People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Larbi Ben M'Hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi

Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English

The Scarlet Letter: A Feminist Reading

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master in Anglo-American Studies

By: CHELOUACHE Loubna  Supervisor: AAID Sallah Eddine

Board of Examiners
Examiner: HADDAD Mordjana

2015-2016
Candidate Declaration Form

I, Chelouache Loubna,
candidate of Master at the Department of English, Larbi Ben M’hidi University, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “The Scarlet Letter: A Feminist Reading” in partial fulfillment of MA Degree in Anglo-American Studies is my own original work, and it has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any university.

Date: 30/05/2016
ID number: 11/4000432
Signature of the candidate

………………………………..
……………………………..
Abstract:

This work investigates the traces of Feminism in *The Scarlet Letter*. First, it explains the social and historical background of this novel that is framed by the Puritan history and its social patriarchal principles. As a Puritan and Romantic writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne depicts, first, the Puritan women, called in this research “good women”. Second, he moves to another type, “Hester Woman”, named after Hester, the heroine of the novel. His work criticizes implicitly the Puritan society and its treatment of women. Though, Hester is a 17th century character, she displays a rich catalogue for the Feminists allowing us to apply most of the Feminist theory.

**Key words:** Puritanism- Feminism- The Scarlet Letter- women.
Resumé:
Ce travail examine les traces de Féminisme dans La lettre écarlate. D'abord, il explique le contexte socio-historique de ce roman encadré par l'histoire puritaine et ses principes patriarcales. Comme un écrivain puritain et romantique, Nathaniel Hawthorne représente, d'abord, les femmes puritaines, appelés dans cette recherche de «bonnes femmes». Deuxièmement, il se déplace à un autre type, "Hester Woman", nommé d'après Hester, l'héroïne du roman. Son travail critique implicitement la société puritaine et son traitement des femmes. Bien que, Hester est un personnage du 17e siècle, elle affiche un riche catalogue pour appliquer la théorie féminisme.

Mots clés: Femme, Puritanism- Féminisme, La Lettre Ecarlate..
الملخص:

يبحث هذا العمل عن أثار الحركة النسوية في رواية الحرف القرمزى. سيقوم أولاً بشرح الخلفية الاجتماعية والتاريخية لهذه الرواية. يتحكم في هذه الخلفية التاريخ البيروتاني المنغم ومبادئه الذكورية. كرواتي بيروتاني ورومانطيقي مثل ناثانيل هاوثرن المرأة البيروتانية بصفة عامة، والتي لقبت في البحث المرأة الصالحة. ثم تطرق إلى نوع آخر من النساء تمثله بطلة الرواية، هستر برين. من خلال روايته، نفهم أنه انتقد بطريقة غير مباشرة المجتمع البيروتاني وطريقة تعامله مع المرأة. على الرغم من أن البطلة تنتمي إلى القرن السابع عشر إلا أنها تمثل نموذجاً غنياً للنظرية النسوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المجتمع البيروتاني، النظرية النسوية، الحرف القرمزى، المرأة
Dedication:

I would like to offer this work to my dear family, for you my father, my mother, my brothers and their families. To all my sisters and my brother in law and my girl sister.

Also, I dedicate this research to all my friends and teachers from my primary school to my college.

To all my old friends from the club of Karaté-Do

To my supervisor, special thank and apology.
Acknowledgements:

My thanks first and for most go to my Creator, God.

Iam grateful to all teachers of English department in Larbi

Ben Mhidi University Oum El Bouaghi.

Special thanks go to my supervisor.

I hereby thank and appreciate the examiner’s comments and

positive criticism.
List of Abbreviations:

VS. = Versus

TSL. = The Scarlet Letter

AHAPS= A History of American Puritan Settlers

FPPM= From Puritanism to Post Modernism
# Table of Contents:

Abstract ................................................................. i

Dedication ............................................................... iv

Acknowledgements ......................................................... v

List of Abbreviations or Acronyms ................................ vi

Table of contents ......................................................... vii

**General Introduction** ............................................. 1

**Chapter One: The Puritan Society** ................................ 3

I- History of The Puritan Society .................................... 3

II- The Puritan Literature ............................................ 13

**Chapter Two: Women in The Puritan Society** .................. 20


II- The Hester Woman .................................................. 31

**Chapter Three : The Scarlet Letter : A Feminist Reading** ...... 38

I- Feminism ............................................................... 38

II- The Scarlet Letter : A Feminist Reading ....................... 44

Conclusion ............................................................... 59

Works Cited ............................................................. 60
General Introduction:

Nathaniel’s Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is one of the classical works in the history of the American literature. It can be used as a reference to the Puritan community. It represents almost all the Puritan beliefs. Reading the novel led us to rethink the women status in that society. In fact, Hester Prynne, the protagonist, represents another type of women. She is different from her social sisters; she is rebellious, courageous and rational. Hester Prynne character seems so feminist. So, this study will be a Feminist reading of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hester is a single mother, something forbidden in the rigid Puritan society. She is punished publicly for the sin of adultery. Instead of being ashamed and hiding from the society, she faces it, and she does not care about its members and feels so free. She represents strength and freedom and all the beliefs that belong to the Feminist movement. So, Feminism seems the appropriate theory to be applied in this research.

In fact, this study will rely on many books and articles. In his Journal *The Story of The Puritan*, Eroll Hulse explains in details all that concerns the Puritan society, history and beliefs. In addition, “Representative of the New Female Image- Analyzing Hester Prynne's Feminist Consciousness in The Scarlet Letter”, is a seminal article that this research has relied on. In this article, Yamin Wang says: «Hester’s Rebellious Spirit embodies her feminist consciousness prominently. With this valuable spirit, she defies power and puts up a tenacious fight against the colonial rule combined by church and state. He explains how Hester stands against her Patriarchal society. Moreover, Shegufa presents the Puritan community at the beginning of her essay named “The Scarlet Letter : Struggle of Hester Prynne in the 17th Century Puritan Society” “a]story of a woman named, Hester Prynne, who is punished for her adultery with a young priest Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. She also
has a daughter but denies disclosing her father’s name. Furthermore, the work of Yueiling Li Hester Prynne, *A Heroine of Anti-Puritanism* represents heroine the heroine as an anti-social woman; because she broke the code.

This work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will first deal with the Puritan society and its legacy. Then, it will discuss the Puritan literature and its aesthetics. The second chapter will discuss women in general in the Puritan society and their role in that community. After that, it will contrast Hester Prynne to the first women. The third chapter will first deal with Feminism as a theory then it will apply it on the novel. To conclude, this dissertation will investigate the traces of Feminism in a seventeenth century literary work, a period when the freedom of women was limited.
Chapter One: The Puritan Society:

The history of the United States can be defined by its eras and their characteristics. The colonial period can be highly related to Puritanism. The Puritan society is worth studying because it helps in understanding the foundation of the American nation. Its era can be described as classical, religious and traditional. This chapter will discuss the Puritan society and its development and principles. It will also deal with the characteristics of the Puritan Literature.

I- History of the Puritan:

Historically, the word "Puritan" has been referred to as a group of extremists, similar to the Cathars of France \( ^1 \). According to Thomas Fuller, writing in his Church History, the term dates to 1564 while other stated that dates to 1558 "The word "Puritan" grew in meaning through the Puritan period from 1558 to 1662. Today it has a fairly clear meaning in Christian circles. The development took place and it was used by the Archbishop Matthew Parker giving it the sense of the modern "stickler". In modern times, the word "puritan" is often used to mean "against pleasure"\(^2\).

Puritanism can be seen as movement that aimed at the “purifying of the Church of England” \(^3\), and Roman Catholic Church in contrast to the "Separatists" who believed that the established churches could not be reformed and the only hope was to set up separate churches. The term "Puritan" came in the 1560’s and was adopted by those who found the Elizabethan Religious Settlement of 1559 inadequate.\(^4\) The term Puritan did not therefore refer to strict morality as it is known, a common misinterpretation, but to a reforming attitude towards established churches.
The word "Puritan" was applied unevenly to a number of Protestant churches (and religious groups within the Anglican Church) from the late 16th century onwards. Puritans did not originally use the term for themselves. The practitioners knew themselves as members of particular churches or movements, and not of a precise church. "Precisemen" and "Precisians" were other early derogatory terms for Puritans, who preferred to call themselves "the godly". The 17th century English Puritan preacher Thomas Watson used "the godly" to describe Puritans in the title of one of his more famous works The Godly Man's Picture: "The Puritan pastors concentrated their efforts in other directions such as the development of the godly life, evangelism, preaching, and becoming expert physicians of the soul." (Qtd in Hulse 25)

Also, the Puritans can be related to the first Vestments (which include Vestments in traditional Roman and Gothic styles in all liturgical colors) in the reign of Edward VI. The Puritan movement started in the 1560s and declined in the mid-18th century. Its evolution has known many difficulties and can be explained with reference to the political and religious situation of the Puritans in the British society and toward the Church of England. The Puritans history can be defined by many changes and hard conditions. The Puritans position has changed through the British history from being persecuted into being the governors during the 1640’s after what is known as the Puritan Revolution.

