

Lost in the Confusion:
Addressing Father-Daughter Relationships in the Novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne

by
Andrew David Toews

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English
University of Manitoba
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Abstract

A reading of the father-daughter relationships in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne, this thesis examines *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance* in light of shifting domestic and economic ideals in nineteenth-century America. Beginning with a historical overview of an American society in transition, this thesis examines the instability of the institution of fatherhood as it appears in the selected novels. In Hawthorne's texts, the daughter is inevitably a victim of a male-dominated society that is both confused and threatened by new social models and the shifting of power that inevitably accompanies them. By recognizing the destabilisation of paternal identity in a culture where social prominence and responsibility is no longer centred in the home, this examination exposes the narcissistic self-doubt that drives Hawthorne's father figures to sacrifice their daughters in an attempt to maintain traditional male social roles.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Rick Magus. It pains me that such a fine friend did not have the opportunity to read and comment upon a work which owes so much to his encouragement and insight. A consummate father and steadfast friend, Rick can rest easy knowing that he would have had no place in the pages of Hawthorne. Rick, for all our times together, I thank you.

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Introduction

America in Transition

It is fitting that over a hundred and fifty years after its publication, *The Scarlet Letter* presides as Nathaniel Hawthorne's most celebrated and debated work. Written at the outset of Hawthorne's furious period of artistic inspiration, *The Scarlet Letter* remains as intriguing and as troubling a text today as it was in 1850. Published in the midst of an America turbulent with moral, political and social transformation, *The Scarlet Letter's* preeminence in Hawthorne's bibliography, not to mention America's, is altogether appropriate in respect to its ability to define his other works. *The Scarlet Letter* constructs America by deconstructing it, stripping it to its foundations without losing sight of what it has become by the mid nineteenth century. Identities and nationalities are blurred in Hawthorne's fiction; society is fractured and heterogeneous at best, and traditional family structures are challenged and resisted. Hawthorne refuses to dismiss or differentiate past from present, and the America that enshrouds its conflicted author is cast in a Puritan mode that is the foundation of country and novel alike. In fact, though nowhere more explicit than in *The Scarlet Letter*, America's Puritan past is forever infused in the themes and designs of Hawthorne's literature. Ideals and values that construct a nation of progress and prosperity are for Hawthorne a debatable blessing.

For Hawthorne, and for the majority of his fellow countrymen, the American ideal of nationhood is a masculine one. Adhering to a patriarchal interpretation of a male-dominated Christianity, and birthed from revolutionary politics, America leaves little

room for feminine discourse. Stephen Frank claims that “specialists in nineteenth-century women’s history have observed that ambitious, independent women, those who pushed gender boundaries beyond the confines of domesticity to establish public careers, frequently had supportive fathers as guides and inspirations” (162). Such fathers do not exist in Hawthorne’s work, and the daughters that are raised in his novels are given little hope of achieving such distinguished careers. Though Pearl and Hester Prynne epitomize a feminine struggle in a masculine society, they are merely the more celebrated members of a group of women that continually yet ineffectually resist narcissistic male desires for preeminence in a society which seems as eager to consume itself as it is to reproduce itself. The women of Hawthorne’s novels are forever at risk of becoming the means and medium through which men can reassert an increasingly confused dominance. Victims at worst, outcasts at best, Hawthorne’s female characters – Pearl and Hester, Priscilla, Zenobia, Alice Pyncheon and others – are caught in a surreal existence that suggests the possibility of an autonomous identity. But these women’s voices are invariably rejected and subsumed by a masculine prerogative fighting its own destabilisation in the face of changing economic and social ideals. In Hawthorne’s work, this cultural shift increases masculine anxiety on an individual and a social level, much to the detriment of the female community.

During the time when Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote the bulk of his work, American social and legal attitudes were rapidly challenging traditional modes of patriarchal control, especially in regards to male authority and preeminence in the nuclear family. Whereas children and wives had traditionally been under the control of the husband – a

social model specifically based on existing English common law – ideals and social sentiments began to give woman and children their own space by the mid nineteenth century. As a new capitalist economic model began to take precedence in American daily life, especially in the northeastern states where Hawthorne spent the majority of his time, nuclear family dynamics began to shift accordingly. In a traditional colonial household, the father's role in the home was one of both provider and master. In her detailed examination of the American family and child custody, Mary Ann Mason describes the colonial father's responsibility in the family hierarchy as an obligation "to provide adequate sustenance, vocational training, and, with some variation between the colonies, rudimentary education and religious training to all children (except the slave children) in his custody" (5). Mothers, according to Mason, were to assist in these tasks, and children performed chores as they were able.

But by the mid nineteenth century, the economics of America were shifting, and the new capitalist ideals began to create problems for the old economic and social models. Work no longer revolved around the rural or colonial home, and husbands were forced to find work that separated them from their families for the length of the workday. With the absence of a father figure to administer teaching, training and discipline in the home, the wife's familial and social role was altered and expanded. No longer subservient by virtue of her husband's mere presence, the wife and mother in nineteenth-century America assumed many of the duties that were previously expected of the husband and father. The raising of children, on a day-to-day basis, became the mother's task.

Concurrent with this shift in parental roles was a newfound interpretation of the

child itself. The state of childhood had traditionally been perceived as a site of resistance or conflict, insofar as the child was born in need of moral reform. Mason and Rodney Hessinger both cite New England as the epitome of a traditional Puritan, patriarchal social structure, a society in which children were traditionally viewed “at best, as miniature adults, and, at worst, as small creatures possessing evil tendencies that must be firmly tamed” (Mason 52). As the head of the household, the father’s responsibilities necessarily required him to set a standard for his children, both morally and socially, in the same way that he was expected to set that standard for his wife. But as the father’s absence from the home became unavoidable, a new shift in ideology was necessary to accommodate the mother’s newfound role as child rearer. In essence, a justification had to be made for a trust never before afforded the wife and mother. Rather than reconsider traditional, essentialist, interpretations of gender – a possibility not even embraced by a burgeoning women’s rights movement – American society began to redefine children according to the care available to them. According to Mason, “The colonial view of children as helping hands in a labour-scarce economy gave way to a romantic, emotional view of children, who were no longer legally akin to servants, under the complete control of their fathers or masters, but instead were deemed to have interests of their own. Increasingly, these interests became identified with the nurturing mother” (50). In other words, in order to assure themselves that their children were still receiving the care they needed despite the father’s absence, Americans decided that what was best for the children was in fact the mother. Evidently, such a shift was easier to accept than a mother who could successfully replace a father in his absence. One need only examine Hester’s

trial at the Governor's house to recognize the anxieties of such a shift.

The mother, in turn, became socially redefined through her children. Or, perhaps more accurately, traditional expectations of the mother that had lain dormant by virtue of her husband's precedence were now brought to the forefront by his absence. With a recognition of the child as now (necessarily) independent of its father, the mother became a nurturer in a family structure far more child-centred than it once was. The desire for children to be properly raised was emphasized on all levels of American society in the nineteenth century, and motherhood was consequently recast as a position of moral superiority. Professional child-rearing manuals, magazines, and even biographies increasingly stressed the mother's role as the primary care-giver that would ultimately shape her child's destiny.

This shift in expectations and responsibilities on both the mother's and the child's part was not a rapid movement, but by the time that Hawthorne wrote the majority of his work, legal expectations of the mother began to confirm newfound social attitudes. Where husbands and fathers had traditionally held full custody rights of children in English common law, legislation in various states, and especially Hawthorne's New England, began to consider mothers and children in light of individual circumstances. Mothers who could be proven to be morally superior to husbands began to receive custody of their children in cases of separation. This is not to say that women were given greater legal status. Rather, custody was granted on the basis judicial views that "placing children in their mother's care was in the best interest of the children" (Mason 53). However, by the time the Married Woman's Property Act passed in 1848, a mere two

years before Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter*, women were gaining an identity that was at least somewhat exclusive from their husbands. Amended in 1860 to include joint guardianship and rights with respect to their children, this act permitted women full possession rights of personal property within a marriage, a significant reduction of the economic power of the husband. In a sense, men were becoming individually accountable for the power that they assumed in a family structure. The ideal family, in turn, became somewhat of a cooperative, rather than a legally legislated and gendered, hierarchy.

But this is not to say that society was any less shaped by masculine ideals. Far from it. The fact that cases of mothers retaining custody in separations appear so singular only emphasizes the extent to which the husband's influence maintained traditional family structures. What is evident, however, is that while real family practices only slowly altered, social ideologies were moving much more rapidly. And it is in the midst of this atmosphere that Hawthorne found himself. A tangled web of economic, social and political cause and effects posed challenges to traditional values and power structures that were all but taken for granted before they were interrupted by new forms of thinking. Capitalist values began to take precedence over religiously defined social structures, and these new values altered society's concepts of superiority and control. Men who had once known their position, and their power, were now forced to redefine themselves in order to maintain the hierarchies that were so dear to them. Money, rather than self, became the primary signifier of potency, but to accumulate money meant relinquishing power in the home. What is more, money and property were becoming even more elusive insofar as they were no longer always already the male's right.

Accompanying the altered American home in the northern states was an increase of wealth and leisure time that Hessinger describes as a byproduct of the new capitalist economy (132).¹ Given that work now directly required the father's absence from the home, these additions to the middle-class family lifestyles resulted in the transformation of the home into what Mason describes as a "retreat from the demands of the competitive world" (51), a significant departure from the colonial workplace model of home so familiar to Puritan traditions. Referring to Phoebe Pyncheon, T. Walter Herbert argues that "In the emerging domestic ideal, 'true womanhood' matches 'self-made manhood' and the household is now defined as 'woman's sphere,' a place uniquely attuned to the spiritual needs of self-made men. The 'true woman' creates 'the home,' which offers a redemptive solace that counteracts the corruption and spiritual desolation of the world" (68). Rather than being a purely hierarchical, economic and pragmatic sphere, the newfound home of middle-class America now provided a safe outlet for the nurturing of children and families alike. But in the midst of such ideological changes, one may suppose that the very location of change is far from the most stable point in which to grow accustomed to new ideas. So it is in Hawthorne's fiction. Writing in the midst of a society that was embracing a new economic model and challenging traditional values, Hawthorne found himself at odds with both his nation's past and its future.

Each of Hawthorne's consecutively published novels, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance*, grapples with the issues of male

¹ There is a distinction here between northern states and the slaveholding states of the south, where fathers were still more active in the home. Given the subject and intents of this paper, it is the shifting society of the northern states that is at issue.

dominance and female autonomy. Always conscious of the Puritan past made explicit in *The Scarlet Letter* and present throughout each of his following novels, Hawthorne constructs broken family structures that repeatedly reconstruct the conflicts between traditional patriarchal desires and more radical nineteenth-century trends. Hawthorne's works are thus inevitably preoccupied with family, a stage onto which he is able to project the doubt and uncertainty that inevitably accompany social change. Patriarchal desires for legacy and social stability collide with modern ideals that reject the masculine prerogative of name and right. Moreover, the newly constructed home, that of comfort and retreat, becomes a surreal atmosphere of struggle and resistance. Beginning with a direct conflict between feminine resistance and masculine society in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's three novels trace the realization and internalization of conflict between gendered, hierarchical communities and individual desires for independence and autonomy on the part of both men and women. But what is inevitably at stake in Hawthorne's work is the individual woman, a figure who unavoidably becomes the site of conflict between the many competing discourses in her society. Moreover, Hawthorne's work is not so much infatuated with the woman as it is with the daughter, a state of being that is inescapable in Hawthorne's social hierarchies.

In each of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance*, daughters of disjointed families play key roles. Despite radically differing settings and plot structures, these three novels maintain a similar form and pattern of conflict. Pearl, Phoebe, Zenobia, and Priscilla differ in status and social prominence, yet each occupies the same precarious cultural position of being the daughter of multiple

father figures, each daughter having been displaced by or from more than one male parent and thus having acquired an ambiguous identity in a culture where the father's name is preeminent in establishing social standing. Moreover, the conflicts that arise by virtue of the daughters' ambiguous parentage emphasize both the degree to which a seemingly stable home is able to provide a convenient veil for masculine agendas and the efforts society is willing to make in an attempt to maintain itself.

In each of these novels, basic thematic structures exist. First, it is important to understand that society is always present, though its relationship with the protagonists may vary. It is also important to recognize that society is implicitly male dominated, a condition that will become more obvious as the individual novels are examined. Second, in all of these works, one or more women exist as unique social figures, in one way or another: Pearl is an illegitimate child, Phoebe comes from a great lineage and is yet without a family, Alice has a great family and is lost to it, Zenobia is wealthy and liberally independent, and Priscilla's mysterious history makes her a curiosity. But what is vital to understanding the treatment and actions of these women is the fact that they are forever daughters. Despite the independence that some of these women seem to achieve, they are inevitably signified by the fact that they are the product of a father. Unlike the son who can become a man by virtue of age and station – Dimmesdale for example – these daughters can never become women so long as they remain unattached to men. Marriage or motherhood are the only means by which a daughter in Hawthorne's texts is able to sever the connection with her father, even if he is entirely absent from her life and the novel itself. As Alison Easton suggests in reference to Hawthorne's early short

stories, the “female ‘haunted minds’ differ from their bewildered, divided male counterparts in retaining a stronger sense of the connections that, even when fractured, still define them as daughters, wives and mothers” (83). Implicit in Easton’s statement is the woman’s inability to be anything other than these signifiers of male preeminence, even should they want or need to be, given their marginal social status.

But what is troubling about these daughters’ inability either to mature or to progress is that fatherhood in Hawthorne’s work is nothing if not unstable. Frank describes the difference between nineteenth-century father-son and father-daughter relationships, noting that “A father’s duty to model the sober behaviour that would help his sons define themselves as workers and as men opened a gulf of emotional distance between them. The father-daughter relationship, by contrast, permitted greater displays of paternal warmth and tenderness” (140). But in each of Hawthorne’s major novels, father-daughter relationships can take one of two forms, and neither reflect the solidarity described by Frank. A daughter’s father in Hawthorne’s novels (and it is inevitably a daughter; only *The House of the Seven Gables* has any semblance of sons being born, and even these are never dealt with before manhood) is either present or absent. Present fathers are rare. Only Alice Pyncheon has a father who is part of her intimate household. Pearl, Zenobia, Priscilla and Phoebe all have absent fathers, and what is more, each of these daughters has multiple absent fathers. And while it would seem likely that the destabilisation inherent to these disjointed and dispersed families would give way to some type of relief in the more structured familial space, such is not the case. In Hawthorne’s work, absent fathers are indicative of social confusion and transition. Instability on a

social scale is signified by fractures in the family unit. But what inevitably occurs is that these distant fathers conform to and in some cases actively promote traditional patriarchal ideals, and by the end of a given text isolate the daughter and force her to choose between submission or alienation. But more disturbing is the deceptive presence of the fathers who do not abandon their daughters. These fathers, though few and far between, give their daughters no choice at all. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, for instance, the active father is both emasculated and narcissistic. With his own identity in doubt, the father figure creates an artificial conflict with society and ultimately sacrifices his daughter in doing so, a distorted reflection of what Frank calls “the notion that children existed as much to reward the family man for his devotion as they did to pursue their own goals” (173). The father’s daughter becomes a medium of conflict, rather than resistance, and instead of being nurtured she is destroyed.

