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Puritanical Dimensions in The Scarlet Letter: Moral Demands Versus Individual Needs

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Dedication

This thesis is honestly dedicated to my beloved

Father: Abd el-aziz,

Mother: Louiza,

Sister: Houda,

Brothers: Messaoud, Islam, and Yahia,

Friends: Amel, Khadidja, Amina, Zahra, Linda, Dalila.

All the members of my family

Students: Mimouna, Sabra, Salima, Hana, Maroua.

All my best companions in life.

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Abstract

This thesis concerns itself with those obstacles in American experience that placed themselves in the way of the search of happiness. The Puritan ethic is examined in relation to Hawthorne's romance The Scarlet Letter. Its heroine, Hester Prynne, though on a binary position as a woman in Puritan society, rebels power and puts up a tenacious fight against the colonial rule combined by church and state. From her rebellious actions, we can see her struggle with the Puritan community. She becomes totally different from the traditional women who are always obedient to the unfair rules enacted by society. She has won not only the self-reliance in economy, but also in thought. It can be sensed that a new image for the individual is born. This dissertation tries to analyze Hester's conflict as an individual with society and its strict morals at the respect of her rebellious spirit, self-reliance and strong mind.

Résumé

Cette thèse concerne les obstacles de l'expérience américaine qui ce sont placées face à la recherche de joie. L'éthique puritaine est examinée vis-à-vis le roman La Lettre Écarlate de Hawthorne. L'héroïne, Hester Prynne, malgré dans une position alternative comme étant une femme dans une société puritaine, se rebelle contre la force et met en place une lutte tenace contre la domination coloniale combinée par l'état et l'église. Elle devient complètement différente des femmes traditionnelles qui sont toujours obéissantes aux règles injustes adoptées par la société. Elle a non seulement gagné une autonomie économique, mais aussi une autonomie de la réflexion. On peut sentir qu'une nouvelle image de l'individu vient de naître. Cette dissertation essaye d'analyser le conflit d'Hester comme individu contre la société et ses mœurs strictes à l'égard de son esprit rebelle, son autonomie, et de son fort caractère.

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The Scarlet Letter

General Introduction

Society generally is ruled by a set of cultural, religious, and philosophical concepts and beliefs by which human actions are determined whether right or wrong. This system of principles and judgments is called morality. It is often generalized and codified by a culture or group, and thus serves to regulate the behavior of its members. Conformity to such codification is needed because it gives balance to society. Individuals conform in ways that keep things running smoothly and keep them from harsh light of scrutiny that nonconformists suffer, especially when their nonconformity causes them to question the values of their society.

Most of the societies require the individual to make some sacrifices for the common good. This good can be in a direct conflict with the individual's good. This obliges the society to be in a different situation that is opposite to what it is created for. If a society puts its own needs over the needs of the individual, the result will be injustice. Its morality will appear as a repressive phenomenon on the individual. It involves his attributing value to something beyond himself. The victim of this repressiveness will be the individuals because societies are not merely physical entities, but they are a certain set of ideas and beliefs that the individual will accept. A balance between the needs of both individual and society will eliminate much of the injustice.

The strength of the individual's struggle is determined by the flexibility of the society. The more flexible the society is, the more it allows the individual to get his needs. The more severe it is, the more it prevents the individual from doing anything and pushes him either to lose his identity or to follow a harsher way to attain greater personal freedom. Sometimes, he finds himself in conflict with its laws. Once he breaks these enforced laws, he has to face a severe punishment. Thus, he either accepts this punishment and surrenders to his society's judgment or refuses and struggles to defend himself, to prove his identityà so, to attain his own individuality and subsequently to realize himself as a person. Only an inward revolution can bring such self-realization through a radical transformation of the outer, of society. Since society is static, any reform without this inward revolution will be equally static. The outer actions, then, become repetitive and society will be broken up.

The Puritan society of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is portrayed as stern, lifeless, dark and an imaginative. It rules by imposing harsh laws. Every individual, who lives in this society, has to submit to the limitation of freedom, where the circle of human and natural behaviour is determined by the society's religious norms.

This dissertation discusses the concepts of Puritanism, Transcendentalism, and the individual-society antagonism with the confines of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter.

One of the motives behind the choice of Hawthorne's romance is that The Scarlet Letter is one of the best novels, which treat some of the most influential historical, political and cultural issues of Hawthorne's day: slavery, women's rights and Utopian movements, in addition to the focus on the theme of individual and morality.

Hawthorne interpreters started to be convinced that while history was extremely appropriate to Hawthorne's fiction, it was not so much the history of the centuries before Hawthorne's birth that mattered, as the history of Hawthorne's own day. Certainly, the most influential work in this respect is Sacvan Bercovitch's The Office of The Scarlet Letter. Bercovitch argues that The Scarlet Letter is primarily about the current political issues in the United States in the 1850's — not the 1650's — especially slavery. According to him, the novel critiques the kinds of radicalisms that existed in Hawthorne's day, especially the most prominent radicalism of the time period: the movement to abolish slavery.

In his book Hawthorne's Narrative Strategies (1995), Michael Dunne claims that Hawthorne's history was not a dream from which he might seek to awaken, but a paradoxically liberating source of creativity and an opportunity to explore the varied possibilities of narrative.

Larry J. Reynolds's European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance (1988), also, claims powerfully for what is still a controversial view of Hawthorne's response to the slavery issue. Reynolds, therefore, brings out Hawthorne's distrust of political terrorism and discovers a representation of this in his interest in the seventeenth-century witchcraft trials. Nina Baym's essay "Hawthorne's Women: The Tyranny of Social Myths" (1971) gives a retrospective survey of the response of "feminist" interpretation of Hawthorne over the past thirty years, as she offers a reformulation of her own pioneer views about Hawthorne's characters. In Harold Bloom's Nathaniel Hawthorne,

Hawthorne, nevertheless, was a prophetic writer, hoping for a new relation between man and woman.

Alison Easton, one of the modern interpreters, offers in 1996 another study to the works of Hawthorne in The Making of the Hawthorne Subject. By examining Hawthorne's novels, sketches, tales, letters, notebooks, reviews, and children's books up to the publication of The Scarlet Letter, Easton shows how Hawthorne tried to understand the complexities of the clash between individual desire, that is ignored by the social order, and circumstances, that are the conditions under which that individual must live in society.

Henry James's Hawthorne of 1879 was the first extended study ever made of an American writer. In this critique of one literary genius by another, James not only considers Hawthorne as a man and a writer, but he uses his subject as a vantage point from which to present his views on American culture. He, furthermore, assesses the place of the writer in nineteenth-century America, and touches upon the opposing values of the Old World and the New. Hawthorne's preoccupation with evil and guilt and his significant imagination are brought out in the critique of his works.

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren classify approaches of the study of literature into two types: the extrinsic and the intrinsic approaches. The extrinsic approach interprets literature in the light of its social, historical, biographical, moral, psychological and ideological context. The intrinsic approach insists to analyze the works of literature from within and that the emphasis is on techniques, the form of the work, its style, the craft of the author and the structural points of literary works; theme, characters, plot, setting, style, and point of view.

Primarily, then, I rely upon the intrinsic analysis of the Hawthorne's work, The Scarlet Letter, to arrive to an interpretation of its meaning. The investigation will pay close attention to the absences in the text, for it is in these silences that the presence of ideology is most tangibly perceived. Moreover, an in-depth study of the text's rhetoric is necessary. A text's rhetoric is its artful ability to convince its audience to accept a particular ideology.

What I hope to show is how historical, political, and cultural issues are absorbed, articulated and debated within the text itself. The writer will be situated within a specific period with the consideration of some issues going on at the same time. The analysis will be through the text and its context since there is no rigid boundary between text and context, intrinsic and extrinsic analysis.

The effort of the analysis takes the form of three chapters, followed by a conclusion:

The first chapter, "An Investigation into N. Hawthorne's Beliefs", is a theoretical study of Hawthorne's beliefs, his concern with Puritanism and Transcendentalism and the impact which they left on his art and personality.

The second chapter, "Symbols and their Significance in The Scarlet Letter", discusses the surface qualities of the romance with a particular emphasis on the signification of the scarlet 'A' and the child 'Pearl'.

The last chapter, "Individual Resistance Vs Social Authority in The Scarlet Letter", attempts to explore the role played mainly by the character of Hester Prynne. Here, I will try to pinpoint the obstacles imposed by society to control the freedom of its individuals.

The work, then, explores what difficulties the individual can find in the search for his identity in a society that keeps threatening his individuality with varied forms of conventions such as religion, family, society-defined rules, and particular social, political, and economical codes. Rejection of each can be taken as the assertion of a new reality and a new identity.

Chapter 1:

An Investigation Into Hawthorne's Beliefs

Introduction:

While some great writers belong to humanity, Hawthorne belongs to his own land or people. He is seen as "the greatest imaginative genius since Shakespeare."[1] The explanation is that Hawthorne's field was so intensely local that only those who are familiar with it can appreciate him. From his Twice Told Tales to his unfinished Dolliver Romance, he held steadily to the purpose of portraying the moral law against a background of Puritan history. He reproduced the sombre Puritan world powerfully and single-heartedly. To Hawthorne it was a world in itself, a world that attracts him.

Hawthorne may congratulate himself "that he can hereafter turn his undivided attention to the cultivation of his fine talents, by which he can confer a more lasting benefit on the public than by his services as Surveyor."[2] James T. Fields, a successful publisher, loaded praise on Hawthorne who, for a time, was working as a surveyor at the counting house in Salem. When Hawthorne lost that job, Fields saw it as opportunity to push the author to greater works. In Yesterdays with Authors, he asserted:

> I came to know Hawthorne very intimately after the Whigs displaced the Democratic romancer from office…One pompous little gentleman in authority, after hearing my appeal, quite astounded me by his ignorance of the claims of a literary man on his country. "Yes, yes," he sarcastically croaked down his public turtle-fed throat, "I see through it all, I see through it; this Hawthorne is one of them' ere visionists, and we don't want no such a man as him round." So the "visionist" was not allowed to remain in office, and the country was better served by him in another way. [3]

The American author Henry James published a book Hawthorne about his predecessor Nathaniel Hawthorne, whom he regarded as "the most valuable example of the American genius."[4] James sees Hawthorne a mature bloom "deeply rooted in the soil" for two main reasons, both of them should be related to history.[5] While the first shared his birthday with that of the United States (4 July 1804), the second gave a particular tone to his Americanism. James believed that Hawthorne came from the only part of America, which was deep in

[1] William J. Long, Outlines of English and American Literature (Summerville: Forgotten Books, 2008): 436
[2] Gary Scharnhorst, The Critical Response to Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992): 2
[3] James T. Fields, Yesterdays with Authors (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1872): 48
[4] Henry James, Hawthorne (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997): 02
[5] Ibid.: 04

history, thus, he writes that he "sprang from the primitive New England stock, he had a very and conspicuous pedigree."[1] The United States dated back only to 1776, Hawthorne could trace his "pedigree" a century and a half earlier, to "primitive New England Stock". He demanded:

> He was a beautiful, natural, original genius, and his life had been singularly exempt from worldly preoccupations and vulgar efforts. It had been as pure, as simple, as unsophisticated, as his work. [….] His work will remain; it is too original and exquisite to pass away; among the men of imagination he will always have his niche. No one has had just that vision of life, and no one has had a literary form that more successfully expressed his vision… He combined in a singular degree the spontaneity of the imagination with a haunting care for moral problems. Man's conscience was his theme, but he saw it in the light of a creative fancy which added, out of its own substance, an interest, and, I may almost say, an importance.[2]

For the next several decades, the author was routinely as the sombre heir of a severe and diseased Puritanism. At that time, the Puritan-baiter D.H. Lawrence observed that he is "Old-fashioned […], with his little-boy charm, he'll tell you what's what. But he will cover it with smarm."[3] His art and personality were much influenced by Puritanism. If his matter was at once that of the Puritan, so was his manner. The critic Carl Van Doren wrote in 1920:

> The impact which the story makes may be traced back of Hawthorne's art and personality to the old Puritan tradition which, much as he might disagreed with it on occasion, he had none the less in his blood. Some ancestral strain accounts for this conception of adultery as an affair not of the civil order but of the immortal soul.[4]

Hawthorne is the obvious example of nineteenth-century writer influenced by and consciously appropriating seventeenth-century Puritan culture. Emerson, Thoreau and the Transcendentalist movement overall are sometimes described as the heirs of New England Puritan's providential reading of history, the New World, and daily events.[5] Kermit Vanderbilt wrote that Hawthorne's literary voice has been defined as the subjective, inward

[1] Ibid. : 04

[2] William R. Veeder and Susan M. Griffin, The Art of Criticism:Henry James On The Theory And The Practice of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 124

[3] D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: Viking, 1964): 96

[4] Carl Van Doren, The American Novel (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1940): 67

[5] Lincoln Konkle, Thornton Wilder and the Puritan Tradition (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2006): 30

spirit of Puritanism; but Hawthorne overlooked the active and cheerful elements of Puritan experience.

2. Hawthorne and Transcendentalism:

2.1. Transcendentalism:

2.1.1. Definition:

New England Transcendentalism was a religious, philosophical, and literary movement that began to express itself in New England in the 1830s and continued through the 1840s and 1850s. Although Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, and others among the Transcendentalists lived to old age in the 1880s and beyond, by about 1860 the energy that had earlier characterized Transcendentalism as a distinct movement had subsided. For several reasons, Transcendentalism is not simple to define. It encompassed complex philosophical and religious ideas. Its tenets were tinged with a certain mysticism, which defies concise explanation. Moreover, significant differences of focus and interpretation existed among the Transcendentalists; these differences complicate generalizations about the movement as a whole. Henry David Thoreau, himself, pointed out the difficulty of understanding Transcendentalism in his journal entry for March 5, 1853:

> The secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Science requests me . . . to fill the blank against certain questions, among which the most important one was what branch of science I was specially interested in . . . I felt that it would be to make myself the laughing-stock of the scientific community to describe to them that branch of science which specially interests me, inasmuch as they do not believe in a science which deals with the higher law. So I was obliged to speak to their condition and describe to them that poor part of me which alone they can understand. The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot. Now that I think of it, I should have told them at once that I was a transcendentalist. That would have been the shortest way of telling them that they would not understand my explanations. [1]

Moreover, the Transcendentalists were only loosely connected with one another. They were not a cohesive, organized group, who shared a formal doctrine. They were distinct and independent individuals, who accepted some basic premises about man's place in the

[1] Henry David Thoreau, Journal (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 1962): 529

universe. This new school of thought flourished in the intellectual centres of Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts and Concord. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the pivotal figure in the emergence of American Renaissance and was the most celebrated expounder of Transcendentalism. His leading role has made the movement seem central, but, perhaps, it seems that it will be more influential than it did at the time.

In 1836, Emerson published his essay "Nature", which is a systematic exposition of the main principles of Transcendentalism. He wrote in it that "The foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we — through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" [1] Although it was based, in part, on ancient ideas (the philosophy of Plato, for example), Transcendentalism was, in many ways, a radical movement threatening to the established religion. In "Nature" (1836) and other essays, as "The American Scholar" (1837) and "Self-Reliance" (1841), Emerson defines what he sees as the principal characteristics of American Identity, and calls for authors to represent them. Thus, in "The American Scholar", he announces that "our long apprenticeship to the learning of the other lands, draws to close."[2] Emerson demands that American writer follows his lead and "embrace the common […] the familiar, the law."[3] He stresses the need for a literature that celebrates the individual, democracy and equality that he identifies at the heart of American life. In "Nature", usually, he calls for his generation to "enjoy an original relation to the universe" and "a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition" rather than "grop[ing] among the dry bones of the past." For him, the dependence on a European tradition and on history rather than self-reliance is distinctly un-American, and he makes a nationalistic demand for the "new lands, new men, new thought" to shape "our own works and laws and worship."[4]

Following Emerson and Thoreau, other intellectuals involved in the movement. They were: Amos Bronson Alcott (philosopher, educator, and Concordian); Margaret Fuller (early feminist, author, and lecturer; one of the editors of The Dial); James Freeman Clarke (Unitarian minister, author, and editor); Theodore Parker (Unitarian minister and abolitionist); Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (teacher and educational reformer, writer, editor, and social reformer; one of the publishers of The Dial); George Ripley (Unitarian minister, editor, and

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature (Boston and Cambridge, J. Munroe & company, 1849): 01
[2] Ibid.: 51
[3] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar", Miscellanies, embracing Nature, addresses, and lectures (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866): 106
[4] Ibid.: 07

founder of the Brook Farm community); Orestes Brownson (editor, reviewer, and contributor of essays to The Christian Examiner and to his own Boston Quarterly Review); William Henry Channing (Unitarian minister and editor of the Western Messenger and other journals); Christopher Pearse Cranch (Unitarian minister, editor of the Western Messenger, poet, and artist); Convers Francis (Unitarian minister, biographer of John Eliot, and historian of Watertown); William Henry Furness (Unitarian minister, theologian, and author); Frederic Henry Hedge (Unitarian minister, scholar, author, editor, lecturer, and professor of ecclesiastical history and of German at Harvard); and Jones Very (poet, tutor in Greek at Harvard, and, after he proclaimed himself the second coming of Christ, a resident at McLean's Asylum). These individuals, all of whom devoted serious thought to the major concepts of Transcendentalism, were educated, intellectual people.[1]

New England Transcendentalism flowered during a period in American history marked by expansion, change, a growing national self awareness, and increasing political, social, and regional polarization. The years from 1830 to 1860 witnessed the exploration and annexation of much new territory, westward migration, dramatic improvements in transportation and communication, and development toward political parties, as we recognize them today. It was the age of the Monroe Doctrine and of Manifest Destiny applied by advocates of territorial expansion to encourage acquisitive government actions; it was a time of the criticism of Traditional New England Congregationalism when Unitarianism arose, and other new, distinctly American religions sprang up.

2.1.2. Major Tenets of the Transcendentalist Movement:

Independence was the key note and "The American Scholar" which Emerson delivered in 1837 restated the theme that "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe"[2] and thereby earned its place as America's declaration of literary independence. This theme was extended in "Self-Reliance", which expressed a central doctrine: divinity existed intimately in each natural fact, in each individual self**.** Extensively, at the heart of "Nature" is an intense commitment to the power of nature and the individual and to the intimate character of the connection between the two. The self-reliance that Emerson embraced was not selfishness — towards which his self is ethically opposed: since, as he saw it, to be true to the

[1] Leslie Perrin Wilson, "Cliffs notes: Thoreau, Emerson, and Transcendentalism / What Is Transcendentalism? Introduction," 06 April 2012 [http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/Thoreau-Emerson-and-Transcendentalism-What-Is-Transcendentalism-Introduction.id-134.html. Paragraph7]

[2] Richard Ruland, and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Postmodernism: a History of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1991): 119-120

true self was to be true to the self, to the spirit present in all human beings, and all nature. To obey the promptings of the soul was to obey those of the Transcendental Self or what he called the Over-Soul.[1] Emerson insisted that every real man must be a nonconformist, but nonconformity meant going against the superficial dictates of society, not following the grosser forms of self-interest and selfishness. He declared: "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."[2]

For Emerson, here, as for William Blake in America, A Prophecy (1793), "everything that lives is holy, life delights in life"; and to be in communion with oneself, at the deepest level, is to be in touch with what Emerson goes on to call the "uncontained and immortal beauty" that runs through the veins of everything around us. "In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon," Emerson suggests, "man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature," [3] supplying wonder and instruction, the sense that in descending into his true self he is escaping not only from society but also from his baser, superficial self.

In this sense, Transcendentalism was yet another awakening of the spirit in New England, an indication that the sensibility of Jonathan Edwards still lived on in the new American world. For Emerson, however, as for Branson Alcott, Orestes Brownson and others, the meaningful reality of the immaterial world existed in much closer proximity to the material one than the Puritan settlers had held. For the Puritans, the spiritual truth worked itself out providentially through the successive stages of history; for Emerson, the epochal moment was eternally present. "There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship,"[4] Emerson demanded for retrospection in "Nature". Moreover, in "Representative Men", he called for a world of self-made genius. He, nevertheless, felt it was possible to bypass history, to make mind and self the measure of life. This equation of the self and the universe came to seem as essential American principle and the originating theme of much of its finest subsequent literature.

Transcendentalism was, thus, to reach into every aspect of American life: education, religion, feminism, political and social reforms; what enables it to transform American literature was the crucial relation Emerson saw between his spiritual vision and the nature and

[1] Richard J. Gray, A History of American Literature (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004): 131
[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature (Boston and Cambridge, J. Munroe & company, 1849): 01
[3] Ibid.: 08
[4] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Essays, lectures and orations (London: William S. Orr, 1851): 277

social role of the writer. For him, the use of nature did not mean exploitation, but, rather, it was "the only use of nature that all men apprehend", and it "is a benefit which is temporary and mediate, not ultimate, like its service to the soul", as Emerson puts it. [1]

Emerson expands this idea in "The Poet" (1844): poets summon true life through the lens of nature, letting us "see trifles animated by a tendency […] Life will no more be a noise […] Poets turn the world to glass."[2] This stress on seeing (vision) points to one of the many puns transcendentalism used to reform language itself: the poet is a see-er, a prophet who helps us see through our eyes, the "I" of our self-reliance that will make the first-person voice of Thoreau's Walden and Whitman's Leaves of Grass an echo of that transcendent Self, the Over-Soul. [3]

Henry David Thoreau, among the Transcendentalists, is perhaps closest to Emerson in his understanding of the importance of nature to the construction of individual and national selfhood, but Thoreau also extends Emerson's transcendentalist philosophy in two significant directions. First, where Emerson tends to deal in sweeping generalizations, Thoreau's writings are constructed around attention to detail, whether in listing his provisions during his stay at Walden Pond or in his measurements of the pond itself. Thoreau attempts to show an idealized version of the "simplicity" advocated by Emerson and juxtaposes this with what he sees as the overly complicated, economically driven lives led by his contemporaries. Second, Thoreau is unafraid to engage directly with political causes in a manner that is absent from Emerson's most famous early writings. Thus, in "Civil Disobedience", Thoreau explains that his refusal to pay his poll tax and subsequent imprisonment for one night is based (at least in part) on a principled opposition to slavery and to the war with Mexico and on the belief that the problems of the United States are the result of the abandonment of the Bible and the Constitution and the "purer sources of truth" from which they stem.[4] For Thoreau, the very concept of government is anathema to American identity based upon individualist action from principle.

For Walt Whitman, the process is as much to do with form as with content. Thus, while much of the subject matter of the first edition of Leaves of Grass (1855) echoes Emerson's ideas about the relationship of the self to the natural world and to the nation—as well as

[1] Ibid.: 280
[2] Ibid.: 170
[3] Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Postmodernism: a History of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1991):122
[4] Henry David Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003): 285

extending them to include celebration of the increasingly urban and industrialized society of which Emerson was deeply suspicious — the structures of poems such as "Song of Myself" are also important. Whitman's free-verse efforts to unite the nation at a moment when it was being pulled apart in the build up to the Civil War function in a variety of ways. First, the differences in layout of various sections mirror the diversity of peoples and environments within the United States. His claim that "I am large . . . I contain multitudes"[1] is as much a commentary on his verse form as on the relationship between the poetic "I" and the nation. As subsequent revisions of Leaves of Grass illustrate, Whitman's poetry allows for expansion and incorporation of new ideas and peoples, just like the expanding nation. Unlike traditional formal poetry, Whitman's verse is always capable of being stretched to include celebrations of new aspects of an ever-changing and growing national identity. And like the nation pushing across the continent, the individual lines of Whitman's poems continue until their image or meaning is complete, rather than being curtailed by the lack of space of the old (European) world and its rigid poetic structures. [2]

It is tempting to see these three writers as a single identity: Emerson the thinker, Thoreau the bold experimenter in life's living, Whitman the singer and seer. But if this notion clarifies, it also simplifies, for each man was truly his own. Perhaps they might better be distinguished by their attitude toward Nature. Emerson remained closest to philosophical idealism and the spirit of Kant.[3] Thoreau expressed a far more direct contact with the natural world. Whitman always retained a transcendentalist mysticism and a belief in nature as force and source, but the mysterious value of life lay finally in what he directly felt and saw.

2.2. Hawthorne as an anti-transcendentalist:

Hawthorne lived on Transcendentalism's fringes at George Ripley's Brook Farm, a utopian community in which he used to meet a group of men and women to discuss art, religion, politics and the latest works of the novelists, historians, and philosophers of the day. He was a sceptical writer as well as an artist of irony, and since he found little creative inspiration in wheeling manure, he created the "Blithedale" of his ironic The Blithedale Romance (1852). Two of his neighbours in Concord, where he lived at the Old Manse, were Emerson and Thoreau.

[1] Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself", Leaves of grass (Diginovus, 1968): 51
[2] eNotes: "Literary Nationalism/ The American Renaissance," 22 March 2012. [http://www.enotes.com/ literary-nationalism-reference/literary-nationalism. Paragraph 7]
[3] Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Postmodernism: a History of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1991):129

Though he was interested in those Transcendentalists (mainly Emerson, Thoreau and Margaret Fuller) and admired them, Hawthorne's romances are hardly to be understood as a part of the current Transcendentalism. "Transcendentalism touched him not at all", as it is written by Henry Seidel Canby[1]. Here lies the character of the influence and effect of Transcendentalism on Hawthorne.

