"I am mother's child": Nathaniel Hawthorne's Moderate Feminism in *The Scarlet Letter*

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Critical discussions surrounding Nathaniel Hawthorne's views on feminism in *The Scarlet Letter* chiefly focus on his portrayal of Hester.[1] This article, however, focuses on Pearl and the novel's depiction of maternity. Recent studies reevaluate Pearl as being more than a symbol of sin[2] : for example, Cindy Lou Daniels argues that Pearl is "the representative 'girl-child' who would grow into a representative 'female-woman'—a woman in no manner bound to the Puritan female code of conduct" (229). Pearl refuses to conform to Puritan norms throughout the novel and represents a new perspective on women's roles. However, Pearl's position is ambiguous as she ultimately ceases her wild behavior and later is said to be happily married, having made "a home" in "that unknown region" (*CE* 1: 263, 262). To examine Pearl's seemingly contradictory nature, I will investigate her strong attachment to her mother and show how her duality embodies Hawthorne's ambiguous attitude toward feminism. As a "mother's child," Pearl has the potential to subvert Puritan society's patriarchal order, and the final reunion of Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl on the scaffold can be seen as a triumph of maternity. However, the strong mother-child relationship simultaneously serves to mitigate radicalism, rendering the novel's feminism less subversive. By exploring the power of the maternal sphere, Hawthorne engages the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres, and Hester and Pearl's relationship ultimately brings them closer to a Victorian ideal of true womanhood. While Pearl is not as radical as her mother, she is strong enough to overcome the old patriarchal system and thus, she represents Hawthorne's complex feminist position. This article will discuss how Pearl, who becomes a less subversive but not altogether conservative mother herself, resembles the "fair ladies" in Hawthorne's other novels, thereby complicating the seemingly fixed binary of dark/fair lady which is a popular critical convention.

1. The Triumph of the Maternal Sphere

As critics have discussed extensively, Hester and Pearl are compared to the Madonna and her baby Christ at the beginning of the novel: "Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent; something which should remind him, indeed, but only by contrast, of that sacred image of sinless motherhood, whose infant was to redeem the world" (*CE* 1: 56). John Gatta, examining how interest in the Divine Maternity is found in the works of Protestant writers, argues that "[e]specially for writers like Hawthorne and Stowe, figures of divine maternity [...] challenged the predominantly masculine symbol-system inherited from Puritan forebears" (4). Indeed, the problem of religion is deeply intertwined with that of gender in the novel. In "The Custom-House," Hawthorne tells about his "first ancestor," who "was a ruler in the Church" with "all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil" and was symbolized by "his hard severity towards a woman" of the Quakers; and about his son who "inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches" (*CE* 1: 9). It is worth noting it is not only that the issues of religion and gender that are intermingled, but also the severity and "the persecuting spirit" of the Puritans as being something inherited paternally from father to son. In the main story, sin is intertwined with gender as Hester chiefly sees her sin in terms not so much of morality as of gender. In her famous speculation in Chapter 13, she negatively speculates on the happiness of "the whole race of womanhood," asking herself whether their "existence [was] worth accepting, even to the happiest among them" (*CE* 1: 165). This speculation, which seems to be shared by Hawthorne himself, is repeatedly shown at the end of the novel, where Hester tells the women who come to her cottage about the future change in gender situation that will make possible "the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (*CE* 1: 263). In this "feminist analysis" (Baym 116) is found Hawthorne's question about Puritan Fathers and their male-dominated society as well as his ambivalent consciousness about his own gender.[3]

Partly reflecting Hawthorne's criticism of paternalism, Pearl shows disobedience to the Puritan rule and a strong attachment to her mother, and is actively involved in protecting her mother-child relationship. She repeatedly confronts "the children of the Puritans," who taunt her and her mother, and "put them all to flight" (*CE* 1: 102); then, "[t]he victory accomplished, Pearl returned quietly to her mother, and looked up smiling into her face" (*CE* 1: 103). Pearl is connected with gayety and the light of sunshine, which starkly contrasts with "the blackest shade of Puritanism" (*CE* 1: 232). As David Greven aptly states, Pearl's strong relationship with nature makes her "mar[k] a place where femininity and Nature triumphantly merge, thwarting male patriarchal, Christian rule" (217). Through not submitting to the Puritan system (while her mother ostensibly does), Pearl grows to be independent of any system either in the past or of her time, "as if she had been made afresh, out of new elements, and must perforce be permitted to live her own life, and be a law unto herself" (*CE* 1: 135).