Ideologically, the Puritans were radical Calvinists who believed that the Church of England had betrayed the spirit of the Reformation. Calvinism refers to John Calvin (1509–1564) and his talking to those who are in denominations because it allows almost all denominations. The theological system of Calvin and his followers was marked by a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of humankind, and the doctrine of predestination. Whenever someone contends that faith is a gift from God;
affirms that he has been saved by faith only; embraces false teachings about the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners; or believes it is impossible for a child of God to sin and be eternally lost; he has fallen victim to the Calvinist system of doctrine.

This Calvinist system which shaped the Puritan society had three Puritan beliefs. The first one is to believe that their feelings changed through God’s Grace which is a covenant that requires an active faith, and, as such, it softens the doctrine of predestination. Although God still chooses the elect, the relationship becomes one of contract in which punishment for sins is judicially a proper response to disobedience. During the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards later repudiated Covenant Theology to get back to orthodox Calvinism. Those bound by the covenant considered themselves to be charged with a mission from God. They wanted to be cleansed of envy, vanity, and lust.

The second belief is that the Puritans valued simplicity in almost everything from language to way of life. And finally they saw their bringing Christianity to America as a divine mission as Donald said “America is a nation called to a special destiny by God.” So, the mission that led to the discovering of America was very important for people as if God chose that country to those people. All in all, they were influenced by John Calvin, and believed in original sin and predestination. They based their belief that Man’s relationship with God is a sort of special contracts or covenants. After a long period of predestination in Britain, in the early 1600’s, a group of Puritan Separatist known as Pilgrims migrated to North America to establish a new Christian Commonwealth. Their dispute with the Church of England was over excessive hierarchy and unnecessary ritual that prevented man from communicating with God directly. The Pilgrims were followed by a larger Puritan migration between 1630 and
1640. Their settlement was hand back them, however, their idea that God has willed eternal damnation for some people and salvation for others helped them shape a new society. (Vowell 2014)

In the New World, New England Puritan ministers imposed the Puritan principles of “covenant theology.” Those principles are Calvinist concept and an interpretive framework for the aim of understanding the overall flow of the Bible. It uses the theological concept of a covenant as an organizing principle for Christian theology. The standard form of covenant theology views the history of God’s dealings with mankind, from Creation to Fall to Redemption to Consummation. Their life was based on the Bible where they could follow their general (effectual) calling or it is known as God’s glory through respecting his creation by heeding Christ’s opinion and to love their fellow human beings to present their feeling of merciful.

In theory, the Puritan theology considers all legal jobs equal. It gives measuring to the public useful and worth of the individuals and not in terms of social status. This belief of equal acts appeared even in the period of premillennialism. Premillennialists like Cotton Mather, who believed in the return of the Christ with the age of peace, prosperity, and triumph of the church. After that period, the Puritan millennial appeared which based on the thought that also figured prominently in later American literature and culture its ideology as it is known, based not only the writings of nineteenth century.

Millennialists or the Millennial Generation which are the demographic cohort or Generation Y. That is a period which noticed a high numbers of births. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were divided into two encamped. Then, the postmillennialists with Daniel Whitby, Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Bellamy, and Samuel
Hopkins, who held that Christ’s Second Coming directly followed the expansion of civil and religious American values on earth (“civil millennialism has been placed in the broader context of European Reformed beliefs about the millennium and interpretation of Biblical prophecy, for which representative figures of the period were Johannes Piscator, Thomas Brightman, Joseph Mede, Johannes Heinrich Alsted, and John Amos Comenius. Both Brightman and Mede were Puritan by conviction, and so are identified as such by their biographers.\textsuperscript{11}

The Puritans were politically important in England, but it is not clear whether the movement was in any way a party with policies with leaders before the early 1640s; while in New England it was important culturally for a group of colonial pioneers in America. Fundamentally, the historians still dissatisfied with the Puritan as a working concept for historical explanation. The conception of a Protestant work ethic, identified more closely with Calvinist or Puritan principles, has been criticized at its root.\textsuperscript{19}

In the evolutionary crises each individual feels himself responsible for saving his soul and by this each individual is responsible to transmit its character to be a stronger or weaker one. By Elizabethan times the Puritans' religion emerged as a little bit a reaction against it and its principle of the totally sovereign of the king or the queen especially the decisions they made and the unjudged ones. The religious ideal helped to awake the people of their rights.\textsuperscript{19}

Puritanism played a major role in the English history during the first half of the 16th century. The English Civil War was first defined as a "Puritan Revolution" by Samuel Rawson Gardiner in the 19th century. Puritans were blocked from changing the established church from within, and were severely restricted in England by laws
leading the practice of religion. Their beliefs transported by the emigration of congregations to the Netherlands (and spread it later to New England in North America) and by evangelical clergy to Ireland (and later to Wales), and were spread into society and parts of the educational system, particularly some colleges of the University of Cambridge. They took on distinctive beliefs about clerical dress and in opposition to the Episcopal system which focuses on the form of church in which the office of Bishop is a key authoritative role. It is from the Greek word for bishop. In this system, the local church is part of a hierarchy of clergy who oversees and governs the church denomination. This usually involves regional bishops headed up by an Archbishop. This system helps a lot in spreading the evangelical beliefs which are the center of the Puritan society that based on the Biblical thinking.

The Puritans were in alliance with the growing commercial world since it is a new world which most historians agreed that this discovery was a result of a commercial trip, with the parliamentary opposition to the royal prerogative, and with the Scottish Presbyterians in the late 1630s with whom they had much in common. Consequently, they became a major political force in England and came to power as a result of the First English Civil War (1642–1646). Almost all Puritan clergy left the Church of England after the Restoration of 1660 and the 1662 Uniformity Act that based on government, or as it is called unitary state, is a sovereign state governed as a single entity.

In this system the central government is supreme, and the administrative divisions exercise only powers that the central government has delegated to them. Subdivisional units are created and abolished under, and their powers may be broadened and narrowed by the central government. The United Kingdom, for example, is a unitary state, as its constituent countries (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern
Ireland) have no power to challenge the constitutionality of acts of Parliament. Unitary states contrast with federal states, such as the United States, in which power is shared between the federal government and the states. (The states themselves are unitary.) More than 150 countries are unitary states, including France, China, and Japan., some becoming nonconformist ministers. The nature of the movement in England changed radically and involved as a strong religious motivation, although it retained its character for a much longer period in New England.

The Puritans were dissatisfied with the limited extent of the English Reformation and with the Church of England's tolerance of practices which they associated with the Catholic Church. They formed and identified with various religious groups advocating greater purity of worship and doctrine, as well as personal and group belief. Puritans adopt a Reformed theology and, in that sense, were Calvinists (as were many of their earlier opponents). In church polity, some advocated separation from all other established Christian denominations in favor of autonomous gathered churches. These separatists and independent strands of Puritanism became prominent in the 1640s.

The Puritans were never a formally defined sect or religious division within Protestantism, and the term "Puritan" itself was rarely used to describe people after the turn of the 18th century. Some Puritan ideals became incorporated into the Church of England, such as the formal rejection of Roman Catholicism and some were absorbed into the many Protestant sects that emerged in the late 17th and early 18th centuries in the Americas and Britain. The Congregationalist tradition, widely considered to be a part of the Reformed tradition, claims descent from the Puritans.(Vowell 2014)
From old to new England puritans many aspects changed, this transition touched many field like laws, culture and other issues which played roles in shaping the puritan community.

Puritans left for New England, particularly in the years after 1630, supporting the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and other settlements. The large-scale Puritan emigration to New England ceased by 1641, with around 21,000 having moved across the Atlantic. This English-speaking population in America did not all have the original colonists, since many returned to England shortly after arriving on the continent, but it produced more than 16 million descendants. This so-called "Great Migration" is not so named because of high numbers, which were much less than the number of English citizens who emigrated to Virginia and the Caribbean during this time. The rapid growth of the New England colonies (around 700,000 by 1790) was almost entirely due to the high birth rate and lower death rate per year.

The Puritan harmony lasted for at least a century. That century can be broken down into three parts: the generation of John Cotton and Richard Mather, 1630–1661 from the founding to the Restoration, years of virtual independence and nearly autonomous development; the generation of Increase Mather, 1662–1689 from the Restoration and the Halfway Covenant to the Glorious Revolution, years of struggle with the British crown; and the generation of Cotton Mather, 1689–1728 from the overthrow of Edmund Andros (in which Cotton Mather played a part) and the new charter, mediated by Increase Mather, to the death of Cotton Mather.

