Minority/Majority
Childhood Studies and Antebellum
American Literature

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The field of antebellum American literature has been radically transformed over the last thirty years by spectacular projects of literary recovery that have in turn redefined the foundational texts of the discipline. A renewed interest in authorship and publication studies is currently reinvigorating the field. Further, a turn toward the transnational has highlighted transatlantic literary relationships in the pre-Civil War era and introduced to our understanding of the field a hemispheric component. This has complicated assumptions about the relative exceptionalism of the literatures of the United States and challenged received notions of borders, boundaries, and nationalism. While childhood studies may be seeking a more elevated seat at the academic table—as the title of this volume suggests—scholarship is already beginning the work of reshaping antebellum American literature through the lens of childhood studies. Similar to scholarship that has changed understandings of antebellum American literature, the newly emerging discipline of childhood studies is also poised to rediscover the foundational literatures of antebellum America by showing how the study of those who are known legally as minors invites us to realign theories and conceptions of major literary works. Childhood studies has the potential to disrupt the inherently unstable and airless binary of child/adult and to complicate reductive understandings of what constitutes “children’s literature” in antebellum America. Additionally, childhood studies may allow scholars to interrogate the category of the child in antebellum American
literature as a locus of power differentials in an era so riven by competing claims for equality and parity with power that it is famous for the threat of disunion. While childhood studies has been defined as “a multidisciplinary field that concerns itself with the nature of childhood experience and with ways cultures construct and have constructed childhood,” the field can do more than liberate childhood from cultural limits and recognize childhood as something that may be mapped or “constructed” onto various bodies (whether those bodies are classed, raced, ethnically marked, gendered, or juvenile). As Joan Scott puts it in her illuminating study of the potential of gender theories to transform the study of history, it is Foucault who allows gender to be understood as, in part, “a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” By understanding childhood as a way of delineating relations of power, childhood studies allows us to rethink the ubiquitous figure of the child in the literature of antebellum America as a discursive signifier whose meanings are inherently constituted around issues of equality and mediated through pedagogy as a tool of power. This chapter explores how the field of pre-Civil War American literature might be reconfigured by recovering what could be called an antebellum culture of pedagogy that both critiqued and reinforced power relations in the antebellum United States. I also suggest that antebellum America’s pervasive culture of pedagogy is inextricably linked to the concept of authorship as it was defined in the era. When viewed through the lens of childhood studies, the boundaries of our understanding of antebellum American print culture shift to reveal the centrality of childhood and a concurrent redefinition of authorship that may contribute to the broadening of current conceptions of nineteenth-century American literature.

Little Eva reading the Bible with Uncle Tom: it is almost impossible to imagine antebellum American literature without recourse to this iconic moment in the best-selling novel of the era. According to James F. O'Gorman, the biographer of Hammatt Billings, who illustrated the novel, the engraving of this scene of reading is “without doubt the most important image of the first edition” and was the scene—one of only six that were illustrated in the first edition—that, “of all Billings’s scenes,” as Jo-An Morgan explains, “most captivated viewers. . . . [giving rise to] all manner of ephemera” memorializing the incident.” The prominence of the Bible marks the evangelical nature of the moment and the depiction of physical intimacy sexualizes the relationship between Eva and Tom even as it infantilizes Tom as a novice being taught to read by a child. Yet the scene stands more forcefully as an icon from an era marked by a profound faith in the power of literacy and the potential of pedagogy to transform individuals both spiritually and materially.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin was published in the early 1850s, during a period that witnessed the growing significance of what Richard Brodhead calls the “literature of the child.” Antebellum print culture was marked by an outpouring of child-rearing guides, schoolbooks, readers, primers, juvenile periodicals, Sunday school stories, “toy books,” and teacher-training manuals. Sarah J. Hale’s iconic children’s poem about the intersections of home and school, “Mary’s Lamb,” appeared in 1830 in the Juvenile Miscellany, edited by children’s author Lydia Maria Child. Stowe came of age as an author during this era; her first publication was a pedagogical tract, A Primary Geography for Children (1833). Although antebellum print culture’s turn toward the literature of the child seems self-evident when these works are viewed as an aggregate, it is the advent of childhood studies that allows us to situate Stowe’s novel in relation to an antebellum culture of pedagogy in which education itself was at the core of many of the period’s numerous reform movements. Transcendentalism, abolition, advocacy for women’s rights, the common-school movement, temperance—all these movements were predicated on an abiding faith in the transformational power of pedagogy. Further, when considered in light of childhood studies, the seeming incongruities between such works as Elizabeth Oakes Smith’s sentimental classic “The Sinless Child” (1842) and Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter (1850), featuring the impish Pearl, begin to resolve: both participate in a redefinition of antebellum authorship that includes the literature of the child. Indeed, Anne Lundlin’s study of the canonization of children’s literature notes that “books were read by a dual audience” of adults and children in the long nineteenth century: “Many of the best-selling novels of the nineteenth century were works we now consider children’s literature.” Beverly Lyon Clarke’s analysis of American children’s literature agrees: “The nineteenth century was a time ‘when majors wrote for minors.’” Finally, if the proliferation of juvenile literature can be associated with American imperial ambitions, as the works of Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Caroline Levander, and Amy Kaplan suggest, many of the canonical works of the era can also be situated in terms of minority positions and asymmetrical relations of power that both critiqued yet reinforced U.S. racial, cultural, and territorial borders.

