison, she has the option to name Arthur Dimmesdale as her "fellow-sinner and fellow sufferer," but she does not, even under great intentional, repeated, and public pressure by Governor Bellingham and church officials (175). She lives apart from communal society, both by choice and necessity; her neighbours judge and deride her for her moral failure, but this simply compounds her queerness. What begins as simple ostracism for her sin later becomes Hester's path to queerness. In being forced to live apart from normative society, she is eventually able to conceive of a world that, like her, does not conform to its rules. For Hester, "in all her intercourse with society… there was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it. Every gesture, every word, and even the silence of those whom she came in contact, implied, and often expressed, that she was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere. She stood apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them" (190). Her banishment fuels her imagination for a better world, this "other sphere", because there is no place for her in her present society. When she tries to associate with her community in normal social activities, her otherness, which later becomes her queerness, is further underlined by all levels of Puritan society: "The poor… whom she sought out to be the objects of her bounty, often reviled the hand that was stretched forth to succour them. Dames of elevated rank, likewise, whose doors she entered in the way of her occupation, were

accustomed to distil drops of bitterness into her heart" (190). Beyond these interpersonal slights, she is made an object of public shame, as even "clergymen paused in the street to address words of exhortation, that brought a crowd, with its mingled grin and frown, around the poor, sinful woman. If she entered a church, trusting to share the Sabbath smile of the Universal Father, it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse" (191). Her status as an outcast generates her queer thoughts, which generate queer actions, and eventually her readmission into society as a counsellor of other women who are likewise unsatisfied with their lives as she was. Hester helps other women navigate Puritan normativity: "Women, more especially, – in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion, – or with the dreary burden of a heart unyielded, because unvalued and unsought, – came to Hester's cottage demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy!" (344). The narrator here describes the damaging effects of Puritan normativity on women, as it continually debases both their interiority and capabilities, negating women's personhood. Hester is but one example of this, but her own personal response to normativity, and her efforts to help other women navigate it, has the potential to effect change. Hester's is a defiant and self-sufficient queerness, unmatched in her own time, and breaking the ground for women in the future; they will benefit from it, whereas she must endure it in its ignominy. Hester balks at the socially and religiously prescribed gender roles of Puritan society that demand women's chastity to husbands and obedience to theocratic powers – these pillars of Puritan normativity keep most women in line, but not Hester – but this is partially because she has to. She has ventured too far and too permanently in her queerness, refusing to bend to government and church figures who demand she name her adulterous partner, raising Pearl outside of a normative family structure, and conceiving of a world that acknowledges her humanity and its inherent potentiality, regardless of her gender. Because of this interior alterity, and its

sustained trajectory throughout the narrative, she cannot return to the performed heteronormativity of her previous marriage to Chillingworth. She and her queerness, integrated with normative society through her counselling of other women and influencing them in their own normative spheres, thus endure past the novel's close.

Because she can conceive of a different world than the one that exists outside her cottage door, she is the character most perfectly positioned to be the conduit of Hawthorne's narrator's imagined queer future. There are indications of this vision of the future in how the narrator characterizes the way she lives and sets herself up in opposition to the rules of the world that has so cruelly, but ultimately, generatively abandoned her. But it is also present in her interiority, the place where so much of the examination of queerness evolves. In Hester's mind, readers find a wealth of queer, subversive, radical, and generative thoughts that could potentially reshape society to reflect a more just world with greater gender parity in private and public life. Hester discerns "such a hopeless task before her" in actualizing all of her revolutionary thoughts, but she still has them; they still remain on the page, which is where they endure (260). For Hester,

> [t]he dark question often rose into her mind, with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them? As concerned her own individual existence, she had long ago decided in the negative, and dismissed the point as settled. A tendency to speculation, though it may keep woman quiet, as it does man, yet makes her sad. (260)

Hester was far from the happiest of women in her marriage to Roger Chillingworth, and so it is reasonable that despite her Puritan upbringing she fell in love with a sensitive, age-appropriate man like Arthur Dimmesdale when she was alone in New England with the very real possibility that Chillingworth was dead. She found traditional domesticity unfulfilling, and indeed, quite

damaging to both parties involved in a Puritan marriage. With that instance too, she did not accept the form of mere existence afforded her, she actively resisted it and took another. She pays dearly for it, but she is still free. In order for other women who come after Hester to be free without sacrifice and punishment,

> the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated. A woman never overcomes these problems by any exercise of thought. They are not to be solved, or only in one way. (260-61)

Hawthorne's narrator acknowledges here that any form of cultural change comes only with great social upheaval, and will only be actualized through the efforts of both women and men working together. One of the reasons why it is not realized in Hester's time is because for the most part she only theorizes its possibilities, and she does so alone. The narrator considers her interiority to be individually dangerous and socially ineffectual, and regards it with a great deal of suspicion – perhaps not as much as the Puritan authorities who consider radical thought a greater sin than adultery do – but he does not lend it much authority in the text. He can see its shortcomings just as clearly as we, the audience, can. Despite this, the narrator affords much textual space for Hester's thoughts to be articulated on the page. So there is clearly a tension between the narrator's attitude towards Hester's thoughts and the fact that he grants those thoughts so much textual space to resonate with readers. By allowing them at all he condones them, while he condemns them in

his narratorial response. The future she imagines can occur, and the novel's ending hints that Hester does her part in bringing it about for women who come after her, but only through a great deal of work and willingness to change on both sides. While he does not afford Hester the solution she seeks, he also does not consider it an impossibility; he leaves room for readers to contemplate its implementation in their own time, in whichever time period they are reading this work, whether that is Hawthorne's 19th century New England or modernity.

While the narrator posits this future, he does not fully articulate it within his fiction, as it is unrealized for the women of his time, and so too for his heroines. Nina Baym argues that Hawthorne's novel gestures towards solutions that are

> palliative and far from romantic. Society can begin to compensate for the trials and consequences of woman's greater heart. Women's lot can be eased; they can be helped rather than punished; their humanity can be affirmed by recognizing their equality with men, their intellects respected, possibilities opened for them other than the domesticity that has failed them. Above all, perhaps, the institution of marriage needs to be freely elected; neither men nor women should be required to marry. (Baym 575)

These tenets of equality and opportunity are not afforded Hester by her society, but at the end of the novel after much personal sacrifice, she is able to offer them to other women who come to her for counsel. Scott S. Derrick notes Hester's "tendency to intellectual and cultural criticism that represents a transgression of an ideal domestic role" (Derrick 56). Transgressing normativity by envisioning this alternative, future world, she contemplates its benefits and possible implications, and indeed what it would cost her personally, but knows that it is unattainable in her own time. The narrator refers to her as a potential prophetess, likening her to Ann Hutchinson, "the foundress of a religious sect" who was excommunicated and remembered as a transgressive example of a

bad Puritan (260). She is not remembered by the Puritans of Hester's time for her courage or potentiality, though she should be. She, like Hester, is condemned in her time for a capacity for imagination and a life that is quite ordinary to modern audiences, though still politically unrealized, even in our time. The narrator at least, if not the Puritans of her community, regards Hester's transgressions as generative ones.

Hawthorne's narrator notes that Hester, had it not been for raising Pearl, would have been this religious and therefore political revolutionary, but because she must raise Pearl within Puritan New England, she will not be remembered as an Ann Hutchinson, with the same infamy and derision. I would argue that she is, in fact, a revolutionary both in thought and in practice. She is hemmed in at certain points but still asserts her queerness, and therefore is in the same company as Hutchinson, but should be celebrated for it. Indeed, I think while Hawthorne's narrator is wary of the potential danger to established social order her interiority presents, he does subtly praise his heroine for her queerness. He notes that Hester Prynne

> [a]ssumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known of it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter. In her lonesome cottage, by the sea-shore, thoughts visited her, such as dared to enter no other dwelling in New England; shadowy guests, that would have been as perilous as demons to their entertainer, could they have been seen so much as knocking at her door. (259)

This freedom to think, and to think boldly of possibilities denied the women of her time, is what separates Hester from others in this novel, and what the narrator appears to celebrate. Indeed, when those women who dared to espouse such thoughts did so, they were punished by the "forefathers," figures of normative authority with the power to punish women for exercising choice, in action

and in thought. This is because, according to Zhongfeng Huang, "from the Puritan perspective, freedom of thinking is a more devastating sin than that of adultery… [which] has already transgressed the Puritan code, for which [she] is severely punished. In contrast, free thinking, particularly Hester's free thinking, poses a disastrous threat to the established religious and political order" (Huang 528). Hester is potentially dangerous in her queerness, as it threatens such order, but it is ultimately less forceful in action than in her own interiority. Brook Thomas notes that in his fiction, Hawthorne imbued a "sense of the tragic and transgressive nature of historical change. Figured in *The Scarlet Letter* as an act of adultery that threatens the political order of Puritan Boston, such transgressions both keep history moving forwards and undercut hopes of radical breaks with the past" (Thomas 163). Thomas notes Hester's adultery as the impetus for her radical thoughts, which I term queer, and that they generate a necessary queer futurity. She threatens upheaval, but achieves it only for herself in some ways, and in moderating effects with other Puritan women through her counselling. Interestingly, images of domesticity and danger appear together in this passage, as if to suggest they have both potential outcomes. The queer thoughts are polite, seemingly asking for permission to enter Hester's interior space and her own personal interiority. She "entertains" them as she would entertain a guest in her home. It is these interior domestic scenes that reveal much about characters' queerness and afterwards relate to wider society in a more publicly acknowledged way.

Hawthorne's narrator continues, musing that

> [i]t is remarkable, that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them, without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action. So it *seemed* to be with Hester [emphasis mine]. Yet, had little Pearl never come to her from the spiritual world, it might have been

> far otherwise. Then, she might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect. She might, in one of her phases, have been a prophetess. She might, and not improbably would, have suffered death from the stern tribunals of the period, for attempting to undermine the foundations of Puritan establishment. (260)

While Hester does not, in fact, bring about this kind of radical change – she is by no means a full political revolutionary – she is still subversive, and insists in her queerness. She is a prophetess, just not in a way that New Englanders can understand. We as readers understand it, as we recognize a kind of proto-feminism in her personal beliefs, and the manner in which she continues to live her life, despite normative encroachment.

Hester never fully integrates back into Puritan society in the aftermath of Arthur Dimmesdale's death. The scaffold scene sees Pearl freed of her marginalization and able to accept normativity, but it has no such effect on her mother. It would seem that she has existed for too long and too ardently as a queer agent in the novel to return to old ways. Indeed, she leaves Massachusetts for a time, and speculation is rife concerning her whereabouts and her activities. She gains almost cult-like status in this small community when she leaves it, but when she returns, she still wears the scarlet letter. In the majority of the narrative the letter marked her as one apart from the rest because of a moral and behavioural transgression; signalling a visual demarcation between her and the normative masses. There was always something distinctly queer about the letter and about her too, and this inherent otherness remains when she returns. She has been pardoned, but she insists on wearing it, she continues to live apart from the rest of the community in her small cottage by the seashore, and she continues to support herself through her needlework. Nina Baym contends that, by doing so, she is able to effect a modicum of change in her world, and

that she is able to participate in the queer future she imagines in the chapter "Another View of Hester". She believes that

> her resumption of the letter permanently changes her public world… Had Hester never returned, she would have been forgotten. Had she returned and not worn the letter, she would have escaped [its] meaning without changing it. Returning and wearing the letter… alters the way the letter is perceived, [and] changes its definition… She practices a model of slow change brought about by persons visibly scarred by battles fought and ignominy endured… Re-entering civil life adorned with the letter by her own choice, Hester moves Puritan Boston from the Dark Ages towards enlightened modernity. (570)

Interestingly, she does not do this alone. Though she is independent, self-sufficient, and single, she invites other women who are as dissatisfied with their lives as she had been into her space of queer isolation, helping them to navigate the normativity of their own lives. For Huang, this is typical of a Hawthornian narrator, as his "idea of reform underlines his antipathy toward isolated individualism… self and community are dependent, and only by social participation can the individual find a fulfilling form of domestic life… In one way or another, the isolated characters in [his] works often strive for a place within society and history" (Huang 538). So while Hester is mostly alone, the fact that she intermittently engages with Puritan society in her attempts to change it is what makes her queerness successful. Before, she was fully isolated and fully queer, and had dreams of tearing the whole system of her society down. Now she is older and has ties with her normative community, and so has a more nuanced, integrative view of how to assert forms of non-normativity onto the prescriptive world of Puritan New England. It is a "reciprocal yet dialectical agreement: the individual's integration into a communal life without giving up individuality" (Huang 535). She persists in her queerness, then, even as Pearl is subsumed by normativity. Hester

and Pearl are not the only characters whose interiorities reveal personal queerness in tension with their community's normativity. Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth both exemplify an interpersonal alterity, but it is characterized wildly differently than Hester's, because it has such different effects.

The relationship between the two men is intimately queer, but not in a positive or productive way, and does not result in mutual benefit. It is vengeful and predatory, and is rife with intimately inflicted emotional, and perhaps sexual, violence. Chillingworth very quickly marks Dimmesdale as a person of interest in his wife's affair, but cannot prove his suspicions. In the long process of obtaining proof he exacts his revenge; the two actions are relationally entwined, as Chillingworth uses Dimmesdale's conscience and faith against him. Once Dimmesdale admits to fathering Pearl with Hester, he dies. But the seven years he spent in such close contact with Chillingworth were what greatly weakened his body and his mind, and causally resulted in his death. Chillingworth achieves his vengeance when Dimmesdale finally admits his long-held guilt, but the process of mental and emotional anguish he purposefully inflicted on Dimmesdale is what brought him to such a breaking point. Scott S. Derrick observes that this relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth

> contains much that we, as contemporary readers, would recognize as the machinery of homophobia and, of course, of the homoeroticism homophobic structures both admit and work to suppress. [It] contains the kind of erotic triangle that… can function as a disguise of and a conduit for homoerotic desire. Both… have relations with Hester Prynne… however, we rarely see either male having contact with [her]; instead they take up residence with each other. (Derrick 44)

Their relationship develops as an inversion of a normative marriage, occurring within the intimate interior space of the home they share, Frederick Crews calling it "a kind of mock-marriage, a substitute for more normal sexual feeling in both parties" (Crews 126). While I take umbrage at his use of the word "normal," I agree with his characterization of the marriage. The homosociality of their living arrangement verges on homoerotic in one specific scene of the chapter "The Leech and His Patient;" an aptly descriptive interpretation of Chillingworth's relationality towards Dimmesdale. Under the guise of medical concern and a desire to improve the minister's health, he keeps careful watch over Dimmesdale, weaponizing the guilt he sees in Dimmesdale to deteriorate his patient's body, mind, and soul. He has his suspicions about Pearl's parentage, but waits for a direct sign to confirm Dimmesdale's role in it. Chillingworth's constant predation eventually results in proof, which he witnesses while violating the sleeping Dimmesdale. This interior scene reveals much about his internal preoccupations and has implications within the wider story world of the novel. Where Hester Prynne and Pearl evolve as positive and generative queer agents, Chillingworth presents another, more sinister version of queerness in Hawthorne's fiction.

