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The Birth of Wonder: Emerson's Formless Beauty and Child's Hybridity*

Hisayo OGUSHI

A casual glance at a literary calendar since the turn of the century gives one the impression that we have been continually celebrating anniversaries relating to the writers of American Renaissance. As for Herman Melville, Norton Critical edition published the 150th anniversary edition of *Moby-Dick*,¹ and a maritime exhibit and a Holiday Melville Tea were organized in New Bedford in 2001 ("Moby-Dick 101"). The Nathaniel Hawthorne Society held the panel discussion, "*The Scarlet Letter*: 150 Years After" at its biannual meeting in Boston in 2000, and in the following year *Himonji no Danso*, a collection of essays on *The Scarlet Letter*, edited by Tadatoshi Saito was in publication in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the novel which still arouses our interests. An illustrated edition of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* was also added to this list of American Renaissance fest in 2004.

In addition to the anniversaries of the publication of major literary works of American literature, we also witnessed the 200th anniversary rejoicing the birth of one of the most influential writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) in 2003. Commemorative events, exhibitions, and conference for his bicentennial birthday celebration were held in Concord and Cambridge, Massachusetts: needless to say, quite a few articles

and reviews appeared honoring Emerson's contribution to American intellectual history.² Emerson's popularity appears solidified not only in New England, but also in Japan: the 75th annual general meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan held a panel discussion, "'*Neicha' no genzai: emason tanjo nihyakunen* ('Nature' in Our Time: the 200th Anniversary of Emerson's Birth)" in which Japanese scholars tried to offer reconsiderations and new perspectives on his major piece of work.

Indeed, reexamination of the general concept of American Renaissance has been flourishing in the past twenty years in the field of American literature and cultural studies. F. O. Matthiessen's definition of this particular literary period has been extensively criticized for its exclusive prioritization of white male writers in the northeast, and pointed out the necessity for reconsidering³. David Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance*, published in 1988, delves into the nineteenth century literary culture, showing that popular fiction of those writers whose names were virtually erased from literary history occupied the market of the time, and their works—by both male and female authors—had cultural significance. Close observations by Nina Baym, Jane Tompkins, Hiroko Sato, and other feminist critics in the 1980s and 90s reveal how enormously the female writers (such as Catherine Sedgwick, Susan Warner, Maria Cummings, Harriet Beecher Stowe, to name a few) contributed to readers' enjoyment in the nineteenth century, which accordingly modifies the male-dominant literary history of American literature from female points of views. As Hawthorne's famous complaint about "the scribbling women" clearly illustrates, female writers surpassed "serious" male writers in both popularity and salability.

It is, I think, interesting to rethink Emerson in relation to his female contemporaries. One might think that Lydia Maria Child (1802-80) would be an appropriate candidate, considering their close proxim-

ity of age and their friendship through Child's brother, Converse Francis. More significantly, it is their perception of Nature that reveals close literary relationship between Emerson and Child: both of them represent "Nature" as a locale for "wonder." In what follows, I will try to shed a new light on the study of American Renaissance by arguing that it is in the discursive Nature that Emersonian and Childean wonders encounter each other.

I. Selflessness of the American Self

The American self which is in peculiar accordance with selflessness as well as universality makes its first appearance with the most famous statement in Emerson's "Nature" (1836):

Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air,
and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I
become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the cur-
rents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or
particle of God. (10)

In this passage representing an American romanticism, Emerson's self transforms itself into the well-known "transparent eye-ball." In it, nothingness and omnipotence co-exist, and it is a perfect receptor for perceiving the wholeness of Nature. The mystic experience of Emerson may be analyzed as an allegorical union with a greater being, which expresses his optimism as a transcendentalist. Yet, a question remains: how can we attain such an ability? Who is qualified to become an "eye-ball" which beholds the wonder of Nature, while turning his self into "nothing" concurrently?

