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**Portraits of Puritans in Nathaniel Hawthorne's  
Prose Works and Arthur Miller's Drama (Text and  
Film)**

***Zobrazení puritánů v próze Nathaniela Hawthornea  
a dramatu Arthura Millera (v textu a filmu)***

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the diploma work is to compare and contrast the portrait of Puritans in drama and film version of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller with selected novels and short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne. The work will show how Puritanism is viewed from a critical perspective by these two authors, indicating the means by which, through religion, guilt and shame was exploited. The romantic use of myth and symbolism by Hawthorne will be juxtaposed with the dramatic elements employed by Miller.

## ANOTACE

Cílem této diplomové práce je kontrastivní analýza portréту puritánů v dramatu a filmové verzi *The Crucible* od Arthura Millera s vybranými romány a povídkami od Nathaniela Hawthornea. Práce ukazuje kritický přístup obou autorů k puritanismu. Zároveň se zaměřuje na způsob, jakým byla prostřednictvím náboženství zneužívána vina a zostuzení. Práce se nejprve zabývá Hawthorneovými díly, ve kterých autor používá symbolismus a mýty typické pro romantismus, následně se věnuje Millerovu dramatickému dílu.

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## 1. Introduction

In this diploma work I will analyse the portraits of Puritans in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a romantic writer, and Arthur Miller, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century playwright and screenwriter. In chapter II I will introduce briefly the early history of New England which is the setting of these works, and outline the basic tenets of Puritanism and other typical features of the Puritan societies. This will be followed by short biographies of both authors and their personal motivation leading them to explore the theme of Puritans in chapter III.

In chapter IV I will focus on the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, namely his novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and his short stories "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) and "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836). I have chosen these works because they are set historically in Puritan communities and show the lives of the individuals within these rigid societies. I will concern particularly with the female characters and the relationships between men and women in the selected works. The means by which the author creates moods, such as the use of light and darkness, will be also analysed. A thematic analysis will include spectres, allegories and the description of witchcraft in the fiction.

In chapter V *The Crucible* (1953), a drama by Arthur Miller, will be analysed and contrasted with its film adaptation from 1996 based on the screenplay by Miller. I will concentrate on the depiction of the main characters – Abigail Williams, John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor – and the hysteria in the society.

## 2. Puritans

This chapter is dedicated to Puritanism which is evident as the historical setting in selected literary works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Arthur Miller. It is necessary to define Puritanism and the Puritans' origins.

### 2.1 The History of Puritanism

Puritans first appeared in England during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603) as a result of a religious reformation taking place throughout Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Renaissance period was marked with the beginnings of two new important Protestant religious movements, Lutheranism named after the German reformer Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and Calvinism after the Swiss reformer John Calvin (1509 – 1564). The Church of England arose from the latter one since King Henry VIII (1509-1547), the founder of the Church of England, had already condemned the former, Luther, in a publication. The Puritans, nonconformists, thought that the reformation of the Church of England had not gone far enough, that the Church of England could have done more “to purify itself of all symbols of Catholic worship”<sup>1</sup>. Some of the dissenting groups even decided to separate themselves from the Church of England and establish their own church.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the Puritans in England felt safe because “the religious persecution had been directed mainly against the Catholics as the potential political enemies of the Crown (adherents of Spain and France)”<sup>2</sup> but after her death the situation changed. As Queen Elizabeth I died without any heirs of her own, the English throne fell to the House of Stuarts who were ruling in Scotland at that time and the British Isles were united under one crown. When James VI of Scotland ascended the throne

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<sup>1</sup> Ritchie, Donald A., *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, New York : Macmillan, 1985, p 41.

<sup>2</sup> Procházka, Martin et al., *Lectures on American Literature*, Praha : Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2007, p 8.



as James I of England (1603 – 1625), Puritans started to feel discriminated against and endangered because the new King showed sympathies for the Catholics (actually, he was a secret Catholic) and, moreover, public opinion turned against the Puritans. Thus the first groups of nonconformists escaped from England in search of a safer place to practice their religion.

### **2.1.1 The Pilgrims and the Plymouth Colony**

One of the most famous dissenting groups were Pilgrims or Pilgrim Fathers, the predecessors of the Puritans. The Pilgrims headed to the Netherlands first. They settled in Amsterdam and later moved to Leiden where they worked and traded. However, soon they became displeased with Holland. They felt that their language, customs and traditions were under threat in the Netherlands. Therefore they decided to move elsewhere where they could worship God freely in their own way and keep their language and customs. As Europe did not provide any suitable place, America, the new unexplored and unsettled land, became their destination. This idea was shared also by the Puritans. According to William Bradford (1590 – 1657) in his *Of Plymouth Plantation* which described the history of the Pilgrims, one of the main reasons they left the Netherlands was that the life there offered too many temptations. The Pilgrims were afraid that the community would die out or be corrupted in Holland. Bradford, the later governor of their newly established colony in New England, described it in this way:

For many of their children, that were of best dispositions and gracious inclinations, having learned to bear the yoke in their youth, and willing to bear part of their parents' burden, were, oftentimes, so oppressed with their heavy labours, that though their minds were free and willing, yet their bodies bowed under the weight of the same, and became decrepit in their early youth. (...) But that which was more lamentable, and of all sorrows most heavy to be borne, was that many of their children by these occasions and the great licentiousness of youth in that country, and the manifold temptations of the place, were drawn

away by evil examples into extravagant and dangerous courses, getting the reins off their necks, and departing from their parents.<sup>3</sup>

This together with other causes made this group of dissenters move to America. They were determined to found a new settlement there where they would lead a holy life according to the Bible and their sons and daughters would not be threatened by any temptation. They chose Virginia as their destination because the colony with the capital of Jamestown had been successfully established there since 1607 (cf. Johnson 2000). The proximity of another colony would provide them with a safe place to live and trade. Therefore they went back to England to solicit a patent for the new land from the Virginia Company, the owner of the land in Virginia.

Having made contract with King James and the Virginia Company, the first group of settlers, the Pilgrim Fathers, set sail in September 1620 on a ship named the *Mayflower* from the English port of Plymouth. On their voyage to the New World they encountered strong winds and storms which brought them far from Virginia where they had originally planned to land and settle. Despite all the difficulties they managed to reach the coast safely in November 1620, landing on the shore of today's Massachusetts, near a peninsula which they later called Cape Cod. They tried to sail further to Virginia but due to the unfavourable weather conditions stayed in New England and established there a new colony – the Plymouth Colony. Unfortunately, they had not chosen the best time to arrive since the climate in New England was unexpectedly harsh in winter. They had to build their houses amid the winter snows. Lacking supplies and starving, almost half of the settlers did not survive the winter. Bradford described the dreadful situation in the following quotation: “But it pleased God to visit us then with death daily, and with so general a disease that the living were

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<sup>3</sup> Bradford, William, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, New York : Knopf, 1952, pp 24-25.

scarce able to bury the dead.”<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, “the Pilgrims had a deep sense of religious purpose, and they were determined to endure whatever hardships faced them.”<sup>5</sup> Actually, they had nowhere else to go since America was their last refuge. In 1621 they elected William Bradford, the author of the history *Of Plymouth Plantation*, as their governor.

The Pilgrims did not live alone in the New World: beside the English settlers in Virginia many indigenous tribes dwelled there, for example the Massachusett, whose name was later used to denominate the state of Massachusetts. The Indians, nowadays called Native Americans, played an important role in the colonization of America. If it had not been for them, the surviving Pilgrims might have died as well as the colonists in Roanoke Virginia did. An Indian called Squanto shared his knowledge of the American environment with the settlers and showed them how to take advantage of the local plants and crops. He taught them how to grow corn, a typically American commodity. Following Squanto's advice the Pilgrims had a good harvest in the autumn of 1621 and were well prepared for the next winter. In order to celebrate their first successful harvest they invited the Indians and arranged a harvest festival to thank God for his mercy and support. This festivity became known as Thanksgiving and a new tradition was started. The story of the Pilgrim Fathers, who successfully overcame the first hard winter, learned how to survive in America and held the first Thanksgiving, has become one of the celebrated events in the American history. Later it became a legal holiday.

### **2.1.2 Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Puritans**

Another famous group of religious refugees who found their situation in England unbearable, especially after the ascension of Charles I to the English throne in 1625, were the Puritans. Inspired by the success of the

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<sup>4</sup> Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p 95.

<sup>5</sup> Ritchie, *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, p 42.

Pilgrims they also decided to leave for America and found their own colony. Unlike the Pilgrims, Puritans were richer and much better equipped to found a colony. In 1629 a group of wealthy Puritans and merchants led by John Winthrop (1588 – 1649) persuaded the King to grant their newly established Massachusetts Bay Company a piece of land to the north of the Plymouth Colony. They established a charter which enabled them to govern their own territory in New England and, moreover, “it did not specify the location of the company's headquarters”<sup>6</sup>. The shareholders – John Winthrop and his companions – took “advantage of this loophole”<sup>7</sup> and decided to carry the charter to Massachusetts, which would also transfer all the company's administration to America, beyond the control of the British authorities.

In March 1630 the ship *Arbella* carrying John Winthrop and the charter headed to Massachusetts accompanied by the fleet of other six ships (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). On board this ship John Winthrop held a sermon about his plans with the new colony. He wanted to establish a holy community where people would worship God and lead exemplary lives. Such a settlement would represent the New Jerusalem, a city that would serve as a model to the rest of the world and other people would look up to it, the City upon the Hill (see 2.2). John Winthrop and his adherents who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony represented a milder Puritan fraction which did not want to separate from the Church of England unlike the radical Pilgrims, who were Separatists. The Massachusetts' Puritans still belonged to the Church of England and hoped to purify it.

More and more settlers came to Massachusetts Bay in the following decade and the colony grew rapidly. By 1640 the population reached 20,000 inhabitants (cf. Ritchie 1985). The colony flourished and surpassed

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<sup>6</sup> Ritchie, *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, p 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ritchie, *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, p 43.

the Plymouth Colony both in its size and importance. Boston became its capital and many smaller towns and villages grew up in the surroundings, for example, Salem. It is Salem which features as the setting in the works of the writers Hawthorne and Miller (e. g. *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* by Hawthorne, *The Crucible* by Miller). The success of the colony was emphasized by the establishment of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1636. The college was founded thanks to reverend John Harvard, who provided about 400 books, to improve the education in the new colony, especially in the field of theology and medicine (cf. Johnson 2000).

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was governed by a small group of shareholders called “freemen” who established the General Court, a lawmaking body of the colony, and elected John Winthrop the first governor. As provided by the charter given to them by King Charles, the colony was self-governing and later developed a system of legislature with two elected representatives from each town who attended an assembly (cf. Ritchie 1985).

Although the church was separated from the government in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the two still remained closely connected and shared power in the colony. Actually, the separation of church and state was de facto nominal. While “the Puritan ministers had great political influence, the governor and the representatives in the legislature and other colonial officials were church members.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the Puritan ministers, as spiritual authorities and thus superior to the secular government, assured that the politicians and other inhabitants did not depart from Puritan principles.

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<sup>8</sup> Ritchie, *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, p 45.

### **2.1.3 Religious Conflicts among the Puritans and Establishment of Other Colonies**

The morals in the colony were very strict and the authorities tended to eliminate anyone who disagreed with them because that weakened the whole community while unity ensured their survival. However, with such an amount of new settlers it was natural that dissenters appeared and, as there was plenty of space around, they rather left the community than assimilate and conform (cf. Ford 1988). The intolerant Puritans made other religious sects leave, for example Baptists and Quakers, an act which unintentionally contributed to founding of new colonies by the expelled dissenters. Two of the most famous dissenters were Roger Williams (1603 – 1683) and Anne Hutchinson (1591 – 1643).

Roger Williams came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a young idealistic man. Belonging to the Separatists, he seemed more Puritan than the Puritans themselves. He demanded full separation of the Church from the state and an absolute religious freedom. His ideas which challenged the religious system in Salem were too radical and caused him many problems, leading to his expulsion from the colony in 1635. Although he was supposed to return to England, Williams – helped by his Indian friends – escaped into the wilderness and in 1636 bought land from the Narragansett Indians where he founded the colony of Rhode Island with Providence as the capital (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). Williams, unlike the Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, showed tolerance toward adherents of other religions and “welcomed (...) Jews as well as Christians to his colony and guaranteed their religious freedom”<sup>9</sup>.

The destiny of Anne Hutchinson (1591 – 1643) differed from that of Williams and ended tragically. Hutchinson was a very intelligent Englishwoman of independent spirit who moved to Massachusetts with her

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<sup>9</sup> Ritchie, *Heritage of Freedom : History of the United States*, p 45.

husband and children (altogether they had 14 children). Besides nursing people she dedicated her time to reading the Bible which she interpreted in her own way. For instance, she questioned the necessity of having ministers explain the meaning of the Bible to the people and doubted their teachings about salvation. These ideas were revolutionary. Moreover, it was a woman who dared pronounce them. It did not last long and she became a thorn in the side of the Boston authorities. By challenging the authority of the Puritan ministers, she undermined the fragile stability of the society. Anne Hutchinson, pregnant again, was brought to trial which, despite her brave defence with clever arguments, found her guilty and banished her from the community (cf. Ritchie 1985, and Tindall, Shi 2008). Her family and some of her supporters followed her into exile. Unfortunately, the hardships of the travelling through the wilderness damaged Hutchinson's health resulting in her baby being stillborn. Later, in 1643, she and five of her children were massacred in a raid of Mohican Indian tribe. John Winthrop, one of the judges in the trial with Hutchinson, interpreted her death as God's punishment for her heretic ideas.

#### **2.1.4 Indian Wars**

It may seem that Native Americans were cruel to the white settlers and massacred them in raids. However, whites exhibited even higher brutality when they slaughtered the Indians. The relations between the colonists and the Indians were either cooperative or hostile depending on the situation. Usually the colonists tended to exploit the Indian allies to help them win. Besides the wars, there was a lot of trade between the colonists and the Native Americans, and even conversions on both sides and mixed marriages. Some tribes converted to Christianity, for instance the Wampanoag, while on the other hand, some white colonists adopted the Indian way of life.

Around 1637 the Puritans from Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies started a war against the Pequot Indians by which they literally eradicated the tribe (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). The conflict became known as the Pequot War. Such cruelty of the whites surprised even the Narragansett, the Native-American allies of the Puritans, and made them very angry (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008).

Another conflict between the white settlers and the Native Americans in New England broke out in 1675 and lasted until 1676 when the leader of the Native-American side, an Indian called "King Philip", was killed. During King Philip's War the peaceful tribe of Narragansett was attacked in their home in Rhode Island by the united forces of Connecticut and Massachusetts (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008).

At the same time but more to the south in Virginia there was the so called Bacon's Uprising. Nathaniel Bacon (c. 1640s – 1676), a young hot-blooded and wealthy farmer, rebelled against the authority of the governor William Berkeley (1605 – 1677) and began to prepare total war against the Indians in order to drive them out of their land. He claimed the Indians were all the same, i.e. bad, and deserved to be hunted (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). To prevent any intervention of the authorities, Bacon, joined by other farmers and slaves even imprisoned Berkeley and burned Jamestown down in 1676. Fortunately, the rebel did not enjoy his victory for long having died of a dysentery. His companions were soon defeated and hanged. The government eventually signed peace treaties with the Indians. Nevertheless, the colonists won more. As a result of the fights they gained more land and confirmed their power in the area (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008).



### 2.1.5 Salem Witch Trials

The social and political tension was increasing gradually in the Massachusetts Bay Colony since its establishment and culminated in 1692 with a series of unfortunate events called the Salem Witch Trials. According to Ford the Salem Witch-hunt was “the greatest test of the providential mission (...) which divided the community and exposed all the inherent tensions of Puritan society.”<sup>10</sup> The Salem Witch Trials represent an important milestone not only in the history of New England but also in the history of the United States. Even if witch trials had taken place before, some people had been accused of witchcraft and hanged, the mass witch hunt which occurred in 1692 differed in size and intensity (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). What led to the unprecedented mass hysteria about witches in 1692? There were several factors: on one hand, doubts about the doctrine and frictions among the inhabitants, particularly within the community in Salem Village, and, on the other hand, the political tension in New England.

Salem Village stood in the proximity of Salem Town, a prospering and cosmopolitan centre of trade, whereas Salem Village represented the opposite: an agricultural, economically weaker settlement with traditional values. Due to its location in the interior of the country, Salem Village not only had a provincial and homogeneous character but also limited resources (cf. Clough 2001).

In Salem Village, an agrarian community where land had become a scarce commodity, people were painfully aware of much more promising developments in the commercial sector of neighbouring Salem Town. Although the merchants were devoted to the Puritan faith, in the eyes of the peasants they had succumbed to the temptations of Mammon. In their way of thinking, merchants had helped the Devil to build a bridgehead in Salem Town. The struggle

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<sup>10</sup> Ford, Boris, *American Literature*, Volume 9, London : Penguin Books, 1988, pp 11-12.

between poor and wealthy branches of families was also pursued in the agrarian community.<sup>11</sup>

The less favourable situation of Salem Village in comparison to Salem Town deteriorated the interpersonal relationships in the village both among the villagers and within families. Less successful Puritans started to doubt the basic teachings of the Puritan doctrine. Their earthly failures and bad economic situation made them unable to prove they had been chosen by God for salvation. "The children of the original Puritan pilgrims could not demonstrate the same grace given to their parents."<sup>12</sup> Their spiritual uncertainty undermined the discipline in the whole society and shook the unity of faith.

As for the frictions among the villagers, the witch hunt of 1692 provided them with a great opportunity to resolve long-running feuds with their neighbours and to get revenge for all the failures they had encountered and considered to be unfair, e. g. bad crops. By accusing an inconvenient neighbour of witchcraft, they got rid of him or her and could obtain his or her land easily. Thus, the real motive behind the Salem Witch Hunt was not the presence of witches in the village but greed, envy and vindictiveness of its inhabitants. These aspects were studied and developed in literary expression both by Hawthorne and Miller.

Besides the tension among the neighbours, another factor contributing to the outbreak of the witch hunt was the worsening political situation. Over the years the English colonies in America managed to gain a high degree of independence from England and they got used to self-government. In 1686, however, England decided to unite the existing colonies, including the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Plymouth Colony, into the Dominion of New England and appoint a governor to rule over them. The

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<sup>11</sup> Clough, Paul, Mitchell, Jon P., *Powers of Good and Evil: Moralities, Commodities and Popular Belief*, Oxford : Berghahn Books, 2001, p 34.

<sup>12</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 11.

colonies lost most of their independence. If the wars against the Indians are added, particularly Bacon's Uprising in the neighbouring Virginia in 1675, it is obvious that the political situation in Massachusetts had become very tense and uncertain. This may have led the political leaders to divert the attention of the discontented inhabitants from the politics to the witches.

Everything started with Abigail Williams (1680 – 1697), an eleven-year-old niece of Samuel Parris (1653 – 1720), the vicar of Salem Village, who pretended to suffer from fits of hysteria during which she screamed and rolled herself on the floor (cf. Johnson 2000). Soon thereafter, some of her friends, including the vicar's nine-year-old daughter Betty (Elizabeth; 1682 – 1760), began to behave in the same way so that all the villagers thought that they must have been bewitched because such behaviour was interpreted as a clear sign of the Devil's presence in the village. Consequently, a special trial was summoned and the inquiries followed. The witches among the villagers had to be discovered and eliminated.

The first person whom the girls accused of witchcraft was Tituba, a black woman-slave working in the vicar Parris' household. She used to narrate fantastic stories about black magic (most likely coming from her home in the West Indies) to Abigail and Betty. Later the girls used this fact against the poor slave who eventually, under the pressure, confessed to witchcraft and to being in Satan's service. Tituba mentioned some other details such as cats, rats and writing into Satan's book (cf. Johnson 2000). As a person of a different religion, origin and skin colour, Tituba became an easy target of the accusations.

At first Abigail with the girls chose victims from the margin of the Salem's society, females with small influence in the village such as Tituba or the homeless Sarah Good (1653 – 1692). Those women could hardly defend

themselves and nobody stood up for them. The class system in Salem may be mentioned at this point. Although there was no aristocracy, everyone had his or her place in the society. Slaves and homeless people were on the lowest rank, indentured servants only a step higher while rich farmers and church ministers stood on the top. The indentured servants represented a group of immigrants from different European countries who had been paid the journey to America by their future employer from the colonies and in exchange they had to work for him or her for several years depending on the contract. At the end of their terms they were free.

