

**NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S *THE SCARLET LETTER*
AS A FEMALE ALLEGORY**

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An allegory in literature is a story where characters, objects, and events have a hidden meaning and are used to present some universal lesson. Hawthorne has a perfect atmosphere for the symbols in *The Scarlet Letter* because the Puritans saw the world through allegory. From them, simple designs, like the meteor streaking through the sky, because religious or moral interpretations for human events. Objects, such as the scaffold, were ritualistic symbols for such concepts as sin and penitence.

The Scarlet Letter reflects the patriarchal creeds and the political construction of the Massachusetts colony of seventeenth century Boston. The Puritans set up astringent laws and religious systematization to secure the patriarchal system to conserve their social and economic status. The female sex debris completely unrepresented and the powerful dominance of patriarchy is managed by the male government. Hawthorne reveals the female protagonist's "marginal" status in the puritan patriarchal society. Relationships between men and women were very controlled and adultery was seen as a bad sin in the eyes of everyone in the community. Public discipline and punishment were used to discourage everyone else from violating the same crime or sin. Hawthorne develops Hester as a representation of the idea that Puritanical notions of judgment and condemnation are wrong:

Giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbols at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of women's frailty and sinful passion. Thus the young and pure would be taught to look at her, with the scarlet

letter flaming on her breast, [...] as the figure, the body, the reality of sin.
(Hawthorne 49)

Hester's characterization is allegorical in its depiction of Salem society. The way in which Hester is shown in female allegorical with regards to how she must assume the role of scapegoat. In Hester's depiction, Hawthorne creates an allegory about the nature of Salem society and what defines a just and moral social and political order.

A young woman Hester Prynne with an infant in her arms stands on the scaffold is proof for her crime. Boston's patriarchal government selects perpetual public indignity for Hester. They strained to wear the red letter 'A' for her crime adultery. The Boston government failed to give appropriate judgment for her crime adultery because the adultery can be committed by two people. The judges without any appropriate scrutiny and identification of the father of the child, are having scapegoat is abundant to their need for justice. The verifiable truth is that Hester's clandestine partner in crime is one of the esteemed puritan community members.

The Puritan community sees Hester as a fallen woman, Dimmesdale as a saint. Instead, Hawthorne eventually presents Hester as a woman who represents a impressionable human being with a heart and emotions; Dimmesdale as a minister, who is not very holy person in private but rather morally weak and unable to confess his sly sin. Puritan civil officer's, who attempts to govern not only demeanor but also individual souls.

Elbert who sees the warfare in this scene in terms of matriarchy and patriarchy claims that "Hester's silence is victorious over her male judges (198)". Silence is a part of Hester's plan of action for resistance, but the long combat is only begun in the marketplace, and it is difficult to infer victory for her from this encounter: "After her return to the prison, Hester Prynne was found to be in a state of nervous excitement that demanded constant watchfulness, lest she should perpetrate violence on herself, or do some half-frenzied mischief to the poor babe" (Hawthorne 70).

Hester is a person who possesses liberated, insurgent soul. She battles against the unfair fate impose something on her, and chases her life endlessly. Under the callous Puritan rules; yet, she does not stop her search for love. She gives birth to Pearl "the sinful child" bravely, and stands out gamely to face the artificial and the affliction, which is accurately one of the idea that the feminist activists have campaigned for promoting women's rights to bodily uprightness, self-rule and generative privilege.

Hester rebels the traditional idea of treating female as the "object" in the male-dominated society. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the woman is no longer serves as foil to the male figures. For example, at the first scaffold setting, Hester undergoes this huge tribulation with a calm and easy attitude, whereas Dimmesdale, standing near her and urges her to tell who the child's father is, is a person with repugnant, complicated position. He is not as gutsy and powerful as Hester. Fearing that the affair might be naked, the only thing that he could do is to put his hands upon his chest, and waiting for what Hester is going to say. From here, we can see that Arthur does not have the brave to choose his life, but only depends on Hester to make decision for him; he loses his self-rule and self-awareness gradually.

Hester Prynne never stands above or further her community, and when she getaway to give Pearl a fresh start in Europe, she leaves trailing an "awful," without space where she had worn a alcove for herself. *The Scarlet Letter* is not only Hester's life sentence; it is her life's work. When she returns to take it up again, it is not with zest but with a hopeless, tried boldness, and the community immediately feels the heat. She who had once been "the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point" becomes a kind of authority herself.

Children to young to comprehend wherefore this women so be shut out from the sphere of human charities...coming forth along the pathway that lead town ward; and, discerning the scarlet letter on her breast, would scamper off with a stranger, contagious fear (Hawthorne 57)

This community never let her not able to remember what she had done, and she accepts society's condemnation. The community tries to exclude her both materially and psychologically from everything, but she is still with them, when Hester is strained to live apart from the townspeople, the society begins to learn what Hester's real nature is and is able to see her for what and who she is and realizes that is an asset to the community. When Hester is first brought out of her prison cell, the gossiping goodwives recommend much severe punishment like death. Hester is no longer seen as a human being but as a symbol of evil and disgrace town.

Shari Benstock says, "Hester is the victim of male fantasies ranging from those that concern "the female body" to the controlling "fantasy of absolute sexual difference" that lies at the very heart of women's repression and exploitation" (case studies 276). Hester routines her social life to punish herself which she thought God had selected to her as punishment for her sins. The punishment accepted by Hester was based upon the Puritan religious, social, and governmental beliefs, methodical into a single dogma.

The community appreciates Hester's candidness and straightforwardness in her wrongdoing and her willingness to repent. They think her as a good person and someone gifted with the talent of sewing. People started accepting her into their lives once again. Son they used her and were willing to overlook her sins when she looked to be of value of them. Though Hester is treated as the worst person in the community, she manages to renovate herself in the community by caring for the poor. She barely manages herself with the money she gets from her sewing her skills. Though still she shares what little she has with needy, yet those people too still insult her. Even the poor think themselves better than Hester as they are monetary poor, but not morally. Hester had no duty to feed the poor but she knew it was the right thing to do. Hester's good achievements finally were noticed by community and life takes a turn for the better for her. They finally find out that they could not demolish her spirit and they really needed a person like her in their community:

She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness.

...The Scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, -- stern and wild ones, -- and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss. (Hawthorne 214)

She gained honour of the community with her stiffness, her sewing skills and her philanthropic ways with the poor in the community. "Such helpfulness was found in her so much power to do and power to sympathize that many people refused to interpret the scarlet "A" by its original signification. They said that it meant "Able" so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength" (Hawthorne 126).

She was "Able" to accord with a town that hated her, and then a town that recognized her for good works. The society was able to look past their hatred for her and saw that in fact they needed her. And finally she was able to stay, where she wanted to be. Over the time the fact that Hester didn't fall into pieces and in fact stood taller despite her forbiddance from the puritan society opened their eyes to see that good can survive even in the heart of a sinner. Thus her

adulteries turn into her power to act to exist. Hester takes up her shame out her own deal and finds peace where her sorrow was once situated.

The moral we can learn here is a certain amount of control is a good thing, but too much control makes people to react. And they will usually react in a way not quite obedient with that society's standards. Once a person has broken from that control, there is no going back. You can't undo what has been done. Hester Prynne, the point of strength which Hawthorne has put great efforts on, again revealed his positive attitude towards Hester's self-awareness and life value.

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