In "Nature," Emerson refers specifically to a surprising ability of an

infant, emphasizing his simplicity. He, at the same time, debases the overt shallowness of an adult: “[t]he flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood” (9); “To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child” (10). In the woods, only those who possess the simplicity of childhood are capable, without knowledge or any worldly wisdom, of deriving enjoyment from Nature. What we need is, therefore, not the ability of squeezing something special out of Nature, but rather that of discerning “wonder” in the ordinary:

The invariable mark of wisdom is *to see the miraculous in the common*. . . . We make fables to hide the baldness of the fact and conform it, as we say, to the higher law of the mind. But when the fact is seen under the light of an idea, the gaudy fable fades and shrivels. We behold the real higher law. To the wise, therefore, a fact is true poetry, and the most beautiful of fables. *These wonders are brought to our own door*. (47-48; emphases mine)

This passage, urging us to recognize the truth around us, immediately reminds us of Emerson’s another well-known proclamation, “I embrace the common” (68) in “The American Scholar” (1837). And it also highlights the significance of seeing through and perceiving the essential without any judgments or analyses, because “[f]or you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see” (48). Here, Emerson’s self-fashioning paradoxically relates to passivity and self-annihilation, as Emerson’s self should become “transparent” and “nothing” the

very moment it is established.

The coalescence of self-fashioning and self-annihilation in “Nature” provokes in us an anxiety of isolation from the world, which simultaneously arouses a perpetual fear of the god who transforms us into transparency and into him. This experience of disappearance shows that when one is overwhelmed by the sublime beauty, an emotional response comes from the inventive potency of imagination, which eventually put one’s self into the blankness. “Excluded from its own nature and shrinking from the white depths of nature’s abyss,” as Mary Arensberg argues, “the American self is the ‘dumb blankness,’ the deconstructed self. This nothingness of the American self may be traced from Emerson’s trope, ‘the transparent eyeball’ (‘I am nothing; I see all’) . . .” (10). In Arensberg’s view, the American sublime does not result in the restoration of an equilibrium by means of a catalysis or an identification with an authoritative repressive power, as in a European tradition of sublime: it evokes a feeling of dislocation and “the emptiness of the vessel of the self” (11).

The blankness of the self caused by the American sublime, I believe, bears a great relevance to “the sense of wonder,” with which Tony Tanner characterizes the American literary history in *The Reign of Wonder*. Tanner points to a contrast between Rousseau and Wordsworth in their view on a relationship between a child and reason: for Rousseau a child becomes a philosopher—one who can understand the whole — only after a full development of reason through an adequate education, whereas for Wordsworth, a child *is* a philosopher, feeling the wholeness of the world without understanding or judging (4-5). The Wordsworthian romantic image of a child as an innocent sage resonates with “the passive susceptibilities,” which, J. S. Mill believes, need cultivating (qtd. in Tanner 5). It is the child’s innocence, simplicity, and

passivity, Tanner proclaims, that enable us to discover miracles or wonder in Nature:

Wonder has now become a definite mode of philosophic understanding to be set up against analysis. The truly philosophic Eye is the wondering Eye, for that alone is capable of seeing Nature not as an "aggregate" but as "a Whole." (6)

Emerson reached the wondering eyes of a child with the passive susceptibilities and the sleep of reason by way of Thomas Carlyle, who also greatly impressed the young American transcendentalist with his renunciation of history and tradition. Since Emerson's discovery of Nature, according to Tanner, the sense of wonder has been comfortably accommodated in American literature and American realities, establishing "a new point of view, a new way of appropriating reality, a new angle of vision" (11).

The passive susceptibilities⁴ without the sense of agency, thus, fits well with the Emersonian self-annihilation, the blankness of the self, and the wondering eyes of such innocents as a child, a savage and a simpleton:

If the adult eye is glazed and dull and blind to the lesson of nature, still the naïve eye—idiot, Indian, infant—seems to pay the most profitable kind of attention to things, to enjoy a lost intimacy with the world, to have freshest, clearest perceptions. Thus Emerson seems to have seen the problem and located the salvation. (Tanner 34)

It should be noted here that "the naïve eye" Emerson yearns for belongs

(162)

not only to a child but also to an Indian. For Emerson, a child and an Indian are not different in their simplicity: “[c]hildren and savages use only nouns or names of things, which they continually convert into verbs, and apply to analogous mental acts” (“Nature” 20). Native American’s primitivism is explicitly associated with infancy, both of which are thought to be keys to grasping the true meaning of Nature, penetrating through the superficial phenomena: “[b]ecause of this radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts, savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures. As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols” (“Nature” 22). Such innocent and primitive people are ideal receivers of wonder, being capable of *feeling* the wholeness. Emerson envisions “unselfconsciousness” in those “savages” (Tanner 32) as well as in children who can detect a wonder in the ordinary, with their acute sense and an insightful perspective.