Embodying something other than a Puritan child, Pearl identifies herself as “mother’s child.” At the Governor’s Hall, when Father Wilson asks Pearl who she is, she does not give an expected answer:

> “[…] Art thou a Christian child,--ha? Dost know thy catechism? Or art thou one of those naughty elfs or fairies, whom we thought to have left behind us, with other relics of Papistry, in merry old England?”
>
> “I am mother’s child,” answered the scarlet vision, “and my name is Pearl!” (*CE* 1: 110)

While Father Wilson uses the Catholic/Protestant contrast and the Old World/New World contrast in identifying the girl, Pearl’s answer that she is “mother’s child” transcends the differences between religious or political sects and even surpasses religion itself. Denying that she was made by the “Heavenly Father” (*CE* 1: 111), she answers that she was “plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses, that grew by the prison-door” (*CE* 1: 112), which may further remind readers of “a wild rose-bush” that is believed to have “sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson” (*CE* 1: 48). As Michael J. Colacurcio suggests, “Anne Hutchinson is not implausibly taken as a sort of foremother of American feminism” (“Woman’s” 109), and along with the fact that Hester is clearly connected with Ann Hutchinson in the novel, Pearl can be seen as a daughter of feminists.[4] Though Pearl’s answer is attributed to her temporal “perversity” (*CE* 1: 112), her self-identification as “mother’s child”—or a daughter of feminists—shows the supremacy of the maternal sphere and even a challenge to the patriarchal rule.

Further, Pearl’s attitude toward Dimmesdale changes depending on the extent to which he appreciates and protects the maternal relationship. In the Governor’s Hall, when Dimmesdale speaks in Hester’s favor regarding her maternal rights, Pearl shows a rare attitude of tenderness, which greatly surprises Hester: “Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf, stole softly towards him, and, taking his hand in the grasp of both her own, laid her cheek against it; a caress so tender, and withal so unobtrusive, that her mother, who was looking on, asked herself,--'Is that my Pearl?'" (*CE* 1: 115). While Pearl receives a kiss from Dimmesdale in this scene, she strongly rejects this in the scene at the forest, by which time Dimmesdale "ha[s] been admitted within the circle of the mother's feelings" (*CE* 1: 208) and becomes "a dangerous rival" (*CE* 1: 212) for Pearl. It is when Dimmesdale confesses his sin and publicly recognizes mother and child that Pearl willingly kisses him.

In this final scene, Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl are depicted publicly as a family of three. Greven, reading Pearl as "the pre-oedipal girl who resists her oedipalization" (211), suggests that in this scene "Pearl is socialized—in other words, properly heterosexualized" (212). Hawthorne uses the word "sportive" (*CE* 1: 256) to portray Dimmesdale's attitude toward Pearl, and Greven reads the "kiss on the lips" as "a prefiguration of the mature heterosexual eros" and states that "Hawthorne stages the daughter's induction into the patriarchal order, through the oedipal seal of the father's kiss" (222), which will separate Pearl from Hester.[5] However, how much does this scene actually represent a patriarchal picture? While it is true that Pearl "is socialized" in this scene, the picture of the three paradoxically evokes a mother-child relationship, as women's strength is shown to be more powerful than men's. Seeing Dimmesdale's wobbling steps, Father Wilson—who is Dimmesdale's "professional father" (*CE* 1: 150)—offers "his support" (*CE* 1: 251); however, Dimmesdale "tremulously, but decidedly, repelled the old man's arm" and instead, continues to walk toward Hester and Pearl with movement that "resemble[s] the wavering effort of an infant, with its mother's arms in view, outstretched to tempt him forward" (*CE* 1: 251). Here, the relationship between Dimmesdale and Hester is turned into that between a mother and a child. Then, at the scaffold, Dimmesdale rejects the hand of Chillingworth, whose interest in Dimmesdale was thought by people to be "his concord of paternal and reverential love" (*CE* 1: 125), and instead, "extend[s] his hand to the woman of the scarlet letter," asking for her "strength": "Thy strength, Hester; but let it be guided by the will which God hath granted me! This wretched and wronged old man is opposing it with all his might!—with all his own might and the fiend's! Come, Hester, come! Support me up yonder scaffold!" (*CE* 1: 253). Here, Dimmesdale rejects the controlling power of two patriarchal father figures (while he followed their instructions in the previous two scenes at the scaffold), and turning his face to "the woman and the child" (*CE* 1: 256), asks for Woman's—or Mother's—power. After his confession, Dimmesdale lies down with his head supported by Hester's bosom, leaving Chillingworth defeated beside him. As critics have put it, this scene evokes the image of *Pietà*, again connecting Hester with Madonna, whose power overwhelms that of fathers. In this final scene, the narrator repeatedly notes Dimmesdale's triumphant air, but we may ask: In what way is he triumphant? In terms of religion, Dimmesdale's final confession can be interpreted either as his reconciliation with God or as his triumph over the temptation of Hester; however, it can also be interpreted otherwise. In terms of gender, Dimmesdale's confession can be seen as the triumph of maternity since Dimmesdale chooses not to remain a hypocritical child of patriarchal Fathers, but instead to publicly appeal for Woman's strength and to become a "mother's child." Thus, with its scope for these entirely different interpretations, the scene involving Dimmesdale's confession shows how maternity may subversively prevail over paternity; this may reveal Hawthorne's rather radical criticism of the patriarchal rule of the Puritans.