He, himself, assessed the influence of this trend and his position relative to it in an introductory paragraph that he added in 1854 to "Rappaccini's Daughter." He refers to himself as M. de l'Aubépine (French to Hawthorne)[2]:

> As a writer, he seems to occupy an unfortunate position between the transcendentalists (who, under one name or another, have their share in all the current literature of the world) and the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellectual and sympathies of the multitude.[3]

In this paragraph, Hawthorne shows the readers that he occupies a position between the popular writers of his age and the transcendentalists, but this statement does not actually explains his moral and aesthetic beliefs nor does it reveal whether he agrees or disagrees with reform and Transcendentalism.

There has been confusion and controversy concerning whether and how far he was a transcendentalist. The principle of this confusion is his frequent statement of belief in the "Transcendental theory", which Meyer Howard Abrams defines in his The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition as a theory which "specifies the proper objects of art to be Ideas or Forms, which are perhaps approachable by way of the world of sense, but are ultimately trans-empirical, maintaining in independent existence in their own ideal space and available only to the eye of the mind."[4].

Hawthorne rejected Transcendentalism. In his essay "The Old Manse". He called the discipline of Emerson "hobgoblins of flesh and blood," "young visionaries and gray-headed theorists," "uncertain-troubled earnest wonderers, through the midnight of the moral world,"

[1] Ibid.:13
[2] Alfred F. Rosa , Salem, Transcendentalism, and Hawthorne, (New Jersey: Associated University Press, Inc, 1980): 114
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter", Mosses from an Old Manse (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1871): 106
[4] Meyer Howard Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971): 36

"I […] admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness but sought nothing from him as a philosopher."[1]

The Transcendentalists were discussing the same matters, which interested Hawthorne. Nevertheless, though Hawthorne was at home with both Transcendental thought and language, it becomes clear that he is different and he can by no means be called a Transcendentalist.

The differences between Hawthorne, Thoreau and Emerson, according to Marcus Cunliffe, are well known. For them, nature was man's true home; to him, nature was beautiful enough but unconcerned with man. They consider the age-old torment over sin, predestination and damnation as needless; those factors as Emerson wrote in "Spiritual Laws", "never darkened across any man's road, who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps and measles."[2] For Hawthorne, as it is written by Marcus Cunliffe British scholar, once they entered a man's life, as they were more than likely to do, there was no road by which they could be avoided.[3] i.e. Hawthorne was no Emersonian optimist.

Moreover, what distinguished Hawthorne from the Transcendentalists was that they denied the reality of evil. As quoted by Turner in D. Abel's The Moral Picturesque, maintains "Hawthorne could agree that in the divine scheme of things good and evil may be indistinguishable, but his observation of human nature taught him that people believe in the reality of evil and feel real guilt."[4] It was this conviction, even obsession, with the reality of evil that accounts for Hawthorne's sharp satire against Transcendentalism. But, in the prefatory comment to "Rappaccini's Daughter", Hawthorne is calling attention to a broader distinction. He was not merely concerned with "evil latent in every human heart" but with the psychological probings of which this nearly one aspect.[5]

Although Hawthorne fully accepted the Transcendentalists' ontology, he admitted their epistemology in theory only for it was oriented in the wrong direction. That was what distinguished him from his Transcendentalist contemporaries. The objects of his art were transcendental ideas and forms, but his approach to them was distinctive.

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Old Manse", Mosses from an Old Manse (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1871): 36-38
[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Spiritual Laws (Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor LLC, 2007): 14
[3] Marcus Cunliffe, The Literature of the Unit States (New York: Penguin Books, 1963): 96
[4] Darrel Abel, The Moral Picturesque: Studies in Hawthorne's Fiction (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1988): 38
[5] Ibid.: 38

For him, nature was not "transparent" — "glass to see heaven through;" it was materially dense and opaque — what he called in The Scarlet Letter "that wild heathen Nature […] never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth"[1]. Nature's own laws, as Hawthorne perceived it, were more evident and operative that Emerson's "higher laws", and nature was not thoroughly mediate but compellingly immediate. So, he could not "go to the god of the wood / To fetch his word to men," as Emerson did. [2] The only spiritual refreshment Hawthorne sought in nature was not a communication from the Over-soul but a freeing of his own individual spirit from the oppression of conventions and society.

Hawthorne did, however, utilize symbols he saw in nature — not as communications of divine Ideas, but as a way of expressing his own ideas. He also found intuitions as a valuable resource for his ideas to be figured in his functions; his were not intuitions of divine Ideas but of the secrets hidden in men's bosoms. His intuitions were those of the subliminal undersoul, not of the transcendent Over-soul intuited by his Transcendental contemporaries. [3]

It is a careful measuring of the historical, religious, literary and emotional distance that separated the Puritan New England from the transcendentalist New England, of the change from the "old iron world" to the world of "freedom of speculation" which Hester, Hawthorne's most remarkable fictional character in The Scarlet Letter, embodies. Even though Hawthorne was close to many Transcendentalists, including Emerson, and even though he lived for a while at the Transcendentalist experimental community of Brook Farm, he was rather peripheral to the movement. He even poked fun at Brook Farm and his Transcendental contemporaries in the Introductory essay "The Custom House", referring to them as his "dreamy brethren … indulging in fantastic speculation."[4] But despite this, Hawthorne is still a transcendentalist, and the greatness of The Scarlet Letter seems to lie in this social interest, which distinguishes him from the Transcendentalists.

3. Hawthorne and Salem Witch Trials:

The witchcraft hysteria had proven so malevolent that Hawthorne believed its full disclosure to be, for some audiences, unwise. Although the kindly patriarchal narrator of Grandfathers Chair (1841), a regional history for young readers, is prepared to divulge only those details "he thought it fit for them to know," Grandfather condemns the witch trials as a

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 173
[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Apology", Poems, 7th (Boston: Phillips, Sampson &Co, 1858): 178
[3] Ibid.: 43
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 22

"frenzy which led to the death persons" and which "originated in the wicked arts of a few children."[1] While the magistrates took delight in wielding deadly authority, "the ministers and wise men were more deluded than the illiterate people."[2]

2.1 Salem Witch Trials of 1692:

The story of the Salem Village witch hysteria is a minor, though well-known footnote in American colonial history. Its popular fascination has continued to make it the subject of innumerable scholarly as well as superficial books and articles. Recently, the expression "A Salem Witch Trial" is often used as a universal phrase, which points to a scapegoating position taken by people or groups emphasizing hysterical, blindly illogical and intolerant actions or expressions.

What caused the Salem witch trials of 1692 is a question that has been asked for over 300 years. Although it is a simple question, it does not have an easy answer. The main factors that started and fuelled the trials were religion, politics, family feuds, economics and the imagination and fear of people. Writers and researchers, since the last decade of the seventeenth-century down to the present time, have been trying to find a theory or an explanation to this question. Colonial clerics, including John Hale and Cotton Mather, saw these events as the direct intervention of the Devil attacking the Puritan Commonwealth and being partially successful as the result of a religious backsliding of New Englanders and the use by civil authorities of ill-conceived traditions and non-biblical principles to discover, who was a witch. Later authors — such as Winfield S. Nevins, George Lyman Kittredge, Charles Wentworth Upham, Marion Lena Starkey, Chadwick Hansen, Thomas Hutchinson — would come up with a wealth of hypotheses to describe the causes, postulating among other explanations that it started from the pranks of bored adolescents, the influence of oligarchical and power-hungry clergy, local petty jealousies and land grabs, mental observations, spiritualist goings-on , political instability, a conspiratorial holding action against the disintegration of Puritanism, mass clinical hysteria, a clash between agrarian and emerging commercial and a continuation of the suppression of certain types of women. [3]

[1] John P. McWilliams, New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion, 1620-1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 178
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Grandfather's Chair (Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 2010): 103
[3] Richard B. Trask, "The Devil hath been raised: A Documentary History of the Salem Village Witchcraft Outbreak of March 1692," 06 April 2012. 1997. [http://etext.virginia.u/salem/witchcraft/Intro.html. Paragraph 7]

The Salem witch trials took place in 1962, a product of old-world superstition, religious control of government, and plain old boredom. The crisis began quietly in Salem Village (now the town of Danvers). By the winter of 1691-1692, the two children of The Reverend Samuel Parris's home, his eleven-year-old niece, Abigail Williams, his nine-year-old daughter Elizabeth (called "Betty"), were in need of a diversion from the dullness of daily domestic activities and study. Thus, they began to meet with Tituba, a slave he had brought from the West Indies with her husband John Indian, in the afternoon during Reverend and Mrs Parris's absence. Tituba would entertain Betty and Abigail with stories from her native Barbades, particularly with her knowledge of folk magic. In time, the secret afternoon sessions with Tituba became increasingly popular with a few other young women from the Salem Village parish including Ann Putnam (age 12), Elizabeth Hubbard (age 18), Mar Warren (age 17), Mercy Lewis (age 19), Elizabeth Booth (age 16), Susannah Sheldon (age 18), and Mary Walcott (age 10). It was this group of girls —along with several other women— who would come to be known during the witchcraft trials as "the afflicted girls".[1] Ultimately, they would accuse or cry out against nearly two hundred individuals with charges of witchcraft, providing much of the spectral evidence and testimony during the trials and pre-trial examinations.

At first, only Tituba and two other women were accused of casting spells. The fight of the Puritan theocracy started very soon. Witchcraft is used as an accusation and a handy way to gain control over the area. Anyone different was considered as a potential target; Puritans accused even the old people and the useless poor. A special court was organized in Salem, and although the girls rejected, the trials began.

The arrests of women and men of Salem Village started and lasted for a long time because of the Afflicted-girls accusations. Those who confessed were not executed. The magistrates reasoned that witches, who confessed, had repented of their sins, and the devil was no longer with them. Besides, they were witnessed against those, who insisted they were innocent. Those who defended their innocence in spite the testimony of confessed witches and spectral evidence of the afflicted were hanged.[2] Those supposedly "possessed girls" —they had a foreknowledge of events— could hear and see things other people could not. Because people believed in this phenomenon, the girls' testimonies and accusations were taken at face

[1] K. David Goss, The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008): 15
[2] Lori Lee Wilson, The Salem Witch Trials (Minnesota: Lerner Publications Company, 1997): 27

value, instead of as hoaxes and hallucinations. The court accepted the girls' stories as proof and there was no defence against that sort of proof.[1]

From March 1 to September 22, the court sentenced 27 among more than 150 people accused. In the end, 19 people went to the gallows, and one man who refused to be excused, Giles Corey, was pressed to death by stones, which were put with a large amount on a board on his chest. Leading cleric Cotton Mather and his father, Harvard president Increase Mather, led the call for tolerance. With the jails overflowing, the court called off the trials and freed the remaining prisoners, including Tituba. The episode's lessons about open- mindedness and tolerance have echoed through the years.[2]

The Salem inherited legacy of association with witchcraft may seem normal enough in view of trials; yet some statistics complicate the matter. Salem became associated with witchcraft because the legal system of Massachusetts Bay Colony chose it as the location for trials and executions. It should be mentioned that neither the initial accusations, nor the decision to end the trials originated there. Only years later would the event take its particular mythic form of "Salem witch trials" as a local event.[3]

No one died as a convicted witch in America again after the Salem witch trials. It was also the last of the religious witch hunts. Salem Village separated from Salem Town in 1752 and became the town of Danvers. However, this separation did not wipe away the history of the witch trials from its past. For over 300 years, historians, sociologists, psychologists and others continue to research and write about them to this day, and they continue to serve as a reminder of how politics, family squabbles, religion, economics and the imaginations and fears of people can yield tragic consequences.[4]

2.2 . Hawthorne and Salem Witchcraft:

Without question, Nathaniel Hawthorne is the exact author to examine the Salem Witchcraft episode. More than any other American writer, he popularized the view that the trials were the result of Puritan prejudice and social repression. His ancestors William and John Hathorne were both men of rank in Massachusetts Bay Colony. For him, it seems that

[1] Ibid: 28
[2] Paul Karr et al, Frommer's New England (New Jersey: Wiley Publishing Inc, 2010): 169
[3] Bernard Rosenthal, Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 205
[4] Tim Sutter, "Salem Witchcraft: The Events and Causes of the Salem Witch Trials/Aftermath", 28 March 2012. 2003. [http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~syroots/salem.htm. Paragraph 13].

the most memorable aspect of his powerful forefathers was their sternness and their penchant for persecution. William was merciless in his legal prosecution of the Quakers, and John sat in judgment of several of the accused witches during Salem's witch trials of 1692.[1] Hawthorne was extremely sensitive about those fanatical roles played by his ancestors in the early days of New England. Harold Bloom states that:

> Hawthorne felt that he had been born into a world of gloom and decay in his hometown of Salem, Massachusetts. Hawthorne was always to complain of the oppressive past that haunted Salem, with the memory of its witch trials and stern Puritans looming over the town. [2]

This sense of history's oppressive, stifling force runs throughout Hawthorne's works, in which characters must grapple with the pressures of their inheritances. Hawthorne himself felt burdened by the need to justify his career as a writer in the face of these sober judges, and to release himself from the curse of injustice reaching down over the centuries from the over-stern decrees of the Puritans. In an apparent act of shame or rebellion, he changed the spelling of his last name from Hathorne to Hawthorne.

Hawthorne's biographer Arlin Turner calls John Hathorne "earnest and unyielding"[3] for the reason that, in his mind, "Justice Hathorne was a magistrate, who never expressed feelings of guilt or regret for the notorious part he had played in the unjust deaths of twenty fellow citizens."[4] Hawthorne, as well, was suspicious whether these ancestors had lamented for their cruelties. As their representative, he thought that he would take their shame on himself and pray that any curse on their dreary descendants will be removed. He wrote:

> I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for

[1] Laurie A. Sterling, Bloom's How to Write About Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008): 44
[2] Harold Bloom, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 2000): 11
[3] Sarah Bird Wright, Critical Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007): 302
[4] K. David Goss, The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008): 74

> many a long year back, would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed.[1]

Obviously, Hawthorne criticizes the Puritans by showing them as apparently religious people, who, under surface, are subjected to evil as every other human being. Consequently, he took every opportunity to cast literary shadows over his Puritan forbearers. In addition, he held view that the religious faith of his Puritan ancestors was rarely sincere. He often depicted Puritan divines, magistrates, and prosperous merchants as hypocritical community leaders using their religious, political or economic power as a means to accomplish their objectives.[2] For example, in The House of Seven Gables, Hawthorne displays such characteristics.

As the story goes, the House of Seven Gables was built by Colonel Pyncheon, but the land was owned by Matthew Maule. When he refuses to sell the land to Pyncheon, Maule is charged with witchcraft and burned. Just before being executed, however, he utters the famous words of Sarah Good (one of the women who were executed for witchcraft in Salem): "God will give him blood to drink."[3] In The House of Seven Gables, Hawthorne's attitudes about witchcraft in general and about Salem in particular might be gleaned from the following passage:

> Old Matthew Maule, in a word, was executed for the crime of witchcraft. He was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion, which should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob. Clergymen, judges, statesmen,—the wisest, calmest, holiest persons of their day stood in the inner circle round about the gallows, loudest to applaud the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived [4]

Although the hysteria of 1692 stood out like an ugly mark on the historical page, Hawthorne could not view it as an isolated event, separate from the whole texture of Puritan moral experience. Charles Upham's work, the 1831 Lectures on Witchcraft, stood as a good leading work in Hawthorne's dealing with that history. Hawthorne apparently thought that

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 08
[2] K. David Goss, The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008): 75
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of Seven Gables (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Houghton Mifflin, 1924): 21
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables (Maryland: Arc Manor LLC, 2008): 15

Upham's witchcraft study could be improved upon. He wrote about his own possible historical study of witchcraft to Evert A. Duyckinck on 10 October 1845:

> As to the history of witchcraft, I had often thought of such a work; but I should not like to throw it off hastily, or to write it for the sole and specific purpose of getting $500. A mere narrative, to be sure, might be prepared easily; but such a work, if worthily written, would demand research and study, and as deep thought as any man could bring to it. The more I look at it, the more difficulties do I see - yet difficulties such as I should like to overcome. Perhaps it may be the work of an after time [1]

Witchcraft and the witchcraft trials were present in Hawthorne's fiction from the start, but they became more substantially represented after publication of Upham's Lectures. To prove this, it is necessary to mention that Hawthorne wrote "Alice Doane" before he read Lectures, for example, but he substantially rewrote the short story under its influence — even giving praise to Upham's work in the revised text — and retitled it "Alice Doane's Appeal" (1835). Again, Kopley explains that it would not be surprising if Hawthorne's early ambition to write about witchcraft had endured. And when Hawthorne discovered in 1849 that Charles Wentworth Upham was, in fact, his archenemy in the painful Salem Custom-House debate as being the "key opponent to his keeping his position as surveyor," then perhaps Hawthorne's "sense of literary rivalry with the writer of Lectures on Witchcraft significantly deepened."[2]

The history of witchcraft is apparent not merely in "Alice Doane's Appeal" but also in the short story "Young Goodman Brown". Nancy Bunge comments in Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study of The Short Fiction:

> [Hawthorne] did not write out of ignorant fantasies about the Puritans. "Young Goodman Brown" not only presents the issue of the Salem witch trials, but a number of its characters have the names of Salem residents charged with witchcraft, and its major action takes place in the noisy pasture historical documents of the period designate as a witches' gathering place [3]

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "To Evert A. Duyckinck", Selected Letters by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Joel Myerson (Ohio, Ohio State University Press, 2002): 119
[2] Richard Kopley, The Threads of The Scarlet Letter: A Study of Hawthorne's Transformative Art (Newark, Delaware**:** Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2003): 82
[3] Nancy L. Bunge, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study of the Short Fiction (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

In his Form and Fable in American Fiction, the critic Daniel Hoffman tries to imagine what would happen if Hawthorne believed in witchcraft as his grandfathers did. He writes:

> Suppose Hawthorne, for artistic purposes, to have taken witchcraft at exactly the value his great-great-grandsire put upon it; suppose him to have been able to believe that Goody Cory and others like her had really made covenants with the Black Man; suppose such Accusers as Abigail Williams were factually correct in reporting That she saw a great number of Persons in the Village at the Administration of a Mock Sacrament[1]

As a consequence, no one was free from suspicion that the hysteria attacks of the accusers might be produced by the spirit of any member of the colony. "There must be a stop put, or the generation of the children of God would fall under condemnation."[2]

Hawthorne takes witchcraft more seriously than had John Hathorne or Cotton Mather, for unlike them, he does not flinch to acknowledge the covenant of the fallen nature of all mankind.[3] In fact, Hawthorne, as Claudia D. Johnson claimed, is interested in what people's points of view and judgment tell us about them. So, the focus in the discussion of witchcraft is primarily on those who see witchcraft in others. What can we deduce about a person, who constantly sees others as witches, demons, or consorters with the devil? Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" is a key to this aspect of witchcraft. Here is a young man, just married, who has a dream in which he sees all the best people in the village, including his wife as witches. Presumably, in his experience with sex in his newly married state, the sexuality -the human quality- of everyone including his wife, his parents, and his teachers, dawns on him in a traumatic way in that he has always been taught by his Puritan teachers that the flesh is sinful. Faith, his wife, while also "troubled" by the sinfulness she sees in even the best of people, can still love them. Goodman Brown, however, in seeing both the best and the worst in human nature, loses his "faith" and his love, and chooses to believe the worst. People, just by being human, are, in his loveless eyes, witches. Those who have this loveless view of others have already, ironically, partaken of the devil's baptism. Like Brown they, forever, will

[1] Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994):155
[2] Cotton Mather and Thomas Robbins, Magnalia Christi Americana: or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England, from its first planting, in the year 1620, unto the year of Our Lord 1698 (Hartford: Silas Andrus & son, 1853): 476
[3] Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction, op. cit.: 156.

be "more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own."[1]

Ironically, in "Young Goodman Brown", Brown out-Puritans the Puritans, concluding that he remains the only good man in a society of sinners. He may, as Hawthorne suggests, have "fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch- meeting."[2] Unlike him, Hawthorne could accept of alleged witches only as their individual share of the guilt of mankind. He must accept also the guilt of their accusers and tormentors. "Young Goodman Brown" is one of his expiations for John Hathorne's guilt, as well as for his own.[3]

Traditions of witchcraft served Hawthorne's complex purposes with extraordinary precision in each of these dimensions of meaning. If "Young Goodman Brown" is the most profound work of fiction drawing on those traditions in American writing, one reason for this is that Hawthorne knew better than any author of his century what the traditions signified or could be made to signify. Hawthorne had the courage to recognize the cosmic irony of the situation in which innocent, charitable Christians were tortured to death by the ministers and magistrates of God's chosen people. Not only this, but Nathaniel Hawthorne could be able to recognize the wrong deeds of his Puritan ancestors and examine their beliefs in a critical manner in his fiction.

4. Hawthorne and Puritanism:

Of all American writers, Hawthorne is the most deeply steeped in the history and theology of Puritanism. Its presence in his works is a critical commonplace. The scholar Sacvan Bercovitch writes that "Hawthorne rendered Puritan tolerance more vividly than any other historical novelist," because "better than any other" he understood the complexities of Puritanism "as an interpretive community," as well as both the dead and living dimensions of that legacy for the nineteenth century.[4]

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", Mosses from an Old Manse (London: Wiley and Putnam, 1846): 82
[2] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 43
[3] Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994): 156
[4] Millicent Bell, Hawthorne and the Real: Bicentennial Essays (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005): 85

The Puritan basis, the critic William Lyon Phelps said, is so strong in Hawthorne that he was felicitously called by the critic R.H. Hutton the *Ghost of New England*.[1] He writes about the past, and he is profoundly interested in ethical questions; for that reason, he is sometimes dismissed with a phrase — he is a Puritan romancer. Despite being a descendent of the Puritans, living in a Puritan state, in a Puritan town, Hawthorne did not make himself the historian of Puritanism. He delivered it with force and gave the spirit and sentiment of its life, in an intense and powerful story which contains the very soul of its faith. "He is rather an American writer, in that he represents the past always at the moment it is breaking up".[2]

3.1.Puritan Roots: A Brief Account of the Values of Puritanism:

Many scholars have argued that various elements of Puritanism persisted in the culture and society of the United States. Two leading literary and cultural scholars of New England Puritanism and its legacy, Harvard Professors Perry Miller in the 1940s and 50s and, more recently, Sacvan Bercovitch studied the rhetorical strategies of the New England Puritans and demonstrated the remarkable extent to which the leaders and clergy created a rich American Christian mythology to describe their Providential role as the new Chosen People in world history. Passed down through generations to the modern time, many assumptions regarding God's promises to his chosen American People have persisted through the American Revolution, the Civil War, and all periods of crisis down to the new time. Still visible in much religious and political rhetoric in United States are versions of the grand narrative of the Reverend Cotton Mather's prose epic, Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), where he talks about the Christian religion, starting from their deprivation of Europe to the formation of the American self. This vision of a Christian American utopia was first expressed by John Winthrop in his works of the 1630's.[3]

The influence of the Puritan forefathers John Winthrop and William Cotton Mather and their writings is pervasive and transcends many centuries. Long after their religious zeal faded, their social ideals imprinted generation upon generation of Americans. Some frequently cited examples of Puritans' influence are the nineteenth-century political policy of "Manifest Destiny" and the "American Dream". All are traditionally considered to be

[1] William Lyon Phelps, Some Makers of American Literature (Boston : Marshall Jones Company, 1923): 97
[2] John Drinkwater, The Outline of Literature, vol 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005): 849
[3] Elliott, Emory, "The Legacy of Puritanism," Divining America, TeacherServe©. National Humanities Center. 6 April 2012. [http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/legacy.htm]

representative of America's inheritance of early Puritan ideals.[1] What are those ideals? What is Puritanism? Who were exactly the Puritans? What relationship do they have with other religious sects? What course did Puritanism follow in the New World?

Puritanism was part of the Protestant Reformation in England. No specific date or event marks its conception. It first assumed the form of an organized movement in the 1560's under the reign of Queen Elizabeth. But when the traits of that movement are identified, it can be seen that its roots reach back into the first half of the century. Its story, as Marshall Knappen in his classic study of Tudor Puritanism states, started with the reforms initiated by Henry VIII when the king took England out of the Catholic community in the 1530s. Professor Claudia D. Johnson clarifies that "in England the Reformation … took a very peculiar turn. The English King, Henry VIII … formally broke with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 over the matter of divorce and thus formed the Church of England (or Anglican Church) with himself as head."[2]

But when Henry asserted his independence from Rome, he was not inspired by desire to reform ecclesiastical abuses. His motivation was essentially political, spurred by the pope's refusal to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, a refusal that itself had as much to do with international politics as it did with canon law. Nevertheless, despite his own continued belief in Roman Catholic dogma and his acceptance of its devotional practices, Henry, as the author Francis J. Bremer states, was forced to make occasional concessions to Protestant religious reform.[3]

The growth of the many Christian denominations known as Protestants derives from this rebellion by Martin Luther, through one route or another. Johnson writes that these denominations include various "Reformed" churches; Presbyterians; Methodists; Baptists; Lutherans; Episcopalians; and others.[4] Out of this mix of elements came the Puritans who strove to be pure and perfect in their daily lives.