In order to better understand some of these father-daughter relationships as they function in Hawthorne’s texts, consider the short story “Rappaccini’s Daughter.” First published in 1844, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” is, for all intents and purposes, a microcosm of the conflict that exists in Hawthorne’s later works. Though it escapes the foreboding social framework that will later come to dominate Hawthorne’s novels, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” nevertheless constructs a web of confused patriarchal ambition and predatory narcissism. Unravelling some of the subtexts in the shorter “Rappaccini’s Daughter” allows the reader some perspective when dealing with the more densely woven conflicts in Hawthorne’s longer works.

It is not without irony, however unintended, that Giovanni Guasconti declares: “I

know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is an object more dear to him. He has a daughter” (*Rappaccini* 192). Speaking of the beautiful daughter Beatrice, Giovanni unwittingly makes a distinction where there is none to be made. Beatrice, daughter of Rappaccini, is both daughter and art, a product of her father in more ways than one. Rather than being raised as a daughter, Beatrice is crafted, shaped and pruned by a man intent on creating a legacy. Rappaccini’s craft, his art, is his only pride, and it is the invulnerability of that art to which he aspires. Rappaccini desires a legacy that must, in some way, survive him. It is already greater than he is, an entity within itself that cannot be safely tended by him alone. In Beatrice, Rappaccini creates a new race, as it were, a new family, or subspecies, within the human tree. Yet Rappaccini creates a species whose survival is dependent upon him – a tenuous position given his frailty – so long as it remains manifest as nothing more than his daughter.

Two essential discourses in “Rappaccini’s Daughter” arise. Veiled in what is described by Baglioni as Rappaccini’s art, the first discourse is a masculine desire to create a legacy by whatever means necessary. By all accounts, Rappaccini is an entirely private individual. His garden is a secret, his knowledge nothing more than an ambiguous entity to be envied, feared and outdone by those in similar professional pursuits. Moreover, the reader learns nothing of Rappaccini beyond what is affirmed by Giovanni’s own voyeuristic tendencies. And what is learned is nothing more than that Rappaccini has a daughter and a garden. The garden is the first half of Rappaccini’s art to be unveiled, a vibrant creation that serves different purposes for different people. The public sphere interprets the garden as Rappaccini’s masterpiece. The garden is the creation and the

experiment in one, a justifiable if not disturbing presence in light of the doctor's work. But the garden is also a veil. Potent to the extreme, Rappaccini's botanical creation enshrouds a domestic space that for Rappaccini signifies nothing but lack and impotency, a "man's world" that Herbert describes as an "incessant self-reliant self-seeking [that] forced individual men into anxious solitude, cutting them off from the emotional support other men could provide, and cutting them off from their own capacity for nurture and compassion" (63). And it is within this world that Beatrice becomes the means to an end, rather than the end itself.

Upon unveiling his motive, Rappaccini declares that "My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women" (208). Beatrice is a construct belonging wholly to her father, her mother having been erased entirely from the discourse of creation and replaced by pride and triumph. The implication of a wife and mother's absence is hard to ignore. Rappaccini, obviously intent on constructing a legacy defined by his name, is unable to provide the means to the end he seeks. Asking "Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?" (209), Rappaccini reveals the conflict driving his actions. Evil, of course, is an ambiguous word here. There is no explanation given, but the implication is that evil signifies the actions of men. The "marvellous" (208) gifts given his daughter are, of course, the means to protect herself from the casual male admirer, the "common man." But the motivation underlying these gifts is the fact that Beatrice is not a man at all.

Beatrice, as a daughter, is no means by which to create a legacy, but she is the perfect material with which to purchase one. Rappaccini requires, and desires, a son. Rendered impotent by the lack of a wife, a condition emphasized by the seclusion and affection of his daughter, Rappaccini begins a type of asexual breeding with his now “quasi-wife” (Frank 160). Already provided with a “sister” (193), Beatrice is also given a “brother” in Giovanni (200). By extension, then, Rappaccini gains a son, and not simply through a marriage process. Giovanni’s response to Beatrice as sister is a culmination of Beatrice’s “seclusion” and her “lack of familiarity with modes and forms,” an implicitly unnatural state that maintains Beatrice’s infancy (200). Giovanni is not only a brother, but an older brother, the ideal male heir, all by virtue of Rappaccini’s craft. But the means of procuring this heir is more akin to a purchase, and herein lies the second discourse that will remain constant in Hawthorne’s later work.

Marrying daughters to “eligible” men is a traditional social trope that in itself is hardly unique. There are many motivations for marriage contracts in a patriarchal hierarchy, with money not the least of them. But there is something darker than mere provision in the relationships forged in Hawthorne’s fiction, and Rappaccini’s craft is a perfect example of the destructive narcissism that Hawthorne’s men confuse with proper social and economic protocol. Beatrice, first and foremost, is from her infancy reduced to nothing more than a fetish object, an economic means to an end for Rappaccini. Beatrice is both an object of sexual desire and an economic prize, put on display by a father who watches from the shadows in a market perused by only a select clientele. And Giovanni is the ultimate consumer. Beatrice evokes in her admirer “fantasies of gemlike brilliancy, as

if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain” (200). Combining the material and the sexual, Giovanni’s obsession invests Beatrice’s image of “girlish womanhood” with “all the witchery that had been gathering around it since his first glimpse of her,” an image “worthiest to be worshipped” and displaying “a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system” (200-201). But despite Beatrice’s overwhelming influence on Giovanni, there is little doubt as to who holds the power in the transaction that is slowly taking place. It is Dr. Rappaccini “who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.” And at this critical juncture, the underlying conflict driving the simultaneous sale of Rappaccini’s daughter and purchase of Giovanni is revealed. With Rappaccini looking on, Guasconti returns to his room to muse and obsess over Beatrice (200). Referred to by their last names, this meeting of men emphasizes the distinction between the market and the product. Beatrice, referred to only by her first name, is raised as a means of purchasing the stability of a male heir, a transaction symbolized by Giovanni’s payment to the landlady and confirmed by Rappaccini’s acceptance of his newfound heir.

The lack of reference to Beatrice’s surname distinguishes her as lacking hereditary power and thereby excludes her from any active service in her father’s designs. Used as an enticement and advertised like a common bouquet of flowers, Beatrice becomes a victim of male transactions. Put on the market by Rappaccini and purchased by Guasconti, Beatrice is a medium of patriarchal authority. Rappaccini, via Beatrice, is able to bestow his blessing upon a male heir, a blessing never given to Beatrice alone (208). But rather than selling his daughter, Rappaccini actually spends her. By virtue of her

death, Beatrice shifts from being an object of exchange and becomes instead the medium of exchange. In this regard, the confusion between economic ideals and traditional patriarchal exchange is made apparent. Rappaccini expects to barter his daughter, whose value to Rappaccini lies wholly in her ability to acquire Giovanni for her father. But an established society, which can also be read as a competing paternity, manifest in the figure of Baglioni, resists Rappaccini's egotism and rejects the idea of an inaccessible object of desire. Rappaccini is left with his heir, but his designs are spoiled, and his legacy is forfeit.

As a theme that is repeated throughout Hawthorne's work, society inevitably attempts to reclaim those daughters whose identities outstrip patriarchal modes of control, even at the cost of the individual, be it the father, the daughter or both. And while the daughters in Hawthorne's work are seemingly granted a distinctly new and autonomous identity, an identity that seems to rejoice in the possibility of freedom from traditional feminine roles and male control, Hawthorne's daughter figures cannot escape the disorientation that results from their unavoidable social liminality. As much as these women succeed in actively challenging social norms, they also become victims of a patrimonial framework that resists their autonomy and ultimately refuses or subsumes their new identity. Like Beatrice, Pearl, Zenobia, Priscilla, Alice and Phoebe all find their independence fleeting, and each is ultimately reabsorbed or erased by communities that are unwilling to accommodate them.

Chapter One

Hester and the "Other Woman" in *The Scarlet Letter*:

Pearl and the Politics of the Fatherless Child

Criticism of *The Scarlet Letter* has undergone a significant shift in the last four or five decades. What was once an arena for debate concerning the extent of Hester Prynne's culpability and the appropriate response by society has become an important ground for feminist scholars' new examination of Hester's possible autonomy in a patriarchal system. But the extent to which that autonomy exists, and in what form, is far from decided. Moreover, as Nina Baym's recent article "Revisiting Hawthorne's Feminism" explains, feminist scholars remain reluctant to accept arguments that view Hawthorne as some type of pseudo-feminist author. Pointing to the general treatment of unconventional women in Hawthorne's novels, feminist critics, according to Baym, find Hawthorne's plots to be "antifeminist, reinforcing a culturally conservative agenda, and a testimony to authorial misogyny" (Baym *Revisiting* 109-110). Baym's counterpoint to those critics who would read Hawthorne as misogynist is an examination of Hawthorne's treatment of the essentialism that defined gender in his time. As Baym argues in terms of Hawthorne's world view, it "is not that essentialism makes social change impossible, but that it makes social change impossible unless differences between women and men are taken into account" (118). Baym argues that Hawthorne's novels explore the idea of giving women space in a community where they had traditionally been forced to adapt their essential differences to a dominant male space (124). This is not radical feminism, but merely a

recognition that Hawthorne is aware of a female prerogative that cannot exist as anything but resistance unless it is given room to coexist with its male counterpart. The possibility and necessity of this new space forces the redefinition of male hierarchical power, and in turn creates some of the tensions that appear in Hawthorne's texts. For instance, there is no doubt that Hester and Pearl occupy a unique space in *The Scarlet Letter*. What is not clear, however, is whether that space is taken or given. Moreover, the function of that space is far from obvious, and critics are hard pressed to interpret it as signifying anything concrete.

What has become clear in recent analysis is that Hester is becoming less a victim of her circumstance. That is not to say that Hester occupies a privileged position within her society. Rather, Hester's silence is now thought of as strategic, her distance from her community as resistance rather than compliance. But what is interesting in this shift from the conservative, masculine perspective to a more liberal, egalitarian one is that Hester's child Pearl has virtually dropped out of all discussion. It is odd that the character to whom all the trouble of the novel is inevitably linked, by virtue of her conception and birth, should be so overlooked by readers who are eager to determine what politics and what social discourses are at work in Hawthorne's novel. While the relationships in *The Scarlet Letter* are far too complex to allow anyone the title "main character," even if the letter itself seems to denote Hester's right to that role, it is troublesome that Pearl does not receive more of the critical attention that she is due. Even Baym, who professes to be a significant minority in reading Hawthorne's feminism as sympathetic, interprets Pearl as little more than a passive extension of her mother. This is not to say that the

significance of the maternal role is overplayed in modern criticism, as it is impossible to entirely separate Hester and Pearl, given Pearl's age, and to that end any discussion of Pearl must begin with her mother. Rather, what has occurred is a narrowing of perspective that rightfully stresses the maternal condition but that fails to take into account "the other woman" in the text, ostensibly because that other woman is a child. This shortcoming leads to an incomplete reading of both Pearl and those with whom she interacts. The men of Boston give Pearl the opportunity to speak for herself, so there is hardly a viable reason for modern critics to ignore her as they do. Though only three months old when the novel begins, Pearl's voice rings loud and clear through much of the tale, and her presence complicates virtually every significant relationship in the work. And despite the fear of feminine influence in an otherwise masculine society, change was nevertheless taking place in Hawthorne's world. Dominant male-driven ideologies were giving way in a society that was increasingly reliant upon the woman's input in the home, especially in terms of raising children.²

In *The Scarlet Letter*, this shift to a slightly more maternal ideology is obvious in Hester's position as primary care-giver and nurturer of Pearl. Many critics have offered close readings of Hester's position as "matriarch," and to understand the role of Pearl one must inevitably examine her mother. But for the moment, consider the position of the

² Though critics like Monica Elbert argue that men in the nineteenth-century maintained their power despite a shift to more maternal homes by empowering women to simply "promote good capitalistic values in their children, so that the male-dominant capitalistic system would thrive" (195), studies such as Ann Taves' analysis of mothers' growing responsibilities for the religious and moral formation of their children confirm that men were forced to cede some domestic influence and control in order to be economically competitive.

child within both Hawthorne's time and the Puritan culture of which he writes. Coinciding with the nineteenth-century shift in women's responsibility toward their children was a new concept of childhood as a "distinctive developmental phase," a contrast with former (including Puritan) ideas that considered children as "little adults." These little adults were viewed suspiciously, "due to their being perceived as innately depraved" (Hessinger 132). Thus, to understand Pearl's position in the social atmosphere of *The Scarlet Letter*, recognizing the conflict between the two interpretations of childhood is critical. That Pearl is a creature "in development" is quite clear: Hester's anxieties about what her child will become compel her to look "fearfully into the child's expanding nature" (SL 80). Pearl here is no Puritan "little adult," but is a daughter in a formative phase that is autonomous enough to trouble her mother's sense of responsibility for Pearl's future. Socially, however, Pearl exists as "something that will be." This state is far more important to the ruling patriarchy than what the child is as a child, and thus the Puritan suspicion of the child as being always potentially deviant in regards to its future. Textually, the conflict between these two competing ideologies manifests itself in Pearl herself. Pearl is a child seen as many things by both herself and others: from a demon, an elf-child, and a bird to something as abstract as a sign of a sign, the embodiment of the scarlet letter itself. Always changing from one thing to another, Pearl is in constant development as an imaginative and curious child, but she is also subject to narrator and community alike in regards to her symbolic identity. And, according to her community's paternal voice, Pearl is not "what she must be now," and thus cannot possibly "be what she must be" as an adult.

Stephani Woodson explains that “unlike gender or race, childhood is a temporary and temporal classification; however, it can be understood in much the same manner – as sets of power relationships revolving around different axes” (31). In *The Scarlet Letter*, certain power relationships become obvious. Hester must control the impetuosity of Pearl for the sake of both mother and daughter, while the governing patriarchy also assumes the right to intervene in the child’s development. Conversely, Pearl resists both modes of constraint, maintains a distance from both family and society, and affirms her autonomy and the right to self-definition. But what coincides with this affirmation is Pearl’s inevitable status as other. For Woodson, all children are necessarily other, and to that end childhood “exists as a space in which culture, identity and significance are repeatedly and overtly stamped onto children in order to recover them from, or to reiterate, their otherness” (32). Echoing Althusser, Woodson speaks of a childhood geography that is concerned not only with material culture, but with issues of containment, cultural production and replication. Pearl represents what Woodson calls the “dangerousness” of childhood because she cannot be contained and has in some form an agency which can threaten the process of “successful socialization of children” (33-34). But for Pearl, what becomes apparent is that her otherness must be maintained rather than dissolved. Only thus can she escape the Puritan patriarchy and complete the process that Hester begins. Through Pearl, Hawthorne explores the possibility of rejecting the perpetual socialization of daughters in favour of constructing an at least somewhat autonomous feminine space, thereby permitting a dialogue between the essentialized genders already noted by Baym.