Dimmesdale's death is followed by that of Chillingworth's, a patriarchal father, whose inheritance is given to Pearl. According to Deborah Gorham, "[t]he heroine of nineteenth-century fiction would achieve, through marriage, both love and worldly success, and in the process, she would never need to sacrifice the maidenly modesty so essential to femininity" (53). However, Pearl becomes rich not through marriage but through Chillingworth's inheritance, which, like American girls in Henry James's novels, gives Pearl economic power and agency. Chillingworth's property is inherited not through a father-son connection but through a father-daughter one, and, thereby, a form of power that had been exercised exclusively by men is, in the end, passed on to a girl, who symbolically represents "[t]he angel and apostle of the coming revelation" (*CE* 1: 263). Embodying democratic ideas especially in terms of gender, Pearl hints at Hawthorne's democratic nationalism as "the richest heiress of her day, in the New World" (*CE* 1: 261), who "will take charge, and remain in charge, of her own life" (Daniels 234). Additionally, despite inheriting Chillingworth's property, Pearl continues to be described as "the daughter of Hester Prynne" (*CE* 1: 261) and not as "the daughter of Arthur and Hester" or "the stepdaughter of Roger Chillingworth." Thus, the maternal sphere prevails once again, and Pearl remains "mother's child" throughout the novel.

2. The Softening Role of Maternity

While Hawthorne certainly illustrates a change in Pearl at the scene of Dimmesdale's confession, he does not give any more reference to Pearl's sexuality or even to her adolescent life. The next picture of Pearl that is shown to readers is one of a wife who finds a "home" in an "unknown region" (*CE* 1: 263, 262), evoking a rather conservative view of gender roles. Indeed, while Pearl represents a different view of gender than that held by the Puritans, it is not extremely radical in that what is emphasized is Mother, not Woman. Pearl makes Hester remain a mother, preventing the latter from becoming radical. In Chapter 8, Hester rejects Mistress Hibbins' invitation to the meeting in the forest, saying "I must tarry at home, and keep watch over my little Pearl," and thus "the child saved her [mother] from Satan's snare" (*CE* 1: 117); also, "had little Pearl never come to her from the spiritual world [...] 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 the Puritan establishment" (*CE* 1: 165). Hester, thus, would have become a radical reformer or a witch who would openly challenge the Puritan rule, and it is her maternity that stops this from occurring. Pearl's power culminates at the scene in the forest. Before this scene, Hester, "who has once been woman, and ceased to be so, might at any moment become a woman again" (*CE* 1: 164), and the situation changes when she meets Dimmesdale in the forest. Taking off the letter A, Hester also takes off the cap which covered her abundant hair. She shows "a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood" and "[h]er sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past" (*CE* 1: 202); that is, she "become[s] a woman again" (*CE* 1: 164). Pearl, however, strongly resists her mother's change, and orders Hester to put the A on again. While this act tends to show Pearl as a law-keeper, it is important to note that her resistance is chiefly based on her feeling that their mother-daughter relationship is endangered. It is "as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it" (*CE* 1: 208); when Hester puts the letter A on again, Pearl "clasp[s] Hester in her arms," saying "Now thou art my mother indeed! And I am thy little Pearl!" (*CE* 1: 211). Considering that Hester's feminist speculation centers on Woman in relation to Man, Pearl making Hester remain a "mother" instead of "woman" stops Hester from becoming radical, and consequently, makes the feminist argument in the novel less radical.