[1] Wendy C. Graham, Gothic Elements and Religion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction (Marburg: Tectum Verlag DE, 1999): 59
[2] Claudia D. Johnson, Understanding the Scarlet Letter: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995): 32
[3] Francis J. Bremer, The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to wards (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1995): 03
[4] Claudia D. Johnson, Understanding the Scarlet Letter: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995): 32

With Henry VIII' s death in 1647, many Catholics thought that reconciliation with Rome was possible and potentially easy, so little had Henry affected the essence of English worship. But the rapid pace of religious change in the brief reign of Edward (1547-1553) ─ Henry VIII's nine-year-old son ─ made it clear that a reversal could be painless and was perhaps not even possible.

Thus, as a specifically church movement, Puritanism began with the establishment of "the Elizabethan Settlement" (also known as "the Elizabethan Compromise") within the Church of England early during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Henry's daughter. That compromise drew together Reformed or Calvinist doctrine and the continuation of the Catholic form of worship. But the Puritans were impatient with this halting of Reformation and said that the English Church remained "but halfly reformed"[1]. The conscious act of rejecting a forced religious view gave them the name "Puritans" since they desired to "purify" the Church of England from its corruption. They did not aspire a full separation from the church, but rather its formation, copying the reformation under John Calvin in Geneva. J. A. Leo Lemay explained what the word "Puritan" means and what is the belief of those reformers, as follows:

> Called "Puritans" by their enemies because they wanted to "purify" the Anglican Church from what they considered to be unscriptural and corrupt forms ("popish trash", said William Bradford) left over from Catholicism, these religious reformers gradually found themselves at odds with the English authorities. Puritans believed that Adam's sin condemned mankind to a life of labor, suffering and death. But through Christ's crucifixion, those persons who were truly reborn (that is, who experienced a valid conversion experience) would be saved … Puritanist called into question every person's religious state.[2]

Some Puritans also believed that the churches should be composed of visible saints, that is, those who had been reborn and whose lives proclaimed that they were living without sin. This doctrine especially seemed to attack the authorities' attempt to have the church support to the state. They generally fulminated against a system of priests, bishops, and archbishops in

[1] Leland Ryken, Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1986): 07

[2] J. A. Leo Lemay, An Early American Reader (Washington, DC: Unit States Information Agency, 1993): 173

the church organization. Lemay, again, defended that they "believed that members should have the right to choose and ordain their own ministers" [1].

This group of Puritans, as they believe, could express a religious outlook in an ignorant world or the factor that they formed an educated group. Most of them at one time or another earned degrees at either Oxford or Cambridge. Their ministers knew the Word of God intimately. They did not just study it; rather, it became part of them. William Perkins states it when he says, "he must have an inward feeling of the doctrine to be delivered. [H]e must be godly affected himself who would stir up godly affection in other men."[2] This was in total opposition to those Anglican ministers, who merely viewed their positions in the church as jobs and were commonly in it for the money. The Puritan preachers were not in it for the money at all, rather, they desired godliness, and glorification of Christ. For them, nothing could be more important than bringing the Word of God. In his "Of Plymouth Plantation", the Puritan William Bradford explains:

> When as by the travail and diligence of some godly and zealous preachers, and God's blessing on their labours, as in other places of the land, so in the North parts, many became enlightened by the Word of God and had their ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by His grace to reform their lives and make conscience of their ways; the work of God was no sooner manifest in them but presently they were both scoffed and scorned by the profane multitude; and the ministers urged with the yoke of subscription, or else must be silenced.[3]

According to John Winthrop, the Lord's free people, whose hearts had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth, "joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel".[4] These people became two distinctive bodies or churches, and in regard of distance and place they congregated. When they heard about freedom of religion for all men in Holland, in 1607 and 1608, they shipped over there in groups under the leadership of Pastor Robinson and Elder William Brewster. Bradford describes the Puritans' taking decision to flee. He states in his "Of Plymouth Plantation":

[1] Ibid.: 173-74
[2] Hughes Oliphant Old, Worship: Reform According to Scripture (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002): 79-80
[3] William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647 (New York: Alfr A. Knopf, Inc, 1952): 08
[4] J. A. Leo Lemay, An Early American Reader (Washington, DC: Unit States Information Agency, Division for the Study of the Unit States, 1993): 191

> Yet seeing themselves thus molested, and that was no hope of their continuance there, by a joint consent they resolved to go into the Low-Countries,…. they seeing they could no longer continue in that condition, resolved to get over in Holland as they could [1]

The Puritans, William Bradford wrote, continued many years in a comfortable condition enjoying much delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God, under the able ministry and prudent government of Mr. John Robinson and Mr. William Brewster.[2] But Holland, again, could not be a permanent resting place. There was a danger of Spanish conquest; the vision of continuing grinding poverty was a discouragement; the children of these firm English threatened to turn Dutch, not only as to language but as to religion. It would be necessary for those Puritans to move on again. They started to think about the departure to the vast areas of America.

In 1620, the English monarchy, as eager to get rid of the Puritans as the Puritans were to get rid of the king, granted a charter to a group of Puritan Separatists to settle in the area that is now New Jersey and New York. Though their reason was purely religious, there were economic motivations for those Puritans to move to the New World, including the vision of making a profit in America. Wendy C. Graham said:

> The first Puritan pilgrims to America were dissenters who had fled to Holland in 1609 under the ministry of John Robinson. Having given up their attempts to reform the Church, these Puritans saw separatism as the only way to realize their religious ideal. In 1620, it was members of this group who were the first to sail for the New World and to establish the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts Bay. Between 1630 and 1640, 20000 Puritan families migrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony[3]

Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury further to say that among these settlers were some, who truly believed that sailing on the Mayflower and reaching Plymouth to establish the separate colony of Massachusetts, was "the new beginning" for history and religion, a millenarian enterprise. They add:

> They were the Puritans, who, determined to maintain the purity of their separatist Protestant faith, did aim to begin

[1] William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647 (New York: Alfr A. Knopf, Inc, 1952) :10
[2] Ibid. : 17
[3] Wendy C. Graham, Gothic Elements and Religion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction (Marburg: Tectum Verlag DE, 1999): 60

> anew and find in that process of erecting towns, peopling countries, teaching virtue and reforming things unjust a truly fresh start.[1]

In fact, these were not just alienated Puritans fleeing England, perhaps hoping to return, but men and women with a vision for the future in America. In his sermon, Winthrop set down what he believed his followers should intend for this New World now that they had left England, that "sinful land". He believed the Puritans should settle together in a city or town where large and small farmers and merchants alike would form a community housing their church, their government, and their defenses against enemies, whether Indian or European. He believed it would be a city upon a hill. Men and women would aid each other and, as a consequence, serve God. They would not satisfy individual desires at the expense of the community. "We must be knit together in this work as one man," Winthrop wrote. "We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. [W]e must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body."[2]

Winthrop's ideals often played themselves out in the history of the New England towns, but not always in ways he imagined. A very serious and destructive case of dissent arose within the original group of Puritan settlers in 1636. Boston witnessed an extraordinary trial that resulted in charges of heresy among the town's clergy and the expulsion of a prominent merchant and his wife from the community. The case centered on Anne Hutchinson, the wife of William Hutchinson, who had landed in Boston in 1634. They followed Cotton from England because of his preaching and firm commitment to the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, which held God's grace as the only way for salvation.

Only two years after she arrived in Boston, most ministers were aghast at her behaviour. Hutchinson had begun speaking about religious doctrine to groups of sixty to eighty men and women. She interpreted the Scriptures. She and her husband oust Reverend John Wilson who seemed to go too far in the direction of suggesting that good works might lead to salvation. In 1637, the Boston authorities charged her with civil offenses. Unlike her husband, she refused to change her opinion. She upbraided ministers, who criticized her use of biblical citations

[1] Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Postmodernism: a History of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1991): 08

[2] John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity", The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology . Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985): 91

when she defended her teaching claiming that men and women, who were saved by God, were not bound by the civil law as others were but obeyed it only as an example to the unsaved. And, most disastrously, she claimed that she spoke directly to God, as it is written in Butler's "Religion in England's First Colonies."[1]

Hutchinson paid for her boldness. The Boston court banished her and her family from Massachusetts for undermining the civil order. They moved to Rhode Island for five years then to New York where all of her family but one was killed in an Indian raid.

The most prominent episode throughout the history of colonial America and the subject, which was under a long debate by critics, was the accusation of witchcraft. The clergy would conduct investigation for several women then usually send the accused to be examined by another minister in a distant parish.

In the case of Salem (1692), other forces were at work and scholars have had varied theories about what enflamed these events: conflicts among neighbours and families, economic and political disputes, anxiety among the young people, gender conflicts, and possibly a growing class division with the clergy and leading figures on one side and the poor and disgruntled people.

Each day's experiences could be scrutinized for indications of God's will and evidence of predestination, and so the story of individual lives grew in the pages of diaries and journals in much the way historians shaped their accounts of historical crises and public events.

The Puritans continued to unite their journals and narratives. They persist in writing for themselves a central role in the sacred drama God had designed for man to enact on the American stage, the stage of true history. In this recurrent conflict between their writings and their true life, "between the ideal and the real, the Utopia and the actual, the intentional and the accidental, the mythic and the diurnal"[2], can be read an essential legacy of the Puritan imagination to the American mind.

3.2.Hawthorne and the Puritan Mind:

[1] Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, et al., "Religion in England's First Colonies", Religion in American Life: A Short History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 56

[2] Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Postmodernism: a History of American Literature (New York: Penguin Books, 1991): 13-14

Despite Hawthorne's reputation as a romancer, who preferred to create a "neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land"[1] and seemed intent upon liberating his tales and novels from the everyday world, he paid careful attention to historical settings for most of his literary works. He conducted his research, but he routinely changed facts to suit his imaginative purpose. He read widely in seventeenth-century history, both English and American. The Journal of John Winthrop and Winthrop's The History of New England from 1630 to 1649 (1825–26), Caleb H. Snow's A History of Boston (1825), and Joseph Felt's The Annals of Salem from Its First Settlement (1827) represent especially important sources from which Hawthorne took background information. [2]

The Puritan past was the raw material for Hawthorne's romance, partly because it gave him a language and metaphor both congenial to his own ideas and familiar to the public at large.[3] Barret Wendell highlighting this quality in Hawthorne points out that for Hawthorne Puritanism was no longer "a way of life but a subject for Literary Art."[1] Extending the details using more simple words, the Professor Claudia D. Johnson states in her Understanding The Scarlet Letter that:

> Hawthorne used the Puritan past as a setting or subject in many other works of fiction, each of which sheds light on the complex use of Puritanism in The Scarlet Letter. The most prominent of these tales and sketches are: • "Main Street," sketches of Salem throughout history, including a scene in which a Quaker woman is beaten • "Endicott and the Red Cross," about Puritan cruelty; includes citizens with their ears cut off and cleft sticks on their tongues as well as one who wears an "A" for adultery • "Young Goodman Brown," about a newlywed Puritan's meeting with witches • "The Gentle Boy," about Puritans hanging Quakers • The House of the Seven Gables, about the effects in nineteenth-century Salem of a curse uttered by a seventeenth-century witch who was hanged.[4]

Despite Hawthorne's origin as a "Puritan", he is not always satisfying in his portrayal. Yet, it is impossible to say with one word, if his portrayal is praising or judgmental. J. Golden Taylor succeeded in finding an apt one-word-appraisal of Hawthorne's attitude towards

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 31
[2] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 16-17
[3] Wilson C. McWilliams, The Idea of Fraternity in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974): 302
[4] Claudia D. Johnson, Understanding the Scarlet Letter: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995): 29.

Puritanism: ambivalent. Hawthorne loved to cast a shadow of doubt on the verity of his narrative or steep his events in the mire of uncertainty. Wendy C. Graham said that "Hawthorne loved ambivalence" — not because he did not want to venture expressing his own opinion or because he did not have an opinion to express, "but because he wanted to challenge his readers to think for themselves". He describes a Hawthorne's tale as "a walk through a hall of mirrors. There are many images of the truth, but those who are not will merely crash into a glass wall."[1] For him, Hawthorne's portrayal of Puritanism is at times positive, at times negative. This means that although he admired his Puritan fathers for their courage and high morality, he criticized their ruthless behaviour, their belief in predestination and their exaggeration in thinking that they were able to recognize God's elect.

Some misunderstandings surround Hawthorne's writings need to be dispelled. The simplest one that a reader may find in books is that Hawthorne felt a simple piety toward his Puritan ancestors. In "The Maypole of Merry Mount", he raised a special attitude against them. He did neither think nor imagine that life was somehow grander and better in the early Colonial days. To him, that age was "rude and rougher […] than our own, with hardly any perceptible advantages, and much that gave life gloomier tinge."[2] The gloom of Puritans' times appear in his fiction neither merely as a want of diversity and human nor as a purpose or interest to his writings, but an oppressive starvation of life which "could not fail to cause miserable distortions of the moral nature."[3] Frederic Crews, a literary critic, who goes deeply in discovering Hawthorne's ambiguity, says that Hawthorne is heartedly glad to be two centuries away from his first American forebears, and at times he appears almost frightened that the distance is not great enough.[4] As one of his narratives concludes, Hawthorne added: "Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of ages."[5]

This helps to explain why Hawthorne often speaks of his bland time with a "resentful tone."[6] Hawthorne believes that human nature changes little from generation to generation;

[1] Wendy C. Graham, Gothic Elements and Religion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction (Marburg: Tectum Verlag DE, 1999): 57
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Tales and Sketches (New York: Library of America, 1982): 253
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow-Image: and Other Twice-Told Tales (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1851): 84
[4] Frerick C. Crews, The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes (California : University of California Press, 1989): 29
[5] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow-Image: and Other Twice-Told Tales (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1851): 85
[6] Frerick C. Crews, The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes (California : University of California Press, 1989): 30

simply, he has no viable technique for laying bare the hearts of his contemporaries. In "Endicott and the Red Cross", he writes:

> Let not the reader argue, from any of these evidences of iniquity, that the times of the Puritans were more vicious than our own, when, as we pass along the very street of this sketch, we discern no badge of infamy on man or woman. It was the policy of our ancestors to search out even the most secret sins and expose them to shame, without fear or favor, in the broadest light of the noonday sun. Were such the custom now, perchance we might find materials for a no less piquant sketch than the above[1]

Hawthorne defines his meager right to an artistic career by criticizing and placating the shades of the Puritans. The most famous instances occur in "The Gentle Boy" and "Endicott and the Red Cross".

"The Gentle Boy" is considered by Darrel Abel, Gary Richard Thompson, and Virgil Llewellyn Lokke as "the product of an imperfect and ill-wrought conception" because of "Hawthorne's uncertain attitude toward the Puritans."[2] In that story, Hawthorne is at point to show how, given the historical circumstances, his ancestors could behave as cruelly toward the Quakers as they did.

"Endicott and the Red Cross" is the last Puritan tale Hawthorne would write until "Main Street" and The Scarlet Letter twelve years later. The tale raises questions about the ambiguous relationships between church and state in the New World, between colony and motherland, between liberty and repression. "Endicott" serves as a sign of Hawthorne's attitude towards his country or the religion of his forefathers. It is concerned not only with the original events which are referred to but also, more importantly, with the re-telling of these events and their eventual manifestations as mythic structures in the American consciousness.

In the cross talk of the disagreement among the critics concerning Hawthorne's purposes of spotting "darkness", "shadow" or "gloom" on his narratives: Herman Melville and Henry James underline the two directions of the discussion.

Herman Melville loved Hawthorne's writings partly because of the latter's emphasis on sin, or "darkness". He said:

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Tales and Sketches (New York: Library of America, 1982): 544
[2] Gary Richard Thompson, and Virgil Llewellyn Lokke, Ruined Eden of the Present: Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, Critical Essays in Honor of Darrel Abel (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1981): 31.

> For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side — like the dark half of the physical sphere — is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. But this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving down, that to the ever-moving dawn, that forever advances through it, and circumnavigates the world.[1]

When he came to refer to Hawthorne's peculiar "power of blackness" as a Puritan trait, Melville touched a problem that has plagued his successors in Hawthorne's criticism. The problem, named as "Hawthorne's Puritanism", tends to "define the terms and the conditions of Hawthorne's special talent without trying to estimate the distance between the apparent intellectual poise of the blue-eyed Nathaniel and the obvious religion intentions of the Quaker-whipping and witch-hunting ancestors."[2] In his "Hawthorne and His Mosses", Melville claims that the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne who seems to be merely a "pleasant writer, with a pleasant style, - a sequestered, harmless man, from whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated."[3] This means that, according to Michael J. Colacurcio, it is impossible to decide whether or not Hawthorne's own personality is somehow involved in that "Puritanic Gloom," which was supposed to be a lasting legacy of New England's stern old religion. Perhaps, Hawthorne had merely "availed himself" of some "mystical blackness" as a literary means. What seemed clear, Colacurcio adds, was that Hawthorne's "great power of blackness [. . .] derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinist sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking man is always and wholly free."[4]

Through this, Melville insists that Hawthorne's literary vision should be taken seriously in a religious way. Readers are sure to misapprehend Hawthorne, he thinks, unless they notice that Hawthorne seemed unable to "weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance."[5]

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[1] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses", The Piazza Tales: and Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860, Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall and G. Thomas Mansell (Evanston, and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987): 243

[2] Michael J. Colacurcio, ., The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995): 05

[3] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses", The Piazza Tales: and Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860 . Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall and G. Thomas Mansell (Evanston, and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987): 242

[4] Michael J. Colacurcio, The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995): 05

[5] Ibid.: 05

When Melville's review comes to an end, blackness, which has earlier been offered as "the very axis of reality,"[1] has become the basic quality in Hawthorne's writing, a quality inherent in the constitution of the man Hawthorne, and not a mere device of artistry. In his celebrated analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Province of Piety, Michael J. Colacurcio writes that Hawthorne's: "Sense of depravity – his power of blackness- is rightly apprehended only as a consciously historical recognition of the Puritan way in which America had begun."[2]

Hawthorne's other great nineteenth-century critic Henry James judged Hawthorne's blackness otherwise. James seems to oppose Melville's argument almost diametrically. What he rejects is the quasi-puritan sense of evil in Hawthorne. On one hand, he is far readier than Melville to accept in Hawthorne some inevitable inheritance of the Puritan morality. He writes that Hawthorne's conscience "lay under the shadow of the sense of sin."[3] But on the other hand, James found it impossible to imagine that the sense of sin in Hawthorne was anything but an inheritance. For him, the power of blackness was no more than an aesthetic device. He maintains:

> The old Puritan moral sense, the consciousness of sin and hell, of the fearful nature of our responsibilities and the savage character of our Taskmaster — these things had been lodged in the mind of a man of fancy, whose fancy had straightway begun to take liberties and play tricks with them- to judge them (Heaven forgive him!) from the poetic and aesthetic point of view, the point of view of entertainment and irony [4]

James's Hawthorne is an artist not a theologist or a philosophical moralist. Hawthorne's undoubted "Puritanism" interested James not as a hard-own insight into the human situation but rather as a condition affecting the exercise of literary imagination. This view was borrowed also exactly by Van Wyck Brooks, who said that:

> The Puritan conscience in Hawthorne is like some useful Roman vessel of glass which has been buried for centuries in the earth and which comes forth at last fragile as a dragonfly's wing, shot through with all the most exquisite?

[1] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses", The Piazza Tales: and Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860, Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall and G. Thomas Mansell (Evanston, and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987): 244
[2] Michael J. Colacurcio, The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995): 14
[3] Henry James, Hawthorne (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997): 45
[4] Ibid.: 48

> Could anything more utterly fail to connect with reality in a practical Yankee world? [1]

Accordingly, one can witness the beginning of two schools of Hawthorne criticism. On one side, there are the critics, who, like Melville, respond at least metaphorically to the Puritan language and overtones in Hawthorne. They judge that Hawthorne in some sense really believed in the ideas, which order (or disrupt) the lives of his characters. According to them, his fictions, therefore, are meaningful adumbrations of their author's own brand of Puritan protest. On the other side, there are those who, like James, cannot quite take seventeenth-century theology seriously. As a consequence, they interpret Hawthorne's play with Puritanism as a sign of divorce between literature and belief.

In Hawthorne's ancestral history, two important events became prominent elements in his fictional stories. One was the persecution of the Quakers, a policy that seemed particularly horrible to Hawthorne's rather secular generation: Hawthorne mentions it repeatedly and treats it with great subtlety in "The Gentle Boy".

Both Puritans and Quakers thought that they possessed the whole truth. While the Puritans were determined to stamp out the doctrine, not to hesitate even at the last choice, of persecution, torture and death, the Quakers were just determined to court persecution and did not resist. Of these executions, Hawthorne wrote:

> An indelible stain of blood is upon the hands of all who consented to this act, but a large share of the awful responsibility must rest upon the person then at the head of the government [2]

The second focal point was the Salem witch trials of 1692, one of whose presiding judges was Hawthorne's great great-grandfather, John Hathorne (1641-1717), who favoured the death penalty not only for witchcraft but for heresy as well.

Conclusion:

Hawthorne was not a Puritan of the old type, but he was obviously the child of those forebears. He had reached a point where he could view the Puritan conceptions of life and fate with some degree of detachment. He thought about sin, guilt and the dark side of the soul. Though he has a wide streak of Puritanism, he refused it and did not let it interfere in his soul

[1] Van Wyck Brooks, America's Coming-of-age (New Jersey: Doublay, 1958): 35-36
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales (Boston: American Stationers Co, 1837): 99

as it did to his ancestors. He took their beliefs and reshaped them with an aesthetic comprehension of their values. He asked questions that few of his fellows cared about — questions like: What happens to people, who have a secret sin throughout their lives? Or, is it true that the evil taint of crime lasts forever on the soul? He focused on the old Puritanism to the some degree and translated it from an invisible essence to a visible and cowardly giant that might be combated by those, who desire to lay it low.

The Puritan, like any other human being, can make the subject of art, but he himself is artistically unproductive and inarticulate. The beginning of any art in New England should be based on the removal of Puritan reservations as a necessary condition, and Hawthorne was notably free from the spirit of Puritanism. Indeed, he was the only one of the New Englanders, who can be purely artistic. He was interested in the manifestations of the soul, not in ethical problems.

His stories prove, however, that he is a critical of Puritanism. Being historical stories, they rework Puritan and revolutionary material. He seeks from the American past more deep meanings, about the place of art in society, about sin and the feeling of being guilty and about crime and punishment.

Chapter 2:

Symbols
and their Significance in
The Scarlet Letter

Introduction:

The appearance of The Scarlet Letter is probably the largest event in American literature. Here, for the first time, a life, or a group of intertwined lives, is revealed, with entrancing skill, in an environment and with an atmosphere from the artist's own imagination. The author tries to impress people to feel such life as ideally true to human nature. The pity and horror, animated by the sin, the remorse and the long suffering of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, leave every reader the sadder, the better, the purer.

The romance is a tale of remorse, a study of character in which human heart is anatomized, carefully, elaborately and with striking poetic and dramatic power. Its incidents are simply the work of infamy branded on the bosom of one (Hester Prynne), who has violated the seventh commandment. Side by side with the partner of her guilt, the sad heroine walks through a life of retribution crowded with incidents, which the novelist has depicted with so much truth and vigour, and he will not lay down the story till he knows its result at its close.[1] It is a drama in which thoughts are acts. The material has been thoroughly fused in the writer's mind and springs forth an entire, perfect creation.

1. Illusive Shadows on The Scarlet Letter :

Hawthorne has been influenced by many thoughts, historical events and intellectual movements. He was an anti-transcendentalist and was a critical to his Puritan fathers in their deeds especially the witch persecutions. The effects of all of these: Transcendentalism, Puritanism and the idea of witchcraft seem obvious in his novel The Scarlet Letter.

2.3. Transcendental Doctrines in The Scarlet Letter:

What attracted Hawthorne in Transcendentalism was its free inquiry, its radicalism and its contact with actual life. In his stories, the American author John Erskine said, Hawthorne was a philosophical experimenter; he had recourse of life in order to try out the efficacy or the consequences of Transcendental ideas and if the result was hardly what he expected, he still pursued the hypothesis to the bitter end. He was really the questioner, the detached observer and that other Transcendentalists thought they were. [2] That is to say that Hawthorne's work is

[1] Gary Scharnhorst, The Critical Response to Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992): 11

[2] John Erskine, "Hawthorne", The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol 1, ed. William Peterfield Trent, John Erskine, et al. (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons ,1918): 17

truly a criticism of the Puritan morality, of the transcendental morality and of the world in which he lived. Neither Emerson nor any of the others (i.e. other Transcendentalists) was a real observer of the moral life. This is because he had what no one of those Englanders had: the boldness, the firmness and the coldness of the genuine artist. The soul, Emerson had said, "Accepts whatever befalls, as part of its lesson. It is a watcher more than the doer, and it is a doer only that it may the better watch."[1] This is exactly the description of Hawthorne's soul not Emerson's.

It is remarkable to spot light on and to know that the main aspects of Transcendentalism, which occupied Hawthorne's thought in his romance The Scarlet Letter, were the doctrines of self-reliance, compensation and the circle. The ideal of self-reliance was that a man should live according to his own nature, by listening to the dictates of the over-soul as revealed in his instincts and desires; to this end, he should keep himself free of the imprisoning past and of conventional society, which embodies the past. Though Hester clearly demonstrates "Self-Reliance" in the most mundane sense of supporting herself and her little daughter Pearl through her own efforts, therefore, both she and Hawthorne seem notably to resist the idea that the individual's inner essence can simply be laid bare — or, within the context of Puritan judgmentalism, that the act of declaring either one's guilt or one's virtue can be other than a shame — a performance whose content can never acquire the status of the actual and the absolute.

