

On the Tragedy of Love in *The Scarlet Letter*

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Received 8 April 2011; accepted 3 June 2011

Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the great romantic novelist of the 19th century, is one of the founders of American literature. Influenced by the times and social background, family origin and life experiences, his novels reflect a strong flavor of Puritan ideology. In his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne tells a story of tragedy of love. This thesis analyzes the causes of the tragedy of love from three aspects. By analyzing the three main characters' different personalities, the thesis reveals the internal reason of the tragedy. This thesis also deals with women's status and dark society at that time, showing the influence of the environmental factors of the tragedy. In addition, it also focuses on Hawthorne's life experiences and his intention of creation, to show the inevitability of the tragic end under Hawthorne's pen. From these analyses, people can reach a systematic and profound understanding of the causes of the tragedy of love, and thus will grasp the connotation of the novel comprehensively and accurately.

Key words: Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Scarlet Letter*; Tragedy of love; Cause

LUO Lanlan (2011). On the Tragedy of Love in *The Scarlet Letter*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 3(1), 77-84. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/j.sll.1923156320110301.220>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/j.sll.1923156320110301.220>

INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the greatest romantic

American fiction writers, was born in Salem, Massachusetts, a descendant of a long line of Puritan ancestors including John Hathorne, a presiding magistrate in the Salem witch trials. His first novel, *Fanshawe*, was unsuccessful and Hawthorne himself disavowed it as amateurish. He wrote several successful short stories, however, including *My Kinsman*, *Major Molyneux*, *Roger Malvin's Burial*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

The Scarlet Letter, the most important novel written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, is a monument in the history of American Romantic literature. In more than one century, *The Scarlet Letter* has been one of the most frequently analyzed works of American literature, ranging from subjects to writing skills, even to social significances. For instance, Melville, in his book *Hawthorne and His Moses*, describes Hawthorne's soul as "shrouded in blackness" (59); Melville's view that since Hawthorne is brought up in a family with a strong flavor of Puritanism, it is reasonable that Hawthorne's darkness is rooted in Puritanism. In China, Li Shuping argues that *The Scarlet Letter* penetrated deeply into the tragedy of the human nature (42).

This thesis aims to find out the causes of the tragedy of love. It is divided into three parts: part one is concerned about the three main characters' different personalities, which is the internal reason of the tragedy of love. Part two is devoted to the environmental factors of the tragedy. Part three analyzes the influence of Hawthorne's unfortunate youth and his intention of creation, which shows the inevitability of the tragic end under Hawthorne's pen.

1. CHARACTERS' DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

The Scarlet Letter is a story ended in tragedy. To know its causes of the tragedy of love, it is necessary to study

the protagonists' characteristics. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester and Dimmesdale's personalities are greatly varied. Besides, Chillingworth's evil in nature plays an important role in the tragedy of love. The big differences among the three main characters' personalities decided that their love could only be ended in tragedy.

1.1 Hester's Bravery and Rebellion

As every reader noticed, at the beginning of the story, Hester's personality is accorded a vivid and in-depth description. Her pride and her beauty receive emphasis. It is told that

The door of the jail being flung open from within, there appeared Hester, with a child in her arms. On the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled the townbeadle, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will. (Hawthorne 36)

It is just the force of character that fortifies Hester to encounter the stings and venomous stabs of the public. Hester sustains herself as best a woman might under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her, and concentrated at her bosom. It is almost intolerable to be borne. However, it is surprised that, when she appeared before the spectators, including an irregular procession of stern-browed men and unkindly visaged women, she was found to be

a young woman, with a figure of perfect elegance, ... especially the mark of shame upon her bosom—the scarlet letter A, made in fine red cloth, surrounded with an embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold-thread, was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore. (Hawthorne 38)

Obviously, what Hester has done manifests her challenge to the whole dismal severity of the Puritanical code of law. No wonder some Puritans reproach her, saying: "what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?" (Hawthorne 40).

In addition, Hester's reliance also lies in that after experienced the unnatural punishment, she doesn't fall, but to continually struggle against the evil forces. She tries to face her existence as a human being, especially as a woman. On the scaffold, she tries to relieve herself from the cruel weight and hardness of the reality.