In education, New England is different from its mother country, where nothing in English statute required schoolmasters or the literacy of children. The Puritan model of education in New England was unique. John Winthrop claimed in 1630 that the society
which they would form in New England would be "as a city upon a hill," and the colony leaders would educate all. These were men of letters. They had attended Oxford or Cambridge and communicated with intellectuals all over Europe. In 1636, they founded the school that soon became Harvard College.17

Besides the Bible, children needed to read to understand the capital laws of this country, as the Massachusetts code declared, order being of the utmost importance, and children not taught to read would grow "barbarous" (the 1648 amendment to the Massachusetts law and the 1650 Connecticut code both used the word "barbarisme"). By the 1670s, all New England colonies except Rhode Island had passed legislation that mandated literacy for children. In 1647, Massachusetts passed a law that needs towns to hire a schoolmaster to teach writing. This latter also known as the Thirty Years War.18

Forms of schooling ranged to Latin schools for boys already literate in English and ready to master preparatory grammar for Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Reading schools were often the single source of education for girls, whereas boys would go to the town grammar schools. Gender largely determined educational practices; women introduced all children to reading, and men taught boys in higher pursuits. Latin grammar schools did not accept girls (nor did Harvard), since grammar schools were designed to instruct youth so far as they may be fited for the university, and girls could play no role in the ministry. Most evidence suggests that girls could not attend the less ambitious town schools, the lower-tier writing-reading schools mandated for townships of over 50 families.19

The Plymouth Colony Puritans of New England disapproved of Christmas celebrations, as did some other Protestant churches of the time. Celebration was outlawed in Boston from 1659. The ban was revoked in 1681 by the English-appointed
governor Edmund Andros, who also revoked a Puritan ban on festivities on Saturday nights. Nevertheless, it was not until the mid-19th century that celebrating Christmas became fashionable in the Boston region. Likewise, the colonies banned many secular entertainments on moral grounds, such as games of chance and drama.  

Women and men are equally expected to fulfill marital responsibilities. Women and men can file for divorce based on this issue alone. In Massachusetts colony, which had some of the most liberal colonial divorce laws, one out of every six divorce petitions was filed on the basis on male impotence. An issue which held significant cultural ramifications the Puritans exhibited intolerance to other religious views, including, Anglican theologies. The Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were the most active of the New England persecutors of Quakers, and the persecuting spirit was shared by the Plymouth Colony and the colonies along the Connecticut River.

In 1660, one of the most notable victims of the religious intolerance was English Quaker Mary Dyer, who was hanged in Boston for repeatedly defying a Puritan law banning Quakers from the colony. She was one of the four executed Quakers known as the Boston martyrs. The hanging of Dyer on Boston Common marked the beginning of the end of the Puritan theocracy. In 1661, King Charles II explicitly forbade Massachusetts from executing anyone for professing Quakerism. In 1684, England revoked the Massachusetts charter, sent over a royal governor to enforce English laws in 1686 and, in 1689, passed a broad Toleration Act.

The first two of the four Boston martyrs were executed by the Puritans on October 27, 1659, and in memory of this, October 27 is now International Religious Freedom Day to recognize the importance of freedom of religion. Anti-Catholic sentiment appeared in New England with the first Pilgrim and Puritan settlers. In 1647,
Massachusetts passed a law prohibiting any Jesuit Roman Catholic priests from entering territory under Puritan jurisdiction. Any suspected person who could not clear himself was to be banished from the colony; a second offense carried a death penalty. (Vowell 2014)

This freedom spread to touch also equality of women who started to ask for their rights like Anne Hutchinson who were among these martyrs. All the previous characteristics, principles and the history of Puritans are found in the literature either written by them or about them.

II- The Puritan Literature:

The Puritan Literature represents a lot the suffering and the history of the Puritans. During the colonial period, the Puritan literature cannot be defined as the literature we know. It involves sermons, biographies, diaries and autobiographies. The style is generally against decoration and transferring things to nice images. The main theme of their writing is to glorify God.

So, the Puritan’s writings are about their religious mission in the New World, and this justifies the use of the language of the Old Testament, (which is the first section of the Christian Bible, based primarily upon the Hebrew Bible, a collection of religious writings by ancient Israelites) adapted to the realities of the New World. They saw that their experience was anticipated in the Old Testament. Consequently, the Puritan community and its literature introduced a lot of themes which have deeply been rooted in the American literature that came after. Some of these themes are: Idealism and Pragmatism.
The Puritan literature appeared in the 17th Century. At first, it was about the Puritan early life and a recording of their way of living. It can mainly be described as biographical literature. Indeed, the interests of Puritans in the narratives of early life and conversions made the recording of their way of living important to them. The historical literature on Puritans is quite problematic and subject to controversies over interpretation. The early writings are those of the defeated, excluded and victims.26

The Puritan or the Calvinist aesthetic in literature is much more reflected in the Puritan affection to view the world in terms of divisions: depravity vs. innocence, predestination vs. free will, self vs. other, type vs. antitype. Followed by the narrative exchange, distinctive rhetorical strategy that informed Puritan writing was the typological reading of the Bible. Typology is the form of allegorical reading in which Old Testament “types” are interpreted as prefiguration of future “antitypes.” Or it is the way when the one gave future a kind of symbols it is in a way or a another an interpretation of this future. Like Samuel Danforth’s A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand into Wilderness (1671) who interpreted the Puritans’ settlement in the “New World” and construction of the “city upon a hill” as the antitype to Moses’s exodus from Egypt and the subsequent arrival of the “holy nation” at Mount Sinai. Generally, notions of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism that developed in the nineteenth century owe much to this typological tradition that sought perfection (and perfection is only for God). (From Puritanism to Post Modernism n.p.)

The puritan literature is full of achievements and books that follow a given code which gather them from their early settlement. It is a pure heritage that every one uses it as a guide for his or her life. Many Puritans also wrote letters to send back to family and friends they left behind in Europe. Very little fiction appeared during this period that based on reality and true stories. These writings always
have the background of religious beliefs and they influenced a lot by this aspect of religion “the bible”. The Bible played an important role in the daily lives of the Puritans. Families attended church regularly and read the Bible in their homes. Due to this influence, most Puritan writing is based on the styles of the Bible.

Puritans lived a simple life which is shaped by this style of the bible which based on the concepts of humility and simplicity. This influence comes from their religious beliefs. Wearing elaborate clothing or having conceited thoughts offended Puritans. Puritan writing mimics these cultural values in its plain writing style. Puritans wrote directly to the point, and avoided much of the elaborate writing style that became popular in Europe. Simple sentences with common language are the issues that shape the Puritan Literature. This literature did not appear randomly without purpose, yet, the Puritans wrote with specific purposes in mind. Even the letters they wrote to friends and family in Europe performed more of a purpose than simply communicating about their lives and keeping in touch. Puritans' religious beliefs affected their lives on all levels, and their writing illustrated their religion's values, such as the importance of the church and the influence of God in their lives. Writing often became instructive, teaching Christian values. The Puritans did not believe that literature was for entertainment; therefore, they frowned upon "entertainment" genres such as drama (plays) and fiction novels.

The puritan writing based on the bible when they saw a direct connection between Biblical episodes and their life and through that they connect their life to the Bible. Among the writers that appeared in that period, who uses the puritan style: William Bradford 1590-1657 Of Plymouth Plantation when he described a hardships journey to New World using a few figures of speech since he was
setting only events. Also, Mary Rowlandson 1636-1678 A Narrative of Captivist which is a story of capture by Native Americans, her story is considered as a reflection of Bible stories of hardship using allusions to those stories. (FPPM n.p.)

Anna Bradstreet 1612-1672 and her work *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung in America... By a Gentlemens in Those Parts*. It explores religion and personal relationship with God using metaphors. It is published in England without her knowledge.

To conclude; this introductory chapter discusses the history of the Puritan community. Puritanism shaped early American life with its values like following religious matters via referring all the time to the Bible in order to make judgments about anything.
End Notes to Chapter One:

1 The "Cathars" or "le Pays Cathare" were not a race, or a people; they were the followers of a dissident church that flourished in several parts of Europe during the early medieval period.[Matt Hodges, Food, Time, And heritage Tourism in Langued( France.University of Kent: Canterbury, 2001): 16.]


4 Edward VI (12 October 1537 – 6 July 1553) was King of England and Ireland from 28 January 1547 until his death. He was crowned on 20 February at the age of nine. He is The son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, Edward was the third monarch of the Tudor dynasty and England’s first monarch raised as a Protestant. During Edward’s reign, the realm was governed by a Regency Council because he never reached his majority. The Council was first led by his uncle Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset (1547–1549), and then by John Dudley, 1st Earl of Warwick, from 1551 Duke of Northumberland.[Carl Donald, The Influence of Edward VI(1547, 1553) on English Ecclesiastical History,( Wisconsin State University: Lacrosse Graduate School, 1968):11.

5 The Puritan Revolution or The English Civil War was as much the response to the effects of the Reformation as it was a response to the needs of the rising middle classes, the landed gentry. The war itself involved the king, Parliament, the aristocracy, the middle classes, the commoners, and the army. The War tested the prerogative of the king and challenged the theory of divine right. War raged between Parliamentarians, Royalists, Cavaliers and
Roundheads and every religious sect in England. the Puritan Revolution in Britain (in which New Englanders participated) in its redemptive purpose and its sense of living out an elected, providential history on American soil [ “The Puritan Revolution,” Church History II(2016). Video.]


7 Predestination, in theology, is the doctrine that all events have been willed by God, usually with reference to the eventual fate of the individual soul. Explanations of predestination often seek to address the "paradox of free will", whereby God's omniscience seems incompatible with human free will. In this usage, predestination can be regarded as a form of religious determinism; and usually predeterminism .[ Tom French,What is Predestination. Web (2014). Video.]


Mr. Shea, Puritan Society. (30 Nov. 2014). Youtube. Youtube

“Thirty Years War” n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2015.

Tonja Miller, Latin Grammar School.

