

## The Tragic End of Love for Hester's Prynne in the Scarlet letter

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**Abstract:** Nathaniel Hawthorne, is one of the establishers of the American literature. He is the considerable romantic writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is completely influenced by the social background, the times, the family and personal life's experience. His writings reflect the puritan doctrine. In *The Scarlet letter*, the writer narrates a tale of strong and pure love. The study analyzes the reasons of the love with reference to the three major characters' various moods. The study exposes the internal source of tragedy. The study also concerns with females' conditions and society at that era, expressing the effective of the environmental aspects of the tragedy. Then the study focuses on the writer's vision experiences and his purpose of creation, to convey the inescapable of the tragic end. The analyses of the novel can provide readers with a systematic and thorough the comprehension of the sources of the tragedy and thus will recognize the connotation of the literary work accurately.

**Keywords:** Pearl; Tragic End, Hester Prynne; *The Scarlet Lette*.

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### Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *the Scarlet Letter* (1850) is a valuable literary work in which figures of speech invade its components. It has a great bundle of symbolism in it and this issue gives the novel its potentiality. This paper is an attempt to show the sorrowful end love of Hester Brynne.

The tale of *The Scarlet Letter* ended in a grievous image because it displays the causes of the tragedy of love. In addition to the protagonist characters, the writer tries to show romance atmosphere. In the novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, the writer portrays the personalities of Hester and Dimmesdale as greatly varied. Besides, Roger Chillingworth's wickedness in nature acts a vital action in manifestation of the tragedy of love. The huge variations among the three characters (Hester, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth) make love ended in a tragic manner. The current study aims to show the reasons behind the tragedy of love

### The Use of Symbols in the novel

Symbolism as a literary action indicates an aesthetic movement created in France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Symbolism is characterized with the form of French literature considering it as the starting point to the other world of literature. It represents the reaction to the realism and naturalism. Naturalism usually involves a view of man as a victim of natural forces and social setting. Nathaniel Hawthorne was among those who practiced symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*. This novel can be considered as the masterpiece of his literary production since he reveals the themes of legalism, love, sin and guilt.

Cuddon (1998) mentions that "The Word symbol comes from the Greek verb "symballein", "to throw together", for instance the dove symbolizes peace, the cross symbolizes Christianity, and lion symbolizes courage. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the writer well employs the symbols, and he relays on introducing objects with double expressions, the surface meaning and the under surface meaning.

An outstanding symbol in the novel is the scarlet letter "A" that decorated Hester's dress when she is accused of committing adultery crime and gave birth her daughter "Pearl". The letter has a meaning that changes different times. It starts as a symbol of crime and ends as a symbol of alienation and loneliness. The Puritans her and compelled her to wear the letter.

Finally, the reflection of the letter has another connotation which is possibility and angel, because the people in the town realize the letter denotes to the ability of Hester's needlework and poor without selfishness. Therefore, Hester's Character grows to be seen as an innocent among people". In Chapter 13, the people of the town told "Do you see that woman with the embroidered badge? They would tell the others. "It is our Hester-the town own Hester-who is so kind to poor, so helpful to the sick, so comfortable to the difficult!"(Hawthorne,1994:138).

The other symbol in *The Scarlet Letter* is the scaffold is rostrum on which the sinful woman stands and wears the letter "A" on the breast and holding her illegal daughter for a period estimated of three hours:

"It was, in short, the platform of the pillory, and above it rose the framework of That instrument of discipline, so fashioned as to confine the human head in its Light grasp, and this hold it up the public gaze. The very deal of ignominy was Embodied and made manifest in this contrivance of wood and iron..... her Sentence bore that she should stand a certain time upon the platform, but Without undergoing that grip about the neck and confinement of the head.(Hawthorne, 1994:47)".

Scaffold represents as platform for the puritan. They use it to the sinner to stand up in front of the people revealing the sinner's crime. It symbolizes the punishment, and the fate of isolation.