Abigail and the other girls obviously liked the attention they had aroused. When they saw that the judges believed them, they grew more self-confident and continued accusing other villagers. Actually, the judges encouraged them to tell more and more details. The more people were arrested, the higher their power and esteem was. Since the girls felt strong support from the public, they pointed to more and more respectable citizens. In the atmosphere of mass hysteria and fear the inhabitants of Salem Village started accusing one another of not going to church often, reading strange books (another sign of witchcraft) and other suspicious activities. Many people were arrested and examined. Under the hard conditions in the overcrowded prison, many people agreed to confess just to get out of there. Yet some villagers obstinately resisted the interrogations before the magistrates (the judges) and preferred to keep their honour, and thus be executed as witches, rather to make a forced confession to something they had not committed. Giles Corey (1611 – 1692), a prosperous farmer and a respectable member of the church, when accused of witchcraft refused to defend himself at court. Under the authority of the judges he was pressed to death under a load of heavy stones. This old and barbaric method of torture, *peine forte et dure*, was applied for the first and also last time in the American history. The mass witch hunt did not come to an end until a wife of the governor was accused

of witchcraft in late 1692. Only at that point did the authorities realize the absurdity of the trials and cancelled them, releasing almost all the alleged witches from prison (cf. Johnson 2000), since they viewed witchcraft as a means of maintaining power and did not allow the mania to threaten their own social class. This is well depicted in the film *The Crucible* (1996).

Nathaniel Hawthorne and Arthur Miller carefully studied those events for different reasons. In case of Hawthorne, it was his family past which aroused his interest in Salem and Puritans in general. Hawthorne's family came from the area of New England and one of his ancestors, John Hathorne (1641 – 1717), participated in the Salem witch trials as a judge. The fact that Hawthorne's great-grandfather had never apologized for his participation in the trials might have led Nathaniel Hawthorne to change his surname from Hathorne to Hawthorne (see 3.1).

On the other hand, Arthur Miller's interest in the Salem Witch Trials stemmed from his personal experience with McCarthyism, another fit of hysteria (similar to the witch hunts in Salem), which broke out in the United States of the 1950's. At that time people perceived a threat of communism and hidden communists in the society. Many "public figures from all walks of life fell under suspicion of conspiring to overthrow the government"<sup>13</sup>. The climate of fear and persecution inspired Miller to write one of his best plays, *The Crucible*, in 1953 (see 3.2 ). According to the historian Paul Johnson, the hysteria of 1692 in Salem was later compared to the Red Scare in the 1920's, McCarthyism in the 1950's (see 3.2) and the Watergate scandal in the 1970's.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson, Kathleen, *Major 20th-Century Writers: A Selection of Sketches from Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 4, London : Gale, 1999, p 1986.

## **2.2 The Features of Puritanism**

### **2.2.1 The Five Tenets of the Puritan Doctrine**

Puritanism belongs among the Protestant religions and originates from Calvinism. The Puritans analysed in this thesis were a group of nonconformists in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century who wanted to purify the Church of England of any ceremonies and other things they considered too Catholic. For this reason they decided to leave the old continent and establish their own church in the New World. Puritanism shares the main tenets of the Calvinist doctrine. The five points of Calvinism hidden under the acronym of TULIP are: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints (cf. Spencer 2007).

The first one, the total depravity was understood as an inherited sin as a consequence of Adam's fall – in Adam's fall we all sinned. Puritans believed people were not born good but on the contrary were corrupted from their birth and inclined to work for Satan. The second one, the unconditional election is based on the previous. According to Puritans, all people were predestined to eternal damnation. However, God, in His infinite mercy, decided to save some of them. Those lucky people were considered the God's chosen people, the Elect. Despite the fact that nobody could be sure if he had been predestined for the salvation or not and there was no way of finding out, the Puritans held the belief that they were the God's chosen people. In addition, Puritans believed that their good deeds, behaviour, faith etc. could not change the God's choice of the Elect. It had been decided from the eternity. Yet they worked hard striving for success and wealth because they tended to interpret their earthly success as a sign of God's mercy, i.e. election.

The third point, the limited atonement, refers to Jesus, the son of God, whose death redeemed the sins of mankind. However, in the Puritans' or

Calvinist view Jesus atoned only the sins of the Elect, not of all humanity. Fourthly, the people who had been chosen for salvation by God could not change His decision in any way, they could not resist His mercy, thus the term – irresistible grace. The last tenet, the perseverance of the saints, can be interpreted as once saved, always saved. The chosen people will never be damned. The word “saints” here refers to “good Christians”, not the Saints we know from the Catholicism.

To sum up, “the Fall was the primary fact of the Puritan consciousness; it marked an irrevocable division into 'before' and 'after'. In it, all mankind was justly damned; God, however, had arbitrarily selected some (the Elect) for salvation through grace. Their fate (...) was eternally fixed and unalterable.”<sup>14</sup>

### **2.2.2 Other Puritan Beliefs and Customs**

The most important features of Puritanism are the covenant and the repudiation of church hierarchy (cf. Procházka 2007). They believed no priest or bishop was “necessary to mediate between them and their God”<sup>15</sup> and the Bible was considered the ultimate source of authority. The covenant was a form of contract established between the Christians and their God (cf. Procházka 2007). “Because of the individual nature of the covenant, the congregation was understood as a community of individuals who were free to choose their elders (...) and elect their ministers (priests of Puritan persuasion).”<sup>16</sup>

In their belief, the Puritans compared themselves to the Biblical Jews, another persecuted religious group, and were strongly convinced that their journey to America was a mission God wanted them to fulfil. “These people regarded America as the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, to

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<sup>14</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 4.

<sup>15</sup> Procházka, *Lectures on American Literature*, p 23.

<sup>16</sup> Procházka, *Lectures on American Literature*, p 23.

which God once led Moses and the Jews from the Egyptian captivity.”<sup>17</sup> Ford adds: “They believed that events in the Old Testament prefigured and were fulfilled in their own experiences; the idea of America, from the beginning, carried a quasi-religious freight. (...) America was the new Eden.”<sup>18</sup> Following the example of the Jews, the Puritans were determined to found a perfect Christian community, the New Jerusalem or the City on the Hill (cf. Procházka 2007), where they would lead exemplary lives and the whole world would look up to it. On board the *Arbella* Winthrop said: “We shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are on us...”<sup>19</sup> However, after their arrival to the New World the reality did not correspond with their idea of America being a new Eden and they started to call the untamed land with its savages Wilderness Zion (cf. Ford 1988).

The Puritans went to the New World looking for religious freedom – they wanted to worship God in their own way, independently, and not to be restricted by any other authority than themselves. As one of the first settlers in North America, they established their own church and became the earliest religious authority in the Protestant New World. The form of government they introduced in their new communities was a theocracy, i.e. the state authorities were church authorities at the same time. The life in such a community was based on strict rules and there was little space for individualism. According to Ford, Puritans “exerted powerful pressure on its members towards consensus and conformity”<sup>20</sup>. Such a community is depicted in Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

Furthermore, everybody's life had to be controlled – the Puritans exhibited a clear tendency to watch and judge the behaviour of other church members, an intrusive feature to which they owe their unflattering

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<sup>17</sup> Procházka, *Lectures on American Literature*, p 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 6.

<sup>19</sup> Winthrop, John, “A Model of Christian Charity”, *The Puritans in America: a Narrative Anthology*, Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1985, p 91.

<sup>20</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 6.



nickname “busy controllers” (cf. Hillerbrand 1996). Winthrop once said “We must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our brethren,”<sup>21</sup> and Puritans took his advice.

The Puritan government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony showed significant intolerance to members of other religions as well as to the members of their own church who had questioned the strict rules or morals of the Puritan society. Both other religious sects and any discontented and rebelling Puritans were perceived as a possible danger to the whole society which could cause its collapse. What is more, “the presence of dissidents threatened not only social stability, but also the divine authority of the Elect”<sup>22</sup>. Whoever did not like their way of life or interpretation of the Bible was banned out of their society. Ford adds that the Puritan society did not know compromise: deviants had to be either absorbed or ejected. This was the case of Ann Hutchinson and Roger Williams (see 2.1.3).

Another characteristic feature of the Puritans was the polarity. They tended to simplify any ambivalent or complex problem or situation into a polarized one (cf. Ford 1988). Everything was either good or bad, there was no grey zone in between. They understood the world “as a series of dramatic oppositions: between good and evil, man and God, the Elect and the Reprobate, Faith and Works.”<sup>23</sup> However, Hawthorne in his works rejects the idea of oversimplifying the questions of good and evil and tries to leave the symbols open to many interpretations (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004). This is the case of his famous novel *The Scarlet Letter* where the author refers to the Puritan habit of labelling things and people. According to the historians Tindall and Shi (2008), Puritans used the letter “D” which had to be worn in public by people who got drunk repeatedly.

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<sup>21</sup> Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ford, *American Literature*, p 5.

Another example of the polarity in the Puritan beliefs, deriving from the Calvinist doctrine, is their vision of the world as an arena of constant battle between the forces of good, represented by Protestant saints, against the forces of evil represented by devils (cf. Simmons 1981). They also believed Satan wandered among them on Earth using many disguises to deceive them. According to the anthropologist William S. Simmons, the Puritans who lived in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island considered the Indian inhabitants bewitched and the Indian religions practitioners witches. They also believed the Native Americans worshipped the devil. These beliefs may explain the violence of the whites against the Native Americans – they felt it was their holy mission to eliminate the agents of devil. However, the historian Ronald Takaki thinks that the demonization of the Indians, i.e. describing the Indians as a race of devils, was just a convenient excuse for the Puritans to start wars against them. Takaki explains that the colonists needed land which the Indian tribes occupied, therefore they justified the wars by giving them a religious, or divine, purpose. Overall, for the Puritans the Indians and the wilderness where they lived were theologically linked with the Devil. Especially the forest was a forbidden place since it was beyond the power of the Puritan authorities. This Puritan attitude is depicted in Hawthorne's fiction, e.g. "Young Goodman Brown" and *The Scarlet Letter*. In the latter one we can also find a white man, Chillingworth, who has lived some time with the Indians, has started to dress like them and has learnt some of their know-how of the natural medicine.

The common image of frowning Puritans who rejected all the secular pleasure is wrong (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). The Puritans, "particularly those in the upper class were known to wear colorful clothing, listen to secular music, and drink plenty of rum."<sup>24</sup> They enjoyed all the earthly pleasures,

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<sup>24</sup> Tindall, George B., Shi, David E., *America: A Narrative History*, Fifth Ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999, p 136.

e.g. alcohol, sex etc., since they regarded them gifts from God. Nevertheless, there was strong call for obedience to the laws and moderation in all aspects of their lives besides the religion. The alcohol abuse was strictly punished and the offenders had to wear letter “D” as a badge of shame. As for sexual relationships, the marital sex was encouraged and even considered a duty of both husband and wife since it helped to satisfy the human needs and bring some relief. On the other hand, sexual activity outside the marriage was strictly forbidden (cf. Tindall, Shi 2008). The extramarital sexual relationships appear both in the historical works of Hawthorne (*The Scarlet Letter*) and Miller (*The Crucible*).

### **3. The authors, their biographies and their significance for the American literature**

What connects these two authors of different literary genres and distinct origins? Nathaniel Hawthorne represents a Romantic New England short story-writer and novelist while Arthur Miller was a Jewish 20th-century playwright. These two writers share an their interest in timeless social themes, such as the struggle between the values and principles of the individual and those of the community, which ensured the success and survival of their works. Both Hawthorne and Miller perceived how important “the meaning and significance of the American past in relation to the present”<sup>25</sup> were, hence their decision to explore the Salem witch trials, “one of the most terrifying chapters in American history”<sup>26</sup> and to write about the life of the Puritans. However, the reasons why Hawthorne and Miller paid special attention to this particular event in the American history differ and the answer to this question can be found in the following chapters about the authors' lives.

#### **3.1 Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804 – 1864)**

Nathaniel Hawthorne's his private life and literary career are important to understand his literary style and his motivation to write about the Puritans.

##### **3.1.1 Nathaniel Hawthorne's biography**

Nathaniel was born in 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts, to a family whose origin could be traced back to 1630 and the first British colonists (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004). Among his ancestors we can find a Revolutionary War hero as well as “villains” who participated in religious repressions, such as William Hathorne who ordered a Quaker woman to be whipped, and his son John Hathorne, a judge in the Salem witch trials (cf. Procházka 1993). Hawthorne discovered this family history, when he was collecting materials

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<sup>25</sup> Wilson, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1986.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1986.

for his historical tales, and it had a crucial impact on his life and work. Not only did he become interested in the American history, especially the history of Puritan communities in New England, but he probably felt guilty for the participation of his ancestor in the trials. This may have been the reason why he added “w” into his surname – to show distance from his great-great-grandfather John Hathorne. Another explanation for the change of his surname might be an attempt to clarify its pronunciation (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004).

Hawthorne grew up in Maine surrounded by a large family from his mother's side – the Mannings – and became a family person who liked nature and quietude. At the age of four he lost his father, a ship captain. The premature death left young Nathaniel raised mainly by women – his mother, sisters and aunts. This unusual family constellation together with his wife Sophia and their children may explain Hawthorne's later attention paid to female characters in his fiction (see 3.1.2).

In his youth Hawthorne spent a lot of time reading, which later served as another source of inspiration for his works. The connection between the allegorical text of *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1628 – 1688), which Hawthorne read as part of his precollege education, and Hawthorne's short story “The Celestial Railroad” is obvious. In 1821 Hawthorne entered Bowdoin College in Maine where he studied together with Franklin Pierce, a future president, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a romantic poet, who became his lifelong friend. After graduating from the college in 1825 Hawthorne started his career as a writer. He decided to dedicate himself purely to writing although at that time it was not a profitable job because of the lack of any copyright law: piracy flourished and American and English writers found it very hard to earn their living by writing solely. Fortunately, Hawthorne could afford to be a full-time writer thanks to “small

inheritances and support from the Mannings”<sup>27</sup>. In spite of this fact, Hawthorne's financial situation worsened and he had to ask his influential friends to help him find a job. However, Hawthorne turned out not to be good at managing his finances since he invested his earned money in Brook Farm, a utopian transcendentalist experiment based on communal living and cooperative labour. Hawthorne soon became disillusioned and “realized he would have to begin his married life and establish his literary career elsewhere.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1842 Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody and the couple moved into the Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts, and lived next to a community of transcendentalist thinkers and writers, e.g. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Hawthorne's stay in the Old Manse was later called the Manse period and started a new stage in his writing: in this time he conceived his mad-scientist short stories, for instance “Rappacini's Daughter”, and the tales were published together in a collection *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1946) (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004). Nevertheless, the successful publication of his stories did not improve their financial situation: they had to leave the Old Manse and Hawthorne had to start working again, this time in the Salem Custom House. This place served as a source of inspiration for “The Custom House”, the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*. In spite of the uneasy financial situation, Hawthorne published his masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. His second most important book, *The House of the Seven Gables*, came out a year after, in 1851 while Hawthorne was living in Berkshire where he established an enduring friendship with Herman Melville, also a writer. Melville not only was his colleague, but he was a great supporter of Hawthorne and his works.

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<sup>27</sup> Parini, Jay, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, New York : OUP, 2004, p 159.

<sup>28</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p 163.

Hawthorne eventually earned himself a name as a good writer and achieved financial security. Moreover, his friend Franklin Pierce whom Hawthorne had helped to win his presidential campaign, appointed Hawthorne a consul to Liverpool, England, in 1853 (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004). When his appointment expired, he took the opportunity to travel through Europe, particularly Italy and France, with his family. Italy became a source of inspiration for his final novel, *The Marble Faun* (1860). The Hawthornes returned to the United States in 1860 and the writer died in 1864, aged 59. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia Peabody had three children, one son and two daughters.

### **3.1.2 Nathaniel Hawthorne's significance, position in the American literature and works**

Nathaniel Hawthorne represents one of the most important prose writers of the American Romanticism. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism or American Renaissance was characterized by a significant flowering of the national American literature owing to authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, Herman Melville and, last but not least, Nathaniel Hawthorne. These authors were “influenced by the contemporary call for a national American literature which would be independent of European themes and traditions”<sup>29</sup> especially by Emerson and Irving, and were looking for new forms of literature proper to America. They did not want to copy the European Romanticism. On the contrary, they searched for themes from their own history and nature, for example, the myth of the Frontier, the Puritan past and the American landscape. Within Romanticism several literary streams can be distinguished: the historical romance, the Gothic fiction (Poe) and Transcendentalism (Emerson, Thoreau) (cf. Procházka 2007). For some time Hawthorne admired a literary movement called Transcendentalism and he can be also

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<sup>29</sup> Procházka, *Lectures on American Literature*, p. 87.

classified as a local narratives writer because of his interest in the history and geography of New England (cf. Bercovitch 2003).

Hawthorne has often been compared to his contemporary and friend Herman Melville (1819 – 1891), the author of *Moby-Dick*. Many contemporary writers praised Hawthorne for the quality of his fiction but he did not become as popular as other authors. Most readers of that time found Hawthorne's works too critical towards the religion and not sentimental enough to become bestsellers. Poe (1809 – 1849) called Hawthorne an “example, par excellence, of the privately admired and publicly unappreciated man of genius.”<sup>30</sup> This was written by Poe in the 1840's about Hawthorne's short stories. His novels in the 1850's helped elevate him from obscurity.

As for the style, “the works of late romantics are distinguished by the interplay of allegorical, symbolic and 'realistic' features, and by the interpenetration of the traits of the romance, novel and essay.”<sup>31</sup> Most of these characteristics can be logically found in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne focused on the Puritan past of New England which led him to the use of allegory, a typical form of the Puritan literature (cf. Procházka 2007). Hawthorne's tale “The Celestial Railroad” represents a great example of an allegory. It was based on the allegorical foundation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (cf. Martin 1965). According to Martin “allegory afforded Hawthorne a means of access to the moral world.”<sup>32</sup>

Hawthorne's works are also full of symbols, particularly articles of clothing connected with colours. We can find, for instance, a scarlet letter (*The Scarlet Letter*), a pink ribbon (“Young Goodman Brown”) and a black veil

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<sup>30</sup> Bercovitch, Sacvan, *The Cambridge history of American literature*, Volume 2, Prose writing, 1820-1865, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 694.

<sup>31</sup> Procházka, *Lectures on American Literature*, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> Martin, Terence, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, New York : Twayne Publishers, 1965, p. 62.



("The Minister's Black Veil"). All symbols can usually be interpreted in more than one way. Hawthorne put "dramatic emphasis on the symbol as a primary means of achieving what was for him the most effective form of the tale."<sup>33</sup> Since the tale was a relatively short fictional composition, Hawthorne managed to organize a tale around one central symbol, e. g. "The Birthmark", "The Minister's Black Veil" and others (cf. Martin 1965).

As for the form, Hawthorne dedicated himself early particularly to the genre of a short story and established it as "an important literary form capable of exploring both the psychological and the historical realities of American life"<sup>34</sup>.

Along with Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne deserves credit for transforming the short story in the 1830's and 1840's into a flexible mode capable of embodying a wide range of human emotions and experiences, and a powerful vehicle for the expression of the psychological, the tragic, and the symbolic.<sup>35</sup>

Hawthorne planned to publish his short fiction in volumes of carefully chosen tales unified by the theme, e. g. the project of *Provincial Tales* or *The Story Teller*. However, his efforts were rejected by the publishers and so he had to publish his earlier tales one by one in magazines. The project of *Provincial Tales* was meant to group his early tales of Puritan New England as "an inquiry into the meaning and psychological consequences of the American experience in the new world"<sup>36</sup>. Eventually in 1837 Hawthorne managed to get his collection called *Twice-told Tales* published. Nevertheless, it contained a wider range of themes. It "seems calculated to present a less challenging, more congenial Hawthorne, eager to entertain his audience and more inclined to draw a conventional

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<sup>33</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p. 162.

<sup>36</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p. 161.

moral than to disturb the psyche”<sup>37</sup>. This collection is of great importance for this diploma work because it includes some of his Puritan tales, for example, “The Minister's Black Veil”. In 1846 Hawthorne published another collection – *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Although this collection is not part of the focus of this diploma paper, it is very significant for the development of literature. It contains tales which belong to precursor of a newly invented genre – science-fiction, following Poe's tales using similar applications of science. In these tales Hawthorne concentrated especially on mad scientists who are “driven by a corrosive egoism that leads them (...) to some act of experimentation on a woman”<sup>38</sup> as in “Rappacini's Daughter” (1844) and “The Birthmark” (1843) (cf. Parini Vol. 2, 2004).

Some of Hawthorne's longer and later works are difficult to classify whether they are novels or romances. This is the case of his masterpieces *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* (cf. Bercovitch 2003). He wrote another two novels – *The Blithedale Romance* (1952) which came out quickly after the previous two novels, and later *The Marble Faun* (1860) inspired by his journey to Italy.

The themes of Hawthorne's fiction are firmly tied to his life and family. His family background both from his lifetime and from the past provided Hawthorne with a great source of inspiration. Firstly, his fatherless childhood is reflected in his concern in the female characters, both “as nurturers or destroyers”<sup>39</sup>, in the family life and dysfunctional families where the father was absent. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's masterpiece, we can find a very strong female character who has to cope with the hard life in the Puritan community alone because her husband was lost at sea like Hawthorne's father. The short story of “Young Goodman Brown” deals with the relationship between the husband and

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<sup>37</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p 162.

<sup>38</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p 164.

<sup>39</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p 159.

wife and the family past (a dead grandfather appears), and the novel *The House of the Seven Gables* narrates a story of a large family with a long history.

