

The Scarlet Letter

The Pursuit of “Some Sweet Moral Blossom”

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Introduction

In 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne brought out *The Scarlet Letter*, which was one of his valuable romances and, moreover, came to a masterpiece throughout the world. He worked at the custom-house in his native town Salem for a living without writing his works, where he seemed to be an efficient surveyor. Although he was dismissed unexpectedly for the vicissitude of the political situation, he began to write the work, as there is no time like the present. His wife Sophia, on the other hand, gave generous support to him by her side job to make lump shades. In this period, his mother was dead of sick, who brought up her children by herself. Around him there were some women including his brilliant sisters who gave inspiration to him

and attracted him to their individualities, with the result that he found out the human heart as the first author writing women who have personalities in the history of American literature.

In the opening chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, “a wild rose-bush,” of which the air would be saturated with the perfume, takes root in front of the prison-door. He sets it to fulfill an enormous and key part over the whole work, for he plucks one of its blossoms and gives it to his reader with his eager hope:

Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to their reader. It may be serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, of relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.¹

It should be noted that the rose expresses “some sweet moral blossom,” which may show the essence of the romance. The symbolism of the sweet rose supposes the two aspects of virginity and sexuality in women and at the same time assists in searching for women who breathe in the romance, which will unveil them as women written by Hawthorne. However, there are ugly weeds growing on the other side of the rose bush. The author of the romance writes that “...such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison.”² It must be constantly kept in mind that the opposition between “some sweet moral blossom” and “the dark flower of civilized society,” namely, the rose and the graceless weeds, which symbolize something important in the volume.

Chapter

Sinful Hester and Innocent Dimmesdale in the Public Eye

Honig maintains that the rose is “the threshold symbol,” that is, “the standard emblem of sexual passion and romantic love a love that has tragic consequences ” and is also the symbol of Hester’s erotic commitment to Dimmesdale. On top of that, he explains that she suggests “society’s import in the individual and the individual’s import in society,”¹ so that she completes the meaning of the rose. The present writer applies the method of comparing the haughty woman with the picturesque minister in the public eye who is in the same situation as she is

they committed the sin together , for it is difficult to judge lightly the kind of Hester's bloom, irrespective of her nature. The research of their attitudes to adultery leads her nature to peep out and challenges the scathing and unjust criticism of Hester. Inevitably, this chapter focuses on the place where they meet in *The Scarlet Letter*.

1. The Pillory in the Daylight

Since it is obvious that Hester's and Dimmesdale's natures, positions in society, and sexes influence their behavior, there is a fundamental difference between their attitudes toward the guilt. The change of her body proves adultery, which people in New England come to realize. In "The Market-Place," Hester ascends the scaffold only with her baby named Pearl and finds the former husband Rodger, who stands aside watching her bosom where the stigma is branded. Although the sin comes from her love to the minister, she fights tooth and nail to undergo the abnormal but actual situation almost alone, even if she must strongly bear the shame, such as the whip or the pillory. It is just her affection for Dimmesdale and her figure protecting him.

Arthur Dimmesdale, who cannot confess his guilt by himself, exhorts her to the revealment of his name as her accomplice of adultery owing to his profession of a minister of religion and his cowardice, as he says, "Take heed how thou deniest to him who, perchance, hath not the courage to grasp it for himself the bitter, but wholesome, cup that is now presented to thy lips!"² There is also his sordid nature different from his compassion for the poor woman, which is extracted from his saying to Mr. Wilson that "it were wronging the very nature of woman to force her to lay open her heart's secrets in such broad daylight...."³ He unconsciously tries to defend himself against the social judgment. However, the thought of the sinful woman and the innocent man is planted into the minds of pure religious people in New England.

2. The Governor's Hall

It is an impressive scene for Hester to tangle with Puritans over her daughter, for she complains to them that Pearl, who God sends for her, is both her treasure and punishment. By her motherhood she desperately asked Dimmesdale to stand up for her view with her "wild and singular appeal, which indicated that Hester Prynne's situation had provoked her to little less than madness...."⁴ Since he acceded to such a request and with a wan face insisted that the fairy child would bring her mother to Heaven and *vice versa*, he could guard her from religious men who put probing questions to an inauspicious parent and child. His behavior establishes the solid fact that the man of probity makes an effort for the child, yet what influences the difference

between father and mother is their affections, out of the hearts, to the daughter developing into a love for others. The reason is his statement that the truth “is the sinful mother happier than the sinful father,”⁵ which hints his feeling toward Hester, who discloses her crime in public and further has a pretty infant who is destined to save her from evil. It is probable that the other face of the minister, such as a seeming love, is tainted with jealousy toward Hester, as her hysterical appeal seems to a madness, which is referred as the minus sides of her passion and ardent love more than womanish petulance.

3. The Pillory in the Night

This is an ironical and tragic section which shows that Dimmesdale, who is a honorable and sophisticated man for New Englanders, agonizes himself because he beguiles them, taunts himself with cowardice, and at last ascends the scaffold on which Hester stood alone in that morning, when nobody finds him at the midnight. The author of *The Scarlet Letter* comments about his sermon, “He had spoken the very truth, and transformed it into the veriest falsehood...he loved the truth, and loathed the lie as few men ever did. Therefore, above all things else, he loathed his miserable self!”⁶ His deed, however, does not accompany with a stab of remorse on the grounds that his fear is not God's eyes but people's, so that it is no exaggeration to say that he ignores the transcendence of God in Calvinism and thinks of society as a special significance.