By all accounts, Pearl is still a member of the Boston community despite her mother's liminality. However, as a member of that society, Pearl is expected to participate in and thus replicate the Puritan social project, a task which depends upon her proper education and her compliance with such an upbringing. Pearl rejects this role. And while there are many elements to the resistance manifested in the figure of Pearl, it is important to note that Hawthorne's depiction of an independent, sometimes uncontrollable child is not unique in his time. Rather, Pearl seems to be a typical representation of the nineteenth-century child in art.

The "naughty" child in art, as explored by Jadviga da Costa Nunes, gives some insight into Pearl's general behavior and temperament. Although Nunes' project focuses upon visual art, her theories do not exclude the written text. As previously noted, the nineteenth century exhibits a particular shift in its perception of childhood. Nunes also acknowledges this shift, and points to further historical evidence that suggests that the parent, be it mother or father, was more inclined to "bend" the child's will rather than "break" it (228). Nunes' study links this change in parental ideology to a stereotype that portrayed the nineteenth-century American child as "wild, precocious, and disrespectful" (230). Originating in the travel journals of Europeans, especially the British, this stereotype led to the chastisement of American parents for not "exerting sufficient authority" over their children (230). But America embraced the image of the precocious yet precious child, and the stereotype seems to have done nothing but help celebrate what Nunes describes as a child "encouraged to be strong-willed and spirited" (231). But there is more to the naughty child image than a simple free spirit. Children of Pearl's ilk

represented a new social ideology of individualism that did not fit in the ordered social construction of Old World Europe, and they implied a future with far less moral and social stability than had been previously been known, even in America. The ability of the individual to thrive in a capitalistic, free enterprise society necessitated the values inherent in the “naughty” child, but these values threatened any authority’s attempt to maintain traditional social ideals. And in light of the examination of Hester and Pearl at the governor’s hall, this naughty child stereotype does not seem to have eluded Hawthorne. Spliced into the Puritan society of Salem, Pearl’s disposition is consequently exaggerated, and her nineteenth-century ideas force a conflict that exposes the crisis inherent not only in the idea of a new kind of childhood, but in a new kind of female childhood as well. The fact that every individual in the mansion at the time of Pearl and Hester’s interrogation is Old World English, save Pearl herself, illustrates the potential for cultural and social discord that lies in her refusal to grant Mr. Watson the theological answer he seeks: a type of Old World-New World schism is revealed. But Pearl’s unwillingness to cooperate in pedantic banter with Wilson spurns more than simple educational traditions. Rather, Pearl challenges the very basis of the patriarchal mode of replication, and on more than one level.

The reader is made aware that Pearl does indeed know the basics of a theological education, though Hester herself never argues that fact with her judges. But Pearl’s refusal and mockery of the examination process explodes the dangers of the independent mother and child. Pearl’s first transgression is that she does not seem to know about God. This is a simple fact, in and of itself. It is not a good fact, as far as the minister is

concerned, and initiates the troubles that ensue. However, there are deeper ramifications to the proposal that Pearl “had not been made at all” (SL 99). Pearl’s version of her “birth” overthrows every means of control the established patriarchy can assume in her life. Pearl is a problem specifically because she has already been “made” without any father, at least in an official sense. But Hester’s society knows that there was at some point a biological father involved with Hester. This assumption (which must be held, for despite all their religious rhetoric and superstitious metaphor, any other possibility would utterly devastate the community) grants the people of Boston a disciplinary authority over Hester and her child, and a means of making her both a scapegoat and an example to the community. But Pearl’s refusal of a patriarchal lineage extending all the way to God denies that Hester was ever at fault in social law; it asserts Hester’s creative maternity which in turn threatens the patriarchal control of community, and it denies the creative and authoritative power of a deity whose sovereignty is at the forefront of Puritan discipline.

To understand the implications of Pearl as the child she is, one must examine her social context – a context constructed in part by and in reaction to her mother. As noted earlier, Hawthorne was privy to a developing social ideal that stressed a shift to the maternal role in the family to a far greater degree than had appeared in previous generations. Accompanying that role was the tempering of the idea that children should be a purely functional cog in the social machine. The concept of childhood as a distinct phase in an individual’s life permitted the child an autonomy not possible in the breaking and forming process of the Puritan philosophy. Consequently, in *The Scarlet Letter*, the

freedom available to Pearl is not possible without the absence of a father. It would be presumptuous to assume that Hawthorne kept Dimmesdale at a distance for Pearl's benefit, but Hester and Pearl are similar in terms of their resistance to the Puritan patriarchy. Essentially, Pearl inherits the fruits of Hester's struggle with the community. By virtue of an absent father Pearl's story becomes more than that of a disobedient child, as the typical family structure of her time would have cast her. This is where Hester's resistance earns its reward.

It must be understood that Hester is in a constant state of resistance within her community. Many critics seem to be satisfied with the reading of the scarlet letter as a continual punishment of Hester and as a threatening imperative to moral obedience in the community. But the letter is much more than that. Scott Harshbarger reads the letter as a permanent reminder of Hester's transgression, but extends that reading to include the letter as a focal point and a catalyst of community gossip and rumour (41). What Harshbarger does not do is extend the rhetoric of rumour to its ultimate significance. Hester is more than a victim of her circumstance, even when she is subject to the critical gaze and slanderous scorn of the community. As Elbert discusses, the rumour and scorn which emanates from the community of Boston is a reaction to Hester's maternity. The novel makes it clear that there is no shortage of devious affairs taking place. Hester's downfall is that she is purported to be married and that she is caught by the consequences of her actions. What is in continual suppression in the Puritan society is maternal desire: a desire that is controlled by the patriarchy in order that women do not usurp the authority of men. Women in the Puritan hierarchy are valued only so long as they are able to give

birth to children. These children in turn replicate the social order by virtue of their adopting the Puritan ideology. Elbert's examination of the opening scaffold scene gives pertinent insight into what the woman becomes after the loss of her childbearing capability. In the attempt to maintain what power is left to be had, post-menopausal women see the fertile woman as a threat and thus rely "on the same patriarchal texts that have imprisoned [them]" in order to maintain what little position they have in society (Elbert *Hester's* 176). That such a harsh reaction is directed towards Hester can be read as an assault, and thus Hester becomes the victim of a disenfranchised sub-community. But it can also be read as a victory for Hester. In terms of an initial resistance to the established patriarchy, Hester has been successful enough that anyone with a vested interest in that system turns against her. Thus it should come as no surprise that the only woman still occupying the role of mother in the crowd of condemning voices is the softest toned of them all, and admonishes those in her company to have mercy on Hester (SL 51). Here Hester has a silent ally of sorts. This woman, Elbert notes, is also a victim of the "antimothering sentiment," and dies a death in keeping with it (177). Perhaps a more heroic reading of this woman's death may be as an escape from the inevitable fate of the Puritan post-maternal woman, though this reading is no less pessimistic than Elbert's. Whatever the case, the young woman's fate gives the reader significant insight into the depth of alienation inherent in the resistance that Hester is undertaking. Not merely at odds with the fathers of her community, Hester risks the wrath of an entire society that is devoted to its masculine perspective of control. And while the reader cannot presume to know all the circumstances that motivate Hester's affair with

Dimmesdale, one knows enough to recognize that Hester is by no means oblivious to the tensions which accompany her actions and their inevitable consequences.

If Hester is a victim, her status as such lies much farther back than her punishment for adultery, and is a manifestation of both Boston's social codes and the impunity with which its individual men like Dimmesdale can act. Kenneth Pimple argues that Dimmesdale's moral character has not been given enough consideration by critics, and Pimple cites numerous examples of a rhetorical strategy that allows Dimmesdale a deceptive power throughout the novel. Pimple argues that it is Dimmesdale, and not Hester, who is the "activating agent" in their encounter in the forest, and that by putting thoughts and words into Hester's mouth and mind is able to affect his desired conversation and the couple's decision without appearing as morally degenerate. Pimple's argument compares Dimmesdale's forest conversation with his sermons, and Pimple cites Dimmesdale's ability to "manipulate words and appearances" (268). Claiming Dimmesdale to be more cunning and less inclined to moral persuasion than he is often given credit for, Pimple essentially constructs in Dimmesdale a microcosm of Hester's entire experience with men. Pimple does not take his argument beyond the figure of Dimmesdale, but his assertion that Dimmesdale's exhilaration after the forest scene "is due to a sudden sense of his own power" (267) mirrors the energy of the ruling patriarchy when they parade Hester and Pearl upon the scaffold. Similarly, the fact that Dimmesdale "had used his speaking ability to maintain the status quo, to disguise his sin and escape punishment" (Pimple 267) is simply an extension of his authoritative role within a patriarchy that uses Biblical text and dogma to maintain a system that discourages

maternal assertion and maintains male dominance. By virtue of being a woman, Hester has always been a victim of “Dimmesdale.” The fact that Dimmesdale is self-aware – he realizes the extent of his desire to subject the female and recognizes the corresponding degree of hypocrisy inherent within himself – is all the more ironic. The reader must determine whether this self-awareness is admirable or not, given the unfaltering embrace of the system by others in Dimmesdale’s position.

The problem with Pimple’s argument is that while it seeks to defend Hester, the power he gives Dimmesdale precludes Hester’s ability to compete in the public sphere. Too many critics assume that Hester as a character begins at the jailhouse. This is not the case. Hester has already experienced the pangs of living in a patriarchal system by virtue of her marriage to Roger Prynne, and one cannot assume that Hester is either naive or incompetent in the affairs of men or in her relationships with them. Hester is fully aware of her status as a married woman when she has her affair with Dimmesdale, and while Dimmesdale’s “innocence” is certainly not seduced, neither is Hester’s. If Hester had been “a maiden newly won” (SL 191), circumstances would be different. But Hester is not a maiden, and that fact implicates both Hester and Dimmesdale.

Dimmesdale is not, or at least should not be, desperate for female companionship. Dimmesdale is a bachelor by choice, and as Carol Bensick points out, he is in fact under significant pressure to marry (103). Given what Taves’ research uncovers about the fear of effeminate ministers in Hawthorne’s day, it comes as no surprise that the unmarried Dimmesdale is a concern for a community even more concerned with male establishment than the one in which Hawthorne resides. But the fact that Dimmesdale can have “one of

the many blooming damsels, spiritually devoted to him” as his wife (SL 110) and chooses not to raise the unanswerable question of why Dimmesdale decides to sate his desires with the married Hester. Conversely, one cannot presume to know what prompted Hester to have her affair with Dimmesdale. However, the consequences of that affair combined with Dimmesdale’s now inescapable pledge of celibacy provide Hester with the means of maintaining her autonomy.

Whatever can be said of the circumstances that lead to Pearl’s birth – whether Hester is a victim or accomplice or both – Hester’s refusal to name Dimmesdale as the father is a significant act of resistance. By not naming the father of her child, Hester removes the patriarchal claim to that child. Pearl remains Pearl: she is not Pearl Prynne, not Pearl Dimmesdale, as everyone knows that Hester’s husband is not the father, and has not conceded to claim the child as his own despite its illegitimacy. In the patriarchy the mother does not have the means or the right to give the child any more than a first name. The very fact that Hester and Pearl are referred to by their first names while the men of the novel are signified by their names of legacy illustrates the intensity with which the male sphere guards this power.

Thus Pearl remains as she is. Pearl has no father, and as such she is not worthy to be married to any of the men of the community. Woodson explains that, traditionally, urban children are a paradox: they are both “emotionally priceless” and “economically worthless” (41). In a Puritan society that values women almost exclusively for their reproductive ability, any girl-child who is not worthy to be married has lost whatever value she once had, especially if she shares Pearl’s economic status. As Woodson

elaborates, children are both “potential and peril” (41). But for the Puritan elite, Pearl has lost all potential, thus leaving her perilousness unchecked. With no responsible male to assert himself over Pearl, she becomes a marginal subject of the community. But Pearl’s marginality is as much a threat to Boston as it is to her. In effect, Pearl becomes for Boston what the A is for Hester, a visible sign of the inability to govern one’s self, a symbol of desire over doctrine. Pearl is a tangible manifestation of her community’s fear and denial. Her pseudo-autonomy is a possibility that Boston refuses to admit, but at the same time it is a product of the social system that is specifically constructed to prevent it. Pearl is denied name and fortune by virtue of her mother’s punishment and silence, and consequently escapes the means by which the community can possess her.

It is important to remember that Hester’s silence is not a product of male dominance; it is in reaction to it. Leland Person Jr. argues that Hester does not “change Puritan values [or] alter the balance of power between herself and Puritan authority” (471). Person’s argument stems from his reading of Hester’s freedom from the Puritan community as a private exercise. But Hester is not trying to change the Puritan community; Hester is no activist. Hester does change Puritan values, if only in herself and her progeny. And contrary to Person’s reasoning, Hester’s freedom is exercised very publicly. Hester takes part in the mercantile exchange system of her community with no intercessor, as she is both producer and broker. Hester’s product is not sought in every regard, but this is a condition that can exist for any merchant or producer for any number of reasons, and is not unique to Hester. Hester’s product also becomes a fetish, sought “from the morbid curiosity that gives a fictitious value even to common or worthless

things” (SL 74). Not only does Hester endure her stigma, she turns it into a marketable entity. Obviously, Hester’s ability to compete with skill and diligence in an otherwise male-dominated marketplace while maintaining her maternal duties is more than a private exertion of freedom. And the fact that Hester is willing to conduct her business in the community despite the letter she wears is obviously a public defiance. One need only return to the antagonistic women at the scaffold to find an example of Hester’s public effect on the patriarchal ideal. Hester’s embroidering of the scarlet letter, “a specimen of her delicate and imaginative skill” (SL 74), loudly pronounces her ability to succeed in her chosen field of production, despite the public scrutiny that follows her.

Person’s study of Hester’s silence in *The Scarlet Letter* is a keen one, but the assumption that Hester remains silent as a means of revenge is difficult to accept. Pragmatically, Hester’s primary role is as mother: she must provide for her child. But that Hester embraces this role is made quite clear in the text. Her unwillingness to lose the child to the community at the governor’s hall is obvious, but the manner in which Hester raises Pearl must be noted as well. Echoing the new ideologies of Hawthorne’s time, the narrator explains that “the discipline of the family, in those days, was of a far more rigid kind than now” (82). Hester resists the attitudes of her day, and “ran little risk of erring on the side of undue severity, [...] compelled to stand aside, and permit the child to be swayed by her own impulses” (82). It is unlikely that Hester would expend the effort of being a “patient mother” if she did not care for her maternal role. Hester’s silence and the space and freedom it buys Pearl have less to do with revenge and far more to do with preserving both Pearl’s and her own security and autonomy in a system that needs only

the father's name to establish his and society's hierarchical control over the mother and child. Though this resistance to established Puritan discipline almost costs Hester her child when Pearl refuses to answer Watson's examination, it is clear that Hester does not intend to tow a line that has caused her nothing but anguish up to that date.