Where Hester does seem to exemplify "self-reliance" in the most important sense, however, is in the self-sacrificing generosity and sympathy towards her fellow-citizens, which ultimately transforms the significance of The Scarlet Letter, showing "so much power to do, and power to sympathise — that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able, so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength."[2] Hester's individualistic activity of mind and spirit distinguishes her fundamentally from the identity imposed on her by her town's authorities. Her new identity is acquired not through any direct assertion or expression of her character or opinions, but rather than through an activity whose effect is precisely to free her from passive definition and make her (in Emerson's words) an "active soul" – that soul which "sees truth or [...] creates". [3] Not only

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Miscellanies embracing Nature addresses (Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1966): 58
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London, Penguin Classics: 1994): 137
[3] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Essays, Lectures and Orations (London, William S. Orr and Co., Amen Corner, 1851): 493

through the representation of Hester that the doctrine is revealed but also through Dimmesdale and his ultimately successful resistance to Chillingworth's efforts to intensify his sense of inward vice. This voluntary act of those characters transforms the individual from shaped into the shaping power.

Despite stressing the evils of Hester's dramatic exposure on the scaffold, Dimmesdale largely shares the Puritans' emphasis on "dragging into the sunshine" the private sins or iniquities of the individual. Immediately after describing how Chillingworth's subtle victimization of Dimmesdale causes him to engage in self-flagellation, fasting, and a constant introspection giving rise to strange hallucinations, Hawthorne writes:

> It is the unspeakable misery of a life so false as his, that it steals the pith and substance out of whatever realities there are around us, and which were meant by Heaven to be the spirit's joy and nutriment. To the untrue man, the whole universe is false — it is impalpable — it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist. The only truth that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale a real existence on this earth was the anguish in his inmost soul, and the undissembled expression of it in his aspect. Had he once found power to smile, and wear a face of gaiety, there would have been no such man! [1]

At first glance, it would be hard to place more emphasis on the value of honesty and openness than Hawthorne does in this passage. It concludes that the anguish caused by Dimmesdale's concealment of his relationship with Hester has become his only real existence, and that had he succeeded in concealing this, he would therefore have ceased to exist. This suggestion, however, takes the ethics of openness or exposure, which Emerson, in fact, shares with Hawthorne's Boston Puritans to such extremes that it acquires a quality of over statement, which seems to problematize the very doctrine to which Hawthorne at first seems so intensely committed. Hawthorne speaks about the falsity of Dimmesdale's life, and he describes him as an "untrue man." It would seem to refer not to his concealment of his sinful nature, nor even to his congregation's ever-greater admiration of the ideal he falsely represent to them, but rather to precisely the introspective obsession which Chillingworth has prompted in him. This leads Dimmesdale to see himself as the quintessence of falsity.

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 123-24

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Dimmesdale's unhealthy preoccupation, indeed, is his tendency to keep "vigils" in which he views "his own face in a looking-glass, by the most powerful light, which he could throw upon it […] he thus typified the constant introspection wherewith he tortured, but could not purify himself," as Hawthorne writes.[1] Hence, a central part of the falsity, which leads to Dimmesdale's "unspeakable misery", appears to be precisely this attempt to transform his inner self into an object no less solid and visible than his physical surroundings — a comparison additionally suggested by Hawthorne's description of the way in which Dimmesdale's visions of angels and evils compete for solidity with "yonder table of carved oaks".[2]

During her punishment, Hester passes some different and difficult stages, which show her as a transcendental and self-reliant character. Her position in the eyes of the people of Boston is progressing. Robert L. Berner says that Hester passed from (1) her initial humiliation as a sinner to (2) a condition in which she is tolerated, though scorned, through (3) a stage of respect for her good works, to (4) their love for her and for the letter which finally signifies Angel.[3] The first stage shows her a sinner, who is cursed by the people, who consider Hester as an immoral lawbreaker. This stage is pictured by the prison, the market place and the scaffold: all signifying and emphasizing her humiliation. Then, it changes to the second stage, a condition in which she is scorned and tortured, but she tolerates all persistently and patiently. In the third stage, her good works and her help to poor people receive the respect of the people. This situation forms the last stage in which their love for Hester and her letter are formed. In this stage, public invest the scarlet letter with a new meaning. The townspeople, who once condemned her, now believe her scarlet 'A' to stand for her ability to create beautiful needlework and for her unselfish assistance to the poor and sick. The letter is the symbol of her calling. Such power to help and sympathize made many people to refuse to interpret the scarlet 'A' by its original signification. The 'A' no longer stands for 'Adulteress':

> At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madame Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she — the naughty baggage — little will she care what they put upon the

[1] Ibid.: 123

[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 123

[3] Robert L. Berner, "A key to The Custom-House," The Scarlet Letter An Authoritative Text Essays In Criticism And Scholarship, eds. Seymour Gross, et al. (New York: Norton & Company, Inc, 1988): 273.

> bodice of her gown! ... She never battled with the public, but submitted uncomplainingly to its worst usage; she made no claim upon it in requital for what she suffered; ... None so self-devoted as Hester when pestilence stalked through the town….She came, not as a guest, but as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble, as if its gloomy twilight were a medium in which she was entitled to hold intercourse with her fellow-creature ... They said that it meant Abel, so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength.[1]

The doctrine of compensation is mostly illustrated in Chillingworth, who, having determined on a fiendish revenge, becomes himself a fiend. This gloomy soul, marked for perdition, is a firm believer in compensation; he wronged Hester's youth by marrying her, and, therefore, he bears her no ill will for wronging him, but he argues that since the minister had never received a justifying harm at his hands, the secret lover should therefore be punished by the injured husband. As Chillingworth discusses the matter with Hester, compensation seems to be at one moment sheer fatalism, at another moment a primitive exacting of an eye for an eye, but he never does it come to happy issue. He dies and follows Dimmesdale, whom he had tortured. The optimistic turn in the doctrine is illustrated by Hester — or perhaps it is better to say that she illustrates the optimism of Circles. She has sinned, but the sin leads her straight way to a large life.

Like Adam and Eve who are driven out of Paradise, Hester finds she has a career at last. Social ostracism first gives her leisure for meditation and a just angle from which to attack social problems, and then it permits her to enter upon a life of much mercy and good works which would have closed to a conventional woman.[2] Hawthorne described the original wearer of the scarlet letter, in "Endicott and Red Cross," as a woman, who braved her shame by embroidering the guilty 'A' into an elaborate and beautiful emblem; so, in the romance, he lets the sin elaborate herself, so far as Hester's nature is concerned, into nothing but beauty.[3] She becomes more loving, more sympathetic, tenderer, and intellectually, she becomes emancipated from the narrowness of her age, so that even now, she seems prophetic of what the noblest woman may be. Thoughts were her compassions, which, Hawthorne says, would

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 44,136-137
[2] William Peterfield Trent, John Erskine, et al., The Cambridge History of American Literature Early National Literature Part II Later National Literature, Part 1 (Charleston, South Carolina: BiblioBazaar, 2009): 01
[3] Darrel Abel, The Moral Picturesque: Studies in Hawthorne's Fiction (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1988): 181

become more dangerous than the sin of The Scarlet Letter. She saw how completely the social scheme must be altered before woman could enjoy a true equality with man, and she suspected the losses in the best of manhood and womanhood, which might be the incidental or temporary price of the belated justice.

An important key point of Transcendentalism is reflected in the symbol of the novel's natural setting. When Hester is pushed away from society, she goes to live in the abandoned house. The only thing that surrounded the house was woods. With the self-confinement of the woods, she began to learn about herself and her thoughts

> She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness … Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. The Scarlet Letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers — stern and wild ones — and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss.[1]

For the Puritans, the forest was a place of darkness and evil, where Satan himself reined. For Hester, however, it was a place of beauty and freedom, where truth could be realized. In the forest, with Arthur and Pearl, away from her repressive society, she could be the person she really was, free to express her love and take pride openly in her beautiful child. Arthur himself, as soul sick and tormented as he was, found joy within the natural environment and dared to hope again that life would not always be one pain and loneliness. Arthur's dream of happiness ends, when he leaves the forest and returns to the settlement. Hawthorne wrote that woods was a place where:

> 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. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, — no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair…. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, — master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 170

> beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.[1]

The beauty, peace and freedom experienced by Hester and Arthur in the forest seem consistent with Emerson's words in Nature.

2.4. The Real Witch in The Scarlet Letter:

Although The Scarlet Letter doesn't address witchcraft directly, witchcraft contextualizes and saturates the background of the novel. Gabriele Schwab suggests that The Scarlet Letter is affected by what she calls "the witchcraft pattern," claiming that in the novel "historical witchcraft is only the background for the witch stereotype. It is this stereotype that becomes the actual subject of the novel."[2] 'Which is Witch?' is a question that needs first an answer of another question: What is witch and witchcraft?

It is extremely difficult to define with precision the beliefs and practices of witches. This is because of the elasticity of the terms "witch" and "witchcraft" as they have been applied to people and practices both today and throughout history.

An oft-suggested definition for what constitutes a witch, as the author Brian P. Levack states, is anyone who possesses a supernatural, occult, or mysterious power to cause misfortune or injury to others. [3] Witches are those people who possess the skill or the knowledge to deal with the world of human beings and the world of spirits. This definition can include evil figures like palm or card readers, ritual magicians, sorcerers and Satanists. Witches generally share a number of characteristics, including isolation from the community, a hateful personality and the inheritance or acquisition of power from another witch. They may share similar world views, politics, and socio-economic backgrounds. They are an inclined proportion and share the tendency to resist regardless to the rules or regulations. This includes both men and women.

[1] Carl Bode and Malcolm Cowley, The Portable Emerson (New York: Penguin Books, 1981):10-11
[2] Kim A. Loudermilk, Fictional Feminism: How American Best Sellers Affect the Movement For Women's Equality (New York: Routledge, 2004): 102.
[3] Brian P. Levack, The Witchcraft Sourcebook (New York: Routledge, 2004): 02

Witchcraft is often said to mean "craft of the wise" and that "witch" derives from the Anglo-saxon "wicca" meaning wisdom.[1] Modern philologists think that the word "wise" used to mean "know-how" today. Witches, then, were wise women, or wise men, who know-how to deal with herbs, with animals, with people sick in body, mind or heart, with birth and with death, i.e., they were people able to use spells and to practice magic.

In short, in "Dictionary of the Bible", under the article Witch, Malcolm says: "That such persons", that is witches, "have been found among men is abundantly plain from Scripture."[2] Because of the expression "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" –which is stated in Exodus, chapter xxii, 18, according to the common version – ignorant and bigoted men have claimed a warrant to execute capital punishment on those witches who were deemed guilty of this supposed crime; and the result has been that many innocent persons in both America and Europe have lost their lives.

The Greek version of the Old Testament may be considered a valuable commentary on those ancient Scriptures, and enable people to arrive at the correct meaning of those passages in which the words Witch and Witchcraft are found. The word that is translated to 'Witch' is in Greek a medical term, from which the English word "Pharmacy" is derived. It literally means "A mixer of drugs". Hence, this term is applied to that class of impostors called necromancers, sorcerers, and jugglers, who practiced magic by the use of drugs and other deceptive arts, to impose on the innocent mass. To explain, Lincoln Burr writes that because the name of sorcerers in the Bible may signify Poisoners, "it is a foolish thing then to infer that by Witches;" [3] the Scripture means no more than such as commit Murders by Poisons.

There is a character in The Scarlet Letter, who would be condemned to witchcraft. It is Governor Billingham's sister, Mistress Hibbins. She was a historical figure executed for witchcraft in 1656 on Boston common, and by liberally mentioning tales of the Black Man and his dreaded book. Throughout the novel, she serves as a symbol of uncontrollable darkness because Hawthorne treats her ambiguously. She may be a mildly tolerated eccentric, an insane busybody, or an anti-Christian cultist. Hibbins, who in the novel has learned her craft from an English "witch" named Ann Turner, seems to have a special insight into the

[1] Judika Illes, The Weiser Field Guide to Witches: From Hexes to Hermione Granger, from Salem to the Land of Oz (Red Wheel/Weiser, Ilc, 2010): 12
[2] Bernard Whitman, The Unitarian, Vol I (Cambridge and Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1834): 387
[3] George Lincoln Burr , Narratives of the New England Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 2002): 265

other characters, instinctively knowing that Dimmesdale has some particular connection with Hester and Pearl and that he, as Claudia D. Johnson writes, "could well commit some evil deed and easily be persuaded to meet with the devil in witches' meeting in the forest."[1]

There is another character more in line with the New Testament understanding of witch. He was seen with savage Indian priests, "powerful enchanters, often performing seemingly miraculous cures by their skill in the black art."[2] He is a gatherer and mixer of herbs. He uses "European pharmacopoeia" not just for medicine, but to control another man emotionally and avenge himself. He is seen gathering nightshade, dogwood, and other plants associated with magic and witchcraft. That character is Roger Chillingworth. He is a doctor who uses a fake name to be able to revenge from Reverend Dimmesdale through the use of plants. For that reason, he is suspected for witchcraft. The critic Gabriele Schwab points out that:

> In a silent revenge Hester's husband, a doctor with the allegorical name of Chillingworth, himself suspected of witchcraft because of his affiliations with the Indians and their use of herbal plants, moves into Dimmesdale's house under the pretense of investigating the reverend's heart problems. Dimmesdale will perish under Chillingworth's penetrating gaze because he has concealed his guilt from the community [3]

Not only Misstress Hibbins but also Hester, herself, is treated by the townspeople as if she is already a witch. Children, who do not know the meaning of the scarlet letter 'A', spy on her as if she was a witch and then run off with a strange fear. Hester does not tell her daughter the real meaning of the 'A', but rather she tells her that it is the mark of the Black Man whom she met once in the forest. That's why she added that she has played the witch one time in her past.

The public consequences of sexual transgression and, specifically, the expression of female sexuality outside the bonds of marriage are what force Hester to the margins of society and to live in the forest. And the forest is the place where men and women think that witches go to dance with the Devil. As Nina Baym notes,

[1] Claudia Durst Johnson, Understanding The Scarlet Letter: A student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1995):114
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 108
[3] Gabriele Schwab, The Mirror and the Killer-queen: Otherness in Literary Language (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 114

> The idea of witchcraft is the way in which the Puritans accommodate the inescapable reality, that people do have interior lives into their worldview … Their solution … is to define the inner world as the most exterior world of all: as the alien world of the Forest, the dark, the Black Man, the Other, something that comes upon them from the outside and tempts them away [1]

In her analysis of the witch pattern in The Scarlet Letter, Gabriel Schwab argues that an internalized pattern of witchcraft was used in the cultural representation of women during Hawthorne's time. In her view, there are three types of witches, together form this witch pattern. While Hester is figured according to the image of "the beautiful wild witch", her daughter Pearl is stylized as the "child-woman witch."[2] The third type of "the old or deformed witch … who comes to represent the inverse of seduction" [3] is represented by Ann Hibbins.

Hester seems unconsciously linked to the witchcraft pattern. Furthermore, she also transfers it to her own daughter. Pearl develops as an elfin, witchlike girl, persecuted by the suspicious gaze of the community as much as of her mother, who fears in the daughter the stigma she herself bears. The narrator talks about her witchcraft openly when she screams as a reaction to the children's persecution. He describes her "shrill, incoherent exclamations that made her mother tremble, because they had so much the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue."[4] Even the townspeople consider her as "a demon offspring."[5] Pearl clearly plays the role of a witch-child, whenever she communicates about her missing father or about the scarlet 'A', which, for her also, symbolizes the absent father.

Each of the four main characters has a relation with witchcraft. This means that even The Reverend Dimmesdale had that relation. In fact, he seems to be bewitched by Chillingworth. Moreover, by his behaviour after meeting with Hester in the forest, Dimmesdale is close to yielding himself to witchcraft. His dark side is so obvious to Mistress Hibbins that she is sure that he is now a witch: "You carry it off like an old hand! But at midnight, and in the forest, we shall have other talk together! "[6] When Mistress Hibbins accuses him of having met with the devil, he thinks: "Have I then sold myself …to the fiend

[1] Nina Baym, The Scarlet Letter: A Reading (Boston, Twayne, 1986):116
[2] Gabriele Schwab, The Mirror and the Killer-queen: Otherness in Literary Language (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996): 114
[3] Sharon Friedman, Feminist Theatrical Revisions of Classic Works: Critical Essays, op. cit.: 172
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 83
[5] Ibid.: 79
[6] Ibid.: 189

whom, if men say true, this yellow-starched and velveted old hag has chosen for her prince and master!"[1] She continued that Dimmesdale is a witch, even as he is passing by in his ministerial ceremony in the procession of Election Day.

In short, the idea of witchcraft in The Scarlet Letter assumes several distinct functions. First of all, it is a genius presence as well as a symbol, represented concretely by the dark forest, the regular appearance of Mistress Hibbins, and the evil deeds of Chillingworth. Hawthorne writes that "It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbons, the bitter tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows."[2] In addition, it is a pervasive dark element in human nature – a facet seen by the Puritans as the unchanging fate of Fallen Man after the expulsion from Eden; and it is concretely the supernatural element of the devil. Thus, there are many aspects of witchcraft that are shown by the Puritan community. There is the passion and rebellion that Hester feels and that Dimmesdale tries to hide, and there is the passion that has created Pearl and that she displays as part of her nature.

2.5. The Puritan Society in The Scarlet Letter :

Hawthorne extracts episodes not only from American history, but even from the knowledge of English history. Several of his narratives, including The Scarlet Letter, respond to events occurring in England. For the character of Roger Prynne (Chillingworth), Hawthorne took the last name from William Prynne (1600–69), an anti-Catholic Protestant, who strongly criticized King Charles I and Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud. William Chillingworth, another historical man, enabled Hawthorne to take both of his characters' names from the same historical situation. When Prynne published diatribe against Laud, whom he considered a Catholic in disguise, he was punished by having the letters "SL" (for "Seditious Libeller") burnt into his cheeks.[3] Hawthorne must have enjoyed the coincidence of writing a story about a similar punishment that bore the same initials.

If one examines the way in which Hawthorne employs Puritanism in The Scarlet Letter, he can reach some conclusions about the way in which he exploits social and political issues as well. Professor Joseph Schwartz has noted, as Aliki Barnstone states in The Calvinist Roots of the Modern Era, that Puritanism should not be thought of only as the American branch of

[1] Ibid.: 189
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 42
[3] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007):18-19

Calvinism but also as a distinctive way of life, and it is in fact this latter more encompassing view that Hawthorne expresses in his fiction, rather than the strict theological one.[1] About his personal religious beliefs, the scholar Agnes Donohue remarks that "Hawthorne was suspicious of all doctrines or sects (he thought of himself as a Christian but never went to church)"[2]. His interest in Puritanism did not lead him to make a coherent political statement of The Scarlet Letter any more than it caused him to develop a consistent theological doctrine. Rather, his interest in this subject was due to its suitability as a foundation for his moral investigation and psychological study of what the critic and literary historian Nina Baym called "inner truth".[3]

Through the different sources of history, adultery was not even known in the golden age of Puritanism. When the communities talk about such crime or others, they refuse it and repel even to think about or to imagine it. So far, The Scarlet Letter serves the goals of Hawthorne to use Puritanism since it agrees with its doctrines. In some situations, Hawthorne seems harsher than his elders, for he declares in his narrative that the sinner will have no hope of any beneficial intervention when he shows that Dimmesdale will not encourage Hester to hope for a compensating future life. The novel discloses that the cost of such deeds lives forever. Hawthorne mentions in his romance:

> "Hush, Hester–hush!" said he, with tremulous solemnity. "The law we broke I–the sin here awfully revealed!–let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot our God–when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul–it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and He is merciful! He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost for ever! Praised be His name! His will be done! Farewell! [4]

[1] Aliki Barnstone, and Michael Tomasek Manson, et all., The Calvinist Roots of the Modern Era (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1997): 253

[2] Agnes McNeill Donohue, Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985): 01

[3] Sujata Gurudev, American Literature: Studies On Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville And Whitman (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2006): 52

[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 218.

There is no hope in the cross for Hester and Dimmesdale.

Hawthorne, here, displays Arthur Dimmesdale's sadness through an extremely dominant melancholic tone. Dimmesdale is very stressed about his past and his present. He worries about what he has done in the past, the commitment of the crime with Hester and basically his forgetfulness of his god, and also is sad about his future. He really does not want to live another lie, yet he knows that if he does not tell the truth, he will be extending his first sin. He knows that in any way it would be humanly impossible to escape death, whether he puts it upon himself or the public executes him as a hypocrite. He wants what is best for the people and for his reputation, which may not be what is best for him in the end. He is certain that there is no hope for his reunion with Hester. This is to say that he believes they will never meet again because he will be hung for his betrayal and be put to shame. Because of this particular sensation that he experiences in his beast he can never let go of his sin, and is forever saddened and demoralized by it.

In his work The Scarlet Letter, Seventeenth Century New England is shown as being synonymous with social repression, which uses psychic repression in order to make the subjects easy to control. The two French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari underline the process claiming that: "What really takes place is that the Law prohibits something that is perfectly fictitious in the order of desire or of the 'instincts' so as to persuade its subjects that they had the intention corresponding to this fiction. This is indeed the only way the law has of getting a grip on intention, of making the unconscious guilty".[1] A perfect example would be the casual plot of Hester Prynne's obedience and disobedience between the Law of marriage and the transcendental Law of erotic desire with a "consecration of its own".[2]

As Hawthorne suggests, sin was the bedrock of Puritanism. It was at once an individual and social aspect. The critic Eric Mottram, in his essay "Power and Law in Hawthorne's Fiction," comments: "So the monster created by a society or by and through its invented Gods — and this is a major basis of all fiction since Defoe, and cuts across the genres — elicits sympathy because he or she or it is the form of the repressed and oppressed. The illegal

[1] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004): 125

[2] Sujata Gurudev, op. cit.: 53

becomes a category of necessity and therefore strangely legal".[1] The individual and social perceptions of sin are exhaustively analyzed by Hawthorne. In his American Notebooks, he defined the unpardonable sin as a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul: in consequence of which the investigator pried into the dark depths, not with hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold philosophical curiosity which implies "a separation of the intellect from heart".[2] D. H. Lawrence in his Classics of American Literature maintains that "blue-eyed darling Nathaniel knew disagreeable things in his inner soul. He was careful to send them out in disguise".[3] The sin of Hawthorne's characters has been compared to the original sin of Adam and Eve. According to Lawrence, the sinners were watching what was happening to them after the crime had been committed. They were conscious and aware. He wrote:

> Each of them kept an eye on what they were doing, they watched what was happening to them. They wanted to KNOW. And that was the birth of sin. Not doing it, but KNOWING about it. Before the apple, they had shut their eyes and their minds had gone dark. Now, they peeped and pried and imagined. They watched themselves. And they felt uncomfortable after. They felt self-conscious. So they said, 'The act is sin. Let's hide. We've sinned'.[4]

Lawrence concludes that sin was the self-watching and self-consciousness. It is the "dirty understanding".[5]

The genius of Hawthorne to deal with such material is clearly shown in his psychological study of the effects of sin upon different individuals and its reaction on the environment. There is, first of all, Hester Prynne, a noble and strong woman despite her disobedience to the Puritan rules which painted badly her life. She has sinned not because she wanted to break the social rules, but because love is a desire given to all women and men by Nature.

Within Hester, there is a persistent individualism. Being a great-souled woman, who loves with that sincerity and devotion possible only to such women, she accepts the miserable

[1] Shirley F. Staton, Literary Theories in Praxis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987): 230
[2] Sujata Gurudev, American Literature: Studies On Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville And Whitman (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2006): 58
[3] D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 81
[4] Ibid.: 82
[5] Ibid.: 82

notoriety thrust upon her with bravery and meekness. She stays on in Boston on account of Dimmesdale and dedicates her life to bring up Pearl. She accepts the social condemnation of her adultery and pays the price. Gradually, she grows more and more alienated and as she withdraws from the social concourse, she begins a journey inwards — which places her far beyond her time and age. The puritan code of ethics to which she paid allegiance was no longer hers. "The World's Law was no law for her mind."[1] She was born ahead of her time and "she assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic but which our forefathers, had they knew it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the Scarlet Letter".[2] All of her outward beauty is but the symbol of the beauty that develops within her soul through her patient bearing of her punishment; her helpfulness toward her fellow creatures, all with no thought on her part of receiving reward, or even mitigation of her punishment.

Arthur Dimmesdale, though he is a saint, is still a sinner and guilty because he is influenced by cowardice. The latter ties his tongue and lets him live with hypocrisy. Moreover, he does not only sin but also obliged the woman with whom he committed the sin to bear alone the whole responsibility. Escaping the punishment he deserves, Dimmesdale lives with a double suffer: not only because of the secrets he bears and his betrayal to Puritanism but also because of the torments of Chillingworth.

Anyone, who reads The Scarlet Letter, will realize that Dimmesdale thinks that he becomes a sinner only when he met Hester in the forest. This unpuritan view of sin signifies alienation from God and determines that the clergyman does not think about the vital corollary of grace, which is God's free gift of salvation.

And finally, there is Roger Chillingworth, cold-hearted, and showing that evil, which goes with physical distortion. He wilfully chooses evil, when he decides to take revenge with his own hands, though he knows that revenge is another's. The only sign we have that Chillingworth repented of his sins is the fact that at his death he left considerable property to Pearl, the daughter of Hester Prynne.