Chillingworth initially seeks out a shared living space with Dimmesdale in order to monitor him, to gauge his preliminary suspicion that he is Hester's adulterous partner. Chillingworth wants proof and admits to her he "shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!" (182). He, like other Puritans, relies on signs that point to deeper meanings, and trusts in his own intuition following his suspicions of Dimmesdale. They turn out to be correct, but remain officially unproven until the very end of the novel. He goes on to note, about Pearl's unnamed father:

> He bears no letter of infamy upon his garment, as [she] dost; but I shall read it on his heart. Yet fear not for him! Think not that I interfere with Heaven's own method of retribution, or, to my own loss, betray him to the gripe of human law. Neither do thou imagine that I shall contrive aught against his life; no, nor against his fame, if, as I judge, he be a man of fair repute. Let him live! Let him hide himself in outward honor, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine! (182-3)

Interestingly, Chillingworth notes the tension in this passage between outward shows and interior truths. He himself presents one character to the town of Boston, that of the stranger with medical knowledge, but has ulterior motives in hiding his relationship to Hester, as this will allow him to carry out his investigations without Dimmesdale's suspicion of his intentions. He eventually *will* read a clear symbol of Dimmesdale's guilt on his breast, but before he can do so he must build an intimacy. It is through this building of a relationship that his queerness emerges. I contend that the interior spaces they share as housemates reflect certain aspects of their mental and emotional interiorities, and that through this queered version of a normative marriage, Chillingworth's homosociality veers into a space of homosexuality. As Derrick indicates,

> one finds evidence of homosexuality… in odd, narratively detached places… the homoerotic surfaces in the midst of conventional narratives that constitute stable and knowable social experience and grant access to social power. These conventional narratives, often versions of the 'marriage plot,' in general reflect the cultural dominance of heterosexuality. (53)

I believe that this expression of Chillingworth's non-normativity is separate from his initial goal of proving Dimmesdale's guilt, and reflects a different part of his interiority.

Their intimacy begins under the pretense of Chillingworth's noble pursuit of medically improving Dimmesdale. The narrator notes that "these two men, so different in age, came gradually to spend much time together… they took long walks on the sea-shore, or in the forest; mingling various talk with the plash and murmur of the waves, and the solemn wind-anthem among the treetops. Often… one was the guest of the other, in his place of study or retirement" (223). In innocuously building such a friendship, Chillingworth puts Dimmesdale at ease and gradually gains intimacy with him, achieving his goal of building trust through free and easy conversation. Eventually "at a hint from Roger Chillingworth, the friends of Mr. Dimmesdale effected an arrangement by which the two were lodged in the same house" (225). This erodes even more of the barrier between the two, and builds further intimacy, precipitating their queered quasi-marital relationship. Indeed, the narrator contrasts this very living arrangement with the possibility of a heterosexual marriage, an option rejected by Dimmesdale in favour of this one, as "there was no present prospect that Arthur Dimmesdale would be prevailed upon to take; he rejected all suggestions of the kind… Doomed by his own choice… to… endure the life-long chill which must be his lot who warms himself only at another's fireside" (225). In the case of these two men, their queerness is not positive because it only leads to a further deterioration of the individuals' interiorities. Dimmesdale's health declines, and Chillingworth grows increasingly sinister. Neighbours note that Chillingworth's "aspect had undergone a remarkable change while he has dwelt in town, and especially since his abode with Mr. Dimmesdale. At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight, the oftener they looked upon him" (227). Chillingworth was vengeful to begin with but becomes more sinister through this living arrangement, so much so that it is not just hidden in his interiority, but becomes

visible to others. His integrity deteriorates the closer he grows to Dimmesdale and the more their queer interrelatedness negatively manifests. Because they do not challenge any kind of hegemony in their queerness, because they do not create anything through it, it becomes a predatory example not to be celebrated. I am as critical of their relationship as Hawthorne's narrator, because I believe it to be a negative manifestation of queer desire that ultimately does not promote anything generative. It also, despite being so queer, typifies the harmful dynamics inherent in the heteronormative marriages of Puritan New England, and indeed, even those of Hawthorne's own 19th century New England. Their relationship could have held so much generative potential, but ultimately, they repeat old patterns of behaviour, fulfilling domestic normativity in a queer space. They come together under the guise of friendship and shared goals – to improve Dimmesdale's health – but really this leads to Chillingworth emotionally torturing Dimmesdale. His search for the truth devolves into a hateful intimacy, weaponized against the weaker party. Chillingworth eventually comes not to care about the confession at all, but about using their relationship as an outlet for him to exercise his power over Dimmesdale, assuming the patriarchal mantle, complete with physical and emotional mastery over Dimmesdale, who typifies the female role within normative dynamics. There are a number of fireside scenes in *The Scarlet Letter*, and all have personal or political implications reflecting either normative or queer domesticity; Hester's queer fireside is positive, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth's fireside scenes are detrimental to both men. This is why Hester's vision of the future is so necessary, because the normativity women face – and men in Dimmesdale's case – is so damaging.

Hawthorne's narrator treats Chillingworth with a great deal of sympathy when he is first introduced, noting that initially, he "had been calm in temperament, kindly, though not of warm affections, but ever, and in all his relations with the world, a pure and upright man. He had begun

his investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth" (229). His singular cause narrows his vision, limiting his capacity for compassion. It warps him with a "terrible fascination, a kind of fierce… necessity seized the old man within its gripe, and never set him free again, until he had done all its bidding. He now dug into the poor clergyman's heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man's bosom" (229). For Gordon Hutner, Chillingworth "exemplifies the new cultural figure of aggrandizement who abrogates all socializing influences in pursuit of one's limited, selfish interests" (Hutner 28-9). He invades Dimmesdale's interiority with such a quiet fierceness that Dimmesdale does not realize he is being preyed upon, but still feels the acute effects of this predation. According to Brant M. Torres, Chillingworth expresses his queerness in his "devotion to past forms of knowledge, the antisocial reclusiveness of the alchemist in his lab, and his excessive attention to transforming emotions and regulating the body all become markers of deviance or queerness. While this does not immediately link Chillingworth's deviance with a sexually queer one, the conflation soon becomes apparent" (Torres 155). Because he cannot clearly see the intentions of the man with whom he lives, he "kept up a familiar intercourse with him, daily receiving the old physician in his study; or visiting the laboratory" (230). Dimmesdale's poor health is affected by his own guilt, but it is exacerbated by Chillingworth's constant presence and his pointed questions about Pearl's parentage whenever she appears in a scene. Chillingworth does this to gauge Dimmesdale's reaction, looking for those aforementioned clues that will confirm his suspicions, and on one such occasion he is rewarded. Pearl and Hester have passed below a window, and Chillingworth broaches the subject of the minister's health, suggesting Dimmesdale's corporeal deterioration is a symptom of his spiritual state. He does not explicitly say that Dimmesdale has committed a sin, but he does draw a

correlation between his spirit and his deteriorating body, noting one's interiority can manifest itself corporeally. He asks Dimmesdale, would his "physician heal the bodily evil? How may this be, unless [he] first lay open to him the wound or trouble in [his] soul?" (235). Dimmesdale vehemently refuses, and it is this pure physical reaction to recognizing something within the question that he cannot publicly acknowledge that confirms Chillingworth's suspicions. He has found his proof not in a shudder, as he supposed, but in an abrupt and genuine reaction that Dimmesdale could not control: "As with one passion, so with another!" (236). Once Chillingworth has this confirmation, he becomes even more sinister.

After this scene Dimmesdale apologizes for his reaction and welcomes Chillingworth back into the intimacy of friendship they previously shared. He falls into a remarkable and uncharacteristically deep sleep one day and Chillingworth happens upon him:

> The physician advanced directly in front of his patient, laid his hand upon his bosom, and thrust aside that vestment, that, hitherto, had always covered it even from the professional eye. Then, indeed, Mr. Dimmesdale shuddered, and slightly stirred. After a brief pause, the physician turned away. But with what a wild look of wonder, joy, and horror! With what a ghastly rapture, as it were, too mighty to be expressed only by the eye and features, and therefore bursting forth through the whole ugliness of his figure, and making itself even riotously manifest by the extravagant gestures with which he threw up his arms towards the ceiling, and stamped his foot upon the floor! Had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth, at that moment of his ecstasy, he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself, when a precious soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom. (237)

This scene implies that Chillingworth has obtained proof of Dimmesdale's implication in Hester's adultery, as his bare chest reveals either the letter A, similar to the one she wears, or scars from

self-flagellation, a practice of ridding oneself of guilt or sin. The narrator alludes to this throughout the novel, noting the many times Dimmesdale clutches his chest when he sees Pearl or Hester. It is always dismissed as a side-effect of his weak nerves and heart, but within this scene his chest physically reveals what has been emotionally hidden for so long. I would argue that while this is confirmation of a sort for Chillingworth (if not for readers, because Hawthorne's narrators are notoriously subtle), it can also be read as a moment that expresses Chillingworth's latent queerness interpreted in sexual terms, extraordinarily invasive as this moment is. He breaks the bonds of trust between physician and patient, but also between friends, though the friendship was always a one-sided ruse. Derrick suggests that "what has occurred is some sort of erotically charged, physical violation. It is far from clear, however, how [his] violation of the sleeping Dimmesdale should be understood… since all interpretations have implications that are politically difficult, and pertain, directly, to the relation of homophobia and desire" (46). It is absolutely a physical violation of the immensely private Dimmesdale, but its extent is unclear. Some critics have argued that it is a sexual one, others an emotional one; I contend that it is the "ghastly rupture" of Chillingworth's desire for Dimmesdale, and I believe it has both emotional and physical consequences. Hawthorne's narrator is far less kind in his opinion of this expression of queerness than with Hester Prynne's. I believe that is because this is a negative, destructive kind that benefits none but the conscious participant, and only in a very myopic way. For Derrick, the two readings of this scene are either a homophobically represented rape on Chillingworth's part or a willful allowance of homoerotic contact on Dimmesdale's (he interprets Dimmesdale's sleep as feigned). He notes that these two readings encourage "a simplified either/or relation to the problem of homophobia in *The Scarlet Letter*" and "since [it] is finally a fantasy produced by Hawthorne, the homophobia of the text works to suppress or repress something *it itself* is producing" (46-7). Neither interpretation of

this scene is condoned within the novel, as it is associated with such hellish imagery. Derrick further notes that "the nature of this passion – and whether it should be understood in heterosexual, homosexual, or some other set of terms – remains ambiguous… All erotic passion in *The Scarlet Letter* threatens the bodily integrity and rational self-control of its possessor" (48). Not only would Puritans recognize "the extravagant gestures with which he threw up his arms towards the ceiling, and stamped his foot upon the floor!" as a bad sign, but contemporary audiences as well.

A change occurs in Chillingworth after this, as though it were an irrevocable action he committed. Hawthorne's narrator notes that "a quiet depth of malice, hitherto latent, but active now, in this unfortunate old man, which led him to imagine a more intimate revenge than any mortal had ever wreaked upon an enemy" (238). He becomes an even darker player than he was before, having forced himself inside a place of private interiority and witnessed proof on Dimmesdale so that his

> very inmost soul… seemed to be brought out before his eyes, so that he could see and comprehend every movement. He became… a chief actor, in the poor minister's interior world. He could play upon him as he chose. Would he arouse him with a throb of agony? The victim was for ever on the rack; it needed only to know the spring that controlled the engine; – and the physician knew it well! (238-39)

Chillingworth's slightly more honourable initial purpose of ascertaining the truth of Dimmesdale's guilt here becomes as twisted and vengeful as the antagonist himself after he violates the sleeping man. It is as though he passed a point of no moral return and will only be satisfied with Dimmesdale's total misery and destruction. He becomes a "poor, forlorn creature… and more wretched than his victim" as he is consumed by revenge and thoughts of torture (239). The queer opening in the previous scene changes him for the worse, but it also has detrimental effects on

Dimmesdale. He becomes even more self-loathing, self-punishing, and physically weak. Chillingworth seems to live only to see Dimmesdale suffer after this, thwarting any of Dimmesdale and Hester's attempts to be free of him. He is vengeful up until the point at which Dimmesdale acknowledges Pearl as his daughter and dies. Chillingworth contributes to his death and it seems as though once Dimmesdale confesses his adultery and reintegrates himself back into the heteronormativity of a nuclear family, however briefly, neither man has anything to live for. When the individual against whom he wrought his vengeful queerness is gone, negating any further potential for queer expression, Chillingworth slips away from the narrative, and is said to have died "within the year" (342). Torres notes that "after Dimmesdale's death, Chillingworth starts to fade away, in part because he now no longer has someone to fully project his desire on" (168). His final act, relayed to us by the narrator, is to bequeath all his worldly fortune to Pearl, "a very considerable amount of property, both [in America] and in England", a choice to participate in a form of paternal and financial inheritance that is very much in line with the heteronormativity he assumes (342). Despite her distinctly queer childhood, this action also normalizes and reintegrates Pearl.

Pearl is one who has, since infancy, willfully and consistently resisted the socially prescribed normativity numerous figures attempt to impose upon her. She recognizes little authority in her mother and obeys or rebels based on her whims and changing temperaments. She is equally ambivalent towards more influential authority figures, such as Minister Wilson and Governor Bellingham, even when submitting to normativity would be useful and beneficial to her and her mother. She is raised outside of the hegemonic structures of the heteronormative nuclear family, and therefore recognizes no authority in it. Hester has her own radical ideas, but she must conform to certain tenets of Puritan ideology under the threat of Pearl being removed from her by

church figures. Pearl is one who was conceived outside of theocratic rules and so she persists in her queerness throughout the first seven years of her life. Indeed, Easton notes that "Hester's subversion and submission turn out to be fearsomely connected, but Pearl suggests true difference" (92). The narrator notes that Pearl's

> nature appeared to possess depth… as well as variety; but… it lacked reference and adaptation to the world into which she was born. The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements were… with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to discover. (195)

Like her mother, there is an innate sense of alterity in Pearl, attributed in the novel to her conception outside of the bounds of marriage, and therefore church doctrine. In the novel, her difference from other Puritan children is intelligible as childish willfulness and passion because of the circumstances of her birth. More nuance is given to this simple difference when it is considered in the context of queerness, however. The "variety and arrangement" of her elements are made intelligible through this lens. Pearl's queerness sets herself up in opposition to social structures and gender roles, willfully balking these traditional mores of normativity. She is aware of them, but because of the singularity of her upbringing, she refuses to abide by them. The narrator insists that it is not only "that perversity, which all children have more or less of, and of which little Pearl had a tenfold portion… that took possession of her and closed her lips, or impelled her to speak words amiss" (213). It is not just childishness but her innate, irreducible queerness many in the story world attribute to the passion and sinfulness of her mother and father during her conception. In some ways she is queerer than Hester, because she constantly acts upon her queer impulses, where Hester performs normativity when she knows she has to.