Pearl's own precociousness and lack of male ties give her an opportunity to construct her own identity and assert her individuality, even more so than her mother does. Becoming the "elf-child" who seems to capture the imagination of anyone with whom she has contact, Pearl begins to exhibit traits that suggest she has indeed inherited her parents' more mischievous qualities and intends to exploit them to the fullest. That Pearl is her own child is quickly made clear. Though veiled in the playful banter of a young child, Pearl's language signifies a detachment from all the traditional paternal figures and thus represents not just a figure of resistance but an entirely new social identity. Having no "natural" father, Pearl severs ties with all patriarchal roles. Sensing Hester's own misgivings about the religious element of her community, Pearl also clearly reasons, "I have no Heavenly Father!" (SL 88). Yet more dramatically, Pearl's independence is later asserted in the governor's hall. Proving herself as distinct from her mother by Mr. Wilson's initial inability to recognize her, Pearl exclaims that "I am mother's child [...] and my name is Pearl!" (SL 97). The challenge to the traditional patriarchal family here has already been noted, but the emphasis with which Pearl names herself is significant. In the male economic sphere of the Puritan culture, the female child is the least valuable entity in the social structure, and certainly has no autonomy. Yet when asked who she is – a question that implies "who do you belong to?" – Pearl names

only herself and offers nothing but that she is “mother’s child,” a nineteenth-century idea that significantly omits the father. Speaking for and naming herself while admitting no paternal ties, Pearl exposes the tensions and fears of a male-dominated culture that cannot reconcile itself to an idea that exists outside of its rigid hierarchical structure, a structure that relies as much upon feminine submission as it does on masculine self-assertion.

Pushing her individuality further, Pearl later claims that she was never born, but was rather “plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses, that grew by the prison door” (99). Pearl in fact denies that she has any human parentage whatsoever, entirely removing herself from social authority as well as from religious doctrine. If she has no earthly parents, Pearl is not subject to original sin and is thus free from the discipline of God and, probably less to their liking, free from the doctrine and discipline of the community. Though insignificant in a modern context, Pearl’s denial of religious structure cannot be taken lightly. In a society still rife with witchcraft superstition, Pearl’s statement would no doubt perturb some of the more dogmatic rulers and theologians. And although Pearl knows nothing of the theological weight her statement carries, the narrator’s construction of her independence in this sequence of rebuttals is clear. Though not theologically aware, Pearl is by no means imperceptive. The narrator notes Pearl’s depth when comparing the Puritan children’s “vague” ideas and “fitful caprice” to Pearl’s “intelligible earnestness” (84). This intuitive nature gives Pearl the means to recognize the relationships of the adults around her and influence them to a degree not usually attainable by the typical Puritan child.

Responding to criticism that regards Pearl’s relationship with language as

problematic, Laurie Sterling counters with the argument that “adults are the ones who find Pearl’s relationship with language ‘trying.’ Clearly, to Pearl, her words have a specific and intended meaning” (24). Sterling explains that Pearl “continually demonstrates an innate understanding of the relationships among her mother, her self, the letter, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth” (24). Pearl cannot function in the novel if she is cast as nothing more than a child who follows her mother and is oblivious to others and herself. Instead, Pearl’s impetuous individuality is a constant catalyst for plot resolution and character development. In terms of the perceptiveness that Pearl requires to fulfill her narrative responsibility, Sterling points to Dimmesdale’s nocturnal encounter with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold. (24). Recognizing Chillingworth in the distance, Pearl states that she “can tell [Dimmesdale] who he is” (SL 137). But Pearl is aware of the language tricks that Dimmesdale has just used with her, and so withholds the information, stating clearly: “Thou wast not bold! – thou wast not true!” (137). Here, Pearl herself enters into the system of exchange, and knowing that what Dimmesdale had previously offered is worth nothing, she refuses to give the information that he wants and that she holds. At the same time, Pearl’s accusation strikes a deep chord as she perhaps not inadvertently defines the difference in parental dedication between Dimmesdale and Hester, as she says, “Thou wouldst not promise to take my hand, and mother’s hand, to-morrow noontide!” (137). But in terms of family dynamics and the ultimate resolution of the narrative, Pearl’s insight holds even greater significance when examined in the context of a new kind of nineteenth-century father-daughter relationship.

Karen Sánchez-Eppler’s work on temperance literature in Hawthorne’s time

describes a growing sentiment that seems to coincide with the idea of a more maternal and less disciplinary home. Sánchez-Eppler's research outlines the often disturbing trend of female children posing as the necessary mediators in broken families. Stephen Frank's discussion of the nineteenth-century daughter as an affectionate "quasi-wife" would seem to corroborate Sánchez-Eppler's ideas (Frank 160). Frank's quasi-wife addresses issues of physical and emotional affection with daughters of Pearl's age not previously apparent in traditional household dynamics, a reasonable foundation for even the more exceptional cases examined by Sánchez-Eppler³. The temperance literature that Sánchez-Eppler describes often places girls in a position of compromise: they offer a loving, servile deference to their father in order that he may see the error of his ways and be turned from wrongdoing by the love that he has for his daughter. Despite her free-spirited nature, Pearl is perceptive enough to understand the bond between her mother and Dimmesdale, and is remarkably intent on bringing Dimmesdale into a closer, familial bond. Imitating the girls described by Sánchez-Eppler, Pearl's affection for Dimmesdale is very much out of character. Their first encounter, which takes place in the governor's hall, places a timid Pearl at the side of Dimmesdale. Pearl takes Dimmesdale hand, and with "a caress so tender" coaxes a kiss from the minister (102), creating an atmosphere that is in direct contrast to the attitude of "distrust" that Dimmesdale later attributes to children who find themselves in his presence (177).

³ Sánchez-Eppler goes on to analyze the physical and sexual abuse that is implied in such relationships. However, given the physical separation of Dimmesdale and Pearl, and the lack of textual evidence, such an extreme inference is probably not relevant in this particular case.

Pearl's seeming want of a father figure continues at the night-scaffold-scene, and her imploration of Dimmesdale to promise to "take my hand, and mother's hand, tomorrow noontide" expresses the urgency of her desire. Not only does Pearl ask so bold a question, but she initiates the conversation with an emphatic "Minister!" (134), taking upon herself the responsibility of uniting the estranged trio. Pearl's desire for physical, familial intimacy between herself and her father mirrors the desire found in Sánchez-Eppler's temperance literature, and it certainly seems to be prompted by the same conventions. Sánchez-Eppler states that the redemption plot "seems to be a cultural and narrative reaction formation as it reconfigures trauma into the possibility of moral triumph" (7). Moral lines are sketchy at best in *The Scarlet Letter*, but the narrative does seem to be driven to a degree by the possible redemption of Dimmesdale. What Pearl's affection does is open a space in which Dimmesdale may find a means of reconciling his conflicted identity. Meanwhile, the potentially more volatile relationship between Dimmesdale and Hester can be avoided as long as possible. But as Sánchez-Eppler explains, "the child's love works to enforce [and re-inscribe] a bourgeois patriarchal order that leaves the child as vulnerable as ever" (3). And given her reaction to Dimmesdale in the forest, the perceptive Pearl does not let this reality escape her, though Dimmesdale does his best to ensure the success of his patriarchal inclinations.

In Dimmesdale and Hester's encounter in the forest, it becomes clear that Dimmesdale is no less concerned with enforcing his society's standards on a child whom he has nonetheless neglected since her birth. Upon Pearl's tirade resulting from the removal of the letter, Dimmesdale demands of Hester: "if you have any means of

pacifying the child, do it forthwith! [...] I know nothing that I would not sooner encounter than this passion in a child [...] Pacify her, if thou lovest me!" (183). Expressing the confusion of a paternal desire to control that must defer to Hester's maternal abilities and relationship with Pearl, Dimmesdale nevertheless manages to deny a previous feminine attempt to construct an autonomous space by adding: "Save it were the cankered wrath of an old witch, like Mistress Hibbins" (183). By invoking and dismissing the idea of witchcraft, and having already thrown away the scarlet letter, Dimmesdale has effectively curtailed any feminine means of resisting the system for which he stands. Unfortunately for Dimmesdale, however, Pearl is an active, rather than a passive, subject, and she is not as willing to subscribe to the traditional social models with which Hester is negotiating.

By Dimmesdale's removing it from Hester's clothing, the letter that has forever signified her freedom from society and the stability of a purely maternal home has been replaced with a male figure who represents the reestablishment of the patriarchal order. As long as the scarlet letter remains, even if Dimmesdale enters the union, Pearl's family remains safe from the Puritan community by merely accepting Dimmesdale as yet another outcast, so long as the community's standards are at all consistent and the letter – the law – is not subservient to individuals, even to those as respected as Dimmesdale. But to lose the letter is to lose the only means of differentiating Pearl's family from any other, and thus Hester and her child can be subsumed. The kiss from Dimmesdale that was at one time yearned for by Pearl is now anathema until the letter is replaced, as it signifies the paternal bond and all its denotive and connotative power in terms of patriarchal hierarchy and control. And, again, Pearl's emotional forthrightness moves the narrative ever

forward towards its conclusion. Hester must replace the letter, and other plans are made to free the trio from Puritan rule.

But Dimmesdale's masculine social prerogative is not so eager to let the two women free. Knowing that he is to die, Dimmesdale confesses the "name" of the child. By pronouncing himself as father, Dimmesdale puts a number of open-ended discourses in motion. Pearl is now one step closer to being appropriated: she is named, and thus has exchange value. But Pearl still maintains her autonomy. There is not enough information to know what Pearl's social "status" is once her father is known, but the narrator makes it clear that at least some notable people in Boston refuse to accept her newly disclosed lineage, referring to her still as "the demon offspring" (225). Thus the scarlet letter remains, insofar as the stigma attached to the letter prevents Pearl's redemption in the community. In a society that is quick to condemn and slow to forgive, not even Dimmesdale's name is enough to wholly redeem Pearl from her past and her mother's disrespect of social protocol. In effect, Pearl is still her mother's child, rather than the community's or Dimmesdale's, and she is guarded by the emblem that encloses Hester "in a sphere by herself" (SL 51). For Pearl, this may be the ultimate triumph. Again invoking the near-erotic language Sánchez-Eppler describes, Pearl kisses Dimmesdale's lips. Pearl's father is united with his family, the relationship is mended, and Pearl is still free. The familial intimacy desired by Hester and Pearl throughout the novel is achieved without the mother and daughter's submission to patriarchal expectations and designs. Hester will not become the cold, post-maternal woman and Pearl is free from the fate of her counterparts, those "virgin souls" with consciences "full of harmless little matters" over whom Dimmesdale's presence as minister and man has such power (SL 191-192).

Some critics read Pearl's freedom negatively, assuming that what is best for Pearl, and what she ostensibly wants, is to become a member of the Puritan society. Bethany Reid claims that Pearl and Dimmesdale's final kiss does not give her real social legitimacy. Rather, Reid argues a defense of Chillingworth and explains that Pearl is "not fully human until she receives Chillingworth's legacy" (261). What defines legitimacy for Reid is Pearl's post-inheritance worthiness to marry "the devoutest Puritan among them all" (SL 225). But this is exactly the point. Hester and Pearl spend their entire lives resisting the most devout Puritans. The inherited name and wealth are the signifiers that give men power in the community. Franny Nudelman claims that after Dimmesdale's confession, Pearl "is free to become a woman" (209). But to be a woman in Hester's community is to be subservient and politically powerless. Pearl, in contrast, is a child who never creates a friend in her play, but ever imagines a "harvest of armed enemies, against whom she rushed to battle" (85), and it is this individuality that cannot sustain the traditional role of woman in the established patriarchy. Nonetheless, Chillingworth's will strips Pearl of the last effective barrier she has between herself and the community. As Sterling argues, "Chillingworth allows for the community's reevaluation of Pearl and re-translates her according to society's values" (27). Sterling correctly reasons that Pearl's new patrimony, via Chillingworth, allows her into a legitimate system of exchange, and provides her with the opportunity to be married and thus gain a permanent and respectable paternal name. In short, Pearl can be absorbed into the established system.

And so Pearl must flee. Taken by her mother but never returning with her, Pearl does the only thing that she can do to avoid the scrutiny and reevaluation that comes with

being an economic and social object of desire. Rejecting the “very material change in public estimation” that implies her community’s inability to comprehend a desire for something other than itself, Pearl undermines traditional social designs on her wealth by using it to escape her community rather than join it (SL 225). And, as Sterling recognizes, the narrative of the Puritan community is broken by Pearl’s absence. The patriarchy is stripped of its ability to construct all ends for its members. Hester returns, but this is no victory for the community. Hester returns on her own terms and maintains the barrier of the letter. Neither Hester nor the town is above the multiple meanings embodied in that letter, and in fact the letter outlasts them all. The letter is not buried with Hester, but remains a signifier that forever maintains Hester’s individual name and legacy within a society bent on female anonymity. But by the end of the tale, Hester turns the letter into a talisman that protects her maternal family from paternal influence and provides the necessary means to establish a legacy without a male signifier. Despite the final, dramatic attempts of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, Hester and Pearl are not fooled nor forced into the male sphere, and Pearl is free to exist as indeterminate. Though rumours abound, there is no named husband and no life described for Pearl in America or England. Rather, the only confirmed detail is the continued celebration of the autonomous maternal role: the lavish provision for a grandchild by a grandmother (SL 226-227). Though thrust from a society intent on breaking them, Hester and Pearl maintain their individual and familial autonomy, circumvent the economic system of exchange and paternal legacy, and cultivate a new relational ideology that stresses familial bonds over male dominion. Unfortunately, Boston’s self-centered male hierarchy cannot productively coexist with an

equal and independent feminine social space, and so Hester and Pearl must forever maintain their distance to maintain themselves.

Chapter Two

Holding the Veil:

The Competitive Male Gaze in *The Blithedale Romance*

“In the case of the Veiled Lady, moreover, the interest of the spectator was further wrought up by the enigma of her identity, and an absurd rumour [...] that a beautiful young lady, of family and fortune, was enshrouded within the misty drapery of the veil” (BR 6). So begins Miles Coverdale’s introduction of Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*, an introduction that, by virtue of Coverdale’s obsessive, fetishistic, voyeurism and taste for theatrics, essentially continues until Zenobia’s dramatic monologue in the thirteenth chapter of the novel. Even here, the reader must infer that Priscilla is in fact the Veiled Lady, as Coverdale persists in his maddening habit of refusing to reveal a fact or make his point. Hiding behind the mask of narrated chronology, Coverdale’s narration flaunts the mis-used Priscilla throughout Zenobia’s story (and Moodie’s life account) until Hollingsworth puts an end to it, as if exclaiming for a second time: “Why do you trouble him with needless questions, Coverdale? [...] You must have known, long ago, that it was Priscilla” (BR 85).