Hester Prynne works at the death-chamber of Governor Winthrop while the miserable man feels only his twinge of conscience, and passes in front of that pillory with her daughter echoing her shrieks in the silence of the night. She receives his agony there without a word, astonishing at his drawn and haggard face, which makes her offer her hand to him in sympathy and puts the onerous responsibility for him on her. It is not to be denied that a merciful Hester and a sinful Dimmesdale partly unveil in this situation.

4. The Seven Years of Hester and Dimmesdale

Although, in the previous sections, the parallel between Hester and Dimmesdale has pointed to their postures toward adultery, what seems to be lacking is their natures and daily acts for seven years. A good place to start is Hester's deep thought and mental state framed in those years. The public thoroughly excludes her from its circle in affirming that she is a wicked and filthy woman. Out of such a mood, she attempts virtue that is her calling till gradually she gains the position of their Sister, even though it is not suitable to her nature or reflection as she

“saw or seemed to see that there lay a responsibility upon her, in reference to the clergyman, which she owed to other, nor to the whole world besides.”⁷ She would not apply her mind to the external of her mercy, but still she approaches her calling step by step, which means that adultery unexpectedly develops her like a brilliant flower in wastes.

In spite of the pastor committing the sin of the flesh, those who have Puritanism look upon him all the more without knowing what their idol is as “the mouth-piece of Heaven’s messages of wisdom and rebuke and love.”⁸ The potential reason for their jubilation of the pastor’s sermon is that its resource is his animal nature, which drives him to the unpardonable sin, and all of them belong to animal sides. The following example will confirm it. When the blood circle consisted of Hester, Dimmesdale and Pearl appeared on the scaffold, he felt some energy not because a new wild nature flowed into his body but because he recognized his animal side which he had denied. Hester faces her nature different from animal nature a wild nature derived from passion in order to expose herself in the public eye, while Dimmesdale endeavors to extinguish his own quality and restrains his emotion or desire. Although Dimmesdale never acknowledges his error in front of the community, Reverend Mr. Hooper in “The Minister’s Black Vail,” who is in the same situation as Dimmesdale is in *The Scarlet Letter*, persists in his earthly life with a dark cloth which is his mark of a sin. He says on his deathbed, “Why do you tremble at me alone? ...I look around me, and, lo! On every visage a Black Vail!”⁹ The disguise of a confession proves his cowardice not to bring his guilt to the tomb in contrast with Mr. Hooper’s bravery, which indicates that Dimmesdale is a hypocrite.

A human being has various sides, which, suppose they drive him or her to distraction, are just human nature, as even Reverend Dimmesdale has the aspects of meanness and self-complacency. The great disparity between a sinful Hester and an innocent Dimmesdale is love to others, which reverses each meaning. Therefore, the result of this chapter is that the confirmations of Honig’s comments fail to find her mercy or attachment to humans unless he concedes that her passion is not the desire coming from a sexual passion but the demonstrative love of her family named romantic love which develops into that of mankind in the depth of her heart. She is gradually parting from the symbol of eroticism as the fleshly rose.

Chapter

Temptation in the Forest

Hester, in the previous chapter, reveals the figure of a warmhearted woman, who keeps a wild nature and fervor in her. However, it is not sufficient to ignore the forest scene Hester's and Dimmesdale's decisions to leave for Salem by the reason of a lot of opinions that, with respect to this affair, Hester is a dark lady as D.H. Lawrence¹ says and Hawthorne invents the manner of Hester's temptation by means of "her sexual attraction" as Stein² supposes. They regard the beautiful lady as a dominant dark force in *The Scarlet Letter*. Chapter treats the problem about her seduction, because there is no doubt about the need in the reconsideration of the most symbolic and interesting forest's scenery. And "Arthur Dimmesdale gazed into Hester's face with a look in which hope and joy shone out, indeed, but with fear betwixt them, and a kind of horror at her boldness, who had spoken what he vaguely hinted at, but dared not speak,"³ which proves the heart of his unmistakable truth. Hester's suggestion is his voice at the bottom of his heart, and at once a question arises: Is Hester an absolute tempter?

The general definition of temptation in the forest, first of all, may demonstrate how the remarks make up her feature of a tempter. In the medieval times of Europe, that area was a criminal place and worked an imaginative world where supernatural and heretical creatures clustered, such as all kinds of hideous ogres and exquisite fairies. The latter were convenient women who played with men and were defined the forest ladies with obsessions about voluptuous pleasures, as people in those days believed. Generally speaking, the clergy considered whether there was the devil's area and they were phantoms and to the church they were adulteress who symbolized the sexual desire. Such a concept as an enchanting woman allures a man would serve nothing more than to put Hester in a tempter. In "Young Goodman Brown," that place is also a nest of vice where good and religious men gather around the Satan one after another.⁴ The secret meeting between Hester and Dimmesdale, at last, indicates that he yields to her as a limb of the devil.