II. An Ideal Seers in the Woods

Emerson’s mystical experience turning into a “transparent Eyeball” took place in Nature—or in the woods, to be more precise. It is the place, as Annett Kolodny points out, where the fantasy of men grows and masculine literary imagination flutters in the nineteenth century (let us remember James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Leatherstocking Tales*). It is also the locale for the indigenous people of the Americas. To have the eyes of a child (or those of a savage), to turn oneself into nothing but transparent eyes, and to establish one’s self out of self-annihilation—if these are the elements of the Emersonian transcendentalism, it is not so difficult to find a close affinity between Emerson and Lydia Maria Child, the author of *Hobomok* (1824), which is a controversial novel

about a romantic relationship between an Indian man and a white woman.

Though Child lived in the same period as Emerson, Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Emily Dickinson, until recently she has attracted neither significant critical attention nor recognition as an American Renaissance writer. During her lifetime, however, Child was quite famous as an abolitionist, reformer, activist for women's rights, journalist, biographer, and educator. Child, who established her reputation in New England literary society as the writer of *Hobomok*, had developed a life-long friendship with Emerson. But she was not always favorable to him. In her *Letters from New York* (1843), Child sharply criticized Emerson's lecture "Being and Seeming":

I once heard a very beautiful lecture from R. W. Emerson, on Being and Seeming. In the course of many remarks, as true as they were graceful, he urged women to be, rather seem. He told them all their laboured education of forms, strict observance of genteel etiquette, tasteful arrangement of the toilette, & c., all this *seeming* would not *gain hearts* like *being* truly what God made them; that earnest simplicity, the sincerity of nature, would kindle the eye, light up the countenance, and give an inexpressible charm to the plainest features.

The advice was excellent, but the motive, by which it was urged, brought a flush of indignation over my face. *Men* were exhorted to *be*, rather than to seem, that they might fulfil (*sic*) the sacred mission for which their souls were embodied; that they might, in God's freedom, grow up into the full statue of spiritual manhood; but *women* were urged to simplicity and truthfulness,

that they might become more pleasing. (155; emphases original)

Here Child expresses her dissatisfaction that Emerson's lecture is gender-biased, and that his "exhortation" is filled with the idea of conventional gender roles—men's substantiality and women's simplicity.

In spite of the incongruity in their perspectives on gender relations, however, Emerson and Child both employed the figure of self-annihilating child-like savages in their works. *Hobomok* is a historical novel about a Puritan society set in Naumkeak (Salem), Massachusetts, ca. 1629. In this novel, the protagonist, Mary Conant, leaves behind a life on her rich grandfather's English manor to journey to the New World with her sick mother in search for the religious freedom which her father, Roger Conant, desires for his family. Historically, the Indians often raided the colonists in those days. In the story, Hobomok, an Indian intermediary, plays a significant role by securing peace between the whites and the Indians. As the novel develops, Hobomok comes to foster a secret love for Mary, despite his knowledge that she loves Charles Brown.

Charles is a young Episcopalian whom Roger Conant hates and whose marriage to Mary he disapproves of. Charles refuses to convert to Puritanism, and consequently he is ordered by the Governor to return to his native Britain. Charles, however, boards a ship for India, and the news soon arrives in Naumkeak that the ship has sunk in a storm. The news of Charles's death together with her mother's passing drives Mary into "a bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity" (120). She, then, finally decides to marry Hobomok to her father's great despair. Three years later Mary bears Hobomok a son. It turns out, however, that Charles has survived the shipwreck, and he returns to

Naumkeak only to find that Mary has become the wife of Hobomok. When the two men come across each other in the woods, the idea flashed through the Indian's mind that he should eliminate the ex-fiancé of his wife. Knowing Mary's feelings for him, however, Hobomok restrains himself and goes into the deep forest, leaving Mary and his son behind for good and all:

The Indian *gazed upon* his rival [Charles], as he stood leaning on his aching head against a tree; and once and again he indulged in the design of taking his life.