The answer to Hollingsworth’s question, of course, lies in the fact that Coverdale has no other means of control in a story that is entirely without need of him, save for the mere fact that he is the man who decides to tell the story. In a tale replete with dramatic binaries and parallels, Coverdale admits to being nothing more than a chorus. But this admission, like so many of the narrator’s remarks, is misleading. Whether Coverdale is

conscious of the fact or not, his admission links him to Professor Westervelt, the one character in the novel whose moral disposition is not ambiguous and of whom Coverdale is willing to make a definitive judgement of character. If the chorus' role is to introduce, link and comment upon the scenes of a play, then there is a deviousness in Coverdale that outstrips the role he is permitted. Revelling in the form of his tale, the suspense that Coverdale tries to elicit in his reader mimics the crowd's response to those same "skilfully contrived circumstances of stage-effect" that so impress Coverdale at the outset of the novel (BR 5). In effect, by constructing his tale as he does, Coverdale "re-veils" Priscilla for one last attempt to profit by her subjection. But like Westervelt and those who aid his endeavours, Coverdale's participation in the rhetoric of the veil has as much to do with control and the assertion of his will on others as it does with mere monetary profit. And Coverdale's control is not limited to those about whom he writes. By engaging his readers with a myriad of veils, hints, and altered and imagined events, Coverdale is able to create a stage that is surreal enough that it becomes disassociated from the reality of human intercourse. Beginning with the displacement of community to Blithedale itself, *The Blithedale Romance's* language and form invite the reader to forego traditional social and moral responses in favour of new ideals relative and specific to the Blithedale community, "a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based" (BR 19). And while modern critics readily admit Coverdale's failings as a narrator and as a participant in his newfound society, they nonetheless agree, be it implicitly or explicitly, to participate in Coverdale's rhetoric, and so lose sight of the fact that Coverdale is merely the voice of a patriarchal community

intent on reestablishing a control that was wavering, not in Blithedale alone, but in American society as a whole.

Though critical responses to *The Blithedale Romance* have taken many forms through the years, they have in some respects become repetitive. Whether in terms of capitalist, Marxist, feminist, Utopian, or biographical forays into Hawthorne himself, critics continue to ground themselves in Coverdale's façades, not the least of which is the community of Blithedale itself. Benjamin Scott Grossberg begins "The Tender Passion" with the very question, "To what can we attribute the failure of the Blithedale experiment?", while admitting that "Most discussions of the novel, whether in terms of character, allegory or plot, do eventually confront [this] same question" (3). While imperative to so many readers, the success and failure of the Blithedale project is nonetheless a redundant question. Blame for Blithedale's failure has been cast on all members of the community, from Coverdale, Zenobia and Hollingsworth to more general groups such as men, women, the poor or the rich. Yet what critics like Grossberg, Gale Temple, Shaskan Bumas, Harvey Gable Jr., and others fail to address is the translation, or lack of a requirement for one, between Blithedale and New England as a whole.

Blithedale is, for all intents and purposes, entirely transparent in its function as a site of conflict in the novel. Though Coverdale makes the seemingly obvious distinction between rural and urban communities in his narrative, the individuality of Coverdale, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla in the midst of an otherwise anonymous community of untold size renders that community irrelevant to the social discourses at work within the novel. Coverdale and Hollingsworth are both private individuals; there is no upheaval

involved in their leaving Boston. Zenobia and Priscilla come and go between their two communities as they are compelled to do. Westervelt and Moodie enter the communal realm as they please, yet their motives and agendas remain as potent in Blithedale as they do in Boston. Even Silas Foster explodes the façade at its outset by economically linking Blithedale to the Brighton fair (20). For all of Coverdale's grandiose claims of "separation from the greedy, struggling, self-seeking world" (20), there is little separation at all. And as Zenobia and Priscilla are quick to discover, traditional social forms and ideals are not easily left behind.

Moving away from Blithedale as a unique community then, there is little doubt that it is a distinctly male-dominated one. Coverdale's narrative repeatedly returns to debates about essentialist ideas of gender, each of which fortifies an already assumed patriarchal social sentiment. But there is more to the masculine shroud that envelops the entire narrative than merely individual debates about the role of men and women. Given that Hawthorne's novel is written from a male, first-person perspective, it is impossible to disassociate the construction of the text's social atmosphere from Coverdale himself. But as noted earlier, the very act of writing the narrative is a male-driven exploitation of a passive femininity that cannot speak for itself. Moreover, the implicit – and overly explicit, in Coverdale's case – male gaze of the narrator informs at least in part the overriding male project of recouping an authority that is threatened by the characters of Zenobia, and, ironically, of Coverdale himself.

Responding in part to the work of Kristina Straub, Minaz Jooma's assessment of the male gaze in *The Blithedale Romance* effectively addresses the competitive and

mutually threatening relationship that exists between Coverdale and Zenobia. As narrator, both of the *Blithedale* text and as self-professed artist and poet among the Blithedale community, Coverdale assumes and revels in the power that his gaze permits him. Being both narrator and gazer, Coverdale maintains an exclusive authority over his reader, an authority that asserts Coverdale's relevance to the events described in his text. But Coverdale's narrative, when read closely, actually dismisses his own relevance, at least insofar as his role in his companion's tale is concerned. One need only examine Coverdale and Hollingsworth's encounter with Moodie to recognize the narrator's lack of influence. Having met both Coverdale and Hollingsworth, Moodie utterly and somewhat rudely forgets the former, saying: "with many thanks to you, Mr. Hollingsworth, I will creep back to town again" (BR 85). And after being rebuffed by Hollingsworth for leading Moodie on in regards to the purses made by Priscilla, Coverdale does not utter another word. Purely occupied by his own trivial pursuits, Coverdale is rendered redundant by Hollingsworth's practicality. Only by asserting his own authorial presence in the text can Coverdale maintain any presence at all. But as Jooma explains, Coverdale is threatened by the presence of Zenobia, an author in her own right (we'll leave it to the reader to decide whether Coverdale's unenthusiastic response to her work is legitimate) who threatens to reconfigure a narrative that Coverdale is determined to possess in its entirety. Jooma suggests that "the object of Coverdale's spectatorship, Zenobia, is herself engaged in acts of gazing at and re-reading the spectator who reads her. The reciprocal gaze problematizes, even suspends, the relation between the traditionally powerless spectacle and empowered spectator of Straub's formulation, for spectacle and spectator

have the potential mutually to constitute and reconstitute one another” (322). In effect, Zenobia lifts the veil of a male-desired femininity that refuses the spectacle the ability to look back at its spectator, a figurative recasting of the opening discussion of the Veiled Lady and a foreshadowing of Hollingsworth’s later unveiling of Priscilla. But unlike Hollingsworth’s unveiling, which signifies possession, Zenobia’s personal unveiling is a resistance that the male community cannot condone.

Responding to Zenobia’s mocking tones and attempts to reject Coverdale’s early romantic narrations, her counter-gaze, so to speak, Coverdale admits – in the context of his imagining Zenobia in the nude – that:

Her free, careless generous modes of expression often had this effect of creating images which, though pure, are hardly felt to be quite decorous, when born of a thought that passes between man and woman. I imputed it, at that time, to Zenobia’s noble courage, conscious of no harm, and scorning the petty restraints which take the life and colour out of other women’s conversation. There was another peculiarity about her. We seldom meet with women, now-a-days, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all; their sex fades away and goes for nothing, in ordinary intercourse. Not so with Zenobia. [...] Not that I would convey the idea of especial gentleness, grace, modesty, and shyness, but of a certain warm and rich characteristic, which seems, for the most part, to have been refined away out of the feminine system. (17)

The irony in this statement cannot be ignored. If one is inclined to read Coverdale’s description sympathetically, then his final declaration of love for Priscilla is rendered

absurd, for she is the embodiment of everything that Coverdale dismisses from Zenobia's character. More disturbing, however, is the possibility that Coverdale's sentiments are derisive. If such is the case, then Coverdale implicitly condones the "refinement" of the "feminine system" that produces women like Priscilla, a refinement that relies on the figurative muting and blinding – a veiling – of the woman, a figurative act that is nonetheless made real in Priscilla's subjection and Zenobia's eventual death.

Yet, however much Coverdale and Zenobia contend as spectators in their attempts to construct a narrative out of Blithedale, the male gaze and its inherent ability to subject the feminine is always already present by virtue of a commodified femininity that, in the case of *Blithedale*, supercedes even Zenobia's independent intentions. As Jooma argues, "the power of the gazer is at least partially dependent on wealth" as well as gender. Jooma goes on to suggest that Zenobia's wealth permits her to withdraw from a public gaze to Blithedale, where she "straddles the divide between observed and observer: her wealth both enables her participation in the purportedly egalitarian Blithedale experiment and places her in a position to view Priscilla in a manner akin to Coverdale's spectatorship of the poor woman" (324). But what Jooma fails to consider is that as much as Zenobia's wealth may permit her a freedom to assume masculine roles of leadership and superiority, it also subjects her to a much more active and aggressive male gaze than the one endured by Priscilla. For if Priscilla is mere spectacle who, as Temple suggests, is nonthreatening to Coverdale's (and presumably any man's) masculinity, someone whom he can view "from the safety of his seat in the audience and still maintain his own version of perfect femininity as a fetishized marketplace artifact" (292-293), then

Zenobia becomes by virtue of her wealth and independence the available manifestation of “a beautiful young lady, of family and fortune.” The argument can be made that Zenobia remains veiled by her name, thus rendering her without family, but it is Coverdale, rather than Zenobia, who maintains this shroud. Only at Westervelt’s insistence does Coverdale disclose Zenobia’s real name (though not to the reader), prompting Westervelt to admit that he had “never heard her called otherwise” in “general society” (93). Zenobia, then, becomes what Bethany Reid would consider a post-inheritance Pearl, a marriage-making commodity in a male-driven market. And like Rappaccini’s Beatrice, Zenobia is constructed in purely fetishistic terms. A sexually and financially attractive woman, Zenobia mimics Beatrice’s exclusivity by virtue of her demeanour, a haughty independent disposition that permits a level of autonomy and simultaneously invites a competitive male gaze. And in a market where men control the flow of capital, Zenobia’s ability to attract attention becomes problematic. Like her father, Zenobia embraces capital as the preeminent signifier of power and freedom. But despite all her rhetoric, Zenobia remains a part of a society that is not so quick to acquiesce to new forms of control in women, and as a mere daughter of the patriarchy, Zenobia remains in the shadow of her absent yet ever-active father.

Old Moodie, otherwise known as Fauntleroy, is the first person to speak in *Blithedale*, and despite his marginal position Moodie remains the single most influential figure in the novel. Father, consumer, and usurper, Moodie represents the extreme manifestation of new, capitalist ideals: “a man of wealth, and magnificent tastes, and prodigal expenditures” (BR 182). Moodie’s history is described entirely in material terms

by Coverdale, whose narration by default includes “a trifle of romantic and legendary license” (181). Nonetheless, if Coverdale is in fact embellishing the story of Moodie, he merely proves again his complicity in a male-driven desire for social preeminence.

Whatever the case, Moodie is without question the ultimate consumer, willing and able to commodify, “like all his other manifestations and developments,” his own wife and daughter (182). But if Moodie represents new capitalist desires, he also signifies the disjunction of a shifting social system that had yet to entirely acclimatize itself to its required pursuits that demand Moodie’s own labour and productivity.

Returning again to traditional signifiers of power and identity in Puritan traditions, *Blithedale* at first invokes a new standard in the case of Moodie. The ultimate consumer made powerful by virtue of his wealth, Moodie’s very name is lost alongside his fortune, “forgotten by the multitude who had passed it so diligently from mouth to mouth” (183). The implication here is that name has been superseded by capital in terms of social significance, especially given his extended family’s wealth and stature. Individual stature, rather than a familial one, seems to take precedence. Moodie’s social standing is of no concern to his family, and his name holds no economic weight beyond the immediate strength of his personal fortune. This sentiment also corroborates the idea that Zenobia’s wealth, more than her name, permits her lofty social status. But traditional modes had not given way to new ideals and sentiments, and as a “beneficiary of a legal system crafted to maintain traditions of primogeniture” (A. Mills 111), Moodie retains a socially sanctioned, masculine prerogative to lay claim to family wealth that does not permit a feminine claim to it.

But this is not to say that Moodie's role as patriarch is in any way an individual challenge to the feminine freedom, or more specifically, the potential loss of a masculine control, manifested in Zenobia. It is apparent in the form of the novel itself that what is at work is a male social response much the same as the meeting in the Governor's house in *The Scarlet Letter*. Though not as formally structured as the meeting of Puritan leaders, Moodie's approach and assessment of Coverdale and Hollingsworth symbolizes a collective male response to an idea that threatens each every significant male personality in the novel. Despite Moodie's lack of an active voice in *The Blithedale Romance*, he is nonetheless spoken for on more than one level by the men who represent him. Coverdale, Hollingsworth and Westervelt repeatedly assert traditional modes of control on Moodie's daughters, and in doing so provide Moodie the physical means of reasserting his paternal influence despite his absence. Addressing the failure of the Blithedale community as a whole, Gale Temple suggests that Coverdale and Hollingsworth "see women and impoverished members of the working class as commodities that exist to serve the impossible realization of themselves. The inequality of this dynamic both results from and fosters a persistent sense of entitlement that denies subjectivity and agency to women" (286). While accurate in its assessment of the commodification of women, Temple's desire to maintain the Blithedale myth limits her scope and fails to take into account the rigid paternal influence that initiates this commodification of both Zenobia and Priscilla. Zenobia, we are told, is loved by her father merely "because she shone" like "another jewel"(182). Priscilla, on the other hand, becomes subject to Westervelt and her father both, sewing purses for Moodie's profit while being rented or sold to Westervelt as

subject and slave. Hence, though no doubt acting independently, Coverdale and Hollingsworth's treatment of the two sisters is hardly unique. But there is something more at stake in Moodie's relationship with his daughters that is, despite his despicable attention towards them, somewhat sympathetic and not necessarily condoned by the male community at large. But to understand this conflict, it becomes necessary to determine what threat, if any, Moodie's daughters pose to himself and his male counterparts.

Turning to the women in question then, Zenobia naturally takes precedence. And for this very reason, she poses a threat to traditional male hierarchies. But for all of the attention that has been paid to Zenobia as the active feminist, critics are too quick to label Zenobia as eliciting male fear in *The Blithedale Romance* as a whole. Roberta Weldon, in her scathing critique of Moodie, argues that "Moodie hates Zenobia because of the threat she poses to his patriarchal status. Zenobia has inherited his fortune after the death of her uncle, and, although he says that he has been content to 'shine through her,' it is clear that he has, like the father in the accused queen narrative, come to desire to reassert his control over her" (34). Though arguably indicative of a traditional reading of Zenobia, Weldon's argument assumes too much. Nowhere does Moodie suggest that he hates his daughter, and given Coverdale's admitted romantic license, it is impossible to infer emotion from Moodie's story. There is, of course, the singular moment when Moodie shakes his uplifted staff, though this event is ambiguous at best (88). Coverdale does not specify that Moodie shakes the staff at Zenobia, and for all the reader can know, Moodie may very well be addressing the intrusive narrator himself. But if Moodie's displeasure is in response to Zenobia's "haughty look," it is a significant leap to assume that frustration

with his daughter, with whom he continues to entrust with Priscilla, evolves into anything nearing hatred. Moreover, emotions aside, Zenobia is never in a position to threaten her father. Later in her essay, Weldon states that Zenobia “is a serious threat to her father because she can be whatever she desires to be,” and that she “has no last name that binds her to her father; her marital status has no apparent bearing on her social identity. It is not her relationships with men that have determined her estate. Her capabilities have sustained the powers that wealth has initially conferred” (36-37). But Moodie’s actions and knowledge of his daughter imply that he is fully aware of her circumstances. Moodie’s knowledge that his brother has died, and it must be his brother if Moodie has the legal right to his fortune, provides Moodie with complete power over Zenobia’s wealth the moment she possesses it. Moreover, given that she is raised by Moodie’s brother, Zenobia does in fact share Moodie’s name, and is subject to both it and him by consequence. In short, Moodie’s vigil over his daughter’s circumstances begins long before the Blithedale episode, and Zenobia poses no more a threat to him than Pearl does to Chillingworth. As much as Zenobia may construct herself in a kind of male subject position, she is always a daughter, and is confined to the restrictions that enclose her.