What seems to be lacking, however, is an idea that the forest is a zone where disburdens people's minds of secrets, impinges upon the reason, and beyond leaves them in confusion on the background of the forest's influence,⁵ which is implicit in another works of Hawthorne. In "Young Goodman Brown," when Brown goes into there to do his doubtful business, leaving his wife Faith in his home, solitude unfavorably reflects upon his intelligence and thrusts him into a sacrificial rite. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest! Think not to frighten me with your deviltry!" he says and "all through the haunted forest, there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown."⁶ To feel remorse for the error, to find reputable persons worshipping the Devil, and to acknowledge Faith to be its companion change his appearance into

a mad man. Gloomy and narrow-minded Richard Digby of "The Man of Adamant, Apologue," who has a mortal disease and looks death in the eye, is out of joint and cankers into himself in the wilderness. Mary Goffe, who is a ghost, comes down to try to give him water as a medicine, but he never takes up her kindness with his ridiculous stubbornness. "Tempts me no more, accursed woman...",⁷ roars he, and after all he dies an dreadful death with virulence. In brief, "the horrible loneliness in the luxuriant forest"⁸ makes his mind stiffened at her miraculous virtue that he has disgusted.

The same influence have already effected Dimmesdale when Hester waits there to convey the physician's identity, about which Hawthorne writes that "the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale exhibited no symptom of positive and vivacious suffering, except that, as little Pearl has remarked, he kept his hand over his heart."⁹ It means his transformation into a feature that expresses a free mind gradually beginning before Hester meets him. It is possible that he consciously or unconsciously assumes that the Divinity does not work in the house of the Satan, as humans do not contemplate him, pretending to suffer from his mark in the town where God can realize everything.

His veritable composition has gushed out of his flesh since then, for he urgently appeals to Hester to retrieve him from the predicament in front of him. As soon as she apologized to him for the hidden reality of Chillingworth he demanded her help. "Had I one friend or were it my worst enemy!"¹⁰ and the minister eventually displayed his downright visage, as "he looked at her, for an instant, with all that violence of passion which intermixed, in more shapes than one, with his higher, purer, softer qualities was, in fact the portion of him which the Devil claimed..."¹¹ His sign brings his evil into daylight, and besides his animal nature. It would be fallacious to say that, concerning his present situation, she plunges him into the depth of despair. The rational reason is that she had no other choice than taking Chillingworth's beck and call under the difficult condition of delirium in the prison where they discussed the companion whose name she did not answer, and if she selected the other it meant his death. Her so-called dark deed is, therefore, proper to the occasion.

In addition, it is an amazing fact that he urges her to allure himself into her proposal that they go out of Salem for the simple reason that Dimmesdale, who well knows her disposition and tenderness to him, may be aware of or speculate about what she hits upon and says to her, "Be thou strong for me!...Advice me what to do."¹² His behavior seems to be influenced by the enchanted woods, while she also perverts the course of her determination there. She verges to a cheerful and vigorous woman instead of her marble-like affection, brings up the wrong behavior,

and that intrinsic tendency appears to emancipate herself from restraint there. The accordance of their emotion, that is, their sympathy reflects the forest which has an impact on their feelings and is the very place where human beings are morally and mentally in tumult.

There is the criticism of her sexual appeal to seduce Dimmesdale in that she takes off her taint on the bosom. It makes a mistake to comprehend her action, for she takes the letter to stimulate him and to prove her joy and happiness not on account of her benefit but on account of his. The chief reason is that he displayed his weakness and nervous collapse. It should be added to the resolution of the problem about her sexuality that she intently speaks about little Pearl after taking off the mark. If Hester takes advantage of his frailty, why does she bring out the child? To entice him into the evil way, she must be careful lest he confronts his sin, namely, Pearl as the emblem of the scarlet letter, but she makes him misgive about their daughter. She behaves herself with cheerfulness and hopefulness without the red badge. Therefore, based on her mercy and the above circumstances, she is not such a woman as abuses her sexuality.

In a word, not only the minister but also his congregation fall into the slough of insanity in the secluded forest for the reason why he throws off the disguise of a saint and his nature reaches the course of vice by his frailty, while she is getting more and more humane but looks at things from a biased view point that she loves him too much. "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, stern and wild ones, and they had made her strong but taught her much amiss,"¹³ the writer of the work affirms, as for Hester.

In concluding, the scene of the forest preserves the possibility of Dimmesdale's temptation rather than Hester's, so that she is not an outright tempter. She approaches the emblem of a benign spirit by consequent of her internal woman, such as affection or sweetness, adding charm to herself.

Chapter

Chillingworth's Evil and Hester's Wild Nature

Although there is no reason to think that Hester as a devil thoroughly leads the minister into traps and she cannot be ranked a demon in Chapter , Stein discusses that "Hawthorne feminizes the Faust motif in depicting the character of Hester." This is the definition from the standpoint that Hester is of ancestry of Chillingworth, who has the element of Faust and Mephistopheles, and she holds a candle to the devil.¹ Irrespective of the antithesis between her salvation as compensation for the sin and his degradation as evildoing itself, such critics argue

that she comes to just a demonic woman who makes Dimmesdale lapse from grace. Since the evil itself means beguiling others and trifling with their sensibility, this chapter gets rid of the remarks of her satanic nature by contradicting the relation of the doctor's evil and her wild nature, and finally, Hester would approach the red rose in morality.

It is certain that Chillingworth's texture is the evil itself that resembles Faust's, which is a life carrying on research, spending his powers to hound the other and selling to his soul to the Devil on account of dissatisfaction at his own lifetime. Individualism can develop human intellect, yet it has a perilous tendency for a man to exaggerate only his importance. The doctor in the work as the Black man threatens both Dimmesdale and Hester after he deceived Hester once, as he admits, and attempts to make his life more vivid and more comfort in the Old World. In other words, she is the first victim of his project. Hawthorne writes that "old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake a devil's office."² Although he is originally a scrupulous and thoughtful man, he has an inquiring mind. He does not abandon the interest of purposes until he contents with the outcome, which is a tendency to lead him into the wrong way.