If childhood studies asks us to consider the child as a signer of relation-
ships of power, then turning to the law can help us understand this function better, since terms and definitions of power are most starkly articulated in U.S. law. An examination of the legal status of the child under antebellum juridical codes reveals definitions of power and citizenship that challenge reductive or essentialist understandings of the child. (See Annette Appell's contribution to this volume, which includes a discussion of figurations of the child in current legal practice.) Legal historian R. Kent Newmeyer has argued that antebellum legal culture in New England—fostered and developed by U.S. Supreme Court justice and Harvard Law professor Joseph Story—was inextricably linked to print culture and its relationship to pedagogy as a source of power.

The success of Harvard Law School [in the 1830s] can be explained by its ability to generate books and circulate them. . . . Making books exactly suited New England, with its tradition of literacy, its print culture, its belief in education and the converting possibilities of the written and spoken word. . . . What the 1820s and 1830s added, besides faster presses and cheaper paper, was a new sense of urgency about the fate of civilization and a new realization that law was an instrument of both social change and social control.  

Newmeyer highlights Story's prolific authorship of legal commentaries. In a chapter titled "Contracts for Hire," Story discusses the relative legal "capacity," or power, of various individuals to enter into legal contracts: "The parties must be competent to contract. . . . Thus, married women, idiots, lunatics, and persons non compos, by reason of age, infirmity, or sickness, are unable to contract. Minors, also, are incapable of contracting, unless the contract is clearly for their benefit."  

Here, the power to enter into contracts for hire is delimited by a definition of such power that frustrates seemingly stable boundaries between married women and minors and the apparently self-evident distinctions between the dependency of childhood and the independence of an adult.

Nancy Isenberg contends that antebellum legal definitions of childhood challenge essentialist notions of the difference between child and adult: although fully grown, married women "were never understood to have achieved full independence or adulthood, because married women, like minors, had their rights circumscribed by the legal guidelines for capacity. In the eyes of the law, female and male children reached adulthood at twenty-one, but women who married were divested of their legal capacity. Women's political status never appeared to change from childhood to adulthood."  

In Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845), Margaret Fuller exposes the intersections among the legal status of married women, the dependency of the child, and the plight of the slave: "It may well be an Anti-Slavery party that pleads for the woman, if we consider merely that . . . if a husband dies without making a will, the wife, instead of taking at once his place as head of the family, inherits only a part of his fortune, often brought him by herself, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner."  

As Fuller complains, equality is almost impossible in marriage when "the man looks upon his wife as an adopted child, and places her to the other children in the relation of nurse or governness, rather than of parent."  