For the seven solitary years, it is told that "Hester never battled the public, but submitted; uncomplainingly ... she never raised her head to receive their greeting. If they were resolute to accost her, she laid her finger on the scarlet letter, and pass on" (Hawthorne 92). Outwardly, she wears the letter that labels her as an evil woman. Inwardly, she exists in her speculations, her solitude, her quiet hours with Pearl, her needlework, and finds these good. (Lü 56) Though "the scarlet letter by which man had marked Hester's sin had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her" (Hawthorne 95), satirically, it is just the scarlet letter that

becomes her passport into the regions where other women dare not to tread. As Hawthorne describes: "she looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators have established. ... The tendency of her teachers,—stern and wild ones—and they had made her strong" (Hawthorne 165).

It is her firm conviction that keeps Hester in Boston close to Dimmesdale all those long, sad years. All of the above proves that Hester is a heroine with tenacious existence consciousness.

Besides, Hester's bravery and persistence is obviously shown through her rebellious actions. Hester's rebellion is first seen in chapter "The Governor's Hall", in the confrontation with Governor Bellingham, to defend her right to raise Pearl. Although Hester is isolated and cut off from help, and so obviously that it seems an unequal match with the Puritanical magistrates, she still set forth from her solitary cottage. She feels that she possesses indefeasible rights against the world, and is ready to defend them to the death. When the rulers want to break up her and her daughter, she cries, confronting the old Puritan magistrates with almost a fierce express, "God gave me the child. He gave her in requital of all things else, which he had taken from me. She is my happiness! ... Thou shall not take her! I will die first!" (Hawthorne 201) At this time Hester realizes that she has the responsibility and capacity to raise the child. Clearly, Hester, as an ordinary woman, cries for nothing else, but for her indefeasible rights, which shows her extraordinary courage and rebellious spirit.

Hester's another rebellious action is shown in her meeting with Dimmesdale in the forest. She urges her lover to create a new life with her in the wildness:

Is the world, then, so narrow? Doth the universe lie within the compass of yonder town? Whither leads yonder forest track? ... There thou art free! So brief a journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched, to one where thou mayest still be happy!" (Hawthorne 352)

However, Dimmesdale dares not quit his post. At this crucial moment, in order to arouse his pragmatic idealism, Hester fervently resolves to buoy him up with her own energy. So Hester says continually and firmly:

Thou art crushed under the seven years' weight of misery. But thou shalt leave it all behind thee! ... Leave this wreck and ruin here where it hath happened. ... Begin all anew! ... The future is yet full of trial and success. ... Exchange this false life of thine for a true one... Preach! Write! Act! Do anything save to lie down and die! (Hawthorne 354)

It is clear that as regarded Hester Prynne the whole seven years of outlaw and ignominy has been little other than a preparation for this very hour. In order to give Dimmesdale encouragement and hope further, Hester, without the least hesitation, takes the scarlet letter from her bosom and throws it off, and next, she heaves a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departs from her spirit. Her sex, her youth, and the whole

richness of her beauty, come back. (qtd. in Butler 65)

Although Hester suffers enormously from the shame of her public disgrace and the isolation of her punishment, in her inmost heart she can never accept the Puritan interpretation of her act. Because she does not believe that she did an evil thing, she retains her self-respect and survives her punishment with dignity, grace, and ever-growing strength of character. (Spiller 57)

1.2 Dimmesdale's Ambivalence

Dimmesdale, a main character in *The Scarlet Letter*, proves to be a sinner against man, against God and most importantly against himself because he has committed adultery with Hester, resulting in an illegitimate child, Pearl. (Swann 76) His sin against himself, for which he ultimately paid the price of death, proved to be more harmful and more destructive than against the public and God. Socrates said, "Know thyself," and Shakespeare said, "To thine own self be true" (Lawrence 66). If Reverend Dimmesdale had been true to himself, he certainly wouldn't have suffered as much as he did. What drove Dimmesdale to hold in his self-condemning truth? To answer this, it's necessary to examine the character of Reverend Dimmesdale while explaining his sinful situation.

Dimmesdale is not ignorant, he is very well educated. As Hawthorne states:

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

This man's moral had, until the adultery, been high. He is very spiritual because on top of being of the Puritan faith, he is a minister of the word of God. Throughout most of the novel, Dimmesdale is forced to hide his guilt. In reality, he is not being forced by anyone, but himself, for he is the one who chooses not to reveal his secret. Dimmesdale has a concealed sin that is, eating him. He just doesn't have the courage to admit his sin. He seems to be a coward during these seven years of living with guilt.