The strong mother-child relationship in *The Scarlet Letter* can be compared with that in one of Hawthorne's earlier tales, "The Gentle Boy." Both works show a child who is persecuted by Puritan children, and considering that the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* mentions a Quaker along with an Antinomian, an Indian, and a witch as an example of the object of persecution in the Puritan society, it is reasonable to see some similarity between the positions of Pearl and Ilbrahim. At the same time, they are starkly contrasted, one as a boy who is passively killed by Puritan children and the other a girl who actively attacks and drives them back, whereby Hawthorne presents an overturning of gendered norms. Further, such an intertwinement of gender and religion as is seen in *The Scarlet Letter* can be found in "The Gentle Boy," in which Catherine goes up to the pulpit where the male Puritan minister has just finished his sermon and passionately denounces the Puritans' persecution of Quakers. Here is shown not only the power dynamics in relation to religion, but also to gender, and Catherine's character as "a woman of might passions" (*Tales* 41) may to a certain extent link her with Hester.

A crucial difference, however, is that the mother-child tie is never broken in *The Scarlet Letter* while it does in "The Gentle Boy." In the latter, Catherine follows the "voice [that] speakth within" her which orders her to "[b]reak the bonds of natural affection, martyr thy [her] love, and know that in all these things eternal wisdom hath its ends," and in order to pursue her religious faith leaves her child, her "precious jewel" (*Tales* 44); on the other hand, Hester, "caught hold of Pearl, and drew her forcibly into her arms, confronting the old Puritan magistrate with almost a fierce expression. Alone in the world, cast off by it, and with this sole treasure to keep her heart alive," desperately appeals for her maternal rights (*CE* 1: 112). While Catherine chooses to be a martyr to her faith, Hester is "ready to defend them [maternal rights] to the death" (*CE* 1: 113). In this sense, Hawthorne seems to attribute the tragedy of Ilbrahim not only to the Puritans' persecution, but also to the break in the bond between Ilbrahim and his mother, who tells him that she "ha[s] ill performed a mother's part" (*Tales* 43). Recognizing Ilbrahim after the frantic speech on the pulpit, "it would seem that the indulgence of natural love had given her mind a momentary sense of its errors, and made her know how far she had strayed from duty, in following the dictates of a wild fanaticism" (*Tales* 42). Hawthorne clearly presents maternal love as antithetical to fanaticism or radicalism, and criticizes Catherine for being "neglectful of the holiest trust which can be committed to a woman" (*Tales* 49). After Ilbrahim's death, "Catherine's fanaticism had become wilder by the sundering of all human ties" (*Tales* 55); however, later his "gentle spirit came from heaven to teach his parent a true religion," which might indicate faith in natural affection and "human ties" (*Tales* 55).

The emphasis on maternal love to a certain extent shows a conservative view of gender norms; however, Hawthorne appears to positively appreciate its function in restraining radicalism. In "The Gentle Boy," the narrator repeatedly notes the fanatic nature of Quakers while criticizing the severe persecution of the Quakers by the Puritans, and in these two poles may be found Hawthorne's distance from any kind of radicalism. In the story, furthermore, maternity powerfully serves to transcend conflicting sects. After Catherine gives a frantic speech on the Puritan pulpit, Tobias cannot say anything before the public; however, his wife Dorothy "dr[aws] near the Quaker woman" and says "I will be his mother" in front of the congregation, and Catherine receives her offer despite the difference in religion (*Tales* 43). Here is shown the strong power of sympathy among mothers, which transcends the Quaker-Puritan conflict and even exceeds patriarchal power.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, maternity has the power to control Hester's chief characteristic, her passion: "Mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society; and in the nature of the child seemed to be perpetuated those unquiet elements that had distracted Hester Prynne before Pearl's birth, but had since begun to be soothed away by the softening influences of maternity" (*CE* 1: 94-5). In the chapter titled "Another View of Hester," the narrator reveals how the relationship between Hester and the community changed. As "[h]atred, by a gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love," Hester "never battled with the public, but submitted uncomplainingly to its worst usage" (*CE* 1: 160). While Hester is "characterized by a certain state and dignity" with "a haughty smile" (*CE* 1: 52) and stands "in a sphere by herself" (*CE* 1: 54) at the beginning of the novel, she gradually becomes "self-devoted" with "a well-spring of human tenderness" (*CE* 1: 161). She now offers charity to the poor and devotedly takes care of the sick; her helpfulness and compassion—namely her "power to do, and power to sympathize" (*CE* 1: 161)—make people interpret the meaning of the letter A differently from the way the Puritan fathers had originally intended. For many people, the letter A comes to mean "Able," since "so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength" (*CE* 1: 161). Hester is "quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of man," and in fact becomes "self-ordained a Sister of Mercy" (*CE* 1: 160-61, 161). The Sisters of Mercy are a Catholic organization established in 1827 in Dublin, Ireland, by a Catholic woman, Catherine McAuley, who adhered to her Catholic faith despite the conversion of her other family members to Protestantism. The Sisters of Mercy have been energetically engaged in charitable projects such as visiting the sick and taking care of the poor, and one of their important aims is to offer women shelter.[6] The charity Hester shows does resemble that of the Sisters of Mercy; in addition to helping the poor and the sick, she offers her cottage as a shelter for "[w]omen [...] 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" (*CE* 1: 263). Here, Hawthorne combines his own nineteenth-century context with the seventeenth-century one to explore women's power. Evoking a gendered image from Catholicism again, the description of Hester as "a Sister of Mercy" represents "women's strength" that could match the strength of men of authority, and the narrator's words that the letter A "had the effect of the cross on a nun's bosom," which gives Hester "a kind of sacredness" (*CE* 1: 163) imply that Hawthorne portrays women's strength positively. Simultaneously, this image is made less challenging since Hester's maternity transforms her passion into the less subversive *compassion*, which in fact makes Hester's femininity closer to the nineteenth-century domestic ideal of womanhood wherein helpfulness and sympathy are essential. Also, it is worth noting that nineteenth-century America saw an increasing interest in the Madonna, and Divine Motherhood came to be linked with "an ideal of sacred womanhood enforced by the Victorian cult of sentimental domesticity" (Gatta 6), that is, the angel in the house. Hester's Madonna-like image thus becomes less heretical by the end the novel; as seventeenth and nineteenth-century contexts become entwined, Hester's maternity brings her closer to the latter's model of true womanhood.