"No," thought he. "She [Mary] was first his. Mary loves him better than she does me; for even now she prays for him in her sleep. The sacrifice must be made to her." . . . He arose and touched Brown's arm, as he said, "'Tis all true which I have told you. It is three snows since the bird came to my nest; and the Great Spirit only knows how much I have loved her. Good and kind she has been; but the heart of Mary is not with the Indian. . . . Hobomok will go far off among some of the red men in the west. . . ." Before the Brown had time to reply, he plunged into the thicket and *disappeared*. (139-40; emphases mine)

Child deliberately reinvents Hobomok, a real historical figure,⁵ into a fictional Indian who is so innocent and so obedient to the woman he loves that he vanishes into the woods with a wish for her happiness. Completely depersonalized, Child's excessively selfless Hobomok abandons "all mean egotism" for his sublime love.

Self-annihilation is not the only clue connecting Emerson's "Nature" to Child's *Hobomok*: just as Emerson becomes an "transparent Eye-ball," which sees everything, Hobomok is turns into an observer,

watching over Mary silently. When Mary secretly practiced divination in the forest, hoping Charles will be her future husband, Hobomok in person suddenly springs out of the thicket. Astonished by his appearance, Mary retreats from the woods with Charles, who happens to be on the scene to look for her, as Hobomok is quietly watching them going away:

Hobomok *looked after them* [Mary and Charles] with a mournful expression of countenance, as he said, “Wonder what for be here alone when the moon gone far away toward the Iroquois. What for squaw no love like white woman.” (14; emphasis mine)

His eyes reveal not only his hopeless love but also his innocent admiration for the white maiden: “[w]henever *Hobomok gazed upon Mary*, it was with an expression in which reverence was strikingly predominant” (17; emphasis mine).

The reticent Indian gradually comes to act like a dependable guardian for her. Whenever Mary needs someone to help her, it is Hobomok who stands right beside her, keeping close vigilance on her. Shedding tears in front of her mother’s grave on a cold night, Mary “felt something lightly thrown over her. She looked up, and perceived that it was Hobomok, who had covered her with his blanket, and slightly removed a short distance from her” (121). Such a loving and naïve look of Hobomok on Mary is described repeatedly throughout the story, so that the reader will be touched by the noble and tragic emotion of the Indian hero, as he stands in front of his wigwam after he decided to leave his family forever, silently staring at Mary and his son:

Hobomok paused before the door of his wigwam, looked in a

small hole which admitted the light, saw Mary feeding her Indian boy from his little wooden bowl, and heard her beloved voice, as she said to her child, "Father will be home and see little Hobomok presently." How much would that high-souled child of the forest have given for one parting embrace — one kind assurance he should not be forgotten. . . . "No," said he; "it will distress her. The Great Spirit bless 'em both." (140-41)

Self-sacrifice of the modest Indian signifies the total acceptance of the painful situation, and the author lets Nature absorb the selfless being silently: Hobomok, symbolically referred to as a "child of the forest," has innocence and passivity, which are the essential qualities for the Emersonian seer of Nature. Carolyn L. Karcher, pointing to the words of Mary's dying mother, who describes Nature as "God's library—the first Bible he ever wrote" (*Hobomok* 76), emphasizes Child's transcendentalist conception of Nature precedes Emerson's by twelve years (Karcher 25). Furthermore, the Romantic view of a disappearing savage—a noble, self-sacrificial, child-like Indian with naïve eyes—resonates with Emerson's ideal man.

III. The Birth of Wonder

What, then, does Emerson, the transparent Eye-ball, see in Nature? Jenine Dallal argues in her article on Emerson's aestheticism and American expansionism, that Emerson's "gaze has no object": "he at once possesses an ineffable 'somewhat' an indescribable sense of the beautiful, the self, and the evanescent 'distant line of the horizon.'" (68). In other words, what Emerson sees in Nature is "absolute formlessness" (63)—something "open, vast, silent, or empty" (68). Beauty, on which, he thinks, both poetry and culture should be established, is

incorporeal and it can be found in nature and “the spiritual realm beyond it” (59). Unlike the European colonization by so-called a seeing man (“a monarch of all I survey”), Emerson’s gaze catches on non-material, formless and intangible beauty—miracles or wonder—through a mystic experience in the open space. The wonder in Nature leads Emerson to the vast expansion of his inner self and identification with the infinity of God.