Mr Studebaker Plymouth Colony and the Pilgrims. 8 Sep. 2014. Youtube. Youtube.


Idealism is a term with several related meanings. It comes via idea from the Greek meaning “to see” [60 Second Philosophy. What is Idealism. Web. 22 Apr 2015.]

Pragmatism rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality, pragmatists consider thought an instrument or tool for prediction, problem solving, and action. Pragmatists contend that most philosophical topics such as the nature of knowledge, language, concepts, meaning, belief, and science are all best examples in terms of their practical uses and successes. [Beco, Aeriel. PRAGMATISM. Web. 4 Nov 2015.]
Chapter Two: Women in the Puritan Society:

In the first chapter, there was a little reference to women’s life in the Puritan society. To serve the objectives of this study; this chapter will analyze mainly Nathaniel Hawthorne’s representation of women in the rigid patriarchal Puritan society. It will focus on the depiction of women in general then move to Hester Prynne.

I- Women in the Puritan Society: The General/ Good Women:

Women in the Puritan society played a very important role: they acted as farm hands, tending their vegetable gardens; as wives, responsible for caring for their husbands; and as mothers, producing and guiding the next generation of the Puritan children. In addition, although their legal rights were limited, some Puritan women were able to become the breadwinners of their families through the sale of goods they produced or animals they raised.1 The most important roles for a Puritan woman were being a mother, a wife, and a workers. Any Puritan town of a significant size had to establish a school. Although the rates of girls attending school were lower than the rates of boys. Yet, many Puritan girls and women did gain a basic education. Some Puritan women, like poet Anne Bradstreet, produced beautiful poems and other works relating their experiences in the colony. (Understanding Puritan Womenhood in Feminist America n.p.)

Though the Puritan women seem to have some important social roles, the Puritan society is par excellence a patriarchal society. There were some limitations on the rights of women in the Puritan society. Women were not allowed to vote, the legislative body that governed the early colony. They could not interact with the
government in their local communities. Women were also restricted from buying and selling land or suing in a court of law. The Puritans, like many societies back then, believed that women were culturally inferior to men. Married women were expected to follow the edicts of their husbands and were unable to interact with local government on their own. In addition, married women were unable to sue for divorce. (UPWFA n.p.)

Widows were the exception to the legal limits on women in the Puritan society. While unmarried girls were supposed to follow their fathers and married women follow their husbands, widows had no male figure to guide them. Puritan widows could sue or be sued in a court of law, could own land, and could discipline any children or servants in their households. (UPWFA n.p.)

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a Romantic writer, who represented the Puritan society and its values. He also depicted women situation in that society. It can be said that Hawthorne’s works are equivocal. For instance, in The House of the Seven Gables (1851), he holds belief in original sin and predestination. In this novel, he asserts the Puritan values, however; the happy end puts the moral atmosphere into question. This moral ambivalence has also been treated in The Blithedale Romance (1852). It tends to expose the selfishness that already exists in human’s innate.

In fact, various analyses of Hawthorne’s short stories claim that Hawthorne’s works express the belief in innate depravity and predestination and the social subjects that were hard to be expressed. However, recent studies of Hawthorne’s use of Puritan typology give pause to such an interpretation. The literary scholar Bill Christophersen believes that whereas [Cotton] Mather . . . used biblical themes or as reference to demonstrate Providence, Hawthorne uses them to question this providence which is the careful actions taken by God toward his people. Perhaps, Melville had it right in the
first place and “this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world, at least, with respect to himself”.

In Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* single males like Arthur Dimmesdale, the adulterous minister, are often tortured creatures who cannot reach their full needs. His life as a gentle man changed when he met Hester.

Hawthorne is a known member in the history and theology of Puritanism. 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. Since Nathaniel Hawthorne was so influenced by the Puritan ideology, his famous novel *The Scarlet Letter* contains a lot of Puritanistic Ideas if not its main theme.

Nathaniel Hawthorne is deeply influenced by his Puritan ancestors. His knowledge of their beliefs and his admiration for their strengths were balanced by his interesting for their rigid and oppressive rules. *The Scarlet Letter* shows his attitude toward these Puritans of Boston in his portrayal of characters, plot, and the themes. The point of view of Hawthorne toward this society seems to be appointed in several places in the novel. Hawthorne's gift for ironic understatement should be balanced by the sense that he feels connected to his Puritan ancestors and admires a number of their qualities. He sees them, like the old General he describes in the novel, as people of integrity, inner strength and moral courage. Those people are considered the ones who can present changes in the community via election.

In the Puritan society, there are two main institutions: the Church and the government. Only men have the power to vote and select the members of those
institutions. In *The Scarlet Letter*; those two branches are represented by Mr Roger Wilson (the Church) and governor Bellingham (State). The rules governing those institutions and the Puritan society are definite and the penalties are public and severe. One can observe that women are excluded from making the laws and when it came to punishment, they are the first to pay.

Furthermore, the Puritan beliefs are somehow unjust or unexplained. In other words, Those laws have been criticized implicitly in *The Scarlet Letter*, because Dimmesdale who represents all that is puritan meets Hester in the forest:

> Be not silent from any mistaken pity and tenderness for him; for, believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee, on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him — yea, compel him, as it were — to add hypocrisy to sin?"\(^5\)

Here, Dimmesdale seems to see hypocrisy as separate from sin, and not as a type of sin. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hypocrisy is clear everywhere. The characters of Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and the very society that the characters lived in. Hawthorne make sure that it was easy to see the sin in this work.

He does not only depict the side of the masculine puritan society, he also depicts variably its women. In the novel we can distinguish two categories of women: “the good women”, who adhere to the puritan society and accept its laws, then; the Hester woman, the opposite of the first class.
The first classification of women is depicted when women do not support Hester and do not sympathize with her when she is punished: "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead." Another woman in the crowd who is the "most pitiless of these self-constituted judges" points to the scriptural basis of their law in the colony:

This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly, there is, both in the Scripture and the statute book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!(TSL 102)

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s works are more critical in the sense of stereotypes and reform motivations. *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) characterizes the cruelty of Puritan punishments directed at those who are different. In the novel, the reader feels that Hawthorne identifies and sympathizes with Hester

When Nathaniel Hawthorne’s (1804–1864) *The Scarlet Letter* first appeared he identifies himself with Hester. Her “A” symbolizes adultery, and his “A” symbolizes art as her shame that is transferred into proud ⁶.

Her shame is public in the exact way that his normally should be considered as a pride and something done freely because of the same acts that her husband did when he left and act as if he is died band after decades he came back to judge her on things that he did. Her pride lies in creating the letter “A,” demonstrating a response to a political system that has stigmatized her and which they lived in which is the puritan one that gave man the authority to do whatever they want far from the religious ideal.
The Scarlet Letter based much more on the status of women at that era. The Puritan society ruled by male, and women have always been considered as a margin thing. The following passage represents women as inferior:

Heaven hath granted thee an open ignominy, that thereby thou mayest work out an open triumph over the evil within thee, and the sorrow without. 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! (TSL, 102)

In his depiction, Hawthorne based much on the moral prescriptive of the whole society merely because it is a religious society. The whole society attacked Hester for her sin, even women could not forgive her and this is rational. Hester’s sin is not accepted in any monotheist religion. Then; the problem is not in Hester’s sin but in the way they treated her even after her punishment.

If we consider the theme of sin from a Puritan point of view and then from Hawthorne’s, the first which is as Puritans sees it; is hardly solved due to the code that governs this society and from the second one deals with it as a common issue. The New England Puritans believed in collective guilt, and some steps once sin was confessed. While Hawthorne agrees that sin was wrong, he attributes a beneficial use to sin. This shift demonstrates individuality, focusing on Dimmesdale and Hester’s respective way following their shared sin rather than on the actual sin.

Puritans viewed sin as wrong in all instances. There is no acceptable reason for sinning. Generally, the Puritans were truthful believers in crushing the evil within a person and society in order to ensure the development of what they termed virtuousness.
However, a person sinned, and then there were specific steps to be followed. After confession, the sinner was blamed and then repenting. If repentance was not the result, then the church had the power to excommunicate, or cast out, the sinner.

Hawthorne takes the topic of sin and uses the Puritans as a backdrop for depicting his own views. He uses Dimmesdale and Hester to portray sin as an agent of change. Both characters grow and develop because of their mutual sin. Dimmesdale cultivates empathy for the sinner and is able to better minister to his parishioners. Hester, on the other hand, connects with society by helping others and live freely as if nothing happen. After the magistrates recognize Hester as a sinner, the Puritan society will not accept her into their society because the Puritan members seek the utopian community and they refuse any one who tries to destroy this plan. Yet, when she outwardly appears to society, the other members of Boston slowly draw Hester back into association with them.

The Puritans not only believed sin to be inherently wrong, but also felt that a one church member breaking the covenant resulted in collective guilt. Noted historian Edmund S. Morgan comments that:

In view of such a belief the reason for restraining and punishing sin is obvious. Since the whole group had promised obedience to God, the whole group would suffer for the sins of any delinquent member, unless that member were punished.