Secondly, the crucial theme adopted by Hawthorne was the Puritan past of New England which is to be analysed in this diploma paper. Hawthorne's family link to the early colonial history of the United States and his ancestors who participated in the unfortunate Salem witch hunt (see 3.1.1) inspired his Puritan fiction. "For Hawthorne, awareness of American history was an act of recognition that encompassed both pride and shame."<sup>40</sup> Hawthorne believed the past was still vivid and could foreshadow the future (cf. Procházka 2007). In his 'Puritan' fiction Hawthorne concentrated on an alienated relationship of the individual to the society and the search for a hidden guilt. This motif is very obvious in the tales "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil" (cf. Procházka 1993). His longer works *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* are also set in the Puritan background and explore the life of the individual, respectively the family, within a society.

### **3.2 Arthur Miller (1915 – 2005)**

This chapter concentrates on the personal life and career of Arthur Miller since his works are closely connected to the events in his personal life and sometimes even contain autobiographical features.

Miller's life and career are self-consciously and complexly embedded in the public culture of twentieth-century America. The Depression, marxist organizations of the 1930s, World War II, the Holocaust, McCarthyism and HUAC, Marilyn Monroe, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the war on terrorism have made up not only the texture of Arthur Miller's life but also the subjects of his plays.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 2, p 158.

<sup>41</sup> Ackerman, Alan, "Liberalism, Democracy, and the Twentieth-Century American Theater", *American Literary History*, Volume 17, Number 4, Winter 2005, p 777.

### 3.2.1 Arthur Miller's biography

Arthur Miller was born in New York City in 1915 to an upper-middle-class family of a Jewish businessman. Until the collapse of the stock market in 1929 they lived comfortable lives in their spacious apartment in Harlem but then Miller's father lost his job forcing the family to move into a smaller and much cheaper flat in Brooklyn. Miller saw his parents selling their luxury items, one by one, and watched how his father's faith in the American dream shattered (cf. Wilson 1999). Miller later commented on this situation: "It made you want to search for ultimate values, for things that would not fall apart under pressure."<sup>42</sup> As a consequence, Miller, like many others of his generation, looked for an alternative vision of an ideal society and was attracted to socialism (cf. Wilson 1999). Because of the Great Depression and his Jewish origin he found it difficult to get a stable job. Yet he was determined to work until he could afford to go to university (cf. Wilson 1999). Having earned enough money Miller went to the University of Michigan where he started his literary career. He proved to be a promising playwright already for his first play, *Honors at Dawn*, which won him at the age of 21 a prestigious and lucrative Avery Hopwood Award in 1936 (cf. Wilson 1999).

As for his family life, I would like to mention his second marriage to a famous actress Marilyn Monroe (1926 – 1962). One of Miller's biographers, Jeffrey Meyers, described Miller's decision to marry Monroe as "an impulsive gamble for someone as self-controlled and self-respecting as Arthur Miller"<sup>43</sup>. The marriage to a Hollywood star disturbed Miller's quiet way of life and brought him to the centre of attention of the public and media (cf. Wilson 1999). As a result, he found it difficult to continue writing.

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<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1984.

<sup>43</sup> Meyers, Jeffrey, "A Portrait of Arthur Miller", *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 2000, 76; 3, p 422.

However, the marriage influenced Miller's life much deeper than that. The 1950's when he got married to Monroe represented a problematic decade in his life because he was, like many other Americans, subjected to political persecution. In the early 1950's there was an increasing political tension in America as well as in some European countries, including the USSR and Czechoslovakia, which led to persecution of certain groups of people, their interrogations, show trials and imprisonment. In the United States the tension was caused by the fear of the communists, particularly of hidden spies within the country and the persecuted group were the Jews. The series of interrogations became known as the McCarthy hearings or simply McCarthyism, the name deriving from U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy (1908 – 1957).

Many people including Miller and several of his theatre and Hollywood associates were questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) about their political beliefs and became targets for persecution (cf. Wilson 1999). Miller "himself appeared before the Committee in 1956, when anti-Communist hysteria was at its height"<sup>44</sup>. When asked to name names, Miller resolutely refused to do so for which he was tried and sentenced to two years in prison for contempt of Congress in 1957. Fortunately, thanks to Monroe's intervention his conviction was overturned on appeal the next year (cf. Wilson 1986).

In his memoirs *Timebends: A Life* (1987) Miller points out the absurdity of the hearings. He was summoned to the hearing only because he had refused an influential congressman to have a picture with his famous wife, Marilyn Monroe, for his campaign poster. This leads us to believe that the whole accusation of Miller being a threat to the nation was invented. In fact, Miller compared the members of the HUAC to a bunch of clowns. The

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<sup>44</sup> Meyers, "A Portrait of Arthur Miller", p 433.

intense persecution of innocent people motivated him to write *The Crucible*, where he drew a parallel between the anti-communist paranoia of the 1950's and the 1692 Salem Witch Trials. The persecution of lower Puritan classes in the play echoed the persecution of the Jews in the U.S. of the 1950's.

In contrast to Miller, his close friend, movie director, Elia Kazan (1909 – 2003), named names before the HUAC and this act ended permanently their friendship (cf. Meyers 2000). However the McCarthy period represented a bitter chapter in Miller's life, the positive side is that it made him write *The Crucible*, one of the great plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Arthur Miller died in 2005, aged 89.

### **3.2.2 Arthur Miller's significance, position in the American literature and works**

Arthur Miller belonged among the most important American playwrights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and wrote some of the best works of the American literature. For his masterpiece *Death of a Salesman* (1949) Miller was awarded with a Pulitzer Prize for drama in the same year when the play came out, in 1949. Besides the Pulitzer Prize Miller won dozens of other awards, such as Hopwood Award from the University of Michigan (1936, 1937) and Drama Critics Circle Award (1947, 1949) (cf. Wilson 1999). Miller also actively engaged in the politics – he defended human rights and artistic freedom and, as a president of PEN, an international association of poets, essayists and novelists, supported imprisoned or persecuted writers from the Soviet bloc (cf. Wilson 1999), including Václav Havel.

Regarding his work, Miller was a prolific author of tens of plays and screenplays but despite the number of the plays he wrote, in the eyes of the wide public, according to Parini, Miller was famous only for several of them: *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible*

(1953), and *A View from the Bridge* (1956). He remained, “to his own considerable irritation (...), a 'naturalistic' or 'realistic' dramatist of the 1940s and 1950s.”<sup>45</sup> Although these plays have been performed for over forty years, they do not represent Miller's work as a whole. Among his later dramas *After the Fall* (1964) and *The Price* (1968) are best known. Some of his plays were made into films based on his scripts, which is the case, for example, of the 1996 adaptation of *The Crucible* (1953) (cf. Wilson 1999). This film, *The Crucible* by Nicholas Hytner and starring Winona Ryder and Daniel Day-Lewis, later Miller's son-in-law, will be analysed later in this diploma work, and was Miller's last screenplay he wrote before dying in 2005.

As one of the leading figures of the American theatre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Miller naturally knew many other contemporary novelists and playwrights; some of them were his close friends and even neighbours to his house in Connecticut, for example Philip Roth, Norman Mailer, and William Styron (cf. Meyers 2000). It should be noted that Roth is and Mailer was Jewish. Because of his origin, Miller was also a representative of the American Jewish literature. His dramas were not necessarily set into a Jewish background but sometimes his Jewish origin could be recognized in the style or in the message of his works. For example, *The Crucible* is set into a Puritan village in 1690's but the persecution of the witches is linked to the persecution of Jews in the United States in the 1950's. *The Crucible* is the only one of Miller's plays to deal with the life of the Puritans, but it should be understood as an allegory to McCarthyism, which was the real motivation of this drama. The characters in *The Crucible* give life to the real participants of the Salem witch hunts, such as Abigail Williams (1680 – 1697), John Proctor (1632 – 1692) and even judge Hathorne (1641 – 1717), Hawthorne's great-great-grandfather. When Miller was interrogated before the House Un-American Activities Committee about his political

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<sup>45</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 3, p. 136.

beliefs and asked to give names of other people who might have been involved in communist activities, he strictly refused to name anyone taking “the precise position John Proctor took before his Puritan judges”<sup>46</sup>. This refusal links the author (Miller) and the character (John Proctor in *The Crucible*) (cf. Parini, Vol. 3, 2004). According to critics the play “has endured beyond the immediate events of its own time”<sup>47</sup> and is described as “a powerful indictment of bigotry, narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and violation of due process of law, from whatever source these evils spring.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Wilson, Kathleen, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1986.

<sup>47</sup> Wilson, Kathleen, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1986.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, Kathleen, *Major 20th-Century Writers*, p 1986.



## 4. Portraits of Puritans in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Prose Works

Some particular aspects of Hawthorne's fiction, such as light and darkness, nature, human relationships, female characters etc. will be analysed. Aspects are dealt with separately, although to set the limits is difficult for each aspect because they are interconnected. Sometimes a particular scene could be analysed from more than one point of view: once we can focus on the use of expressions connected with light and darkness and on other time the aspect of nature in the same scene is examined.

His works are characterized by the application of the literary means used in his time: ambiguous symbols, metaphors, personifications and allegories. The use of symbols is crucial for Hawthorne. They become central to the plot of his works: good examples are *A Scarlet Letter* and *A Black Veil*. Martin explains that "Hawthorne frequently makes use of an allegorical mode, shaping his materials so that they conform to the imperatives of an outer, and moral, reality"<sup>49</sup>. One of his best allegorical tales is "Young Goodman Brown". Hawthorne tends to use a lot of light and darkness in order to create not only atmosphere in his fiction but also mood both in the characters and the reader. He is particularly good at creating the mood of fear usually associated with the night either in the forest or in the house.

Hawthorne's choice of themes and settings can be explained both by the tendencies of this time, Romanticism (see 3.1.2), and by his own family's past. As Romanticism dealt with the nation's past Hawthorne chose the earliest history of his country – the colonization by the Puritans. The Puritan settings feature in many of his short tales, e.g. "The Celestial Railroad" (1843), and "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1837).

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<sup>49</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 61.

In his approach towards the Puritan societies the author tends to be critical. The themes of evil, guilt and sin became proper to Hawthorne who links them to the Puritan settings. Hawthorne proves to be a superior psychologist in describing the characters tormented by their conscience and guilt. He explores the life of such individuals in oppressive Puritan communities and how the community treats them. As the sinners are strictly punished and condemned, it is impossible for them to ever get rid of the feeling of guilt unless they leave such a community. For instance, Hepzibah and Dimmesdale represent characters haunted by guilt. The motif of a hereditary burden, or guilt, which is found in Hepzibah, reflects Hawthorne's own family burden. Some of Hawthorne works, due to their concern with evil and guilt, exemplify what Melville designated "power of blackness"<sup>50</sup>.

Examples which best illustrate the chosen aspects or themes will be presented in the following chapters and my own interpretation will be offered.

#### **4.1 Light and Darkness**

Hawthorne's works abound with light and darkness. His descriptions of a dark atmosphere are masterful. He uses a wide scale of expressions concerning the light and darkness reaching from literal descriptions of the scene to sophisticated metaphors. The connotations of light and darkness in his works reflect the usual associations of the Euro-American society: light is mainly understood as positive and good, implying the future, clarity and freshness. On the other hand, darkness suggests negativity, evil, the past and mystery. In Hawthorne, moreover, the obscurity is also connected with the suffering of the human soul which is troubled by the secrets or sins of the past. As the meaning and purpose of the light and

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<sup>50</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 89.

darkness differ from work to work, the selected novels and tales will be analysed one by one.

#### **4.1.1 *The House of the Seven Gables***

This romance is the best example of Hawthorne's usage of light and darkness among the selected works analysed in this thesis. Despite the fact that *The House of the Seven Gables* is rich in dark atmosphere and characters, Hawthorne decided to throw into it as much light as possible to bring the story to a "sunny", i.e. happy, ending. "Though the reader might be struck with the gloom of the past"<sup>51</sup>, the happy ending returns light and joy to the novel.

One of the most frequent connotations of the darkness in *The House of the Seven Gables* is the past since the novel describes a history of an old family. The beginning of the family was not accompanied by happy circumstances, (the dishonest means by which Colonel Pyncheon, the founder of the house, obtained the land from Matthew Maule, and the Colonel's sudden death which was interpreted as a fulfilment of Maule's curse). Thus the past is referred to as being dark and overshadowing the present lives of the Pyncheon family. In chapter I Hawthorne's narrator states that the past deeds of the ancestors have an impact on the following generations, their acts "may darkly overshadow their posterity"<sup>52</sup>.

Another reference to the past as something negative and dark can be found in chapter IV when Hepzibah is waiting for her brother to come back from prison: "Remote and dusky, with no sunshine on all the intervening space, was that region of the Past, whence her only guest might be

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<sup>51</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 132.

<sup>52</sup> Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The House of the Seven Gables*, Oxford : OUP, 1998, p 6.

expected to arrive.”<sup>53</sup> Here, moreover, Hawthorne uses a very elaborate metaphor depicting the past as a hopeless and deserted place.

Secondly, Hawthorne uses the expressions of light and darkness for some descriptions of things and places. Most of the story is set in or around the old Pyncheon house and so the novel is full of the images of the house, the elm-tree standing next to it and the garden. Some of the descriptions can be considered neutral in terms of connotations. Most descriptions, however, are very elaborate, metaphorical and underline the intention of the author in creating either a dark or bright atmosphere. As an example of a neutral usage of the “shadow”, in chapter I the narrator speaks about his visits to Pyncheon Street: “I seldom fail to turn down Pyncheon-street, for the sake of passing through the shadow of these two antiquities; the elm-tree, and the weather-beaten edifice.”<sup>54</sup>

In other descriptions of the house, the author either emphasizes its ugly, dark and depressive appearance of today, or how it looked like when it was brand new hundreds of years ago. Here the light is associated with a new or pleasant visage of the house while dark, logically, suggests its decaying aspect. In chapter I the old house is black as a consequence of the weather in New England: “it grew black in the prevalent east-wind-pointing”<sup>55</sup>. Further in the same chapter the narrator recalls a shiny image of the house after its completion: “the bright novelty with which it first caught the sunshine”<sup>56</sup>. Then he darkens that image again with the gap of almost two hundred years:

The impression of its actual state, at this distance of a hundred and sixty years, darkens inevitably through the picture which we would

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<sup>53</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 68.

<sup>54</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 5.

<sup>55</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 6.

<sup>56</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 10.

fain give of its appearance, on the morning when the Puritan magnate bade all the town to be his guests.<sup>57</sup>

The appearance of the house is generally contrastive throughout the whole novel, sometimes it is connected with positive and cheerful atmosphere, but mostly it evokes the dark past of its inhabitants and the gloomy atmosphere inside. In chapter I the narrator describes the whitish and shiny walls of the house as “glittering plaster, composed of lime, pebbles, and bits of glass”<sup>58</sup> and the number of windows which lead in the light but there is a catch. The upper storeys overshadow the ones below them and let only a small amount of light enter the rooms. As a consequence, very little light enters the base and lower storey.

The shadow of the storeys may be interpreted as the shadow of the unfortunate past and of the curse Matthew Maule, the original owner of the piece of land, put on the Pyncheon family and which is still hanging over the house. From the very beginning the house was predestined not to have a happy future, as in chapter I where the house is portrayed after Colonel Pyncheon's death: on the front gable there was a dial “on which the sun was still marking the passage of the first bright hour in a history, that was not destined to be all so bright.”<sup>59</sup> Towards the end of the novel in chapter XIX, after the storm and Judge Pyncheon's death, the house has lost its dark and gloomy atmosphere – the curse has been broken – and seems very bright: “Its windows gleamed cheerfully in the slanting sunlight.”<sup>60</sup>

Thirdly, the parts of the day – the morning and the night, two opposites connected with both light and darkness, good and evil, and also the nature are contrasted. Hawthorne masterly takes advantage of the natural

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<sup>57</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 10-11.

<sup>58</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 11.

<sup>59</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 12.

<sup>60</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 285.

processes – the morning and the night – to underline the plot. The author uses the dark or light atmosphere to create mood towards both the reader and the characters themselves. In chapter XVIII where Judge Pyncheon dies and his dead body is left in the saloon over night, the atmosphere is literally horrible and Hawthorne wants the audience to be afraid. The author describes the progress of the night in the saloon as the darkness creeps slowly over the furniture and makes its features indistinct. However, the Judge's face remains strangely white in the obscure room, which contributes to the scary horror atmosphere:

The Judge's face, indeed, rigid, and singularly white, refuses to melt into this universal solvent. (...) Has it yet vanished? No! – Yes! – not quite! And there is still the swarthy whiteness – we shall venture to marry these ill-agreeing words – the swarthy whiteness of Judge Pyncheon's face. The features are all gone; there is only the paleness of them.<sup>61</sup>

In my opinion, the night with the Judge's corpse is the darkest and most frightening scene which deeply affects the atmosphere of the plot, rendering it to a Gothic novel. The night as it is described alludes to the contemporary concept of a period of time associated with dark powers which take control over the house. As if to fulfil this idea the ghosts of the deceased Pyncheons appear in the room (see 4.8.1). When the dreadful night full of evil and fear is ending, both the narrator and the reader are relieved it is finally over. The bright morning interrupts the haunted scary atmosphere and brings light, joy and goodness to the novel again. The morning is endowed with purifying effect – it refreshes and cleans all things.

The day-beam – even what little of it finds its way into this always dusky parlor – seems part of the universal benediction, annulling evil, and rendering all goodness possible, and happiness attainable.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 276.

<sup>62</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 282.

Throughout the scene with the dead body of Judge Pyncheon, the author uses a special narrative technique, so called omniscient narrator. This technique was not very usual and can be found only in chapter XVIII. There the narrator behaves as if he actually was in the room with the corpse: he speaks to the dead judge and even tries to wake him up, even if he as well as the reader knows that the judge cannot respond to his order "Rise up, Judge Pyncheon!"<sup>63</sup> because he is simply dead.

Fourthly, light and darkness are used to illustrate the age of the characters. Hawthorne associates old Hepzibah and Clifford with the obscurity: the old woman usually appears frowning, gloomy, and wearing a black dress. On the other hand, young Phoebe is the opposite, compared to "a ray of sunshine"<sup>64</sup>, often portrayed in scenes full of light such as in chapter VII:

An illumination from her youthful and pleasant aspect, which, indeed, threw a cheerfulness about the parlor, like the circle of reflected brilliancy around the glass vase of flowers that was standing in the sunshine.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, Hawthorne uses the light and darkness as a metaphor for the state of human mind, especially in the characters of Hepzibah and her brother Clifford. The changes of light and darkness symbolize the transition from the consciousness, joy and enthusiasm to the past memories, fears and the subconscious. For example Hepzibah's mind is referred to as "the poor, bare melancholy chambers of her brain"<sup>66</sup> where some dreams and fantasies "kindled a strange festal glory (...) as if that inner world were suddenly lighted up with gas".<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 283.

<sup>64</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 68.

<sup>65</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 104.

<sup>66</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 65.

<sup>67</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 65.

The scenes with Clifford literally abound with allusions to his intellect for he is not mentally very stable. His long stay in prison has left terrible scars on his soul and he finds it very difficult to concentrate on the present. The short moments when he is conscious or enthusiastic about something are described as a light, or sparks of reason implying the common Euro-American association between the light and the reason (for instance, the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked by the advance of science was the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment while the period after the decline of the Roman Empire was called the Dark Ages). An example can be found in chapter VII:

The expression of his countenance – while, notwithstanding, it had the light of reason in it – seemed to waver, and glimmer, and nearly to die away, and feebly to recover itself again. It was like a flame which we see twinkling among half-extinguished embers; we gaze at it, more intently than if it were a positive blaze, gushing vividly upward – more intently, but with a certain impatience, as if ought either to kindle itself into satisfactory splendor, or be at once extinguished.<sup>68</sup>

Hawthorne shows how weak and fragile Clifford's soul is and how easily he can enclose and sink into the melancholy and depression, metaphorically described in chapter VII as the depths of the dark prison of his mind:

Then his face darkened, as if the shadow of a cavern or a dungeon had come over it; there was no more light in its expression than might have come through the iron grates of a prison-window – still lessening, too, as if he were sinking farther into the depths.<sup>69</sup>

In these dark periods, Clifford is not capable of perceiving and understanding the world around him. The changes of his mood are often accompanied by a confusion because he feels lost and does not know what is going on. Hawthorne uses marvellous metaphors for the changes of Clifford's mood in chapter X:

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<sup>68</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 104.

<sup>69</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 110.



But, as the sunlight left the peaks of the seven gables, so did the excitement fade out of Clifford's eyes. He gazed vaguely and mournfully about him, as if he missed something precious.<sup>70</sup>

Lastly, the power of light reveals the truth about the nature of things and people. Holgrave, the daguerreotypist, attempted many times to take a picture of Judge Pyncheon, but the mighty Pyncheon always looked as bad person, which he was, although he tried to hide his evil nature: "The sun, as you see, tells quite another story and will not be coaxed out of it, after half-a-dozen patient attempts on my part. Here we have the man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and, withal, cold as ice."<sup>71</sup>

#### **4.1.2 "The Minister's Black Veil"**

This short tale, as its title suggests, is connected with the dark. It abounds with darkness coming from the veil, the dark and mysterious figure of the minister and from the images of death, funerals, cemeteries and graves while light is scarcely in the story. The main source of darkness, though, is the black veil, which overshadows all happiness and spread terror.

