

ISSN : 2395-4132

# THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



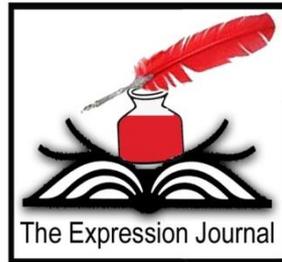
Impact Factor 3.9

**Vol. 8 Issue 3**     **June 2022**

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : [editor@expressionjournal.com](mailto:editor@expressionjournal.com)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com)



**NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S PICTURIZATION OF EVIL AND LONELINESS IN HIS TALES  
AND NOVELS: A BRIEF NOTE**

**JOSHIHA BELL J. B.**

**Ph.D. Scholar (Reg. No: MKU22FFOL10573)**

**Department of English & Comparative Literature**

**Madurai Kamaraj University**

**Madurai – 625 021**

.....

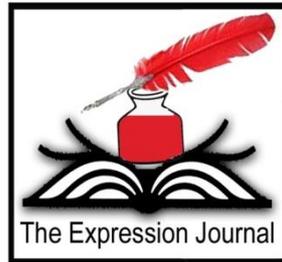
**Abstract**

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a noted American novelist and short story writer. He was born in Salem Massachusetts in 1804. He has written novels and short-story collections during her writing period. He wrote his first novel Fanshawe in 1824 but unfortunately, it was published in 1824. His novel *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* (1850) is a world famous novel. Apart from it, his other notable novels are *The House of the Seven Gables, A Romance* (1852), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), *The Marble Faun* (1860) and *The Dollover Romance* (1863). His short story collections are *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), *Grandfather's Chair* (1840), *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* (1851), *Tanglewoods Tales* (1853), etc. This paper is focusing on Nathaniel Hawthorne's picturization of evil and loneliness, not in the superficial terms of realistic description, but by means of symbols which had a deep emotional meaning. Hawthorne's writings are on the importance of recognizing that this essentially human condition will inevitably fall short of the perfect or the ideal. Hawthorne always writes about man in society, rather than simply about man in nature. His characters usually have some secret guilt or problem which keeps them at a distance from other people. Hawthorne's Tales and novels are men and women who have remained aloof from the society.

**Keywords**

American Temperament, Isolation, Regeneration, Human and Society, Image of Damnation

.....



## **NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S PICTURIZATION OF EVIL AND LONELINESS IN HIS TALES AND NOVELS: A BRIEF NOTE**

**JOSHIHA BELL J. B.**

**Ph.D. Scholar (Reg. No: MKU22FFOL10573)**

**Department of English & Comparative Literature**

**Madurai Kamaraj University**

**Madurai – 625 021**

.....

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) occupies a significant place in American fiction and he is distinctly different from other American men of letters. Writers like Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman were mainly concerned with what America ought to be. On the other hand, writers like Poe, Melville and Hawthorne were passionately engaged in presenting America as it actually was. Although Poe, Melville and Hawthorne were very much unlike each other in sensibilities, they were alike in their basic preoccupations. They looked upon life as a battle between the will of man and his environment. They believed that the individual will was the highest good. Hence, man, they said, need not subordinate himself to some other order or harmony. Man, in his search for the actual, should strive for omnipotence. Poe, Melville and Hawthorne expressed their view of life, not in the superficial terms of realistic description, but by means of symbols which had a deep emotional meaning. Their American temperament and world view can be understood better when their works are compared with those of European writers.

European writers, with their deep sense of social order and discipline, have usually presented men and women as torn between conflicting loyalties or between impulses and moral obligations. But the American conflict has been between human will and Nature. The characters in American Fiction have usually been relatively simple creatures with little inner complexity who have embodied some aspects of human will or appetite. A complex character like the Prince of Denmark is rarely to be seen in American Literature. Hawthorne, as Prof. H. B. Parkes puts it,

“a man of low emotional pressure who adopted throughout his life the role of an observer. Remaining always aloof from the world around him, he was able to record what he felt with a remarkable balance and detachment....Hawthorne's obsessing

# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com)

ISSN: 2395-4132

personal problem was his sense of isolation. He came to regard isolation as almost the root of all evil, and made it the theme of many of his stories. But Hawthorne's treatment of the subject was always too conscious and deliberate; he expressed it allegorically and not in symbols; and consequently he was unable to say anything about it that enlarges our understanding either of human nature or of the society in which Hawthorne lived" (Waggoner, 337-338)