Due to this belief in collective guilt, and in order to keep their covenants with God, the Puritans could not allow any member of their society to continue sinning once the sin had come to their attention. If they had, they would have been implicated in the sin or sinner. While Hawthorne did perceive sin as wrong, he also realized that there
was an educative effect in sin. He felt that the person who has sinned becomes sadder, but wiser in the long run. He thought that sin was necessary in order to truly understand humanity. In this way, Hawthorne differed from the Puritans over the idea of collective guilt. Rather than feeling one person would drag down the entire society, he concentrated on the conflict between passionate, self-assertive, and self expressive inner drives and the repressing counter forces that exist in society and are also internalized within the self.

For Hawthorne, it was not a matter of collective guilt, but rather the battle of self VS self. Dimmesdale and Hester both analyse self throughout the romance because of the hard situation that both of them are in but love still gather them; if not via marriage but through what Dimmesdale do to share Hester the pain and the shame when he hurts himself with a letter just like the one Hester wears. Dimmesdale cannot accept his sinful state and struggles between two levels, the public and the private.

Hester’s awareness about sin permits her to detach herself from the community and eventually grows her above the collective and to live individually. Through her isolation, she develops an understanding of self-awareness not indicative of the other members dwelling in Boston. She knows very well what she did her situation after the sin; she hold the feeling of responsibility.

Although Hester has passed through moments of doubt, her acceptance of her situation allows for a clearer view of not only herself but others. She developed her strength from her isolation, becoming less dependent and more capable. However, Hawthorne did qualify this usefulness of sin with the belief that the educative effect only became positive in light of the sinner’s full repentance. Without repentance, the individual would not change and become an agent for improvement. Hester changes
from an intellectual isolation to a strong member of society by slowly participating again. It is true that at first some tasks were refused her, but Hester “never battled with the public, but submitted uncomplainingly to its worst usage; she made no claim upon it, in requital for what she suffered; she did not weigh upon its sympathies” (TSL, 241).

Through the pain of repeated disgrace for her sin, Hester withdraws from the community. Yet, with Pearl to provide for, Hester is forced to find occupation in town. She quietly accepts what she is given and abuses the strictures of society in the confines of her mind.

The sin is shared with Hester by her beloved Arther Dimmesdale who chose to feel what Hester feels of shame and pain, as an important member in the Puritan society, unjudgement decided toward Dimesdale from his community although he was a cheated and his life started in a typical way yet it ended in an ugly form.

Sin and knowledge are linked in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Bible starts with the story of Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the Eden for eating from the tree which the created warn them to be near from it. As a result of this, Adam and Eve are made aware of their humanness since this tree is about knowledge, this separates them from the divine and from other creatures. The experience of Hester and Dimmesdale recalls the story of Adam and Eve because, in both cases, sin results in expulsion and suffering. But it also results in knowledge of what it means to be human and if there are other possibility to live differently.

For Hester, the scarlet letter functions as her new life that she lives in easily without caring about the others and about the code the community based on. As for Dimmesdale, the responsibility of his sin gives him sympathies so deeply with the sinful brotherhood of mankind. His powerful sermons came from this sense of empathy.
Hester and Dimmesdale consider their own sinfulness on a daily basis and try to use it with their lived experiences.

The Puritan elders, on the other hand, insist on seeing earthly experience as merely an obstacle on the path to heaven. Thus, they consider the sin as a threat to the community that should be punished. Their answer to Hester’s sin is to send her far away. Yet, Puritan society is very hard, while Hester and Dimmesdale’s experience shows that a state of sinfulness can lead to personal growth and new experience that others cannot do it, in addition, sympathy, and understanding of others.

Via this new attempt that both Hester and Dimmesdale passed through, the two feel that they built new issue in this community. When Hester is publicly shamed and forced by the people of Boston to wear a symbol of sin, her unwillingness to leave the town may seem an enigma. She is not physically imprisoned but her soul is in this jail leaving the Massachusetts Bay Colony would allow her to remove the scarlet letter and resume a normal life. Surprisingly, Hester reacts with afraid when Chillingworth tells her that the town fathers are considering letting her remove the letter. Hester’s behaviour is presented on her choice to deside her own identity rather than to allow others to determine it for her. To her, running away or removing the letter would be an acknowledgment of society’s power over her; she would be admitting that the letter is a mark of shame and something from which she desires to escape.

Instead, Hester stays, refiguring the scarlet letter as a symbol of her own experiences and character. Her past sin is a part of who she is; to pretend that it never happened would mean denying a part of herself. Thus, Hester very determinedly integrates her sin into her life.

Dimmesdale also struggles against a socially determined identity. As the community’s minister, he is more symbol than human being because he was the model
that all generations should follow him. Except for Chillingworth, those around the minister that ignore his obvious pain, misunderstanding it as holiness. Unfortunately, Dimmesdale never fully recognizes the truth of what Hester has learned, that individuality and strength are gained by quiet self-assertion and by reordering, not a rejection, of one’s assigned identity.

The sin leads to identity and both are the result of what the past was and what the present days is. There are many traces of time in the novel and this time is in a clash. In the past the only matter for both Hester and Dimmesdale is to do what the society is based on. Hester supposed to wait her husband and Dimmesdale to carry on his way in the Puritan council. However in the present time of the episodes Hester tries to live freely with her shame and Dimmesdale works on the solution of his sin too.

Being far from the events of the novel; even the author himself passed through this experience of contradiction between the past and the present. His purely Puritan ancestors led him to write about such a topic and his isolation when he lived alone with his mother left in him this desire to express his ambiguity in themes and to present in almost all his works the devil side in the human being.

II Women in the Puritan Society: Hester Woman:

Hawthorne presents Hester as an anti Puritan woman. Dimmesdale’s inability to face the public and to declare that he is the second part of the sin and cope with his guilt contrasts with the highly independent attitude that Nathaniel Hawthorne gives Hester because she had the courage unlike Demmesdale. Hawthorne presents Hester as an anti-Puritan in The Scarlet Letter. He sets her up as a representation of individual redemption that the Puritans avoided. In the end, Hawthorne portrays Hester’s way to redemption as if she chose it. While both characters struggle with the perceptions placed
upon them by the Puritan society, Hester wins over the obstacles forced upon her by the Puritans.

Although she initially rebels openly, Hester eventually abandons overt rebellion and understanding of the self. She does not mentioned in history like Ann Hutchinson who called for rebel against any one treated badly with women, but Hester choose to live in normal way as if nothing bad happened.

In order to appreciate Hester’s fault within the community, Hawthorne takes pains to describe the gathered crowd surrounding the prison door. He explains the need for a prison because any Utopian value in human virtue and happiness they might originally plan. Hawthorne follows the description of the prison so far as to present the roses directly outside the door. He writes that perhaps the roses symbolised the beauty in this hard moment and to make atmosphere of calm and relax. How does this serve the question of Hester the anti-Puritan?

Hester’s wilful spirit surfaces at the commencement of The Scarlet Letter. When she emerges from the prison, Hester raised her head as if she wants to say that I do not care and standing in front of the entire town with smile of carelessness again.

According to Puritan society, her sin and the result of it should be objects of shame and result in humility. However, Hester does not show concern or a penitent attitude. Rather, she falls back on her own abilities in order to survive. She even draws attention to the scarlet A on her body and as if she is satisfied with this. The narrator states that even her clothing seemed to express the attitude of her soul.

Hester, the anti-Puritan, arrives with shock behaviour to the spectators with her self-assurance and boldness. Such an introduction to her hints that she has no intention of obeying the Puritan magistrates. Nor does she disappoint from this matter. When
ordered to reveal the name of her lover, Hester did not accept. Even though the clergymen John Wilson remarks that Mr. Dimmesdale “could the better judge what arguments to use, whether of tenderness or terror, such as might prevail over [Hester’s] hardness and obstinacy,” she remains silent (TSL, 99). Silence here is part of Hester’s strategy for resistance; Hester’s limited power lies in the secret of her lover’s identity.

Although oppressed by the judgment of the magistrates, Hester pushes back against them with silence, presently the only form of rebellion open to her. She knows the limits of her power and the inferiority that already follow women, but uses her silence to its full potential. (“Hester Prynne, a Heroine of Anti-Puritanism” n.p.)

When she finally decides to speak, she refuses to name her lover, calling instead upon God as her child’s father. Hester is the conventional sign of the law. Hester has long been the limit of what representations the law can abide of its inability to prevent transgression. Though the decision makers in Boston attempt to bind Hester’s independent spirit, they are unable to force her to answer. Thus, the magistrates lose control over the situation and can only control the situation.

Hester does not care that she stands before the entire town, that the magistrates view her as uncooperative, or that she suffers. In this particular episode, what she cares about is the fact that her lover remains hidden. Only she and he have the power to name or not the other, and for her part she will not resign to the oppressive opinions of the authorities. Moreover, she believes that she will eventually meet with him. (“HPHAP” n.p.)

Hester’s silence is a strong attempt to undermine the stigma of the A, breaks down when she goes to the prison. Having already endured repeated the question that they look for the answer; she keeps the name of her lover and having listened to an discourse
on sin, she is no longer controls her passions. The narrator declares that she was “found to be in a state of nervous excitement that demanded constant watchfulness, lest she should perpetrate violence on herself, or do some half-frenzied mischief to the poor babe” (TSL, 106).