There is a scene in chapter 3 where Dimmesdale states:

Hester Prynne...If thou feelest it to be for thy soul's peace, and that thy earthly punishment will thereby be made more effectual to salvation, I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner and fellow-sufferer! Be not silent from any mistaken pity and tenderness for him; for, believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life? What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him-yea compel him as it were-to add hypocrisy to sin? (Hawthorne 73)

In this scene it is seemed as if Dimmesdale is very hypocrite. He portrays himself very ironically. He is a well respected reverend and yet, has, for the last 7 years, worked on preaching the word of God. While, in fact, Dimmesdale is the one who needs a clean conscious. He

feels like that he needs to confess not only to the town but also to himself.

Halfway through the novel Dimmesdale has yet intended to reveal the truth, which, so far, has been devouring him, physically and mentally. Since Dimmesdale is so spiritual, he cannot reveal his truths to the public. He is of the Puritan faith and being a follower of that, the sin of adultery is a very grand sin. The whole town would look down on him, and he would have been scoffed as Hester has. The reverend is so well liked by the townsfolk that Hawthorne states, "They fancied him the mouthpiece of Heaven's messages of wisdom, rebuke, and love. In their eyes, the very ground on which he trod was sanctified" (139). How can the reverend live without revealing his identity? He has been doing it for seven years, and it must be hard for him, mentally and physically. Mentally, his whole body shuts down because he cannot take it anymore, even though he does not give in to confess yet. He has become emaciated because he has let the sin against himself churn inside and on the outside he has spent many nights whipping himself. Perhaps this is a sign for him to feel he has punished himself, as God would have punished him.

One day while Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are talking about medicinal weeds that Chillingworth found on an old grave which had no tombstone or marking whatsoever, Chillingworth says to Dimmesdale, "...They grew out of his heart, and typify, it may be, some hideous secret that was buried with him, and which he had done better to confess during his lifetime" (Hawthorne 129). It seems as if Chillingworth can tell that Dimmesdale is hiding something, something that could be the cause of his health depleting. Chillingworth then states that, "Then why not reveal them here?" (Hawthorne 129) Chillingworth knows that there is something that Dimmesdale has not yet come forth to tell him.

Dimmesdale, in chapter 12, finally realizes that it could be a better thing to disclose his secret. He has become so weak that he has even thought about his death. He has walked to the scaffold and climbed up as if he wants to proclaim something. And yet, it is nighttime and the whole town is resting. Some are at the deathbed of the ailing governor who has just died. They do not notice him. As Hester and Pearl walk by, Dimmesdale tells them, "Come up hither, Hester, thou and little Pearl...Ye have both been here before, but I was not with you. Come up hither once again, and we will stand all three together!" (Hawthorne 148) Dimmesdale is coming close to speaking, but he doesn't. He reveals his secret to the town after he has preached his finest sermon and after the town is holding him so very high on a pedestal. Dimmesdale says to the town, "ye, that have loved me!-ye that have deemed me holy!-behold me here, the one sinner of the world! At last!-at last!-I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here, with this woman..." (Hawthorne 237) Now that Dimmesdale confesses his

secret, he can rest in peace now. Dimmesdale has sinned against God, and more importantly against himself.

He has not lived a true life because for seven years he has lived in denial of his sin. (Hu 82) It did prove to be more harmful in the end, since he died on the scaffold while standing next to his fellow-sinner Hester. He knew that he needed to reveal himself, but in his Puritan ways, it was hard to confess. The irony he portrays and the hypocrisy that he lives is such a grand sin in itself. He lived by facing his sin every day, because he was a minister and would not only have to answer to the townsfolk after he had admitted but he had to face God everyday. His character has perhaps the central struggle in this novel, for he has the struggle within, and the struggle portrayed outwardly to the town and Hester.

It is just because Dimmesdale's struggle and ambivalence that makes Hester as well as himself suffer so much.

1.3 Chillingworth's Evil

Another character who is not a part of the common people of Salem is Roger Chillingworth, Hester's former husband. His main purpose is to find out and slowly punish Hester's lover with whom she had committed adultery.