Hawthorne differed from most other American writers in that he attributed blame to the individual who became isolated. Isolation was the punishment of pride and egoism, which for Hawthorne, were the roots of all evil. Many of his short stories dealt with different manifestations of these basic sins which led to the isolation of the sinner. On the one hand, Hawthorne condemned the individual rebel; on the other hand, he was also convinced that the society at large was corrupt. Hence he felt that virtue was to be encountered not in conformity to social norms and institutions, but in the practice of love and humility. This led him to conclude that if human society was to be reformed, there ought to be a regeneration of the individual. Unless this was done, all talk of social reform was meaningless. For Hawthorne, as for most other American novelists, the most important virtue of a man was comradeship.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem of an old New England Family. He was orphaned by the death of his ship Captain Father in Surinam, Dutch Guiana. From 1821-1825 Hawthorne attended Bowdoin College. After graduation, Hawthorne returned to Salem and started writing novels and short stories like his premature first novel *Fanshawe* (1828), *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and *Moses from an Old Manse* (1846). *Twice-Told Tales* elicited a thoughtful review from Poe, who hailed Hawthorne as one of America's 'few men of indisputable genius'. Returning to Salem in 1846 as Customs Inspector, Hawthorne began his best-known novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) which was an immediate success in America and in England. A story set in seventeenth century puritan Boston, it takes its title from the Scarlet 'A' which Hester Prynne has been obliged by the community to wear because she has borne an illegitimate child, Pearl. Actually the father is the Minister of the community, Arthur Dimmesdale. Hester's husband, Roger Chillingworth, tortures Dimmesdale mentally out of a cold wish to experiment with another human being. The story traces the different effects of guilt to some extent recognized in Hester, compounded in Chillingworth, and hidden in Dimmesdale, but ultimately confessed in a gesture so shattering to him that it causes his death. An important motif throughout the novel is the shifting force of the latter 'A'. Though the old puritans may have been a little clumsy about somethings, Hawthorne implies, they were not far wrong about the sinfulness of man. The validity of an older religious point of view, as in Dostoevsky, is thus asserted.

After losing his Custom House Job in 1849, when the political administration changed, Hawthorne moved to Lenox, Massachusetts, and in a burst of activity wrote *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), a novel about a curse uttered against a puritan, Judge Pyncheon, and working itself out in the children's children unto the third and fourth generation. The interpretation of past and present is here explored – the cumulative effects of greed and increasing sterility – from which the younger characters are finally able to break away. It is a

Vol. 8 Issue 3 (June 2022)

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Bijender Singh

# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com)

ISSN: 2395-4132

pioneering venture in the type of novel depicting the decline of a once proud house, such was to be carried on in the twentieth century by notable writers in the South. Hawthorne, having moved to West Newton, wrote *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a novel in the contemporary setting of Brook Farm. The narrator is a young poet, Miles Coverdale, who through his alienation from life around him plays an ambiguous role in the action. Through his consciousness, a situation is presented in which an unselfish but monstrously self-centered man, Hollingworth, attracts the affections of two contrasting half-sisters one a colourful, sophisticated, powerful self-effacing girl, Priscilla. In the early 1850's Hawthorne also wrote some other volumes like *A Wonder Book* (1851) for children and a *Campaign Biography of Pierce* (1852) and in 1860, he completed another short novel namely *The Marble Faun*.

The principal stress in all of Hawthorne's writings is on the importance of recognizing that this essentially human condition will inevitably fall short of the perfect or the ideal or the abstract – the claims of which had been so eloquently urged by Poe and Emerson. Hawthorne questioned whether anyone has the right to meddle in the life of another. This is essentially a human problem – felt in the relation between successive generations, in any attempts at reforms, and in time of war – the civil war for instance. It is also the problem of the writer as he deals with his raw materials of experience and imagination of life, and fashions it into a work of art. Hawthorne was aware of the claims both of art and life. Though he never lived to resolve the conflict, the narratives he left are unforgettable. Hawthorne always writes about man in society, rather than simply about man in nature. His characters usually have some secret guilt or problem which keeps them at a distance from other people. They are troubled by pride, envy or the desire for revenge. This interest in the dark part of the human mind causes Hawthorne to create tales similar to those of the Gothic novelists.