## Methodology

The procedure that is followed in the current study is the qualitative. The choice of qualitative with the conceptual field, to get the main purpose of the study of literary work that comprises: the validity of semantics and make benefit of realizing the meaning of the symbols in the text. (Endraswara, 2008). The paper uses characterization, figurative language, and death and life instinct theory. Firstly, the researcher reads the novel. Secondly, the author composes the words or phrases are related to the topic and the character. Thirdly, the writer uses the theory of life and death to discover how the author of the novel uses characterization, figurative language, and literary devices like metaphor and simile to disclose conflict between life and death for Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne.

## The Major Characters

### Hester Prynne

Hester is a female who loves Arthur Dimmesdale, a religious man, and commits adultery. She introduces many symbols (Kirk, 2000). Firstly, she is a symbol of strength and ability, she spent two years in Boston alone, she also accepts her punishment; this proves her strength to stay in Boston and works as a voluntary nurse in the city giving the people advice of the heart for those who condemned her.

She refuses to reveal the secret and the identity of her daughter's father. She faces the punishment and insults alone. She becomes the symbol of passion because she lets her heart control her thoughts. She is an affectionate lady and her affection makes her fall in love with Dimmesdale. She represents the Symbol of beauty and attraction. In Chapter II Hawthorne Referred:

"The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a Gleam: and a face which besides being beautiful form regularity of feature and Richness of complexion had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and Deep black eyes. 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 dedication, evanescent, and indescribable grace which is now recognized as its indication". (Hawthorne, 1994:45)

### Arthur Dimmesdale

Arthur Dimmesdale is a religious man and represents a symbol of weakness, since he is attempting to cover his crime. His weakness is clear in the novel in the sense that he observes the

punishment of Hester, but he couldn't confess his sin. He is obliged to wear the letter because Hester wears the letter too. Dimmesdale decided to hide his crime which leads him to suffer psychologically. He represents the symbol of hypocrisy because he violates the religious regulations and committed the sin of adultery in a secret way.

Dimmesdale confirms to be a sinner against human, himself, God. He has committed illegal issue to result illegitimate daughter. (Swann, 1971: 76) claims that Dimmesdale's crime against himself makes him paid the value of his fate, proved to be more hurtful and secretly more destructive against humanity and god. Socrates said, "Know thyself," and Shakespeare said, "To Thine own self be true" (Lawrence, 1991: p. 66). Dimmesdale is not ignorant as the writer describes him:

"Rev, Mr. Dimmesdale; a young clergyman who had come from One of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of The age into our wild forestland. His eloquence and religious fervor Had already given the nearest of high eminence in his profession" (72)"

### Roger Chillingworth

Chillingworth is Hester Prynne's husband who left his wife to the puritan settlement while he stayed in Amsterdam for two years. He planned to get revenge of Dimmesdale. Roger was close friend of Dimmesdale, but he has suspicious of Dimmesdale. Hester felt haunted with her husband's close friend: "To sum up the matter, it grew to be a widely defused opinion, that the reverend Dimmesdale, likely many other personages of special sanctity, in all ages of the Christian world, was haunted either by Satan himself, or Satan's emissary, in the guise of old Roger Chillingworth." (Hawthorn, 1959: 159). Likewise, Roger has fulfilled the puritan goal of forbidding his passionate nature. "He had so cultivated his mental part that it could not fail to mold the physical to itself". (P. 60).

### Pearl

Pearl is an illegal girl of Hester and Dimmesdale. According to Hawthorne, the girl represents the symbol of innocence because she doesn't know the story behind the letter "A". She is the symbol of intelligence because she always asks questions about the letter saying "What does the letter mean, mother? -and why dost thou wear it? - And why dost the minister keeps his hands over his hear?" (Hawthorne, 1994:154). Pearl represents the illegal result of illegal relationship between her mother and Dimmesdale.

Pearl is unlike her puritan analogues. She is described as having a gift of understanding and imagination. She got creativity and artistic views from her mother. She inspires a natural custom for her personality and becomes a "nymph-child" or "an infant drayed" (Hawthorne: 205).