The black veil is a central motif of the tale and everything stems from its dark influence on the people's behaviour. At the very beginning of the tale Mr Hooper, the pastor of the village, decides to wear a black veil over his face and refuses to take it off in his lifetime. However, neither the main character nor the narrator give an explanation for the purpose of such an eccentric decision. Therefore the black veil is a mysterious symbol. One of the possible interpretations is that it might represent atonement Mr Hooper makes for a sin he committed. This idea is supported by the subtitled designation of the tale as "a parable". Hawthorne adds a footnote with information about a real person, Mr Moody, a clergyman from New England, who accidentally killed his friend and since that day till the hour of his own death he has never shown his face again. Mr Hooper's black

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<sup>70</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 157.

<sup>71</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 92.

veil may also express some sort of a sorrow. All in all its interpretations are ambiguous and “the meaning remains to the end obscure”<sup>72</sup>.

There are many references to the capacity of the veil to intercept minister's sight and darken all the things. The veil described as “a medium that saddened the whole world [and] (...) threw its obscurity between him and the holy page”<sup>73</sup> when he read from the Bible. The connotations of the veil are only negative, ranging from sad and lonely to frightening, however, there is no allusion to the devil. The veil seems rather to spread fear from the God's punishment for your earthly sins: “From beneath the the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister.”<sup>74</sup>

The black veil, a mere piece of black crape, overshadows the whole reverend's personality. Although it covers only the reverend's face, it “throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghost-like from head to foot.”<sup>75</sup> The parishioners fear him and avoid him because the look at the dreadful veil makes them feel uncomfortable. The people's spirits lighten up as soon as the veil is out of their sight. The reactions of the villagers appear to be surprising considering the fact that the person under the veil has stayed the same. However, for them he “has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face!”<sup>76</sup> Their response to the veil proves that the meaning of the veil is figurative. Nobody is able to perceive the veil merely as a physical object (cf. Bell 1993).

As for the minister's personal life, the veil has a dramatic impact. Similarly to Hester's scarlet letter, the veil has alienated Mr Hooper from the society:

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<sup>72</sup> Bell, Millicent, *New essays on Hawthorne's tales*, Cambridge : CUP, 1993, p 134.

<sup>73</sup> Hawthorne, Nathaniel, “The Minister's Black Veil”, *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, New York : W.W. Norton, 1995, pp 598-599 and 604.

<sup>74</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 604.

<sup>75</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 600.

<sup>76</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 599.

he is welcome only at the death-beds and funerals. His fiancée leaves him and in general, the veil represents an obstacle which prevents the happiness from the outer world to reach him:

The piece of crape "had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity."<sup>77</sup>

Besides the veil, the atmosphere of the tale is also obscure due to the scenes the author chose for the plot. Not only is there a dark and mysterious character of the minister, but he is mostly portrayed in scenes connected with death such as the funeral of a young girl, funerals of his other parishioners and finally, the story concludes with his own funeral and a horrible image of his buried decaying corpse lying in the grave still with the dreadful black veil on.

Due to the presence of Mr Hooper even the wedding, an occasion which is supposed to be cheerful and full of light, changes into a horror scene. His obscure veiled figure is endowed with the power to overshadow everything around him and to completely spoil the merry mood: "Such was its immediate effect on the guests, that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles."<sup>78</sup> The poor bride is depicted as an unhappy girl. She is even compared to another girl whose life has just ended and to whom the minister has just attended. The image of a bride resembling a dead girl contributes to the horror atmosphere of the whole event:

But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her death-like paleness caused a whisper, that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before, was come from her grave to be married.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 605.

<sup>78</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 601.

<sup>79</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 601.

In the tale there is very little light which comes from beneath the veil when the minister smiles: “the same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.”<sup>80</sup> This light is very weak and lacks the warmth. His fiancée Elizabeth asks Mr Hooper to unveil his face as well as the meaning of his words and “let the sun shine from behind the cloud”<sup>81</sup> but she fails to convince him. It seems impossible to throw more light to the story both in the literal and figurative sense. Mr Hooper never gives a clear response to the questions concerning the veil. His only reply is a faint sad smile: “at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people. (...) A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, flickered about his mouth, glimmering as it disappeared.”<sup>82</sup> In some ways his secret is similar to that of Arthur Dimmesdale, another minister in Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, whose guilt is concealed from the unknowing public. However, unlike Mr Hooper, Dimmesdale shares his secret with one person which his his lover and fellow sinner and in the end makes it a public knowledge.

### **4.1.3 “Young Goodman Brown”**

The atmosphere of the tale is very obscure as most of the plot is set into one night, between the sunset and the sunrise: Young Goodman Brown left at sunset and returned the next morning, i.e. after the sunrise. The narration opens in the evening, that is at sunset, when Goodman Brown is about to leave his wife at home alone and set off on a mysterious journey to the woods to meet the devil. As he himself says, the journey “must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise”<sup>83</sup>. The night, or darkness, in this allegorical tale is linked to devil, witches and evil powers in general.

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<sup>80</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 603.

<sup>81</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 602.

<sup>82</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 600.

<sup>83</sup> Hawthorne, Nathaniel, “Young Goodman Brown”, *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, New York : W.W. Norton, 1995, p 576.

Goodman Brown leaves home to do something forbidden – to visit the forest and meet a devil – and he wants to do it at night in order not to be seen. When Goodman Brown reaches his acquaintance, the devil, and walks with him, the forest becomes darker: “It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying.”<sup>84</sup>

In *The House of the Seven Gables* the light showed the true nature of things (the real evil character of Judge Pyncheon on the Holgrave's photograph, see 4.1.1) but here it is the night which seems to reveal the real characters of the villagers. At least Goodman Brown believes it. After his comeback to Salem Village in the early morning he regards all the venerable villagers liars and frauds. He finds their behaviour at day a mere pretence because he has already seen their real faces.

In the middle of the story Goodman Brown reaches a clearing in the forest where the respectable villagers have gathered to perform a satanic ceremony. The scene is lit “by four blazing pines, their tops a flame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting and “hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest”<sup>85</sup>. The clearing resembles a theatre for Goodman Brown. He hides in the shadows of the forest and watches them as if on the stage. The light which illuminates the open space does not come from the sky (sun, moon), but on the contrary, from the fire on the ground, a clear connection with the hell. Hawthorne creates an impressive scene of contrasts: the dark gloomy forest and the fire on the clearing.

The end of the tale is not happy and hopeful but dark and hopeless as well as Goodman Brown's life since his return from the forest. When he dies they cannot carve any “hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom”<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 577.

<sup>85</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 582.

<sup>86</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 585.

## 4.2 Nature

### 4.2.1 *The House of the Seven Gables*

Although this novel is set into a town, there are many references to the nature, particularly the garden of the house and the mighty elm tree. Moreover, Hawthorne masterly uses the changes in the nature to emphasize the plot. In other words, the nature reflects the life of the inhabitants of the house.

Maule's Well lies in the corner of the garden and represents a reminder of Matthew Maule. Before Colonel Pyncheon stole the land from Maule, the well was "a natural spring of soft and pleasant water – a rare treasure on the sea-girt peninsula"<sup>87</sup>. However, when Colonel Pyncheon started to build the house after Maule's execution, "the spring of water, above mentioned, entirely lost the deliciousness of its pristine quality" and "grew hard and brackish."<sup>88</sup> The deterioration of the quality of the water in the well can be interpreted as some kind of a punishment for Pyncheon's wicked behaviour.

The well undergoes another change at the end of the novel in chapter XIX and it seems to be linked to the situation in the house again. After a storm Maule's Well "overflowed its stone-border, and made a pool of formidable breadth, in that corner of the garden." The flood the well caused in the garden may be an allusion to the biblical flood, which had washed all bad and gave space to a new start. The water has a symbolic and purifying quality. Similarly to the biblical flood, the Pyncheons also make a new start after the storm and the subsequent flood. The old curse is broken and they are free to leave the dark haunted house and move to a lighter mansion. It is a significant milestone not only for the young couple who is to get

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<sup>87</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 6.

<sup>88</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 10.

married (Holgrave and Phoebe) but also for the two old siblings (Hepzibah and Clifford) who have eventually gotten rid of the family past and can begin to live freely.

Nature reflecting the development of the Pyncheons is manifested by the chickens which are analogous to the Pyncheon family. These fowls were “pure specimens of a breed which had been transmitted down as an heirloom in the Pyncheon family”<sup>89</sup>. The life of the chickens mixed up with the destiny of the House of the Seven Gables and its inhabitants. The chickens in their prime used to grow almost into the size of turkeys and thanks to their delicate flesh were suitable even for a prince's table but as the time past they have degenerated into much weaker and smaller birds barely larger than pigeons which seldom hatched a chicken. As Hawthorne says, “it was evident that the race had degenerated, like many a noble races besides, in consequence of too strict a watchfulness to keep it pure”<sup>90</sup>. This is a clear reference to the Pyncheon family who has degenerated too: there are no more children in the family, on the contrary, we can find only two old childless individuals, Hepzibah and Clifford, who do not seem to be able to lead productive and meaningful lives. Judge Pyncheon has only one son who happens to die before him and all his property goes to Hepzibah and Clifford. Phoebe is emphasized to come from a different branch of the family. The chickens are directly compared to Hepzibah as their crest seems analogous to Hepzibah's tourban. Moreover, Hepzibah does not stop pointing out with pride the almost aristocratic origin of her family. The birds show similar pride when they hatch a chicken “not for any pleasure of their own, but that the world might not absolutely lose what had once been so admirable a breed of fowls”.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 88.

<sup>90</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 89.

<sup>91</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 89.

Another piece of nature inseparable from the house is the huge elm tree which “gave beauty to the old edifice, and seemed to make it a part of nature”<sup>92</sup>. The connection of the house with the tree and the nature is emphasized in chapter XIX. Although it was built by a man, the house has become part of the nature and together with the elm tree has faced the storms:

The lines and tufts of green moss, here and there, seemed pledges of familiarity and sisterhood with Nature; as if this human dwelling-place, being of such old date, had established its prescriptive title among primaveral oaks, and whatever other objects, by virtue of their long continuance, have acquired a gracious right to be.<sup>93</sup>

Hawthorne's use of nature-connected metaphors illustrates the age of the characters. The title of the chapter V “May and November” implies the contrast between the two main female characters – young and fresh Phoebe and old melancholic Hepzibah. “May” refers to the fact that Phoebe is in her first half of life when the girl changes into a grown woman. “November”, analogically, is Hepzibah or generally anyone whose best and productive years of life has passed. The happiness Hepzibah experiences when her brother returns is described as Indian summer – the last short but warm period of the year before the cold weather starts: “Coming so late as it did, it was a kind of Indian summer, with a mist in its balmiest sunshine, and decay and death its gaudiest delight.”<sup>94</sup>

As the last point I would like to focus on the storm which occurs towards the end of the novel. Again the storm has a symbolic meaning – it evokes the turmoil in the lives of the family. It is not accidental that it breaks out after Phoebe's departure from the House of the Seven Gables and during or shortly after the storm some of the most crucial events happen: Judge Pyncheon dies, Clifford and Hepzibah eventually leave the house and the

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<sup>92</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 27.

<sup>93</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 285.

<sup>94</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 149.



curse is broken. As suggested above, the storm resembles the biblical flood which had purified the world. When the storm is over, the world his sunny and peaceful again and everything is ready for a new start, stronger than before because it had survived:

Every object was agreeable, whether to be gazed at in the breadth, or examined more minutely. Such, for, example were the well-washed pebbles and gravel of the sidewalk; even the sky-reflecting pools in the centre of the street; and the grass, now freshly verdant, that crept along the base of the fences. (...) The Pyncheon-elm, throughout its great circumference, was all alive, and full of the morning sun and sweetly tempered little breeze, which lingered with its verdant sphere, and set a thousand leafy tongues a-whispering all at once. This aged tree appeared to have suffered nothing from the gale.<sup>95</sup>

The storm represents a time when the nature took control over the world and lives of the people, as the changes of the garden. The weeds and grass grew rapidly as if to erase every sign of human activity by strangling the flowers and vegetables:

The growth of the garden seemed to have got quite out of bounds; the weeds have taken advantage of Phoebe's, absence and long-continued rain, to run rampant over the flowers and kitchen-vegetables. (...) The impression of the whole scene was that of a spot, where no human foot had left its print, for many preceding days.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, Judge Pyncheon died during the gale. However, his death was not violent – he died of a “natural” cause. Hawthorne makes a lot of allusions to the changes of the environment to underline what happened in the house. For instance, after the Judge's death “the boisterous wind is hushed”<sup>97</sup> and Alice's poises in the angle between the two front gables “were flaunting in rich beauty and full gloom, to-day, and seemed, as it

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<sup>95</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 284-5.

<sup>96</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 299.

<sup>97</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 281.

were, a mystic expression that something within the house was consummated.”<sup>98</sup>

#### **4.2.2 The Forest in *The Scarlet Letter* and “Young Goodman Brown”**

The nature in these two works is represented by the forest in contrast to the town. In the Puritan perception the forest lies beyond the power of the laws of the society: it seems that people may behave there as they please, that the rules of society do not apply to them. Hester Prynne takes off her scarlet letter and releases her hair, something she would not do in the public eye. In “Young Goodman Brown” the villagers take off their masks as venerable Puritans and their true nature is revealed to Goodman Brown. Generally, the forest is associated with the wilderness, Indians, and secret rituals of witches and the devil.

##### **4.2.2.1 The forest in *The Scarlet Letter***

The forest in this novel is connected with the devil, or the Black Man as he is referred to, and witch rituals but it is also a place where Hester and Dimmesdale can meet and talk privately. As for the Black Man, in chapter XVI little Pearl mentions a legend about the devil haunting that forest and walking round with a big heavy book which he offers to everyone he meets among the trees. “They are to write their names with their own blood. And then he sets his mark on their bosoms!”<sup>99</sup> This concept is common to the contemporary beliefs about devil and appears both in Hawthorne and Miller. Moreover, the mark seems to refer to the scarlet letter on Hester's robe and a similar mark on the clergyman's skin.

Secondly, the forest meeting of Hester with Dimmesdale is thoroughly analysed as it is central to the plot of the novel and it shows the

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<sup>98</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 286.

<sup>99</sup> Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Scarlet Letter*, New York: Airmont Books, 1962, p 136.

significance of the forest. The forest belongs to the wild nature, human laws do not apply there. It offers a refuge where Hester and Dimmesdale can behave freely without any restrictions or fear of being seen by anyone. Hester has chosen the forest as a place for her meeting with the clergyman intentionally because it offers privacy she needs. She does not want to talk to him in the town where somebody might suspect something.

Moreover, the forest allows both the participants to throw away their burdens for a while, to stop pretending and hiding their true natures. As pilgrims tired after a long journey, they can rest and take a deep breath. Dimmesdale can symbolically throw off the “garments of mock holiness”<sup>100</sup> he has to wear in the town and for which he hates himself. Since Hester knows his secret, there is no need for pretence. Hester takes off her scarlet letter and the cap which covers her hair. Not only she feels a deep relief that the burden of shame is gone, but Hawthorne masterly describes her transformation into the woman she used to be: young, beautiful and happier. The joyful atmosphere is underlined by the sunshine which appears as soon as Hester removes her letter. Hawthorne uses nature to create the mood: the happy moment naturally corresponds to the sun.

And, as if the gloom of the earth and sky had been but the effluence of these two mortal hearts, it vanished with their sorrow. All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold. (...) Such was the sympathy of Nature.<sup>101</sup>

In the forest there is a path which is endowed with a symbolic meaning. As it leads either to the town or to the heart of the wilderness, it gives the main characters an opportunity to choose the direction of their lives. Both of them decide to rebel against the rules and escape but for the time being

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<sup>100</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 141.

<sup>101</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 149.

they have to return to the town and put on the masks people expect them to wear again:

How dreary looked the the forest track that led backward to the settlement, where Hester Prynne must take up again the burden of her ignominy, and the minister the hollow mockery of his good name!<sup>102</sup>

The forest seems to have the transformational function, not only it changes Hester for a short time as if the past did not exist, but it also leads to a permanent change in Dimmesdale's personality. In chapter XX as if charged with new energy the clergyman returns from the forest as a completely different person. The houses and people of the town suddenly look different to him although they are the same. The minister the townspeople know has been left back in the forest by a mossy trunk:

Another man had returned out of the forest; a wiser one, with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former never could have reached. A bitter kind of knowledge that!<sup>103</sup>

This epiphany resembles Goodman Brown coming back home from his night adventure. Similarly to Goodman Brown Reverend Dimmesdale doubts the reality and asks himself which is the dream – the past or the present and he also exhibits strange behaviour. As if obsessed by devil Dimmesdale feels tempted to offend his parishioners who look up to him with respect and he has to struggle with himself very hard to resist. In comparison to “Young Goodman Brown” here Hawthorne offers us a probe into the man's inner crisis.

#### **4.2.2.2 The forest in “Young Goodman Brown”**

While the forest in *The Scarlet Letter* is a rather happy place for the main characters, for Goodman Brown it becomes a nightmare full of devil and

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<sup>102</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 144.

<sup>103</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 162.

witches. He sets off to the forest in the evening even though he knows that the forest is a forbidden place where he should not go. He has an appointment with a mysterious figure which turns out to be a devil. The question how Goodman Brown arranged such a meeting remains unanswered.

The forest which Goodman Brown enters is described as an obscure and haunted place where “the traveler knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks. (...) There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree.”<sup>104</sup> These were common Puritan beliefs concerning the forest. As soon as Goodman Brown arrives in the forest and meets the person he has promised he feels his mission has been accomplished and wants to go back. Nevertheless, the devil disguised as an old man with a snake-like cane convinces him to penetrate deeper into the forest, i.e. further beyond the influence of the Puritan laws. Goodman Brown aware of his bad decision shouts: “Too far, too far!”<sup>105</sup> but it is too late for him. His curiosity has led him too far into the forest to return unaffected by the experience. Having witnessed a strange witch ritual deep in the forest Goodman Brown returns to the village as a bewildered man who has lost his faith. Similarly to Arthur Dimmesdale, Goodman Brown experiences an epiphany: he starts to doubt everything he sees in the village, considering the piety a lie and hypocrisy. In the forest he has seen the true face of the phoney Salem's society. However, as the story is an allegory, Goodman Brown cannot be sure whether the night forest journey was only a bad dream, a hallucination or reality.

### **4.3 Men and Women**

The relationships between men and woman are presented in a unique fashion in Hawthorne's fiction. Hawthorne proved to be a great writer in

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<sup>104</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 577.

<sup>105</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 578.

describing the psychology of the characters, especially of women (see further in 4.4). In his works we can find couples connected by different kinds of relationships (love between men and woman, love between brother and sister) and these relationships are in different stages: an engaged couple, a newly-married couple, a long-married couple etc. However, most of the relationships are either dysfunctional or get destroyed by the end of the story.

### **4.3.1 Goodman Brown and Faith**

The relationship between Goodman Brown and his young wife Faith share some features with the relationship of Mr Hooper and Elizabeth. There is a motif of rejection of a woman, for instance, and other similarities. The couple, recently married, is happy but one evening Goodman Brown goes to a mysterious meeting and leave his wife Faith alone at home overnight. There is something suspicious behind his journey and Faith is worried. She begs her husband to stay and warns him as if she had a sense of foreboding:

'Pr'y thee, put off your journey until sunrise, and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts, that she's afeard of herself, sometimes. Pray, tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year!'<sup>106</sup>

However, Goodman Brown does not care about his wife's anxiety and is determined to leave, although he knows he is doing something bad. In his internal monologue he calls himself a wretch for doing this to his beloved wife but he also feels that he protects her by not telling her the real purpose of his night journey. Moreover, he justifies himself that it is only one night away from his wife and that then he would "cling to her skirts and follow her to Heaven"<sup>107</sup>. His temptation to set off on the errand is stronger than his respect to Faith's feelings. To Faith he is uncompromising and

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<sup>106</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 576.

<sup>107</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 577.

responds to her plea with an unfair remark: "What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married!"<sup>108</sup> Similarly to Elizabeth's farewell, Faith, hurt by his obstinacy and recklessness, ends up the discussion abruptly: "Then, God bless you! (...) And may you find all well, when you come back."<sup>109</sup>

As for Faith, her character is symbolic. Not only Hawthorne gave her a meaningful name, typical for an allegory, but she wears an article of clothes with a symbolic meaning – pink ribbons. Their colour suggests the mixture of red and white colour, i.e. hell and purity. Faith, an example of a pious and devoted wife, becomes a servant of the devil during that night, or at least this is what Goodman Brown believes.