Chillingworth is first seemed to be more of a recipient of the actions of sinners than an actual sinner himself. After all, he was held captive by the Indians for a year, and then returns to civilization to see that his wife is standing on the scaffold. Midway through the novel the audience's view of the character changes dramatically. The major turning point is when Chillingworth tries to find out the personal information about his patient, Dimmesdale. Hawthorne describes it as "The physician advanced directly in front of his patient, laid his hand upon his bosom, and thrust aside the vestment, that, hitherto, had always covered it even from the professional eye" (121).

As a matter of fact, Chillingworth really commits two major sins. His first sin is against Hester. He committed it when he married her and took away her youth; he admits: "Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay" (Hawthorne 69). Chillingworth's second, and far more evil sin, is tricking the heart of a fellow man and sacrificing a friendship to gratify his own selfishness. What Chillingworth does is befriend the good Reverend and become his doctor. Chillingworth notices that something more than physical is wrong with him. He starts to dig deeper and deeper until he finds out what he is looking for. As Chillingworth probes farther into Dimmesdale's life, he resembles the devil more and more. Hawthorne illustrates this event when he remarks, "Now, there was something ugly and evil in his face, which they had not previously noticed, and which grew still the more obvious to sight, the oftener they looked upon him" (133).

In Chapter 14, Chillingworth's transformation seems to be complete, and Chillingworth becomes aware of what has happened. It is too late to change who he is and who he has become. There is no doubt that the worst sinner and the most evil is old Roger Chillingworth. He is flat out pure evil. Dimmesdale comments to Hester:

We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so. (Hawthorne 191)

2. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

After analyzing characters' different personalities, it is essential to learn the environmental factors. In *The Scarlet Letter*, women's status contributes a lot to the tragedy of love. Besides, the dark social background is the underlying and fundamental reason.

2.1 Women's Status

In a sense, *The Scarlet Letter* is a legend of crime and punishment, the background of the story is in New England in the seventeenth century under the rule of Puritan. At that times, the Puritans came to the American continent by crossing ocean, but they simply lacked the political philosophy of democracy, and their ideals on the secular government is under the Calvinism system. Calvinism stress that the Bible is the law, and tend to attach much importance to "Old Testament" and its patriarchal and aristocratic social values. They believe that God gave the husband the right of ruling and dominating his wife, which decide the subordinate status of his wife. Women could only exist as a form of objects. Besides, the Church not only propagate women should be subservient to men, but also advocate that marriage is a sacred saint contractual relationship. Women's any disloyal behaviors not only betrayed her husband and violated the men's high status, but also offend God.

The administrative staff headed by Bellingham, as well as the clergy on behalf of Wilson come to such a sentence: Hester should stand on the scaffold for three hours, to expose the evil of her to the public; in addition, she must wear the scarlet letter "A", a sign of adultery, forever. In essence, this ruling could not be harsher. Just as what Hester has experienced later on, the scarlet letter keeps on tormenting her in various forms. However, those self-appointed women judges, fully reflects the rule of patriarchal awareness against women in Puritan community. The rule, rather than the rule of violence, but is voluntarily accepted; women do not complain and agree to participate. Although they are also women, yet they are so cruel to Hester, not showing the slightest bit of mercy. It proves that women are taught patriarchal ideology at a young age in the Puritan society, and they even not aware of it; thus their ideology are completely enslaved, and they become faithful defender of the ideology of men.

At that time in New England, the dominance of the ideology of men is not only reflected in the Legalization of the Bible, but also embodied through the strengthening of the ideology of men by the law. Before women married, their fathers are their guardians; after they married, their husbands are in essence to act as guardians. Once married, husband and wife are a whole in the law. During the marriage, all the individual property and labor fruits of women belong to their husbands, thus the husband have the absolute control over his wife. In other words, the existence of wife comes to an end in the law. Besides, most of the colonial law explicitly demanded that women should give up the rights of land ownership. In the early colonial period when agriculture is put the first place, once women are deprived of the rights of owning and using land, they have no economic status. Let alone political status and the freedom of thought.

So, both Hester's unfortunate marriage with Chillingworth and her suffering after the "crime" are, to some extent, the result of the low women status.