3. The Maternal Education of Pearl

The intense mother-child relationship between Hester and Pearl in fact evokes the Victorian idea of the "separate spheres" in nineteenth-century America, where the sphere of men was clearly separated from that of women, and children were brought up through "exclusive and intense maternal parenting" (Theriot 76). Particularly, the daughter "over-identifies with her mother" and "[t]he boundary-fuzziness between mothers and daughters affects the content of feminine ideology" (Theriot 76).[7] The intense mother-daughter relationship frequently makes them like sisters or friends, while a mother, who often suffers from marital unhappiness, teaches her daughter the female duties of self-denial, domesticity, and practical arts (Theriot 80-1). In *The Scarlet Letter*, instead of becoming a witch or a "foundress of a religious sect" (*CE* 1: 165) that would subvert patriarchal Puritanism, Hester becomes a mother, and, as the narrator suggests, "the mother's enthusiasm of thought" is turned toward "the education of her child" since "Providence, in the person of this little girl, had assigned to Hester's charge the germ and blossom of womanhood, to be cherished and developed amid a host of difficulties" (*CE* 1: 165). While the novel follows how Hester (and Dimmesdale) changes, it also shows how Pearl develops; in other words, the novel can be read as Pearl's *Bildungsroman*, where the central problem concerns the kind of woman Pearl may become through her mother's parenting.

Hester's initial education of Pearl is based on traditional religious education that matches the one in the Puritan society: "Hester Prynne, the daughter of a pious home, very soon after her talk with the child about her Heavenly Father, had begun to inform her of those truths which the human spirit, at whatever stage of immaturity, imbibes with such eager interest" (*CE* 1: 111). Hester, however, cannot apply the "undue severity" usually found in the patriarchal education of the seventeenth century because she was "the lonely mother of this one child," and she lets Pearl do anything she wishes to, which leads to the development of her spirit, independent of Puritan norms (*CE* 1: 91). Hester's maternal education, thus, is presented as something other than the seventeenth-century severe and paternal education.

Significantly, the focus of Pearl's education is not so much on whether she becomes a religious person as it is on whether she will be able to control the passion that she has inherited from her mother. In her childhood, Pearl embodies Hester's inner passion as "fire," and she sees the world as full of enemies. However, as Hester is engaged in charity in the spirit of sisterhood, Pearl gradually becomes interested in human ties and repeatedly asks her mother about her biological father. During this stage, Hester wonders whether Pearl would become a sympathetic friend to her if she were to tell her the truth: “She [Pearl] took her mother’s hand in both her own, and gazed into her eyes with an earnestness that was seldom seen in her wild and capricious character. The thought occurred to Hester, that the child might really be seeking to approach her with childlike confidence, and doing what she could, and as intelligently as she knew how, to establish a meeting-point of sympathy” (*CE* 1: 179). Hester, however, decides not to tell Pearl the truth, saying to herself, “No! If this be the price of the child’s sympathy, I cannot pay it!” (*CE* 1: 181). While Dimmesdale hides the truth from the public, Hester does so from her child. As the narrator suggests, Pearl “wanted—what some people want throughout life—a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanize and make her capable of sympathy. But there was time enough yet for little Pearl” (*CE* 1: 184). If girlhood is characterized by innocence and cheerfulness, and the transition to womanhood accompanied by the acquisition of both grief and sympathy, Hester postpones Pearl becoming a woman by leaving her daughter innocent.