Her spirit revolts against the injustice of penalty for an individual choice. However, this has short-lived and she once again has that desire to revolt and to show her liberation that may bring some helpers; the category of those who my will help Hester are the same those women who hate her, as they are called the good women, the aid will came if Hester starts he presentation of freedom and that of the liberation of the soul. Nina Baym reminds us that “Hester’s lonely path, taken less out of conscious decision than out of temperamental necessity, is that of refusing to believe herself evil”. Told that she’s evil and expected to believe it, Hester denies the accusations and attempts to reconstruct her life. (“HPHAP” n.p.)

Continuing, Hester chooses to remain in Boston. Hawthorne writes that:

kept by no restrictive clause of her condemnation within the limits of the Puritan settlement, so remote and so obscure,—free to return to her birthplace, or to any other European land [...] it may seem marvelous, that this woman should still call that place her home, where, and where only, she must needs be the type of shame (TSL,119).

Having already seen Hester’s iron will, her decision to stay near her lover does not present new thing from Hester because she already kept the name of her beloved secret that he is any one from that Puritan community. In fact, considering the Puritan belief in guilt, Hester’s choice to live in the land of her shame becomes a fixed desire to show her strength in front of whole society; although the chance to leave and to start new life
with new people that no one knows her; but her refuse gave her more power to carry on with cold heart.

Believing herself capable of finding a new way of living, Hester settles into a remote dwelling with her daughter Pearl:

She compelled herself to believe […] that perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result of martyrdom (TSL, 120).

Hawthorne focuses on the importance of shame as a motivation for good by fighting against the shame; Hester focuses instead on how her shame can produce something of value, i.e. an improved sort of redemption. Hester chooses to sacrifice herself for the opportunity to find this new redemption which she seeks. Her spirit refuses the opportunity that seems as a second chance for her. Instead of sad and setting watching other destroy her, she plans to walk slowly until she gets her goal of transformation the adulteress name to angel one.

She settles into a routine, seeking out those “less miserable than herself” (TSL, 125) to offer charity and also “making coarse garments for the poor” (TSL, 125). Day after day she plays the role of helper for other citizens of Boston. Rather than hiding in her coin crying about her situation, Hester persists in changing her activity within the community. She refuses to allow society to control her actions.

Women in the Puritan society suffer a lot but not Hester although her punishment. Puritan women enjoyed traditional roles and were not suppressed because they did not see other things new and they are under male’s power all the time. Hester plays almost
the significant role in the novel and in the Puritan community. Although the unmerciful acts toward her but her rebellious soul allows her to make the change that she wants via presenting her carelessness about all the barriers that faced her in the Puritan society.
End Notes to Chapter Two:


2 "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850) is an essay and critical review by Herman Melville of the short story collection *Mosses from an Old Manse* written by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1846. Published anonymously by "a Virginian spending July in Vermont", it appeared in the *New York Literary World* magazine in two issues: August 17 and August 24, 1850. An early, literary expression of the mid-nineteenth century Young America movement, the work has been cited as an important commentary on, and analysis of, the emerging "New American Literature.” [Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” *Virginian Spending July in Vermont* (1850): n.p.]

3 Sacvan Bercovitch (October 4, 1933 – December 9, 2014) was a Canadian literary and cultural critic who spent most of his life teaching and writing in the United States. During an academic career spanning five decades, he was considered to be one of the most influential and controversial figures of his generation in the emerging field of American studies. [Cabot Owell, *Sacvan Bercovitch*, (USA: Cambridge, n.d.): n.p.]


9 Nina Baym, *Passion and Authority*: 221.
Chapter Three : The Scarlet Letter : A Feminist Reading

After having read The Scarlet Letter, the reader can easily deduce that Hester is a rebellious character and represents in many respects the Feminist principles. So, this chapter is a Feminist reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter. It consists of two parts. The first part will deal with feminism as a theory in order to apply its main principles in the second part.

I- Feminism:

Since the early 20th C feminist criticism has grown to embody a vast series of concerns: a rewriting of literary tradition and history; theories of sexuality and sexual difference, drawing on psychoanalysis, Marxism, and the social sciences; the representation of women in male literature; the role of gender in both literary creation and literary criticism (as studied in so-called "gynocriticism"). Some feminists have urged the need for a female language, while others have advocated appropriating and modifying the inherited language of the male oppressor.

To investigate those concerns, this theory seems complicated and has multiple definitions and origins. In fact, there are many definitions of feminism. First, Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as ”the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities “or” organized activity in support of women's rights and interests”1. Here, one can understand that feminism is related to equal rights in economy and civil rights. For instance having the same salary means feminist objectives are achieved. Also, Estelle Freedman, a U.S. historian specializing in women's history and feminist studies, defines it as:
Feminism is a belief that although women and men are inherently of equal worth, most societies privilege men as a group. As a result, social movements are necessary to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies.  

Though Feminism gets its heyday after the second half of the 20th C, it dates back to the Greek days as M.A.R. Habib clearly explains in his book *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory From Plato to the Present*:

Feminist [...] is not a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon. It has antecedents going all the way back to ancient Greece, in the work of Sappho and arguably in Aristophanes’ play *Lysistrata*, which depicts women as taking over the treasury in the Acropolis, a female chorus as physically and intellectually superior to the male chorus, and the use of sexuality as a weapon in an endeavor to put an end to the distinctly masculine project of the Peloponnesian War.

Feminism is the belief that both men and women should have the same rights, opportunities and power in all domains. Then, it becomes a political movement in which women raised their voice to be a political issue. This theory has gone through historical and geographical developments, for instance we have the French Feminism, the American Feminism and the British one.

During the post WWII period, a complete component of political revolution was witnessed as the transformation of signifying acts and conceptions of subjectivity, based on a radical understanding of the power of language in which new
words emerged with new laws. All those concepts and laws have been drawn from
the ideas of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida.

For many centuries, the Western Philosophy has been built on a notion of
universal absolute truth that certifies the superiority and the rightness of the White
man. This philosophy used the language as its obedient servant and led to what is
called logocentrism. ‘Logocentrism’ is the term Derrida used to cover that form of
rationalism which presupposes a presence such as an idea, an intention, a truth, a
meaning or a reference for which language acts as a subservient vehicle of
expression. It set a notorious oppositional system within the western culture such as:
White vs. Black and Masculinity vs. Femininity. Consequently, through privileging
one over the other in those dichotomies, it gave the center to the white man and the
periphery/margin to the black and women, here, certain stereotypes, anchored in the
Western society, led to the victimizing of the periphery or attributing it certain social
role. In other words, the superior term belongs to the logos and is a higher presence;
and the inferior term marks a fall or an absence. However, in the second half of the
20th C, Jacque Derrida destabilized that long deeply rooted system. He offered a
method of reading that changed the way we perceive and interpret literature. Derrida
argued:

In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence
of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the
other, occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is
above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy 4

It can be said that Feminists adapted from deconstruction many principles,
like language is by definition uncontrollable, are particularly useful for them to invert
and revise the traditional hierarchy and assert the primacy of the feminine. So, feminists worked hard to advocate what is called l’écriture féminine.

Feminists such as Annie Leclerc, Marguerite Duras, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous variously participated in advancing a notion of l’écriture féminine, a feminine writing with subjects about women that would emerge from the unconscious and the body. Though it is often translated as "women's writing." The theory, which open the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text, is a work of feminist literary theory that originated in France in the early 1970s through the work of theorists including Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, Luce Irigaray, Chantal Chawaf, Catherine Clément, and Julia Kristeva and has subsequently been extended by writers such as psychoanalytic theorist Bracha Ettinger, who emerged in this field in the early 1990s.

Écriture féminine as a theory foregrounds the importance of language for the psychic understanding of self. The theory draws on the foundational work in psychoanalysis about the way that humans come to understand their social roles. In doing so, it goes on to expound how women, who may be positioned as 'other' in a masculine symbolic order, can reaffirm their understanding of the world through engaging with their own outsidersness.

All in all, the feminists focussed their criticism on the language. For exemple, Luce Irigaray uses Derridean way of analysis and advocates undermining patriarchal discourse from within, a way she pursues in her readings of different discourses from Plato through Freud and Marx to Lacan. She does, however, conclude that a feminine
language would be more smooth and full of femininity, beauty and emotion, to be different from male’s language.

Further, Hélène Cixous finds a tight relationship that can be called a “solidarity” between logocentrism and phallocentrism (where the phallus is a signifier, a metaphor of male power and dominance), a mixture that must be questioned and undermined. Women, she thinks, must write their bodies, to open the resources of the unconscious. While other feminists, however, such as Christine Fauré, Catherine Clément, and Monique Wittig, have challenged this issue on the body as biologically reductive because they are afraid that their works would be classified under the sexual criticism column.

It can be added that there were many events that led to emergence of Feminism. In the U.S.A Feminism received an important motivation from the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and has differed in its content from its counterparts in France and Britain, notwithstanding the undoubted impact of earlier figures like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir.

Betty Friedan’s “The Feminine Mystique” (1963) presents the fundamental protest of middle-class American women with their problems that faced them in work or even in private life. A number of other important feminist works were produced around this time: Mary Ellman’s *Thinking About Women* (1968), Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969), Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970), and Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970).