To take another example in Hawthorne's works, Dr. Ruppaccini reasonably shows his face, tearing his way out, who raises his daughter Beatrice with the plant of poison. She has a capacity to kill humans by her breath, and naturally grieves her unhappiness in the main because she cannot approach anybody. Professor Pietro Baglioni's comments about Ruppaccini are within the mark;

Ruppaccini, it is said of him...that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him³

The human sacrifice of an itch for research is, as it were, his daughter Beatrice, but Dimmesdale and Hester in *The Scarlet letter* are also the victims of an intelligent man. Faust, Ruppaccini, and Chillingworth have one characteristic in common, which is cultivating not human spirits but selfish ones. They are wretches who have all of the kinds of necessities or unnecessariness in happy lives except affections or who are clumsy about the manifestations of emotions.

Hester, in contrast, has a wild nature which shows that a person cannot conduct according

to reason for the cause of passion behind Puritans' disciples, but, to put it another way, she is not responsible and acts on instinct. Puritans linked texture in passion and manifestation in feelings with the guilt, and thought of an ardor for beauty as a nonessential emotion. In a secluded house from society, she put out her sensibility to needlework, and "she had in her nature a rich voluptuous, Oriental characteristic, a taste for the gorgeously beautiful, which save in the exquisite production of her needle found nothing else, in all the possibilities of her life, to exercise itself upon."⁴

Pearl takes over the same unstrained nature as her mother has, for there is the wild energy in the behavior of the little girl who feels her own impulse. However, it is different from her supernaturalness of a mystic and fairy infant given by God. Added to that, "she would be convulsed with a rage of grief, and sob out her love for her mother, in broken words, and seen intent on proving that she had a heart, by breaking it."⁵ Actually, she felt a little love for her father when he protected her from old Puritans in "The Elf-Child and the Minister," which proves that she has an attachment with which her heart is brimming over. Her wild nature which lets her mind free would cause her to have a great deal of potential love, so, even if she cannot understand human sorrow, her sympathy for frailty is in prospect.

Compared with Chillingworth's malicious, Hester's or Pearl's wild sides rightly reflect their emancipations from society, or rather independent souls. It is Hester's nature that is originally distinct from his evil. However, the fact remains that vice attracts humans at all times, for the physician surrendered himself to his grudge against Hester and Dimmesdale without rebellion. As for Hester, it is very reasonable that she hits on the idea that she declines to depend on the devil and she thinks of her death with her daughter, but she cannot. In this point, there is a noteworthy difference between them. Chillingworth lives in his insular little world, that is, the lower world, but Hester is full with love in the higher world:

She determined to redeem her error, so far as it might yet be possible. Strengthened by years of hard and solemn trial, she felt herself no longer so inadequate to cope with Roger Chillingworth as on that night, abased by sin, and half maddened by the ignominy that was still new, when they had talked together in the prison-chamber. She had climbed her way, since then, to himself nearer to her level, or perhaps below it, by the revenge which he had stooped for.⁶

It must also be said that her temperament regarded as the wild element is gradually

arising, for, as for her virtue that she has cultivated since she broke the rule, she builds up her strength of invulnerable position against perversity. The good reason is that the contribution to strangers needs a courageous and merciful soul, but it becomes the core of dispositions and constitutes the resolute belief after all. And she said to him, "I thee, ... for the hatred that has transformed a wise and just man to a fiend! Wilt thou ye purge it out of thee, and be once more human? If not for his sake, then doubly for thine own! Forgive, and leave his further retribution to the Power that claims it!..."⁷ There is no reason that the black man defeats Hester. Chillingworth is evil and a demon, while Hester is a woman who had or has enmity against others sometimes but overcomes it bravely.

She says to her daughter, "Once in my life I met the Black Man...This scarlet letter is his mark!"⁸ When Chillingworth visited her in the prison, she made up her mind to fulfill the pledge of concealing the true identity of her former husband. In the light of her nature inclining to affection, it is supposed that she did her best for Dimmesdale in that moment, as has been suggested in Chapter . She has behaved to help him from her former husband since she saw Dimmesdale's debility.

There is one other thing that is important for the decision about their natures, which is the problem of the unsightly plant in "The Prison-Door" reflecting "the black flower of civilized society." The reason is that, after their talking in a retired part of the town, Hester doubts whether he is a human being and conceives of his dark vegetations:

Would not the earth, quickened to an evil purpose by the sympathy of his eye, greet him with poisonous shrubs, of species hitherto unknown, that would start up under his fingers? Or might it suffice him that every wholesome growth should be converted into something deleterious and malignant at his touch? Did the sun, which shone so brightly everywhere else, really fall upon him? Or was there, as it rather seemed, a circle of ominous shadow moving along with his deformity, whichever way he turned himself? And whither was he now going? Would he not suddenly sink into the earth, leaving a barren and blasted spot, where, in due course of time, would be seen deadly nightshade, dogwood, henbane, and whatever else of vegetable wickedness the climate could produce, all flourishing with hideous luxuriance?⁹

If it can be presumed that the ugly weeds are Chillingworth himself, who overgrows in

society, as these grow up near the evil prison, the boundary between Hester and her former husband is fixed. And his ugly appearance his deformed frame and vicious visage shows that he is the weeds and the very malicious being in *The Scarlet Letter*. The appearance of Dr. Ruppaccini is also gloomy, as expresses that "his face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect...."¹⁰ The significant point to note is that all of them who play major roles as villains are described as the unfavorable old men who alienate the sympathy of readers, even if the results of the romances are not their faults and even if they are almost remarkable men at the beginning of the stories. But Hester cannot fulfill the position of the plant, for her figure is very attractive, or rather her beauty approximate to a rose that fascinates a person. She herself is by no means sinister essentially, because she opposes a devil.