After the return from the forest Goodman Brown's life has changed forever. He is not the same anymore – he has lost his faith, both in the religious sense and also his wife. However, as well as Goodman Brown has lost his Faith, she has lost her husband. A cold, stern and distrustful stranger has replaced the man she knew and loved. In Goodman Brown we can find the motif of rejection of the woman and alienation from the society similar to reverend Hooper. Both Goodman Brown and Mr Hooper alienated themselves from the society and their wife, or fiancée respectively, although the women remained faithful and devoted till the end of the men's lives.

The situation is especially difficult for Faith, who does not seem to know about the night ceremony in the forest. Hawthorne depicts the couple in a powerful moment on Goodman Brown's arrival to the village. Faith burst "into such joy at sight of him, that she skipt along the street, and almost kissed her husband before the whole village"<sup>110</sup> but he neglected her warm

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<sup>108</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 576.

<sup>109</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 576.

<sup>110</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 584.

welcome, which was like a slap into her face, assuming that she was really innocent. As a devoted wife she stays with him, they live together and have family but emotionally they never get close again. Like “The Minister's Black Veil”, this story ends with the man's death. On his last journey Goodman Brown is accompanied by his spouse whose devotion has survived his alienated attitude.

#### **4.3.2 Mr Hooper and Elizabeth**

Mr Hooper and Elizabeth, the main characters from the short tale “The Minister's Black Veil”, represent an engaged couple. At the beginning they seem an ideal pair – a kind respectable clergyman and a decent young girl – but Mr Hooper's decision to put on a black veil and his refusal to explain it destroys their relationship and they do not get married. In the middle of the tale there is an encounter between Elizabeth and Mr Hooper. She meets him in private to see his veiled face for the first time and demands an explanation. She shows a lot of loyalty because she does not judge him before speaking with him. Moreover, she does not fear the veil. Actually, she is the only one in the village “unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all”<sup>111</sup>. She is portrayed as courageous, affectionate and patient when she comes to Mr Hooper's and asks him directly about the veil:

“No,” said she aloud, and smiling, “there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look on. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on.”<sup>112</sup>

She repeatedly tries to convince him to tell her because she does not understand his motives but instead of a satisfactory answer he obstinately insist that even she – his future wife – does not have the right to see his face. Any other woman would be discouraged but not Elizabeth. She starts

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<sup>111</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 602.

<sup>112</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 602.



thinking about methods which might be tried to withdraw her beloved from that dark fantasy. Nevertheless, in the end even she succumbs to the dark power of the veil and is about to leave him. Mr Hooper struggles for her, begs her to stay using what we would call today an emotional blackmail:

Oh, you know not how lonely I am and how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!<sup>113</sup>

Despite his sincere begging, he promises her nothing as for their earthly life. Elizabeth gives him the last chance but her condition leads to the end of their relationship.

'Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face,' said she.  
'Never! It cannot be!' replied Mr Hooper.  
'Then farewell!', said Elizabeth.<sup>114</sup>

Apparently, Mr Hooper's reason to wear the veil is stronger than his dedication to Elizabeth's feelings. His selfish and reckless decision destroys their chances to ever become a husband and wife. He tears Elizabeth's dream of having a family with him apart. Some critics speak about a motif of rejection of the female (cf. McIntosh 1987) which is also present in other stories, e. g. "Young Goodman Brown" (see 4.3.1). Surprisingly, at the end of their quarrel Mr Hooper seems content "that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness"<sup>115</sup>. Maybe he thinks he is protecting her from the horrors beneath the veil by wearing it: "The horrors which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers".<sup>116</sup>

Nonetheless, Elizabeth has never stopped loving him as we find out at the very end of the tale, many years later when Mr Hooper is dying: Her "calm

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<sup>113</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 603.

<sup>114</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 603.

<sup>115</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 603.

<sup>116</sup> Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p 603.

affection had endured thus long, in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour”<sup>117</sup>.

### **4.3.3 Hester, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale**

In comparison to other Hawthorne's works, in *The Scarlet Letter* there is a love triangle between Hester Prynne and her legal husband Roger Chillingworth as well as her lover and father of her daughter, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. However, neither of them takes their role as partner in the life of Hester or father of her child. Instead they leave her alone to cope with her punishment and education of her hyperactive daughter. We have already seen failed relationships between men and women, such as that of Mr Hooper and Elizabeth and that of Goodman Brown and Faith. Nevertheless, neither of these couples failed because of a third person, a lover, as was the case of Hester's marriage.

#### **4.3.3.1 Hester and Chillingworth**

This relationship is an example of an arranged marriage of two people who probably should not have got married: an old reserved scholar and a young beautiful woman who has never loved him. Hawthorne portrays Hester and Chillingworth as two opposites in all aspects: in their appearance, age and interests. While Hester is passionate, Chillingworth is an intellectual, a man of science. The only common quality is the strength of their personalities. Hester could have never been happy with such a cold man as her husband was because he dedicated more time to science than to his beautiful wife. The failure of such a relationship was inevitable as Chillingworth admits after Hester's sin: “From the moment when we came down the old church steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path!”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 605.

<sup>118</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 59.

Hester does not represent a typical unfaithful wife. On the contrary, despite the not very happy marriage, Hester is faithful and the couple does not separate until their journey to the New World. While Hester travels in advance, her husband sets sail later, gets lost at sea and is generally believed to be dead. This motif is autobiographical since Hawthorne's father also disappeared at sea, but unlike Hester's husband never came back. Consequently Hester has an affair with the clergyman but in the belief that her husband died.

Hester's husband does not reappear until two years later at the moment when her sin has been discovered and she is being punished by standing on the scaffold. This is a moment when he finds out about Hester's infidelity, which puts him into the role of a betrayed and vengeful husband. He immediately decides not to reveal his relationship to Hester and thus spare himself the public humiliation, which might seem selfish of him. In fact, he has no choice: had he revealed his identity, Hester would have been executed for adultery. The only reason why she has been pardoned is that the judges assumed her husband to be dead. Chillingworth cannot defend his wife or take his position at her side. Rather, he is jealously eager to find out the identity of her lover, his competitor. As Hester is standing on the scaffold and refuses to name her lover to the authorities, her husband, under the anonymity of the crowd, tries to get the lover's name from her and shouts: "Speak, woman! (...) Speak; and give your child a father!"<sup>119</sup> However, Hester is determined not to surrender, especially not to her husband.

After the years of separation Hester and Chillingworth have alienated and there seems to be no more physical attraction between them had there ever been. Despite leading separate lives, their relationship is not over for

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<sup>119</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 55.

they are still legally married. Moreover, by asking Hester to keep his identity a secret, Chillingworth establishes a new bond between them. The secret of their marriage connects her with Chillingworth as well as the secret of her love affair links her to Dimmesdale. Hester actually stands between the two men and tries to protect the weaker of them – Dimmesdale.

As for Hester's guilt on the failure of the marriage, Chillingworth surprisingly does not blame her nor does he demand explanation on Hester. He seems to be a wise man to acknowledge his part of guilt on their current situation. It was his folly and Hester's weakness which destroyed their relationship. He was the one who laid the base for the failure by marrying Hester. Hester also admits her fault but the mutual understanding between them does not mean they are to live together again.

Interestingly, since their re-encounter after the two years, their life journeys have set into opposite directions: Hester dedicates herself to charity work and behaves as a saint while Chillingworth transforms himself into a devil and his only mission seems to be, despite being a doctor, to hurt and punish Hester and Dimmesdale. Besides his medical assistance in the cell, Chillingworth does not help or support Hester, not even secretly. On the contrary, he leaves her alone to cope with the consequences of her sin.

Chillingworth's comeback to Hester's life does not bring her relief but torment. He watches her every move to find her lover and she is aware of his unpleasant spying look whenever they meet. Even if Chillingworth does not want to punish Hester for what she has committed but to revenge on her lover, via the chase after the clergyman Chillingworth hurts Hester, too. When he discovers Hester has reunited with Dimmesdale and is

planning to run away with him, Chillingworth is determined to follow them wherever they might go.

Apart from all his negative characteristics, Chillingworth does one good thing to help Hester at the very end of the novel: he leaves a bequest to Hester's daughter Pearl, who is, technically speaking, his legal daughter. The sum of money enables the mother and her child to move from the town and lead a normal life in a place where nobody knows about Hester's sin.

#### **4.3.3.2 Hester and Dimmesdale**

Hester and Dimmesdale, a pair of lovers who committed the sin of adultery, conceived a child. Unlike the relationships of other couples in Hawthorne's fiction, this one is illegal and severely condemned by the society. The Puritans were very strict with regard to extramarital sex. The choice of a priest as the sinner, of someone who should be a moral example to the society, shows that anyone in the community, even the most respectable members, can sin.

Hester is portrayed as a contrast to both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale. Not only she is much stronger while the clergyman is weak and cowardly, but the contrast is caused particularly by the public knowledge of her sin since only she has to wear the letter on her dress and face the humiliation. As a consequence, she becomes a mother and a person on the margin of the society. On the other hand, Dimmesdale's position in the society does not change: he is still its most respectable member. He is also marked with the letter A but since it is covered by the clothes on his skin, he is spared the shame Hester has to stand. Similarly to Chillingworth, neither Dimmesdale reveals his relationship to Hester and takes the role of her partner. He leaves the education of their problematic daughter to Hester.

Since Hester's public punishment they did not continue in their relationship until their meeting in the forest seven years later.

The pair is unbalanced – their roles appear to be reversed. Dimmesdale should offer her support and advice as her pastor. Furthermore, as a man and her partner he should be the stronger one, her solace. However, he fails to fulfil both his roles. Hester is the stronger half of the pair: she is courageous and protective. She has to earn her own living and she has nobody to rely on or to support her. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, is very sensitive and much weaker, which is shown in his cowardly rejection to confess. He seeks Hester's protection and help in such a way that it seems ridiculous and inappropriate for a man. The only excuse for his behaviour is that he has become a nervous wreck. In the forest Dimmesdale literally begs Hester for help and comfort: “Think for me, Hester! Thou art strong. Resolve for me!”<sup>120</sup> Dimmesdale is a broken person who lacks any life energy and ability to decide for himself. Hester becomes a soothing mother or sister. Not only she has to look after her daughter but also after her lover. Nevertheless, tenacious and devoted Hester does not surrender easily and is determined “to buoy him up with her own energy” and encourage his spirit.

Dimmesdale, guilt-ridden, hates hypocrisy and the role of a venerable priest he has to play in public torments him. However, he is too weak and therefore makes only vain attempts to reveal his secret. In fact, he is afraid of the reaction of the parishioners. He shows his affection to Hester and her child only in such places where nobody can see them. For example, he chooses to stand on the scaffold together with Hester and their daughter so that everyone could see him and realize his sin, but he does that at night when, logically, the whole town is asleep. The scene is special for one more reason: a meteor appears in the sky and to Dimmesdale it

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<sup>120</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 144.

looks like the letter A. The poor man is haunted by his guilt so that he sees his sin everywhere around. He interprets the letter A as an “adulterer” but for the rest of the town it stands for an “angel” because their good governor Winthrop died earlier that night. Governor Winthrop in the novel is based on a historical person, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Dimmesdale's punishment is to suffer privately, which is even more difficult. He gets into uneasy situations when his roles of a pastor and lover collide. In chapter III, for example, he is asked by the authorities to persuade Hester to tell the name of her lover, that is his own name. Hester, face to face to her beloved, rejects. On another occasion, however, Dimmesdale defends Hester and her right to bring up her daughter herself.

Hawthorne focuses on Dimmesdale's deteriorating physical condition which corresponds with his mental state. The guilt is always with him and does not allow him a moment of peace. Even in his room there is a tapestry with a very symbolic message: it depicts David and Bathsheba, mythological adulterers. They present a parallel to Hester and Dimmesdale. Moreover, Chillingworth harasses him continuously. Dimmesdale, unable to confess, makes atonement by whipping himself secretly. In the end of the novel Dimmesdale, despite his youth, dies. His death might be interpreted as a metaphysical punishment for his sin.

#### **4.3.4 Hepzibah and Clifford**

This couple differs completely from the other analysed couples. Unlike them, Hepzibah and Clifford are much older and they are not married or even lovers. They represent a sister and a brother, a spinster and a released prisoner. From the psychological point of view they are one of the most interesting pairs. Despite having spent most of their lives separated,

they share a lot: they have lived outside the society, they have never married or had families of their own. Actually, they have lost their best years and become human wrecks, shadows of the people they could have been. Hawthorne goes as far as to call them dead people, though they are still alive:

Miss Hepzibah, by secluding herself from society, has lost all true relation with it, and is in fact dead.(...) Your poor Cousin Clifford is another dead and long-buried person, on whom the Governor and Council have wrought a necromantic miracle.<sup>121</sup>

Due to their single and lonely state they substitute other family roles for each other, especially Hepzibah because she has the stronger personality. She takes the role of Clifford's solicitous sister, or better, of his mother, because Clifford is not able to do anything, he's just a body without a soul, without his own will, a puppet who needs to be taken care of and told what to do. His intellectual capacity seems to be very limited (see 4.1.1 the connection between the light and intellect).

Hepzibah's love for her brother is obvious. She does her best to ensure everything Clifford wants – she literally sacrifices for him when she opens a cent-shop despite her strong aversion to do so. Later she sacrifices the only egg from the hens:

Thus unscrupulously did the old gentlewoman sacrifice the continuance, perhaps, of an ancient feathered race, with no better end than to supply her brother with a dainty that hardly filled the bowl of a teaspoon!<sup>122</sup>

On other occasions when Judge Pyncheon comes to visit Clifford and insists on meeting him, Hepzibah defends her brother with her own body. She faces the judge bravely in spite of her fear in chapter VIII:

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<sup>121</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 216.

<sup>122</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 153.



She now issued forth, as would appear, to defend the entrance, looking, we must needs say, amazingly like the dragon which, in fairy tales, is wont to be the guardian over an enchanted beauty. The habitual scowl of her brow was, undeniably, too fierce, at this moment, to pass itself off on the innocent score of near-sightedness. (...) But we must betray Hepzibah's secret, and confess, that the native timorousness of her character even now developed itself, in a quick tremor, which, to her own perception, set each of her joints at variance with its fellow.<sup>123</sup>

Unfortunately, Clifford does not return her love, which is very sad considering her devotion to him. Actually, he cannot even stand the look at her face because of her ugliness: "But the worst of all – the hardest stroke of fate for Hepzibah to endure, and perhaps for Clifford too – was his invincible distaste for her appearance."<sup>124</sup> Clifford fancies only beautiful things and people, and therefore he enjoys staying in Phoebe's presence. As foreshadowed above, Clifford represents a pitiable human wreck. His stay in prison has damaged his mental health and he seems unable to adapt to the present and is lost in time:

With a mysterious and terrible Past, which had annihilated his memory, and a blank Future before him, he had only this visionary and impalpable Now, which, if you once look closely at it, is nothing.<sup>125</sup>

He resembles a daydreamer with a soul of a small child, though his body is old. He is not worried about the future or money to provide his family: "he had no burthen of care upon him. (...) In this respect, he was a child; a child for the whole term of his existence."<sup>126</sup>

Clifford does not take his natural male role of his sister's guardian but once. There is one situation when Clifford and Hepzibah switch roles – it is after the judge's death: Hepzibah seems to be paralysed and is not

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<sup>123</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 126-127.

<sup>124</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 135.

<sup>125</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 149.

<sup>126</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 170.

capable of doing anything while Clifford is full of energy as if he has woken up from a nightmare. He leads her out of the house and they escape from the town. In chapter XVII Hawthorne brilliantly describes the moment when these two time-stricken owls leave the house for the first time: despite their age their experience with the outer world is very little like that of a child. They are “old helpless children”<sup>127</sup>.

#### **4.3.5 Phoebe and Holgrave**

In comparison to other previously mentioned couples, Phoebe and Holgrave represent the happiest couple of all. From the psychological point of view they do not seem as interesting the other couples. There are almost no obstacles for them to overcome and they have nothing to worry about except dealing with is Holgrave's family past. When the young man reveals his origin Phoebe does not seem to pay any undue attention to it as she is free and disconnected from ancestral burdens. The young couple represent modern people because Holgrave as a scientist dedicates himself to daguerreotype which is a brand new technique of that time and Phoebe is not psychologically burdened with ancestral past.

The reader can watch the development of their relationship throughout the novel: how they meet for the first time in the garden, how they gradually get to know each other, fall in love and get engaged. Due to his distant behaviour, Phoebe considered him at first “too calm and cool an observer”<sup>128</sup>. Similar to Mr Hooper and Elizabeth Phoebe and Holgrave are engaged to be married and seem to be a match made in heaven. Fortunately, they are not troubled by any dark thoughts, nightmares or sins which destroy the chance of a happy future for Mr Hooper and Elizabeth, as well as other couples. Phoebe and Holgrave have a bright future ahead of themselves. When they finally tell each other about their love

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<sup>127</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 216.

<sup>128</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 178.

Hawthorne describes the scene as if it was meant to happen. Their love is transcendental:

The bliss, which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy, shone around this youth and maiden. They were conscious of nothing sad nor old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it.<sup>129</sup>

The young man with reformation ideas decides to adjust and settle down with Phoebe because she is his saviour. Before he met her he had been overshadowed by a sense of guilt which had taken away his youth. Holgrave describes how Phoebe intervened in his desperate situation and changed it dramatically:

'The world looked strange, wild, evil, hostile; – my past life, so lonesome and dreary; my future, a shapeless gloom, which I must mould into gloomy shapes! But, Phoebe, you crossed the threshold; and hope, warmth, and joy, came in with you! The black moment became at once a blissful one.'<sup>130</sup>

This couple of young innocent people with their pure love injects the light into the dark and gloomy atmosphere of the novel. Furthermore, their decision to get married brings the story to a happy ending which resembles a fairy tale. Like a prince and princess, “the descendant of the legendary wizard”<sup>131</sup> and “the village-maiden” leave the house in a carriage and move to a palace, Judge Pyncheon's mansion.

## **4.4 Main Female Characters in Hawthorne's Works**

### **4.4.1 Hester Prynne**

Hester Prynne belongs to one of the most elaborate female characters in Hawthorne's fiction. Hester, a woman of an extremely strong character, originally from an old English aristocratic family, is left alone in a new

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<sup>129</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 307.

<sup>130</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 306.

<sup>131</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 319.

country, New England, and commits adultery with a priest. The pregnancy reveals her sin and she has to face the consequences and bring up a child, the living evidence of her sin, on her own. The nature of her sin made an outcast of her. This is a very difficult situation for a young mother – she is absolutely alone, she has nobody to talk to, to ask for help or advice, the whole society avoids her. She is a person who people point out to their children to warn them. She walks among them as if she was a ghost. She has to stand the constant agony and torture in her chest as people look at her token. Nonetheless, she exhibits unusual strength to survive all the public humiliation and not to collapse. Actually, her good health and psychical endurance helps her overcome all the obstacles and she outlives both her husband and her lover.

Hester is presented as a sinner deeply condemned by the community where she lives, but since the opening of the plot she behaves like a saint. She dedicates to charity work as an atonement for her sin and therefore bears tenaciously and patiently all the offence of the inhabitants, especially women, despite the fact that they cause her a lot of pain. Hawthorne emphasizes the paradox that even the poor people whom she helps from the little what she has for herself and her own baby criticize her. They literally bite the hand that feeds them. Ironically, although Hester behaves better than many other townspeople, big hypocrites, she is still considered the worst outcast because adultery is one of the most severely punished sins: something that the society based on conservative family values does not forgive.

In the character of Hester we can see Hawthorne's typical approach: he rejects the black and white Puritan way of seeing things. He makes us think about who is actually bad in the story. Is it Hester who is trying to do penance for her sin or the hypocritical society? The ambiguity can be found in chapter II when Hester is standing on the scaffold with her baby in her

arms. As depicted in Catholic Church paintings she resembles the Virgin Mary with baby Jesus. This association is actually precise because Mary also conceived her child with a man who was not her husband.

Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent; something which should remind him (...) of that sacred image of sinless motherhood.<sup>132</sup>

Hester is extraordinarily beautiful in comparison to the old ugly matrons who watch her being taken to the scaffold in the same chapter. With broad shoulders, well-developed busts and round red cheeks these goodwives are definitely not examples of refined pale ladies, not even in their way of speaking. These first inhabitants of New England represent a contrast to young, tall Hester, who has abundant dark hair, regular features of her face and rich complexion. As good Christians, and particularly women, they feel offended by her sin – adultery – and take the roles of “self-constituted judges”<sup>133</sup>. They would like to punish Hester more severely than the judges did. However, the reason behind their criticism might be the fact that they are envious of her beauty and youth, qualities which have not vanished under the punishment but on the contrary. Moreover, Hester is wearing a splendid apparel and the scarlet letter she has sewn on her bosom resembles rather an adornment than a token of shame. The daring dress she is wearing seems to be more sumptuous than it is suitable for a woman of her rank. Designed and made by Hester herself like that on purpose, the apparel reflects “the desperate recklessness of her mood”<sup>134</sup>. I would also say that working on that apparel was a sort of a therapy for Hester when she was imprisoned. She could use her

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<sup>132</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 47.