Hawthorne carefully describes the psychology of his characters. Loneliness and waste are the themes of his first novel *Fanshawe*. It is about a young genius who dies before he can create a work of greatness. With the publication of *Twice-Told Tales*, he showed his mastery of the short story. *The Minister's Black Veil*, one of the stories, contains the theme of loneliness and evil which run through his whole work. A New England Minister puts on a black veil as a symbol of the evil hiding in every human heart. He wears it for the rest of his life, but it separates him from the rest of the society and from woman's love. The author repeats this theme of aloneness, or isolation or alienation in the stories *Wakefield* and *Lady Eleanore's Mantle*. *Mosses from the old Manse* contains some of Hawthorne's best known tales. *The Birthmark* and *Rapaccini's Daughter* are examples of the mad scientist story in America Fiction. Both tell of intellectual men who are ruined when they interfere with the sacred mysteries of life. In *Young Goodman Brown*, the hero believes that all the people in his village are Devil – worshippers. Actually he is only hiding from his own sinfulness, by dreaming of sin in others. In *Ethan Brand*, the hero kills himself by throwing himself into a fire. He had been searching for the 'unpardonable sin' and has found it in his own soul. All these characters and many others in Hawthorne's Tales and novels are men and women who have remained aloof from the society. This kind of alienation distinguishes them from others. "Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is

invention, creation, imagination, originality – a trait which in the literature of fiction is positively worth all the rest” (Poe 198).

In the Tales, Hawthorne sets a leisurely, indefinite and not particularly precise tone. But he remains unsurpassed as a creator of dominant moods. This is clear from his treatment of Father Hooper’s loneliness in “The Minister’s Black Veil”, or of cruelty in “The Gentle Boy” and like the Tales, some of the entries in Hawthorne’s Note Books contain the seeds of future flowering. For example, there is no doubt that the entry: “A moral philosopher to buy a slave or otherwise get possession of a human being, and to use him for the sake of experiment, by trying the operation of a certain vice on him” (Stewart, 172) is the germ behind Ethan Brand’s ‘Psychological experiment’ which ‘wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated’ the soul of a young woman. Further, even a brief sketch such as – Endicott and the Red Cross’ not only holds dramatic possibilities but also the germ of a great novel such as *The Scarlet Letter*. The relationship of these tales to Hawthorne’s position as artist is of great significance. Speaking of the great difficulty in finding native materials to shape his art, Hawthorne commented:

“I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but their air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give a life-like semblance to such shadowy stuff” (435)

Like Shakespeare, Hawthorne was not averse to introducing the supernatural into his tales and novels. He relied on the Gothic tradition for these effects but always as allegory to convey some deep spiritual truth. For him, such truth was reality and the greatest reality for Hawthorne was man’s imperfectness and sinfulness – his innate depravity. Isolation is perhaps the theme Hawthorne handles with greatest power. ‘Insulation’ he called it which suggests not only isolation but imperviousness. It is the opposite of that ability to respond and relate to others and the world. Its causes are many and complex, its results simple. It puts one outside the ‘magic circle’ or ‘the magnetic chain’ of humanity, where there is neither love nor reality. It is Hawthorne’s image of damnation. Reunion, often imaged by the hearth, is his redemptive cure. Hawthorne’s characters who are isolated should ‘blow on the coal of the heart’ to be brought back to the human fold. Alienation achieves many forms in Hawthorne Tales. He often uses the images of veils and disguises to suggest isolation or alienation. Father Hooper in “The Minister’s Black Veil” deliberately puts on a black veil covering his face and stubbornly refuses to part with it till he goes to the grave. He willingly isolates himself from his congregation, his wife and this sinful world. When his wife entreats him to take away the veil from his face, Mr. Hooper replies that an hour will come “when all of us shall cast aside our veils” “The Minister’s Black Veil”, is a symbol of man’s sins which separate him – spiritually from his fellow beings.

# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com)

ISSN: 2395-4132

## Works Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Twice-Told Tales and Other Short Stories*. Eurasia Publishing House, 1967.

James, Henry. *Hawthorne*. Macmillan, 1879.

Pearce, R.H. Ed. *Hawthorne Centenary Essays*. Ohio State U. P, 1964.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Red Field, 1858.

Stewart Randall. *The American Note Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Cambridge: Mass, 1932.

Wagenknecht, Edward. *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Man and Writer*. Oxford U P 1961.

Waggoner, Hyatt. *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*. Oxford U P, 1962.