Up to this study has not dealt with it, but to take the light of the meaning of the prison where criminals are cast, there is no doubt that the weeds echo human evil. Another proof is "a dark, flabby leaf,"¹¹ which Chillingworth pulls in the grave and also Nature has sympathy for it, for it grows from the heart of a sinner. When Hester meets the physician and asks him whether she discloses his privacy, he says, "Let the black flower blossom as it may!"¹² The words, "the black flower" mean, needless to say, the evil plant in the opening chapter of the romance and it is also surely the adultery of Hester and Dimmesdale, because it is the flower of sin in the scene of the Devil claiming Dimmesdale "a germ of evil that would be sure to blossom darkly soon and bear black fruit betimes."¹³ What she concerns in is just her sin itself committed with Dimmesdale. It should be concluded that the division between Hester and Chillingworth is fixed firmly in this chapter.

Chapter Of "The Custom-House"

It is important to bear in mind that Hawthorne devised "The Custom-House" narrowly to add a striking effect to its content, as Baym writes, "If 'The Custom-House' makes an introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, so does *The Scarlet Letter* provides the conclusion for 'The Custom-House.'"¹ The analysis of the preface, therefore, is very useful to capture essence in the work, so it will make the contrast between plants near the prison-door clearer. The chapter concentrates on his intention in the romance through the preface on account that he composed it by way of the touch of autobiography, and may be also instrumental in the discovery of two

important features in collisions between spontaneousness in quality and self-control, and between the individual and society.

A bare old Inspector of the preface will clear the former up, who has a prominent animal side that is defined as hunger and an egotistic emotion tending to be fanatical about a banquet:

The original and more potent causes, however, lay in the rare perfection of his animal nature, the moderate proportion of intellect, and the very trifling admixture of moral and spiritual ingredients; these latter qualities, indeed, being in barely enough measure to keep the old gentleman from walking on all-fours.²

The detailed and misleading description exaggerates the individuality of the old Inspector whose main essence is an absolute instinct, and causes confusion that increasingly alienated Hawthorne from his community. He comments, "I myself have often been the recipient of his kindness and my children also. This is my gratitude for it,"³ which is linked to his another statement in the volume. Hawthorne writes in his work, "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!"⁴ He argues in favor of a naked man who exposes the worst or the best to whoever yearns to know him, because he believes that a human being has various aspects of life and continues to seek an ideal world in which he or she lives with unalloyed satisfaction.

Reverend Dimmesdale fears his own brutality on account of having a natural antipathy to it and spends his life to conceal it from society and even from himself. In fact, the congregation joined not with the message from God but with his unveiled nature, an animal nature, mainly because they were excellently impressed by his sermon second times, but it was stem from the occasion to confront his intimate nature. He restrains his behavior and emotion in behalf of his authority and pride, while Hester, who goes on showing her wild nature including the fruit of her passion which is the worst side for Puritans. There is good cause to believe that the wild lady is described as a vigorous woman who readers adhere to, and the man in depression is feeble and slender. The writer of the romance seems to handle the revelation of the worst nature with great favor.

The second discussion is the antagonism between the individual and society.⁵ Hawthorne experienced it in those days, for he was dismissed abruptly for the victory of the Whigs. He made a protest against the suspicion of illegality which caused his displacement and finally found himself notorious in the native town.⁶ Added to it, he was bitterly criticized for the

representation of the old Inspector and General Miller, as he admits that “my preliminary chapter has caused the greatest uproar that ever happened here since witch-times.”⁷ It is apparent that he was separated from society and in this period he would feel defiance to Salem from the consideration that “Hawthorne became *persona non grata* in his native city and was to remain so, to an astonishing degree, for half a century.”⁸ His condition would generate the conflict between order and disorder.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, there are the two conflicts Dimmesdale vs. society and Hester vs. society. The reason why the present writer parts them in two is the problem disclosing the sin or not. Dimmesdale is scared to oppose against the community as the reason for the discord with others, and he avoids confessing his guilty in front of them until the verge of his death. From this point of view, he writhes under his conscience not because he trusts the Divinity but because he dreads the seclusion of society. He thrusts his agony in the external world into Hester, for he considers that Hester’s situation is much better than his. It is just a rip current.

Hester’s life among the public makes Puritans draw conclusions that they receive her as a Sister, who performs an important function in the outside conflict with society. Since a tendency of her nature is riotous, she has no struggle between emotions and remorse. Judging only from Hawthorne’s situation, his letters, and so on, he did not seem to feel the internal opposition except his image of strict ancestors:

“What is he?” murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. “A writer of storybooks! What kind of a business in life, what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!”⁹

However bitterly it was criticized in morality and however gloomily he lived in those days, he did not hesitate to bring out them. He would undergo the exterior antagonism rather than the inner, such as Hester. With all a severe reprimand in his fancy, he continued to write literary works, for he would self-recognize his works.