Obviously, the Puritans of The Scarlet Letter are wholly out of touch with the forgiving grace of God. For them, a single wrong act could become the last word in a person's life,

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 122
[2] Ibid.: 139

leading him into a state of perpetual unforgiveness. They severely dealt with the question of guilt, passion and anguish. As Hawthorne shows in Hester's penalty, the Puritans have a contractual government that enables them to devise public punishments. Rather, the Puritan leaders intend to reflect their belief that the theocracy holds a covenant with God, and therefore the laws that govern them hold a relation with the Divine. But, they had to rely on their own interpretations of Scripture to write the statute book. Moreover, his telling that the leaders could not disentangle the mesh of good and evil in Hester's heart indicates the kind of ambiguity, which can only be resolved by making a political judgement against the act itself. Hester, as a married woman, has broken the "sacredness of Divine institutions"[1] that is being propagated by the Puritan community and has, thus, acted against its moral codes. The usual Puritan punishment, as one townsman tells Chillingworth, would be death. But in her case, the magistrates have shown mercy and with Chillingworth it can be assumed that they did so to present her as "a living sermon against sin."[2]

Despite her rejection to name Pearl's father, people will avoid Hester. She has neither met the expectations connected to her role as a woman in the patriarchal Puritan society nor kept the Ten Commandments: she has broken the 7th commandment. Therefore, for the Puritan community the letter 'A' stands for adultery, the sin she has committed. Hester becomes

> the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion. Thus the young and pure would be taught to look at her, with The Scarlet Letter flaming on her breast, — at her, the child of honourable parents, — at her, the mother of a babe, that would hereafter be a woman, — at her, who had once been innocent,— as the figure, the body, the reality of sin [3]

As the quotation shows, even the children have been told about Hester and her child. In fact, they have adopted the intolerance of their parents: "Behold, verily, there is the woman of The Scarlet Letter; and, of a truth, moreover, there is the likeness of The Scarlet Letter running along by her side! Come, therefore, and let us fling mud at them!" [4]

[1] Ibid.: 60
[2] Ibid.: 58
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 67
[4] Ibid.: 86

In Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, there are two souls for whom this Puritan faith has proved an insufficient bulwark: a woman passionate, esthetic whom the hard doctrine of Calvinism has called in vain; a man has been gifted with more than a man's normal life, yet one whose practical fiber of morality has not kept pace with his spiritual development, and who in consequence breaks down completely. What Puritanism offered to them in their fallen state was little. To Hester Prynne, it drove her forth to bear a lot, as best she might, under the great hatred of the public, and to wrestle alone. To Arthur Dimmesdale, a fear of discovery forced him to play the coward against his very will, and to forget all the joy and freshness of his soul in the process. And at the end, it is only in part from the living faith within him — when all earthly escape is closed to him, and then with the support of the woman, who was his stronger self — that Arthur Dimmesdale, with his dying breath, makes the supreme confession of his life.

The Scarlet Letter, then, can be understood as a criticism to Puritanism. After all, throughout the work, Hawthorne criticizes the so-called Puritan allegorization of experience, which equates any sin with all Sin, and which denies the patient study of the details of moral behaviour. Hawthorne socializes the idea of knowledge through his use of this method, and this is true in the case of the scarlet 'A,' the dominant example of Puritan signification, which ostensibly allegorizes Hester's being. In The Unusable Past, the author Russell J. Reising finds out that Hawthorne fills the novel with a plethora of interpretations of the 'A', which, far from degenerating into pointless perspectivism, unsettles the stable allegorical vehicle and tenor and subverts the Puritan autocracy's simple allegorical equation of 'A' with adultery, thus de-allegorizing and humanizing Hester's being and moral complexity. As the 'A' gradually accrues greater ranger of meaning and represents a variety of positive senses, so does the reader's understanding of Hester and other characters in the novel.[1]

2. The Ambiguity of the 'A' and Its Story :

From its title and its major plot elements, from its initial word to its final sentence, The Scarlet Letter turns on the first letter of the alphabet. Yet, the figure of the letter 'A' slips in and out of critical close-up and remains unelaborated in the extensive literature that has grown up around the novel. E A. Duyckinck wrote it large: "The scarlet letter … is the hero of the

[1] Russell J. Reising, The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature (New York: Routledge, 1986): 72

volume."[1] Roy Male's "Hawthorne's Literal Figures" asks, "What other literary work has been so successful in breathing life into a letter?"[2] Invoking the graphic sense of "character," Nina Baym proposes that taking this primary definition, the chief character of The Scarlet Letter must be the scarlet letter itself. Most recently, the literary and cultural critic and academic Sacvan Bercovitch asserts that "the letter has a purpose and a goal" and that the "'A' is first and last a cultural artifact, a symbol that expresses the needs of the society within and for which it was produced."[3] A century ago, the critic Henry James lamented the risk Hawthorne ran, with his insistence on the many powers and venues of the 'A': "When the image becomes importunate it is in danger of seeming to stand for nothing more serious than itself."[4] James regrets this aspect of Hawthorne's art, but his analysis is correct: the "importunate" letter, Patricia Crain writes in The Story of A, does "stand for nothing more serious than" — and nothing other than — "itself."[5]

The assertion that critics have drawn from the letter responds to the imagined question: "What does the 'A' stand for?" Professor Richard Chase, in his 1957 The American Novel and Its Tradition, notes that "The scarlet 'A' is an ordinary symbol (or sign) [….]. We can say with relative certainty what the scarlet A stands for. It stands for adultery or [….] it stands for the inevitable taint on all human life."[6]

The Scarlet Letter's 'A' stands for something. Does it stand for Adulteress, surely the intention of the magistrates, who imposed it in the first place? Does it stand for Able in recognition of Hester's devotion as a nurse? Does it even mean Angel, with the consequent suggestion that Hester has risen above the society which condemned her?

The meaning of the 'A' is not certain. Through the first pages, the 'A' has been given by the Puritans the significance of Adultery. If this interpretation has been kept, Hester will definitely fall down and this will be unfair. But as the romance develops, Adultery becomes

[1] E A. Duyckinck, "The Scarlet Letter, A Romance", Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007):165

[2] Roy Male, "Hawthorne's Literal Figures", Ruined Eden of the Present: Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, Critical Essays in Honor of Darrel Abel, ed. Gary Richard Thompson and Virgil Llewellyn Lokke (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1981) : 87

[3] Sacvan Bercovitch, The Office of The Scarlet Letter (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): x-xiv

[4] Henry James, Selected Fiction, Letters and Criticism (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2006): 427

[5] Patricia Crain, The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from the New England Primer to The Scarlet Letter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 174

[6] Richard Volney Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1957): 80

no longer a matter to be believed when Hawthorne asks to look at Hester from other, very different, viewpoints. Readers are never sure whether to criticize Hester or to admire her.

The significance of the letter matters not only readers and critics. It has been asked by the characters of the romance. The scholar Sara Sheldon writes down:

> What does the scarlet letter mean? It is a question repeated by almost every character in the novel who is confronted with the latant red token and who has to deal with it: by Hester herself, as she sits in prison, decorating the emblem with golden thread; by Reverend Wilson, who addresses the crowd at the scaffold with such terrifying references to the scarlet A that it seems to glow red with hellfire; by Pearl, who asks about the letter so often that she threatens to drive her mother (and all of us) mad.[1]

The symbol's meaning is hard to pin down because it is no passive piece of cloth, but a highly active agent. The American essayist and critic Edwin Percy Whipple notes:

> Here is the germ of the whole pathos and terror of "The Scarlet Letter"; but it is hardly noted in the throng of symbols, equally pertinent, in the few pages of the little sketch[2]

The red token has many explicit and implicit meanings and to get all of them, it is important to see first what the symbol signifies for the child Pearl, a scarlet letter herself, and for the Puritan community, then how it is represented and related to Hester Prynne herself, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Sometimes, it seems that the discussion over such an issue is worthless since many critics agree that it does not signify more than 'adulteress', which is the judgment that has been given by the magistrates. In fact, they gave such a sentence for they assume that the letter senses only in one way. However, if the study has been related to the language, it will result in a long history of interpretations as long as the story of the heroine, Mrs Prynne, develops throughout the novel.

When the novel comes to its middle, people start to change their views about Hester. They find her ready to help them the time they were in need. And because of the endless charitable acts she did, they "refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification.

[1] Sara Sheldon, Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (New York, Barron's Educational Series, 1984): 25

[2] Edwin Percy Whipple, Character and Characteristic Men (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2005): 229

They said that it meant 'Able'; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength." [1] More than this, the town's people come to another interpretation to the scarlet letter the day they have seen it in the sky. They said that it means 'Angel'. Hawthorne writes: "A great red letter in the sky,—the letter A,—which we interpret to stand for Angel." [2]

In fact, the 'A' stands to represent many other human elements as the novel moves along. Pearl, for example, who is neither adulteress nor angel, is described as the living scarlet letter, and she embodies a full range of human characteristics: "Pearl's aspect was imbued with a spell of infinite variety; in this one child there were many children, comprehending the full scope between the wild-flower prettiness of a peasant-baby, and the pomp, in little, of an infant princess".[3] Furthermore, Hester begins to sense that many people besides herself wear scarlet letters on their breasts, even those with reputations for piety and purity:

> Could they be other than the insidious whispers of the bad angel, who would fain have persuaded the struggling woman, as yet only half his victim, that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's? … Again, a mystic sisterhood would contumaciously assert itself, as she met the sanctified frown of some matron, who, according to the rumour of all tongues, had kept cold snow within her bosom throughout life. That unsunned snow in the matron's bosom, and the burning shame on Hester Prynne's, — what had the two in common? [4]

The scarlet letter, in addition, has many implied meanings. The narrator, also, suggests: Admirable, Apathy, Ambiguity, Author and Allegory. It may as well be an ironic naming of Arthur and thereby an effective fusing of its totemic nature with what the totem usually signifies, the tribal father. Professor August J. Nigro adds that action and image also suggest that it may indicate the Amour that conquers all, the Affection that softens severity, the Atonement that is achieved by the central characters, the Art that Hester manifests in her embroidery, and the Alpha that is the union of logos and eros in elementary religion,

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 137
[2] Ibid.: 134
[3] Ibid.: 76
[4] Ibid.: 73-4

Hawthorne's religion in The Scarlet Letter. The letter 'A' also signifies Adolescence, Automachia, Antinomian, Adamic, and America.[1]

This anti-literalist style of reading the letter, Arthur Riss calls it, has developed a sense that the 'A' is "an indefinite article", an impossibly over determined figure that ultimately represents nothing but the dynamics of representation itself. According to this account, Hawthorne's letter connotes the constitute uncertainty of language.[2]

The publication of Sacvan Bercovitch's The Office of The Scarlet Letter offers an ideal occasion to re-examine this anti-literalist style of reading. According to him, the 'A' makes visible "the strategies of what we have come to term 'the American ideology'", incarnating "the system of symbolic meanings that encompasses text and context" and expressing "all the tenets of modern liberal society [that] find their apotheosis in the symbol of America."[3]

As a consequence, the letter 'A' can be interpreted on multiple levels since its meaning changes as the novel's time passes. Originally, it is meant to be the symbol of shame but, instead, it symbolizes the individual's isolation from society. It is the angelical spirit of Hester Prynne as it manifests her artistic ability. If it is compared to the child Pearl, the 'A' seems insignificant. It, then, helps to identify the meaninglessness of the Puritan community's false system of judgement and punishment.

2.1.The Significance of the Letter for Pearl:

Much of the meaning of the scarlet letter resides in Pearl because she is the result of Hester's adultery. Hester dresses the child in scarlet, presenting her as a little scarlet letter. Moreover, Pearl has a great obsession with the scarlet letter. The connection first made in the chapter entitled "The Governor's Hall," where her red dress is described:

> But it was a remarkable attribute of this garb, and, indeed, of the child's whole appearance, that it irresistibly and inevitably reminded the beholder of the token which Hester Prynne was doomed to wear upon her bosom. It

[1] August J. Nigro, The Diagonal Line: Separation And Reparation In American Literature (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1984): 74

[2] Arthur Riss, Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-century American Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 111

[3] Sacvan Bercovitch, The Office of The Scarlet Letter (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992): xvii-xxi cited in Race, Slavery, and Liberalism in Nineteenth-century American Literature, ed. Arthur Riss. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 112.

> was the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life![1]

Pearl's obsession with the letter her mother wears on her breast begins in infancy as her eyes focus on it. Then as a tiny girl, Pearl evinces a fascination with the letter and continually touches it and throws wild flowers at it:

> In the afternoon of a certain summer's day, after Pearl grew big enough to run about, she amused herself with gathering handfuls of wild flowers, and flinging them, one by one, at her mother's bosom; dancing up and down, like a little elf, whenever she hit the scarlet letter.[2]

Later, she begins to poster her mother with questions about why she wears the letter and what it means. Pearl's existence is inevitably linked to the letter. She has never seen her mother without the scarlet 'A', so it has become "an object of identification" to her.[3] She loves her mother dearly; Hester is the only model in life she has ever known. Because of this, when Hester takes off the scarlet letter, Pearl becomes madly disturbed and will not quiet down until Hester has it back on her dress, as if by discarding the letter Hester has discarded Pearl. Pearl even makes herself an 'A' from green seaweed:

> As the last touch to her mermaid's garb, Pearl took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother's. A letter, — the letter A, — but freshly green, instead of scarlet! [4]

Pearl's connection with the scarlet letter helps to bring the readers closer to its meanings. If she is identified with the scarlet letter, then the reader needs to consider her characteristics to determine some of the letter's meanings. First of all, Pearl is uncontrollable, subject to hyperactivity, bad temper, even behaviour that could be classified as cruel. But for all her childish cruelty and hyperactivity, she is always depicted as nature's child. While the other children in the community play games taught by society and their parents, such as scourging Quakers and having prayer meetings, Pearl plays in the forest and by the seashore with the living flowers. The letter 'A' she makes for herself is not red, but green — nature's colour. These observations lead to the conclusion that the 'A,' rather than being exotic and

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 85
[2] Ibid.: 82
[3] Kathrin Gerbe, The Ambiguity of the Letter 'A' in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2007): 08
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 151

lurid, as the community sees it, is in fact natural, and that those things associated with it — passion and sexuality in particular — are natural to human nature, not scarlet and demonic, as the community sees both the letter and Pearl herself. According to the critic Claudia Johnson, this would explain why Hester, metaphorically speaking, sees an 'A' on many breasts other than her own: because passion exists as a natural part of human nature in every human being.[1]

A second characteristic of Pearl shows that the scarlet letter means truth as well as nature. For all her faults, Pearl is the hardest truth-sayer in the novel. It is she who immediately recognizes Chillingworth as "the black man," or devil, in the community, telling Hester, "Come away, Mother! Come away, or yonder old Black Man will catch you! He hath got hold of the minister already."[2] And it is she who suspects that Dimmesdale has a scarlet letter over his heart, asking Hester if she wears the scarlet letter for the same reason "that the minister keeps his hand over his heart!"[3] She also knows intuitively that Hester is not telling her the truth about the letter. After Hester has lied about its meaning, Pearl will not let the matter drop.

> Two or three times, as her mother and she went homeward, and as often at supper-time, and while Hester was putting her to bed, and once after she seemed to be fairly asleep, Pearl looked up, with mischief gleaming in her black eyes.
> "Mother," said she, "what does the scarlet letter mean?"[4]

Not only she speaks the truth, but she pursues the truth in continually questioning Hester about the meaning of the symbol she wears and the reason why Dimmesdale keeps his hand over his heart. From this connection of Pearl to truth, it is obvious that the scarlet letter, which Pearl embodies, is also a totality of truth about human nature and relationships. At the end of the novel, Pearl leaves America and never returns. This suggests that those aspects of human nature on which the cold Puritans frown — in this case, creativity, passion, and joy — will not be acknowledged in New England for many years to come.

Any one can realize that the character, who suffers a lot from the scarlet letter is Pearl. She and her mother are refused by the community and live on the edge of the town. She finds

[1] Claudia D. Johnson, Understanding The Scarlet Letter: A student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1995): 5-6
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 113
[3] Ibid.: 171
[4] Ibid.: 154

her self A-lone: her only playmates are trees and plants of the forest; the only person caring for her is her mother. She has never been to practice her rights as a little child. Instead, Pearl goes in a non-stop fighting against the members of Puritan authority, as if she knows that Hester's and her situation is their fault. Though she is still young, the little girl is the one who understands Hester's situation and the Puritan meaning of the letter better than any adult does.

2.2.The Significance of the Letter in the Puritan Community:

The first appearance of the scarlet letter is implicit in the gossip of the towns' women in the marketplace the time Hester Prynne was judged. They think that the decision of the community's officials is not hard enough when it is related to Hester's punishment. They said that "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there no law for it? Truly, there is, both in the Scripture and the statute-book."[1] This indicates the high influence of religious principles on worldly jurisdiction, which can be transferred to all parts of social life. Later, all the members of the Puritan community come to see the sinner and the consequence of her sin, her child, on the scaffold. Hawthorne explains:

> But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, trans-figured the wearer,— so that both men and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time,— was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.[2]

On the scaffold, men and women look strangely to Hester as if they have seen her for the first time. The magistrates expel her out of society. For that, she makes a new sphere that she will never leave. The Puritans' judgement is much harder just like the ones taken by their ancestors (the persecution of the Quakers and the execution of witches). They forget that all men are sinful by their nature. They recognize the passion and guilt of Hester but they do not recognize theirs. Though, they still consider Hester Prynne as a sinful Eve.

Unlike Hester, the community members hide in their hearts and refuse to acknowledge passion, which is one trait represented by the 'A'. At the same time, they value characteristics signified by the 'A', such as age. The community leaders are repeatedly referred to as "aged"

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 44
[2] Ibid.:46

or "ancient." They adhere to a system "of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle".[1] What those Puritans have built as a necessary requirement for the town is that prison with the iron door. They are characterized as rigid people. Their faces are far from being young because they refuse all the elements of joy; they seek to destroy every passionate person. Claudia Durst Johnson points out that: "The very foundation of the community, usually associated with iron and rigidity, rests so heavily on age that characteristics of youth, such as joy, passion, and creativity, are destroyed."[2]

In this community, the reader notices that the town's peoples' respect is given to one category of people with special characteristics. They are the town's leaders like Chillingworth, Governor Bellingham, and the Reverend Wilson. They are old people with fair hair. Besides, people prize such individuals not because they are honoured people or people of sciences but this is the law of the Puritans. In fact, such leaders are imposed on the inhabitants while their age is impressed upon the readers.

2.3.The Significance of the Letter for Hester Prynne:

At the beginning, Hester is ashamed and tries to hide the letter, feels tortured by the gazes of the others, but in the course of the action she seizes the chance that the letter offers to her. Professor Klaus P. Hansen maintains that:

> Once expelled from Boston society, Hester intellectually moves outside society's norms and regulations. This she herself experiences as freedom but it is "the freedom of a broken law." Hester has entered a moral vacuum, where no rules or conventions exist, and has become her own law-maker[3]

The letter 'A' gives Hester a chance she has never dreamt of. Unlike the other women of the town, she becomes able to practice all the forbidden acts. Her life in the town is ended and since she stars living outside the town, Hester is passed through a new experience with which she is happy. She begins a new life on the scaffold. Additionally, she has totally got her intellectual and moral freedom.

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[1] Ibid.: 139
[2] Claudia D. Johnson, Understanding The Scarlet Letter: A student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1995): 08
[3] Klaus P. Hansen, Sin and Sympathy: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Sentimental Religion (New York: P. Lang, 1991): 92

As she has been expelled from society, Hester leads a lonely new life, a life as she wants it to be. Her only company is Pearl, her daughter. There is hardly any contact to the community. In this context of isolation, it is astonishing that the sign, as it separates her from the others, is the only link between her and the Puritans. The critic Nina Baym explains that Hester subverts the meaning of the scarlet letter that she is forced to wear as a sign of her adultery. "An artist with a needle," Hester turns the letter into a work of art. Hester's art, Baym says, is amoral for it is sheerly decorative.[1] However, it is also an act of self-expression, like her adultery, within a society that demands conformity and surrender of self-hood. In her study of Hester as the heroine of The Scarlet Letter, the critic Marilyn Mueller Wilton claims that Hester represents the artist in American society. Wilton explains: "Rather than accept defeat at the hands of those who have scorned and rejected her, Hester, in heroic style, determines to forge an independent life for herself and her daughter through her role as solitary artist on the fringes of society. Although the seaside, Hester's fine needlework is in high demand."[2] Hester has appropriated the letter and has added a new signification to it.

The scarlet letter, then, signifies more than "adulteress". It gives its wearer, Mrs Prynne, the chance to have a new life far from the rigidity of the Puritan society. Through her needlework, Hester has changed the meaning of the scarlet 'A'. She makes it appropriate to the meaning she looks for. In fact, Hester allows the scarlet letter to play with the meaning that has been given by the community. At the beginning, it implies her shame, but later she gives it the significance of an art. Though she is still a rejected outsider, Hester obliges the Puritans to accept her as an artist despite the fact that the artist is someone, who is against the law. More than this, her embroidery is needed among those rigid Puritans especially the leaders.

2.4.The Significance of the Letter for Arthur Dimmesdale:

Dimmesdale feels offended by the letter on Hester's bosom. It constantly reminds him that he did wrong. His guilt not only covers his sin, but also the fault that he left Hester alone in her situation. He feels that the Puritans may see a scarlet letter over his heart as well.

[1] Nina Baym, The Scarlet Letter: A Reading (Boston: Twayne, 1986): 183

[2] Marilyn Mueller Wilton, "Paradigm and Paramour: Role Reversal in The Scarlet Letter" in The Critical Responce to Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, ed. Gary Scharnhorst (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992): 220

Actually, he knows that it is there, but he refuses to acknowledge it to the rest of the community, so he adopts a gesture to conceal it.

The Puritans do not notice, but Pearl has noticed. When Hester tells her that her scarlet letter is the mark of the Black Man of the forest, the girl concludes the following concerning Dimmesdale: "He has his hand over his heart! Is it because, when the minister wrote his name in the book, the Black Man set his mark in that place? But why does he not wear it outside his bosom, as thou dost, mother?"[1]

Pearl understands that the mark which reverend Dimmesdale wears is for the same mistake her mother does. What confuses her is something else. While all people can see the shame of Hester on her bosom, Dimmesdale's 'A' is hidden and the little girl is the only one who realises it. Thus, the struggle of Hester is apparent because she is fighting the Puritans whereas Dimmesdale's is invisible because he is fighting himself. Hawthorne writes

> No, Hester, no!" replied the clergyman. "There is no substance in it! It is cold and dead, and can do nothing for me! Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none! Else, I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment-seat. Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret! Thou little knowest what a relief it is, after the torment of a seven years' cheat, to look into an eye that recognizes me for what I am!" [2]

The situation is harder on the minister. He couldn't confess his crime on the scaffold as Hester does because he is beloved by people and at the same time he is representing the law. The truth is that Reverend Dimmesdale is suffering twice. He is punishing himself the same time he is punished by Chillingworth with his evil torments. This indicates that his suffer lasts for long and his life ends slowly.

In contrast to Hester, he cannot change the meaning of his letter by confession or ways of purification. His attempts to confess in front of the congregation fail, as they even intensify their admiration for him:

> He had told his hearers that he was […] the worst of sinners […] Would not the people […] tear him down out

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 159
[2] Ibid.: 163

> of the pulpit which he defiled? Not so, indeed! They heard it all, and did but reverence him the more. […] "The saint on earth! Alas, if he discern such sinfulness in his own white soul, what horrid spectacle would he behold in thine or mine![1]

Assuming that one of the meanings of the 'A' Hester wears is 'Arthur', corresponding the name of her lover, it can be able to say that the letter Arthur Dimmesdale wears is an 'H' signifies 'Hester', his partner in sin. This opens the door to a long discussion about the meanings of the 'H'.

Among those who discussed the issue are Larry Joseph Kreitzer and Deborah W. Rooke. They pointed out in their Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of the Woman Taken in Adultery that: "Arthur's scarlet letter 'H' could refer to the heart itself, or to Holy, Heaven, Halo, Hell, or perhaps even to Hawthorne given that the author obviously invested much of himself in the character of Arthur Dimmesdale."[2]

Dimmesdale does not only feel guilty, but he also shows a darker aspect of human nature. Hester confesses the sin in front of all people and she cares for her lover and little child. Dissimilar to Hester, Dimmesdale neither thinks about Hester's pain nor concerns himself about how to sacrifice for the daughter Pearl. He only worries about what people will think about him and how it will affect his career if they recognize the truth. He is selfish. This behaviour can be seen in many situations in the novel especially the scene when he refuses to join Hester and Pearl on the scaffold for confession.