While Pearl shares creativity, innocence, and the beauty of nature, she is also shares in the mystery of physical of the universe. She is characterized by a singular challenge of regulations:

"The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence A great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements Were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order Peculiar to themselves, amidst with the point of variety and

arrangement Was difficult or impossible to be discovered” (Hawthorne: p. 91).

### Socio-Origin of the Novel

The novel, *scarlet Letter* conveys the kinds of relationships, community, discipline, religion, and penalty in the 17<sup>th</sup> century especially the Puritan society. The relationship between male and female were very limited. This limitation of the relationship proves that adultery is a bad sin in the community. People of Boston were very strict and everyone must follow the laws, which make Prynne's sin as an example of punishment. Hester's fault such an instance scene is very important of the belief of that era. The primary scaffold is so fundamental because the belief summed up by this scene. Chapter two started shows the sense displayed as “It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit” (Hawthorne, 1989. P. 71) showing that all the people of Boston gathered there to see the punishment. The majority of the people gathered there not for the execution, but for a public punishment of Prynne who perpetrated adultery. One of the townsman told about the punishment of Hester to a stranger saying “they have doomed mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform of the pillory, and then thereafter, for the reminder of her natural life, to wear a mark of shame upon her bosom” (Hawthorne, 1989. P. 58). The scene illustrates the place of values and morals in the society of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the punishment is used as a lesson for other people not to commit such bad crimes (Duan, 2005).

The stranger reveals how most people affected when they see the guilty stands on the scaffold “it irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side” (Hawthorne:48). Women still did not have rights, so anything told by Hester in her defense would have not met ears. Thus, both Hester's regrettable marriage with Roger Chillingworth and her agony after the sin are the consequences of the low females position.

### The Sign of the Meteor

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century was believed in miracles and when Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl stand on the scaffold, a meteor manifests and draws a red “A” in the sky. In chapter twelve, Hawthorne commented “Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed for and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night-watches may so often observe burning out of waste, in the vacant regions of the atmosphere.” (Hawthorne, 1994:130). The appearance of the meteor on the form of “A” represents a great thing especially for the American and puritans. The community leaders and the men who believed in religious issues would interpret such phenomenon as messages from God to warn them from doing such bad deeds (Kirk, 2000).

Here, the sign of the meteor to the scarlet letter has an identical to the “A” on the breast of Hester. It also serves as Dimmesdale's share of the same sin, moreover, the meteor snaps onto the scene. The meteor can symbolize various aspects, both innocence and wickedness, in this recognized scene. Hawthorne show this depends on the characters; the selection will specify whether the meteor is a blessing or curse.

The function of the meteor is not a blessing, casting its furious light on the family, and sheds the light on the shameful action by the father, Dimmesdale, who doesn't acknowledge his crime.

### Conclusion

After examining Nathaniel's novel, it is obvious that the writer introduces his attitude towards the strict and rigid Puritan community; he used so many symbols to reveal spiritual and social status at that period of time. The current study has focused on the tragedy of love in the novel. The form of the love adds a potentiality to the novel which comminutes between various feelings and passions towards sinners and their environment.

Hawthorne tries to use the characterization technique and a special language to disclose the conflict between death and life sense in Hester and Dimmesdale. Arthur Dimmesdale is not able to curb his emotions of forbidden love; he can't escape from the guilt that made him feels agony. The internal conflict that dominated Arthur's mind and feelings is sadness due to the treatment of the society to Hester. He keeps on suffering and lead to health deteriorated and causing death.

Before writing the novel, *The Scarlet letter*, the writer wasn't delightful to write a striking one, but to write a tragedy of “romance”. Prynne conducts true love with her belief and rebellious spirit.

Ideal was influenced by multiple factors and thus acted a sorrowful tragedy. It is very difficult for Dimmesdale and Hester to flee the tragic outcomes and religious background. In this novel, there are many factors contributes to the tragedy of love such as dark social systems, low status of females, and the different kinds of the three major characters' personalities. All of these factors decides that Hester's love could ended in tragedy.

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