Hester and Pearl live outside both the social bounds of heteronormativity and the spatial edges of their Boston community as liminal characters, traversing the boundaries of queerness and normativity in interior spaces and public arenas. Hester knows when she can express her queerer impulses and when she must adopt the tenets of normativity, but as a small child, Pearl has little impulse control, and because she knows queerness better than she does normativity, she does not temper her feelings and actions even when it would benefit her queer family to do so. She has known little else than social ostracization and non-normative kinship networks, and though these are considered punishments by the Puritan establishment, she revels in them. They allow her more freedom to embrace further queerness in her behaviour. Because she has never really known normativity in the same sense as Hester, she does not know when she is performing queerness, unlike her mother who makes several conscious choices to do so within the narrative. When other children make fun of her, Pearl "would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling at them, with shrill, incoherent exclamations that made her mother tremble, because they had so much the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue" (198). For Joel Pfister, this is an example of how "Pearl's perverse behaviour might be read as the quintessence of Hester's own determination to resist Puritan authority" – indeed, to outright challenge it (Pfister 127). A form of Hester and Pearl's continuous punishment is social exclusion and ridicule, and where Hester responds with public meekness but then privately broods on radical thoughts, Pearl here responds in the moment with anger, rejecting her punishment and her tormentors, tormenting them instead. I would argue this is not just a childish response to bullying, but an example of her queerness. Public shame is a Puritan tool of theocratic punishment, an example of the "rigid order of principles in religion and government" meant to purge citizens of whatever sin they have committed, fostering meekness and reintegrating them back into the normative bounds of religious

and social order (203). When the children try to publicly shame Pearl, she openly rejects their normative efforts – by queering her response to them, she transforms their attempted imposition of normativity into an opportunity for her to display her difference, and punishes them, instead. Pearl does this more than once, too. When she and Hester pass another group of children on their way into town, the children remark, "there is the woman of the scarlet letter; and, of a truth, moreover, there is the likeness of the scarlet letter running along by her side! Come therefore, and let us fling mud at them!" (205). Instead of running away, or not responding at all, Pearl,

> who was a dauntless child, after frowning, stamping her foot, and shaking her little hand with a variety of threatening gestures, suddenly made a rush at the knot of her enemies, and put them all to flight. She resembled, in her fierce pursuit of them, an infant pestilence… whose mission it was to punish the sins of the rising generation. She screamed and shouted, too, with a terrific volume of sound, which doubtless caused the hearts of the fugitives to quake within them. (205)

Pearl succeeds in transforming the children's efforts to cow and shame her into an expression of her own rejection of them, cowing her tormentors instead. Here she loudly and boldly dismisses Puritan social norms, and later she does the same with religious ones.

When Hester and Pearl meet with Governor Bellingham and Minister Wilson, those figures of "authority and influence," they threaten to remove Pearl from Hester's care, to be "clad soberly, and disciplined strictly, and instructed in the truths of heaven and earth" (212). In short, to be normalized, because she has been allowed to behave so freely and so queerly in relation to the norms of the Puritan community. Hester has raised Pearl queerly in the sense that she has not forced her to adopt the theocratic, patriarchal, heteronormative tenets of their community into her interiority, either coercively or punitively, as violence was a part of Puritan childhood. According

to Hawthorne's narrator, "the discipline of the family, in those days, was of a far more rigid kind than now. The frown, the harsh rebuke, the frequent application of the rod, enjoined by Scriptural authority, were used, not merely in the way of punishment for actual offences, but as a wholesome regimen for the growth and proportion of all childish virtues" (196). Because Hester does not perform this kind of domestic normativity, Pearl grows up outside of its boundaries and recognizes no authority in it. Pearl is "swayed by her own impulses" instead (196). Pfister contends that "Pearl's temperament is significant because she bears no signs of having internalized the authority that marks the young middle-class conscience-under-construction… Pearl rejects this middle-class Puritan normality" (128). While he does not characterize this as her queerness, I do, because I believe it an exemplary instance of her willful non-adherence to attempted impositions of normativity. Though this is extremely generative for my queer interpretation of Pearl as a literary character, within the context of the novel this example of Pearl's queerness is dangerous, because it is the impetus for the Puritan state to remove Pearl from Hester's care. If Pearl were taken away and raised within a heteronormative family structure, the queer futurity Hester imagines could not be actualized.

Hester responds to this threat by performing normativity, insisting that while she cannot offer Pearl a heteronormative family, she can "teach [her] little Pearl what [she has] learned from this!... [L]aying her finger on the red token" (212). The governor and minister assume she will use the letter to instruct Pearl against sin and social disobedience, but what Hester actually teaches Pearl is far different. Hester's radical thoughts in relation to the scarlet letter are what "this badge has taught [her], – it daily teaches" her (212). Indeed, in this instance where normative figures of theocratic authority are attempting to remove Pearl from Hester's care because of their shared queerness, "it is teaching [her] at [that] moment, – lessons whereof [her] child may be the wiser

and better, albeit they can profit nothing to" Hester herself (212). The letter teaches her she has little power in the face of such authority, and cannot change her society for the better unless it is completely remade with elements of compassion, sympathy, and equity for those who are socially marginalized – women, sinners, or the poor. Hester's

> intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. (290)

Here Hester rejects priests, judges, theocratic government and punishment, and domesticity altogether, along with the power such institutions wield to crush those who do not ascribe to them. She does her best to envision a world where these examples of normative authority exist in harmony with queerness. Throughout the novel she is unsuccessful in making this future society a reality, until the very end where she counsels other women who are attempting to navigate the rigid normativity she did. As a child, Hester cannot discipline her, and in giving Pearl the license to express her queer nature, she raises her not with Puritan shame and rigidity, but with freedom and hope. In this way, she transforms Pearl into a generative symbol of futurity, in which her ambitions for more equitable gender relations and the freedom to live differently are actualized and propelled forth into the world through the next generation. We as readers can also assume that she has taught Pearl how to do this, and so her daughter might enjoy such freedom in her life and her own marriage.

Pearl is clearly queer as a child, but has strange normative impulses that affect other characters' queerness. When her mother and Dimmesdale meet in the forest, Hester suggests Dimmesdale cast aside "these iron men and their opinions" – Puritan authorities and the rigid normativity they impose (288). She suggests they take to the sea, to live in their "native land, whether in some remote rural village or vast London – or surely, in Germany, in France, in pleasant Italy" where they can be free (288). The two of them make this plan, and in a defining moment, Hester undoes "the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and, taking it from her bosom, [throws] it to a distance among the withered leaves" (292). In throwing off the scarlet letter, Hester rejects her past life entirely, but it is Pearl, the little agent of queerness, who forces her to assume it once again, an action that appears highly normative. Pearl throws a fit and is only pacified when her mother takes "up the scarlet letter, and fasten[s] it again into her bosom" (300). For Huang, "Pearl has grown accustomed to the scarlet letter on her mother's bosom, regardless of what [it] represents to her mother. Whatever message the symbol conveys to Pearl, she fully identifies her mother with this token. Only when Hester restores [it] can Pearl willingly acknowledge her mother again" (Huang 530). While this appears to be a moment when normativity takes over, by forcing her mother to once again wear the letter, Pearl actually encourages her to reassume her status as an outsider, maintaining her queer identity. By wearing the scarlet letter until her death, Hester is able to keep transforming its meaning, and using it as a tool to transform the lives of others. By not allowing Hester and Dimmesdale to escape without the scarlet letter, Pearl forces her mother to integrate her radical thoughts with actions, tying her back to her temporal, social world. This is what ultimately generates a positive queerness in the story world, because it is what leads Hester to counsel other women about how to navigate normativity at the novel's end.

In the final scaffold scene, Pearl seems to be suddenly transformed into a normative girl because of Dimmesdale's familial acknowledgement of her as his daughter, and her parents' quasi-marriage. Soon after, upon Roger Chillingworth's death, Pearl is gifted his worldly inheritance and is said to have disappeared to England with her mother. The last pages of the novel take place some years later in "the flush and bloom of [Pearl's] early womanhood" when Hester returns to Boston to counsel other women (343). *The Scarlet Letter*'s narrator does not explicitly state "with perfect certainty whether the elf-child had gone thus untimely to a maiden grave; or whether her wild, rich nature had been softened and subdued, and made capable of a woman's gentle happiness" (343). These are two extremes that, given the vastness of Hester's queer interiority and all of her efforts throughout the course of the narrative to generate the queer futurity she imagines, I do not believe Pearl would have had to choose between. While I myself cannot assert "with perfect certainty" that Pearl was able to actively participate in her mother's queer future, I do not believe she simply accepted patriarchal heteronormativity unquestioningly. Indeed, even some critics allow for this possibility. Brook Thomas is one such scholar who notes that "the suggestion that Pearl ends happily married might imply that the new order denied her mother has finally prevailed, but in typical Hawthorne fashion we are not told whether her marriage conforms to the new model or the old. What we do know is that her future is guaranteed when her two fathers finally take on their proper responsibilities" (174). She appears to normalize in the final scaffold scene, but given her and Hester's staunch queerness throughout the first seven years of Pearl's life, it is reasonable to make an interpretive leap and posit that Hester continued to raise her daughter queerly, and Pearl was able to achieve a portion of the equitable gender relations and queer futurity her mother planned, even if she later chose to participate in marriage, inheritance, and child rearing. Pearl's normalization through her

fulfillment of the traditional marriage plot only occurs after what appears to be a distinct departure from the story world, so I do not believe my interpretation of her future to be wildly unscholarly.

In her counselling, Hester assures the women of Boston of the possibility that "at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (344). If she offers this kind of hopeful counsel to her neighbours, she would have told her daughter the same, and given her the tools to actualize this queer future. Perhaps Pearl has achieved this kind of interpersonal relation, or perhaps she is working towards it as her mother has done. Hester goes on to note that while she has done her part, because she has been stained with sin and will not remarry, she herself cannot actualize it the way that other women can. She cannot foster this queer future through marriage, passing it on to another generation in a hopeful queer inheritance, no, "the angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman, indeed, but lofty, pure, and beautiful; and wise moreover, not through dusky grief, but the ethereal medium of joy; and showing how sacred love should make us all happy, by the truest test of a life successful to such an end!" (345). This could very easily describe the grown-up Pearl. In Hester's vision of queer futurity, marriage and children are necessary to create a queer future, because it can only come about through equitable interpersonal relationships between men and women, and these tenets of queerness must be further passed on to the children who grow up in such a home, so they may propagate it not only in interior domestic spaces, but in the wider world as well. Pearl is one such child who possessed her own queerness and wrought it upon her normative Puritan world, so she could also be the woman who fosters her mother's queer future. In this way, the scarlet letter had very much done its office.

Chapter II:

"True; if you look at it in one way, it had been only a summer in the country": Miles Coverdale's Queer Desires and Queer Failures in *The Blithedale Romance*

Miles Coverdale is an unreliable narrator, constantly hiding whole truths from view of readers of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. Thus, readers are constantly aware that his retelling of the story of the Blithedale community is presented with his own colouring of events. While this proves frustrating for those of us who want the whole truth about many mysterious events, it is perfectly fitting for a character who conceals so much of himself too, and this interpretive ambiguity is absolutely essential as the foundation of a queer reading of this particular Hawthorne novel. Just as he conceals his own intentions, slowly and furtively revealing key plot points, leaving readers to interpret truths through the biased lens he gives them, so too does he use the exact same tactic on himself. He only shows readers that which he wants them to know and leaves finer points open to subtler interpretation by minds who are attuned to them. His queerness is not one of outward assertion, but of interior desires related to expressions of sexuality that differ from the norm. He teases out small truths about himself in the way he describes both Hollingsworth and Zenobia. When one looks at these descriptions comparatively, one sees he expresses not only admiration and deep friendship for both, but distinct desire as well. It is clear he is attracted to both in equal measure and his attempts to express this attraction are made within the framework of Blithedale, a community that individuates itself from the outside world, but, unfortunately for Coverdale, is still bound to many of its paradigms. While he sees it as a community apart, it is wise to remember that this is only his view of it; his subjective interpretation is coloured by his impressions of its people and their potential for change. Nina Baym, arguing in a seminal critical piece about *The Blithedale Romance,* understands Blithedale as "a radical community which aims, in an atmosphere of

informality and innovation, to establish forms of labor and of love which will express and liberate, rather than inhibit and distort, the human spirit. It hopes to restructure human relationships around the principle of 'familiar love'" (Baym 551). I would argue that this form of love is an expression of queerness as much as anything else, and that, through this interpretive lens, one can view Coverdale as a queer agent attempting to make his expressions of queerness recognizable to those whom he desires. His attempts to assert queer potentialities are met with varying degrees of success, and this informs later actions. These later scenes contain just as much coded language as his previous admissions or suppositions do; they are equally furtive and open to reader interpretations. I will argue that he is a queer agent – a character in the novel who advocates for the place of queer expressions of non-normative sexual desires and social arrangements – but his attempts to create a utopic queer community out of Blithedale fail because Hollingsworth and Zenobia are not receptive to this possibility, and not queer enough themselves to make it a reality. Coverdale expresses his queerness through his own personal desires for romantic relationships based on his sexual desires for both Hollingsworth and Zenobia, but also extends this further to broader social structures built upon the expression of fluid desires.

Coverdale most clearly articulates his vision for their community and its potential when he states that

> [t]he footing, on which we all associated at Blithedale, was widely different from that of conventional society. While inclining us to the soft affections of the Golden Age, it seemed to authorize any individual, of either sex, to fall in love with any other, regardless of what would elsewhere be judged suitable and prudent. Accordingly, the tender passion was very rife among us, in various degrees of mildness or virulence, but mostly passing

> away with the state of things that had given it origin. (Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* 694)

This is the most explicit mention he can give of his vision for Blithedale; a place of fluidity and freedom to express queer desires and sexualities that differ from normative social rules which dictate heteronormativity, family, lineage, and inheritance. For him, at the very least. It becomes clear, though, that not every resident of Blithedale feels the same way in their ideologies or in their personal interiorities. Benjamin Scott Grossberg questions "whether this is utopia as constructed by other Blithedalers… [A]side from those relationships in which he is involved, no other indications of aberrant desire intrude on Coverdale's narrative" (Grossberg 6). While Coverdale may seem to fall in love quite easily with both Hollingsworth and Zenobia, it becomes clear that neither of them reciprocates this feeling, and all must then deal with the repercussions of this interpersonal difference. Coverdale, writing from a point in time much later than the events of the narrative, of course has extensive hindsight and so is perhaps subtly implying his knowledge of how this community disintegrated, hinting that it is beginning to do so even as he states his personal manifesto for its future. The "varying degrees" of passion admits the potentially different internal positions of the principal characters; Coverdale feels strong affection and attraction for Hollingsworth and Zenobia, but in later chapters they show only mild affection for him in return, in accordance with the level of friendship upon which Blithedale is predicated. The "passing away" of these feelings happens in tandem with the disintegration of the Blithedale community, leading up to Zenobia's mysterious death, Hollingsworth and Priscilla's marriage, and Coverdale's return to Boston, posing the central question: how could Blithedale's queer possibilities be realized if there is no place from which they can grow?