Fuller's critique of the eternal childhood of married women can be linked to another of antebellum America's perpetual minors—the slave. Thomas Cobb's An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America (1858) is in part a legal review of antebellum U.S. slavery law and partly a meditation on slavery from its classical and biblical antecedents forward. In his book, Cobb, a lawyer, describes antebellum U.S. slavery in terms that persistently code the slave as a child, a gesture that allows us to rethink the child as a figure for inequality and the lack of power. In Cobb's terms, slavery is an extension of the antebellum family, with the master serving as paternal guardian for the slave: "The slave is incorporated into and becomes a part of the family. . . . Southern slavery is a patriarchal, social system. The master is the head of the family. Next to his wife and children, he cares for his slaves." For Cobb, the master's role is paternal: he "avenges," "protects," "provides," and "guides." And, as Cobb explains, "in return, he is revered and held as protector and master."  

Invoking the pseudoscientific racist canards that justified slavery, Cobb asserts that persons of African descent are developmentally doomed to an endless childhood: "Negro children would learn with equal facility with the white, during the first essays in the school-room, but so soon as education reaches the point where reason and judgment and reflection are brought into action, the Caucasian leaves the negro groping hopelessly in the rear."  

As Lucia Hodson suggests in this volume, "a childhood studies methodology informed by critical race theory" allows us to interrogate the tragic parallels between Cobb's antebellum proslavery racism and "contemporary myths about African American youth" (45). As an eternal minor, the slave can never be a citizen, though he may serve the state: "Possessing none of the privileges of citizenship, the slave is not bound to

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any of its duties," though he may "rightfully bear arms in a war under the orders of his master." And, like a child, a slave cannot enter into contracts: "The incapacity of a slave to contract, being a part and consequence of his personal status, extends to every place he may go, so long as he remains a slave." In the words of Frederick Douglass, who complained about slavery to the white working boys of Baltimore in terms that conflate the inability of children to contract for hire with the limitations of slavery, "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, but I am a slave for life!"

Justice Lemuel Shaw's opinion in Roberts v. City of Boston (1849) legally enshrined racial segregation in public schools. Shaw found that the rights of a five-year-old African American child, Sarah Roberts, were not violated by a city regulation that, in Shaw's words, "provides separate schools for colored children." As Shaw acknowledges, "This is a question of power." Shaw is speaking of the power or "the legal authority" of the city to make such decisions; however, his dictum highlights the extent to which his decision delimits rights in terms of what Isenberg calls a "two-tier system for equal protection: one that entitled competent male adults to full protection and another that subjected those identified as incapable—women and children—to paternal consideration." Shaw admits that "the great principle, advanced by the learned and eloquent advocate of the plaintiff (who was abolitionist Charles Sumner) is that "all persons without distinction of age or sex, birth or color, origin or condition, are equal before the law." However, Shaw sees a vast difference between the "principle" of equality and its application to real, living, American persons:

But, when this great principle comes to be applied to the actual and various conditions of persons in society, it will not warrant the assertion, that men and women are equally clothed with the same civil and political powers, and that children and adults are legally to have the same functions and be subject to the same treatment; but only that the rights of all, as they are settled and regulated by law, are equally entitled to the paternal consideration and protection of the law, for their maintenance and security.

In other words, not only does the law have a "paternal" function but the legal disenfranchising of women is equated with the position of "children"; adult women, children, and "the descendents of Africans" are not actually equal under the law as it is applied to particular cases, nor do these groups have "the same civil and political powers" as white, adult men. The decision suggests the extent to which children were defined as a class constituted by a state of legal dependency on "the paternal consideration and protection of the law," a class that seems to also have included adult women, and persons of African descent. Thus, the antebellum legal definition of childhood understood it as a state of dependency irrespective of essentialist limits, while the opposite of the legal child was understood to be a legal class of persons who had access to unbridled rights, privileges, powers, and political independence.