In this point, there are the internal conflict between manifestations of nature and the restraint of nature, and the external the individual and society in the romance. It is not too far the truth to say that each of these themes applies to the collision between the fragrant rose and the ghostly weed. The former indicates the self-effusion and the personality, whereas the latter the repression and the public. It would be able to say that Hawthorne is fond of an unaffected

person who does not restrain himself and shows himself freely in defiance of the idea in the 17th century and the sense of Transcendentalism, which seeks only the moral and ideal thoughts of human souls. Among people in Salem condemning him for his approval toward self-expression, which had been denied for long time, he continued to insist on his thought. He would hate a closed society. Therefore, such patterns appear in the romance, echoing through its content.

Although the part of reflecting the preface has been commented, Hester has much reference to Hawthorne, who leaves her with his opinion not only about a wild emotion but about the other thing. It would be manifest that to touch his affection and instinct to the native town is connected with his work. In "The Custom-House," what attracts him to Salem is ancestral sins, that is, witch hunt and whipping on Quakers. He does not seem to tear himself away from the town "like the bad half-penny,"¹⁰ for he feels his adverse destiny there. The issue concerning the relation Hester and Hawthorne will be solved by taking into consideration that once Hester cannot leave Salem without the minister and she goes out after his death but still returns there. Because the minister, who shares the bond with her, walks there and an irresistible doom bounds her, she cannot start for the Old World. At last, she leaves for Salem after his death, but she returns there years later, which would be the fixed and inevitable fate and atonement for her sin. Hawthorne appears to exaggerate all of her conduct and, moreover, his ultimate hope in *The Scarlet Letter* would rest on her:

It may be, however, O, transporting and triumphant thought! that the great-children of the present race may sometimes think kindly of the scribbler of bygone days, when the antiquary of days to come, among the sites memorable in the town's history, shall point out the locality of THE TOWNPUMP!¹¹

She gets back from a lengthy voyage and becomes an adviser to women who are injured and despised by men, with the result that she comes to occupy a kind of honorable position in society.

On the other hand, there is not the same emotion as Hester and Hawthorne have to their town in Dimmesdale's determination to cease from his leaving and to climb the scaffold. The central reason is that he does not have an attachment there and the confession in the public includes only a feeling of guilt. And the parting from his land implies to sin the new, and seems to end his days with agony but increases it actually, while his confession must hard hit the citizens who look up to him. The reason why the circumstance of his admission occurs in the glory of his earthly sermon to preserve his laurels from society is to prove his self-centered

nature, which is not affection to New England but guilty conscience.

The present writer gathers from Hawthorne's approval for venting her emotion that she is the very person whom he considers as the lurid but powerful light of his work, and he assigns her an influential and unique position as the rose.

Chapter Pearl's Morals

Hester's and Dimmesdale's daughter, Pearl, has the part of a good conduct to them in the romance, so that Waggoner, who studies "some sweet moral blossom," states that she is the very person who symbolizes it.¹ However, it does not seem to be sufficient to describe the faces of characters, which results in scratching the surface of a work. The careful analysis of Pearl's nature and symbolism of a rose will solve the problem of the symbolized flower.

Pearl has the inherent ambiguity in her nature that is attributed to both "an imp of evil"² and "an infant princess."³ The former comes from her wild freedom and her hostile feeling toward all humans, while the latter her beauty, innocence, and affection to her parent, which brings forth the question of how to deal with her in the paper. Since "the mother's impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life,"⁴ Pearl was a child who were born capricious and whimsical. In the 17th century, a concept that a mother's state of mind impinges upon her child spread among Puritans and, to cite a single instance, out of many, Ann Hutchinson, who was a leader in a religious sect, so-called Hester's model, had a deformed child like a fiend. It was said that the horrible creature different from a human being was the sequel to her heretical opinion against pure religious people. In the same way, Hester's situation produces a powerful effect on Pearl's personality that is so incomprehensible to others or even to her mother, but it is of great significance in the work.

Pearl cuts a conspicuous figure in *The Scarlet Letter* owing to her immortality which means that she cannot be alien to earthly people, for Hawthorne makes use of the word "immortality" again and again to Pearl like "a lovely and immortal flower."⁵ It seems to have something to do with the description that she comes from the "spiritual world"⁶ and cannot grasp human sorrow, which is a significant side for men. On the other hand, the expression "the mortal and earthly people" is applied to Hester, Dimmesdale and other Puritans, for example, "the race and descent of mortals."⁷ It is reasonable to suppose that she plays a considerable part in the work in order

that the clearly defined boundary between a fairy Pearl and mortals is indicative of her special and rare purpose given by Hawthorne.

In fact, she plays a crucial role to redeem her filthy father and mother who suffer terrible pains from their own sin and, in other words, she is an infant whom God sends to them "to be finally a blessed soul in heaven!"⁸ When Hester stands on the scaffold embracing her little baby, the Papist regards her as the Virgin Mary and her Pearl as a baby who is to redeem people's lives. The reason why she is destined to gain immortality at first is the salvation of her parents as the representatives of the people who have various sides in their textures that are not only pure loves or innocent souls but also brutalities. She has a duty to save them from evil things, for Hawthorne explains that "had little Pearl never come to her from the spiritual world, it might have been far other wise. Then, she might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect."⁹

Pearl also has an important part to punish them. In "The Governor's Hall," though Pearl presses her cheek on Dimmesdale, who makes an eloquent defense for Hester and Pearl, she takes a strong attitude against him on the grounds that he still conceals his sin to people. Her role is fully revealed in the forest scene. Since her parents' decision to leave Salem town is not a wise selection, she attempts to control the parents to atone for sin there by her "wild outbreak with piercing shrieks"¹⁰ and by pointing their hearts on the other side of the stream. Recognizing the transformation of Hester into an absolute innocence, Pearl urges her to wear her red badge, as if a fairy infant stands alone in another world against sinful humans. According to an ancient tradition, the fairy is alive over a stream in a thick forest. It may be presumed that Hawthorne takes it and adds a striking effect to the scene of her warning against them; and besides he applies the event that Hester calls Pearl a "young deer," which is linked with the image of Jesus Christ. If the author of the work adapts the ideas, the scene has a double symbolism. There is another punishment from her in the end of her tocsin that is her disdain for the pastor, who keeps his guilt in the heart, while she kisses to Hester, who wears the letter again. This is why she is called just the rose which plays its own moral part admirably.