<sup>133</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 44.

<sup>134</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 45.

imagination freely. Being of a creative nature Hester needed some way to vent her energy and fancy.

This brings us to the dress code in the early-Puritan settlements of New England. Hawthorne describes Hester's apparel as being “beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony”<sup>135</sup> by which he refers to the strict rules regulating the extravagance and luxury in the community. People had to wear restrained clothing, usually of dark colours, but magistrates and other powerful inhabitants were allowed to wear expensive embroidered clothes on special occasions. This also alludes to the class system in the society: the individuals of rank of wealth had privileges which were forbidden to the plebeian order. Actually, Hester makes her living of adorning clothes for rich inhabitants and church authorities because she is very skillful in the art of needlework. Besides the only occasion in chapter II when she stands on the scaffold in a splendid robe Hester always wears simple grey dress. The scarlet letter which was unceasingly attached to the bosom of her dress has become “a specimen of her delicate and imaginative skill”<sup>136</sup>, always on display for the potential customers. Nevertheless, society has never forgotten her sin, therefore she has never been asked to embroider a veil for a bride.

The scarlet letter is a typical example of symbolism frequently used by Hawthorne: a symbol open to multiple interpretations, linked to colours and objects of everyday use, such as articles of clothes. It is not only a piece of red cloth sewed on the bosom of her dress. Hawthorne endowed it with a deep meaning. The basic purpose is clear – it is meant to be a punishment for Hester and warning to other members of the community. Hawthorne alludes to the Puritan habit of labelling things and wearing tokens of shame as a punishment (see 2.2.2). Though it is never said in the novel,

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<sup>135</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 45.

<sup>136</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 64.

the letter “A” stands for adulteress. The red colour symbolizes the devil or hell, thus has negative connotation. In the progress of the novel, however, the letter gets other meanings such as able and angel which are far away from the original negative meaning. Due to her humble behaviour and charity, Hester becomes “self-ordained a Sister of Mercy”<sup>137</sup> whom people start to respect and her letter gets a positive meaning of able and becomes a symbol of her good deeds.

The letter has “the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations within humanity and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.”<sup>138</sup> Similarly to Mr Hooper from “The Minister's Black Veil”, Hester has to wear a piece of clothing which detaches her from the society. The letter gives her certain powers and privileges other people do not have. Firstly, the letter endows Hester with an ability to recognize fellow sinners whose look at the letter betrays them. Through Hester Hawthorne makes the reader realize she is not the only one in the society who has sinned. The only difference is that she had been discovered. Similarly to Mr Hooper and Goodman Brown, Hester starts to feel that the inhabitants of the town hide their sins and wear masks, that “the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many bosoms besides Hester Prynne's.”<sup>139</sup> Hawthorne does not spare anyone the suspicion, nor even an old matron or a venerable magistrate, the earthly saint. This alludes the corruption of the hypocritical Puritan society. In case of Hester it leads to loss of faith; the scarlet letter makes her doubt everybody involuntarily.

Secondly, the letter makes Hester, who spends most of her time alone in her cottage, start to doubt the order of the society and question the laws. She is an independent spirit with new thoughts which reject the ancient

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<sup>137</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 120.

<sup>138</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 45.

<sup>139</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 68.

principles and prejudice. Had she not had Pearl, she might have become a reformer like Ann Hutchinson. Hester appears to be a precursor to the feminist movement because she thinks the position of women in the society should be changed:

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.<sup>140</sup>

Evidently, her liberal ideas are not in accordance with the philosophy of the society where she lives and she might be punished much more severely than just with a scarlet letter if the authorities discovered them. The marginal position she has to occupy gives her a different point of view at human institutions which she criticizes. "The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread."<sup>141</sup>

Hester as an old woman returns to the place where she sinned and where the bodies of both her husband and her lover are buried. She has fulfilled her mother role – her daughter has grown and got married – and she feels obliged to continue in her atonement. Her mission is to live in the community which condemned her and help its inhabitants by her good deeds. The suffering has changed her and she comes back as a wise woman who is not condemned any more. On the contrary, other women seek her help and advice. From her own will she puts on the scarlet letter again and similarly to Mr Hooper never takes it off till her death.

#### **4.4.2 Pearl**

Pearl, the illegitimate daughter of Hester and Dimmesdale, represents vivid evidence of their sin, an incarnation of the scarlet letter. To support

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<sup>140</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 123.

<sup>141</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 147.



this idea Hester makes fantastic red dress for her. Her name does not allude to Pearl's aspect but to the fact that the little girl is Hester's only treasure for which she had to pay all she had. In the society of strict parents Pearl, a beautiful girl with darker skin, is described as a terribly wild child, today she might be called hyperactive, who does not obey her mother and misbehaves. In Pearl being born the order of the world has been disturbed therefore the girl herself finds it difficult to adapt to the rules of the world. She seems to be ruled by her momentary caprice; her moods change more frequently than the weather. The little girl resembles an elf rather than a child from this world and seems to be connected with devil.

Pearl is both Hester's blessing and punishment. "She is my happiness! – she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too!"<sup>142</sup> Her task seems to be to torment her mother. Pearl is attracted by the token on her mother's bosom and often points out to it, touches it or even kisses it, which is very painful for Hester. On one occasion little Pearl throws wild flowers on her mother's bosom and is very happy to hit the target which makes her mother very sad. Pearl misbehaves in the most inappropriate moments such as in chapter VIII when she is examined in catechisms. Even if little Pearl knows the correct answer, but with certain perversity she invents a fantastic theory instead. Not only does she embarrass her mother but as a result Hester looks like a bad mother incapable of educating her own child and the church authorities consider taking Pearl away from her mother.

Pearl appears to be a very intelligent child who shows a surprising comprehension of everything around her. Her remarks and questions are very clever and the truth in them often disturbs Hester. As a typical child she usually says aloud what she thinks or what the adults think but do not

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<sup>142</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 85.

dare to say. For example, the little girl connects her mother's token with Dimmesdale who keeps his hand over his heart. She also urges Dimmesdale to meet them publicly and hold hands with them, not only at night or in the forest.

Pearl constantly reminds Hester of her sin as in the forest scene in chapter XIX. Hester wants to have a short rest from her token of shame and throws it away but Pearl rejects to come back until her mother resumes it. This might seem like a stubborn childish behaviour but it has a deeper sense. By undoing the letter Hester erased the past and by erasing the past Pearl cannot exist in the present.

Pearl's character is based on Hawthorne's daughter Una whose peculiar behaviour puzzled him and sometimes even frightened him (cf. Herbert 1988). Similarly to Hawthorne, Hester is also perplexed and sometimes frightened by her little daughter. Pearl seems not to conform to a definition of a usual child. She is capable of incredibly tender gestures as well as of nasty behaviour such as throwing stones on birds. In chapter VIII, for example, the little girl shows extreme tenderness when she approaches Mr Dimmesdale, her father, and takes his hand: "Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf, stole softly towards him, and taking his hand in the grasp of both of her own, laid her cheek against it."<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, in chapter VI, Pearl suffers from one of her frequent fits of rage:

If the children gathered about her, as they sometimes did, Pearl would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling them at them, with shrill, incoherent exclamations that made her mother tremble because they had so much the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 87.

<sup>144</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 72.

Being an outcast like her mother, Pearl has no friends among the Puritan children and tends to respond physically to their verbal offence. Her behaviour is so strange for the people of her time, that it is considered devilish or unearthly. It is the sin of her parents which makes her inhuman.

Walter Herbert comes with a gender theory which might explain the inconsistency of Pearl's behaviour. In his opinion Pearl exhibits both male and female qualities which makes her look like an anomaly. Throwing stones is rather a boyish characteristic while adorning oneself with flowers is definitely girlish. Hawthorne resolves the conflict by the death of her father. When the identity of her father is revealed, her task to torment her mother is fulfilled and the grief over Dimmesdale's death makes her eventually human and enables her to grow up into a sensitive woman:

Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl's errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled.<sup>145</sup>

Adult Pearl settles in Europe, gets married and seems to live out of the money she inherited from her legal father Chillingworth. As if to keep distance between her current life and the place of her illegal origin, Pearl, unlike her mother, prefers not to come back to New England. Yet she takes care of Hester and sends her gifts which show her affection.

#### **4.4.3 Hepzibah**

Hepzibah is one of the two main female characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*. She is portrayed as an old, ugly spinster, though very kind, whose permanent frown of her face discourages other people, even her beloved brother. Typically for Hawthorne, Hepzibah represents another of

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<sup>145</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 185.

his female characters who is left alone to fend for herself without anybody's help. There are no strong men in her life who would be a support for her. On the contrary, she is the one who has to provide for her brother.

She symbolizes the past of New England: an old lady from once influential aristocratic family, today without money, yet still very proud. Hawthorne describes her at the moment when the poverty makes her open a cent-shop in one of the gables to earn a living for herself and her soon to be released brother. The decision to open a shop brings a dramatic change to her life – she has to leave her lonely way of living and reestablish a contact with the society. It is not easy for her to deal with the new situation considering that she was brought up as a lady for whom work was unthinkable. However, now she is forced to “step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank”<sup>146</sup> and the reader witnesses “the instant of time when the patrician lady is to be transformed into the plebeian woman”<sup>147</sup>. The scene culminates with the image of the humiliated poor old lady literally down on her knees picking up the spilt marbles. “It was the final term of what called itself old gentility.”<sup>148</sup>

The old woman is troubled by the family guilt so that she appears to be paralyzed in time and unable to ever leave the dark house: she has closed herself in the haunted house like a hermit, and meanwhile the society has changed. As a person she has not been productive: she has never married or had children. According to Martin, “Hepzibah is thus what generations of Pyncheons have made her”<sup>149</sup>. The spinster is a victim of the family curse and burden. Hawthorne projects his autobiographical

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<sup>146</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 38.

<sup>147</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 38.

<sup>148</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 37.

<sup>149</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 131.

experience with his ancestral past on Hepzibah. Similarly to him Hepzibah has to deal with her family's unfortunate participation on the witch trials.

As for her qualities, Hepzibah is introverted, impractical, all fingers and thumbs. In the shop she breaks the gingerbread figures due to her awkwardness. The inclination to impracticality and uselessness is hereditary in the Pyncheon family. Hawthorne calls it a “native inapplicability (...) of the Pyncheons to any useful purpose”<sup>150</sup>. He suggests that such a hereditary trait is often found in families that belong to the highest society for a long time. This might be an allusion to the fact that the supposed aristocracy she assumes has no place in the New World. If they want to survive, they have to adapt.

As a person Hepzibah is good but the scowling expression on her face, an innocent result of her near-sightedness, makes people think she is an ill-tempered old maid. However, as Hawthorne emphasizes, “her heart never frowned”<sup>151</sup>. Hawthorne also indicates a connection between Hepzibah's appearance and her stay in the house. In chapter V the old woman warns Phoebe of the negative impact of the gloomy house on her health:

'Those cheeks would not be so rosy, after a month or two. Look at my face!' – and, indeed, the contrast was very striking – 'you see how pale I am! It is my idea that the dust and continual decay of these old houses are unwholesome for the lungs.'<sup>152</sup>

All Hepzibah's qualities seem to contrast with Phoebe and the author often emphasizes their differences by placing the two women next to each other. The contrast is striking. They differ from each other as night differs from day.

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<sup>150</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 77.

<sup>151</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 34.

<sup>152</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 74-75.

#### 4.4.4 Phoebe

Phoebe, another main female character from *The House of the Seven Gables*, is meant to be an opposite of Hepzibah in all aspects. From the very beginning Hawthorne clearly “establishes the fact that Phoebe is not in the direct Pyncheon line”<sup>153</sup>. She has not been brought up a Pyncheon, therefore the family curse does not apply to her. She has different qualities than all the useless Pyncheons: as a girl from the country she is skillful, pragmatic, practical and knows how to manage the household and does not reject work. She must have inherited those qualities from her mother's side.

While Hepzibah represents the past, a “born and educated lady, (...) in her rustling and rusty silks, with her deeply cherished and ridiculous consciousness of long descent”<sup>154</sup>, Phoebe stands for the present, or better, future. Since she lacks the pride of Hepzibah and Alice Pyncheon, she embodies a modern American woman. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne expresses some feminist ideas about the future position of women in the society. Accordingly there will be no more place for useless ladies and only women like Phoebe will exist:

Instead of discussing her claim to rank among ladies, it would be preferable to regard Phoebe as the example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist. There, it should be woman's office to move in the midst of practical affairs.<sup>155</sup>

Phoebe is young and brings light and warmth to the gloomy house and into the life of its inhabitants. Martin emphasizes the fact that Phoebe is endowed with “a kind of natural magic” or “homely witchcraft”<sup>156</sup>, “which

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<sup>153</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 133.

<sup>154</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 80.

<sup>155</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 80.

<sup>156</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 71-72.

begins to purify the house from the moment she moves in"<sup>157</sup>. She has the "ability to make any place look like a home"<sup>158</sup>. It took her only one night to change her bedroom and purify it "of all former evil and sorrow by her sweet breath and happy thoughts"<sup>159</sup>.

#### **4.5 Man and God**

Two interesting male characters, Holgrave from *The House of the Seven Gables* and Chillingworth from *The Scarlet Letter* to a certain degree try to play the role of God. Throughout Hawthorne's works many examples of such men, usually scientists or alchemists, want to manipulate other people or change them by the means of science. These characters usually appear in so called mad-scientist stories, e. g. in "Rappaccini's Daughter" or in "The Birthmark". Similar scientists appear in Hawthorne's Puritan works. These characters take the role of an observer, a manipulator, a creator or a physician.

In the past priests were the psychologists. It was their task to cure human souls and to help people deal with their hidden secrets or sins. However, this concept applied to Catholicism. In Protestant religions, and especially in Puritanism, one of the most radical branches, they rejected the authority of Catholic priests. They did not have anyone they could confess to and who would help them get rid of their burden. They believed in direct approach to God, but as he rarely responded, they suffered more inside. Thus a man who attempts to find out other people's secrets or sins and makes them confess to him obviously plays the role of God because Puritans were used to confide only in God. Similarly, a man who manipulates with other people without their conscience takes the position of God.

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<sup>157</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 133.

<sup>158</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 133.

<sup>159</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 72.

### 4.5.1 Holgrave

From the very beginning of the novel, Holgrave takes the role of a distant observer who does not hide the fact that he enjoys watching the Pyncheon family. In chapter XII he even calls himself “a mere observer”<sup>160</sup>. It should be taken into account that his stay in the House of the Seven Gables is not accidental. He came there on purpose because of his own family's past: as a descendant of the legendary wizard Matthew Maule, he wants to study the family of his enemies. Nevertheless, he does not hate the Pyncheons:

He took a certain kind of interest in Hepzibah and her brother, and Phoebe herself; he studied them attentively, and allowed no slightest circumstance of their individualities to escape him.<sup>161</sup>

Sometimes his obsession verges on intrusion. In one of his talks with Phoebe Holgrave admits his wish to dig into Clifford's mind had he the opportunity. Holgrave is also proud of his ability to read people's minds and claims that he is able to read Phoebe's thoughts like an open book.

As mentioned above, Holgrave comes from the Maules family and similar to his ancestors he is also endowed with special powers to manipulate people by means of hypnosis, popularly called “Maule's eye”. In chapter XIV Holgrave gets into the same position as his ancestor Matthew Maule who had taken possession of Alice Pyncheon's soul. His vivid narration of the story of his ancestor has a hypnotizing effect on his listener Phoebe:

Holgrave gazed at her (...), and recognized an incipient stage of that curious psychological condition, which as he had himself told Phoebe, he possessed more than an ordinary faculty of producing. A veil was beginning to be muffled about her, in which she could behold only him, and live only his thoughts and emotions. (...) He could establish an influence over this good, pure, and simple child, as dangerous,

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<sup>160</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 179.

<sup>161</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 177.



and perhaps as disastrous, as that which the carpenter of his legend had acquired and exercised over the ill-fated Alice.<sup>162</sup>

Martin describes the situation in this way: “Holgrave brings the past to bear on Phoebe in a way that leaves her defenseless. (...) At this point the entire cycle of misfortune could be recapitulated and begun anew.”<sup>163</sup> The whole story stands at its turning point, Holgrave is about to make a decision which can change the fate of the family or repeat it. In this scene Holgrave is God. Fortunately, Holgrave decides not to misuse his powers and releases Phoebe's soul, although he has to resist a strong temptation of “acquiring empire over the human spirit”<sup>164</sup>. The reason why he breaks the spell over Phoebe before it becomes indissoluble is his “reverence for another's individuality”<sup>165</sup>. According to Martin, “by refusing an opportunity for revenge, he loosens the bond of the past”<sup>166</sup>. To conclude, Holgrave is generally a positive character who in spite of his dark powers decides to serve the good and not to repeat his ancestor's mistakes and thus prolong the feud.

#### **4.5.2 Chillingworth**

Chillingworth, a leech and an alchemist, is another example of a character who tries to search in other people's souls, manipulates people and plays the role of a psychologist. He is endowed with similar features as the mad-scientists in other Hawthorne's stories. In comparison to Holgrave, Chillingworth is much more powerful in his science and he is portrayed as a negative person linked to the devil. Moreover, the physician seems to be linked to a suspicious murder which had happened in England long before he appeared in Massachusetts.

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<sup>162</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 211-212.

<sup>163</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 136.

<sup>164</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 212.

<sup>165</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 212.

<sup>166</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 136.

In the beginning Chillingworth is presented as a scholar who has learnt a lot about the medicine and use of herbs from the native inhabitants and has become a leech. His face is described as dark and smoked, a quality which is attributed to his frequent experiments with chemicals. However, as soon as he finds out about his unfaithful wife, he is determined to find the other sinner – her lover. He changes his name (from Prynne) so that he would not be identified as Hester's husband. He erases his identity from the world, settles in the town under the name of Roger Chillingworth and starts to work as a physician or practitioner. The fact that nobody apart from Hester knows his real identity gives Chillingworth power over the people and also over Hester. He can secretly observe his victim, reverend Dimmesdale, and manipulate it.

In chapter X Chillingworth has a strong argument with Dimmesdale who opposes his attempts to manipulate him into revealing the secret. This scene shows clearly Chillingworth's ambitions to play the role of the clergyman's psychologist, which is reserved to God only. Chillingworth goes too far in his insisting on the poor ill clergyman who becomes furious and strictly refuses the leech's medicine of soul claiming Chillingworth has no right to stand between him and God:

No! – not to thee! – not to an earthly physician!" (...) Not to thee! But, if it be the soul's disease, then do I commit myself to the one Physician of the soul! He, if it stand with his good pleasure, can cure; or he can kill! Let him do with me as, in his justice and wisdom, he shall see good. But who art thou, that meddlest in this matter? – that darest thrust himself between the sufferer and his God?<sup>167</sup>

The mission of discovering his wife's lover becomes Chillingworth's obsession and changes his personality adversely: "At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar-like. Now, there was something ugly

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<sup>167</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, pp 102-103.

and evil in his face which they had not previously noticed.”<sup>168</sup> In chapter X, little Pearl calls him the black man, which is a clear reference to the devil: “Come away, Mother! Come away, or yonder old Black Man will catch you! He hath got hold of the minister already.”<sup>169</sup> This illustrates that there is something suspicious and insane in the obsession with which Chillingworth chases reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, the supposed lover of his wife. Like a miner digging into the poor clergyman's heart for gold, or like a thief creeping silently to steal the treasure of Dimmesdale's soul, Chillingworth finds out the secret Dimmesdale is hiding from him. His dark appearance contributes to the public opinion that Chillingworth is a disguised Satan or his emissary. “This diabolical agent had the Divine permission, for a reason, to burrow into the clergyman's intimacy and plot against his soul.”<sup>170</sup> In chapter X there is another reference to Chillingworth's connection with devil and hell fire:

Sometimes, a light glimmered out of the physician's eyes, burning blue and ominous, like the reflection of a furnace, or, let us say, like one of those gleams of ghastly fire that darted from Bunyan's awful doorway in the hillside and quivered on the pilgrim's face.<sup>171</sup>

In this quotation there is an allusion to Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*, a book Hawthorne read when he was a student, and which he also used later as a source of inspiration for his allegory “The Celestial Railroad”.

Having achieved his revenge, Chillingworth dies shortly after his victim, Arthur Dimmesdale. As if the only motif for his existence was to punish the clergyman, after his death Chillingworth seemed to have lost all his energy and he “withered up, shrivelled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight”.<sup>172</sup> Having completed his evil task he could leave the earthly life.

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<sup>168</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 96.

<sup>169</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 101.

<sup>170</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 96.

<sup>171</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 97.

<sup>172</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 188.

## 4.6 Witchcraft and Devil

In this subchapter the witches and witch-hunt are analysed which are central to the plots of *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Scarlet Letter* and also in the tale of “Young Goodman Brown”. In some works Hawthorne uses historical names of real people executed for witchcraft, such as Mrs Hibbins in *The Scarlet Letter* and goody Cloyse and Cory in “Young Goodman Brown”, which reflects his interest in early American history and the intensive study of that period.