3. The Significance of Pearl:

The role of Pearl in The Scarlet Letter is important for what she represents, for what she senses and imagines and for what she does. According to Darrel Abel, Pearl represents childhood with its undeveloped human and moral potentiality. She senses and imagines the moral and psychological realities of other persons and their possibilities of realization as Hawthorne supposed that artists do. By her actions and gestures, she points out and urges right moral determinations of other characters.[3]

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[1] Ibid.: 122

[2] Larry Joseph Kreitzer, and Deborah W. Rooke, Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of the Woman Taken in Adultery, (John 7.53-8.11) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 167

[3] Darrel Abel, The Moral Picturesque: Studies in Hawthorne's Fiction (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1988): 190

Pearl is a very young female character. She represents a child of three and five years old. Since she has undeveloped potentialities, critics refuse to accept the idea that she portraits children's reality. Though she is a complex character, her primary function within the novel is a symbol. She has been clothed with a beautiful dress of scarlet, embroidered with gold thread, just like the scarlet letter on Hester's bosom. She is forced to exercise such a role not by the reader but by Hester. Dimmesdale sees her as the symbol of freedom of broken law; Hester sees her as the sign of her sin; and the community sees her as the result of the devil's work. In common, she is the symbol of Hawthorne's imagination, an idea so powerful that the Puritans could not understand. She is, therefore, the symbol of freedom and happiness of unrestrained wilderness. The purpose of her existence in the novel is dual. She symbolizes both her mother's guilt as well as her rebellion.

Focusing on the analysis of Pearl, many critics define her as the sin-child, through which the unholy result of Hester Prynne's and Arthur Dimmesdale's fall from grace, and Hawthorne's way of presenting the scarlet letter. The Puritans find Pearl as a target to control human sexuality by controlling her. They have practiced upon the child their strict authority. They, therefore, believe that Pearl is the symbol of illegitimacy. In her essay "Hester's Skepticism, Hawthorne's Faith; or, What Does a Woman Doubt? Instituting The American Romance Tradition", Professor Emily Miller Budick points out:

> In Hawthorne's novel, the strict authoritarianism of Puritan patriarchy finds its object in the child Pearl, who, as the living "likeness" of the letter … becomes the target of the Puritans' efforts to control both human sexuality, and its literary, historical expression. The Scarlet Letter, in other words, dramatizes a relationship between issues of birth (Whose child is Pearl?) and questions of interpretation (What does the letter mean?). Indeed, one of the ways the text validates the centrality and legitimacy of the community's doubt about the child is by representing it as its own investigation into its major symbol [1]

Robert Emmet Whelan is one of those who defend the idea that Pearl is nothing more than the "major symbol." In his "Hester Prynne's Little Pearl: Sacred and Profane Love," he claims, "it is Pearl, the gem on her mother's unquiet bosom, who throughout the tale betrays to the reader...the passionate love for the minister which Hester, of fearful necessity, takes

[1] Emily Miller Budick, "Hester's Skepticism, Hawthorne's Faith; or, What Does a Woman Doubt? Instituting The American Romance Tradition", Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007): 85

such great care to hide". Pearl is considered as the "living counterpart" of the "badge of shame" and both are intended by Hawthorne to travel through the same range of meanings: 'Adultery,' 'Able,' 'Affection,' and 'Angel'.[1]

In another analysis, Pearl represents no more than the personification of the scarlet letter. She is described as the result of her mother's illegal passion. She is the living sign of Hester's guilt for the reason that she embodies what the letter represents. The child is responsible to remind Hester firmly about her sin. Actually, Pearl represents indirectly the Puritan society.

On behalf of that, Pearl's role is purely symbolic and it is only towards the end of the novel that she is properly humanized. From her childhood, the little girl reflects the scarlet in the choice of colours. She mirrors Hester in many situations. As she is three and five years-old, she is more her mother's child than her father's daughter.

So, it is her role to enforce the mother's guilt. She does this simply by making it impossible for Hester to forget the letter. This role of an enforcer is seen most clearly in the forest scene, the one and only time that Hester throws the letter away. Pearl refuses to join her mother until the letter is returned to its usual place. Hester is her mother only when she wears the letter, and this is a true perception on Pearl's part. The letter is attached to Hester all the time; if she rejects the letter means that she will reject her child Pearl. With the words of Baym, "The letter is the first object that Pearl becomes aware of as a baby, and she keeps the letter firmly at the center of Hester's life by keeping it firmly in her infant regard."[2]

As Pearl is considered as the living object of her mother's sin, she is dehumanized and depersonalized especially by Hester. She is not the prisoner of the Puritans' authoritarianism. Rather, she is the prisoner of the circle of radiance that has drawn by her mother. The situation is changed only at the end of The Scarlet Letter when Dimmesdale confesses his fatherhood to all people on the scaffold. Dimmesdale seeks to enter her circle in the forest scene through a kiss that he hopes would help to change Pearl's regards to. Instead, Pearl impatiently washes it off at the brookside. She later presents her judgement herself when the

[1] Edwin Harrison Cady and Louis J. Budd, On Hawthorne: The Best From American Literature (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990):125
[2] Nina Baym, The Scarlet Letter: A Reading (Boston: Twayne, 1986): 57

minister reveals his own scarlet letter in the final scaffold scene. Hawthorne writes that "Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken".[1]

In Pearl, the worlds of Hester and Dimmesdale finally become one. She also takes on her father's soul. Through the tears of her father that fall down upon his cheek, she will live in a word of joy and happiness for she will never battle with the world but she becomes a part of it; she becomes a woman in it. With Baym's words, "there is no mistaking that at the end of the book (when she kisses her father) Pearl becomes fully human for the first time".[2]

Throughout the novel, Hester's identity is claimed for as well as Pearl's. The girl claims her identity, and her relationship with her mother, only apart from a masculine sexual economy; she does so when the pair are wandering outdoors on a summer day and Hester is questioning the fiendishness of her daughter: "'Child, what art thou?' cried the mother. 'O, I am your little Pearl!' answered the child."[3]

In a psychoanalysis reading of this relationship, critic Lois Cuddy notes that "Pearl is never seen without Hester in this novel because it is not her function to stand alone [….] Pearl is everything that Hester would deny about herself"[4]; she can sense her mother's confusion and becomes her mother's voice. The scene of the forest offers the best proof for Pearl's claim of her identity when she reclaims her mother only after Hester has replaced the letter on her breast, saying, as it is written by Hawthorne, "Now thou art my mother indeed! And I am thy little Pearl!"[5] The scarlet letter emblematizes Hester's self-defined and independent sexual identity; without it, not only does Pearl lose her own presence in the world, but so does her mother.

Pearl can be seen in every scene throughout The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne keeps treating the child extensively; he describes carefully her physical and mental qualities; and he uses her to present her relation to Hester and Dimmesdale. This justifies that Pearl is a significant character and represents more than a symbol of a sin. Trying to define her as merely a symbolic element becomes an endless circle of ambiguity that leaves Pearl

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 218
[2] Ibid.: 58
[3] Ibid.: 82
[4] Lois Cuddy, "Mother-Daughter Identification in The Scarlet Letter", Hester Prynne, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publisher, 2004): 152
[5] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994):180

unexplored as a significant character in the text. For the two critics Edwin Harrison Cady and Louis J. Budd, Pearl functions more than a merely symbol. They write:

> Above all, his [Hawthorne] insistence upon the peculiar preternatural quality of the child and his manipulation of this phenomenon in the crucial scenes (the forest scene and the three pillory scenes) must certainly indicate that she is not merely a fantastically decorative "relief" in the somber story but a functional element in the structural design.[1]

Pearl is presented in action, mentioned, or discussed in all but four of the twenty-three chapters of the novel proper (i.e., chapters i, ix, xi, xvii) and in the conclusion. Many critics, then, intend in their writing to present evidence that Pearl is more than a symbol. Her true role is extended. Chester E. Eisinger, in his 1951 article "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," argues that Pearl is a

> symbol of natural liberty, perverse and willful, consulting her own impulses and following them wherever conflicts arose. She is antisocial. She will not be governed by any human will or law. She is as unruly as nature and is therefore unfit for civil society. Only when these natural qualities are washed away in Dimmesdale's salvation does Pearl become a responsible human being, ready for admission into the community of men and, when Chillingworth's money came to her, even into the Puritan community.[2]

The connection between Pearl's character and her nature is another aspect that has acquired critical attention. While Baym declares that Pearl has natural qualities and objectives that the Puritan system denies (some of which are: beautiful, intelligent, perfectly shaped, vigorous, graceful, passionate, imaginative, impulsive, capricious, creative, visionary), the essayist Darrel Abel has claimed that Pearl is in her most fundamental character a Child of Nature. He writes:

> She is of course a "natural child" in the euphemistic sense of the phrase. But a Child of Nature is properly speaking one who discovers conscious and valuable affinities with the natural world and enjoys an active and formative

[1] Edwin Harrison Cady and Louis J. Budd, On Hawthorne: The Best From American Literature (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990): 65

[2] Chester E. Eisinger, "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," The Critical Response to Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, ed. Gary Scharnhorst (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992):165

> relationship with that world. Little Pearl manifests this relationship between man and nature; her life and the life of nature are contiguous and sympathetic modes of being. Therefore, Hawthorne observed: "The mother forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child." This "wildness," however is not the wildness of savagery but the wildness of innocence.[1]

This innocence is significant in that it casts Pearl in a new light. Her relationship with nature coincides with the relationship she is creating with the Puritan community, and just as the community cannot control nature, wild and free, it will not be able to control Pearl. The pure Child of Nature, then, is totally under the influence of nature with whom alone she enjoys immediate and entire intimacy.

Pearl's name, which is chosen by Hester, is regarded as a misnomer by John Wilson, who judges the "scarlet vision" only by her external hue: "Pearl? — Ruby, rather! or Coral! or Red Rose, at the very least."[2] But it is known that Pearl's name matches her inner significance, and, unlike most of the characters in the book, her origins are literally and figuratively known to the reader. She is based upon Hawthorne's daughter Una who was at the appropriate age to Hawthorne's study. It is clear that Pearl takes a significant part of Hawthorne's portraits in the novel and if one reads The Scarlet Letter, he/she will understand why Una takes that large part in her father's note-book. The abolitionist Frank Preston Stearns mentions that:

> It is still more probable that Pearl is a picture of Hawthorne's own daughter, who was of the right age for such a study, and whose sprightly, fitful, and impulsive actions correspond to those of Hester's child. This would also explain why her father gave Una so much space in his Note-book. He may have noticed the antagonism between her and the Whig children of the neighborhood and have applied it to Pearl's case.[3]

Pearl was not portrayed only from Hawthorne's observations to his daughter Una. Hawthorne, also, portrayed what she did and said and reproduced them to be the actions and speech of Pearl. His son, Julian, elaborated on the influence of his sister, Una, on his father's

[1] Darrel Abel, "Hawthorne's Pearl: Symbol and Character", Journal of English Literary History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1951): 56-7

[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 92

[3] Frank Preston Stearns, The Life and Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Teddington, Middlesex: the Echo Library, 2006): 152

rendering of Pearl, in a 1931 essay, "The Making of The Scarlet Letter." He noted, aptly, "Mere abstract musings or unaided invention might not have created a figure so alive and undeniable."[1]

> In Hawthorne's descriptions of Una, we find elements of Pearl's speech and manner of talking, the roots of Pearl's approach to her parents, and a reference to inherited traits, one of the great themes in The Scarlet Letter. In creating Pearl's language, Hawthorne clearly drew on his specific observations of his own daughter's speech.[2]

In his journals, Hawthorne kept a detailed journal about his children's development, and he transferred some of the passages he wrote about Una directly into The Scarlet Letter. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne notes that Hester is afraid when she thinks about her daughter. She feels comfort only when the child sleeps. She thinks that Pearl is possessed by a demonic spirit. She sees "another face in the small black mirror of Pearl's eye. It was a face, fiend-like, full of smiling malice … It was as if an evil spirit possessed the child, and had just peeped forth in mockery."[3] When she throws rocks at the town's children, she proves that she is possessed by the devil and is a demon child. But, despite she is compared to the demon, sometimes Pearl becomes a loving girl. She can love with a clinging sensitivity as she can hate with a dark passion. The mockery never left her mouth and eyes. She is always uncertain. Though the mother hates this, the child is always her precious treasure. Una, Hawthorne's daughter, resembles Pearl. She always struggles to defeat an evil spirit.

The scholar T. Walter Herbert explored the connection between Hawthorne's daughter, Una, and Hawthorne's literary creation, Pearl. In "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Una Hawthorne, and The Scarlet Letter: Interactive Selfhoods and the Cultural Construction of Gender," an essay he published in the 1980s, he claims that Hawthorne created the character of Pearl to hold the qualities which he worried about in his daughter and tried to give a psychological treatment with the solutions and the feminine faculties he hoped his Una will grow up with. Herbert writes that "Little Pearl is made to enact the qualities that most troubled Hawthorne in his daughter, and she is eventually delivered from them. Hawthorne surrounds little Pearl, that is to say, with a therapeutic program, which includes a diagnosis of her difficulty and a

[1] Richard Kopley, The Threads Of The Scarlet Letter: A Study Of Hawthorne's Transformative Art (Cranbury, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 2003): 114
[2] Mary Jane Hurst, The Voice of the Child in American Literature: Linguistic Approaches to Fictional Child Language (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1990):74
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 82

prescription for cure, grounded on the gender categories that he considered natural and that defined a femininity he hoped his daughter would grow into."[1]

Pearl's role as the definer of femininity is an interesting one. This area has been rarely acknowledged in the vast body of critical works centring on Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. In reality, Hawthorne's text emboldens and authenticates Pearl's newfound feminine power. Pearl is the sole character who completely casts aside the Puritan definition of the female and breaks away from the Puritan community to find happiness.

Throughout the novel, Pearl represents the future of all women. As she grows, Pearl is described as "a lovely and immortal flower ... [with] beauty that became every day more brilliant, and the intelligence that threw its quivering sunshine over the tiny features...."[2] Hester, on the other hand, is fearful of the things she sees developing in Pearl, even as she is powerless to stop them — powerless because she tries to accept what her community has decreed to be the proper punishment for a female who has dared to challenge her role. "Day after day", Hawthorne says, "[Hester] looked fearfully into the child's expanding nature; ever dreading to detect some dark and wild peculiarity that should correspond with the guiltiness to which she owed her being."[3]

Hawthorne himself points out that when Pearl is viewed honestly as a beautiful female child, whether her outer covering remains perfect or not, she becomes representative of all female children regardless of class or position within the community. She was a representative girl-child, who would grow into a representative female-woman.

Conclusion:

Pearl is the angel that has been sent to Hester Prynne. She symbolizes the characters' conscience but she is merely a little demon. For some critics, she is a symbol of nature as she is a rose for Reverend Wilson. She represents, indeed, the individual's isolation from society. Hawthorne gives her first appearance as Hester and Dimmesdale's sin, but she is still only a child; she is what links Hester to the society, and yet she is also what has separated her from society. She is a constant reminder of Hester's adultery, but at the same time she is her only friend. When Hester is unable to express her feelings, Pearl gladly does and reacts to

[1] James M. Mellard, Using Lacan, Reading Fiction (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 79
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 75
[3] Ibid.: 75

situations in the way her mother wishes she could. In fact, she closely relates to Hester. It's interesting that Pearl is so fascinated by the scarlet letter because they are both symbols that society associates to the same sin. Pearl acts very grown-up and often does not act her age: she has a mind of her own and cannot be forced to obey rules; therefore, Hester permitted the child to be swayed by her own desires.

Hence, Pearl represents Hester's unrestrained self: she cries when Hester needs to and holds Dimmesdale's hand when Hester wants to. The little child is like the archetype of all children. She has features of all personalities, kind, mischievous, evil, good; she doesn't care about rules. Hester wonders if this is because of a broken rule. Some people wonder if she is the devil's child since Hester refuses to say who the father really is. Pearl dresses in beautiful clothes, in red and gold and looks like the scarlet letter. She is really the scarlet letter. She is Hester's symbol of shame, but also Hester's joy and love.

What symbolizes Hester, the scarlet letter, and finally the individual who rebels from society is the wild rose-bush. It symbolizes Hester's individualism, which is achieved through a clear conscience and accepting the fact that she is unique, distanced from the Puritans surrounding her. Just as the rose-bush springs into being, the scarlet letter comes to life as Hester leaves the prison. Through this symbolic scene, Hawthorne repeatedly attaches the reader's sympathy with the individual against social authority, setting him up for a narrative resolution where the individual breaks free from imposed constraints. Hawthorne uses Hester Prynne to symbolize that those who challenge social conformities can benefit society as a whole.

Hawthorne's novel The Scarlet Letter, then, is in no sense a historical novel of Puritan life. The problem of conscience is a motive for the story and a legend to be shaped in the way in which he was a master; the soul suffering from remorse is interesting, and Hawthorne simply plays with it. The theme of The Scarlet Letter appealed less to his moral sense than to his pictorial imagination.

Chapter 3 :

Individual Resistance
Versus
Social Authority
in
The Scarlet Letter

Introduction

People feel they live in a permissive society in which Christian virtue is largely expelled from public life, a society which has invaded the church with its no-fault theology, no longer admitting sin. It is a world where people have the right to choose their own life pattern, to decide to their best knowledge and belief which convictions to support, to define their own ways of life in a multitude of ways their ancestors could not control. But in a Puritan society, life was different. It has laws to cover every aspect of life. There, the Lord requires absolute honesty and condemns everything in false and unjust. Thus, not surprisingly, human nature rebelled against such strict supervision. The goal of Hawthorne, as a romantic writer, then, is to write about such a romantic subject: a rebel who refuses to confirm to society's code.

1. Hester Prynne Vs The Puritan Community in The Scarlet Letter:

The identity of Hawthorne's characters, as the case of American classic heroes, is shaped not only by interaction with others but also with resistance to whatever exists in the community, in the name of a higher social, ethical, or aesthetic ideal. Leaving alone, with no family and past, has an effect on the American heroes more than the European ones. It urges the American protagonist to look for a new world in which they believe they will have a new start and a new life. Harold Bloom, a literary critic, explained that "American heroes, seemingly alone free, and without family or history, test the proposition that a new world might bring a new self and society into being."[1]

One can understand that although in each case the hero's or heroine's effort issues in failure, there is no conventional recognition of this experiential truth on the part of the protagonist, no willingness to recalculate his or her relations to society or history. Individualism, thus, reshapes the archetypal pattern of the orphaned young man (or woman) seeking an adult identity; an identity which is shaped by the social interaction of interdependent selves because what is considered necessary for the individual is to find an identity within his society. This identity is shaped only with the interaction with other selves or other individuals for there is no self apart from the selves of others.

This does not mean to neglect the inside; it, rather, means roughly that we understand ourselves by identifying deeply with others because we take our identity from the group we belong to. That is to say that self-identity or self-understanding is the interpretation of the

[1] Harold Bloom, Holden Caulfield (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005): 137

perception of others' experiences. So, the way the individuals see themselves is related to the way they experience and interpret others as seeing, understanding and experiencing them. They identify themselves because they see themselves reflected in the attitudes and actions of others toward them. Thus, as they are responsible for themselves, they are also responsible for others, and vise versa. A good example is made through the character of Hester Prynne.

Hawthorne writes near the end of the novel that Hester had become a strong woman as a result of her experiences. This strength is often taken to be an individualistic kind of strength, the power of self over aggressive circumstances. Hester is seen as an early celebration of democratic circumstances. She is seen as an early celebration of democratic individualism asserting itself in a hostile environment formed by a political and religious establishment. But Hawthorne's point is that Hester's strength is formed positively as well as negatively by her society. In the paragraph where Hawthorne speaks about Hester's strength, he observes also that she "had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a normal wilderness," and that although her experiences in separation from the Puritan community "had made her strong," they had also "taught her much amiss."[1] Roger Lundin and Anthony C. Thiselton wrote that her full stature is gained when she participates in the personal struggles of the others in the community, who have shaped her own life.[2]

Hawthorne's novels deal with persons stuck in a struggle between individual needs and the moral demands of society, a struggle which the individual generally loses. More importantly, Hawthorne's characters are isolated individuals, who reject society's standards, but because they are imperfect individuals disposed to sin — especially the unforgiveable sin of pride — they are destroyed by their guilt.

Building on the problem of how individuals should interact with social rules, Hawthorne introduces a cluster of similar questions. For example, who should have the right to judge individuals' behaviour? Do the old magistrates have the right to judge Hester's passionate action? Does Chillingworth have the right to judge and to administer private revenge upon Dimmesdale?

The novels also examine the relationship between nature and society. What Hawthorne tries really to find is if nature can provide a heavenly society for the individual; a society in

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics, 1994): 170
[2] Roger Lundin and Anthony C. Thiselton, et all., The Promise of Hermeneutics (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999): 123

which he achieves freedom. He raises questions such as: Does nature's bounty offer relief to humanity as, for example, the wild rosebush offers beauty to Hester?

The community in The Scarlet Letter places extensive restrictions on individual. Although the Puritans had hoped to establish a utopian society in the New World, one where everyone would be united under a shared ideology, their plan appears to have failed before it even began. The prison was one of the first buildings created by the immigrants, suggesting their recognition that certain individuals would inevitably transgress the socially established rules, i.e., the focus on the prison in the opening chapter immediately established the power of the community to punish those who violate its laws and to demand obedience as a means of maintaining social order.[1] Edward P. Bailey and Philip A. Powell explained saying that:

> in The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne expresses the view that the structures of institutions, while not perfect, are necessary to keep society ordered and running smoothly. He felt that institutions keep people from having "dangerous" radical thoughts that might destroy essential order. Although Hawthorne presents Puritan society as rather harsh, he shows that once Hester Prynne is denied its structure, she turns to "dangerous" independence.[2]

The town is, then, a social unit authorized to demand conformity to its vision of the world. It bases its authority on the interpretation of the Bible, which is considered as a necessary requirement to order. This authority permits the existence of iron-prison. Though the leaders attempt to place this strict regulation on behaviour, free will finds a way within some individuals as it is the case of Hester Prynne. She gains her self-realization and becomes a self-reliant woman, who bases her actions on her self-approaching of objects rather than following the community's demands.

In the novel, the two sides of Hawthorne's attitude towards Hester can be realized. While he expresses kindly his understanding of Hester's deeds, he shows his worries about her as she represents a woman who turns away far from society's laws and lives out of its influences. When Hester returns to New England, she accepts the community's influence on the individual will.

[1] Melissa McFarland Pennell, Masterpieces of American Romantic Literature (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006): 92

[2] Edward P. Bailey and Philip A. Powell, The Practical Writer with Readings (Boston, Massachusetts: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008): 431

Hawthorne comments on Hester's independence of thought and separation from social norms: "But Hester Prynne . . . for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman."[1] The scarlet letter, though causing her to be ostracized by society, "was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers — stern and wild ones — and they had made her strong."[2]

To protect herself from the revenge she might face as an independent thinker, Hester hides her rebellious desires beneath a calm and even colourless exterior. This introduces to the reader of The Scarlet Letter the conflict between the private self and the public self. Hester becomes two persons: an inner and an outer person.

Outwardly, she still acts as if she is defiant and that nothing can get in the way of her pride, but on the inside, she begins to feel a great deal of admission to her sins, trying to change herself. What is more, Hester has taken new steps to redeem herself in the eyes of God and man. She has become a self-ordained Sister of Mercy. [3]

Hester insists on determining her own identity instead of letting others determine it for her. This is why she stays in Boston even after the townspeople publicly shame her and force her to wear a badge of humiliation. If she removes the scarlet letter, Hester will prove the Puritans' power over her. Even after her return to her former home, she resumes wearing the token on her besom because it is a part of her past, and the past is an important part of her identity. She succeeds to create a new life in which the letter is a symbol of knowledge rather than a symbol of failure. She keeps controlling her own identity and in doing so, she becomes an example for others. Hawthorne writes:

> But there was a more real life for Hester Prynne here, in New England, than in that unknown region where Pearl had found a home. Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence. She had returned, therefore, and resumed,— of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it,— resumed the symbol of which we have related so dark a tale. Never afterwards did it quit her bosom. But . . . the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics: 1994): 170
[2] Ibid.: 170
[3] Sara Sheldon, Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (New York, Barron's Educational Series, 1984): 67

> which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, and yet with reverence, too.[1]

To protect himself from public exposure and punishment, Arthur Dimmesdale creates a public persona. He is hypocrite since he tries to cover his sin by creating such an image. Hawthorne writes his view about him and says that: "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false, — it is impalpable, — it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist."[2]

Dimmesdale feels guilty when he thinks about the innocent love that townspeople show to him. Every time he tries to confess his adultery, his weaknesses and cowardice put an end to his good efforts. He fears that people, who love him and consider him as a saint, will hate him if they know about his evil past. Actually, he joins the church not for the sake to serve God but to hide his sin. Thus, he will never be able to live in peace because of the feeling of being guilty.

Likewise, Roger Chillingworth allows his public persona to conceal his true aims and identity. He gets suspicion that the man he seeks is no other than the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, whose declining health and unhappiness with other symptoms justify this idea. The townspeople think that he is a physician and, through his sciences, he will help Dimmesdale. They never know that he seeks revenge not from the illegitimate child, Pearl, or from her punished mother, Hester, but from the man he believes has injured him. Chillingworth declares such aims to Hester and says:

> But, as for me, I come to the inquest with other senses than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!"[3]

Instead, Chillingworth, with stories of sorrows growing from sinful heart, plays to Dimmesdale's weakness and enjoy the pain he suffers. Actually, one can say that Dimmesdale allows Chillingworth to become a destructive force. Gradually, as the townspeople have

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics: 1994): 223
[2] Ibid.: 123
[3] Ibid.: 64

noticed, Chillingworth's outward appearance changes because of the devil in his inner self, suggesting how powerful his desire for revenge has become. The narrator marks that:

> Roger Chillingworth's aspect had undergone a remarkable change while he had dwelt in town, and especially since his abode with Mr. Dimmesdale. At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight, the oftener they looked upon him.[1]

But as he sees Dimmesdale dies, Chillingworth is not capable to finish his goal to the end of his life. He has no longer any aim or purpose to live and he withers away.