2.2 Social Background

The Scarlet Letter expresses the aspects of relationships, religion, community, discipline and punishment in the puritan community of 17th century Boston.

Relationships between men and women were very constrained and that is what made adultery such a bad sin in the eyes of everyone in the community. Religion seemed to govern over all, people would look up to reverends and the community believed that fate was their destiny. Public discipline and punishment were used to discourage everyone else from committing the same crime or sin as the offending "criminal" did. The community was to follow the beliefs of god and to do their duties the best they could, yet were there to criticize and punish all who disobeyed the religion or laws. In 17th century every thing was very strict and everyone was expected to follow the laws in Boston, which makes Hester's sin such an excellent example of the beliefs of that period. The first scaffold scene is very important because the scene sums up the beliefs of the general public at that time, and gives a prospective of what Hester must deal with. In the beginning of chapter two the scene is described as "it could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit" (Hawthorne 71) showing that the whole town was there for a ruthless public punishment. The crowd was not there for an execution though, but for a public punishment of Hester who had committed adultery. A townsman describes Hester's punishment to a stranger as, "they have doomed Mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform of the pillory, and then thereafter, for the remainder of her natural life, to wear a mark of shame upon her bosom" (58). This scene shows the weight of values and morals upon society in the 17th century and how public punishment was not only used

as punishment but as a way to discourage others from committing the same crime (Duan 45). The punishment brings forth Hester's underlying pain, "Hester sent forth a cry, she turned her eyes downward at the scarlet letter, and even touched it with her finger, to assure herself that the infant and the shame were real" (Hawthorne 55). This pain only breaks surface once, yet throughout the whole story Hester must deal with the shame and emotional pain of the scarlet letter. The stranger sums it up best with the quotation, "Thus she will be a living sermon against sin, until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone" (56).

Since religion was such a key part of their lives, anyone who did disobey their god was looked down upon. What made religion ironic in this story was how everyone looked up to a reverend that had committed the same sin as someone they looked down upon severely. Dimmesdale says, "Before the judgment-seat, thy mother, and thou, and I, must stand together! But daylight of this world shall not see our meeting!" (Hawthorne 235) The reverend knows his sin and wants be punished with Hester and Pearl, yet not until what he calls "judgment day." In the 17th century, Puritans believed that there was a stern God who had decreed in advance the fate of each person for all time. Therefore, there was not much people felt they could do to become a better person in God's eyes but do his bidding with their jobs. (Duan 75) To increase their chances of getting to go to heaven the townspeople would often get one step closer to God by getting close to a religious leader, which was bad for Dimmesdale who was probably farther away from God than everyone else because of his sin. Relationships were looked upon as something sacred and a woman should be loyal to her husband. Once a woman married it was considered a horrible offense if she were un-loyal to her spouse.

They have not been bold to put force the extremity of our righteous law against her. The penalty therefore is death. (Hawthorne 12) A townsman explains that the penalty is death for her crime, yet that the other party in the affair must have played a strong role in tempting her, so they just sentenced her to putting the letter on her chest and standing three hours on the scaffold.

The stranger shows how most people reacted when only seeing one of the two guilty parties stand on the scaffold, "it irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side" (Hawthorne 48). Women still did not have many rights, so anything Hester said in her defense would have just have been ignored. Relationships were not supposed to be broken unless by divorce, even if the husband was at the bottom of the sea where Hester's husband was believed to be.

Through the analysis of community and the relationship between discipline and punishment, readers can get a better understanding of what was expected of townspeople in the 17th century. *The Scarlet Letter* shows

the pain and suffering a woman went through when she broke her marriage, and disobeyed her religion. She then was sentenced to a public punishment to be humiliated, tormented, and alienated by the community around her. The fate-driven religious society in 17th century Boston would not accept the sin of any kind, and the punishment for adultery was death. Instead, the community branded Hester Prynne with the letter "A" for the rest of her life and made her stand in front of the whole community as an example for everyone that sin and corruption was not accepted in their society.

3. INFLUENCE OF THE AUTHOR' LIFE EXPERIENCE AND INTENTION OF CREATION

As it is inevitable for the literary works to be marked by the authors' life experience and, a better understanding of the author is helpful for the reader to learn the novel's connotation. Hawthorne's unfortunate youth and romantic view decided that *The Scarlet Letter* could not but be ended in tragedy.