Nor does Zenobia threaten the egotistical Hollingsworth. Hollingsworth’s ability to separate himself from any type of conflict dismisses the possibility of threat, at least insofar as his perspective is concerned. In the same manner that he tells Coverdale “Be with me [...] or be against me! There is no third choice for you” (135), Hollingsworth is able to distance himself from Zenobia’s feminist ideals. Constructing an immovable moralistic division between his own self and his community, Hollingsworth demands a

complicity in his own ideas that defuses any kind of threat to his way of thinking, and as Coverdale reports, defuses even the haughty Zenobia. Upon listening to Hollingsworth's famous sermon on the role of women, Zenobia meekly responds in the affirmative: "Well; be it so [...] I, at least, have deep cause to think you are right. Let man be but manly and godlike, and woman is only too ready to become to him what you say" (124). Though sarcastic in its undertones, Zenobia's response nonetheless affirms Hollingsworth's sentiments, but more importantly it affirms Hollingsworth's ability to define his society and maintain the imperviousness that frustrates Coverdale throughout the novel.

If Zenobia threatens anyone on an individual basis then, it is Coverdale. As already noted, Coverdale represents the male desire to commodify women, both as a means of profit and as a means of control. By constructing and making public his narrative, Coverdale asserts his right and power to signify as he sees fit. Describing his introduction to Zenobia, Coverdale recounts Zenobia's slip of the tongue when she names her self "auditor – auditress, I mean – of some of [Hollingsworth's] lectures (21). Angela Mills notes that this "linguistic blunder is curious, considering that Coverdale is telling the tale over a decade after the fact" (104). Mills in turn suggests that Coverdale's memory of this event, or invention of it, is a product of Coverdale's paranoia about Zenobia's ability or inclination to blur traditional boundaries and challenge patriarchal regulation by virtue of her "not exactly maidenlike" qualities (BR 47). Thus Coverdale accepts Zenobia's challenge "to drop a plummet-line down into the depths of her consciousness," and respond to the "unexpectedness of [Zenobia's] attack" that leaves

him feeling “defrauded,” an emotion that Coverdale admits as being based on speculative knowledge of Zenobia’s demeanour alone (47-48). Ultimately, Coverdale’s inability to defuse Zenobia’s empowering disinterestedness in him will prompt his declaration of love for Priscilla, a desperate and facile attempt to reassert a weak masculinity that cannot even dominate its own text.

To this point, there has been little discussion of Priscilla, although her passive presence has been implied through most of the discussion of the more active participants in the Blithedale community. An object to be acted upon, Priscilla inevitably becomes the product of whatever agenda into which she is thrust. Daughter, seamstress, exhibition, sister, exhibition again, and wife: Priscilla is each of these things in turn, and throughout each (until her marriage) she is always Moodie’s daughter. Priscilla professes to be “blown about like a leaf [...] I never have any free-will” (171), a condition that is both accurate and disturbing in its simplicity. As many critics note, Priscilla is the epitome of patriarchal ideals. Passive, silent and dutiful, Priscilla exhibits an opportunity for male control without conflict or question. Confined and shaped since the day that she was born, Priscilla is the perfect daughter for Moodie’s circumstance. Like Rappaccini, Moodie shapes his daughter as a means to an end. Mills, in her extensive analysis of sisterhood in *The Blithedale Romance*, responds to such commodification of women by arguing that “Westervelt’s ‘evil,’ then, is comprised primarily of opportunism, of profiting from the further victimization of an already victimized womanhood. But whatever Westervelt’s crimes, he is not responsible for America’s entire population of enervated women. Rather, he is the consummate representative of western civilization’s male-authored

values, which have created such women as Priscilla” (107). Though the lack of accountability implied by Mills is disturbing, it nonetheless suggests a patriarchal environment that not only thrives on daughters like Priscilla, but actively endeavours to construct them, an idea that Zenobia is acutely aware of: “She is the type of womanhood, such as man has made centuries in making it” (BR 122). Inevitably, then, a conflict arises when Zenobia and Priscilla, daughters of the same father, are contrasted by their new proximity to each other. However, that it is the father himself who, while remaining absent, intends for the meeting of his daughters, suggests that there is more than a simple-minded vendetta against Zenobia at work in the novel, despite all that Coverdale does to make it appear so.

If one is to believe, as Weldon asserts and Coverdale’s narration implies, that Moodie’s sole purpose in sending Priscilla to Blithedale is as a means of securing Zenobia’s punishment and downfall, then significant details must be ignored. When Moodie approaches Coverdale the night before he is to leave for Blithedale, his initial uncertainty in his purpose is in response to Coverdale’s impatience and condescension. Coverdale tersely responds to Moodie’s request for as yet an undefined favour, arguing that “My time is brief, Mr. Moodie, and I have a good many preparations to make” (7). It is this negative demeanour that prompts Moodie to suggest that he had “better apply to some older gentleman, or to some lady. [...] You are a young man, sir!” (7). Moodie’s suggestion that a lady would suit his purpose is a forgotten detail that suggests far more than Moodie’s mere desire to acquire a fortune. There is, in this sentiment as well as his later admission that “If one thing would make me happier than another, Mr

Hollingsworth, it would be, to see that beautiful lady holding my little girl by the hand” (87), an undeniable care for Priscilla and a desire that she have some type of domestic bliss parental protection, be it paternal or maternal. This is not to suggest that Moodie is a reformed parent who is determined to make amends and affectionately provide for his daughters. Moodie’s actions and sentiments make it quite clear that he more concerned with Priscilla than he is with Zenobia. But given Moodie’s reluctance to send Priscilla with an immature man, preferring an older man or woman, suggests that there is no active intent on his part to have his daughters marry. Rather, it seems that Moodie desires the quasi-familial structure that appears when Coverdale finds his three companions at Eliot’s Pupil, “at the base of which sat Hollingsworth, with Priscilla at his feet, and Zenobia standing before them” (BR 212). But this twisted family portrait, the reader learns, is painted immediately after a crisis that signifies and reinscribes a male-dominated social hierarchy and a commodified femininity.

Throughout *The Blithedale Romance*, it becomes apparent even to the sceptical reader that Hollingsworth’s interest in Zenobia is purely financial. Westervelt, speaking for reader and community alike, claims that “Yet, so far has this honest fellow succeeded with one lady, whom we wot of, that he anticipates, from her abundant resources, the necessary funds for realizing his plan in brick and mortar!” (94). But, of course, Moodie does eventually assert his patriarchal right to his daughter’s fortune, putting an end to Hollingsworth’s plans. Critics point to Moodie’s threat that he will one day “demand it all, or none!” (191) from Zenobia, but this sentiment is purely Coverdale’s construction, sketched “mainly from fancy” and corroborated “with some general grounds of surmise”

(190). However, Moodie's assumption of Zenobia's inheritance and the resulting "crisis" that forces Hollingsworth to declare his love for Priscilla, denote a change in attitude in the male community. In Moodie's confession to Coverdale, it is stated that Zenobia "lacked a mother's care. With no adequate control, on any hand, (for a man, however stern, however wise, can never sway and guide a female child,) her character was left to shape itself" (189). Assuming that this narrative is Moodie's, and not solely Coverdale's, one can infer Moodie's desire for Priscilla to obtain the mother's care denied by her own mother's early death, a desire to see Zenobia "holding my little girl by the hand" (87).

A choice, then, is forced on the male community by Zenobia's unwillingness to assume the roles continually prescribed by her male counterparts. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Pearl is given legitimacy by the name and wealth conferred to her by the men who most desired to absorb her into their community. Pearl, of course, resists her community by maintaining her physical distance from it. Like the mature Pearl, Zenobia has both name and wealth, and she is unwilling to become a participant in a masculine society that refuses to recognize the (slightly) more egalitarian ideals and boundaries of Blithedale. Blithedale, in effect, is Zenobia's echo of Pearl's flight, a physical removal through which Zenobia can assert her individuality and independence. But by rejecting the maternal role prescribed by Moodie, an identity that would re-inscribe Zenobia's feminine identity in a patriarchal hierarchy, Zenobia forfeits the monetary autonomy – the means and basis of all of her own self-definition – that is so dependent on her father's whims and her step-father's lack of legal provision. By removing her fortune, Moodie reinforces Zenobia's subservience and dependence as daughter, unveils the fragility and illusion of her

autonomy, and taints her name by asserting his own history upon it. Signified now only in terms of being a woman, Zenobia's practised independence forfeits her claim on Hollingsworth's single-minded practicality, and makes Hollingsworth's choice of the trained, subservient and dutiful Priscilla inevitable. And though purely conjecture, one may assume that Hollingsworth, now familiar with the particulars of the two sisters, recognizes his claim to Priscilla's inevitable inheritance, a claim that rewards the prototypical patriarch that is Hollingsworth and reestablishes traditional social structures.

Chapter Three

Mothers or Money: The Rape of the Daughter in

The House of the Seven Gables

Contrasting with the strong individuality of the characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance*, *The House of the Seven Gables* offers little in the way of an assertive or dominant personality beyond the narrator's moralising interjections. T. Walter Herbert describes *The House of the Seven Gables* as the staging of "a contest between colonial-aristocrat and commoner" that "foretells the future victory of natural manhood" (65), a clash of wills between the enigmatic Pyncheon family and the pride of the Maules. In fact, this contest telescopes the focus of the novel. In *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance*, society functions as an extension and a culmination of individual ideas, attitudes and desires, and is subject to change according to the whims of its dominant individuals. Just as important, however, society exists as something that is both active and tangible; individual actions both define and are defined by the community at large. But in *The House of the Seven Gables*, society and the community seem to cease in importance altogether. Or, in another sense, society does not exist, so far as the residents of the Pyncheon house are concerned. Left standing in confusion at the outset of the house's life, the people of Pyncheon's community are never granted an entrance into its secrets, and it would seem that the entire history of the house exists only in and of itself, moulded in the far less tangible concerns of family pride and legacy, and independent in a manner that the actual characters of the novel are not. With its

overarching sense of destiny and fatalistic tendencies, *The House of the Seven Gables* gives the impression that the characters within the edifice are nearly redundant, insofar as they merely play the roles appointed them in a legacy that overshadows social mandates. In a sense, the Pyncheon house, like its father, and “like most of his breed and generation, was impenetrable” (9).

For indeed, it is the birth of the Pyncheon house through which the Pyncheon legacy is founded, the bastard child borne of Colonel Pyncheon’s violation of Matthew Maule’s virginal earth. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that the plot of land and its spring, described as losing the “deliciousness of its pristine quality” (*House* 10), are the last feminine elements of the Maule family, given the emasculation of the Maule paternity. In a symbolic act that is emphasized all the more by an inexplicable absence of wives on both mens’ accounts, Pyncheon displaces the very foundation of the Maule birthright and nearly vanquishes the Maule family by asserting his own physical presence upon it, digging “the deep foundations of his mansion, on the square of earth whence Matthew Maule, 40 years before, had first swept away the fallen leaves” (9-10). Built in the context of a purely patriarchal desire, the Pyncheon house stands as a signifier not only of the continued – albeit debatable – success of the Pyncheon legacy, but also of the defeat of a competing male and his own claims. Despite the narrator’s best attempts to diminish the Pyncheon family pride with accounts of an “absurd delusion of family importance” that “caused the poorest member of the race to feel as if he inherited a kind of nobility,” the house itself creates an illusion of grandeur by being a constant repetition of a land claim that was made good, no matter the result of the mysteriously absent claim

that promises a legacy that is never fulfilled (19). And although Pyncheon's act is more akin to an erasure of the Maules than a mere displacement, an assertion of his own paternal drive and potency over the seemingly inferior and publicly mistrusted Maules – a mistrust evidenced by the renaming of Maule's Lane to Pyncheon Street – the Maule family is not entirely eradicated (6). The Maules do not merely submit and fade into history but linger in the margins of society, and, more importantly, in the margins of the house itself. And in a novel obsessed with symbols of rape, contamination, and disease, it is inevitably the women, or more specifically the daughters, who are at risk of suffering at the hands of their male counterparts. Thus, for a Pyncheon family that is, in the present setting of the novel, preeminently feminine and utterly unable to safeguard itself from male transactions and desires, there is little hope of withstanding the advancements of a Maule family that remains exceedingly masculine and committed to its entitlement.

The past plunder and contamination of Maule's land sets the tone for a revenge motif that constructs an exclusively masculine conflict that is nevertheless contested entirely within and upon the feminine body. There is a sense of antiquity in the description of the Pyncheon history, derived at least in part by its origins as an oral tale, and this antiquity merely adds to the weight of the patriarchal motif announced in the preface. Echoing biblical language and Jewish patriarchal traditions, Colonel Pyncheon is even said to have appeared again, "At two or three epochs, when the fortunes of the family were low," in a quasi-prophetic or Messianic manner (19-20). But though the narrator claims that "From father to son, they clung to the ancestral house, with singular tenacity of home-attachment," the masculinity of the Pyncheon family is well in doubt by

the end of the novel, a framework of sons that is nonetheless subject to the threats to its daughters. One need only examine the few recorded instances of direct contact between the Pyncheon and Maule families to understand what is at stake in the Pyncheon line and the house that represents it. In each of the meetings of the two families, beginning with the death of Colonel Pyncheon, the heirs of the Pyncheon family line are absent. Moreover, in each instance, the Pyncheon family is rendered effeminate, portrayed as lacking or conceding dominate male attributes while assuming feminine ones, much to the benefit of the Maule counterpart, who is always male. Thus is constructed the medium of conflict between the two families, and whereas in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance* inheritance and family lines function to control and manipulate the daughter, *The House of the Seven Gables* distinctly constructs the feminine as a threat to the patriarchy and the means to its end. Though it echoes "Rappaccini's Daughter" and the pessimistically destructive male egotism of Rappaccini and Baglioni, *The House of the Seven Gables* also offers the same ironic optimism that suggests the daughters' almost pseudo-martyrdom is, in the very least, able to undermine the pride of its father figures. And in the context of *The House of the Seven Gables*'s preface, which boldly declares that the "wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief," it should come as no surprise that the eventual end of the Pyncheon line is as much the result of its own self-consuming pride as it is the function the Maules' interference (2).