The best explanation of the characters' actions and movement of spirit is not only through the Puritans community's repressiveness, but rather through the interrelationship of feeling, thought, and action within each character. It determines their fates to a degree that makes the external forces of the patriarchal community secondary. Hawthorne writes that "It is remarkable that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulation of society."[2] That is to say that the explanation of the fate is related to the characters' responses to symbols, to the 'A', and to Pearl, the illegitimate child.

Hawthorne, therefore, is concerned with the conflict between the forces of tyranny and those of liberty and between forces of passion and assertion and that of repression. In other words, The Scarlet Letter is the record of a woman's fate within a culture. Interested in the complex topic of private sin and public shame or in women, who violated social rules and societal expectations which injured individuals, Hawthorne presents a contrast between the self-reliant individual and a society that values a citizen who conforms: a struggle between social restraint and the impulse toward self-fulfillments:

> But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness[3]

[1] Ibid.: 108
[2] Ibid.: 140
[3] Ibid.: 170

The critic Amy Schrager Lang says that Hester, during her period of preparation, learned to reject both Word and Law and, rather than developing a heightened fear of the consequences of sin, she has learned a reckless courage.[1] In fact, the critic Harold Bloom adds, it is clear that Hester "has access to a completely different source of power — or is, perhaps, herself an alternative source of power."[2]

Perhaps, however, it is precisely her separation from the community that gives her this power. Hester knows that those Puritans have the power to punish her only because she has granted it to them by staying within their society. She is free to leave Boston whenever she chooses. Her decision to stay requires obedience to Puritan power, but since she can withdraw her approval at any time, this obedience is always temporary. Her reasons for staying are her own. In schematic terms, if the Puritans symbolize the law, then Hester symbolizes the individual person and also symbolizes good. Hawthorne wants the readers to think that law is bad and the individual is good- but that would be too easy. Harold Bloom comments that "Matters with Hawthorne are never so clear-cut. But he certainly gives us a situation wherein two kinds of power confront each other in conflict."[3]

But, as usual, his irony carries an extra twist. Lang furthers:

> We may deplore Hester as a hypocrite, but we are asked also to question the wisdom of relying on visible signs of sanctity as evidence of grace. We are asked, in other words, by the very structure of Hawthorne's language, to consider the merits of antinomianism.[4]

Rather than grief, doubt, faith, and dependence, Hester experiences her conversion as liberation of the self that for seven years has remained hidden behind a pious exterior. In the simplest terms, Hester finally says aloud what she has been thinking all those years and thus makes herself "true."[5]

Although Hester has been rejected by society, she is accepted by nature, which seems to have a particular fondness for her. The wilderness, then, or the forest represents the inner self

[1] Amy Schrager Lang, Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England (Berkeley and Los Angles, California: University of California Press, 1987): 182
[2] Harold Bloom, Hester Prynne (Broomall, Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004): 138
[3] Ibid.: 139
[4] Amy Schrager Lang, Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England (Berkeley and Los Angles, California: University of California Press, 1987): 182
[5] Ibid.: 182

of the individual, or more precisely all the passionate feelings that a Puritan had to repress in order to remain a good member of society. Hawthorne writes that Hester

> had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest, amid the gloom of which they were now holding a colloquy that was to decide their fate. Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods[1]

Therefore, the forest becomes the only possible escape from this oppressing society; a location where the individual can express his or her hidden self because ,as it is written by the critics José Eduardo Reis and George Bastos Da Silva, "it is in the forest that she tears the 'A' from her breast and lets her hair down loose, thus revealing norms and regaining her image of a seductive woman."[2]

Hester discovers the need to abandon one world to look for another, since the universe is not limited to the city boundaries:

> Is the world then so narrow? Exclaimed Hester Prynne, fixing her deep eyes on the minister's, and instinctively exercising a magnetic power over a spirit so shattered and subdued that it could hardly hold itself erect. "Doth the universe lie within the compass of yonder town, which only a little time ago was but a leaf-strewn desert, as lonely as this around us? Whither leads yonder forest-track? Backward to the settlement, thou sayest! Yes; but onward, too! Deeper it goes, and deeper, into the wilderness, less plainly to be seen at every step; until, some few miles hence, the yellow leaves will show no vestige of the white man's tread. There thou art free! So brief a journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched, to one where thou mayest still be happy! [3]

Moreover, rather than subjecting herself to the law, Hester subjects the law to her own scrutiny; she takes herself as a law. During the seven years, she attempts to accept the judgement implicit in the letter 'A'; if she could accept that judgement, she would be able to see purpose and meaning in her suffering. But ultimately she is unable to transcend her

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics: 1994): 170
[2] José Eduardo Reis and George Bastos Da Silva, Nowhere Somewhere: Writing, Space and the Construction of Utopia (Porto, Portugal: Universidade do Porto, 2006): 114
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 167-68

heartfelt conviction that she has not sinned. She loves Dimmesdale with whom she sinned; she loves the child that her sin brought forth. How, then, can she agree that her deed was wrong?[1]

In fact, throughout the seven-years, while Hester outwardly proves to be a woman of mercy through her kindness and good deeds, she is inwardly a more revolutionary woman to reject society's norms through her growing alienation from the community. The only law she obeys is her law. She becomes an intellectual independent, who searches for a total freedom. It is written in The Scarlet Letter that:

> The world's law was no law for her mind. It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated, had taken a more active and a wider range than for many centuries before. Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings. Men bolder than these had overthrown and rearranged — not actually, but within the sphere of theory, which was their most real abode — the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle. Hester Prynne imbibed this spirit. She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatised by the scarlet letter.[2]

Hester never reveals out her thoughts; the only reason she lives for in Boston is her 'Pearl'. Otherwise, she will challenge the Puritans and tries to struggle against their religion externally. For that, Hester is regarded as a representative of the individual rather than the social power.

Another aspect with witch Hester breaks the Puritan law is with her needle work. The 'A' seems to be artistically embroidered. It is, then, considered as the ground for the struggle between Hester and the Puritan community. This element of art has no relation to society. So, it is the production of the Individual. Regardless of this, not all individuals can produce it but only those who permanently declare social alienation are capable of creating such an art as it is the case of the heroine, Mrs. Prynne.

Although art is repudiated by the Puritans especially if it is a mode of expression used by women, Hester forces them to accept it. She uses it as an escape for this side of her nature.

[1] Harold Bloom, Hester Prynne (Broomall, Pennsylvania: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004): 139
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 139

"For its part", Nina Baym maintains, "society makes use of *her*. The Puritans may be incapable of producing art, but they certainly want to possess it. Therefore, despite everything, they want Hester in their community; and they want her *as she is*."[1] But this is something they have to learn about, themselves; and if they do not lean in time, there will be a society with no more Hesters.

At the end of the romance, Hester displays another aspect as a defense of individualism through her return to New England. By doing so, she insists to give a new interpretation for the 'A' far from being a sign of 'Adultery'. Thus, the letter reestablishes the unity between Hester and her society. At first, it is imposed on her by the Puritan magistrates. This represents a lack of socialization for the reason that she wears the scarlet letter not by her own will but she does this as a punishment. In her Schools of Sympathy, the storyteller Nancy Roberts insists that the novel can be seen "as a story of socialization in which the point of socialization is not to conform, but to consent. Anyone can submit; the socialized believe. It is not enough to have the letter imposed; you have to do it yourself." [2]

Hawthorne, then, reveals Hester's revolutionary inclinations. She is portrayed as a radical thinker engaged in a revolutionary struggle against the established order. He tells how "the world's law was no law for her mind."[3] As a result, Hester loses the narrator's sympathy and appraisal. She is shown as assuming "freedom of speculation." [4]

Now that the scarlet letter seems to fail in its office, the narrator immediately provides an alternative to it. He tells us of another symbol of reconciliation and conformity for Hester. That symbol is no other than her own child, Pearl. He calls Pearl as the child "from the spiritual world […] Providence, in the person of this little girl, had assigned to Hester's charge the germ and blossom of womanhood, to be cherished and developed amid a host of difficulties."[5]

Hawthorne's ideology of compromise provides the reason why characters, such as Pearl in the novel play a significant role. She represents the compromising force working between the pull of social norms and revolutionary intention. During the forest scene when Hester

[1] Nina Baym, The Scarlet Letter: A Reading (Boston: Twayne, 1986): 66
[2] Nancy Roberts, Schools of Sympathy: Gender and Identification Through the Novel (Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997): 67
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 139
[4] Ibid.: 139
[5] Ibid.: 140

discards Hawthorne's other symbol of reconciliation and compromise, the scarlet 'A', Pearl comes to his rescue by making Hester put it back on her bosom. She is also the symbol that makes possible the reconciliation between herself, Hester and her father, Arthur Dimmesdale. Pearl's office is fulfilled when, nearing the conclusion of the story, she kisses Arthur Dimmesdale after he proclaims his sins and reconciles with his family on the scaffold.

Pearl's compromising quality enables her to leave New England for Europe, the land of revolutions. Hawthorne has somewhat given her the role of a compromising ambassador representing the ideology of Hawthorne's New World to the Old World. It is clear that Hester alone from the adults is changed for the better. Whereas the men, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, slowly decline into madness, Hester begins in a kind of madness and comes out as sane and balanced as a darkling tale will allow. She has been transfigured and transformed from a rebelled and a revolutionary individual into a well reformed woman, who seeks for the union and social order within the community. Reis and Da Silva put in plain words that:

> At the end of the novel, the Hester that comes back to New England is no longer the rebel we first met. She is now a well-adapted, rehabilitated woman in the eyes of the community which rejected and condemned her; above all, she is now a vehicle of order. She believes in institutional order.[1]

Hester willingly returns to the colony to resume her life of submission. She takes up the letter again and this time is for good. Earlier on in the novel, she throws her letter and her cap in the name of freedom only to be forced to put them back on. Between this forest scene and her appearance after her return, Hester's dream of free will becomes a reality. As Hawthorne writes at the end of the Conclusion, she "had returned, therefore, and resumed, — of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it, — resumed the symbol of which we have related so dark a tale."[2]

Pointing out the significance of the crucial phrase "free will", Hester is at last able to realize her freedom and individuality through her open rebellion and proving her part in society. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth died. Pearl marries a European gentleman. Hawthorne writes that "there was a more real life for Hester Prynne, here, in New England,

[1] José Eduardo Reis and George Bastos Da Silva, Nowhere Somewhere: Writing, Space and the Construction of Utopia (Porto, Portugal: Universidade do Porto, 2006): 115
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London, Penguin Classics: 1994): 223

that in that unknown region where Pearl had found a home."[1] She has the capacity to believe in herself and in the establ fang ishment of a new morality in the new world. She becomes spiritually great despite her human weakness and despite the prejudices of her Puritan society.

Nonetheless, it cannot be said that Hawthorne is totally negative about Puritan society, because, as it is the case with individuals, society can change too. This can be so observable in the shift of meaning of the letter 'A': Hester, who returns finally, though quietly, compels the community to acknowledge that the scarlet letter, after all, is a badge of honour and not a token of shame. Society opens out to accept Hester with the letter. Noting the altered meaning of the letter and change in the Puritan community, Baym points out that:

> The Puritan community has arrived at a new consensus. Hester has not exactly prevailed over them, and she has certainly not been the prophetess of a revolution as she had earlier of hopes of being. Nevertheless, she has had a powerful effect on her society's system of meanings, which means that she has been an agent of social change. At the end of the story the community is different from that it was at the beginning, and this difference is symbolized by the emergence of a new reading of the letter. People are not quite so judgemental, legalistic, and moralistic as they were at the start. They have recognized a domain of experience that they were earlier unwilling to admit existed. They are beginning to find a language for the heart. They are beginning to recognize the claims of the individual and the claims of women. They are ceasing to be Puritans.[2]

Hawthorne permits his readers and critics to say that Hester Prynne is a great woman unhappily born before her time, or that she is a good woman wronged by her fellow men. Mary Suzanne Schriber notes that though initially Hawthorne pictured Hester as a complex character, who dared to defy conventional understandings of woman, in the end he is no more daring. She writes that "Hawthorne imagined in Hester Prynne a complexity that defies the conventional understandings of woman in his time,"[3] but in the end, he lost his courage and judged Hester by the very conventions her character seems conceived to question. Drawing

[1] Ibid.: 223
[2] Nina Baym, The Scarlet Letter: A Reading (Boston: Twayne, 1986): 91-2
[3] Mary Suzanne Schriber, Gender and the Writer's Imagination: From Cooper to Wharton (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1987) : 48

attention to the splendour of Hester, Schriber adds, "imagine what she might have been had Hawthorne been more bold."[1]

Critics like Michael J. Colacurcio and Nina Baym have agreed that Hester has achieved at least partial self-fulfillment. Hester Prynne is an example of a self-determining individual, who resists the tyranny of the Puritan, patriarchal social order. Though her power has been controlled, she remains strong and survives by being silent and performing typically charitable tasks: helping and taking care for the sick. In the end, she gains wisdom but also loneliness. Moreover, she has accepted her past; she has accepted that this experience has transformed her and society too, even if it has not been a radical revolution. Still, this does not prevent her from being hopeful for the future: "She assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness"[2]

Hawthorne's social views, however, were far more conventional. Individuals, he said, were responsible for making their own way in the world since it is impossible for them to live in such a world only if they are strong and able to apply their abilities to good purposes. He, furthermore, was suspicious of reformers, who attracted social ills. He shared Thoreau's hostility to all forms of association and agreed with Emerson that slavery, which was the direct cause of the Civil War in America, would be destroyed — not by human efforts, but by Divine Providence, in due time, and by means that could not then be predicted.[3]

2. Hester and the Shadows of the American Conflict:

The Civil War in the United States was the bloodiest conflict in the American history. It was the central event in the lives of those who experienced the great upheaval that quaked the American republic between 1861 and 1865.

If anyone tries to understand the American nation, he has to understand its Civil War since it really defined it. It defined the Americans how they were and opened them on what they became. It showed every good and bad thing. To understand the American character of

[1] Ibid.: 60
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 223
[3] Richard Orr Curry, and Lawrence B. Goodheart, American Chameleon: Individualism in Trans-national Context (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991): 41

the twentieth-century, it is very necessary to learn about this catastrophe of the twentieth-century.

It happened between two political aliens in the Union: a political North and a political South. This indicates immediately the separation and division of the slave-holding states from the non-slave-holding ones. Julian, Hawthorne's son, quotes from his father's letter to a British friend in which he expressed what must have been the attitude of many ordinary citizens:

> We also have gone to war, and we seem to have little, or at least a very misty idea of what we are fighting for. It depends upon the speaker, and that again depends upon the section of the country in which his sympathies are enlisted. The Southern man will say: We fight for state rights, liberty, and independence. The middle and Western statesman will avow that he fights for the Union. Whilst our Northern and Eastern man will swear that, from the beginning, his only idea was liberty to the Blacks, and the annihilation of slavery. All are thoroughly in earnest, and all pray for the blessing of Heaven to rest upon the enterprise. The appeals are so numerous, fervent, and yet so contradictory, that the Great Arbiter to whom they so piously and solemnly appeal must be sorely puzzled how to decide.[1]

In a time most American writers of the period were deeply engaged in the issue of slavery, what really puzzles critics concerning that conflict was the absence of the abolition debate in Hawthorne's literary works. It is doubly puzzling since his position in the Salem Custom House likely made him better informed about the slave trade than many others.

One may agree that slavery exists in his writings merely as a literary device. His awareness of slavery is evident in his Notebooks, where he considered using slavery as a literary device, showing how one enslaves another person both morally and psychologically, as it is the case of many of his characters.

However, Hawthorne did not know much about slavery because he had never been a slave in his life and the few blacks that he had seen were either house servants or the poor of Boston's streets.

[1] Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: a Biography Part Two (Cambridge, John Wilson and Son, 1884): 290-291

With all his imagination, all his sense of history and entire faculty for looking below the surface of things, Hawthorne never saw beneath that surface to the human potential that ill-clothed subservience disfigured. This is because he was interested in another issue: the sin of his Puritan ancestors. The historian Philip McFarland writes: "In a world with such attitudes as commonplaces, Hawthorne had spent his mostly solitary life in New England brooding on history two hundred years old and on matters of the human heart"[1]

Though Hawthorne regretted slavery, he viewed the slavery question with an awful squint. Barry Jeffrey Scherr includes a letter written by Hawthorne containing the following sentence: "I have not […] the slightest sympathy for the slaves or, at least, not half so much as for the laboring whites, who, I believe, as a general thing, are ten times worse off than the southern negros".[2]

A rapid glance on the past will explain such a view. The South would have seemed as a far concept for the Northerners. For most New Englanders, the South appeared as an alien territory. Moreover, the great majority of Hawthorne's contemporaries shared his prejudices. All of white American citizens — abolitionists included — regarded blacks as inferior.

Hawthorne has avoided the slavery issue in his writings. That was probably because of his dislike of reformers that finally made him indifferent to the politics of abolition. In a journal entry before he joined Brook Farm, Hawthorne writes:

> A sketch to be given of a modern reformer — type of the extreme doctrines on the subject of slaves, cold-water, and other such topics. He goes about the streets haranguing most eloquently, and is on the point of making many converts, when his are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the keeper of a mad-house, where he has escaped. Much may be made of this idea.[3]

Throughout his works, Hawthorne criticizes reformers, who suffer from a utopian vision of the world. When the revolution in Europe started, he, unlike his fellow writers and his wife, has been less than supportive of the European revolutionary activity. These attempts at reformations were viewed by Hawthorne with great skepticism.

[1] Ibid.: 159
[2] Barry Jeffrey Scherr, Love and Death in Lawrence and Foucault (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008): 254
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Passages from the American Note-books of Nathaniel Hawthorne, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868): 12

Hawthorne wrote that abolitionists are hell bent, who would tear the constitution to pieces and sever "into distracted fragments that common country which Providence brought into one nation, through a continued miracle of almost two hundred years from the first settlement of the American wilderness until the Revolution."[1]

The critic Brenda Wineapple recognizes the issue of political beliefs and prejudices that produced Hawthorne's politics — and his racism: his skepticism about all reform movements, a belief in states' rights that prompted him to sign a petition protesting the Fugitive Slave Law.[2] For him, reformers were nothing more than enthusiasts, who wound up undermining the very institutions and societal achievements they had hoped to improve.

Hawthorne, as a person refused slavery, believed in the attempt to rid a village, region, or nation of evil could produce results just the opposite of those desired, especially if the means used were violent. His skepticism about purifying the country by eliminating slavery rose not from any anti-slavery sentiment, but rather, from such belief of anti-violence.

Hawthorne was certain, as was Emerson, that meaningful reform could never be imposed from without. As he had insisted in "Earth's Holocaust," reform must grow from within: if individuals wish to have a better society, they must make efforts to reform their own hearts. In that regard, the Puritan society of New England would have appeared instructive. From their city on a hill, the forefathers imposed severe living virtues — of purity, simplicity, duty and devotion — on societies. This arose from their inner conviction. Dead virtues from without — of pillories, brandings and the wearing of penal initials — came only after internal fires had burned communities as it was the case of Bay Colony. Emerson agreed with Hawthorne about the futility of using such external means to reform humanity. Society's problems would be cured only if individual's morality was cured.

Instead of a radical transformation of society driven by man, Hawthorne believed that only trust in God's providence and a gradual change in man's conscience will make true reform possible. He believed that man is not wise enough to do God's work. Michael T. Gilmore explained that Hawthorne "regarded idealist political action, whether against slavery or any other injustice, as a wrongful arrogation of God's power to dispose of human affairs

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Miscellanies: Biographical and Other Sketches and Letters (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005): 163

[2] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 28

when and how He saw fit."[1] That is why Hawthorne, in his three American novels: The Scarlet Letter, House of Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance, gave a fictional form to the age's ethical and legislative impasse agreement, the Compromise of 1850.

Hawthorne, as well as Franklin Pierce — the president who voted for that compromise, believe that slavery would eventually end, and both men were convinced that the nation would be saved from a bloodbath. To Hawthorne, every human attempt at reform was useless. For this reason, he repetitively invoked the inscrutable Providence of God as the only solution to slavery. He wrote in The Life of Franklin Pierce that a wise man

> […]looks upon slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream.[2]

Hawthorne doubted about the efficacy of man's attempts to reform society. That is why he was pessimist about the Civil war, which he considered an actual evil that would result in a great problem. He, therefore, expressed unrestrained optimism in Divine Providence whose evils will vanish rapidly. Magnus Ullén quoted Hawthorne's response to an abolitionist pamphlet by his sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody in 1857 by telling her that "vengeance and beneficenÎ are things that God claims for Himself. His instruments have no consciousness of His purpose; if they imagine they have, it is a pretty sure token they are not His instruments. The good of others, like our own happiness, is not to be attained by direct effort, but accidentally."[3] Because of this conviction, Hawthorne found himself during the 1850s and 1860s more and more at odds with his absolutist contemporaries,[4] who professed to have direct access to the will of God. After he brought his skeptical outlook to bear upon the issues of slavery and the Civil War publicly, he became the object of sanctimonious denigration among New England writers and reformers. William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, The

[1] Michael T. Gilmore, The War on Words: Slavery, Race, and Free Speech in American Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 87

[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Life of Franklin Pierce (Boston, Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1852): 113-114

[3] Magnus Ullén, The Half-vanished Structure: Hawthorne's Allegorical Dialectics (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004): 146

[4] Some of the absolutist contemporaries are Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Liberator, called his "Chiefly About War-Matters" (1862) as flippant and heartless and accused Hawthorne of writing automatically, as though his veins were bloodless.[1]

Larry Reynolds, whose area of specialty is 19th-century American literature, especially the American Renaissance, attributes Hawthorne's opposition to abolitionism, however, to his lifelong social and political conservatism and his persistent fear of fanaticism and radical sociopolitical behavior.[2] Hawthorne did not change during the antebellum period, and like his friend Franklin Pierce, he consistently supported preservation of the Union, fearing any violence that would tear the Union apart. In his final assessment**,** the critic Reynolds credits Hawthorne with possessing a "politics of imagination", which "allowed him to resist the kind of groupthink leading to violence and death."[3] In The World's Great Speeches, Lewis Copeland et al. mention a speech delivered in 1850 by John Caldwell Calhoun in which he agreed with Hawthorne in his fears about the destruction of the Union:

> I have […] believed from the first that the agitation on the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion. The *agitation* has been permitted to proceed, with almost no attempt to resist it, until it has reached a period when it can no longer be disguised or denied that the Union is in danger. [4]

Philip McFarland, moreover, has that same view and considers that "those who insist on ranting about such things are ill-mannered and badly bred — are vegans, are troublemakers who would take away jobs, are abolitionists who would threaten the Union."[5]

Hawthorne worried more about the Northerners' goals that he considered not clear, but he agreed that abolishing slavery in the South was a worthy goal. The one clear good, he saw from this conflict, was the abolition of slaves because the rescue was their right. As he was opposite to such violent revolution, Hawthorne disapproved the first American Women's Rights Convention's attempt to correct the women's situation and demand their rights. This was because of the revolutionary side of the movement.

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[1] Millicent Bell, Hawthorne and the Real: Bicentennial Essays (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2005): 42

[2] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 28

[3] Reynold, Larry, "Strangely Ajar with the Human Race: Hawthorne, Slavery, and the Question of Moral Responsibility;" New Essays on Hawthorne's Major Tales, ed. Millicent Bell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 64.

[4] Lewis Copeland, Lawrence W. Lamm and Stephen J. McKenna, The World's Great Speeches (New York: Courier Dover Publications, 1999): 286

[5] Philip James McFarland, Hawthorne in Concord (New York: Grove Press, 2004): 159

In fact, he professed to dislike female propagandists for reform, but in The Scarlet Letter as well as in The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun, a feminist woman is the magnetic center of his story, irresistible to others despite her odor of transgression. These books express Hawthorne's distaste for female reformers, who campaigned for the rights of political self-expression as well as for the abolitionist cause by raising their voices from public platforms. But this does not prevent him to express his fascination about his heroines Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam though he shows them surrender to lose any hope to fulfill their missions. Zenobia and Miriam differ from Hester. While they do not address themselves to public audiences, Hester did that, but she is a silent woman whose thoughts become heard only at the end of the novel. She cannot finally become a prophetess of personal independence, like Anne Hutchinson.

The Scarlet Letter has increasingly been examined in its nineteenth-century context, and its participation in a conversation about slavery and abolition has become almost axiomatic. Critics, such as Jonathan Arac and Sacvan Bercovitch, have revealed Hawthorne's belief in history in order to confirm his conservatism — his failure to oppose slavery and embrace abolition. Arguing that Hester's scarlet 'A' resembles the United States Constitution as a contested text, Arac considers the "indeterminacy" of the letter's meaning a strategy on Hawthorne's part for avoiding political action and change. The Scarlet Letter, he believes, is "propaganda — not to change your life."[1] Bercovitch also considers The Scarlet Letter to be "thick propaganda", and he cites Hawthorne's "ironies of reconciliation" and laissez-faire "strategy of inaction" as key ingredients in the liberal ideology that sponsored numerous compromises with slavery, especially in 1850, the year of The Scarlet Letter's publication.[2]

Both, Arac and Bercovitch, characterize Hawthorne as a master of compromise. In his 1986 essay, "The Politics of The Scarlet Letter", Arac argues that the narrative indeterminacy of The Scarlet Letter parallels Hawthorne's own resolute refusal to take a stance on slavery and the similar refusal on the part of the legislature that resulted in the Compromise of 1850. Sacvan Bercovitch begins his own examination of the politics of The Scarlet Letter with the assertion that "no critical term is more firmly associated with The Scarlet Letter than

[1] Jonathan Arac, "The Politics of The Scarlet Letter," Ideology and Classic American Literature, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 251

[2] Sacvan Bercovitch, The Office of "The Scarlet Letter," (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 89, 109, 110.

ambiguity." [1] Many other critics read this ambiguity as ultimately serving to quell dissent as well as to foster compromise. They all agree that Hawthorne's work advocates compromise, and privileges the contemplation and internalization of social injustice over action toward reform.