A queer utopia is his hopeful vision for Blithedale, this is clear very early on, but what is also clear is that Coverdale has little aptitude and no real desire to farm as Silas Foster does, to reform criminals as Hollingsworth does, or to further the cause of women's rights as Zenobia does, and he cannot live at Blithedale forever. There is too much of the real world within it, despite his best efforts or most ardent desires, and not enough queerness in those he loves to create any kind of a lasting queer idyll. He is rejected by Hollingsworth, and so leaves Blithedale after a scene I read as a rejection of him personally, just as he rejects Hollingsworth's ideas. Because they cannot walk in step with one another, they fall out, with Coverdale leaving for the city and his previous way of life. He eventually returns to Blithedale, though, this time for Zenobia, having been spurned by the man he desired. But she has no interest in him either, having also fallen in love with Hollingsworth. She, however, is not normative enough for Hollingsworth. Zenobia expresses radical social alterity with her pen, writing fiction as well as "tracts in defence of [her] sex" advocating for more equitable gender roles in everyday life (659). She remarks that at Blithedale, when individuals' "adaptations begin to develop themselves, it may be that some of us, who wear the petticoat, will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!" arguing for occupations designated based on aptitude, not on gendered assumptions of capability based on longstanding convention (646). Hollingsworth believes that a woman "is the most admirable handiwork of God, in her true place and character. Her place is at man's side… Man is a wretch without woman; but woman is a monster… without man, as her acknowledged principal!" (740). Zenobia embodies the opposite of this, being an unmarried woman who operates outside the traditional domesticity of the home, but she still loves Hollingsworth despite this obvious incompatibility in personal beliefs. Hollingsworth, however, does not love Zenobia. She is too bold in her difference, not acquiescent enough to

men and the social status quo, desiring social equality too ardently. She wants a future with Hollingsworth, but she also wants this future to be inclusive. He characterizes it wholly negatively, and responds to the thought of it violently, noting that "if there were ever a chance of [women] attaining the end which these petticoated monstrosities have in view, [he] would call upon [his] own sex to use its physical force, that unmistakeable evidence of sovereignty, to scourge them back within their proper bounds!" (740). Her personal and social difference proves too much for him, and he ultimately reasserts a deeply heteronormative framework by marrying Priscilla, the most childlike, supplicant character. Hollingsworth could never have built a future with Coverdale or Zenobia, he is far too traditional even as he proclaims radicality in his ideas about criminal reform, so it is fitting he chooses a spouse who typifies a version of meek American womanhood, perpetuating heteronormativity and traditional gender roles. No-one in this novel ever really accomplishes what they set out to; it is a story of multiple failures. Zenobia never achieves women's rights, Hollingsworth never reforms criminals, Coverdale never creates a queer utopia. Priscilla, the character who heightens heteronormativity, is the only principal player who achieves anything. At the close of the novel, she marries Hollingsworth, fulfilling the traditional marriage plot for herself and gaining the personal safety and financial security she so lacked upon her introduction. A normative balance is asserted in this way, as she and Hollingsworth reinforce heteronormativity through marriage and family, while Zenobia is dead and Coverdale remains alone. None of them achieve the queer future of equitable gender relations, sympathetic understanding, and the option to fulfill desires outside of heteronormative marriage that Hester Prynne worked so hard to initiate. Her queer future, imagined in the Puritan period, remains unrealized in the mid-nineteenth century, despite queer characters' best efforts.

So much of Coverdale's coded language has the effect of masking the narrative; it conceals interior motives and readers must look to signs, at what he chooses to reveal through the lens of queerness to understand what he is trying to convey in specific instances, and what this really means for him and for his relationships with other characters, the world of Blithedale, and the wider world beyond it. When he meets with Old Moody in the first pages of the novel, he refers to himself in contrast to Hollingsworth's qualities. By praising Hollingsworth, he is at one remove indicating to his readers what he himself is not, revealing deficiencies. He notes that his friend "has three or four years the advantage… in age, and is a much more solid character, and a philanthropist to boot. I am only a poet, and, so the critics tell me, no great affair at that!" (637). This tells readers that Coverdale is young, has less "character", is not as interested in others, and is only a poet. This vocation requires him to create artful fictions, and he does just that by narrating events through his own lens of interpretation. Baym agrees, noting that

> what Blithedale 'is' is inseparable from what it is to Coverdale, for nothing is known in the book but what is known by him. To ask whether there could be a more accurate rendering of the story than Coverdale's, is – given the absence of corrective devices in the narrative – a meaningless question. The book's reality is Coverdale's world; ultimately he is its only character, and everything that happens in the novel must be understood in reference to him. (547)

He is telling us from the beginning that he is creating stories – so what he purports to be the truth should be held up to strong scrutiny; we should also read for what he is not saying, or what he indirectly reveals. Coverdale wants us to know these things, but he cannot speak them directly. For Grossberg, "he has a very specific paradigm, and… all events of the narrative are inflected through it. [His] vision is the one we get most intensely because we can only judge the other two

paradigms through his. It is the lens through which we view all events at Blithedale, imposed on us implicitly" (6). To understand his queerness then, we must look not only at the way in which he articulates Blithedale's potential, but also at his response to Hollingsworth and Zenobia, and interpret their encounters at different points in the narrative. For Lauren Berlant,

> Coverdale's very attraction to Hollingsworth is made possible and fully authorized by the sexual *politics* of Blithedale itself. This means that this homoerotic love plot too, as with all of Coverdale's others, is his attempt to forge or imagine a Utopian experience whose implications will extend farther than the limits of the dyad— personal Utopia and communion would be proof of the possibility that every Utopia might not only be thought, but lived, in unheard-of combinations. (Berlant 37)

Blithedale, a community apart from the world, serving as a utopic vision of what the world could be, is never separate enough for the real outer world not to encroach upon and influence it; it is only ever imagined to be. Berlant's emphasis on Coverdale's thoughts and imagination stresses his deep interiority – he is a character who theorizes but does not act upon the long-imagined possibilities of his own life and that of Blithedale. He sees it as a utopia of queer possibility but will not put in earnest work to make this a reality, and not everyone else there sees it this way either, so it is an unsustainable vision of queer futurity.

No-one fully shares the same vision of the future at Blithedale, so it disintegrates. Hollingsworth sees it as a starting point for his reformist work, Zenobia sees it as a place from which she can advance the cause of women's rights using interpersonal exchange as an example for wider society, and Coverdale sees it as an idyllic space where he can express his queer desires. Priscilla regards it as a refuge, and Silas Foster sees it as a working farm. For Berlant, "*Blithedale* stages the relationship between collective and subjective desire not simply as a

similitude—where love and community become simultaneous ends of Utopian practice and projection—but also as a site of tension" (30). None of the three principal protagonists share goals in common other than an overarching sense of wanting to change the world. But each wants to change it in a different way, so the utopian premise proves untenable from the start. "Paradise indeed" is how Coverdale comes to regard Blithedale (639). He has started with every intention of the scheme working, noting,

> [w]hatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies, that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny – yes! – and to do what in me lay for their accomplishment; even to the extent of quitting a warm fireside, flinging away a freshly lighted cigar, and traveling far beyond the strike of city-clocks, through a drifting snow-storm. (640)

This is really not much work to realize his vision, though it appears to be an accurate depiction of his contribution to the project.

Upon his arrival at Blithedale, Coverdale feels truly removed from the prescriptive rules of the wider society, noting that he feels "that we had transported ourselves a world-wide distance from the system of society that shackled us at breakfast-time" (642). While he had been chained to normativity in the city, he clearly feels free in this egalitarian enclave, though what he is free to do is less clear. This is the difficulty of interpreting queerness in a character who is so unforthcoming about his own story. For Jordan Alexander Stein, "when we look at characters and see people, or when we look at queerness and find homosexuality, we make interpretive leaps that are both unavoidable if one wants knowledge and necessarily distorting towards the objects we want to know" (Stein 230). To say that Coverdale expresses heterosexual desires is inadequate, then, as he regards Hollingsworth with as much personal affection and physical

attraction as he does Zenobia. Alternatively, to say that he is purely homosexual falls equally short of describing his fluid interiority, as he feels the same strong desire for Zenobia as he does Hollingsworth. He can be read as a queer character, then, because he is constant and consistent in his erotic fluidity, and in his attempts to manifest his unexpressed interiority within the utopic community of Blithedale.

In later passages, Coverdale's queered desires become quite obvious, since they are more fully articulated:

> If ever men might lawfully dream awake, and give utterance to their wildest visions, without dread of laughter or scorn on the part of the audience – yes, and speak of earthly happiness, for themselves and mankind, as an object to be hopefully striven for, and probably attained – we, who made that little semi-circle round the blazing fire, were those very men. We had left the rusty iron frame-work of society behind us. We had broken through many hindrances that are powerful enough to keep most people on the weary tread-mill of the established system, even while they feel its irksomeness almost as intolerable as we did. We had stept down from the pulpit; we had flung aside the pen; we had shut up the ledger… It was our purpose – a generous one, certainly, and absurd, no doubt, in full proportion with its generosity – to give up whatever we had heretofore attained, for the sake of showing mankind the example of a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based. (648)

Coverdale's waking dream is the freedom to love at Blithedale, though he never does directly "give utterance" to this dream, nor does he achieve it, because of the very fear of scorn from those who would hear him speak of it. Here he articulates the queerness of his romantic or sexual desires, because they fall outside the boundaries of socially sanctioned heteronormativity.

Though they are what would constitute "earthly happiness" for himself personally and for a portion of mankind that shares his views, in achieving a life of queer desire he quite tellingly includes the caveat "probably," as it is a lofty goal that is never truly attained. He extends his vision of queer futurity beyond these personal desires to a politics of sociality that would be predicated on fluid desires. But they do not achieve this, due in large part to the fact that their group does not overcome the many social barriers that still control the outside world; they merely walk away from the "rusty iron frame-work of society" that Coverdale sees as decayed but still standing – namely religion, law, and money: the "pulpit" "pen" and "ledger" that keep individuals from acting on their desires. Stacey Margolis argues that in this scene, "Coverdale imagines himself escaping from a 'system of society' rather than a mere location in space [which] both connects this scene to "The Custom House" [of *The Scarlet Letter*] – each text moves from the artificiality of system to the authenticity of intimate relations – and marks its difference. For Coverdale's escape to Blithedale is represented not as a move from public commitments to private life but… away from privacy and toward politics" and because of this, "in Blithedale, then, intimacy represents not an escape from politics but a new form of political life" (Margolis 23-24). The example the Blithedale community has the ability to show the rest of the world is predicated on a politics based on something other than "false and cruel principles"; this offers readers an appropriately vague description of normativity for a narrator like Coverdale, and one that can only be defined through opposition, namely to idealized principles of truth and kindness. What are these "false and cruel principles"? He does not name them explicitly, but as with so much of the narrative, readers can infer that they are normative social strictures that inhibit the growth of queer possibilities.

For Coverdale, queer possibilities would recognize the potential fluidity of sexual desire and allow for romantic relationships with either men or women. Berlant argues that

> Coverdale is a bachelor and probably a virgin, which means that the sexual for him exists only in the realm of "hope or fear"—that is, a realm of theory where speculation is a kind of practice… [S]exual discourse provides for him a stimulating and yet comforting structure within which he theorizes about himself, his partners at Blithedale, and the Blithedale project itself. [It] provides for him an epistemology, a conventional and stabilizing structure of interpretation… [that] provides a name for relations that are otherwise awkward, unstable, and undefined in 'our new arrangement of the world'. (33)

Coverdale does not make his readers directly privy to his interior desires, but the manner in which he describes Hollingsworth and their relationship is one that intimates homosociality to the point of what modernity may term homosexuality, though never explicitly. Homosexuality existed, of course, in Hawthorne's time in expressions of romantic desire. The widespread terminology, however, was not yet in the common vernacular[1], and as such, identifying Coverdale as a queer character rather than anachronistically labelling him homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, is a far more appropriate and generative interpretive stance. According to Stein, "early readers missed the homoeroticism, which now so clearly gazes back from Blithedale's pages… because, in 1852, homoerotic relations did not yet enjoy social recognition via the shorthand of 'homosexuality'. In the moment of its iteration, *Blithedale*'s frank description failed to be frank, insofar as it failed to refer to anything recognizable" (211). The relationship between Coverdale and Hollingsworth mirrors that of Arthur Dimmesdale and

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[1] *The Blithedale Romance* was published in 1852, but forays into formal psychological and medical studies of homosexuality were not widely made until much later; for example, Carl Westphal in 1869, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1886. (Bayer, Ronald. *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton University Press, 1987.)

Roger Chillingworth, but, unlike the readers of *The Scarlet Letter,* we are afforded fewer details about actual interactions between the two Blithedalers, and are granted only one party's point of view. From Coverdale's thinly veiled interiority, we notice expressions of affection and longing, as he holds Hollingsworth in high regard, both intellectually and aesthetically. He thinks Hollingsworth is an interesting person, but also a very handsome one, someone he wishes to know more deeply, though his affection is ultimately unrequited.

It is through his struggles to make Blithedale a place of sexual fluidity and queer affection that Coverdale's desires are made clearer, but as these events transpire it becomes equally clear that Hollingsworth does not share his friend's affection. Coverdale describes Hollingsworth's appearance as

> [v]ery striking… He was then about thirty years old, but looked several years older, with his great shaggy head, his heavy brow, his dark complexion, his abundant beard, and the rude strength with which his features seemed to have been hammered out of iron, rather than chiselled or moulded from any finer or softer material. His figure was not tall, but massive and brawny, and well befitting his original occupation, which – as the reader probably knows – was that of a blacksmith. As for external polish, or mere courtesy of manner, he never possessed more than a tolerably educated bear; although, in his gentler moods, there was a tenderness in his voice, eyes, mouth, in his gesture, and in every describable manifestation, which few men could resist, and no woman. (656-57)

Coverdale begins here with a cursory list of Hollingsworth's generic characteristics – his age and his facial features – but this quickly evolves into much more nuanced observations of who Hollingsworth is to him specifically, and through an analysis of tone and inference readers can understand his undercurrent of personal desire. He mentions Hollingsworth's strength multiple

times, as though he is almost fixated on what he can do physically, noting his "rude strength," his "massive and brawny" figure resembling a bear. He seems veritably obsessed with Hollingsworth's physicality, admiring it, but less enthralled with it than he is with what Hollingsworth is transformed into when he behaves more gently. Coverdale is preliminarily attuned to Hollingsworth's tenderness in a few key bodily areas – his voice, eyes, mouth, and gestures – but then pivots to include "every indescribable manifestation," (which is, of course, left undescribed). Whatever these manifestations are, after such an intimate portrait, it is clear that Coverdale is *not* one of the few men who can resist them. It is interesting that both men and women find Hollingsworth irresistible, and that Coverdale has the language to conceive of both men and women being attracted to him, perhaps because he is intimating to his readers that he counts himself as one of those people. He certainly finds Hollingsworth alluring, noting in one of the most direct references that "his dark, shaggy face looked really beautiful with its expression of thoughtful benevolence" (658). These observations are made upon one of their first meetings, so they indicate a direct and immediate attraction on Coverdale's part, but, as the narrative goes on, it is clear he and Hollingsworth do not share a queer vision of the future; there is a disconnect in both intellectual and personal desire between them. On their first night at Blithedale, Coverdale intimates his penchant for eavesdropping, describing the effect of hearing Hollingsworth's nightly prayer and noting that "it affected [him] with a deep reverence for Hollingsworth, which no familiarity then existing, or that afterwards grew more intimate between us – no, nor [Coverdale's] subsequent perception of his own great errors – ever quite effaced" (665). He clearly states they had no friendship at that point, but still builds up an entire narrative based on one evening's interaction. No errors or further intimacy will change his mind; he is fully infatuated, and only grows more so as Hollingsworth pays more attention to him.