The element of the wild infant is also worth arguing by reason of the possibility that she has a wild nature which is different from Hester's and is given only her in *The Scarlet Letter*. It is not effusion in emotion that Hester has but a strong sympathy that Nature feels in her, as she takes delight in Nature all the time when Hester talks so desperately with Chillingworth about their secret in the past, or when Hester and Dimmesdale speak earnestly and passionately about what they hope to do in the future. During her waiting on her mother wild animals seem

to accept that she is their fellow and nestle up to her. Hawthorne expresses it best when he writes that “these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child.”¹¹ She is designated a being superior to or inferior to humankind, which is getting manifest in the fact that human sadness is incomprehensible to her which is inclusive of all hearts in humanity in order that animals would feel only their own pains. It follows from what has been said that she has possibility for becoming a woman who receives everything, such as sadness, someday. Donatello in *The Marble Faun*, who agrees with the natural world, would be able to tell that he is a perfect innocence that is identical to the wild nature like Pearl’s and low mentality unlike her until he commits murder with Miriam and is bowed down in deep remorse. Simultaneously, he loses the factor of sympathy for Nature in the process of a wild creature developing into a man.¹² Therefore, Pearl also develops into an attractive woman. One clear possibility is that the rose in the prison-door or throughout the romance ensues from such Nature’s echo.

Although these ideas suggest good likelihood of Pearl’s emblematic mark, the question now arisen is how it connects directly with her in the whole work. Its clue leads the fact that she does not conflict with those three kinds of wicked weeds; the embodiment of evil Chillingworth, human sin, and society. Concerning the meaning of Chillingworth, there is the remarkable contrast between his vile and her moral deed for her parents. The second and third points of those dark sides, however, never keep the antithesis to her, for she does not act her part as a child who is a Heaven’s messenger to the last. She finishes her role when her father confesses his sin on the scaffold in front of the public, and in the same breath her wild nature is gone:

Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which her wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father’s cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl’s errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled.¹³

In addition, the fact that Hester and Pearl leave for the fatal land after the poor and miserable man’s death, and only Hester comes back there leads Pearl’s information, which says that she “was not only alive, but married, and happy, and mindful of her mother...in that unknown region where Pearl had found a home.”¹⁴ In brief, she loses her original wild

sympathy to Nature including her mother's intense passion for the main reason that if she still has it Hawthorne could not regard her as this kind of lady that lives at peace with her precious family. To take some examples in his works, there are Phoebe in *The House of Seven Gables*, who is an innocent domestic woman whom "wildness was no trait of,"¹⁵ and Hilda in *The Marble Faun*, who has a gentle heart and maidenly sensibility. On the contrary, a passionate Miriam, who holds her red gem in her bosom, is absolutely a character that does not have the aspect of a householder. Hawthorne makes a boundary between women, including Hester, who are attractive and wild, and the other type of women like Phoebe and Hilda.

When Hester and her daughter waited Governor Bellingham in the garden where there were roses, she "began to cry for a red rose, and would not be pacified"¹⁶ in the main because the rose-bush may grow from "the foot steps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson,"¹⁷ who is associated with Hester. With all Pearl's screaming, Hester did not pluck it for her to be silent. The inconsiderate and mysterious behavior may display that the author's intention prevents Hester from doing so in order to rank her with the symbolic flower.

From the point of symbolism, there is the intricate but fundamental problem of both virginity and sexuality that symbolize the rose. Beauty in a luscious and fleshly rose is quite characteristic of Zenobia of *The Blithedale Romance*, which is her covert past that she has been married,¹⁸ whereas a chaste one is Hilda, who "caught up one of the rosebuds, that had been showered upon her, and aimed it at the sculptor."¹⁹ It is difficult for Pearl to be defined as either type for the cause of her figure in budding womanhood who has only a pure side without physical and fascinate beauty toward men. In the long run, it is extremely doubtful that she fully symbolizes "some sweet moral blossom."

Conclusion

So far this argument has been expressed to solve the conflict between the two plants in the opening chapter of his romance, referring to what their symbols are applied to. At the same time through the analysis the women written by Hawthorne have shown up against *The Scarlet Letter*. The dark plant has an eventual outcome in the previous chapters. Pearl even in the verge of womanhood lacks the indispensable element of the fragrant rose, which is the conflict with the evil; on the contrary, Hester, who serves a well-organized society with great fervor in her heart, spends the rest of life to save women in Salem who are afflicted by their doleful situations. Accordingly, she fulfills the role of the wild rose which Hawthorne plucked for

readers.