It is once Pearl knows the truth—and knows grief—as a result of her father’s confession that she changes and acquires sympathy: “The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father’s cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it” (*CE* 1: 256). In this seemingly conforming picture, “the world” does not mean the Puritan society, as Pearl leaves it soon after her father’s death; instead, the “world” here may signify “the sphere of sympathy or human contact” (*CE* 1: 133), which she lacked before. The ultimate goal of

Pearl's education toward womanhood is to acquire sympathy or human ties. By turning ***passion*** into ***compassion***, Pearl, who had "a stern, unsympathizing look of discontent" as a child (*CE* 1: 93), becomes a sympathetic woman evocative of a nineteenth-century model of true womanhood.

In this novel, Hawthorne exclusively connects sympathy with motherhood, sisterhood, and the women's sphere. At the beginning of the novel, only one woman in the crowd comments sympathetically on Hester, and she is "a young wife, holding a child by the hand" (*CE* 1: 51) among the women who remind the narrator of "the man-like Elizabeth" and who stand by the side of the Puritan Fathers (*CE* 1: 50). Also, Hester sees in Dimmesdale "sympathies which these men lack" when asserting her maternal rights (*CE* 1: 113). The quality of sympathy, which is linked with the feminine, is shown as what is lacked in the patriarchal Puritan system that gives Hester "a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her" (*CE* 1: 89). Neither the sympathetic mother at the beginning of the novel nor Dimmesdale can survive in an unsympathetic seventeenth century Puritan community; however, the nineteenth-century sympathetic spirit is succeeded by Hester and Pearl.[8] The Puritan society tries to separate Pearl from Hester to give the child what they think is a proper and better education, and Hester herself once negatively wonders if "a noble woman [...] grow[s] out of this elfish child" (*CE* 1: 180). Despite these negative expectations, Pearl does grow to be a noble woman, and this positive portrait of Pearl indicates Hawthorne's positive attitude toward maternal education and "a quality of awful sacredness in the relation between this mother and this child" (*CE* 1: 114).

In the "Conclusion," the narrator suggests that Pearl's "wild, rich nature had been softened and subdued, and made capable of a woman's gentle happiness" (*CE* 1: 262).[9] While this rather conservative portrait of Pearl evokes the nineteenth-century image of the angel in the house, it is worth noting that what is emphasized in Pearl's marriage is not a husband-wife relationship but a mother-daughter relationship. The narrator reveals that Hester "was the object of love and interest" of Pearl's, and, in Hester's cottage, there were several valuable things, which Pearl selected or made with "a fond heart" (*CE* 1: 262). As Robert K. Martin notes, letters between Hester and Pearl and embroidery represent "a private, mysterious female realm" (518), and the strong mother-daughter relationship is underlined once again by the narrator's words that Pearl "would most joyfully have entertained that sad and lonely mother at her fireside" (*CE* 1: 262). Furthermore, it is significant that Pearl is shown as a mother herself. As the narrator reveals, "once, Hester was seen embroidering a baby-garment, with such a lavish richness of golden fancy as would have raised a public tumult, had any infant, thus apparelled, been shown to our sombre-hued community" (*CE* 1: 262). Though where Pearl lives is left "unknown" (*CE* 1: 262), it is certain that the place is outside the rigid Puritan society of the colonial period, and Pearl succeeds her mother's way of dressing her child gorgeously. While paternal succession prevails in the Puritan society, Pearl's strong attachment to Hester makes the maternal inheritance quite powerful. However, this ending makes Pearl a sympathetic mother, not a "woman," which presents a safe image of womanhood and evades the argument concerning gender politics that lies at the center of Hester's story.

Indeed, by having a domesticating power, Pearl can be linked with Hawthorne's so-called fair ladies. Virginia Ogden Birdsall argues that Hawthorne's "fair-haired maidens," who Birdsall suggests are depicted with the symbols of "birds," "mediums," and "sunshine," are not merely the embodiment of a "type," but play an important part in the novels, representing redeeming human love. Though Birdsall names Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda as Hawthorne's "fair-haired maidens," we may situate Pearl along with them (though her hair is dark); Pearl is frequently compared to a bird, plays a role of Hester's "messenger of anguish" (*CE* 1: 256), and is strongly connected with the image of sunshine. Pearl, like her fair-haired sisters, plays the role of redemption in the novel; she kisses her father's lips when he confesses his sin, and "[a] spell [i]s broken" (*CE* 1: 256).