### 4.6.1 Matthew Maule and the Witch-hunt in Salem

The plot of *The House of the Seven Gables* is based on the fact that the founder of the family and the house, Colonel Pyncheon, did not get the land very honestly because he had arranged the original land owner, Matthew Maule, to be executed for witchcraft. “After the reputed wizard's death, his humble homestead had fallen an easy spoil into Colonel Pyncheon's grasp.”<sup>173</sup> However, the crime of Maule's death darkened the house and gave it “the scent of an old and melancholy house”<sup>174</sup>.

Hawthorne shows us a conflict between men from two distinct classes of society: a mighty Puritan Colonel Pyncheon and a much poorer farmer Matthew Maule. The Puritan was determined to obtain the land he fancied but Maule, “though an obscure man, was stubborn in the defence of what he considered his right”<sup>175</sup>. As it usually happens in similar situations, the richer and more influential one used his power to get rid of the poorer one. During the witch-hunt which befell Salem Colonel Pyncheon took the opportunity to seize Maule's land and supported the public opinion of Maule being a witch:

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<sup>173</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>174</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>175</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 7.

But, in after days, when the frenzy of that hideous epoch had subsided, it was remembered how loudly Colonel Pyncheon had joined in the general cry, to purge the land from witchcraft; nor did it fail to be whispered, that there was an invidious acrimony in the zeal with which he had sought the condemnation of Matthew Maule.<sup>176</sup>

Behind the Colonel's attitude we can recognize a desire for his own personal benefit, a motif present also in Miller's *The Crucible*. However, Matthew Maule was well aware of the Colonel's intention, "he recognized the bitterness of personal enmity in his persecutor's conduct towards him, and that he declared himself hunted to death for his soil"<sup>177</sup>. Shortly before his execution Maule revenged by cursing Colonel Pyncheon and his family "God will give him blood to drink!"<sup>178</sup>.

Maule's case describes the general atmosphere of the Salem witch-hunt, a topic which troubled him personally. His description of the processes is rather moralizing – mankind should learn from its terrible mistake. In addition, the author expresses a severe criticism of the members of higher society for their blindness and participation on the witch-hunt:

Old Matthew Maule, in a word, was executed for the crime of witchcraft. He was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion which should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob. Clergymen, judges, statesmen – the wisest, calmest, holiest persons of their day – stood in the inner circle roundabout the gallows, loudest to applaud the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived.<sup>179</sup>

Terence Martin has characterized Hawthorne's approach to the American past and its use in his works like this:

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<sup>176</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>177</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>178</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>179</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 7-8.

In his tales of colonial times, Hawthorne's imagination withdraws into history and returns to the present with meaning inherent in the past; he makes Americans see what they had been as a way of showing them more fully what they are.<sup>180</sup>

In his criticism of the society's behaviour, Hawthorne finds only one example of extenuating circumstances – the fact that they persecuted everyone without exceptions, including people of their own class:

If any one part of their proceedings can be said to deserve less blame than another, it was the singular discrimination with which they persecuted, not merely the poor and aged, as in former judicial massacres, but people of all ranks; their own equals, brethren, and wives.<sup>181</sup>

In the description of the society during the witch-hunt as well as in other scenes Hawthorne illustrates the system of class society in the Puritan settlements. Matthew Maule was a great example of a person of a lower rank: “It is not strange that a man of inconsiderable note, like Maule, should have trodden the martyr's path to the hill of execution, almost unremarked in the throng of his fellow-sufferers.”<sup>182</sup>

Nevertheless, Matthew Maule was not the only wizard in the novel. Later there was a grandson of the wizard, a carpenter also named Matthew Maule who was asked by Gervayse Pyncheon to help him find a long-lost document. It seems that some strange and suspicious qualities run in the family, for example, the witchcraft of Maule's eye. It was believed that Maule “could look into people's minds” or that “by the marvellous power of his eye, he could draw people into his own mind, or send them, if he pleased, to do errands to his grandfather”<sup>183</sup>. The scene in chapter XIII resembles a greedy person (Gervayse Pyncheon) making a pact a devil (Matthew Maule). The devilish carpenter comes out as a winner: he gets

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<sup>180</sup> Martin, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p 60.

<sup>181</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>182</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 8.

<sup>183</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 189-190.

hold of the soul of Gervayse's daughter Alice Pyncheon. He mocks Gervyse who sold his daughter "for the mere hope of getting a sheet of yellow parchment"<sup>184</sup>. Due to Maule's inherited skills, Alice has become his "slave, in a bondage more humiliating, a thousand-fold, than that which binds its chain around the body"<sup>185</sup>. He just waves his hand and wherever the proud girl happens to be she had to behave as he pleases. Unfortunately, on such an occasion when the hypnotized Alice leaves the house without an overcoat to fulfil Maule's wish, she catches cold and dies. Maule is very angry with himself because he "meant to humble Alice, not to kill her; – but he had taken a woman's delicate soul into his rude gripe, to play with; – and she was dead!"<sup>186</sup>

#### **4.6.2 Witches in *The Scarlet Letter***

The plot of *The Scarlet Letter* is set to the first half of the seventeenth century, i.e. a long time before the mass hysteria about the witches broke out. In the novel the author mentions the first traces of witchcraft in New England; he introduces a character called Mistress Hibbins based on a historical person Ann Hibbins (d. 1656) who was later really condemned and executed as a witch. Throughout the novel the old widow is referred to as a witch who behaves eccentrically. In chapter VIII there is a famous scene when Mistress Hibbins opens the window and invites Hester to a night meeting in the forest with the devil: "Wilt thou go with us tonight? There will be a merry company in the forest; and I well-nigh promised the Black Man that comely Hester Prynne should make one."<sup>187</sup> Hester declines the invitation claiming that she has to look after her little girl. Nevertheless, Mistress Hibbins still regards Hester as a person of her kind, as one of the devil's servants, and is not afraid to talk to her in public. Mrs

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<sup>184</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 206.

<sup>185</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 208.

<sup>186</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 210.

<sup>187</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 88.

Hibbins appears to be able to recognize other sinners, or devil's servants in the town, as can be seen in chapter XXII:

Dost thou think I have been to the forest so many times, and have yet no skill to judge who else has been there? Yea; though no leaf of the wild garlands, which they wore while they danced, be left in their hair!<sup>188</sup>

As the only one in the town Mrs Hibbins doubts Dimmesdale's outer piety for she is sure he has been to the forest and sinned there with Hester. She is convinced there is a devil's sign on Dimmesdale's chest similar to the Hester's one and that the devil will arrange matters “so that the mark shall be disclosed in open daylight to the eyes of all the world”<sup>189</sup>. In fact, her prophecy comes true. At the end Dimmesdale on the scaffold shows his marked chest to everyone.

To conclude, Mistress Hibbins presents a stereotype of a witch – an old woman with eccentric behaviour who is not afraid of her reputation. She openly admits her forest meetings with devil and other witches, does not respect the rules of the society and dares speak with the woman with the scarlet letter. Similar to Miller's *The Crucible*, witchcraft is connected with the visits to the forest, usually at night, dancing and writing into a book.

#### **4.7 Allegory**

Allegory is an extended metaphor with a symbolic meaning which lies outside the narrative. By the means of symbols, personification of human qualities and abstract ideas , usually reflected in the names of the characters or places, the author communicates a message to the society. Although the allegory can be understood in two ways – literally or symbolically, the symbolic meaning is considered more important. The most frequently dealt themes are the society, its morals and religion.

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<sup>188</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 176.

<sup>189</sup> Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p 176.



Hawthorne makes use of allegory as means of criticism of the Puritan society.

#### **4.7.1 “Young Goodman Brown”**

“Young Goodman Brown” can be interpreted on the surface-plot level as a story of a young man who meets the devil in the forest, or as an allegory showing the constant struggle of the individual between good and evil and bad aspects of Puritanism. To achieve this Hawthorne uses symbolic names and figures. The name of the main character is symbolic as it is too general. He might as well be called Mr Smith. By choosing such a general name for the main hero the author suggests that similar epiphany, or crisis of faith, can happen to anyone in the society. As for the other characters, Hawthorne, similarly to Miller, uses names of real historical persons. He contrasts respectable parishioners such as Goody Cloyse with Martha Carrier, the “queen of hell”<sup>190</sup>. The latter resembles Mrs Hibbins, another historical person and a condemned witch, whose name Hawthorne used in *The Scarlet Letter*.

In comparison to other Hawthorne's allegories, such as “The Celestial Railroad”, in “Young Goodman Brown” there is only one character with a symbolic name which personifies an abstract concept – Faith. When he leaves the village, he literally says goodbye to his faith which he eventually loses in the forest. His exclamation “My Faith is gone!”<sup>191</sup> also offers ambiguous interpretations: Faith stands both for his wife and for his religious faith in earthly goodness. In fact, the story seems to be built around faith and belief. The story is very elaborate as it gradually undermines Goodman Brown's faith. At first he learns about his evil ancestors, then he realizes that the whole society, including citizens of

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<sup>190</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 583.

<sup>191</sup> Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”, p 581.

high rank, is wicked, and in the end the last blow – the devil gets possession even of his wife.

The author questions the basic tenets of the Puritan, or Calvinist, doctrine (cf. Bell 1993). Via the character of Goodman Brown Hawthorne explores his favourite topic – the contrast between the public and private image of the Puritans. The visit to the forest makes Goodman Brown doubt his faith in his wife, in his neighbours and in the whole society. Metaphorically he loses his rose-coloured glasses and starts to perceive the world negatively: there is no goodness and everybody are hypocrites. The hypocrisy is one of the common features for which Hawthorne criticizes the Puritans. He emphasizes that in spite of their public sanctity they were corrupted and wicked. The epiphany Goodman Brown experiences might be also interpreted as a change from a boy into a man (cf. Bell 1993). However, this transition has such a drastic impact on Goodman Brown that he never recovers. It is not relevant or important if the story describes reality or a bad dream. What really matters is what Goodman Brown believes.

Regarding the Calvinist doctrine, Hawthorne uses the word “covenant” for the meeting of Goodman Brown with the devil. The choice of this word is very significant since it does not refer to the covenant between God and Protestants but, on the contrary, it is linked with devil. There is an opposition of village, a place of God's covenant, and the forest, a domain of Satan (cf. Bell 1993). The question is why Goodman Brown needed to go to the forest. A person who is firm in his or her faith would probably resist such temptation. This suggests that Goodman Brown might have felt uncertain about the doctrine even before the journey which confirmed his worst assumptions. Bell expresses an idea that Goodman Brown might have belonged to those children of the Elected who doubted the God's

grace. The lack of evidence about his future salvation might have brought Goodman Brown to the crisis of faith.

Next, there is a personification of the devil who is disguised as an old man but the snake-like cane is a clear sign of his real identity. The devil, like Mr Smooth-it-away in "The Celestial Railroad", takes the role of a guide and leads Goodman Brown through the land of evil and shows him the other side of the society. Via this figure Goodman Brown not only discovers the "true" nature of the villagers, but he also learns dark secrets about his family's past. While he regarded his family honest and good Christians, his ancestors seem to have collaborated with devil which is a very disturbing finding for Goodman Brown. Hawthorne refers to the early history of racial and religious persecution in New England: Goodman Brown's father participated in the King Philip's War and burned an Indian village and his grandfather, a constable, "lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem"<sup>192</sup>. The revelation of having evil ancestors is very disturbing for Goodman Brown. It would suggest that the evil runs in his family. Hawthorne projected his own family past on Goodman Brown. Similarly to his character, Hawthorne's ancestors, namely William Hathorne, participated in the Indian Wars and persecution of the Quakers.

#### **4.8 Spectres**

Spectres, or images of ghosts, are very frequent in Hawthorne's fiction. The author, however, describes them in such a way that the reader is never sure if the apparition is real or a mere hallucination. To achieve this, Hawthorne hedges and uses unreliable narrators, or witnesses, respectively. I have chosen several interesting examples from *The House of the Seven Gables* and "The Minister's Black Veil".

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<sup>192</sup> Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown", p 578.

#### 4.8.1 *The House of the Seven Gables*

At first, the picture of Colonel Pyncheon which seems to have a negative influence over the whole house and its inhabitants is analyzed.

Those stern, immitigable features seemed to symbolize an evil influence, and so darkly to mingle the shadow of their presence with the sunshine of the passing hour, that no good thoughts or purposes could ever spring up and blossom there.<sup>193</sup>

There is a scene in chapter XIII where the stern Puritan in the picture appears to come alive and starts to threaten the people in the room to express his disapproval with their plans: "The portrait had been frowning, clenching its fist, and giving many such proofs of excessive discomposure."<sup>194</sup> However, in this particular scene as well as in others Hawthorne hedges – he does not say directly there was a ghost. He uses expressions which undermine his previous statements and bring doubts. Usually the ghost scenes are reported to be based on some kind of a "wild, chimney-corner legend"<sup>195</sup> or any other untrustworthy source. In this scene the frowning expressions on the portrait remain unseen with the exception that Mr. Pyncheon spotted his grandfather's frown as he was setting down the emptied glass. Nevertheless, Hawthorne immediately undermines Mr. Pyncheon's testimony and attributes it to the effect of the alcohol: "This Sherry is too potent a wine for me; – it has affected my brain already."<sup>196</sup>

Another spectre scene in the book can be found in chapter XVII. The dead body of Judge Pyncheon is left alone in the room with the picture of the old Puritan hanging on the wall. At midnight, ghosts of the dead Pyncheons appear in the parlour. They have gathered to check the frame of the

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<sup>193</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 21.

<sup>194</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 198.

<sup>195</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 197.

<sup>196</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 199-200.

painting because they probably suspect that something very important to them is hidden behind it.

What do these ghostly people seek? A mother lifts her child, that his little hands may touch it! There is evidently a mystery about the picture, that perplexes these poor Pyncheons when they ought to be at rest.<sup>197</sup>

At that moment the ghost of Matthew Maule appears as well and prevents the Pyncheons from reaching the picture and finding what they are looking for – a long-lost, or rather, a long-hidden document confirming their right to the vast territories in the east. Among the ghosts we can see an unexpected figure, an apparition of the Judge's son, whose death has not been announced yet. There is also Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon's ghost, despite the fact that his motionless figure is dwelling in the armchair a few metres away:

But another, and a greater marvel greets us! Can we believe our eyes? A stout, elderly gentleman has made his appearance. (...) Is it the Judge, or no? How can it be Judge Pyncheon? We discern his figure, as plainly as the flickering moonbeams can show us anything, still seated in the oaken chair!<sup>198</sup>

At the end of the ghost scene Hawthorne uses again his technique of hedging: he immediately doubts all the spectres and speculates that rather than spectres an explanation is to be found in the shadows and the moonlight in the parlour:

We were betrayed into this brief extravagance by the quiver of the moonbeams; they dance hand-in-hand with shadows, and are reflected in the looking-glass, which, you are aware, is always a kind of window or door-way into the spiritual world.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 280.

<sup>198</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, pp 280-281.

<sup>199</sup> Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, p 281.

#### 4.8.2 “The Minister's Black Veil”

Several spectres can be found in this obscure mysterious tale. By portraying Mr Hooper, the veiled minister, in scenes connected with death and funerals Hawthorne applies spectres. One of them appears in the scene when Mr Hooper approaches a deathbed of his young parishioner and as he bents over her death body, his veil reveals his face to her forever-closed eyes and she shivers:

At the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death.<sup>200</sup>

However, no one trustworthy can confirm the apparition: “A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy.”<sup>201</sup> Another spectre appears further when Mr Hooper attends the funeral procession with the coffin of the death parishioner being taken to the graveyard. He walks at the very end of the procession and two people in the procession “had a fancy (...) that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 600.

<sup>201</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 600.

<sup>202</sup> Hawthorne, “The Minister's Black Veil”, p 601.

## 5. Portraits of Puritans in Arthur Miller's Drama and Film

In this chapter the drama *The Crucible* and its film version based on Arthur Miller's screenplay is analysed. Miller uses different literary genres – a historical drama and a film script – which are meant to be performed and watched. Thus long descriptive parts apart from notes concerning the scene setting are not needed. The emphasis is put on the direct speech and action. Miller's dialogues are masterly elaborated and yet very realistic. Although Miller's aim was to address the wide public of his time and to show the absurdity of the McCarthy hearings, his play has remained valid until today.

The historical drama explores personal conflicts within a New England Puritan community. Miller resuscitates the participants of the Salem trials with all their passions, faults and feelings (jealousy, hatred, envy, greed) who face serious choices: whether to act against their conscience and live with the guilt, or against the expectations of the society and suffer punishment (cf. Jimerson 2003). The author shows that “personal and domestic principles and behavior cannot exist in isolation from the values and practices of a larger society.”<sup>203</sup> According to Jimerson, the individual is always tied to the the community where he or she lives, hence the impact of self-serving choices of some villagers on the outbreak of the mass hysteria about the witches: “John Proctor's adultery, Abigail Williams's bid for revenge, Thomas Putnam's greedy attempts to secure more land, Elizabeth Proctor's lie to the court to protect her husband”<sup>204</sup> and many others.

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<sup>203</sup> Parini, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, Volume 3, p. 137.

<sup>204</sup> Jimerson, M. N., *Understanding "The crucible"*, San Diego : Lucent Books, 2003, p. 64.

As for the historical accuracy of this drama and film, respectively, Miller's characters bear the names of historical persons and play their corresponding historical roles – they are accusers, victims, judges, farmers etc. but the private life and behaviour of those people is an invention of the author. In addition, Miller adjusts the age of some of the characters to fit the plot of his play which is developed around the motif of Proctor's affair with Abigail and its consequences. Abigail Williams was eleven when the witch-hunt started, not seventeen as she is in the drama, and Proctor was actually sixty and not younger attractive man as the play and film depict him to be. This change makes the play more acceptable for the audience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The image of a sixty-year old farmer having an affair with an eleven-year old girl would not appeal; Proctor would have been considered a pedophile.

### **5.1 The Forest**

Like Hawthorne, Miller uses the forest as a setting in order to associate it with illegal activities of the Puritans: secret night meetings, dances and strange rituals. It is a place where the strict rules of Puritan society do not apply and people, in this case young girls, feel free to do as they wish. The life in the Puritan society is very demanding and requires austere behaviour: no leisure activities, no entertainment, but only hard work and prayer. Children in the Puritan society were regarded as small adults who should walk straight with their eyes lowered and speak only when asked. Some accusing girls were, however, neither children or adults, but in a period of transition seeking an escape and a way to release their passions and tensions. Today's girls can date and go to the discos but those girls did not have such opportunities. Therefore the adolescent girls gathered in the forest to perform strange rituals resembling black magic, danced around a fire and drank a potion prepared by a black slave Tituba. The atmosphere of the forbidden ritual is both horrifying and exciting.



Despite being called children, the girls, some of them aged seventeen or eighteen, are grown women and they find it difficult to live according to the rules of the rigid society. It is a habit for the girls of their age to find a job at someone's service and then get married. As the only one of the girls Abigail has a sexual experience but the rejection by her lover forces her to live without sex, which leads to frustration. Mercy Lewis also seems to exhibit sexual tension as she dances naked. As the girls lack excitement in the village, they look for it at least in the forbidden activities in the forest.

The film, which features their sensual dance, confirms the theory of the sexual tension because all the girls seem to be in love with certain men or boys as they throw objects into the pot to get their loves. Abigail, more desperate than the other girls, goes even further: she drinks blood and wishes death for her rival in love – Elizabeth Proctor. The frustration seems to give a logical explanation of their wild behaviour.

The film which opens with the ritual scene in the forest, features one more forest scene: a private encounter of Abigail and John, two lovers and adulterers. Alone and hidden in a forest, they can give full vent to their emotions: love and anger. There is a passionate quarrel between John and Abigail. Proctor even has to use physical violence against Abigail when she pounces on him and will not let him go. He shakes her down and throws her on the ground. Proctor demands that Abigail stop accusing his wife of witchcraft and refuses to resume their love relationship. He threatens Abigail: "If she is condemned, it will be the end of you."<sup>205</sup>

As for the forest ritual itself, it represents a kind of witchcraft not typical for New England. It is not linked to devil or Indians but to voodoo, a powerful indigenous magic coming from Barbados, the home of Tituba. A bigoted

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<sup>205</sup> *The Crucible*, dir. Nicholas Hytner, 20th Century Fox, 1996

Puritan, like Reverend Parris, finds the forest ritual scary and devilish as he describes in Act I:

PARRIS: (...) I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!

ABIGAIL: She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.<sup>206</sup>

Another sign of voodoo is the use of the puppet with the needle stuck in it which appears in Act II. In the voodoo religion the puppet is usually a representation of a real person and by hurting, cutting or stabbing the puppet the real person is harmed. Abigail, knowing very well the practice of voodoo from her slave Tituba, accuses Elizabeth Proctor of witchcraft on the basis of keeping puppets:

CHEEVER: [*wide-eyed, trembling*] The girl, the Williams girl, Abigail Williams, sir. She sat to dinner in Reverend Parris's house tonight, and without a word of nor warnin' she falls to the floor. Like a struck beast, he says, and screamed a scream that a bull would weep to hear. And he goes to save her, and, stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly, he draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she – [*to PROCTOR now*] – testify it were your wife's familiar spirit pushed in.<sup>207</sup>

To conclude, the forest stands in contrast to the village. It is a place where nobody can see your behaviour, therefore you can break the rules of society (e.g. John can speak privately to Abigail, the girls can dance). The absence of rules is reflected on the clothing of the characters in the film: while in the village they are dressed properly, in the forest they appear in loose dresses, even naked, and with released hair. The forest is associated with black magic and witchcraft connected with the Caribbean voodoo religion.