Like many women writers who actively participated in antebellum projects of reform (most prominently Harriet Beecher Stowe), Elizabeth Oakes Smith first achieved wide literary recognition with a work that speaks simultaneously to the reformation of Calvinist visions of childhood, antebellum conventions of female authorship, and the paradoxes of adult femininity in an age when disenfranchisement rendered women a permanent political minority. In "The Sinless Child" (1842), a narrative poem in which the figure of the child and the specter of adult femininity are both mutually constitutive yet inherently opposed, Oakes Smith reiterates a paradox that haunts so much of women's writing for and about children in an era in which, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott complain, marriage legally forced women into a condition of everlasting nonage, rendering them subject to correction as if a child or a slave: "In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement." The sinless Eva in Oakes Smith's poem is the "cherished dream," the "pure ideal birth" of the poet's spirit; as an emblem for the poet, she is a woman-child, the embodiment of "Youth" apostrophized as "thou woman-soul." Eva is initially a child renowned for the purity of her thoughts:

Exalted thoughts were always hers,
Some deemed them strange and wild;
And hence in all the hamlets round,
Her name of Sinless Child.

Eva's fate is to enter into a spiritual marriage with an unworthy young man; just as she is like a woman as a young girl, she retains her status as a child even as the specter of seduction threatens to mark her as a woman. "Eva opens her child-like eyes" (122) to view Albert, who is about to "steal a kiss"
(120) until he is arrested by Eva's purity. Eva's innocence transfixes Albert, so the seduction is forgotten in the wonder of her purity, a paradoxical innocence that is both "childlike" and a symbol of "womanhood":

Light thought, light words were all forgot,
He breathed a holier air,
He felt the power of womanhood—
Its purity was there. (123)

Eva dies before the consummation of her spiritual marriage, neatly avoiding the transformation to adulthood, if such a change could ever be enacted given the legal codes that rendered married adult women equivalent to children. Heightening the instability in this poem that frustrates the binaries of life and death, child and adult, Eva's demise—what would be the beginning of her transformation into womanhood—is less an abrupt change than a naturalized disappearance: as the poet glosses, "She ceased to be present—she passed away... Eva is the lost pleiad in the sky of womanhood" (133). As Isenberg reminds us, with "the consistent designation of [living] women as 'civilly dead,'" in death Eva is both a woman and a child; as the poet puts it, she is a "true woman, with woman's love and gentleness, and trust and childlike simplicity" (133). Finally, her reformation of a rake, Albert, has the air of a pedagogical act in which both teacher and pupil are students, underscored by the poet's use of italics:

Yet teaching thus her spirit lone
Aweary would have kneel,
And learned with child-like reverence,
Where deeper wisdom dwell. (128)

Edgar Allan Poe's review of "The Sinless Child" faults Oakes Smith for not having more skill in "what is termed in the school-prospectuses, composition," and he also complains that the narrative headings at the start of each chapter of the poem make it read like a child's pictorial reader: "Every work of art should contain within itself all that is required for its own comprehension. An 'argument' is but another form of the 'This is an ox' subjoined to the portrait of an animal with horns." The language of pedagogy that characterizes Eva's practice not only reforms a rake but also recasts the poem as a teaching tool that seeks to reform the reader.

As Oakes Smith became active in the cause of women's rights, she continued to write for and about children while advocating for the liberties of women and others. Three children's books—_The True Child_ (1845), _The Dandelion_ (1846), and _The Moss Cup_ (1846)—were subsequently reprinted in 1849 and 1853 and remained in circulation. Her 1851 women's rights collection, _Woman and Her Needs_, and her feminist tract of 1852, _Hints on Dress and Beauty_, likewise remained available. Oakes Smith's work invites us to retheorize the position of the woman writer in relation to the writing of childhood in the antebellum era. Further, Oakes Smith's construction of an authorial persona blending the writing of childhood with the call to reform can be understood within larger patterns of antebellum female authorship performed by so many of her sister authors, including Eliza Cabot Folken, Lydia Maria Child, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Grace Greenwood, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, all of whom wrote for or about children. Caroline Healey Dall is a striking foil parallel to Oakes Smith as one of the few women with whom Oakes Smith shared the lyceum lecture circuit on the topic of rights for women and as a reform-minded woman who was committed to transformational pedagogies. As Dall puts it in _The College, the Market, and the Court_, published in 1867 but based on lectures that Dall delivered before the start of the Civil War, "No better education do I claim for woman than her entire self-possession, the ultimate endowment of all the promise she carries in her nature." Finally, participation in the writing of childhood was more than just a conventional route to literary recognition and pecuniary reward; it enabled antebellum women writers to both reify and expose the contradictions inherent in female-authored reformist writings.