When Coverdale catches a convenient cold, he notes that Hollingsworth had "built a fire in [his] chamber, and… established himself as [his] nurse" with "more than brotherly attendance" (667). What is more than brotherly, to Coverdale? He does not elaborate, but does note how he would "choose for his death-bed companion" a friend like Hollingsworth, whom he has only known for a short time – but with whom he has already claimed an intimacy. He goes on to note that "there was something of the woman moulded into the great, stalwart frame" and that "there never was any blaze of a fireside that warmed and cheered [him], in the down-sinkings and shiverings of [his] spirit, so effectually as did the light out of those eyes, which lay so deep and dark under his shaggy brows" (667). He ascribes femininity and beauty, again, to Hollingsworth and almost wills Hollingsworth to experience the same internal duality – an attraction to both women and men – he noted in himself earlier. Just as he contrives this intimacy in his head, so he may also have built up his own vision of Hollingsworth's level of reciprocation. Coverdale then emerges from his convalescence having acknowledged something within himself that he feels may be more fully expressed at Blithedale. He regards his illness as having provided

> [a]n avenue between two existences; the low-arched and darksome doorway, through which [he] crept out of a life of old conventionalisms… and gained admittance into the freer region that lay beyond… it was good to have gone through it. Nor otherwise could [he] have rid [himself] of a thousand follies, fripperies, prejudices, habits, and other such worldly dust as inevitably settles upon the crowd along the broad highway… The very substance upon [his] bones had not been fit to live with, in any better, truer, or energetic mode than that to which [he] was accustomed. So it was taken off [him] and flung aside, like any other worn out or unseasonable garment… [He] began to be clothed anew, and

> much more satisfactorily than in [his] previous suit. In literal and physical truth, [he] was quite another man. (684-85)

Here Coverdale undergoes a transformation of self that recognizes his old way of life in the city as one that is unnecessary and unsuitable at Blithedale; he is freer to be a truer, newer version of himself, one that acknowledges his dual attraction to both Hollingsworth and Zenobia. Indeed, he notes the elements of a new balance he has found throughout his convalescence; upon stepping outside "man looked strong and stately! – and woman, oh, how beautiful! Thus Nature, whose laws [he] had broken in various artificial ways, comported herself towards [him] as a strict, but loving mother" (685). He acknowledges strength in men and beauty in women, and, as we have seen before, he notes the confluence of both of these aspects in Hollingsworth. Where before he may have felt tension at this, speaking of breaking laws of Nature in a past tense, he moves on to describe Nature as finding balance in his duality now too. After this internal shift, Coverdale can speak in a moderately more open manner. He now states unequivocally that he "loved Hollingsworth, as has already been enough expressed," although he in fact had not expressed it enough, nor in such explicit terms.

As the narrator speaking from a later date, Coverdale notes the possibility that he and Hollingsworth may not have been entirely happy, because perhaps they do not wholly share these same feelings, much like their differing visions for the future of Blithedale. In contrast to the queer relationship between Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale, here a man prying into the interiority of another character is done out of a desire to love, rather than a desire to hate and torture. Indeed, Coverdale even admits that he "did Hollingsworth a great wrong by prying into his character, and … perhaps… by putting faith in the discoveries which [he] seemed to make. But [he] could not help it. Had [he] loved him less, [he] might have used him better"

(692). This is the first indication of a fracture in their relationship, but it is attributed wholly to Hollingsworth and his "stern and dreadful peculiarity… such as could not prove otherwise than pernicious to the happiness of those who should be drawn into too intimate a connection with him" (692-93). Berlant argues that, here, Coverdale

> is attracted to Hollingsworth, and repulsed by his own attraction: while he is in part bitterly suspicious of Hollingsworth's use of personal magnetism to forward his philanthropic schemes, Coverdale also desires Hollingsworth, even to the point of including himself in his list of proselytes… But rather than look merely for the sexual, passional "roots" of this relation… we must read the homoerotic bonds at Blithedale as *relays,* signifying complexly motivated relations among men. The operation of homosociality in *Blithedale* is politically multivalent—describing relations between philosophy and the desiring subject, as these conjoin in the Utopian project; between men competing, patriarchally, for women and other profitable resources; as well as between men who desire each other sexually and emotionally. (36)

Coverdale does not name this particular peculiarity – perhaps it is Hollingsworth's tendency to use others to further his own reformist ends, or perhaps he is beginning to realize it is his adherence to normativity. Though it is clearly an element of his personality that is simply too incongruous to work well with Coverdale and his queerness.

Coverdale's affection for Zenobia is as oblique yet obvious as his attraction to Hollingsworth. He describes her features and her personality with deeply intimate language, language that would characterize a beloved. He notes that "however humble looked her new philosophy – [she] had as much native pride as any queen would have known what to do with," comparing her to a reigning monarch, one for whom he holds a great deal of affection (643). She

has a “fine, frank, mellow voice, and… very soft and warm” hands, and though she dresses “as simply as possible… but with a silken handkerchief, between which and her gown there was one glimpse of white shoulder. It struck [him] as a great piece of good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse” (644-45). Coverdale is, then, as instantly intellectually and physically attracted to Zenobia as he is to Hollingsworth, for many of the same reasons. She possesses a great intellect, as well as beauty and sensuality, as intimated by his mention of her bare skin. This description references not only her own capacity for sexuality, but also his, as he is clearly pleased by the “great piece of good-fortune” that she chooses to show a portion of her shoulder.

Coverdale notes her singularity by describing the perfect match of her physical and intellectual capabilities; that “her hand… was larger than most women… though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of [her] entire development. It did one good to see a fine intellect (as hers really was, although its natural tendency lay in another direction than towards literature) so fitly cased” (645). She uses her hands for writing fiction (which he praises but also diminishes in comparison to his own) and for writing about the rights of women. She is a woman who is in control of her own mind and has the free will to exercise her thoughts in a productive way. Coverdale particularly admires the congruence between her internal and exterior selves, noting her “combination of features which it is safe to call remarkably beautiful” and the “bloom, health, and vigor, which she possessed in such overflow that a man might well have fallen in love with her for their sake only” (645). Coverdale is one such man who has fallen in love with her for these and many other of her attributes, but of course, he does not explicitly state this, instead using a roundabout way of explaining his inner feelings to the readers of the novel through the generic example of “a man”. He has fallen in love with Zenobia just as quickly and

easily as he did with Hollingsworth, and will chart his parallel affections for the two of them over the course of the novel, as well as his heartbreak at their rejection of him.

Not only has Coverdale fallen in love with her; he experiences a physical desire for her beyond just noticing her bare shoulder. His desire is inextricably linked to her interiority and her character – this is much like what he admires about Hollingsworth – but is tactfully camouflaged by his writing. When he compares Blithedale to Eden and her to Eve, she disagrees, noting that it is too cold to reap any of the bounty found in Eden, and "as for the garb of Eden… shivering playfully, I shall not assume it till after May-day!" (646). Again, here Zenobia has the capacity to acknowledge her own sexuality, and in doing so she helps reveal some of Coverdale's. Berlant agrees that "Zenobia—or… Zenobia's body—is the main recipient of the narrative gaze of heterosexual desire" (35). This is a heterosexual attraction if taken on its own, but, as we have seen, Zenobia is not the only Blithedale resident whom Coverdale finds enticing. He is much more fluid in his expressions of desires, and, as such, we cannot definitively confirm that he is either heterosexual or homosexual. Thus the lens of queerness proves entirely useful and appropriate here. It encapsulates sexual desire, yes, but there is more potentiality in it; it is not limited to a sexual binary. Coverdale is queer because he does not limit himself, either. In this sense he is a very generative character, defining himself outside the bounds of either/or; a character as forthcoming and also as guarded about his own inner truths as he is about the truths of the Blithedale narrative.

During his convalescence Coverdale repeatedly praises Zenobia, calling her a "truly magnificent woman" with a "queenliness of… presence" whose beauty and form should be seen by multitudes on the stage, and recreated in paintings and sculptures as an eternal testament (669). Her corporeal and intellectual beauty are also immortalized by Coverdale through this

narrative, as a third form of praise worthy of its subject. He makes particular note of her potential likeness in sculpture as the ultimate form to encapsulate her beauty

> because the cold decorum of the marble would consist with the utmost scantiness of drapery, so that the eye might chastely be gladdened with her material perfection, in its entireness. I know not well how to express, that the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust – in a word, her womanliness incarnated – compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her. (669)

He clearly does in fact, know "how to express" her physical qualities that most attract him, as he does so quite deftly in this passage where he is virtually obsessed with her sexuality, and her sexual history. He wonders if she "had ever been married" and participated in a sexual relationship within it. After so much contemplation of her physical body, he notes that even if she is sexually experienced, even "if the great event of a woman's existence had been consummated, the world knew nothing of it" (671). All of this supposition leads to Coverdale's blanket conclusion that "Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived, and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!" (672). Though, if this were proven true, she would have been regarded as fallen by the wider society, he loves her anyway, as though, for Coverdale, this heightened her perfection. Although she knows that she interests him "very much… yet… [she] cannot reckon [him] as an admirer" (672). Perhaps this is so, but perhaps he is trying to convince her as much as himself that he does not love her, after spending so much time expounding on her charming qualities. He comments that "a bachelor always feels himself defrauded, when he knows, or suspects, that any woman of his acquaintance has given herself away. Otherwise, the matter could have been no concern of mine. It was purely

speculative; for I should not, under any circumstances, have fallen in love with Zenobia" (672). But he continues to make it his concern, belying this assertion, and convincing readers that, in actuality, he really is in love with Zenobia, just as much as with Hollingsworth, during this period of time. He has to make readers believe in a few lines of commentary that he does not love her because she is not a very good cook. This is hardly a convincing enough argument, though, because even while he rejects the gruel she brings him as "very wretched stuff" at the beginning of a paragraph, by the end of it he cannot help complimenting her yet again, pivoting to say that "she should have meddled only with the richest and spiciest dishes, and such as are to be tasted at banquets, between draughts of intoxicating wine" (673). By diminishing her ability to create something base, he praises her person, holding her above such things. And here she is again characterized by regal imagery of banquets, expensive ingredients, and intoxicating wine, all sensual, all recalling his resumed preoccupation with her own sensuality and his place in it. Although he feels an intense attraction to her, Coverdale begins to realize that she does not reciprocate that attraction.

Coverdale wanders Blithedale, exploring hidden spaces on the grounds with as much freedom as he explores the inhabitants' interiorities. In a pivotally queer scene that further demonstrates the fluidity of his desires, Coverdale finds a nook hidden in the trees surrounding Blithedale, and muses that "had it ever been [his] fortune to spend a honey-moon, [he] should have thought seriously of inviting [his] bride up thither," regarding it as his "one exclusive possession, while [he] counted himself a brother of the socialists. It symbolized [his] individuality, and aided [him] in keeping it inviolate… [He] brought thither no guest, because after Hollingsworth failed [him] there was no longer the man alive with whom [he] could think of sharing all" (718-19). In one sentence Coverdale here sees no use for it other than a hideaway

in which to celebrate a potential honeymoon with his bride, and in the next he contemplates bringing Hollingsworth there to share it with him. His individuality in this particular instance is perhaps most clearly indicative of his queerness, as he can hope for a future both with a bride (presumably Zenobia) or with Hollingsworth – in a romantic relation. Indeed, he spies on both of them from this vantage point. But his dreams are not shared, since Hollingsworth has failed his hopes in that realm by not reciprocating his queer feelings. They reject one another because they cannot find commonality in their ideals, and so fall out. He has been rejected by Hollingsworth, and has never received more than friendliness from Zenobia who is actually in love with Hollingsworth too. He now sees that Hollingsworth's "heart is on fire with his own purpose, but icy for all human affection, and that, if [Zenobia] has given him her love, it is like casting a flower into a sepulchre!" (720). How would he be able to draw this conclusion if he himself had not had his affections cooled by Hollingsworth's lack of reciprocity and inability to accept queerness? Indeed, if he himself had not already given Hollingsworth his own love? Hollingsworth ultimately casts aside both Coverdale and Zenobia in favour of Priscilla, who is made conveniently wealthy by Zenobia's original inheritance. Their marriage reinforces a heteronormative balance that Coverdale, with his veiled language and meek, furtive admissions of queerness, cannot match.

Coverdale recalls his time at Blithedale as "a summer of toil, of interest, of something that was not pleasure, but which went deep into [his] heart and there became a rich experience" (745). While it is not the outcome he hoped for, in hindsight he has at least come to characterize it perhaps a bit more accurately in this sense than his previous idealized versions. In an extremely ironic scene, he and Hollingsworth mend a fence together, and Coverdale remarks that "when [they] come to be old men… [they] will look back cheerfully to these early days, and

make a romantic story for the young people (and if a little more romantic than truth may warrant, it will be no harm) out of our severe trials and hardships" (745). Coverdale does indeed make this story more romantic than it really was, at least between himself and Hollingsworth. For that ideological disconnect persists between the utopian and reformist ideals held by the two of them, Hollingsworth noting that he "neither [has] faith in [Coverdale's] dream, nor would care the value of [a] pebble for its realization, were that possible… It has given you a theme for poetry. Let that content you. But, now, I ask you to be, at last, a man of sobriety and earnestness, and aid me in this enterprise which is worth all our strength, and the strength of a thousand mightier than we!" (747). Despite his radicalism in relation to criminals, Hollingsworth is more conservative in his personal aspirations than Coverdale. His dreams of his personal future feature Priscilla as his traditionally heteronormative partner, and even though his vision of criminal reform has social implications, they would be less of a shock to wider New England than if Coverdale publicly espoused his vision of queer fluidity. Coverdale goes on to note that "there can be no need of giving, in detail, the conversation that ensued" (748). Though he does in fact transcribe parts of their conversation, we as readers must still interpret what Coverdale implies. He does not explicitly state his queer vision, but he does show his frustration at Hollingsworth's inability to accept his ambitions for Blithedale, or to compromise at all. But Coverdale too is unwilling to compromise, as his vision would personally benefit his ambition just as much as Hollingsworth's would his own. He asks how Hollingsworth can reject him personally along with his broader queer aspirations, how he can so easily overthrow

> this fair system of our new life, which has been planned so deeply, and is now beginning to flourish so hopefully around us? How beautiful it is, and, so far as we can yet see, how practicable! The Ages have waited for us, and here we are – the very first that have

> essayed to carry on our mortal existence, in love and mutual help!... I would be loath to take the ruin of this enterprise upon my conscience. (748)

Just as Coverdale thought Blithedale's burgeoning queer potential could start to be realized amongst his companions, Hollingsworth planned to overtake and subsume it into his own, devoid of fluid passion and queer possibility.

Coverdale's plea here is as much an entreaty to accept his queer vision as it is to accept himself, but Hollingsworth rejects both. The relationship they have built, along with all future potential for social change that accounts for fluidity in personal desire, fractures with Hollingsworth's response to "let it rest wholly upon m[y conscience]!... I see through the system. It is full of defects – irremediable and damning ones! – from first to last, there is nothing else! I grasp it in my hand, and find no substance whatever. There is no human nature in it" (748). He comments here as much on Coverdale's plans for Blithedale to shift the hegemony of normative culture as he does on Coverdale's plans for their personal relationship. He sees no possibility in it, really, and in this instance his sexual normativity is on full display. He does not feel the same way, and shifts to more fraternal language to underline his adherence to heteronormativity. He still entreats Coverdale to join his enterprise, to "be [his] brother in it," but in subsequent paragraphs Hollingsworth struggles with this heteronormative rigidity (749). After entreating Coverdale to join him, "his deep eyes filled with tears, and he held out both his hands to [him]. 'Coverdale,' he murmured, 'there is not the man in this wide world, whom I can love as I could love you. Do not forsake me!'… as if [he] had caught hold of [Coverdale's] heart, and were pulling it toward him with almost irresistible force" (749-50). Though in this instance he admits to a vulnerable love for his friend, in actuality he limits its possibilities; he *could* love Coverdale, but only on his own terms, in his own way, and only if Coverdale were to forsake his own plans

for their future and assent to his. It is a conditional love, and further proof of these two characters' inability to compromise. Despite the "irresistible force" of Hollingsworth's plea, Coverdale cannot assent to it, and asks what part Zenobia and Priscilla take in the matter. By reminding Hollingsworth of heteronormative possibilities for his life, it is as though Coverdale momentarily reverts back into heteronormativity himself after this brief space for a queer possibility is opened up and then closed.