Jean Fagan Yellin explores Hawthorne's relationship to slavery and abolitionism by decoding subtexts in novels that keep such connections hidden. In Women and Sisters (1989) and in several related essays, Yellin shows Hawthorne's knowledge of the slave trade and illustrates links between The Scarlet Letter and the abolitionist movement. She concludes, however, that Hawthorne rejects the liberationist discourse of anti-slavery women and "endorses patriarchal notions."[2]

The critic Jay Grossman's view seems to be differed with the offer of an even more particularized reading of race in The Scarlet Letter. Bearing in mind that Hawthorne has fixed the figure of the black man, Grossman argues that the novel becomes "profoundly implicated" in "antebellum discourses of miscegenation." The "novel's depiction of miscegenation does not merely reproduce the terms of the Southern confrontation between a white master and a female slave," he argues. "Rather, the novel shifts the genders of that equation, with the effect ultimately of revealing the white fears that linked North and South: a shared belief in the unbridled sexuality of African men and the vulnerability of white women, a shared panic when confronted with the possibility of racial mixing."[3]

If black men or women, the critic Millicent Bell wrote, are absent from the scene of The Scarlet Letter, their condition is shadowed in Hester's. Her figurative chains recall the slave's literal ones.[4] After her condemnation, Hester is thought by Hawthorne's Puritans to have become their life-long bond-slave. It is no accident that the image Hawthorne uses to represent her situation is that of the chains that bind the slave: "The chain that bound her", Hawthorne writes, "was of iron links and galling to her inmost soul."[5] Her desire for a greater

[1] Sacvan Bercovitch, "The A-Politics of Ambiguity," Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007): 47
[2] Jean Fagan Yellin, Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989): 126
[3] Jay Grossman, " 'A' is for Abolition?: Race, Authorship, The Scarlet Letter," Textual Practice, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1993): 15
[4] Millicent Bell, Hawthorne and the Real: Bicentennial Essays (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2005): 15
[5] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London: Penguin Classics: 1994): 67

freedom is thought to resemble the literal condition of the black slave fleeing his enslavement when she throws away "the fragments of a broken chain."[1]

Yellin, who "has shown a rhetorical feminist tradition identified the slave's condition with that of all women,"[2] has gone further in exploring the novel's inscription by slavery and abolitionist discourses and convincingly established Hawthorne's knowledge of anti-slavery feminism. She has linked Hester iconographically to female slaves as sisters in bondage even as she stresses Hawthorne's refusal to let Hester function as a full-fledged anti-slavery feminist. "The Scarlet Letter presents a classic displacement," Yellin points out: "color is the sign not of race, but of grace — and of its absence. Black skin is seen as blackened soul." [3] When 'black' is read as describing skin color and not moral status, the text of The Scarlet Letter reveals the obsessive concern with blacks and blackness, with the presence of a dangerous dark group within society's midst.

With the allegorical terms that Grossman uses, Prynne is "a victimized woman and Pearl the illegitimate child of a father-master"[4] — Dimmesdale, whom the text obsessively figures as black. Although he does not say so explicitly, Grossman seems to recognize the ambiguities, or doubleness, of Hawthorne's symbolic representation of race in The Scarlet Letter. Hester and Dimmesdale can be both black and white.

Dimmesdale and Hester resemble a white master and a black slave, at least in its analogous imbalance of power. "Thou hadst charge of my soul,"[5] Hester reminds Dimmesdale Dimmesdale at the Governor's Hall, as she implores him to intercede with the Puritan magistrates and convince them to let her retain custody of Pearl. And as a slave mother, Hester hopes for keeping her child. Harold Bloom writes that Hester gained power over Dimmesdale by refusing to name him as Pearl's father. Similarly, as absolute authority separated slave mothers from their children and converted children into property subject to

[1] Ibid.: 139
[2] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 15
[3] Jean Fagan Yellin, Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press,1989): 138
[4] Jay Grossman, op. cit.: 14
[5] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 59

CHAPTER THREE: INDIVIDUAL RESISTANCE VS SOCIAL AUTHORITY

Pearl, like all children of slave-holders, follows her mother's conditions. Dimmesdale, nevertheless, worries about her maturing appearance. He refuses to acknowledge Pearl in any way and dreads that his own features will partly repeated in her face. He, therefore, parallels the paradoxical relation between fatherhood and master-hood that has been described by authors such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. Douglass explains that slave women's children "in all cases follow the condition of their mothers," in order to make the slave-owning father's "wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable; for by this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father."[2] And Jacobs tells the story of a Congressman, who insists that his six mulatto children be sent away from the great house before he visits with his friends. What troubled the gentlemen, she observes, "was not the existence of the colored children, but rather the fear that might recognize in their features a resemblance to him."[3]

Indeed, in the scaffold scene that opens The Scarlet Letter, because of her stubborn refusal to reveal the name of Pearl's father, Hester is linked to slave mothers. For her, since Dimmesdale is denied as a father, she will live under mother's condition. "My child must seek a heavenly Father," Hester insists; "she shall never know an earthly one!"[4] Hester's refusal to name Pearl's father highlights the ironies of racial mothering, however, for in the inverted world of slavery, it was a crime for a slave to tell who was the father of her child.

Hawthorne shows the shadows of slavery not only in The Scarlet Letter. He, furthermore, makes a serious effort to connect his writings to the current events of the time. He tried, also, to express the non-conformity of those blacks to the American society as he showed it precisely with the character of Hester Prynne. He wrote and published two Civil War essays, "Chiefly about War Matters" and "Northern Volunteers." The former essay includes a description of a group of fugitive slaves whom Hawthorne encountered on the road, escaping out of the mysterious depths of Secessia. Hawthorne doesn't know what to hope for

[1] Harold Bloom, Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007): 137
[2] Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Delaware: Prestwick House Inc, 2005): 10
[3] Harriet Ann Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Los Angles: Indo-European Publishing, 2010): 160
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 58

on their behalf. He wonders if they will be better off in the north, although he would not have

race is now gone forever, and who must henceforth fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms.[1] Similarly, what Hester seeks from being a non-conformist in the Puritan society is not for her benefit, but rather for the life of her child, Pearl:

> Mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society; and in the nature of the child seemed to be perpetuated those unquiet elements that had distracted Hester Prynne before Pearl's birth, but had since begun to be soothed away by the softening influences of maternity.[2]

Since Hawthorne treats the problems of slavery and women's rights in his writings, he, however, cannot be considered as a racist and a male chauvinist. He, certainly, was aware that the problems do occur. Hawthorne's selection of the seventeenth-century Puritan New England as his fictional period was not unintentional. Donald E. Pease, in his essay "Hawthorne's Discovery of a Pre-Revolutionary Past", provides Hawthorne's reasons for choosing antebellum America as the setting for The Scarlet Letter. Pease states that Hawthorne's fear of revolution led him to write about the "pre-revolutionary" period, as if to comply with the wish of Puritan ancestors "to get the Revolutionary mythos out of the nation's history."[3] The journey back to the very beginning of the New World somewhat represents a journey back to purity — away from the sins of the Modern. The seventeenth-century, thus, represents an alternative world to a man with conservative and antirevolutionary ideology like Hawthorne. Hawthorne's recreation of history in the novel can be seen in the difference between Hester Prynne, the historical source, and Hester Prynne, the fictional character. In "The Custom House," Hawthorne describes the source for his main character as "a very old, but not decrepit woman, of a stately and solemn aspect."[4] However in the novel, Hester becomes a "beautiful woman" whose face glows with girlish beauty. The fictional Hester is no longer the Hester whose history Hawthorne accidentally stumbles across in the Custom House. This new Hester is a culturally-biased creation, created within the

[1] Leland S. Person, The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 29-30
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 80
[3] Donald E. Pease, Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987): 51
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 28

influence of nineteenth century culture and her author's ideological concerns. Thus, what

3. Hester Begins As Anew :

Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is "an enduring example" of a literature that indicates a "strict Non-conformity."[1] Hester Prynne, its heroine, did not conform to the Puritan society as she did not accept their way of life and their beliefs. In her non-conformity to society, she committed the sin. The scarlet letter was placed upon her bosom as a symbol of shame. She was shunned by society, but she dealt with this by continuing in self-reliance. Hester is a symbol of individualism and non-conformity, and her scarlet 'A' reminds people of her will to break society's rules.

According to Hawthorne, Hester gives up her "individuality" in order to become "the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion,"[2] and she attempts to read herself at their valuation. Yet, Hester's extirpation of her "individuality," of her inner life of "impulse," is hardly so complete or successful as she wishes to believe. It is to this repressed "impulse," for instance, that she expresses secretly her feelings through the art of needlework, with which she decorates her scarlet letter and her daughter, Pearl. For all of her outward social conformity, Hester's needle work "appeared to have also a deeper meaning."[3] Though it is a decorative art, it is, however, an act of self-expression, like Hester's adultery, within a society that demands a total conformity of the individual and a surrender of his self-hood. Hester represents the artist in American society.

Generally speaking, the life of the artist in America had separated him from society and from reality. Hester's life differs. Being an artist, on contrary, connects her to society and reality. Embroidery enables her to return to society, and rather than representing her non-conformity and unrestrained behaviour, it demonstrates stability, equilibrium and permanence.

[1] Christopher Howse, Best Sermons Ever (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002): xvi
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 67
[3] Ibid.: 70

The outward conformity does not prevent Hester from proclaiming her quite revolutionary and "firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish

forest, she determines to cast off the arts of deception to act openly on the truths of impulse and individuality. "See!" she proclaims, throwing off the scarlet letter, "With this symbol, I undo it all, and make it as it had never been!" [2] In this event, Hester tried to revolt openly over the Puritan society, but she failed. Michael Colacurcio explains that "This open rebellion is frustrated: Hester must reassume the scarlet letter — first to placate Pearl, then to conceal from the town her plan to escape with Dimmesdale — and Dimmesdale's confession and death undermine this plan permanently."[3]

But there is a deeper meaning in the frustration of Hester's open rebellion, her avowal of overt sincerity. Hester, in the forest, is doing what Dimmesdale does in his final confession on the scaffold: She is giving an outward representation to her inner feelings under the repression of public spectacle. She, then, repudiates the basic meaning of the symbol 'A' and, thereby, repudiates the most essential role of her character, the freedom seeker. She says: "See! With this symbol, I undo it all!"[4] Pearl, who has been considered as a symbol simultaneously of inward rebellion and outward conformity, is right to refuse to acknowledge this new Hester.

Therefore, if Hester's life with Pearl has taught her anything, it is that the unqualified demand of the individual other cannot be displaced onto an idealism that transforms that demand into simple thought. It was not easy for her to be a conformist in a Puritan society and, at the same time, to represent a rebellious individual over its laws. The critic Clark Davis writes that for Hawthorne:

> There is no easy choice between conformity and rebellion; there is instead a set of choices with political effects that are limited by ethical concerns. Unfettered idealism and self-reliance may be just as dangerous as absolute

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 223
[2] Ibid.: 172
[3] Michael J. Colacurcio, New Essays on The Scarlet Letter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 52
[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (London, Penguin Classics: 1994): 172

> conformity; revolution leads to violence and often unchecked abuse through idealism.[1]

Hester is known by her first name while Dimmesdale is known by his last. This can be

Leverenz writes that using her first name encourages intimacy with her freedom from her husband, and from other imposed self-definitions, while the near impossibility of calling him "Arthur" indicates his anxious conformity to inherited social codes.[2]

Hester, consequently, realizes that she will be the only loser through the open rebellion, for, by doing so, she will be refused by her child. As she spends time by herself, she develops independent ways of thinking, assuming a freedom of thought that allows her to reject the community's laws. This pattern of thought gives her a subordinate role to question woman's place and fuels her resistance to the authorities that have punished her. She is just like those men, who change the world with their wisdom. Her freedom of speculation goes beyond all characters' speculations for she can imagine a totally new way of thinking and living. Hawthorne believes in such thoughts, which are often more powerful than deeds to liberate people, and that Hester's outer conformity to the outworn laws of her time is insignificant because an inner self governs her. The narrator writes that "It is remarkable that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them, without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action. So it seemed to be with Hester."[3]

In chapter thirteen, "Another View of Hester", Hester has learned how to cover her inner pride with an external appearance. She prepares herself to reach the moment she declares her personal freedom from every puritan doctrine. This has been sensed by all Puritans, and with her new passionate doctrine she represents a more serious threat than her sin. According to Bercovitch, Hester keeps an in-between situation since she neither accepts the norms of the Puritan community nor refuses them. In his essay "The A-Politcs of Ambiguity", he writes that she

> neither reaffirms her adulterous affair nor disavows it; her actions neither undermine the social order nor celebrate it;

[1] Clark Davis, Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005): 81
[2] David Leverenz, Manhood and the American Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989): 226
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 140

> and at the end she neither reinstates the old norms nor breaks with them. Instead, she projects her dream of love onto some "surer ground" in the future … breaks with tradition by its emphasis on the political implications of [1]

nonconformist, returns to the site of her accusation as an adulteress when she had the opportunity to leave for good, Hawthorne explains that her home is in New England. Though it has been the side of her shame, it is in New England, Hawthorne writes, that she finds "a more real life for Hester Prynne, here, in New England, that in that unknown region where Pearl had found a home. Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence."[2]

The only transcendence of the borders beyond the space of New England settlement comes in the form of Hester's visions as she stands on the scaffold in the marketplace. After describing her from the outside, as she appears to the Puritan multitude, and as she might appear to a cultural outsider, the narrator moves into her mind and follows her own stream of thoughts. In that episode, Hester's mind is out of control, or it seems as a screen on which another mind, rather deeper, casts images. The narrator explains how she feels and writes that:

> Her mind, and especially her memory, was preternaturally active, and kept bringing up other scenes than this roughly hewn street of a little town, on the edge of the western wilderness; other faces than were lowering upon her from beneath the brims of those steeple-crowned hats … Possibly, it was an instinctive device of her spirit, to relieve itself, by the exhibition of these phantasmagoric forms, from the cruel weight and hardness of the reality.[3]

Boston is hardly referred to by name in the tale, but it is a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness. Yet, the relation between New and Old England gradually regains a sense of geographic continuity, as Hester's ability to influence the Puritans' interpretation of the letter she wears also makes apparent the existence of a world beyond the limits of the colony. So, the temporal divide set by the sea and, ultimately, the horizon can be overcome spatially. Hawthorne puts that "be that as it might the scaffold of the pillory was a point of

[1] Sacvan Bercovitch, "The A-Politics of Ambiguity", Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007): 38
[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, op. cit.: 223
[3] Ibid.: 49

view that revealed to Hester Prynne the entire track along which she had been treading, since her happy infancy."[1]

The pillory affords Hester a view over the horizon. She does not only see further in

Him. Unlike her, the magistrates, who stand on the balcony above her, are unable to see further than the sky over their heads to ask God's forgiveness or down to Hester to sentence her judgement.

Stating that Hester has gone across the sea allows the readers to believe that there is something beyond the horizon, which must forever fall off the edges of their every mapping. Yet, Hester returns to Boston to remind her people that, however incomplete, their world and the letters they use to describe it are not simply a fabrication of their imagination and that they must take them somewhat literally to make it all real. Hester's return illustrates Hawthorne's own strategy of settlement with his Puritan past.

Hester is not merely a figure for the shunned outcast, but she, also, embodies the principles of liberation and reconciliation in Hawthorne's text. When she exhorts Dimmesdale to "begin all anew!," she represents the voice of the New World in its most antinomian guise: "The world's law was no law for her mind."[2] By the concluding chapter of The Scarlet Letter, Hester has become a half-prophetic figure by advising those who are in her need that "a new truth would be revealed."[3]

That Dimmesdale, who is advised to go to the Old World to regain the freedom lost in the New, is only the most obvious of the ironies Hawthorne presents in his literature. In the history of Puritanism, the journey to the New World embarked upon so that freedom — religious freedom — could be enjoyed. But here one set of freedoms clashes with another. Hester tries happily to convince Dimmesdale to remove the past, but when her daughter Pearl refuses to accept her until she re-attaches the scarlet letter to her bosom, she receives immediate proof that the past cannot be removed.

Conclusion

[1] Ibid.: 49
[2] Ibid.: 139
[3] Ibid.: 223

Hawthorne's letters, then, explain the bonds between history and community. They demand for self-determination, which is an essential principle of American institutions, for equality, and, then, for self-evident upon which Thomas Jefferson built his argument for a new regime in the Declaration of Independence. Hawthorne tries to encourage the individuals to have a new beginning. The American experiment was meant to prove the workability of this not-so-new idea.

General Conclusion

The thesis has explored the ways in which Puritanism was organized around a set of principles, which elevated mind, reason and order, over the body, emotion and nature which were equated to chaos. The latter trio was also closely related to woman, particularly woman's body as the primary source of sin.

Hawthorne saw in the exploration of the past an opportunity to evaluate how that past shaped the character and culture of America in his own day. Through this interpretation of the past, however, he could also consider issues that were important to mid-nineteenth-century America, including the relationship between the individual and the community, the impact of a society's codes and values upon its members, the place of women in American culture, and the difficult position of the artist or independent thinker in any society, past or present.

In many respects, Puritan manners and morals here become a modern instance, a test case of life in the new world. And this modern life was Hawthorne's as well as the life of his characters. The author of The Scarlet Letter looks back through time, but he exists in historical continuity with the world he describes. The book is most profoundly historical because it is not only about but also written out of a felt historical situation.

In the novel, Hawthorne is more concerned with the lives and relationships of his four central characters Hester Prynne; the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale; Roger Chillingworth; and Hester's daughter, Pearl, figures, who are not historical personages but whose thoughts and actions are affected by the culture that surrounds them. Each of these characters struggles with questions of identity, both in terms of self- and public perception. Their relationships to each other and the patterns of concealment and revelation that emerge from their relations allow Hawthorne to explore how identity evolves and how individuals create public personae to suit their own needs. His characters' interactions with the larger Puritan community raise questions about the nature of patriarchal culture and its control of women, the tension between individual freedom and community standards, and the potential for reintegration into the social order.

The very power in his rendering of a characteristically American consciousness derives initially from his awareness of its being specifically a form of Puritan consciousness. In one

part of his fiction, he did nothing less than use Puritanism to understand Puritanism, and thus worked toward a symbolic understanding by virtue of being historical — of the American's Puritan origins. In another part, he studied later American life, including that of his own time, and showed how it was trying to escape the burden of its heritage. For him, then, Puritanism was, in fact, American history. The factuality of past life had to be transformed into the symbolism of present art. The task he set himself in his art was to make Puritanism correspond to American history: through Puritanism and its conception of the nature and destiny of man. Hawthorne set out to make of American history not just a record of events, of successes and failures, but a vital, indeed necessary and intrinsic, element in the American's consciousness of himself as American. History was to become a means to knowing and living with the self.

Yet, Hester Prynne, who is officially cast down into the underground world of secrets, comes closest to positive vision and speech. Deprived of a public voice and reduced to a gray shadow, Hester lives out the problematic situation that everyone in the book knowingly or unknowingly experiences. Consciously living it out, she emerges on the other side of it. She converts disinheritance into freedom, isolation into individuality, exclusion into a personal presence that is actual and communicable. To do this without denying the negative burden of history — her own and that of her time — is her moral achievement.

She walks out of the town as a representative of an ideal openly opposed to the Puritan moral of the Massachusetts Colony, where immorality is dragged out into the surface. She is converting the isolation of a criminal into the free self-determination of an individual, and she is fighting her natural dignity and force against the abstract dignity and force by which the Puritans attempt to defeat nature.

Hester Prynne, then, chooses a kind of an underground journey to get her freedom from that white men's power. She considers a deeper path to wilderness. The time she returns to England is the only time she has been treated as a human being not as a sinner. She believes that to enhance such freedom, she must experience a full range of civil liberty in her society. This includes freedom of speech, political democracy, religious liberty, and artistic and cultural freedom. It is due to her isolated artistic activity that she has experienced liberty. That woman became able to change the shared practices and values of the Puritan society when she created the art of objects.

Similarly, the scarlet letter that she wears has been deliberately transformed into a suitable decoration for the natural individual. The spell of the letter, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and encircling her in a province by herself, is not cast by Puritan law but by her own sense of its positive meaning; it changes her into an individual because she has changed it into a symbol of individuality.

The individualism dramatized by Hester, in this scene, points toward the freedom of speculation that Hawthorne later attributes to her. The effect of her estrangement, intended to mark her slavery to evil, has been to set her free. Her liberated intellect and heart move through the world of her consciousness.

The Puritan mind in The Scarlet Letter follows a logic of negative freedom. The opposing good and evil of Puritan morality reflects a universe that is diverged into external relations on every level, so that good can be conceived only as an external order imposed by God on a fallen world, by man on a fallen nature, and by society on a fallen individual. Hester Prynne does not abandon that framework of thought but conceives and enacts a dialectical relation between evil and good based on a dialectical conversion of negative into positive freedom.

She is creative in the face of destruction, and she is constantly making an idea of creativity out of the harsh rejections of Puritan doctrine. Dimmesdale is torn apart, rendered insubstantial, by this dialectic, which gives substance to Hester even while it torments her. Unlike her, he experiences the ambiguity of freedom in a primarily negative form; and at the end of his life he commits himself to the negative Puritan basis.

Chillingworth, misrepresenting both the Puritan vision and Hester's, takes evil as his good and thereby ultimately destroys the meaning of such terms as well as the meaning of liberation itself. His immoral world beyond good and evil is also beyond freedom, whether negative or positive.

Pearl is the very principle of freedom, the essence of her time. Since she seems to have been made out of new elements created by the consciousness of her mother, she has been permitted to live her own life, and be a law of herself. As a human child, she has been growing out of a human experience, and she betokens a self being. This is her role, apparently expected with some self-awareness. As being herself a symbol, she gives a new moral interpretation to the things of this world. She does so by blessing the emergent meaning of

temporal life — in Dimmesdale, with his hand over his heart; in Hester, with the embroidered letter on her bosom; but especially in herself, the connecting link between those two. And in this role Pearl is an aesthetic, as well as a moral, exemplar. She represents not only a secular morality but also a secularized symbolism.

Hawthorne's powerful imagination, in The Scarlet Letter and most of his romances, identifies a vast range of moral values, but he gives scant attention to deliberation and choice. He was convinced that authentic moral growth can only occur when individuals, as well as societies, realize that they are drawn to evil as well as good.

Hence, giving priority to a society's right to encourage the greatest possible citizen participation in the life of society, over the rights of the individual, is unacceptable. Communities should think about the standards, values and beliefs that the individual should be able to decide and choose for himself in a democratic society. This indicates the greatest aim in Hawthorne's work to encourage moral and intellectual standards in individuals for the purpose that strong individual autonomy results in strong personal and social responsibilities rather than to return to an order based upon imposed duties, as it was the case in the Puritan society.

People, then, should not look to the law to re-moralize society, but to the moral dialogue amongst community members. The voice of morality within the community is what the individuals should look for to encourage one another to achieve the behaviour that reflects good values and to avoid the one that wrongs them. To have a good society, the regime must be regulated by the reliance on the moral voice rather than on the law.

Hester rebels in the name of human democracy and personal happiness, and she tends to live with her own sense of right rather than have her life governed by a merciless imposed moral law.

Her life displays the self-reliance, freedom of speculation and strong morality. Her struggle with society's codes dramatizes the tension still inherited in America's quest for individual liberty. The Scarlet Letter, in that case, is not just a seventeenth-century history, nor a nineteenth-century romance, but a text of modernity, the consequences of which the Americans still live.

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ملخص:

هذه الرسالة تهتم بتلك العقبات في التجربة الأمريكية التي وضعت نفسها في طريق البحث عن السعادة. يتم فحص الأخلاقيات البروتستانية في ما يتعلق بقصة هوثورن الرومانسية *The Scarlet Letter* (الحرف القرمزي) . بطلتها ،هستر برين، وإن كان ذلك في موقف ثنائي كامرأة في المجتمع البروتستاني، تمردت على القوة ووضعت معركة عنيفة ضد الحكم الاستعماري المكوَّن من قبل الكنيسة والدولة. فمن خلال تصرفاتها المتمردة، يمكننا أن نرى صراعها مع المجتمع البروتستاني .لقد أصبحت مختلفة تماما عن النساء التقليديات اللواتي هن دائما مطيعات للقواعد الغير منصفة التي سنها المجتمع وقد فازت ليس فقط بالاعتماد على الذات في الاقتصاد، ولكن أيضا في الفكر. يمكن إدراك ولادة صورة جديدة للفرد .هذه الأطروحة تحاول تحليل صراع هستر كفرد مع المجتمع ومبادئه المتشددة في ما يتعلق بروحها المتمردة، اعتمادها على النفس وعقلها القوي.