In _Woman and Her Needs_, a compilation of her previously printed opinion pieces in the _New York Tribune_ that was published in 1845, Oakes Smith argues that contemporary laws and customs render woman a permanent "minority." Since marriage prevents women from ever attaining a legal or spiritual majority, they are not only shackled by a "pupilage of mind by which our faculties are dwarfed" but also by the oxymoronic perversities of labels such as "baby wives" and "girl mothers, hardly escaped from pantlets." When it comes to financial management, women most often remain minors: "Every true woman should assert her right to pecuniary independence," counsels Oakes Smith. "I have heard hundreds of women say that they would rather go without money than ask for it; they feel mean and childish to have it doled out to them in little sums, and then be obliged to tender an account of the expenditure" (46). If, under the law, woman is
considered a "chikl" or an "idiot" how can she competently enter into one of the most important contracts of her life—the marriage contract? "Can she, who is an infant, an idiot [under the law]... be capable of entering into a contract involving such tremendous interest?" (49). Oakes Smith asserts that such a marital contract is meaningless without "equality": "The parties should be of age—and no girl should be considered competent to enter into such a contract, unless she has reached her majority in law" (57). Yet the question remained whether it was possible for a married woman to achieve "her majority in law." According to ante-bellum U.S. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, a married woman's capacity to be judged a major under the law and enter into contracts depends in part on the laws of the state or territory where the husband has legal residence (his domicile): "If by the law of the place of the domicile of the husband a married woman has a capacity to sue, or to make contract, or to ratify an act, her acts so done will be considered valid everywhere. On the contrary, if she is deprived of such a capacity by the law of the domicile of her husband, that incapacity exists in relation to all the like acts and contracts." Further, Story rescues the marriage contract from the inherent contradiction that Oakes Smith identifies by claiming that it is different from all other contracts, citing Scottish law: "But it will be observed, that marriage is a contract sui generis, and differing, in some respects, from all other contracts; so that the rules of law, which are applicable in expounding and enforcing other contracts, may not apply to this." As Story glosses, the difficulty of breaking the marriage contract also means that it differs from other contracts: "Unlike other contracts, it cannot... be dissolved by mutual consent; and it subsists in full force, even although one of the parties should be for ever rendered incapable, as in the case of incurable insanity, or the like, from performing his part of the mutual contract." As Oakes Smith puts it, "there is something appalling, when I see a mere girl promising at the altar to love, honor and obey, 'till death.'... It is the style to prate of 'sweet sixteen,' and talk of the loveliness of girlhood[,]... and therefore the woman should not be defrauded of the period; she should not be allowed to step from the baby-house to the marriage altar." Oakes Smith complains that "it is not unusual for girls to become married and mothers at sixteen[,]... and men seem quite proud of these baby wives" (66). Conventional marital codes, both social and legal, ultimately deprive women of their full humanity, rendering them "little better than great babies, to be humored and got along with, or unruly animals, who... must be so managed as to be left as little dangerous or troublesome as possible" (86). Her children's fiction that was in circulation concurrently with her feminist pieces can be read as her reflection on the dehumanizing position of women in the ante-bellum family. In "The Well-Educated Dog," young Charles refuses to put a collar on his dog, Echo. When his mother suggests that Echo might run away without restraint, Charles retorts, "If Echo is mine, he must be mine in his very heart." When his mother calls him "a terrible radical" for harboring such sentiments, Charles replies, "Then I will go it alone, mother... I mean to make a friend of my dog, mother, not a slave." The Indian orphan Inadizzie in "Inadizzie; or, The Wanderer," similarly learns the pleasure of freeing what he loves when he captures a dove to alleviate his loneliness. The dove's anguish in captivity is too much for him to bear, so he "let the white dove depart." Given Oakes Smith's identification of women with "unruly animals," her children's tales may contain metaphors regarding the treatment of women even as Oakes Smith reaches out to the child reader.