At this point, Coverdale realizes that Hollingsworth is not queer enough to continue on at Blithedale as a romantic partner, but also that he cannot join Hollingsworth in working towards his version of the future – they would reform criminals together, but only as friends – because he cannot return to heteronormative performativity after living what was, for him, such a queer interval. For Hollingsworth, his friend can either "be with [him]… or be against [him]! There is no third choice," and so they fall out (751). Grossberg highlights the "exclusive nature of Hollingsworth's demands. It is not just that he has his own utopian vision… It is not just that he wants Coverdale to work with him, but that he wants his person to the exclusion of all Coverdale's other attachments, a life-long commitment" (3). Coverdale cannot be with him in a way that Hollingsworth can accept, and Hollingsworth cannot assent to Coverdale's queer vision. Both men refuse each other's ideologies and each other's love, despite the clear pain it causes them to rupture their relationship. Baym contends that "of Coverdale's ineffectiveness there can be no doubt. His many attempts to control, influence, even involve himself with the [other] characters, are rebuffed. Where at first he is a kind of steady center in their circle, he is gradually pushed aside; as he becomes superfluous, he finds himself strangely drained of energy" (549). In responding "no" to Hollingsworth's offer, Coverdale insists that nothing cost him "a thousandth part so hard an effort as did that one syllable. The heart-pang was not merely figurative, but an

absolute torture of the breast… It seemed to [him] that it struck [Hollingsworth], too, like a bullet" (751). The figurative bullet strikes both men and their relationship, as it is the final wedge between them that forces Coverdale to give up the Blithedale project and return to Boston with a broken heart. He goes on to note that "Blithedale was no longer what it had been. Everything was suddenly faded" and that his heart too, has changed; "Things are not as they were! – it keeps saying – 'You shall not impose on me! I will never be quiet! I will throb painfully! I will be heavy, and desolate, and shiver with cold! For I, your deep heart, know when to be miserable, as once I knew when to be happy! All is changed for us! You are beloved no more!" (753). As his relationships with Hollingsworth and Zenobia irredeemably change, he leaves for good. Later, in the city, he calls on Zenobia and Priscilla after being discovered spying on them from his rented rooms. He then realizes that both women have affection for Hollingsworth, and not for him, and faces this compound rejection.

The next time all four of them are at Blithedale, their fractured relationships are cemented. Hollingsworth chooses Priscilla over Zenobia and Coverdale, and the two jilted characters are left with permanently broken hearts. Zenobia dies under mysterious circumstances after this rejection, her corpse ironically marking what Elisabeth Bronfen considers to be "the dissolution and collapse, not the unity and eternity, of this social system. It marks the disjunction between their utopic aspirations and their realisations" (Bronfen 245). This proves true, with Coverdale leaving for good after blaming Hollingsworth for her untimely demise. He remains a bachelor forever, his dreams for a queer futurity fully crushed by his multiple experiences of failure in the novel. He could not enact this personal vision of alterity in a utopian space as separate from society as Blithedale, so when he returns to the wider world, he does not even try to recreate it in the smallest interpersonal way. The potentiality of his fluid desires is left

unrealized, and his vision of a queer future, once so hopeful, is reduced to the transcription of his tragic failure in narrative form. In failing to create or execute any portion of this queer future in actual relation with others, however, he is able to create one work of literature through which, in posterity, others can at least trace the pitfalls of utopic communities that are far too idealistic to be realized.

Chapter III:

"What a complex riddle – a complexity of complexities – do they present! It requires intuitive sympathy, like a young girl's, to solve it": Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon's Queer Assertions, Phoebe Pyncheon's Normative Influences in *The House of the Seven Gables*

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables,* Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon are two principal characters who each possess a delicate interior queerness expressed most clearly by their non-adherence to normative gender roles. They exhibit social difference in a sustained manner, as Hawthorne introduces them to us as elderly people who have existed as queer agents for most of their lives, insulated by their inherited wealth. For the majority of their lives, their insularity prevents them from having to interact with the world outside of the ancestral Pyncheon home, but when their money runs out, they must contend with a reintegration into society by opening themselves and their home to commerce. Hepzibah must open a cent-shop to the public that has always considered her (and her wrongly convicted, long-incarcerated, newly released brother Clifford, whom she must now support) to be non-normative, and has long judged her for it. Not only do they open a room of their home to normative society, but they admit a distant country cousin, Phoebe Pyncheon, into their previously exclusively insular space, as well. Phoebe is a character whose widowed mother has recently remarried, and for vague yet insidious reasons, Phoebe can no longer remain at home. Hawthorne intimates some domestic danger she faces in this new family dynamic, and so she must leave. She is therefore displaced by the heteronormativity of marriage. Though Phoebe is thus removed from one normative domestic sphere with a mother and stepfather in a married unit and placed into a queer space and family structure of an extended kinship network of queer sociality, she brings normativity with her into it, and cannot help normalizing the house as she does so. Phoebe expresses more normative tendencies in her adherence to traditional gender roles and her eventual fulfillment of

the traditional heterosexual marriage plot. She is a normative influence upon her queer cousins, and it is this dialogue between two opposing forces that drives much of Hawthorne's narrative. Hepzibah in particular has lived a life of queer deviance and defiance, though it has come at the cost of interpersonal relationships. Her difference has been interpreted as reliance on an antiquated form of aristocracy, or the ancient Maule curse upon her family, but I believe it can be interpreted through queer theory as well. Hepzibah's queerness appears initially premised on her sexuality or romantic preferences – disdaining heteronormative marriage and children – and on her non-conformity to traditional gender norms. She has never married; she has chosen to remain aloof and insular from potential friends or lovers or the community at large. Hers is a queerness, then, that exists in an interior space, and only extends to other queer characters and those who sympathize with queerness, creating a sense of queer sociability within the house. She is an anomaly amidst the normativity of her time and place, and her personal deviance is matched only by that of her brother, Clifford Pyncheon, who has been imprisoned for some thirty years for a murder he did not commit.

Hepzibah and Clifford's house is a queer space where they can express their queerness in relative safety and isolation. It is described as a "scene of events more full of human interest, perhaps, than those of a gray, feudal castle," the most interesting of which is the tension between its inhabitants' queerness within its walls and their struggle to contend with the normativity without (Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* 359). For Christopher Castiglia, normativity in this novel is constituted by "modes of life that serve the interests of… orderly public life" – namely marriage, adherence to gender roles within heteronormativity, and the passing on of these traditional values to another generation through birth and child rearing (Castiglia, 188). That which is queer in this novel is constituted by "those who would deviate from normalcy so

as to imagine new social configurations, new aspirations, and new democratic interactions", challenging the traditional social hegemony of the abovementioned gender roles, marriage, and children (Castiglia 188). The queer characters express this interpersonal and social deviance to create a queer sociality within the house, and in so doing, "the House of the Seven Gables becomes, like the characters who inhabit it, the guardian of queer interiority" (Castiglia, 189). Queer interiority can be understood in the context of this novel as the inner thoughts of non-normative characters, expressed through action within the confines of an indoor space. Because a majority of the queer expressions occur within the house, the physical building itself becomes a place of queer interiority too. Milette Shamir notes these exact parallels in

> the recurrent metaphorical juxtaposition of the house and the human mind. [Hawthorne's] characters' psyches are symbolized by architecture… but [he] goes beyond this… invert[ing] the metaphor and anthropomorphiz[ing] the house… The reciprocity of this metaphorical structure implies the complete interchangeability of the house and mind in his story… [It] expresses a fantasy of the somatic impermeability of domestic space, while the architectured mind expands the space that the individual is entitled to claim as veiled from public vision. (Shamir 162-63)

Hepzibah guards her own interiority and privacy as much as she does the sanctity of her house, because they are one and the same. She would prefer them to be inviolate, but knows this is a financial impossibility, and once the house is open for commerce, it will become a social impossibility. For Shamir, Hepzibah "finds herself vulnerable… by introducing the market into her private life" and into what I argue is her queer interiority, so "she becomes a target both of town gossip and the physical intrusion of the town's people… [including her] largest menace… Judge Pyncheon" (163-64). Just as she has to open her house to the public, she will have to open

herself and Clifford up too, effectively eliminating any inner sanctums and creating the possibility of their queerness being weaponized against them.

Hepzibah and Clifford's outwardly enacted alterity is not so outward that it has reached beyond the doors of the house to affect the outside world through any kind of cultural change, though it has spread by word. The house itself is a physical manifestation of the original inhabitant's ambitions for his family and lineage; it is the house built by the Puritan Colonel Pyncheon. It originated as a fixture of normativity; a symbol of the permanence of family, lineage, and the passing on of an inheritance through normative marriage, but is changed by its inhabitants, Hepzibah and Clifford, who do not fulfill any of these expectations. Built on land stolen from Matthew Maule, the executed wizard, it is also a symbol of power and prestige, and the promise of the further Pyncheon claim to Waldo County in Maine, the deed to which is fabled to be hidden somewhere in the house itself. This is another kind of inheritance that seems to bolster the normativity so prominent in the novel, as not only do successive generations of Pyncheons inherit the house itself, but they also inherit a self-perpetuating right to claim further property and wealth. This inheritance it is always qualified, though, with the narrator remarking that

> this impalpable claim, therefore, resulted in nothing more solid than to cherish, from generation to generation, an absurd delusion of family importance, which all along characterized the Pyncheons. It caused the poorest member of the race to feel as if he inherited a kind of princely nobility, and might yet come into possession of princely wealth to support it. (367)

This is exactly the kind of normative mentality that Hepzibah clings to even in her and Clifford's destitution, an embodiment of either tension or dialogue between queerness and normativity

within these individuals themselves. She fully believes that the deed may yet come into her possession, or, failing that, a more affluent relative will take pity on her and take them away to live in the comfort of financial ease in their old age. It is also perhaps what gives them the freedom to be so queer within these walls. This inherited mentality of situational, if not financial stability is what keeps them happily isolated so that they can be as queer as they like in private. This protection fails when their cousin, Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, later uses their queerness against them for his own normative ends, attempting to gain the will though the threat of institutionalizing Clifford when his own queerer traits have been witnessed by the wider public. Jaffrey thus weaponizes their queerness to coerce Hepzibah to force Clifford to reveal what Jaffrey thinks Clifford knows of the deed's whereabouts. This plan does not work, though, and it is ultimately what brings about Jaffrey's downfall, not Clifford and Hepzibah's. Jaffrey is found dead after a suspicious interval in which Clifford cannot be found, and the question of his death hangs over the house for a time. Did he die from a respiratory condition or was he murdered? The truth is, of course, never explicitly stated – this is a Hawthorne novel after all – but this event is the impetus for Clifford's reintegration into the wider world of normativity, though still as a queer agent. He willingly leaves the house, this time with Hepzibah following less assuredly.

The Pyncheon siblings are both locked up in separate buildings when readers are introduced to them, Clifford in prison and Hepzibah in the house. The surrounding community regards them as queer, because of their willful non-fulfillment of traditional gender roles, and their lack of normative sociability – they are unmarried, they have no children, they do not properly socialize in the public sphere, and they have no connections except with other queer neighbourhood figures, namely Uncle Venner. The narrator remarks that the Pyncheon family, while

> possessing very distinctive traits of their own… nevertheless took the general characteristics of the little community in which they dwelt; a town noted for its frugal, discreet, well-ordered, and home-loving inhabitants, as well as for the somewhat limited scope of its sympathies; but in which, be it said, there are odder individuals, and now and then, stranger occurrences, than one meets with almost anywhere else. (369)

Hepzibah and Clifford are discreet and home-loving to a fault; Hepzibah hates to leave her house, and her sympathies are indeed limited to a handful of people who have gained her trust through an intimate acceptance of her queerness. She and Clifford are also two of the odder individuals in their town precisely because of their queer interiority and alternative kinship network, their queer isolation fueling further gossip and speculation by those outside of the house. Christopher Castiglia contends that in *The House of the Seven Gables* "Hawthorne's principal interest – his sympathy, as he might say – is not with the law or its representatives but with those outside the law… [T]he fate of those who are judged to have broken the… juridical law of private property, the external law of social convention, or the inner law of orderly emotion and proper character – is at the center of" the novel (187). Hepzibah and Clifford exist outside such laws, but within the confines of their house; that is what marks them as so queer. Queerness in this novel is not merely understood, according to Castiglia,

> in the twentieth-century sense of 'homosexual' (although the desires of almost all of these characters fall outside the realm of conventional heterosexuality), but rather in a sense of 'deviant'. The queer characters… are described, at some moment, as queer, although some (Hepzibah, Clifford, Uncle Venner) more consistently than others – [they] deviate not by breaking the law… but by virtue of their excessive and inscrutable

> emotions, their melancholic devotion to the past, their antisocial reclusiveness, even their lack of control over bodily functions (… Hepzibah's near-sighted frown). (187)

It is only when the outside world comes into contact with them inside their queer space that Hepzibah and Clifford engage with it, though with great recalcitrance. Readers are introduced to the Pyncheon siblings' truly personal queerness in a voyeuristic way, and it is fundamentally their nonadherence to the normative prescriptions of nineteenth-century gender expectations that marks them as queer in relation to others' normativity.

The narrator introduces us as readers to Hepzibah within the interior of the house, offering us an intimate portrait of the now-elderly Pyncheon sibling. He notes her isolation here: "Miss Hepzibah, who, for above a quarter of a century gone-by, has dwelt in strict seclusion; taking no part in the business of life and just as little in its intercourse and pleasures" (377). We can understand that she has little interest in the world outside her door, perhaps because she has been broken by Clifford's unjust incarceration for the past thirty years, but also perhaps because the normative options available to her outside her door were so incongruous with her inner nature that she chose not to participate in them. The narrator notes that "she never had a lover – poor thing, how could she? – nor ever knew, by her own experience, what love technically means" (378). She is offered a degree of sympathy with this remark, but perhaps she does not need it. She chose to live apart from wider society, perhaps because she did not find anything in it that suited her, including a lover. At the time of the romance, she is an older woman who has never married and openly disdains traditional spousal relationships between men and women. Castiglia notes that the narrative "offers glimpses of what, by the late nineteenth century would emerge as 'homosexual identities'. Hepzibah, who refuses to attend church, becoming, in her isolation, a comically bad housewife and an old maid… falls far outside the nineteenth-century

conventions of femininity, which rested on piety and domestic nurturance" (197). Unlike Castiglia, I do not contend she is a homosexual character, as I do not believe there is enough textual evidence to assert any sexual preference on her part; her personal sexuality is never expounded upon in the ways that Miles Coverdale's is, and so inferences cannot be made about her queerness in terms of erotic desire. We can, however, note that she has chosen to remove herself from the experience of love, and so now has no knowledge of what it technically means; but she really has no need of it, nor any need of the narrator's sympathies in that regard. Had she been normative and never had a lover nor married, then this might be categorized as a loss of life experience. But because we do not know of her preferences or desires, we cannot say that this is something Hepzibah ever really wanted. We can, however, say that this makes her queer, as she has chosen not to participate in the normative life practices of marriage, reproduction, and the continuation of direct generational inheritance.