When Colonel Pyncheon is found dead, shortly after meeting with the son of Matthew Maule, no family representative remains to immediately take his place, save for

the grandchild who shrieks with terror at the sight of his forefather (15). In this brief moment, two things occur: the absence of the heir and the child's shriek diminishes the family's pride and public position, and the Colonel himself is cast in female symbols by the disclosure that the "only human being that ever dared to be familiar with him" is a child, which suggests a matronly role and further reduces the paternal bond between the Colonel and his heir, presumably the boy's father. Similarly, the Colonel's death at the moment of the house's "birth," with the afterbirth of "scattered shavings, chips, shingles, and broken halves of bricks" still strewn about, suggests a mother dying in childbirth. Although the land itself is cast as maternal, or at least female, by its rape and pollution, the scene surrounding the expectant Colonel as the house is unveiled connotes a sense that he, too, is giving birth to his legacy. This effeminacy pervades the family throughout the novel, as both the history of Alice Pyncheon and the main events of the novel revolve around the meeting of the Pyncheons and the Maules, and in both instances the Pyncheon family falls prey to predatory male impulses. Alice Pyncheon, Hepzibah, and Phoebe all in turn succumb to a masculine desire for control. Even the house itself, though traditionally a figurative representation of a masculine legacy, proves to be quite feminine in the case of the Pyncheon line, and reflects the nineteenth-century home's transition to a more feminine domestic space.

Gillian Brown, in her work on women and inheritance in Hawthorne's texts, agrees with the principle that inheritance "seems in its ill effects to produce conditions resembling female vulnerability to male will" (*Inheritance* 110). But Brown refuses to accept the pessimistic overtones of this relationship, and seeks to redeem both

Hawthorne's women and the concept of inheritance, stating that "property also appears decontaminated of this potential by female influence like Phoebe's" (110). Brown goes on to say that "Hawthorne's reversal of the horrific plot of inheritance through the beneficial plot of domesticity attributes to women the symbolic function of redeeming property, removing its affiliations with the past so that property can be safely heritable, and so that women as well as men can safely inherit it" (110). According to Brown, then, one is able to optimistically read Phoebe and Hepzibah's acquisition of the Pyncheon home as a moment of redemption. In this regard, Brown misreads, or perhaps oversimplifies, the conflict that is at stake in Hawthorne's work. In her attempts to idealize Phoebe, Brown makes the mistake of too narrowly reading the scope and breadth of masculine control and manipulative power in *The House of the Seven Gables*' narrative. Moreover, Brown also insists on treating inheritance in Hawthorne as a purely material construction, and neatly attaches the guilt of family history to the acquisition of wealth. But as the narrator of *The House of the Seven Gables* makes clear, family inheritance takes many forms. Repeatedly described as a disease or infection and symbolically manifest as such by "Maule's Blood," family legacy in *The House of the Seven Gables* takes the form of wealth and material goods, public aversion, physical disease, wrongdoing, absurd delusions, and curses, and not all of these are limited to the Pyncheon family. The Maules inherit public aversion, and even the chickens behind the Pyncheon house are subject to malicious legacies. But rather than treating these ailments as heirlooms in and of themselves, Brown implies that they are merely conditions of male-tainted fortune. Dealing with only material possessions, Brown idealistically determines

that "Hawthorne envisions in Phoebe a solution to the problem of inheritance" by seeing in her "the emergence of domestic womanhood as an antidote to the economic upheavals of nineteenth-century American society" (108). What Brown fails to realize, however, is that Phoebe's edifying femininity is merely an extension of a passive female economics that dominates the novel by reducing every encounter between the Pyncheon women and the outside world (usually in the form of the Maule family) to an economic transaction. If Phoebe is able to redeem the Pyncheon inheritance, it is by merely being a valuable enough commodity herself to put the family fortune back into circulation. And as Alice Pyncheon's story reveals, the value of the Pyncheon daughters lies wholly in their willingness to succumb to a masculine desire for wealth.

As noted earlier, Alice Pyncheon is quite unique as a daughter in Hawthorne's novels, as she is the only daughter in the three texts who has a single, (relatively) stable, and present father.

And though the family structure remains intact, at least as far as daughter and father are concerned, the intimacy that is constructed in this secluded relationship is troubling. In a strikingly similar mode as the tale of Rappaccini, Gervayse and Alice Pyncheon's relationship is constructed as a type of surrogate compliance that distorts nineteenth-century ideals of domestic affection and devotion. At this point in the Pyncheon family line, a distinct threat of barrenness or infertility threatens not only Gervayse's economic and paternal stability, but his own self-construction as male and patriarch. Repeating the trope of impotency that drives Rappaccini in his designs, Gervayse's entire life is unproductive and stifling. Trapped in a house and country for which he cares little,

Gervayse's "own fortune, as well as his deceased wife's, [began] to give symptoms of exhaustion" (199). Like Gervayse's wife, the Pyncheon house promises a fortune to be had, though it might also fail to survive and enjoy the wealth it brings him. Cast as a type of marauding parasite who survives on the money assumed from his wife, a "woman of fortune" long dead (190), Gervayse requires a means to extract even more from his legacy in order to increase his own prolific girth, and so he seeks the old land claim that "would be worth an earldom," and "entitle him to solicit, or enable him to purchase, that elevated dignity from the British monarch. Lord Pyncheon! – or the Earl of Waldo!" (199). Thus Gervayse (and the narrator, who in actuality is none other than a Maule), implicitly links the concept of self with economics, distinctly exposing the shift from traditional patrimonial distinction to an economic competition. No longer are name and right requirements for distinction. Rather, they now merely the reward for economic superiority. And Gervayse, forced to compete in a new, capitalist economy, must forfeit power and control in his house in order to gain the means to his legacy.

Unfortunately for Gervayse, the Pyncheon house suffers the same infertility as the family itself. Promising the potential for wealth in the form of a deed that by every account should exist within the house and be forthcoming to the Pyncheon heirs, the house nonetheless produces nothing. Though foreshadowing the lack of fertility that will not even yield a few coins to Hepzibah in later years, the house's inability to financially sustain Gervayse actually leads to his own emasculation, in more ways than one. Unable to discern his house's secrets, Gervayse must defer to a surrogate husband, so to speak. By inviting Matthew Maule into his study, Gervayse admits an inability to control and

define his future prospects, or to put his own house in order. But this is merely a repetition of the Pyncheon reliance upon the Maule family in this manner. Gervayse's attempts to withdraw information from Matthew merely repeats the struggle between the two men's grandfathers, though the land in question may differ. Moreover, this encounter is not the last instance of the Maule family being asked to procure a semblance of productivity from the Pyncheon house, as Holgrave himself will ultimately be its gardener and, more lucratively, the discoverer of its secrets. And yet, despite the manner in which this loss of control undermines the Pyncheon pride and position, it ultimately leads to the disclosure of the family's entirely self-serving designs, an admission of the narcissistic pride that drives it in the very manner that it drives Rappaccini. In Gervayse's case, given the hope of recovering his deed, he is willing to spend and sacrifice not only his own house, but his very family, repeating the commodification of Beatrice Rappaccini with his willingness to barter and spend his own daughter Alice.

Teresa Goddu's work on the circulation of women in *The House of the Seven Gables* uses Alice to highlight what Goddu calls the "role women play as a commodity to be traded between men in the economic relations of society (122). Goddu goes on to state that "Alice is bartered, like the house before her, for Matthew Maule's knowledge about the Pyncheon's claim to eastern lands, proving that the father's business has everything to do with the daughter. Again, economic exchange is described in sexual terms" (122). Goddu's assessment of Alice's treatment is germane but, like most critics' work, it does not explore the full extent of Alice's degradation. Like Beatrice, Alice seems to exist entirely within a confined space. Yet the space that is the Pyncheon house is a conflicted

one. Designed as a testament to its paternal founder, the house by Alice's time exhibits the more maternal aspects of the nineteenth-century American home, with a sense of domestic affection and comfort in its "jolly-looking" patriarchal appearance combined with the "indescribable grace and faint witchery" of Alice's influence. Even Alice's father is cast as effeminate, goaded by Maule for almost spoiling "those rich lace-ruffles, at your wrists!" (206). But the house, projecting the family's wilted lineage, is barren. The narrator goes so far as to suggest that as many as six children could each have their own gable with room to spare for the father (191). But those gables are empty, and never in the text does a Pyncheon child ever reside there save for the transient Phoebe, though she is by her time offset by the co-inhabiting descendent of the Maules.

And so in her solitary confinement Alice becomes an aesthetic curiosity. Like Beatrice and Zenobia, Alice is portrayed as "an exotic, like the flowers, and beautiful and delicate as they" (191). But what is intriguing in this image of Alice is not so much what she is, but the manner in which she is treated, especially by her father. There is no indication whatsoever that Alice is meant for marriage or a relationship. Prior to the meeting with Matthew Maule, Alice does not have an exchange value, so to speak. One can interpret the lack of sexual discourse favourably, insofar as it acquits Gervayse of any premeditation of bartering his daughter. But Alice's innocence also indicts her father for his timid and somewhat disinterested agreement to Maule's designs. Moreover, the passivity inherent in Alice's innocence permits the buyer, rather than the seller, to determine her value. Gervayse's response to Maule's request indicates Gervayse's ignorance of Alice's value, rather than any real desire to protect her, and Maule's offer

prompts him to question Maule's intent and consider newfound possibilities rather than uphold his daughter's decency. Gervayse desires to know "What can my daughter have to do with a business like this?" (200), a question that is the full extent of his resistance to Maule until the process of mesmeric process begins. Even then, after declaring that "The importance of the document in question renders it advisable to neglect no possible, even if improbable, method of regaining it" (202), Gervayse's greed and desire for an established name ultimately triumphs by his reasoning that his actions are best for his daughter, again echoing the monomania of Rappaccini (204).

If the Pyncheon house is emblematic of a domestic space that is no longer capable of producing on an economic level, then it stands to reason that the exchange of Alice for information yields nothing of worth. As Goddu points out, Maule's refusal to disclose his information prompts Gervayse to accuse Maule of robbing him (123). At this junction, the emphasis shifts away from the deed and the house to Alice herself. But the economics of exchange and the commodification of Alice that accompanies it are maintained. Refusing to disclose his information, Maule rescinds his claim to the Pyncheon house. But, being accused of robbery, Maule makes it quite clear that Alice was "sold [...] for the mere hope of getting a sheet of yellow parchment" (206). In a reversal of the Rappaccini plot, Alice, who is meant to be the medium exchange through which information can be obtained, becomes instead an object of exchange. But perhaps more specifically, it is Alice's purity that is exchanged, for she nevertheless survives the ordeal with Maule. A "clear, crystal medium of a pure and virgin intelligence, like that of the fair Alice" gives "the only chance of acquiring the requisite knowledge" (200). Herein lies the truth of the

pact described by Maule, but also a hint of something even darker than the mere prostitution of Gervayse's daughter.

Critics often cite an incest motif in *The House of the Seven Gables*, especially with respect to Clifford and Hepzibah, but in light of Maule's "half-hidden sarcasm" in declaring that Alice "will no doubt feel herself quite safe in her father's presence, and under his all sufficient protection," there are definite undertones of the malicious sexuality inherent in the description of the daughter as a "quasi-wife" and in nineteenth-century daughter-father sexuality. If the hope of recovering information lay in the assistance of a virginal daughter, then a previously tainted Alice would make the agreement null and void. Rendered publicly invalid for marriage by the sexuality "unlocked" by Maule, there is nonetheless a sense that Maule merely makes public what is otherwise private, and uncovers a deception that devalues Alice as a means to obtain further economic increase to a failing line. But Alice is not the only ineligible Pyncheon daughter, and though contrasting greatly with Hepzibah's appearance and circumstances, her own legacy is nonetheless embodied by Hepzibah, a woman whose unproductive nature is a reflection of both the Pyncheon family and its house.

With the Pyncheon sons always absent in Europe or elsewhere, the Pyncheon house is left to nurture the children of the family and provide a haven for emasculated patriarchs. But an examination of Hepzibah uncovers striking similarities between the house and its final Pyncheon inhabitant, and ultimately the interplay between the two reveals the depth of abuse and control they suffer at the hands of their male counterparts. In readdressing her views on *The House of the Seven Gables*, and more specifically on the

construction and identification of its protagonist, Nina Baym grudgingly admits that Hepzibah is better suited for that title than any of the novel's other, less than prominent, personalities. In her attempt to rescue the title of protagonist from passive or absent figures like Phoebe and Holgrave, Baym unravels the conflict between Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon, and ultimately decides that the resistance of Hepzibah, and its outcome, is unique enough within the text to grant her the role of protagonist. Noting Hepzibah's refusal to accept financial aid from the Jaffrey Pyncheon, Baym argues that Hepzibah's attempt to open a store is an act of defiance towards Jaffrey's self-empowering designs. (*Heroine* 610).

But the defiance inherent in Hepzibah's mercantile efforts is a moot point with respect to the family's history. Hepzibah exists as an entirely ineffectual, unproductive figure throughout the novel. Critics like Baym and Melissa Pennell argue that Hepzibah's life is one of resistance, and that her strength of will in defying the Judge is unique in her family. Yet Hepzibah's attitude towards the Judge is more a product of her devotion to another Pyncheon male than an attempt at any type of personal autonomy on her part. Again invoking the incest motif in her spinsterhood and lifelong devotion to Clifford, to whom she feels a "strange mingling of the mother and sister" (148), Hepzibah underscores the infertility, or lack of productive ability, of the Pyncheon home. Hepzibah's devotion to Clifford and the family line produces a feminine body that cannot function in any system. Economically, and as a impoverished aristocrat, Hepzibah merely closets herself away from public view and function, and holds no power whatsoever. As Pennell explains, "The values that have shaped her life allow Hepzibah to

see herself as a guardian of the house and repository of Pyncheon family lore and tradition, but such a role is unimportant to a world preoccupied with technological progress and change” (193). And as a capitalist, Hepzibah is an utter failure: her inability to communicate with a public that has been shut out of the Pyncheon home for decades, even centuries damns her efforts. Or, perhaps more accurately, it is the Pyncheon family that has been shut out by a legacy that stubbornly sets itself apart. What is more, Hepzibah epitomises the fear of an ineffectual, feminine economics. Contrasting with the male counterparts that have come before her, Hepzibah’s passive and failing economy merely justifies the efforts of a family so intent on adding the land claim to its legacy.

In short, Hepzibah is what Alice Pyncheon would have been had she not died. Constrained in her family home, Hepzibah is the product of a masculine narcissism that discards its daughters once there is nothing to be gained from them. In like manner, the Pyncheon house is also abandoned, left to stagnate with its decrepit occupant and twisted gardens. Like the post-menopausal women in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hepzibah must actively participate in the male-centred process of maintaining a proper hierarchy, for fear of becoming redundant. Unproductive on all accounts, and not even able to care for her house, Hepzibah mimics her forefathers’ propensity for blurring their gendered roles by forgoing much of her femininity and adopting traditional male attitudes and characteristics. Obligated by what Brown suggests is a moral debt made manifest in her family inheritance, Hepzibah embodies and signifies her male progenitors and so keeps intact the family’s threatening mystique and demeanour (Brown, *Endangered* 328). Never a matronly figure, for the “love of children had never been quickened in

Hepzibah's heart" (*House* 39), Hepzibah even lacks the Colonel and Gervayse's ability to care for children and grandchildren. In contrast to nineteenth-century trends of maternal domestic spaces and education and a capitalist economy explicitly removed from the home, Hepzibah reverts to a domestic economics and expressly refuses the new feminine roles (39). Constructing a gendered dichotomy and allying herself with the freedom derived from masculine patronage, Hepzibah enters her new commercial sphere and revisits a now receding economic and paternal model (62).