Parallels can be drawn between Oakes Smith's career and that of Mary Wollstonecraft's. Both simultaneously produced important calls for the political and social equality of women while writing for children: Wollstonecraft's Original Stories from Real Life was first published in 1788 and reprinted in 1791 by the same publisher, Joseph Johnson, who brought out her Vindication of the Rights of the Woman one year later. Johnson also published Wollstonecraft's first book, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787). Both Oakes Smith and Wollstonecraft were reformers who did not separate the writing of children's literature from larger questions of reform. In her groundbreaking study of Wollstonecraft's writings for children, Mitzi Myers argues that Wollstonecraft succeeds in "dramatizing female authority figures, covertly thematizing female power." Myers shows that Wollstonecraft's writings for and about children were consonant with her own development as an author who not only wrote for both children and adults but who saw both categories of writing as purveyors of developing a progressive vision of female power inside and outside of the home. Myers puts Wollstonecraft's "mother-teachers" at the center of the development of a "new rational pedagogy." Yet where Wollstonecraft focuses on "heroic, even Christlike, matrons," Oakes Smith proffers the saintly child who teaches the mother." In "The Sinless Child," Eva's mother is entirely effaced by the serene spirituality and preternatural wisdom of her daughter. Giving voice to older Calvinist visions of fallen humanity, Eva's mother attempts to teach her daughter:
Dear Eva! 'tis a world of gloom,
The grave is dark and drear,
We scarce begin to taste of life
Ere death is standing near. (79)

Yet it is the daughter who ultimately instructs the mother:

Nay mother, everywhere is hid
A beauty and delight. (80)

Eva corrects her mother's view:

And did we but our primal state
Of purity retain,
We might, as in our Eden days,
With angels walk again. (81)

Similarly, while The Dandelion is dedicated to "the Mothers of Our Country," Oakes Smith is not addressing the omnipotent matrons of early British romantic-era fiction for children written by women. Rather, in the brief dedication of Poetical Writings, Oakes Smith invokes mothers "who are willing that nature should develop her sweet work in her own sweet way, without forcing it into precocious development." Recall that it is Charles's mother who wants to collar the dog Echo; it is she who calls little Charles "a terrible radical" for promoting a vision of noncoercive freedom. Instruction in Oakes Smith's literature for children has a deeply romantic sense of reciprocity. Charles's mother doesn't contribute to the Revolutionary era's ideal of the "republican mother" who placed her learning at her family's service and was put to work "instructing" her "sons in the principles of liberty and government." Rather Charles, a son of the antebellum era, instructs his mother regarding the domestic equivalents of freedom and citizenship for women and others.

The terms used by Oakes Smith to signal female disenfranchisement are marked by their insistent reference to the status of the child—a being defined as a minor, to invoke the standard nineteenth-century gloss of the word "minority." As Oakes Smith's language suggests, the tragic paradox of antebellum womanhood was that it rendered women permanent minorities, figures of perpetual discomfort for whom growth and development were unnaturally arrested. Oakes Smith privately protested the loss of identity inherent in nineteenth-century conventions of female subordination by appending "Oakes" to her married name and by legally changing the last names of her four sons to "Oaksmith." In public forums, however, she continued to be haunted by the tension between her deeply feminist critiques—Hints on Dress and Beauty is dedicated to the feminist activist Paulina Wright Davis, soon to be editor and publisher of the Una—and her more conventional authorial persona, a genial writer for children. Eliza Richards sees this paradox played out in Oakes Smith's Eva, "the figure of a female child who in every other regard is an exaggerated ideal of antebellum femininity." As Richards remarks—in terms that speak to Eva's direct descendant, Stowe's Little Eva—"The Sinless Child" embarks on the pedagogic enterprise of introducing the public to a model of inventive female authorship by showcasing that model as divine intervention." Though Richards sees a competitiveness in the name Oakes Smith assumed as an author—"That Oakes Smith's pen name is not floral, like many poetesses of her generation, but arboreal suggests a competitive desire to rise above and overshadow all the other pen names"—it is one that links her to an emerging national literary culture grounded in associations of the New World with nature and the power of self-creation, reflected, for instance, in Minnie Myrtle's name and in Hawthorne's addition of a "w" to his name. Thus I would suggest that her moniker also bespeaks an ambivalence about the codes and conventions that circumscribed the authorial persona in the antebellum period.