Millett’s influential book deals with female sexuality and women representation in literature. It argues that patriarchy is a political institution which relies on subordinated roles of women. It also distinguishes between the concept of
“sex,” that biological, and that of “gender,” which is culturally and socially constructed and acquired.7

A number of other feminist texts try to identify alternative and neglected traditions of female writing. This includes Patricia Meyer Spacks’ *The Female Imagination* (1975), Ellen Moers’ *Literary Women* (1976), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). One of the most influential feminist works is Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of their Own* (1977), which traces three phases of women’s writing, a “feminine” phase (1840–1880) where women writers only imitated male models, a “feminist” phase (1880–1920) during which women challenged those models and their values, and a “female” phase (from 1920) which considers women advocating their own perspectives. The Female phase is one of self-discovery, women reject both imitation and protest and turn instead to female experience as the source that should be followed, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature. In fact, Showalter, Lillian Robinson, Annette Kolodny, and Jane Marcus, have questioned the relationship of female writers and male theories, the need for feminist theory and a female language, the relation of feminism to poststructuralist perspectives, as well as continuing educational and political problems.

In a nutshell, Feminism bases its criticism on the revision of literary history, that had been associated with man for a long time. It searches to establish women equal position with man and to modify the deeply rooted stereotypes related to women. Giving women strength and courage in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* seems to be an appropriate case for a Feminist reading.

**II- The Scarlet Letter: A Feminist Reading:**
The Scarlet Letter is one of the classics of the American literature. It can be read from different points of view: Historical, religious and cultural. However, the heroine of the novel Hester Prynne, a female character that represents all the contradictions of the Puritan society seems to be a perfect example for illustrating Feminism. Though she is a sinner, she overcomes all her fears and challenges the established rules of the patriarchal white Puritan society. From her rebellious actions, we can see Hester's feminist consciousness. With this noble character, she becomes different from the traditional women who are always submissive to the unfair rules enacted by men. As the following passage shows:

Indeed, the same dark question often rose into her mind, with reference to the whole race of womanhood. Was existence worth accepting, even to the happiest among them? . . . As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporate.

In the Puritan culture- a part of the Western society, man is the centre of the world, he orders, oppresses and judges women. Men are rational leaders, for instance we have Chillingworth, Dimmesdale- before falling in the sin, since they are
considered as Puritan Members that teach people the wrong and the right. While women are inferior and ruled and manipulated by those men. Though the two characters Hester and Dimmesdale are complice and both of them are adulterous. Hester takes all the blame because she is a woman and she is imprisoned for her sin and doomed to have the letter A of shame on her breast. She is so courageous because she did not give the name of Dimmesdale, and even if she revealed his name no one would believe her because he is an emblematic puritan member. These two passages illustrate the contrast between Hester and Dimmesdale in front of the public.

Hester and Dimmesdale both bear a scarlet letter but the way they handle it is different. Hester’s scarlet letter is a piece of clothing, the scarlet latter, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom” (TSL, 82). Dimmesdale on the other hand, has a scarlet letter carved in his chest. This is revealed when Dimmesdale was giving his revelation, in which “he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed!” (TSL, 381). Since the Scarlet Letter on Hester is visible to the public, she was criticized and looked down on. “This women has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die” (TSL, 79) is said by a female in the market place talking about Hester. She becomes a stronger person through living this hard life. Dimmesdale instead has to live a life of cowardly and selfish meanness, that added tenfold disgrace and ignominy to his original crime.

The courage that those two share is quite similar, in that they have none. They both are afraid of the public and what the public would think of them. Hester refuses to tell anyone about her real husband, Chillingworth, who is still alive, or about her lover, Dimmesdale. Dimmesdale has a boost of courage on the scaffold he says he is
“the one sinner of the world! … there stood one in the midst of you, at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered!” (TSL, 380)

These passages destabilize the dichotomy man/woman. As it is known man is courageous and woman is coward, however; it is the opposite in this case.

Subsequently, Hester represents a new female image, that is totally different from earlier ways of depicting women in the Puritan society as bearers of morals and accepting their submissive role. Hester does not present what Zhang argues about women who are undoubtedly dependents, first of their fathers, then of their husbands, and in case of widowhood, dependents of their sons, if they had any, or of any surviving male relatives. All along the novel, the reader notices that Hester is independent and free from any cuffs imposed by man. Even after the appearance of her Husband, Chillingworth, she lives by her own in the wood isolated and away from the unjust society. “And what am I now?” he demanded, looking into her face and allowing all the evil inside him to appear on his own. “I have already told you what I am! A demon! Who made me into this?”

Living away from the society is so symbolic because one can understand that she does not and cannot accept the ideas that shaped the Puritan community where women are weak and helpless:

On the outskirts of town, far from other houses, sat a small cottage. It had been built by an earlier settler but was abandoned because the surrounding soil was too sterile for planting and it was too remote. It stood on the shore, looking across the water at the forest-covered hills to the west(TSL, 91)

In the Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne creates a new why not precautious female image that fits the contemporary feminist criticism. Yet, at the beginning of the novel
Hester appears as a normal obedient woman who thought that her husband died in one of his missions. Then, she meets Dimmesdale, they fall in love together. Though it is forbidden for a religious man to love and enter in a love affair, it can be said it is acceptable at the part of the reader. Here, one can think that Hawthorne wants to romanticize the Puritan society. As a male writer, Hawthorne uses a woman to show the rigidity of the Puritan society. Here comes the important role of female characters in revising the literary history. In others words, Feminists can advocate Hester role and say that gender is so important because it gives meaning to the organization and perception of historical knowledge. It can be said that Hester plays an important role in conveying the art of Hawthorne. Arnold Weistein discusses the semantic role of the letter A on Hester’s chest. Besides that it is a symbol of adultery, he offers three other interesting interprestations: Hawthorne's "A" goes on to include "able," "angel," and "art."

First, Art is distinctly offered as a second meaning of the "A." Hester, as a single mother, can gain her living only by her needlework, and the Puritan community encourages this particular skill. This indicates that the Puritans care only for the appearance and the beautiful deceiving outside. However, the needlework stands for an artistic work, and here she plays implicitly the role of the writer because she’s constructing a piece of art. This emphasizes again the role of gender in literary history. As Weinstein explicits that she looks like a surrogate for the author himself, she functions as the community artist, and they appreciate her works, whatever her moral transgressions may be. Also, this idea can be reinforced in the prefatory first chapter where Hawthorne narrates the way he "found" the allegedly real "A" in the Customs House, thereby creating the "germ" for his novel. That moment can be described as a magic inspirational moment when the teller meets the
tale, when the 19th century author comes into physical contact with his still-living 17th century materials.

Second, Able is still another key meaning of the "A." Here, we can consider Hester as a superwoman because she could overcome her misery and prove herself in the community. The sin is behind her self-discovery. It is so ironic to change from a shameful woman into a respected one. She becomes the community's sister of mercy, and it is her own suffering that teaches her for the job. The "A" serves, in an extraordinary irony, as Hester's passport to a world full of sorrow and distress, yet, she could see the light at the end of the tunnel and her fall becomes her sanctity.

Hester's "A" functions, then, as the object of attraction and gaze, and Hawthorne fully exploits this concept of spectacle, of a human being on stage and under scrutiny. This point has at length discussed by Feminists. In fact, for Nathalie Sarraute and De Beauvoire, women are trapped in an inauthentically produced gender identity by virtue of the fact that they are the object of a gaze: that of men, each other’s, and their own fantasized eyes of others. In Sarraute’s opinion, women’s entrapment is a male gaze stems both from the way that that gaze imposes certain image upon them. In the world of Sarraute’s novels, everything is a matter of negotiating gazes. The question is how characters can guarantee immunity from the image projected by the gaze of the other. It can be said that Hester really develops an immune wall against the gaze of the community and walks freely and proudly without any fear from them. Like when she exits from the prison, she raised her head and did not fear at all.

The last "reading" of the "A," Hester becomes an angel in her community, she helps people and even after a while they forget about her sin. In contrast, her husband
Chillingworth represents a satanic image though he learns the biblical verses. He incarnates all that is evil. He seeks revenge and humiliating Hester.

Furthermore, the idea of a single mother, an unaccepted and rejected idea then, can be developed and fit the contemporary feminist criticism. Like so many other single mothers before and since, Hester supports herself, resists community officials' attempts to take Pearl away and, most importantly, teaches her daughter that no amount of public shame can delete what is inside you. “This badge hath taught me — it daily teaches me —it is teaching me at this moment — whereof my child may be the wiser and the better, Hester says (TSL 165). Little do they know that Hester is really teaching her daughter about pride rather than their imposed lesson on shame, and for that, she wins stealthy great mom honors.

Being a rebellious spirit, self-reliant, self-confident and strong mind makes of Hester a Feminist character. She represents a full feminist consciousness that enables women to survive and live in dignity no matter what their deeds are. When she walks from prison to the scaffold, she holds her head high and remains in full public view without shedding a tear, her heart is happy. Her face reveals no thought of fear or shame. Hester decides not to remove the Scarlett letter. It is her decision to continuously wear this letter. The letter turns from a symbol of disgrace and punishment into a symbol of pride, courage and distinction. The A becomes a mark of distinction of Hester, as if Hester as an individual woman versus a whole patriarchal society.