> Hepzibah does not need the narrator's pity for the
>
> [u]nfortunate expression of [her] brow. Her scowl – as the world, or such part of it as sometimes caught a transitory glimpse of her at the window, wickedly persisted in calling it – her scowl had done Miss Hepzibah a very ill-office, in establishing her character as an ill-tempered old maid; nor does it appear improbable, that, by often gazing at herself in a dim looking-glass, and perpetually encountering her own frown within its ghostly sphere, she had been led to interpret the expression almost as unjustly as the world did. – 'How miserably cross I look!' – she must often have whispered to herself; – and ultimately have fancied herself so, by a sense of inevitable doom. But her heart never frowned. It 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. (380)

The narrator is here able to intimate what the normative world thinks of Hepzibah, but also what she thinks of herself, which is much more nuanced and useful for an analysis of her queer interiority. Castiglia further defines queer interiority as "the mechanisms that allow characters to maintain hope… to mingle the marvelous with the mundane… [it is] a deviation from the public and inner orders mandated by law," a definition I find particularly useful (187). Queer interiority involves thoughts and a belief system, whether these remain within an individual or are outwardly practiced in community with others. Hepzibah is never understood in any real way by her community, as they catch only a "transitory glimpse" of her face, and very infrequently. Their glimpses are not a real study, and so cannot encapsulate the fullness of her interiority. They lead to "interpretations" that are not only unjust, but false, and the narrator, despite his final line about the interior of her heart, is also guilty of making similar assumptions about what is inside Hepzibah's mind. He notes that she "must often have whispered to herself" and "ultimately have fancied herself" the same ugly, ill-tempered old maid her neighbours do. But this is a supposition that is negated by the fact that Hepzibah's true interiority, not her outward gestures, is what is real about her. The narrator acknowledges that her heart does not frown, it is "tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations"; that she has simply chosen not to direct her passions at any normative goal, like other women of her time did. She did not marry, and she has no children; the love in her heart is directed instead towards her brother and her extended kinship network of other outcasts: her country cousin Phoebe, the boarder and daguerreotypist Holgrave, and the impoverished and transient neighbour Uncle Venner.

Hepzibah's non-normativity in terms of the fulfillment of socially sanctioned gender expectations is stated directly by the narrator, and so needs less interpretation than her aversion to heteronormative love and marriage. He notes that "the love of children had never been quickened in Hepzibah's heart, and was now torpid, if not extinct; she watched the little people of the neighbourhood, from her chamber-window, and doubted whether she could tolerate a more intimate acquaintance with them" (384). Hepzibah has never held a maternal desire to raise children of her own; not only does she not like them, but she cannot bring herself to interact with them on any interpersonal level at all. If she cannot conceive of herself with children beyond occasionally watching them outside her window, then why would she ever have married when she had the chance in her youth? The natural progression of women within nineteenth-century normativity evolved from becoming wives to becoming mothers, and if Hepzibah knew she did not like children and did not desire motherhood, then that would clarify why she would never have married, thus avoiding any chance of this unwanted occurrence. It would be easy to label Hepzibah Pyncheon a spinster, but I believe reading her as a queer character affords her interiority and her actions more nuanced interpretations. Yes, she has never married or had children, but her identity expands beyond this in her extended kinship network and the social world she builds within the interior of the house. While she does not uphold the mores of normative marriage and family, Hepzibah cares very deeply for the diverse, atypical, queered family network that grows up around her solitude throughout the novel. In this way, she is far beyond the socially sanctioned prescriptions of her community, upholding queer rather than proper, normative gender roles and fostering queer domestic dynamics. She does not uphold normativity, presumably because that part of normative gender roles does not fulfill her. Within

her own home, however, she has the freedom to act queerly, but even there she is, unfortunately, continually misunderstood and misinterpreted by the world outside her home.

Beyond her refusal to marry and have children, Hepzibah transgresses the boundaries of normative gender roles when she enters into the world of trade and commerce. She runs a cent-shop, one of the avenues available to women to support themselves financially, but this enterprise still requires an immersion into the realm of economics and public exchange, traditionally regarded as male spheres. For Shamir, the "separate spheres ideology, which allies the private with the feminine and the public with the masculine", is thus inverted by Hepzibah, and by Clifford as well (165). She (and Phoebe) exist in the part of the house that is transformed into a space of public commerce, while Clifford remains always indoors – with little public interaction. So at this point Hepzibah exists in a liminal space, as she is a woman who runs a business, operating on the threshold of the strictly gendered spheres allotted to women and men in the mid-nineteenth century. There is a twofold element to this, as her shop is technically in her home, but is simultaneously open to the outside world through exchange. So she is both a failed angel of the home – wanting no husband or children to care for, indeed allowing Phoebe to take up that mantle – and a person who exists in the male-dominated marketplace, selling to both women and men. She is partly a commercial figure, then, and this contributes to and complicates her queerness in interesting ways. It is what invites the outside world into her closely guarded interiority and opens her up to further scrutiny of her non-normativity. She is cautious in opening herself up to the wider world, but also knows she must ultimately remove herself from her space of queer insulation and extreme privacy. Shamir notes that

> the right to privacy… had class distinctions built into it. [It] always implies the threat of intrusion by others and is therefore a thoroughly political concept… set[ting] one group

> of people against another. The intrusion against which the middle-class home shut its doors was not only that of the government but… what Hawthorne habitually called 'the multitudes,' revealing privacy to be a specifically middle-class privilege, shaped by anxieties of intrusion from the top and the bottom of the social spectrum. (150)

Hepzibah has this middle-class fear of her privacy being violated, but it is problematized by the financial necessity of opening up her home to commerce, and a full understanding of the social implications of putting her queerness into the public realm of discussion and judgement as well. The narrator notes her inner struggle, remarking that "she was well aware that she must ultimately come forward, and stand revealed in her proper individuality; but, like other sensitive persons, she could not bear to be observed in the gradual process, and chose rather to flash forth on the world's astonished gaze, at once" (385). Her "proper individuality" is a phrase that gestures towards her queerness in relation to her social context, as Hawthorne did not have the terminology of modern scholars to define and illuminate his characters' alterity. The narrator remarks on her "queer and quaint manners, which had unconsciously grown upon her in solitude; – such being the poor woman's outward characteristics" suggesting that her interiority eventually became outwardly visible (468). For Gillian Brown, such "individuality, of course, is always showing itself; interior states register themselves in object correlatives. This is another great theme in Hawthorne's writing: the external manifestations of interior conditions" (Brown 88). I would argue her manners are a manifestation of the non-normativity which is so central to her character. These queer manifestations appear to occur naturally, without effort, and to be inherent to her, underlined by the mention of how they "unconsciously" flourish in solitude, irrespective of outer influences. The extended solitude in which she expresses her queerness makes her naturally sensitive about opening herself up so fully to wider criticism of her

heretofore internal queerness, now outwardly enacted and visible to the public in a more direct way, as she recognizes just as much as they that she lives differently. But she must do this to support her kinship network, and so in a burst of courage she acknowledges her personal risk and opens her shop. It is this opening that creates further public intrusion, and throws queer and normative influences more fully into tension with one another. This tension is most clearly observed in the struggle between the elderly Pyncheon siblings and their cousin Jaffrey.

Identification with queerness and queer characters in the novel engenders sympathetic understanding by some of the more normative characters. This signifies that the tension between these two opposite expressions of selfhood can be resolved, in certain instances, on an interpersonal level, if not a broader social one. Gordon Hutner contends that for "Hawthorne, sympathy imparts a Romantic ideal of communication; it predicates an understanding that passes beyond words. In this regard, it is an emotional state that takes place on the burden of a moral and social imperative… Through sympathy, a reader can [also] become the sharer of the secrets that are embedded in the text" (Hutner 8-9). The queer characters are unable to influence their communities, but by giving specific individuals access to their interior spaces and personal interiorities, they are able to generate a level of interpersonal sympathy. Phoebe Pyncheon, Hepzibah and Clifford's country cousin, is one such character. She arrives at the House of the Seven Gables as a wholly contrasting character: "a young girl, so fresh, so unconventional, and yet so orderly and obedient to common rules, as you at once recognized her to be, was widely in contrast, at that moment, with everything about her" – namely the long garden weeds of the house and the house itself (411). But while "none of these things belonged to her sphere… it seem[ed] altogether fit that… the door should swing open to admit her" (411). Phoebe is immediately identified as a rule follower, an agent of normativity who may not have the personal

or political power to enforce normativity in others, but still upholds it within herself; she physically epitomizes it. She is admitted into the queer interiority of the house and its occupants because she herself has been displaced by heteronormativity and its prescriptions. Her mother has recently remarried, and even "Hepzibah knew enough to enable her to appreciate the circumstances… which made it desirable for Phoebe to establish herself in another home" (415). So we can see she is either unwelcome or unsafe under her mother and stepfather's roof, and thus must remove herself. Phoebe is ancillary to her mother and new stepfather's heteronormative marriage, unable to fulfill any kind of normative role, and so must look elsewhere to fulfill her own normative ambitions of marriage and family or else become a queer agent like her cousins. She has "no idea of forcing herself on her cousin's *protection,*" (emphasis mine) a simple but loaded word that intimates some threat to her person or her interiority within a normative domesticity, that, in its queer interiority, the House of the Seven Gables lacks (415). Phoebe is initially not welcome to stay very long, but her more normative domestic tendencies, so clearly underlined (Hepzibah refers to her as "a nice little housewife"), prove useful to Hepzibah in the running of the cent-shop and the upkeep of the house (418). She is also kind and sympathetic to Clifford and Hepzibah, recognizing and understanding their queerness. Phoebe thus ultimately proves the possibility that the tension between normativity and queerness can be resolved within and between people, if not in society at large. She herself has been too moulded by the values and expectations of normativity to change, but she is receptive to queerness in ways that few others are. Hepzibah and Clifford likewise recognize in Phoebe some of normativity's usefulnesses, and the potential for happiness that can be found by combining both elements in one person.

Normative Phoebe and queer Hepzibah exist in dialogue within the house, Phoebe "not so much assuming the office as attracting it to herself, by the magnetism of innate fitness – took the most active part in preparing breakfast… Phoebe, and the fire that boiled the teakettle, were equally bright, cheerful, and efficient, in their respective offices" (417). Here Phoebe naturally fulfils the conventional expectations of women's domestic roles and Hepzibah chooses to exclude herself. I believe this to be one way in which Phoebe and Hepzibah evolve as complementary figures, rather than as mere foils of one another, as each influences her counterpart in subtle ways. Phoebe, "whose essence it was, to keep within the limits of law," and Hepzibah, "formal as she was, still, in her life's experience; she had gnashed her teeth against human law," would appear to be opposing figures meant to be in a constant state of tension, but really they demonstrate congruity with each other (425). For her part, Hepzibah welcomes this little figure of normativity into "such a home as [her] kinswoman can offer" her, opening up a queer domesticity made of atypical kinship networks that proves advantageous to all who inhabit it (417). Castiglia notes that Phoebe, whose "moral system requires the subordination of private anomaly to public order through identification with established norms," encourages more traditionally feminine traits in Hepzibah, almost maternal ones that appear to be in contrast to her dislike of children (194). Hepzibah becomes more the mother figure to Clifford as he becomes more childlike, only after Phoebe has begun living with them. She influences them as much as they influence her, as in a later scene she quite shockingly questions the innate rightness of the normative values according to which she has built her life, and begins to see normativity's constructivism. Despite how ardently Hepzibah and Phoebe each typify oppositional viewpoints, they manage to briefly harmonize within this interior space, achieving a temporary balance in the middle of the narrative. At the beginning the household is exclusively queer and at the end we

can assume it will be mostly normalized. The narrator remarks how, through this mechanism of mutual influence,

> [a]ll the thoughts and emotions of Hepzibah and Clifford… acquire[d] a subtle attribute of happiness from Phoebe's intermixture with them. Her activity of body, intellect, and heart, impelled her continually… to think the thought, proper for the moment, and to sympathize… to such depth as she could, with Hepzibah's dark anxiety or the vague moan of her brother. (469)

Phoebe sympathizes with Hepzibah and Clifford, but perhaps Hepzibah and Clifford, like Miles Coverdale, are unable to sustain their queer interiority in the face of Phoebe's normative influence in a socially meaningful way because they choose to remove themselves to Jaffrey's country estate and live quietly, though presumably still queerly. Their enemy, Jaffrey, that figure of normativity who terrorizes them so frequently and harmfully, is dead by the end of the novel. They overcome him, but do not change things in Salem. They remove themselves to yet another interior space of queerness, to maintain their lives of queer isolation, insulated now by the extreme wealth they were lacking throughout the novel – the poverty that forced them to enter normative society in a commercial way; to subject themselves to normativity while never really bowing to it. When they retreat in this way, their queerness remains exclusive to their small group, and there is some interpretive question as to whether it will continue after Holgrave and Phoebe are married. For Brown, just "as Phoebe revives the lady, she also reanimates the labourer. As she restores Hepzibah and Clifford, her marriage restores the family estate to the dispossessed Maules" (92). Can queerness persist in a generative way despite the heteronormativity of Phoebe and Holgrave's marriage, and will it be supplanted by children and

inheritance? Castiglia gives the Pyncheon siblings and their new queer circle in the country some credit, arguing that their mere persistence as queer agents is remarkable, noting that,

> although fantasy may be a poor substitute for social action, the ridiculous, delusional, fantastic, or marvelous persist as important sites of inventive aspiration that take us beyond what must and toward what might be… to maintain inventive sociality despite their location in an institutionalized public and the interior states it mandates. (Castiglia, *Interior States* 257)

Phoebe and Holgrave finally marry and unite the Pyncheons and the Maules, neatly solving the question of inheritance. We can infer that Phoebe does not retain any kind of queer inheritance from her cousins; though they do impart some influence on her, she never really becomes queer. But she does question normativity, not just because of her experience with her cousins' displays of queerness, but also as a response to the actions of normative figures of authority in the novel. She does not fully challenge those authoritative forces, but turns inward, re-evaluating her own interiority. The narrator, noting her thoughts after an exchange between Hepzibah and Jaffrey that typifies the two viewpoints in tension, observes that Phoebe has "queries as to… whether judges, clergymen, and other characters of that eminent stamp and respectability, could really… be otherwise than just and upright men. A doubt of this nature has a most disturbing effect, on minds of the trim, orderly, and limit-loving class, in which we find our little country-girl" (465). With this thought she questions the inherent rightness of normativity, because one of its most powerful figures of authority, a judge, uses it so cruelly. She does not wholly imagine an alternative for herself outside of normative society, though, so this questioning is not altogether fruitful. Ultimately, she reverts back to her old structures of understanding "to keep the universe in its old place" because she cannot envision queerness for herself, despite the large and positive

role it plays in her cousins' lives (465). This, as Castiglia explains, is a point in the narrative where "in repressing her own 'intuitions'… Phoebe, who previously prides herself on the utter superficiality of her character, becomes possessed of an unconscious, a broody interiority that makes her subject to the inward-looking law… but that also enables her sympathetic attachment to her dark and mysterious cousins" (191). Readers are privy to this development of Phoebe's inner thought processes when the narrator notes that she must "smother her own intuitions as to Judge Pyncheon's character. And as for her cousin's testimony in disparagement of it, she concluded that [it] was embittered by one of those old family feuds, which render hatred the more deadly, by the dead and corrupted love that they intermingle with its native poison," thus explaining away her curiosity regarding queerness but ultimate return to her previous reliance on normativity (465). Phoebe was always a normative force, albeit a benevolent one that was never a threat to Hepzibah and Clifford's queer interiority.