As Hawthorne's participation in romantic self-making as a means of signaling American authorship suggests, ambivalence about the links between authorial identity and the literature of the child was not limited to women writers in the antebellum era. Although Hawthorne playsfully laments the "pervious disinclination to go to school" that characterized his "boyhood," he came of age as a writer at the apex of antebellum New England's development of a culture of pedagogy. From his early work with Samuel Goodrich, better known as the creator of the Peter Parley's series of children's books, magazines, and school readers, to his authorship of children's literature in various forms, Hawthorne as an author was inextricably linked to this pedagogical culture. Hawthorne's marriage into the Peabody family also links him to a trio of sisters (Elizabeth, Mary, and Sophia) who were deeply interested in romantic educational practices. Elizabeth's Record of A School (1839), a transcription of the conversations that transpired at Bronson Alcott's radical experiment in education, the Temple School, has been credited by Megan Marshall as launching the transcendentalist movement. Mary taught school, wrote for children, married Horace Mann (the champion
of the common-school system), and, with Elizabeth, wrote *Moral Culture of Infancy, and Kindergarten Guide* (1863). Finally, Sophia, Hawthorne's bride, worked briefly at Alcott's Temple School (indeed, her first published illustration was a picture of that school) and illustrated her husband's works for and about children while devoting her life to the service of romantic motherhood (as distinct from republican motherhood). Further, if Hawthorne's habitations in Concord and Brook Farm and his associations with its founders link him to the transcendentalist movement, it may in turn be said that a transformative pedagogy that can be associated with him was at the heart of transcendentalism in its early stages. In addition, nearly all of transcendentalism's key figures were associated with romantic educational innovations. In *Nature* (1836), conventionally considered the movement's "pivotal utterance," Emerson rhapsodizes that "in the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth." Emerson gave the dedicatory address when the transcendentalist Greene Street School erected a new building: Margaret Fuller taught at this school, explicitly modeled on Alcott's, before she went on to lead educational "conversations" as a form of adult pedagogy for women. Thoreau and his brother kept a school briefly in Concord, where the young Louisa May Alcott was in attendance, and *Walden* (1854) would not make sense without the pedagogical metaphors with which it is saturated. One of the few successes of the utopian Brook Farm community, where Hawthorne briefly resided and which became the basis of *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), was its school.

Hawthorne was notoriously skeptical of his transcendental counterparts and the reforms that they espoused; nevertheless, I suggest that his conception of authorship was linked to a larger print culture that included children's literature and that conceived of authorship in pedagogic terms. Children and the family circle figured largely as an imagined audience. Unlike Oakes Smith's sinless Eva, Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter* is tainted by original sin, "the guiltiness to which she owed her being." While Eva is associated with angels, Pearl is associated with less holy aspects of the otherworldly: she is a "little elf," an "airy sprite," and far from angelic: she's "intelligent," "perverse," "malicious," given to "wild, desperate, defiant mood[s]" and occasionally offers a "mocking smile" (91–92). Though Pearl would seem the radical opposite of Eva, perhaps she is her dark double; like Eva, Pearl is both a child yet inherently tainted by womanhood: "All this enormity and passion had Pearl inherited, by inalienable right, out of Hester's heart" (94).

Echoing the language of the Declaration of Independence only to deny the full humanity of Pearl (Hester questions "whether Pearl was a human child" [91]), *The Scarlet Letter* exposes the inherent if not "inherited" alienation of the woman-child; as Deborah Gussman claims, "To be an alien is to be precisely the opposite of a citizen: in American political discourse, citizenship requires self-possession, the state of being unalienated from, of owning one's self." The collective quality of Pearl's character—"in this one child there were many children" (90)—suggests that she represents a class or a caste. Further, her status as a double for her mother—Hester's "impassioned state" is "transmitted to the unborn infant" (91)—links the two as they were linked under ante-bellum law.