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<sup>206</sup> Miller, Arthur, *The Crucible*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, pp 19-20.

<sup>207</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 70.

## 5.2 The Participants of the Love Triangle and Their Guilt

Like Hawthorne, Miller also uses the motifs of a love triangle, adultery and the subsequent feeling of guilt and revenge. In Miller two women fight for one man and the rejection of one of them contributes to the destruction of the village. In Proctor's words "vengeance is walking Salem"<sup>208</sup>, not witches. Miller also plays with the concept of visible goodness and private depravity.

### 5.2.1 Abigail Williams

Abigail, a strikingly beautiful seventeen-year old girl recently dismissed from Proctor's service, is the main character and also the trigger of all the witch-hunting. Despite her youth she is a corrupted grown woman, an adulteress and a whore who does not feel guilty about her affair with Proctor. She is very passionate, hot-blooded and impulsive, the opposite of Proctor's cold reserved wife Elizabeth. Her sin helps her recognize other sinners and realize that she is not the only sinner in the community. She can suddenly see the pretence and hypocrisy of the inhabitants who have secret desires but suppress them.

She refuses to accept Proctor's rejection as he put carnal knowledge into her heart but now he deprives her of the sex. Abigail finds her situation very frustrating and tries to get John back by all means. To achieve that she uses women weapons such as persuasion, pressure and threats. When she meets Proctor, she flirts with him, she lets him know that she would like to continue in the relationship: "ABIGAIL [*grasping his hand before he can release her*]: John – I am waitin' for you every night."<sup>209</sup> She touches him, provoking him constantly. When this behaviour does not work, she reminds him of their common past, how he sweated like a stallion and that she knows his desires very well.

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<sup>208</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 72.

<sup>209</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 28.

Abigail grows more and more desperate as she seems not to know how to cope with her newly discovered sexuality and she also does not like being rejected. She wants to get rid of John's wife Elizabeth and marry John herself. Mrs Proctor becomes her arch-enemy, somebody who represents an obstacle and therefore must be eliminated.

Abigail of a naturally strong and dominant character becomes the leader of the girls. Moreover, it is highly probable that it was Abigail who arranged the forest meeting which triggered all the hysteria. She requires total obedience from the girls otherwise they would be punished. In Act I Abigail exhibits a very cruel behaviour to her younger cousin Betty considering the fact how small poor Betty is and that she does not have a mother. As an older cousin Abigail should be rather protective and reassuring. However, when she feels her position is threatened, she reacts wildly and lashes out in defence. For example, the scene from Act I:

ABIGAIL [*smashes her across the face*]: Shut it! Now shut it!  
BETTY [*collapsing on the bed*]: Mama, Mama! [*She dissolves into sobs*]  
ABIGAIL: Now, look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you.<sup>210</sup>

Her wild defensive reactions are repeated throughout the play. Sometimes she even looks feverish and mad. Her present behaviour might reflect a trauma she suffered in her childhood when she witnessed how the Indians slaughtered her parents. When asked questions, Abigail confesses very unwillingly and only when the evidence is conclusive, for example, Parris's questioning about the forest dancing. In other cases she either avoids the answer by attacking the questioner or accuses somebody else. To an

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<sup>210</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 26.

offense she responds with an accusation. She masterfully distracts the attention from herself. In Act I when Parris demands an explanation why she left Proctor's service, Abigail does not admit her guilt and blames Elizabeth. She calls her a gossipy liar who wants to blacken Abigail's name in the village. In Act III when Proctor reveals his adultery with her and calls her a whore, she does not deny his accusation but avoids a direct answer, threatens and attacks the judges instead:

DANFORTH: [*blanched, in horror, turning to ABIGAIL*]: You deny every scrap and tittle of this?

ABIGAIL: If I must answer that, I will leave and will not come back again! [*DANFORTH seems unsteady*]

(...)

[*ABIGAIL stepping up to DANFORTH*] What look do you give me? [*DANFORTH cannot speak.*] I'll not have such looks! [*She turns and starts for the door.*]<sup>211</sup>

Throughout the play Abigail becomes a dictator, a manipulator and the God's finger. The lives of other people are in her hands and she decides about their fate. Since Abigail is a very vengeful woman, she uses her power to eliminate people she does not like, who become obstacles or threaten her, e.g. Mrs Proctor or Reverend Hale whom she tries to destroy by accusing his wife (in the film only). She enjoys power. The sexual excitement is substituted for the thrill from the trials and executions. However, Abigail's private revenge started something terrible which she did not expect nor could stop. Moreover, knowing that she would be hanged if her mischief were discovered, she has no other choice than to continue. However, her deeds lead to the death of the only person she did not mean to harm – John Proctor. In the film she visits him in prison and for the first time regrets what she has caused. She apologizes: “I never dreamed any of this for you. I wanted you, was all.”<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 98.

<sup>212</sup> *The Crucible*, dir. Nicholas Hytner, 20th Century Fox, 1996

Regarding sins and guilt, Abigail seems to be incapable of admitting any of her own part: she does not confess drinking blood in the forest, she does not reveal the true reason why Mrs Proctor dismissed her and she does not admit having sex with John before the judges. To the public she looks like a saint – the child who performs God's work and helps to clean the village – but beneath the surface there is a sinful woman. The motif of visible sanctity and private depravity is exploited by both Miller and Hawthorne. Hawthorne's sinner was Mr Dimmesdale, a priest. Miller chooses Abigail, a niece of a priest. Who else should be pure if not her? Again this proves that anyone in the society could sin, even the “saintliest”.

### 5.2.2 Elizabeth Proctor

Elizabeth represents an exemplary wife who is a good Christian and takes care of the children and household. However, she is not very beautiful and of strong health; Abigail even calls her “sickly”<sup>213</sup>. Elizabeth is well aware of her imperfections, therefore her self-esteem is very low. She seems unable to express her feelings and thus she appears to be as cold as a stone which leads her husband into the arms of Abigail. In Act IV when she lastly speaks to her husband she takes the position of Chillingworth from *The Scarlet Letter*. She acknowledges her fault and role in John's adultery:

ELIZABETH: I have read my heart this three month, John. [*Pause.*] I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery. (...) John, I counted myself so plain, so poorly made, no honest love could come to me! (...) I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept!<sup>214</sup>

There are other references to the lack of warmth in her household in Act II when Proctor comes home. Proctor's suggestion “You ought to bring some

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<sup>213</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 29.

<sup>214</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 119.

flowers in the house. (...) It's winter in here yet."<sup>215</sup> does not refer only to the flowers but to the freezing atmosphere in their home. That scene is a classic example of a quiet home: the atmosphere is tense, Proctor walks tiptoe because Elizabeth has not forgiven him for his adultery yet; she speaks only when she is asked. Although the scene is supposed to be set in 1692, the behaviour of the husband and wife does not differ from married couples today.

Further in Act II, Proctor calls her a judge and compares his house to a court. The fact that he confessed his adultery to her put Elizabeth into the position of God and his judge who decides what his atonement would be. However, the Puritans were used to confessing only to God and not to anyone on earth.

However angry or humiliated she feels because of John's adultery, she is faithful and defends him publicly. At the court she faces a moral dilemma and has to choose between the truth and a lie. Proctor relies on her inability to lie and expects her to tell the truth but as she does not know the circumstances, she decides wrong. Her loyalty and love to John are so huge that she lies at the court to save him – for the first time in her life as it seems. However, her lie comes in the wrong moment because her denial of John's lechery with Abigail condemns Proctor.

### **5.2.3 John Proctor**

John Proctor is another main character and sinner like Abigail. He is also carnal and passionate, the opposite of his wife. Described as a handsome man in his thirties, he is well known for his skepticism. He is a Christian but not too devoted. As a farmer he must be pragmatic therefore he prefers working in the fields till the weather is favourable than going to the meeting house. Moreover, he does not like the current priest, Reverend

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<sup>215</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 52.

Parris. His knowledge of Abigail's real nature makes him the first person in the village to know the accusations are mere mischief.

In his life he has committed one big mistake which was his affair with Abigail. His sin leads him to several situations where he has to decide what to do and which way to go. One of these situations is his confession to Elizabeth. When his wife is imprisoned, he is determined to get her back by all means even if it meant his own destruction. "I will fall like an ocean on that court." he promises Elizabeth. He wants to save his wife by showing Abigail's fraud but he cannot prove it without revealing the truth about their relationship. He constantly questions Abigail's credibility, he even casts away his name, his good reputation, to undermine Abigail's position and stop the court but for the judges it is not enough. They offer him to save his wife but he wants to save all his friends.

In the end Proctor faces a moral dilemma: whether to give a false confession before the judges and survive or deny their accusation and die. On one hand, John wants to live: he knows his family needs him, moreover, his wife is pregnant again. On the other hand, he feels guilty about his adultery with Abigail and thinks he deserves to be punished somehow. The theme of guilt, responsibility and the subsequent search for innocence runs throughout the whole play (cf. Tharp 2003). In order to save his family, Proctor surrenders to the dishonesty and confesses to being a devil's servant. However, the judges are not finished with him – they want the names of other people who were with the devil. This is an autobiographical feature – Miller places the character to the same position where he was himself when asked by the interrogators at the hearings. Like Miller, his character John refuses to give names of other people. He wants to confess only his own sins and not to blacken names of his friends. In that scene Proctor questions the meaningfulness of his written confession which is to be publicly displayed on the church door: he has



confessed, God has seen it and the judges can testify to it. The behaviour of the judges brings him to believe that it is not only the confession they want and the whole situation becomes absurd, similarly to the hearings where Miller was questioned.

Moreover, the judges make him confess in front of Goody Nurse, a kind woman whom he deeply respects. They would like Goody Nurse to confess too, but her presence has the opposite effect. Proctor realizes the impact of his confession: it would condemn the really innocent people, such as Rebecca Nurse, as liars (cf. Parini Vol. 3, 2004). Therefore Proctor chooses death. Despite all his mistakes and sins he dies as an honest man. His sons can proudly bear their surname because their father was not a traitor or a coward.

### **5.3 God Is Dead In Salem**

Proctor's statement "God is dead! (...) You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore!"<sup>216</sup> at the end of Act III sums up the dreadful situation in Salem. The village and its values are turned upside down. It is suddenly in fashion and holy to accuse your neighbours of sending their spirits to you at night. Innocent people who are respected in the village, such as Rebecca Nurse and Elizabeth Proctor, are accused of witchcraft while the adulteress Abigail becomes a celebrity and the greedy Putnams make a profit.

As witchcraft is an invisible crime by its nature, no material proof is needed. The accusations are based on spectral evidence – on an alleged victim's testimony – and the accused people have no means to defend themselves. The justice the judges apply in Salem is twisted: innocent God-fearing people refuse to testify at the court because whoever tries to defend their relatives or bring new evidence to the court is charged with

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<sup>216</sup>Miller, *The Crucible*, p 105.

the contempt of the court or witchcraft as were the cases of Giles Corey and John Proctor. Moreover, good people are forced to lie if they want to save their lives and avoid execution. Miller describes the blindness of the judges and their lack of care about the consequences of their decisions. There are orphans, decaying farms and losses on crops as the adults, some of them rich farmers, are in prison. The impact of the witch-hunt on the village is terrible and lasts many years after the hysteria.

#### **5.4 Drama Versus Film**

Faithful to the drama Miller takes the advantage of the possibilities of the film genre to overcome the limitations of the theatre stage. The film script uses various settings, not only four simple rooms. Miller also uses much more characters in comparison to the play where the number of girls, judges and villagers is reduced. Overall, the film gives the viewer a more complex image of the village including the landscape, the exteriors of the houses and the villagers.

Miller uses the same utterances as in the play but with slight modifications: sometimes he changes the order and the character who utters them. This is a result of adding more characters, such as Judge Sewall, and also new scenes. As Sewall is an important character and therefore has to speak, Miller writes both new utterances for him and gives him parts of the sentences of other similar characters, e. g. Parris.

As for the setting, Miller sets many scenes outside the buildings. For instance, the scene where Mary Warren accuses John Proctor who later shouts his famous statement "God is dead!"<sup>217</sup> takes place in the bay water. Similarly, his confession at the very end of the film is also set outside to emphasize the harsh winter. Moreover, the film shows scenes which were only talked about in the play, for example, the trials with

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<sup>217</sup> Miller, *The Crucible*, p 105.

Martha Corey accused of predicting the pigs' death, and with feeble George Jacobs.

In some cases Miller changes the order of the scenes or segments one long scene, which is the case of Act II, the evening in Proctor's house. It does not take place during one single night as in the play but within several days. Elizabeth insists on John telling the judges about Abigail's pretence to clean her name in the village but in the play he does not have a chance to do anything. His wife is arrested within the same evening. However, in the film he has the possibility to act. Hence his forest meeting with Abigail where he tells her that he will not permit his wife being accused.

In the film there are new scenes whereas several scenes from the play are missing, for example the alarming image of the abandoned decaying farms with uncared-for cows (Act IV), or in Act II Proctor coming home in the evening and tasting the meal above the fire. Regarding the newly added scenes, they fill in some empty spaces in the play and thus make the story more coherent. In my opinion, they help the viewer understand the history better. For example, in the play Abigail's escape is only mentioned in Act IV – Abigail is said to have vanished together with her friend Mercy and the money of her uncle, Reverend Parris, – but the reason for her sudden departure is not clarified. On the other hand, the film explains that through a scene where Abigail is spotted by Mr Hale as she comes to see Proctor's abandoned farm. In reaction to that she immediately visits Judge Danforth and accuses Reverend Hale's wife of sending her spirit to her. Nevertheless, Judge Danforth rejects her testimony: “You are mistaken, child. You understand me?”<sup>218</sup>. He will not allow influential people of his own social class to be blackened. Abigail realizes that she is not trusted

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<sup>218</sup> *The Crucible*, dir. Nicholas Hytner, 20th Century Fox, 1996

anymore, not as long as she accuses people of high social rank, and that she has lost her power in the village, which makes her leave.

In conclusion, the film is very trustful and faithful to the text and message of the original play. As the film is a different genre than the drama, it naturally requires different techniques: more characters and visual scenes and less dialogues. Miller proved to master both dramas and screenplays.

## 6. Conclusion

Though separated by approximately one hundred years, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Arthur Miller share a critical view of Puritans which they express in their works using different means and genres. The target audience also differs: Hawthorne's novel is meant for private individual reading, hence more descriptive passages because the reader needs to imagine the scene. In comparison to the narrative, the drama and film are meant to be performed, thus the main emphasis is put on dialogues and acting.

Both authors avoid depicting sex scenes, which is partly caused by social conventions of their time and by their personal decision. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was unthinkable to publish sex scenes. The motif of adultery in *The Scarlet Letter* was daring enough. In case of Miller, the situation is different as the audience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is much more tolerant. Yet he had to adjust the age of John Proctor and Abigail Williams so that his play was acceptable. Regarding his film script, Miller was determined the film to be educational so that children could learn about the past.

Most motifs are present both in Hawthorne's fiction and Miller's drama, for example, the Puritan understanding of nature, particularly forest. The significance of the forest in Miller is similar to Hawthorne – it stands in contrast to the Puritan community. It is associated with witchcraft, privacy and the absence of social rules. In *The Crucible* Proctor meets Abigail secretly in the forest, which distantly resembles the secret meeting of Dimmesdale and Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*. These former lovers could not speak openly in the village and they could not definitely touch or release their hair in public.

As for witch rituals in the forest, their descriptions differ. Both Hawthorne and Miller show practicing of black magic and dancing around a fire, but in Hawthorne the rituals are directly associated with the devil, e. g. in “Young Goodman Brown”, while in *The Crucible* the ritual serves as a source of excitement for the girls. More importantly, Hawthorne associates the forest and wilderness with the Native Americans, i.e. local inhabitants of New England, but Miller connects the rituals to the voodoo religion coming from the Carribean.

Hawthorne and Miller focus on the portrait of the Puritan society, particularly on the Puritan approach to other people's secrets and personal struggle with one's sin and the subsequent feeling of guilt. Characters are haunted by their guilt, such as Reverend Dimmesdale from *The Scarlet Letter* and John Proctor in *The Crucible*, both adulterers, or Hepzibah from *The House of the Seven Gables*, who is troubled by family guilt. Both Dimmesdale and Proctor feel so guilty that they punish themselves for their sins. The first one whips himself and fasts while the latter one cannot forgive himself and risks everything to save his wife Elizabeth and atone his mistake.

Another common motif is the pressure on people to confess their sins on earth despite the fact that Puritan doctrine accords that they confess to God only. This motif can be found both in Hawthorne, e.g. *The Scarlet Letter* or “The Minister's Black Veil”, and in Miller's *The Crucible*. While in Hawthorne isolated individuals, usually scientists, alchemists or leeches, play the role of God, manipulate people and make them confess their secrets (e. g. Roger Chillingworth, *The Scarlet Letter*), in Miller inquiring judges and a group of girls decide over the life and death of people.

The authors deal with the motifs of adultery and show that anyone, even a person from the highest social class sin. Hawthorne's minister Reverend

Dimmesdale is an adulterer, and Miller roughly follows Puritan historical annals with Abigail Williams, a niece of Reverend Parris. In both authors the sin serves as a means of epiphany: the sinners suddenly perceive the hypocrisy of the society where they live. Many characters gain enlightenment via epiphany, for example, Goodman Brown (“Young Goodman Brown”) and Arthur Dimmesdale (*The Scarlet Letter*). In case of Hester Prynne (*The Scarlet Letter*) and Abigail Williams (*The Crucible*), their sins enable them to see other sinners in the community.

To conclude, the concept of visible sanctity in contrast to private wickedness should be mentioned at this point. Miller and Hawthorne criticize the hypocrisy of the Puritans who pretend to be saintly and untainted despite having passions and desires. As a result, hidden sinners such as Reverend Dimmesdale or Abigail Williams are worshipped instead of being publicly condemned and punished.

## 7. Resumé

Ve své diplomové práci se zabývám rozbořem děl dvou amerických autorů, kteří se věnovali tematice puritanismu: romantického spisovatele Nathaniela Hawthornea a dramatika Arthura Millera. V úvodu své práce nastiňuji ranou historii Nové Anglie, zejména vznik prvních kolonií, války s indiány a hon na čarodějnice v Salemu roku 1692. Dále popisuji pět základních dogmat puritánské víry a další rysy typické pro puritanismus. Následně se věnuji životopisu obou autorů a jejich významu pro americkou literaturu. Uvádím stručný přehled jejich děl a vysvětluji, proč se rozhodli psát právě o puritánech.

V hlavní části své diplomové práce rozebírám vybraná díla Nathaniela Hawthornea, která jsou zasazena do puritánského prostředí, a divadelní hru *The Crucible* od Arthura Millera v konfrontaci s filmovou adaptací. Z děl Nathaniela Hawthornea jsem si vybrala romány *The Scarlet Letter* (Šarlatové písmeno) a *The House of the Seven Gables* (Dům se sedmi štíty), a povídky „Young Goodman Brown” („Mladý hospodář Brown”) a „The Minister's Black Veil” („Černý závoj“). Při analýze těchto děl se zaměřuji na různé aspekty jakými jsou: vytváření nálady pomocí světla a tmy, význam přírody nebo nadpřirozené úkazy. Zvláštní pozornost věnuji rozboru ženských postav, neboť Hawthorne vynikal v jejich psychologickém popisu, a vztahům mezi muži a ženami. Také se zabývám tématem hříchu a následným pocitem viny, otázkami dobra a zla, vztahem člověk-bůh, a v neposlední řadě čarodějnictvím.

U Millera se zaměřuji především na autorovo zobrazení historických postav již zmiňovaného salemského honu na čarodějnice ve svém dramatu *The Crucible* (Čarodějky ze Salemu) a jeho filmovém zpracování, které vzniklo podle Millerova scénáře. Soustřeďuji se na tři aktéry milostného trojúhelníku: statkáře Johna Proctora, jeho ženu Elizabeth a bývalou milenku Abigail Williams, hlavní iniciátorku honu na čarodějnice. U



Johna Proctora poukazují na paralelu mezi jeho výslechem a výslechy, kterým byl autor vystaven v padesátých letech 20. století. Dál se zabývám absurditou soudních procesů, při kterých jsou nevinní lidé posíláni na šibenici, přičemž je může zachránit jen lživé doznání. Nakonec porovnávám divadelní hru s filmovým zpracováním.

V závěru své diplomové práce porovnávám díla Hawthornea a Millera a poukazují na témata, kterými se zabývali oba autoři.

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