Clifford is queer in much the same way Hepzibah is, as he also transgresses the normative boundaries of nineteenth-century gender roles and spheres. "If Hepzibah is a 'bad' woman" in Castiglia's reading of the narrative, "Clifford's 'beautiful infirmity of character' comes from his being too feminine" (197). He is "an example and representative of that great chaos of people, whom an inexplicable Providence is continually putting at cross-purposes with the world; breaking what seems its own promise in their nature" (480), a "being of another order" separate from the world and happy to exist within the safety and queer confines of the House of the Seven Gables", indeed expressing a "shivering repugnance at the idea of personal contact with the world" and its cruel normativity (493-94). He is a man with a "weak, delicate, and apprehensive character" who has never married or had children, though in his case, this was not entirely by choice, as it had been for Hepzibah; for Clifford, the cause was his thirty-year

wrongful imprisonment (500). There is a hint that, before his imprisonment, he may have had heteronormative desires, since he is described as a "man naturally endowed with the sensibility to feminine influence, but who had never quaffed the cup of passionate love, and knew that it was now too late" (473). Here the narrator describes Clifford as a man who had sentimental, gentle, almost effeminate tendencies as a youth, who loved music and all things beautiful. These non-normative leanings are then heightened when he is released from prison and returned to Hepzibah's care, as he retreats further and further into his own queer interiority. And it is not only his interiority that is described in such queer terms, but his outward appearance too. Clifford, in Hepzibah's memory and in the miniature portrait she keeps of him, is highly aesthetic:

> 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! Feminine traits, moulded inseparably with those of the other sex! The miniature, likewise, had this last peculiarity; so that you inevitably thought of the original as resembling his mother; and she, a lovely and loveable woman, with perhaps some beautiful infirmity of character, that made it all the pleasanter to know, and easier to love her. 'Yes,' thought Hepzibah… 'they persecuted his mother in him! He never was a Pyncheon!'. (403)

Clifford is both beautiful and feminine, inside and out; even his facial features cannot adhere to gendered norms. Where Hepzibah is mocked for not adhering to her proper gender role through her refusal to conform to conventions of beauty, Clifford's overtly feminine beauty is of exceptional interest to the narrator. Castiglia notes that there are implications in this: "In his attraction to beauty, his obsession with youth, and his 'womanly' sensibilities, [Clifford] is… a proto-Wildean aesthete. Insofar as modern homosexuality gained public intelligibility as an

inversion of Victorian gender roles, Clifford and Hepzibah, refusing to hold to their 'proper' genders, are arguably among American literature's first homosexual characters" (197). Again, while I would refrain from labelling either sibling with a specific sexual preference, Castiglia's argument does contribute to a broader understanding of their queerness and social alterity. The narrator mentions Clifford's beauty almost incessantly, and the explicit ways in which he aesthetically transgresses boundaries mirrors the ways in which his interiority does too. His "beautiful infirmity of character," which so resembles that of his mother, is clearly a gendered trait, but if it is a softness, a delicateness, or an inability or refusal to conform to masculinity, we do not know. We do know that it was a trait that people valued in his mother, that made her "pleasanter to know" and lovable, but when it is found in the character of a man, it is framed as a "peculiarity" that is "persecuted" out of him by an unspecified "they" – most likely figures of normative authority. Clifford has "delicate taste[s]" and "a weak, tremulous, wailing voice, indicating helpless alarm" as well as an "early love of poetry and fiction" (462-6). He has an affection for flowers that "seemed not so much a taste, as an emotion; he was fond of sitting with one in his hand, intently observing it, and looking from its petals into Phoebe's face, as if the garden-flower were the sister of the household maiden" (478). Clifford's internal qualities, outward beauty, and tastes are as clear as the fact that there are outsiders who would use such traits against him.

Even to Phoebe's young eyes it is apparent "that the soul of the man must have suffered some miserable wrong from its earthly experience," which makes Clifford quiet, withdrawn, and childlike, even in his older age (442). The nineteenth-century penal system would punish indiscriminately, but for an individual with such "beautiful infirmity of character" its effects would be felt even more acutely (403). Hawthorne intimates the levels of his suffering in prison,

implying that his feminine traits would have put him at even more of a disadvantage than other prisoners. Had he been free, "beauty would be his life; his aspirations would all tend towards it; and, allowing his frame and physical organs to be in consonance, his own developments would likewise be beautiful" (445). When Clifford is released and comes back to the House of the Seven Gables to live, he is still drawn to beauty, most clearly in the form of the household garden, and of Phoebe, its gardener. In this way, she rehabilitates him, and he encourages the development of her sympathies towards less rigidly normative characters:

> Not to speak it harshly or scornfully, it seemed Clifford's nature to be a Sybarite… It was seen in his appreciating notice of the vase of flowers… in the unconscious smile with which he regarded Phoebe, whose fresh and maidenly figure was both sunshine and flowers, their essence, in a prettier and more agreeable mode of manifestation. Not less evident was this love and necessity for the Beautiful, in the instinctive caution with which… his eyes turned away from his hostess… It was Hepzibah's misfortune, not Clifford's fault. (445)

Clifford's interiority, now so broken, is pitiable. His femininity is highlighted in his speech and actions, not only in his beauty. Simply arguing with Hepzibah, "the unnerved man – he that had been born for enjoyment, but had met a doom so very wretched – burst into a woman's passion of tears" (449). It pains his sister to see him brought so low, knowing his previous potential, but Phoebe has never known him before, and so regards him as "a poor, gentle, childlike man" whom she sings to and gardens with (495). He in turn holds a "sentiment for Phoebe, [that] without being paternal, was not less chaste than if she had been his daughter. He was a man, it was true, and recognized her as a woman. She was his only representative of womankind" (473). This completely disregards Hepzibah as a woman, apparently because she does not conform to

gender roles in the same way as Phoebe. Phoebe is a thing of beauty for Clifford, but "she was not an actual fact for him," he treats her more as an object than an individual (473). She functions as an outlet for his non-normativity, while also helping to rehabilitate him through her simple affection as "the nurse, the guardian, the playmate – or whatever is the fitter phrase – of the gray-haired man" (476). They manage to identify and sympathize with one another, resulting in positive influences. Phoebe knows Clifford is just as queer as Hepzibah and still holds great affection for him, not despite his alterity, but almost because of his queerness. The figures of normativity in her life are negative, threatening ones; her mother and stepfather forced her to leave her first home, and Jaffrey Pyncheon is overly intimate with her (though she rebuffs his attempt to kiss her on their first meeting) while also threatening Hepzibah and Clifford, who are harmless and kind. In her relationship with Clifford, Phoebe comes to recognize that queerness is not wholly bad, and normativity is not exclusively good. Castiglia argues that if this recognition

> risks Phoebe's identity… it generates new options for identification, not with the public world whose canons of taste she previously upheld, but with the… communities created by the socially abject of the House of the Seven Gables…[H]er imaginative sympathy with Clifford and Hepzibah – leads her to melancholic bonds that, if sometimes pensive and pathetic, are also generous, caring, and poetic. (202)

Clifford's queerness can be further identified, by Phoebe and by readers, in his "affection and sympathy for flowers," which the narrator characterizes as "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. Clifford, too, had long forgotten it, but found it again, now, as he slowly revived from the chill torpor of his life" (478). The narrator most explicitly underlines Clifford's queerness by observing his non-adherence to gendered traits here, but also gestures

towards his quite feminine interiority, which is characterized as such a natural element that he is able to recover once he is returned to the safety of a queer space. He does not just enjoy flowers as objects of beauty, but has an "affection and sympathy" for them that gestures towards his own personal softness, connecting delicate flowers to delicate people, perhaps as an expression of Clifford's aforementioned "beautiful infirmity". He is a man who was endowed "by nature" with this softness characterized as feminine, and did not lose it or "learn to despise it" as other men might. Despite undoubtedly having contact with things unsaid, but understood to be "coarser things than flowers," during his imprisonment, he is able to recover a bit more of this delicate interiority, coming back into himself and his queerness upon his return to the Pyncheon house and garden. This is characterized as a positive development, because it generates so much of the affection and sympathy other men – men such as Jaffrey Pyncheon, who regards his cousin's queerness as a social weakness in normative society – are so lacking. Jaffrey is a character wholly opposite from Phoebe, and one who exemplifies the tension between queerness and normativity when there is no sympathy on either side. He plans to institutionalize Clifford in an asylum for the rest of his days, using Clifford's displays of queerness as evidence that he must be removed from the queer House of the Seven Gables and placed under the care of the normative state. Jaffrey argues this would be for Clifford's own protection, but it is clearly for his own gain (as he believes it enough of a threat to force Clifford to tell him where the deed is hidden) as well as a show of strength – proving that agents of normativity can use social institutions to excise queerness even from private spheres, effectively erasing alterity altogether.

It is Jaffrey's mysterious death, whether by a pre-existing condition or by Clifford's own hand that prompts Clifford to leave the house and briefly reintegrate himself into the outside world in a burst of confidence. He brings a now reluctant Hepzibah with him, and they escape

not only the house, but Salem too, boarding a train and riding until they feel like stopping. When they return, there is some question of their involvement in Jaffrey's death, but that is quickly resolved, and any real tension between queerness and normativity is neatly tied up at the end of the novel. Even Uncle Venner is able to avoid his "farm" – an affectionate and willfully ignorant characterization of the workhouse he would have to retire to, having no familial or financial security to rely on in his old age. Phoebe and Holgrave fall easily and quickly in love, and the marriage plot resolves any queer anxieties about new generations potentially continuing in non-normativity. This conveniently resolves the ancient conflict between the Pyncheons and Maules too, as Holgrave is secretly a Maule. Andrew Lawson does not read this novel through the lens of queerness, but he does note the tidiness of the ending in relation to mid-nineteenth century normativity and class, commenting that "by marrying Phoebe, [Holgrave] gains both the House of the Seven Gables and the Maine lands… [he] is ruthless in exploiting Phoebe, both obtaining her property and securing her household labour as his wife in a process of expropriation whose economic motive is scarcely concealed by his romantic adoration of her" (Lawson 1209). Holgrave and Phoebe will have a heteronormative marriage with children – and have already participated in generational inheritance, claiming Jaffrey's estate as their marital home – so their normativity is already strong in practice. Clifford and Hepzibah will presumably retain their queerness, but once again within the seclusion of the interior of a house, with the further removal to the countryside, leaving them relatively inconsequential to the outside world. Brook Thomas concludes that although the non-normative agents in the romance are regarded as strong forces throughout a majority of the narrative, they cannot overcome the hegemony of the plot's closure, which I characterize as heteronormativity. It is stronger, and asserts its power to dominate even in the face of positive otherness. He argues that:

> Hawthorne's romance shows how the cherished American assumption that each man and each woman is an autonomous self capable of writing his or her own destiny leads not to a progressive society but to a conservative one, how a country founded on romantic visions of the possible develops into a mass culture that robs citizens of the power to conceive a world different from the one in which they live. (Thomas 196)

Because Hepzibah and Clifford's is an insular queerness, it will die out and be replaced by the ultimate normativity found in Phoebe and Holgrave's marriage. For Brown, Phoebe's normalizing effects contribute to "the modernization of the Pyncheons and the Maules into a nineteenth-century middle-class family living in a wooden country home. [This] depends on and reflects the rise of American bourgeois domesticity", characterized by Phoebe's natural fulfillment of gendered labour (93-4). While they live, Hepzibah and Clifford will stand as offshoots of Phoebe and Holgrave's heteronormative marriage, living within the influential paradigms of their home, and when they are gone there will be a normative couple and their children to inherit the Pyncheon wealth and property, and pass it on to the next generation through further inheritance. Though Hepzibah and Clifford exert their queerness in positive and imaginative ways throughout the narrative, their vision of alterity and their identities as queer characters are ultimately subsumed by normativity, and it has little effect on the wider world outside the doors of the House of the Seven Gables.

Conclusion

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's three major novels, the tension between queerness and normativity is clear. In *The Scarlet Letter*, queer openings appear in narrative places where the characters I read as queer resist Puritan heteronormativity, marriage, and typical kinship networks. Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl are able to queer rigid normativity by rejecting hegemonic social forces and anticipating a futurity that is not bound to such restrictive paradigms. In this novel, characters' queer assertions seem futile, but Hawthorne's narrative openings suggest the possibility of queerness' endurance well past the novel's close.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, Miles Coverdale's fluid desires express a similar ambition for a queer future predicated on his vision of queer sociality. His love for both Hollingsworth and Zenobia suggests the possibility of queer expressions within otherwise normative interpersonal and social frameworks, but the essence of a utopia is that it is an idealized, future state of things, so Coverdale's personal queer utopia of fluid desires and non-normativity at Blithedale cannot be realized in his own time, even in a space as removed from the normative world's hegemonic paradigms as Blithedale. I do not read the tension between queerness and normativity in this novel as being resolved by the same positive, anticipatory queer potentiality that I believe *The Scarlet Letter* does. No, this particular Hawthorne work posits queerness throughout, but eventually reasserts a normative balance.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, queerness is most impactfully practiced by Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon within the domesticity of a house through the tenets of queer time and queer sociability. Their queerness is matched by Phoebe's adherence to normativity. While Phoebe and her normativity exist in dialogue with Hepzibah and Clifford's queerness within the house, each influencing the other to some degree, they prove too entrenched in their disparate

philosophies to change. Hepzibah and Clifford's positive queer sociality cannot endure in the face of Phoebe and Holgrave's marriage and eventual children – they will perpetuate heteronormativity once Hepzibah and Clifford are gone. We as readers understand that queerness in this novel is not abandoned, like in *The Blithedale Romance*, but overpowered by and subsumed within nineteenth-century normativity.

This thesis charts such tensions but does not seek to neatly solve the question of whether Hawthorne used his novels to advocate for queerness within normative plot structures. I do not believe I could definitively argue this, but moreover, I do not think that is the methodological point of close reading canonical American novels through the lens of queerness. The point is to show how the logics of queerness create openings for queer agents to resist and influence the normativity of their story worlds through their interiority, desires, and actions. A hopeful reading would contend that such resistance is sustained, but this would really only replicate the reader's own internal biases rather than offering a nuanced understanding, because in some of these novels, a normative framework is indeed imposed upon those who deviate. To critically reflect upon these queer openings in otherwise normative plot structures, without retroactively asserting Hawthorne as a queer author, instead widens the critical field of Hawthorne scholarship through modern interpretations. I believe any contention that labels Hawthorne a queer author to be an anachronism that is simply too broad and unrealistic to prove. I do believe, however, that the nuances in his writing allow for varied interpretations of his characters and their productive queer expressions, and that such interpretations can therefore support a critically plausible queer reading of his major works.

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