The crystal clear eyes of Hobomok, who embodies the Emersonian seer of wonder, divulge his admiration for Mary, as a result of which an issue of interracial relationship inevitably arises. When Mary asks him to marry, Hobomok reveals his passive susceptibilities with his whole acceptance and self-giving love:

In the midst of this whirlwind of thoughts and passions, she turned suddenly towards the Indian, as she said, “I will be your wife, Hobomok, if you love me.” “Hobomok has loved you many long moons,” replied he; “but he loved like as he loves the Great Spirit.” “Then meet me at my window an hour hence,” said she, “and be conveyed me to Plymouth.” (120-21)

With the surprising proposal of the heroine, I think, Child anticipatorily offers a sense of wonder, in a provocative way,² in reply to the question the ethereal Emerson would pose twelve years later.

Moreover, the interracial/multicultural marriage in this romance acquires a much deeper significance when we closely examine the real Hobomok, a historical figure, and the origin of his name. In his journal, William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth Plantation in the seventeenth century, describes apparently truthfully Hobomok as a competent interpreter, being faithful to Englishmen (88). One thing

Bradford did not mention in spite of its significance is, however, the fact that the name “Hobomok” was widely known in the colonial era as an “evil god.” A historical context corroborates “Hobomok” itself was an intercultural being. Frank Shuffelton introduces an interesting episode on the Indian spirit and its translation by Edward Winslow, who was in charge of negotiation with the Wampanoag, the tribe to which the human Hobomok belongs:

Hobomok was, apparently a much more common name for an Indian spirit, widely understood, by the whites at least, as an evil god. Edward Winslow, who probably knew more about the Indians than any of the Pilgrims, wrote of “Another power they worship, whom they call *Hobbamock*, and to the northward of us, *Hobbamoqui*; this, as far as we can conceive is, the devil.” (110)

This way, Winslow tried to accomodate the Indian spirit called Hobomok by deforming and coloring it with Christianity. It is indeed difficult to comprehend what the spirit really is because of its two-facedness: one is an angry spirit which brings sickness to people, and the other a healer. Despite his wide knowledge of the Indian, Winslow understood the spirit Hobomok exclusively as an evil opponent of *Kiehtan*, the spirit of goodness, employing the binarism between protagonist and antagonist familiar to the Western thought. Accordingly, Winslow identified the human Hobomok with the “evil-god,” for he was a “central figure in the practice of Indian magic and shamanism” (Shuffelton 112), which was one of the most incomprehensible rituals for Europeans. In other words, Hobomok’s engagement with “the spiritual world with visions and magic” (Shuffelton 111), unfortunately, led to the distorted understanding by the whites.

Such a misinterpretation of culture indicates complex issues of translating culture, especially, religious discourse. The most interesting point for us here is the fact that the spirit Hobomok was compromised and simplified into an evil-god, deprived of his two-facedness in the interpretive community which was dominated by Judeo-Christian theology. The Indian spirit is introduced in Winslow's report as a protean ghost, which "appears in sundry forms . . . as in the shape of a man, a deer, a fawn, an eagle, etc., but most ordinarily a snake" (qtd. in Sheffeltown 111). Child invents an Indian hero bearing the name of the ever-changeable—therefore unintelligible—spirit in the woods in order to achieve her sense of wonder in a striking manner in which the white would regard as an "evil." Emerson describes a man with imagination who passively accepts formless natural beauty as wonder. By contrast, Child creates a racial Other in Nature who radiates wonder, and whose formless being bewilders and shakes up the rigid mentality of the white society, generating racial and cultural hybridity.

In 1844—twenty years after the publication of *Hobomok* and eight years after the publication of "Nature"—Child sent a letter to a friend about Emerson's *Essays, Second Series*, a copy of which was presented to her by the author himself. Discussing at some length "Experience," one of the representative essays in the volume, Child expressed unsympathetic feeling to Emerson's view on the knowledge of reality, just as she was critical of his opinion on gender:

Emerson has sent me his new volume. As usual, it is full of deep and original sayings, and touches of exceeding beauty. But, as usual, it takes away my strength, and makes me uncertain whether to hang myself or my gown over chair. What is the use

of telling us that everything is “scene-painting and counterfeit”; that nothing is real; that everything eludes us? That no single thing in life keeps the promise it makes? Or if they keep it, keep it like the witches of Macbeth? Enough of this conviction is forced upon us by experience, without having it echoed in literature. My being is so alive and earnest, that it resists and abhors these ghastly eluding specters. It abhors them, and says “Be ye ghosts, and dwell among ghost. But though all the world be dead, and resolved into vapory elements, *I will live!*” Emerson would smile at this; because it shows how deeply I feel the fact I quarrel with. But after all, if we extend our vision into the regions of faith, all this mocking and unreality vanishes; and in the highest scene, all things keep the promises they make. (*Selected Letters* 216; emphasis original)

Even though she was annoyed at Emerson’s metaphysical statement insisting on the incorporeality of anything that exists, Child ultimately shares the belief with Emerson that all mean egotism vanishes at the moment of spiritual sublimation, and that we need to see everlasting truth through the ephemeral. The two writers of the transcendental tendency of the age, end up discovering two different senses of “wonder”—Emerson finds a formless beauty in Nature, whereas Child has a vision of nature where hybridity is created. Nature is, thus, the *topos* where the two discourse structures of American Renaissance intersect: the Emersonian wonder leads to male-dominated “mainstream” novels, and the Childean wonder engenders popular romances. Thus, the two senses of wonder determined the direction of American national literature in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

- * An earlier version of this article was presented at the 75th annual general meeting of the English Literary Society of Japan as "The Birth of Wonder – Emerson and Child" on May 24th, 2003.
- 1 In 2001, W. W. Norton & Co. published Sesquicentennial Norton Critical Edition of *Moby-Dick* with updated footnotes edited by Hashel Parker and Harrison Hayford. See <<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/titles/english/nce/moby2/welcome.htm>>.
- 2 For a more detailed list of events for Emerson's 200th birthday, see Ralph Waldo Emerson: Resource Online <<http://wisdomportal.com/Emerson/Emerson-Links.html>>.
- 3 It is certainly not the case that Matthiessen was ignorant of female writers: he mentions Susan Warner, Maria Cummings, and E. D. E. N. Southworth in explaining Hawthorne's famous grumble (x-xi).
- 4 Surveying English literary history, the passive susceptibilities that Tanner values here has a close relevance to John Keats's "negative capability," an artistic ability to employ passivity and selflessness in uncertainty as a source of aesthetic experiences, described in the letter to his brothers on December 21 (or 27), 1817: "... several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously — I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason — Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge" (492). The self-annihilation in the nineteenth-century romanticism is modified in "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) by T. S. Eliot in twentieth-century modernism. In this critical essay demonstrating diachronic and synchronic aesthetic principle of modernism, Eliot claims that an artist should have a process of "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (40).
- 5 Historically speaking, Hobomok is not a fictional character created by Child. In *Hobomok*, quite a few historical figures appear including Roger Conant, one of the respectable founders of Salem, who, in the novel, is depicted as the oppressive father of Mary Conant. According to William Bradford, there was an Indian called Hobomok, one of the three translators living in the outskirts of Plymouth in the seventeenth century: "[a]nd there was another Indian

called Hobomok come to live amongst them [Englishmen], a proper lusty man, and a man of account for his valor and parts amongst the Indians, and continued very faithful and constant to the English till he died" (88).

- 6 Child was not the first writer to tackle the issue of racial miscegenation between an Indian and a white. For example, James Wallis Eastburn's epic poem *Yamoyden: a Tale of the War of King Philip*, in Six Cantos narrates a tale of the tragic love of an Indian man, Yamoyden, and a white maiden, Nora, both of whom die in King Philip's war. This popular epic won a favorable review in *North American Review* in 1821 which directly inspired Child to write *Hobomok*. In a twenty-two-page review of *Yamoyden*, an anonymous reviewer attested: "[t]his is one of the most considerable attempts in the way of poetry, which have been made in this country"(466). *Hobomok*, too, was praised highly in some reviews, but never wholeheartedly. One anonymous reviewer attacked the unnaturalness of this romance (262-63), and another review, by Jared Sparks, criticized the novel with the observation that not all readers would approve of it morally (87). What upset these two reviewers most was clearly Child's depiction of miscegenation in the seventeenth-century Puritan society.

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