While Hawthorne may have sought to distinguish himself from the popular writers with whom he competed—including women writers—he nevertheless competed with the popular literature of his day on its own terms through his career-long investment in the literature of the child. For Oakes Smith, ante-bellum America's print culture enabled her to bask in the doubling of child and adult that she would later go to great lengths to decry: "After the publication of the Sinless Child my friends called me Eva, and I was having the delights of authorship without the penalties." Stowe understood the audience for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as composed, at least in part, of children, whom she addresses directly at the end of the serialized version of the work: "In particular, the dear little children who have followed her [the author's] story have her warmest love." In terms that extend her vision to the scene of pedagogy, Stowe admonishes her child readers: "Never, if you can help it, let a colored child be shut out of school, or treated with neglect and contempt, because of his color." Stowe continues, "Remember the sweet example of little Eva, and try to feel the same regard for all that she did." The last sentence of the serialized version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, set off as its own paragraph, explicitly acknowledges the child reader: "Farewell, dear children, till we meet again." Charles Stowe's biography of his mother also highlights the presence of children as consumers of the story: "Gathering her family about her she read what she had written. Her two little ones of ten and twelve years of age broke into convulsions of weeping, one of them saying through his sobs, 'Oh, mammal slavery is the most cruel thing in the world.'" Stowe's imagined audience thus complicates notions of a separate children's literature in ante-bellum America that can be clearly distinguished from other kinds of literary works.

As I have attempted to show, conceptions of authorship in the ante-bellum
era are inextricably linked to the literature of the child. Through its understanding of the child as a discursive sign for inequalities of power, childhood studies has the potential to reignite the study of antebellum American literature in terms of the questions about power that it poses and the answers it suggests. Who or what is the antebellum child when that figure is liberated from essentialist definitions? The child becomes a mutable figure, linked to other political and legal minorities. Antebellum obsessions with pedagogy and literacy may be interrogated in terms of power, political and civic. Finally, childhood studies asks us to consider how the ubiquity of the child in antebellum American literature, from high to low, from novels to schoolbooks, both challenges and reinforces antebellum inequalities.

Notes

1. Though providing a thorough account of the changes in the field of antebellum American literature over the last thirty years is beyond the scope of this chapter, a milestone in the field and the way it represents itself was reached with the publication of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature* (1990) and reflected in a forum entitled “What Do We Need to Teach?” published in *American Literature* 65.2 (1993), in which older models of teaching/representing the field are dismissed for focusing almost exclusively on “the Big Eight” (Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Tవain, and James) (325).


4. Book-length milestones in the developing relationship between childhood studies and antebellum American literature include Richard H. Brodhead’s *Chil-
32. Luther S. Cushing, *Reports of the Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts*, vol. 5 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1853), 206.
33. Cushing, *Reports of the Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts*, 205.
38. "The Sinless Child" appears in three variants. It was first published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in January 1843; there, the phrase "woman-soul" doesn't appear in the four stanzas of the opening inscription. When the poem was reprinted in book form in 1843, the inscription was expanded to five stanzas and it contains a phrase, though it was printed with a dash rather than a hyphen: "Thou woman-soul, all tender, meek" (Elizabeth Oakes Smith, *The Sinless Child*, and Other Poems, ed. John Keese [New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1843], 39). Reprinted again in 1846 with a new introduction by Rufus Griswold, this "more complete and elegant edition" (as Griswold puts it in his preface) renders the phrase with a hyphen: "Thou woman-soul, all tender, meek" (Elizabeth Oakes Smith, *The Poetical Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith*, 2nd ed. [New York: J. S. Redfield, 1846], 16).
40. Hereafter cited by page number.
43. Caroline H. Dall, *The College, the Market, and the Court; or, Woman's Relation to Education, Labor, and Law* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1867) 126.