Another important idea attributed to Hester. She does not depend on her beauty or body to prove herself in her society.
But the object that most drew my attention, in the mysterious package, was a certain affair of fine red cloth, much worn and faded....It had been wrought, as was easy to perceive, with wonderful skill of needlework....This rag of scarlet cloth,- for time and wear and a sacrilegious moth had reduced it to little other than a rag,- on careful examination, assumed the shape of a letter. It was the capital letter A. By an accurate measurement, each limb proved to be precisely three inches and a quarter in length. It had been intended, there could be no doubt, as an ornamental article of dress; but how it was to be worn, or what rank, honor, and dignity, in by-past times, were signified by it, was a riddle which...I saw little hope of solving. (TSL, 49)

She removes the letter and the cap when she is in the forest, away from people. This is again so symbolic, the fact that she insists confronting the society means that she does not conform to their rules. She all the time hides her hair under her cap. In fact, Hester strong personality does not derive from her experience. Prior to her marriage, Hester was a strong-willed and impetuous young woman. After his reappearance, Hester does not return to her husband, and they do not live with each other. She, also, rejects Dimmesdale and chooses not to be related or dependent on any man either financlly or emotionally. When she asked about her lover’s name, she says "Never! " Here, she rejects any kind of subordination to the other. Another important scene associated with Hester’s strength is when she faces the Governor Bellingham about the issue of Pearl’s guardianship. Here she stands against the state, the law, the authority and power. Billingham is the representative of the White Puritan man. She fights the power with great courage, "God gave her into my
keeping, I will not give her up!” (*TSL*, 169). Hester’s action proves that being a woman is not weak, but strong.

Though ashamed in front of her people for an adulterous act, Hester keeps feeling strong and proud for the sake of her child. She refuses to name the father’s name even under pressure. She carries on as a single parent with grace and fortitude, demonstrating an intellect and courage that one could argue is at least equal to the two men in her life, Chillingsworth and Dimmesdale. She is the only winner in the triangle they form; by her actions she wins back her place in society...though she rejects the notion of living among them having gained an inner strength in her solitude. The following passage explains:

But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period...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...where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticising all (*TSL*, 299)

Hester's place within the Puritan community changes from a traditional puritan woman into someone who defies an established system. Hester liberates herself from a whole social system: from authority and from man’s submission. This procedure can be seen as the realization of true emancipation. This latter has been achieved only in the late 19th C and the beginning of the 20th C.

However, presents a contradictory character who is torn up with actions that come out of a strong woman and inner thought that show us Hester as a fragile
character. Sometimes, the narrator presents Hester as submissive and well-aware of her guilt. She accepts her punishment because she believes that she committed an act of adultery. However, the scene in the governor's hall standing up for herself and her right to raise Pearl, and in the forest-scene where she meets again Dimmesdale after her punishment are evidence to the contrary, in the end "the world's law was no law for her mind." (TSL, 164)

Hester's isolation, imposed upon her by the Puritan patriarchs, means she has to give up the most important things a seventeenth century woman's life revolve around: marriage and a home. Yet her place outside the community is also the cause of her psychological liberation from the stern Puritan norms. "The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread." (TSL, 199)

In fact, when Hawthorne plays with the narrator's and the reader's perception of men and women by switching male and female traits of character and through putting moral issues at stake, he poses a kind of moral Puritan crisis. Throughout the text, Dimmesdale develops sensitivity and a submissiveness which are not at all manlike, while Hester takes charge of the situation. As if Hester and Dimmesdale have switched roles. Hester is, without question, the stronger one. Dimmesdale even calls her his "better angel." (TSL, 201)

While Dimmesdale's health is on the decline because of love, Hester gradually becomes stronger and that the look others look at her as a sinner begins to disappear:"Some attribute had departed from her, the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman." (TSL, 163) If she is no longer a woman, what is she? She has adopted some very masculine qualities, which can be interpreted as a sign of
psychological emancipation. And this proves that gender is socially constructed because qualities of femininity and masculinity are culturally built.

At the same time, Hester’s experience and character demonstrate the social inequalities towards women in the Puritan society. Hester is very self-sacrificing and here she appears as a typical woman. In her relationships with men, she gives and sacrifices at the expense of her convictions. Her marriage to Chillingworth is characterized by inequality from the start. Chillingworth states: "And so, Hester, I drew thee into my heart, into the innermost chamber, and sought to warm thee by the warmth which thy presence made there!" (TSL, 74)

The relationship was not only unequal, but Chillingworth also married Hester under false pretenses: "mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay." (TSL, 74-75) The narrator affirms this view by stating:

Let men tremble to win the hand of woman, unless they win along with it the utmost passion of her heart! Else it may be their miserable fortune, as it was Roger Chillingworth's, when some mightier touch than their own may have awakened all her sensibilities, to be reproached even for the calm content, the marble image of happiness, which they will have imposed upon her as the warm reality. (TSL, 176)

By committing adultery, Hester defies her moral obligations towards her husband. After seven years of the incident, when she sees what Chillingworth is doing to Dimmesdale, she will no longer keep quiet. Hester decides to go against Chillingworth's desires and to stop him; not because he hurts her beloved but because his act is unaccepted, and thereby achieves full independence from her husband:
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 . . . She had climbed her way, since then, to a higher point." (TSL,167)

At the end she is not submissive to Chillingworth, just like she is not submissive to the Puritan authorities in the long run because she does not adhere anymore to a higher law. "The scarlet letter had not done its office." (TSL, 166). The inequality she experiences causes Hester to speculate on the existing balance of power. It makes her want to find alternatives to traditional patriarchal society. This is another aspect of her psychological liberation. "She assumed a freedom of speculation . . . which our forefathers, had they known of it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter." (TSL, 164) Hester foresees a revolution:

She [a woman] discerns, it may be, such a hopeless task before her. As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated. A woman never overcomes these problems by any exercise of thought. They are not to be solved, or only in one way. If her heart chance to come uppermost, they vanish. (TSL, 165-166)
Hester is revolutionary in a world that is not ready for revolution, which is the cause she becomes its apostle on a small scale. The narrator states that it is Hester’s:

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. (TSL,263)

Another form of revolution which takes place within Hester's own life is a revolution concerning her economic status. Hester's place outside the community forces her to become socially and economically self-reliant and to be accepted. This self-reliance could be perceived as a sign of emancipation, if it were not for the fact that the source of her self-reliance was a very feminine one.

When she is in the forest, Hester is also liberated from her feelings of guilt, which she emphasizes by stating that what she and Dimmesdale did "had a consecration of its own." (TSL, 195)

As becomes clear from the examples used above, Hester presents a seventeenth century woman as strong and free as those defended by the 20th C feminists. The narrator displays the 17th C women condition in the Puritan society in general.

The age had not so much refinement, that any sense of impropriety restrained the wearers of petticoat and farthingale from stepping forth into the public ways, and wedging their not insubstantial persons, if occasion were, into the throng nearest to the scaffold at an execution. Morally, as well
as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants. (TSL, 50)

However, Hester breaks all those rules. The narrator raises the question whether Hester is a heroine or an anti-heroine. He describes her as follows:

She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now recognized as its indication. (TSL, 53)

This ambiguity generated by the characterization of Hester led to a questioning whether The Scarlet Letter is a feminist romance.

As a movement which supports equal political, economic, and social rights for women, Feminism is certainly an appropriate way of reading The Scarlet Letter. Traces of feminism appear in this novel and can be applied on Hester character.
End Notes to Chapter 3

1 Merriam Webster online Dictionary. “Feminism” web.15 Dec 2015.


General Conclusion:

Nathaniel Hawthorne is an American Romantic writer. In *The Scarlet Letter*, he represents the Puritan society and its traditions that have shaped the American values for many centuries. At the first glance, this novel seems to support and promote the Puritan way of life that is characterised and guided by rigid religious rules. Those rules are made advocated and applied by man who occupies the two prominent social branches: the government and the Church. It can be said that the Puritan society is patriarchal.

Seemingly, Nathaniel Hawthorne support the Puritan social traditions, however; he implicitly criticizes the way women are treated in that society and he further criticises the hypocrisy of the Puritan society. In fact, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne depicts two categories of women. The first class is labelled “the good women”, who adheres and accepts her inferior and unvoiced status. This kind of women does not support her sister “Hester Prynn”. The latter introduces the second type “the Hester women”. Hester –the sinner, the outcast and the socially victim- does not accept and respect the Puritan rules. She stands against those rules and represents courage, ability, freedom, consciousness, strength and independence. All these adjectives have been defended by Feminism, a modern theory. So, Hester can be defined as a Feminist character. This novel can be read from different points of view: Feminism is one of them.
List of Work Cited:

**Primary Source:**


**Secondary Sources:**

**A- Books:**


### B- Articles:


Cosby, Brian. “Toward a Definition of 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism': A Study in Puritan Historiography”. Print.


C- Web sites:


Aeriel, Beco. “PRAGMATISM” Youtube, Youtube. 4 Nov. 2015.


“Thirty Years War” n.d. *Youtube*. Youtube. 8 Nov. 2015.


**D- Dissertations:**