Implicit in Hepzibah's refusal of a new domesticity is her participation in the male-driven commodification of the Pyncheon female body. Beginning with the Pyncheon house, Hepzibah reenacts the history of Alice Pyncheon, whose flowers – according to the narrator an almost exclusively feminine interest – still survive in the crevices of the house and thereby reinforce the house's femininity (*House* 147). Desiring economic compensation from a house that has provided nothing for her, Hepzibah opens its doors only far enough to admit yet another member of the Maule family. But Holgrave's admittance into the house does little to increase Hepzibah's fortunes. Foregoing the exclusivity of a single, manageable border, Hepzibah decides to prostitute the house entirely by opening a door, so like a scar, that had been "locked, bolted and barred" by a family mortified by the door's existence (28). Like Gervayse, Hepzibah's initial mortification at the possibility of such an economic transaction gives way under the possibility and necessity of financial gain. And again repeating her forefather's justification, Hepzibah's motivation is displaced from her own self to that of a dependent, this time in the form of Clifford, a shell that is as empty and muddled as Alice by the time

his own family relations are through with him.

But the house yields virtually no profit for Hepzibah beyond a child's infantile attraction to its poor nourishment, though in all truth the failure of Hepzibah's shop keeping is as much the fault of the Pyncheons' "native inapplicability [...] to any useful purpose" (77). When Hepzibah comes to rely on Phoebe in the matter of shop, house and home, she stresses repeatedly the influence of Phoebe's "mother's blood" (77, 78, 79). Though she is the last of her line, Phoebe little resembles the unproductive lineage that has become quite obscure in her history. As the old prophet Uncle Venner confirms, there was never a Pyncheon that Phoebe takes after (82). Phoebe's self-assertive attitude permits her free access between domestic and economic spheres, with the nonchalant ability to declare "I am shopkeeper today" while having been "a nice little housewife" only the day before (77-78). Having embraced modern feminine roles of educator and nurturer so abhorred by Hepzibah, Phoebe is the antithesis of the Pyncheon aristocracy (77). But like Alice and the Pyncheon house before her, Phoebe is not immune from her family's propensity for taking advantage of its daughters. Proud and determined like Alice, Phoebe is more than willing to become the medium of economic exchange for her elder family members. And true to form, Hepzibah does not protest Phoebe's economic role so much as she reveals her ignorance of Phoebe's potential usefulness. Asking "What can a little country-girl know of such matters?", Hepzibah echoes Gervaise's realization of Alice's worth. Once she understands Phoebe's value as a medium for economic exchange, Hepzibah offers no resistance to Phoebe's plebeian role, an arrangement which permits Hepzibah to return to her passive, unproductive existence (78).

But Phoebe's independent nature suffers more than a mere retail experience. Escaping the house for a time, Phoebe asserts her ability to cross the confines of the Pyncheon house, a privilege attainable by Alice and Hepzibah only after they transgress masculine means of control. At this point, Phoebe is cast in very much the same mould as Pearl. Phoebe has two fathers and is displaced from both of them, her true Pyncheon father having died, and her new father possessing a character vaguely described as giving Hepzibah knowledge enough "to enable her to appreciate the circumstances (resulting from the second marriage of the girl's mother) which made it desirable for Phoebe to establish herself in another home" (73). Thus fleeing some nameless taboo and family gossip, Phoebe inhabits a tenuous social position, much like Hester and Pearl do in *The Scarlet Letter*. A capable member of the community, Phoebe nonetheless finds herself at the mercy of others. Although Phoebe's Salem is not nearly as rigid as Pearl's, she nonetheless requires a "home" in order to become established in the community. Phoebe cannot remain self-reliant in the mode of Holgrave, a liminal figure himself whose lifestyle is maintained merely by the masculine ability of maturing through age and station, rather than by marriage and motherhood. Phoebe is always a girl, a daughter, and as such has no right to be self-sufficient.

But unlike Pearl, Phoebe does not resist or flee men's attempts to reassert their influence and so reabsorb her into society. Representing both the Maules and society at large, and both new and old ideals, Holgrave is the masculine response to Phoebe's independent femininity. Though trapped between her new father and Hepzibah, Phoebe's mobility and practical knowledge nonetheless permit her a degree of power and autonomy

not traditional to women. And like Zenobia, Phoebe is ultimately pursued by a masculine culture that is entirely unwilling to permit Phoebe's freedom. Thus, so long overshadowed by the Pyncheon family, the Maule lineage recognizes the opportunity manifest in its competitor's lack of male heirs. Reversing the erasure of the Maules from their fertile land centuries before, Holgrave enacts the very same means of asserting his own name and reestablishing his own paternity. By marrying Phoebe, Holgrave not only erases the Pyncheon name in its entirety, but in the symbolically fruitful Phoebe he plants his own name, "how will it please you to assume the name Maule?" (316), and so builds his own family name in the Pyncheon plot. Furthermore, Holgrave does not merely represent the Maules, but society as a whole. Worldly and educated, Holgrave proclaims his allegiance to "laws, and the peaceful practice of society" (307) and to "permanence, which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment" (315). And in a final assertion of social order and masculine competition, the money of the Pyncheon family, now divested on its daughters, ultimately finds its way into the hands of Holgrave: "Clifford became rich; so did Hepzibah; so did our little village maiden, and through her [...] Holgrave!" (313). Goddu optimistically reads this arrangement as conditional in Holgrave's case, stating that "The Maules get their money but only through several layers of mediation: Hepzibah and Clifford will pass on money to Phoebe who then will share it with Holgrave" (125). But in light of Holgrave's admission that the Maule's family secret has always prevented the increase of the Pyncheon fortune, there is little evidence that the Maules have ever wanted to "share" the wealth (316). Such an economic arrangement could have been easily made as payment for the whereabouts of the land claim. Rather,

Matthew Maule's decisive refusal to disclose the deed's location indicates a malicious struggle that leaves no room for compromise.

Decrepit and infertile, Hepzibah and Clifford will have no heirs save for Phoebe, and Phoebe's wealth and what she stands to gain in later years will by right go to her husband. Acting again as the medium for financial exchange, Phoebe is the conduit through whom Holgrave acquires and asserts his legacy, and it will be the name of Maule by which the couple's children will be defined. Thus, both name and fortune are again underwritten by a male hierarchy, and Phoebe's family legacy ironically dies with the most promising daughter in its history.

Conclusion

Lost in the Confusion

What is, perhaps, most troubling about this examination of family and father-daughter bonds in Hawthorne's work is the utter absence of any discussion of familial love. Dominated by duty, respect, pride, and legacy, the families in Hawthorne's novels are far from optimistic, and any sense of affectionate familial bond is either impossible or untenable in communities that inevitably expect financial and servile deference from their daughters. In the final moments before her death, Beatrice tells her father that she "would fain have been loved, not feared" (*Rappaccini* 209). Though uttered in response to Rappaccini's blind egotism and seemingly justified, Beatrice's words are emblematic of the ambiguity inherent to so many of the familial bonds in Hawthorne's work. The concept of love, in any sense, is troubling. Driven by a patriarchal sense of family pride, Rappaccini veils his own fears and insecurities by perverting the concept of love. By isolating his daughter, Rappaccini is able to prevent, or at least postpone, Beatrice's knowledge of the truth behind her father's façade. And it is important to understand the distinction that Beatrice makes between love and fear, for it underlies much the ambiguity and masculine insecurity that dominate so much of Hawthorne's texts.

Beatrice does not invoke the traditional binary of love and hate, a simple conflict that would render Rappaccini's treatment of his daughter understandable, if not excusable. If Rappaccini's acts were driven by a hatred of his daughter, there would at least exist an understandable cause and effect: Rappaccini's hatred prompts him to act

against his nemesis. But if there is hatred manifest in any of Hawthorne's work, it never involves individual women, although it can be argued that womanhood in general is shunned. Rather, hatred is reserved for competing male spheres: Rappaccini and Baglioni; Chillingworth and Dimmesdale; Coverdale, Hollingsworth and Westervelt; Pyncheon and Maule. Each of these competing male households and individuals manifests a competitive hatred toward their counterparts, a hatred that encloses women but is not directed at them. Exiled or consumed by competitive male egotism, daughters like Pearl, Zenobia, Priscilla, Alice, Hepzibah and Phoebe are the victims of male hatred, not the objects of it. When Beatrice makes the distinction between love and fear, she discloses a far more ambiguous, and troubling, aspect of nineteenth-century male destabilisation.

Though speaking directly of her own legacy as a woman with power and agency, a woman to be feared by virtue of her father's gift, Beatrice's distinction between love and fear unveils her father's attempts to reconstruct gender roles, and ultimately to control the maternal role, the creative ability that lies entirely outside the boundaries of male authority. As noted in the introduction, Rappaccini's role of father is emasculated by the distinct lack of a wife and the resulting inability of the father to produce a male heir. Lacking traditional social means of maintaining his name, Rappaccini turns to a perverted sense of procreation and attempts to "give birth" to a new form of humanity. Concealed in the womb of his garden, Beatrice unknowingly awaits a male counterpart whose union with her will produce the new race, the legacy so desired by Rappaccini. On her own, Beatrice is worthless to her father. Herein lies the fear that Beatrice unmasks throughout Hawthorne's work. Hawthorne's constant repetition of daughters born of motherless

unions thus suggests two things. First, the absence of the maternal body suggests the man's inability to control it. With the constant death of the maternal body, men are left without the means of establishing a traditional family structure over which they can maintain a hierarchical control. Secondly, the absence of the mother also leaves a family that is unproductive. Like Phoebe, the feminine body and name can only be overwritten, and cannot maintain the father's legacy. By having nothing but daughters, families can only be impregnated, they cannot impregnate. They are seen as passive and subject to the advances of assertive male counterparts like Matthew Maule and his family of sons.

By having to fulfill the maternal role in lieu of the mother, fathers like Rappaccini and Moodie become emasculated themselves, and the unselfish, nurturing, maternal love evident in Hester and Priscilla's mother is recast as a perverted love of the male self, projected onto the daughter in an attempt to recreate a traditional family structure and purpose. Thus the concept of love is irrevocably broken by the father's insistence on recreating himself. Rather than providing his daughter with the care inherent to the maternal role, the father asserts his masculinity in an effort to circumvent traditional social prerogatives that favour a male heir and so diminish the father's legacy. Salem requires Pearl to conform to traditional maternal roles, Moodie attempts to recreate a domestic ideal by imposing the maternal role on Zenobia, and the Pyncheons' obsession with a feudal, economic birthright transforms the families' daughters into a means of exchange. In the midst of a nation in transition, the men in Hawthorne's novels are facing new ideals that seem to promise nothing but dead ends. Hester and Pearl construct a maternal domestic sphere that decidedly rejects the father, Moodie's capitalism and

consumerism repeatedly costs him his family, and Pyncheon's attempts to resist capitalism altogether nevertheless results in a family that is scattered and broken. In the midst of these trials, the families' respective daughters are forever threatened by a masculinity determined to reassert its own designs and maintain itself, no matter the cost.

Part of Hawthorne's genius, of course, lies in the ambiguity of his characters, an uncertainty of purpose and past that makes it difficult to read anything in the text as concrete. While the families in Hawthorne's work are certainly disjointed, there is no doubt that they nonetheless harbor an intense intimacy. There is evidence in all the texts examined here that incestuous relationships are present at some point in the narrative. Speaking of "Little Annie's Ramble," one of Hawthorne's children's stories, Sánchez-Eppler states that "One of the most seductive things about this story, in other words, is how it presents the little girl as herself the source of seduction" (*Hawthorne* 152). The eroticised daughter is a familiar image in nineteenth-century American literature, and Sánchez-Eppler's work opens a number of questions about the daughters in Hawthorne's texts. Moodie's unmentionable crime, "growing out of its artificial state" and worse than murder, raises questions that are echoed by the already mentioned relationships between Alice Pyncheon and her father (BR 183). Moreover, as Baym and Goddu's work suggests, the unproductive nature of the Pyncheon household and the relationship between Clifford and Hepzibah suggests an inappropriate sexuality that is echoed by the hens in the yard and shrouded by the house's mystique. Even Dimmesdale's relationship with Pearl is subject to scrutiny, as the physical contact between the two seems out of place in an otherwise rigid masculine atmosphere.

There is, of course, a need to expand the analysis of Hawthorne's daughter figures beyond their fathers and the domestic space. As has been alluded to, some of the women in Hawthorne's texts do manifest some type of agency by resisting their fathers or by traversing traditional physical or spacial boundaries. The mere absence of the maternal figure in "Rappaccini's Daughter," *The Blithedale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables* raises significant questions about traditional familial models, although figures like Phoebe and Zenobia seem to assert a more significant claim to an independent and self-willed feminine prerogative. An examination of death as a means of resistance is also warranted, given that so many of the women who die in Hawthorne's texts do so in response to the sins of their husband or father. Moreover, though nearly always absent, the son must also factor into a larger examination of family dynamics. Be it the small boys like Gervaise Pyncheon at the Colonel's death, or the sons in short stories like "Ethan Brand," it is inevitably the "son" who becomes the father, and in light of the apparent schism between the male generations, there is a need to define that relationship as well. Finally, spatial dynamics must also be considered. All three of Hawthorne's novels examined here construct an urban focus with a rural counterpart, and almost invariably acts of resistance are manifest in the rural setting. In an increasingly urbanized America, the link between family dynamics and social distribution is pivotal in any study that suggests that mobility is in some way linked to a daughter's means of establishing and maintaining her viability as a member of society, rather than becoming a mere extension of her father's egotism and vanishing in the midst of his inability to alleviate his own insecurity.

In this thesis, I have shown that the daughters in Hawthorne's fiction are consistently manipulated and degraded by an aggressive and conflicted male-centred society. Inevitably linked to a confused domestic space, the daughters in *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables* are isolated and marginalised by absent or destructive fathers whose paternal names are nonetheless paramount in establishing their daughters' social legitimacy. Given a measure of space and temporary independence in a reflection of nineteenth-century social trends, the daughters in Hawthorne's novels are inevitably forced to choose between submitting to traditional patriarchal models or leaving their community entirely. Trapped in male-driven society that is at odds with its own sense self, Beatrice, Pearl, Zenobia, Priscilla, Alice, Hepzibah and Phoebe are all subject to a masculine attempt to reestablish dominant familial hierarchies in a society more concerned with capital and gain than name and right. New ideas are confused with old paradigms, and despite their best efforts, the daughters in Hawthorne's texts cannot contest their society's narcissistic designs. And although Hawthorne seems willing to give his daughter figures a space in which they can speak for themselves, there seems to be little in the way of optimism for a feminine voice that is undermined by a society intent on nothing but its own reflection.

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