3.1 Hawthorne's Unfortunate Youth

The English novelist D.H. Lawrence in his famous book *Studies in Classic American Literature*, a book on Hawthorne, has made such a comment:

Nathaniel Hawthorne was writing the legend of Love ... But *The Scarlet Letter* is not a pleasing beautiful legend, but a fable or a story with moral evil. The blue-eyed lovely Nathaniel knew that there were unpleasant things in heart; he had to make pretensions of his speech carefully, one for quick spit. (85)

As a great writer, Lawrence inferred Hawthorne's psychology: unhappy things annoyed Hawthorne, and there was too much injustice in his heart. Successful love story could not satisfy his desire to shout, while broken love story, with the tragedy be presented step by step, relaxed his feeling of injustice as well as seized the reader and aroused the readers' sympathy. Hawthorne made Hester to express the pent-up grievances in his mind, which adopted a large number of detailed psychological description and consequently drawing a series of emotional maps. By putting these emotional maps into articles, Hester's solitude and a sinister meaning of life story appeared before readers. Pew's manuscripts may be only a part of the source of the novel. To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to learn something about Hawthorne's early life:

Hawthorne's father, a sea captain, had died of yellow fever in Dutch Guiana, when the boy was merely four years old. When the news came of his father's death Hawthorne's mother withdrew into her upstairs bedroom, coming out only rarely during the remaining forty years of her life. The boy and his two sisters lived in almost complete isolation from her and from each other. In a few years Hawthorne left Salem and entered Bowdoin College, in Maine. ...From Bowdoin Hawthorne returned to

Salem. For nearly twelve years, from 1826 to 1836, he lived in virtual solitude in this idle town. (Wu 5)

Hawthorne lost his father when he was only four years old. Suffering the immersion of her deceased husband and the passage of love, Hawthorne's mother was unable to extricate herself and stayed at home in almost four decades. Attention should be paid to the two English phrases "in almost complete isolation" and "in virtual solitude", from the time period these two English Phrases covered, it can be seen that from 1809 to 1836, the long 28 years, no parental love was given to Hawthorne, and all that he had was his lonely life melody. His parents' tragic love almost affected the first half of his life. And "precisely at the 9th month of 1846, he began to concentrate on writing *The Scarlet Letter* and its introduction 'Customs' " (Wu 23). At that time, his mother had just recently passed away. Therefore, the story occurred in the hometown of Salem was destined to leave a sad, lonely traces, and was equally doomed to infiltrate Hawthorne's mother's life experiences. Tolstoy expressed his view of art: "Art is a human activity. Men convey their own feelings to others with certain external signs; then others who are infected, will experience such feelings" (qtd. in Yang 123). He added "the most important thing of art is the author's soul; Art is like a microscope; the artists take it at their own hearts, and thus put the secret out publicly" (qtd. in Yang 124).

Tolstoy's words can be used to analyze the secretive love hidden in *The Scarlet Letter*. The story happened half a century before the time when Hawthorne lived. Therefore, either by Pew's manuscripts or through other channels, it was impossible for him to obtain the information about the forties of the seventeenth century so completely and clearly. Thus *The Scarlet Letter* reflected the shadow of that time the author lived. In this sense, Pew's manuscripts may be only a pretext.

There's no doubt that both Hawthorne's mother and Hester present the characteristics of Puritanism with few desires; but under their few desires are permeated with their desire for love and their helplessness for the merciless reality. The only difference between the two women lies in that Hester's pursuit of love and freedom was much more complicated than Hawthorne's mother's negative attitude. Of course, the complex was not without reasons. These reasons are mainly embodied in the following areas: firstly, Hester is the typical image of character creation; thus it is very natural that her image is plumper than that of Hawthorne's mother. Secondly, causes for Hawthorne's mother's tragedy are two-way relationship and more simple; while causes for the Hester's tragedy are much more complicated, including three individuals and thus resulting in the triangular relationship. Thirdly, Hawthorne's mother is not as strong as Hester. Hawthorne's mother is almost defeated by love. She lead a single life, and even could not took care of her

children; while Hester, though under multi-stress, never stops pursuing.