Pearl's resemblance to Hawthorne's "fair ladies" further undermines the seemingly fixed opposition of the fair/dark lady that has long been deployed in the criticism of Hawthorne's works. In such criticism, even feminist critics tend to see so-called fair ladies as conventional, male-centered constructions; while the dark lady is "a 'real' woman," who "embodie[s] creative force," the fair lady is "a 'social myth' invented by patriarchal culture to discipline 'real' women" (Baym 108). Pearl, however, has much in common with the "fair ladies" even though she challenges patriarchy instead of being subject to it. Additionally, she is "creative"; in one scene, Pearl, who "inherited her mother's gift for devising drapery and costume," creates "the letter A,--but freshly green, instead of scarlet" (*CE* 1: 178) with eel-grass. As Pearl changes the letter from scarlet to green, we can see that she inherits her mother's penchant for resisting the patriarchal system and creates her own less radical form of resistance. With these mixed images, Pearl represents what can be called a "moderate" feminism, neither radical nor comepletely conventional, thus suggesting that Hawthorne's depiction of women is more complex than the simple contrast of the dark/fair lady.[10]

In fact, apart from Pearl, three other "fair ladies"—Phoebe, Priscilla, and Hilda—have strong maternal relationships, demonstrating that maternal power represents much more than the patriarchal system's relatively simple female construct. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Phoebe's practical skills are regarded as what she inherits from her mother, and Hepzibah emphasizes the relationship between Phoebe and her mother, saying, "But these things must have come to you with your mother's blood. I never knew a Pyncheon that had any turn for them!" (*CE* 2: 77). In *The Blithedale Romance*, one of the differences between Zenobia and Priscilla is shown to be their maternal relationship; while "from her mother's gentle character, she [Priscilla] had inherited a profound and still capacity of affection," Zenobia "grew up in affluence" though "she lacked a mother's care" (*CE* 3: 186, 189). In *The Marble Faun*, Hilda not only strongly links her roots in New England with her deceased mother (she once says to Kenyon, "But what have I done that a girl of New England birth and culture, with the right sense that her mother taught her, and the conscience that she developed in her, should not do?" [*CE* 4: 367]), but also takes care of a shrine of the Virgin Mary and desperately seeks help from the Divine Maternity in Rome. The relationships between these "fair ladies" and their mothers strengthen the conventional idea of the angel of the house in that they evoke domesticity. However, simultaneously, these "mothers' children" show the strength of, or even the supremacy of, maternal power by leading a new family at the end of the novel, which is a different model from the traditional, patriarchal one. Considering that these are all American girls—New England girls, more specifically—the new, democratic families they lead at the end of the novel can be seen as Hawthorne's vision for the nation.

Pearl's marriage at the end of *The Scarlet Letter* is reminiscent of the marriages of other so-called "fair ladies" in Hawthorne's novels. Pearl's marriage in an "unknown region" (*CE* 1: 262) is much like that of Phoebe's in *The House of the Gables*, where her new family happily leaves the town "for the present" (*CE* 2: 314) since they belong to "the future condition of society" (*CE* 2: 45). Pearl also belongs to "the future condition of society" (*CE* 2: 45) where "the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" can be found (*CE* 1: 263). This suspenseful ending reveals Hawthorne's limited, yet potentially positive, views on the rising feminist movements of his day. Unlike late-nineteenth-century feminist movements, the feminism of Hawthorne's time did not necessarily question the institution of marriage, recognizing the power of women in the home instead. Hawthorne brings nineteenth-century values, especially those of gender, to a novel set in the seventeenth century. By depicting Pearl's development, he celebrates maternal power; evoking the Victorian ideal of separate spheres, Hester and Pearl's strong mother-child relationship counters the power of the patriarchal system. Further, Pearl takes over the old, patriarchal society as "the richest heiress of her day, in the New World" (*CE* 1: 261), suggesting Hawthorne's democratic view of the United States' social system. At the same time, Hawthorne depicts maternity as capable of moderating radicalism, and Pearl's strong maternal attachment prevents feminist arguments regarding Hester's story from becoming radicalized. Pearl, representing Hawthorne's democratic nationalism and distance from radicalism, is a complex character who plays the essential role of embodying Hawthorne's moderate feminism.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was given as a paper at the 21st Summer Meeting of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society on June 4th, 2016.