It is a noteworthy fact that her unbridled passion for Dimmesdale flamed up once and committed a capital sin, namely, adultery, so that she was blooming with health and beauty including her voluptuous and luscious body that is her red rose. However, she attempts to cleanse sin from the soul by herself and become a self-made woman who is blighter than even her former husband. She herself completes the meaning of moral blossom and, moreover, it means that her letter absolutely transforms the import to her calling with the rose for the strong reason that her scarlet letter is evidently the red that would have the symbol of sexuality. She cannot regain pureness because of her sin, but she is in possession of a heart of gold by reason of her asserting her own belief and thought, and respecting another's. Frankly speaking, her blossom may attract humans far more than innocent and virginal one that symbolizes an innocuously young soul does. It is a woman, or a human being that Hawthorne, who reiterated that there was the immense possibility of human soul which had various sides, expressed in his romance. Her flame of love seems to turn into the pursuit of another person's happiness in life with hers:

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 surer ground of mutual happiness.¹

The scarlet letter leaves a permanent mark of human frailty on her bosom, but the red is the color of the intense passion imaginable, which overcomes everything. Her mark sympathizes with the red rose that transforms its meanings throughout the work. To declare the complexity of the human to be true, there is an overpowering sadness in *The Scarlet Letter*, while Hawthorne builds up her contained strength not only with her grieve but also with her hope. Her life itself of the graceful but passionate rose relieves the dark ending more than the rose of virginity does. The reason why Hawthorne put the sweet blossom over the work would be that he had boundless hope for human soul and body.

It should be noted that Hester's and Dimmesdale's deeds are wickedness, for the author of the romance would not regard their sin as justice and made much of morality. When he underwent a severe criticism, he sent the letter to his friend. "The Scarlet Letter' is rather a delicate subject to write upon, but in the way in which I have treated it, it appears to me there

can be no objections on that score.”² He did not allow their happiness, so that they cannot lie in the same grave. And her earthly life closes with the letter “A” as the full-blown rose that echoes a whole in the romance:

And, after many, many years, a new grave was delved, near an old and sunken one, ...yet with a space between, as if the dust of the two sleepers had no right to mingle. Yet one tombstone served for both...It bore a device, a herald’s wording of which might serve for motto and brief description of our now concluded legend; so somber is it, and relieved only by one ever-growing point of light gloomier than the shadow:-

“ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A. GULES”³

Notes

Introduction

¹ Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Scarlet Letter*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), p.46.

² *ibid.*, p.45.

Chapter

¹ Honig, Edwin, *The Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory*, (London: Brown University Press, 1959), p.72.

² Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.62.

³ *ibid.*, p.61.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.100.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.102.

⁶ *ibid.*, p.126.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.139.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.124.

⁹ The letters and works of Nathaniel Hawthorne except *The Scarlet Letter* are from *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat et al. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962-). hereafter Hawthorne’s works are referred as the title, the volume, and page numbers.

Hawthorne, *Twice-told Tales*, CE4, p.52.

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¹ Lawrence, D. H., *Studied in Classic American Literature*, (Penguin Books, 1977), pp.89-107.

² Stein, William Bysshe, *Hawthorne’s Faust*, (n.p., Archon Books, 1968), p.116.

³ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.174.

⁴ Hawthorne, “The Young Goodman Brown,” *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Vol.5.

⁵ This idea partly depends on *Americabungaku to Kyoki*, p.53.

⁶ Hawthorne, “The Young Goodman Brown,” *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Vol.5, p.83.

⁷ Hawthorne, “The Man of Adamant, Apologue,” *The Snow-Image Uncollected Tales*, CE6, p.167.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.169.

⁹ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.164.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.168.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.169.

¹² *ibid.*, p.178.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.174.

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¹ Stein, p.113.

² Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.148.

³ Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Vol.5, p.99.

⁴ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.75.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.83.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp.145-146.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp.151-152.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.162.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.153.

¹⁰ Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Vol.5, p.106.

¹¹ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.114.

¹² *ibid.*, p.152.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp.191-192.

Chapter

¹ Baym, Nina, *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career*, (London: Cornell UP, 1976), p.124.

² Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.19.

³ Hawthorne, *The Letters*, Vol.16, p.329.

⁴ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.224.

⁵ Baym, pp.123-151. The large part of this conflict relies on her study.

⁶ Stewart, Randall, *Nathaniel Hawthorne A Biography*, (n.p., Archon Books, 1970), p.87.

⁷ Hawthorne, *The Letters*, Vol.16, p.329.

⁸ Stewart, p.99.

⁹ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.13.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.14.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.43.

Chapter

¹ Waggoner, Hyatt H., *Hawthorne, A Critical Study*, (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp.139-140.

² Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.84.

³ *ibid.*, p.81.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*, p.80.

⁶ *ibid.*, p.144.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.80.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, p.144.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.183.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.178.

¹² Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun; or The Romance of Monte Beni*, Vol.4. Donatello's nature is described in the whole work, but especially, note p.9.

¹³ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.222.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.227.

¹⁵ Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*, Bol.2, p.143.

¹⁶ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.95.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.46.

¹⁸ Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, Vol.3, p.47.

¹⁹ Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*, Vol.4, p.453.

Conclusion

¹ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.227.

² Hawthorne, *The Letters*, Vol.16, p.305.

³ Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p.228.

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- . *Twice- told Tales*, Vol. 4 of the *Centenary Edition*, ed. William Charvat et al., (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1974).
- . *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Vol.5 of the *Centenary Edition*, ed. William Charvat et al., (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1974).
- . *The Snow-Image Uncollected Tales*, Vol. 6 of the *Centenary Edition*, ed. William Charvat et al., (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1974).
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