From the above analysis, it can be safely concluded that there are many reflections of Hawthorne's life experience in *The Scarlet Letter*. In this novel, he exposed his secret unreservedly. It, therefore, can be said that the written material of *The Scarlet Letter* came from Pew's manuscripts; but what could not be neglected is that the author could not jump out of the shadow of his mother's tragedy, so the essence of the tragedy came from Hawthorne's mother's tragic love.

3.2 Hawthorne's Intention of Creation

Hawthorne's birth place was in the town of Salem near Boston, where the Puritan forces were rather rampant. Several generations of his ancestors were fanatical Puritans. And he was influenced by the Calvinist doctrine from an early age; twelve years after graduating from university, Hawthorne lived in seclusion, and studied the history of the Puritans specially, so he was well aware of the insider of Calvinism. (Gao 34)

This quotation shows that Hawthorne was born in a Puritan family. He witnessed his mother's isolated acts of Puritanism, and then he decided to study the Puritan. Coupled with the history that his ancestors had whipped the female followers of heresy, Hawthorne felt the evil of Puritan. He realized his duty and obligation to expose Puritan's suppression and devastation of human nature. As Hawthorne believed that broken love could help to pour out the evil of Puritan, he put the broken love under the great environment of Puritan rule, so that the tragedy was torn little by little, and finally turned into mirrors, reflecting the evil of puritan doctrine. (Jun 74) But Hawthorne was unable to shake off the shackles of Puritan doctrine completely, not to mention to exceed Puritanism. Therefore, he adopted Puritan morality to interpret Hester Prynne's successful love.

Cruelty of reality and complete of ideals were unified in the author's Puritan idea, which involved both hate and love. Meanwhile, this limitation clearly illustrated the author's romantic ideal: Hester could not be accepted by the religious community, so she was a typical victim under the doctrines of Calvinism. While the glory of human nature reflected by Hester made her eligible to become a model for Puritan morality. This in itself is a perfect mockery of Calvinist doctrine.

From the description in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's critique on his mother's love could be found. So skillfully that Hawthorne made Hester's love a perfection: he made Pearl to own a face and personality that even better than that of her mother Hester; Besides, Pearl possesses Dimmesdale's unique charm, and finally inherits Chillingworth's huge amount of property. Hawthorne gave all the good things to Pearl. Pearl is the continuity of Hester's love. This is a good example to demonstrate that the Hester's life-long struggle had forged brilliant flowers and fruitful fruits. Pearl is the living

scarlet letter. She shows the strong vitality of Hester's love. In *The Scarlet Letter*, no matter how difficult the circumstances are, Hester tries her best to care her beloved Pearl. Hawthorne spent a great deal of space (a total of four chapters) to describe Pearl. Of course, either as a role to link the relationship among characters or to highlight the symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*, and either for the layout or for the subject, Pearl is never of small importance. However, it is apparent that Hawthorne's lack of maternal love when he was young had left him an indelible scar. Deep inside him, he is sympathy for his mother's misfortune, but he also resents her radical love. Hawthorne made Pearl to demonstrate the unity of the result of love and love itself, thus making up for Hester's lack of love; it also indicates his thirst for maternal love when he was young. There is no wonder that Hawthorne said: "Truth is eternal, but it is not truth that set up on the basis of outside world" (251). His novel style also states that truth is not the synonym of details. Thus, to some extent, the tragic end of the love story in *The Scarlet Letter* was deeply influenced by Hawthorne's intention of creation.

CONCLUSION

Before Hawthorne's creation of *The Scarlet Letter*, he was not intending to write a wonderful "romance", but to write a tragedy of "romance". Hester pursues the pure love with her strong bravery and rebellion. However, her ideal was influenced by various factors and thus performed a pitiable tragedy. It is precisely the pitiable tragedy that created unique enduring charm of *The Scarlet Letter* and made it become a romantic literary classic in American or even the world literature.

It is impossible for Hester and Dimmesdale to escape the tragic outcome under the prevailing social system and religious background. In this thesis, a comprehensive and overall study of various causes is made. It is a systematic research of the causes of the tragedy of love. There are many elements contribute to the tragedy of love, such as the three main characters' different personalities, women's low status and dark social system, influence of the author's life experience and his intention of creation etc. All of these elements determine that the love story in *The Scarlet Letter* could only be ended in tragedy.

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