[1] Traditional criticism has largely accorded that Hawthorne was skeptic about, or indifferent to, social movements, and the view that sees Hawthorne as misogynist has been accelerated by a famous phrase in his letter to William D. Ticknor written in 1855, "a d----d mob of those scribbling women" (*CE* 17: 304). On the other hand, Nina Baym, in "Revisiting Hawthorne's Feminism," regards the so-called "dark ladies" in Hawthorne's novels as real women, and positively evaluates *The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance*, and *The Marble Faun*, suggesting that Hawthorne situates at the center those women who deviate from or challenge conventional gender norms. Robert S. Levine points out that contemporary feminist figures such as Swisshelm, Bloomer,

Greenwood, and Grimke highly appreciated Hawthorne's works including *The Scarlet Letter*. Michael J. Colacurcio reasonably suggests that Hawthorne is "[n]ot quite a 'feminist'" but "he himself stands in awe of the resisting figure he names 'The Woman'" ("Woman's" 106).

[2] Traditional criticism has seen Pearl as the symbol of sin (Whelan) or the Child of Nature (Abel). On the other hand, Anne Marie McNamara aptly points out the importance of Pearl's role in influencing Dimmesdale's final confession in public. T. Walter Herbert, Jr. examines Pearl as the embodiment of Hawthorne's anxiety about Una's and his own gender.

[3] Robert K. Martin suggests that "[h]owever much Hawthorne may fear the power of Hester, he is deeply identified with her as an outcast from his own community—publicly humiliated, accused of improper conduct, and expelled from the place of the fathers" (518) and argues that Hester represents Hawthorne's voice and succeeds in writing "her own text" (522) that evades male control of the community. Maria O'Malley argues that Hawthorne's novels deal with the silencing of women's voices, though this does not mean that Hawthorne silences them, but that he portrays female characters whose power makes male characters lose their self-possession.

[4] Colacurcio, in "Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*," fully discusses the relationship between Hester and Ann Hutchinson and suggests that "*The Scarlet Letter* might not be 'about' Ann Hutchinson, but it would be, consciously and emphatically, about antinomianism and 'the woman'" ("Footsteps" 319).

[5] James M. Mellard, using the Lacanian theory in his analysis of Pearl and Hester, discusses that at the scene of Dimmesdale's confession, Pearl "gains identity under the law of the father, but she loses the absolute narcissistic freedom of her natural ("premirror") condition" (203).

[6] A group of Sisters of Mercy came to Pittsburgh, United States for the first

time in 1843, and established a school in Rhode Ireland in 1850. <http://www.sistersofmercy.org/about-us/our-history/>

[7] Michael T. Gilmore examines how the novel establishes nineteenth-century middle-class identity, pointing out that "[t]he many scenes involving Hester and Pearl parallel the sometimes affectionate, sometimes troubled, mother-daughter relationships familiar to readers of domestic literature" (602). Gilmore suggests that Hester and Dimmesdale represent the differentiation of realms (public/private, man/woman). He sees Hester as "a female reformer two hundred years before her time," and "a prefigurement of the Gilded Age woman reformer" called the "New Woman," while Dimmesdale, "a sentimental novelist," embodies mid-century manhood (608). Jean Fagan Yellin also notices the novel's nineteenth-century contexts, suggesting that it deploys nineteenth-century antislavery women's discourse. This ideology, Yellin argues, is ultimately rejected by the novel. Leland S. Person sees African presence in Hester's mothering. He suggests that Hawthorne criticizes antislavery feminist discourse of his time as it identifies women with slaves without questioning the differences between white women and slave women.

[8] Kristin Boudreau points out that John Winthrop's idea of charity, which would unite a community, permeates the whole novel, and suggests that Hester requires in the end "the power to realize Winthrop's ideal of charity" (366).

[9] Hester and Pearl, to a certain extent, show a change in the idea of "feminine gentility" between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. The narrator suggests at the beginning of the novel that Hester "was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now recognized as its indication" (*CE* 1: 53). While the former idea of gentility is based on the European idea of

aristocracy, the latter is based more on morality than social positions. The portrait of Pearl shown at the end of the novel represents the transitional stage of feminine gentility; her gentility shows the mixture of the aristocratic one represented by “articles of comfort and luxury” and the moral one shown by her “delicate fingers” and “a fond heart” (*CE* 1: 262).

[10] By examining how nineteenth-century historical romancers saw seventeenth-century Puritan history, Michael Davitt Bell investigates “the natural heroine” as an antagonist of the father. He also shows that in many romances the natural heroine, “in disagreeing with the intolerance of the fathers, establishes the basis of the new society” (160). Though Bell chiefly focuses on Hester and discusses how Hawthorne subverts this convention in portraying Hester, “his natural heroine, dark rather than fair” (184), Pearl is also a potential “natural heroine.”

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