

C H A P T E R I I I

THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

III.1. Biographical Sketch Of The Author

Nathaniel Hawthorne was an American novelist, short story writer, and essayist, whose masterpiece The Scarlet Letter, established him as the leading American native fictionist of the 19th century. He was born in Salem, Massachussetts, on July 4, 1804. Four years later his father died of yellow fever aboard ship off the coast of Ducth Guiana (Surinam). Nathaniel's father, a sea captain, represented the fifth generation of the Hawthornes in Salem. After his father death, he and his mother moved to her family home, The Mannings. The life of The Mannings alternated between Salem and Raymond, Maine. When Nathaniel was a boy there, as Hawthorne later put it, "I first got my cursed habits of Solitude," but there also with rod and gun in hand, he grew to love unshackled freedom and solitude.

At the age of nine he suffered an injury to his foot, which lamed him for nearly three years. This early confinement, however, may have strengthened his love of reading. The Mannings homes, both in Salem and in Maine, were rich in books; and in Salem lending libraries filled

the gaps. Spenser, Bunyan, and Shakespeare were his early favorites. He also loved to read the novels of Sir Walter Scottish, which also played in shapping Hawthorne's future writing.

By *The Mannings*, he was entered to the small college of Bowdoin for four years (1821-1825). Having attended from the college of Bowdoin, where his friends included Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne spent a dozen years after graduation in the relative isolation of his Salem home. There he wrote his immature novel Fanshawe (1828) talking about his college life, a good deal of his searching short stories. Some of these, such as "The Minister's Black Veil" and "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment", were collected after magazine publication in a volume appropriately titled Twice-Told Tales (1837). The other writings, such as "Young Goodman Brown," and "Rappacini's Daughter", were later assembled in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), which also included sketches like "Earth's Holocaust," and perceptive realistic notations, such as "The Canal Boat".

After the publication of his first volume of tales Hawthorne began to emerge into the world. His engagement to Sophia Peabody led him to obtain a job at the Boston Custom House (1839-1841). Then, inspired by his fiancees Transcendentalism, he spent some months at Brook Farm. He

wanted to do and experiment in communal living which he found uncongenial both to his taste for a solitary life and to his dark temperament, which could not accept the colony's blithe optimism.

After his marriage in 1842, at the age of thirty eight, he rented Emerson's house, the Old Manse, at Concord, Massachusetts. Here Hawthorne continued to write until he returned to his birthplace as Surveyor of the Salem Custom House (1846-1849), a post gained through his activity in Democratic Party Politics. A change of administration cost him this position, and he soon moved to Lenox, in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts.

The Scarlet Letter (1850) was the first of Hawthorne's mature novel as well as his masterpiece. The Scarlet Letter was more sustained work than any he had before attempted. This brilliantly constructed romance made understanding use, both realistic and allegorical. A year later he published The House Of The Seven Gables, a romance of modern Salem concerned principally with the decadence of Puritanism.

He also wrote The Snow Image and Other Twice - Told Tales, another collection of stories, which included Ethan Brand. In 1852 he presented The Blitbedale Romance, a satirical study of the reformer's mind based on his experience at Brook Farm, and A wonder - Book talking

about adaptations of Greek myths for children that were similar to the later Tanglewood Tales. With money earned from his books, Hawthorne that same year bought a house in Concord, his favorite town. But his literary career was interrupted by his friendly act of writing a campaign biography of his old college classmate Pierce, the Democratic candidate for president. Upon the election winning, Pierce rewarded Hawthorne with the consulship at Liverpool, and Hawthorne whose only trip outside New England had been to Niagara, then set sail for England.

For years, he was busy with diplomatic duties, sightseeing, the keeping of interesting Notebooks, and the writing of essays issued as *Our Old Home* (1863). On the other hand his fictive imagination was stopped. Of the years abroad from 1853 to 1860 only the last two spent in Italy yielded material for his fiction. The last of his novel, The Marble Faun (1860), is often considered his greatest after The Scarlet Letter. Although this haunting tale is set in modern Rome, its contrast of the temperaments and consciences of Catholic and Protestant characters and its probing into the problem of the origin of sin intimately ally it with his earlier fiction of the New England scene. The last four years of Hawthorne's life were troubled ones. It was deeply disturbed by the Civil War, he was also worried about the financial welfare of

his wife and three children.

Talking about Hawthorne's writings, one observes in all of them - except his books for children and his observations on England- a similar manner of writing and a constant philosophic concern. The nature of this, he set forth in the preface to his first mature book, the Twice - Told Tales. This book described as having the coolness of a meditative habit. About the process of his art, from an early period Hawthorne had had the habit of keeping notebook, and on these, when he wrote his tales, he constantly drew (Arvin, 1946). One observes too that in all of Hawthorne's fiction, whether historically grounded, such as Young Goodman Brown or fanciful, such as Earth's Holocaust, there is an interest in discovering what he calls " some profundity of moral truth here to fore hidden in mist or darkness".

Relating to the old New England mind, Hawthorne's attitude toward Puritanism was ambivalent. He hated his ancestors self-righteousness and intolerance, but like his forebears he believed passionately in evil as a positive power. For him, sin was a constant and besetting reality. Though in The Scarlet Letter, he could forgive Hester's adulterous passion, he could not forgive the pride of Ethan Brand, that unpardonable sin which set this cold observer apart from the common nature of his

brother man.

In the end of his life, his health seriously waned and his creativeness was sapped. At last, on a trip to the mountains and seashore with his friend Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne died quietly in his sleep on May 19, 1864 in Plymouth.

III.2. Synopsis Of The Scarlet Letter

The novel consisting of 24 chapters takes Boston in the 17th century as the setting. The author concerned the events in the center of Boston that is the seat of government for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Hawthorne is generally credited with having caught the mood and spirit of early American Puritanism.

There are really only four major characters; Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl. They are fictive figures, but the author also presents the historical manners, like Governor Bellingham, Mister John Wilson, and Mistress Hibbins. The two major characters, Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester, are very closely related, through the sin which affects the live of them.

Hester Prynne is the Chillingworth's wife, but she is sent ahead from Europe by her husband. She has been in Boston for two years without any word from her husband.

On the other hand, Hester has committed adultery with someone, that's why she will be forced to stand on the scaffold for three hours and to wear the symbolic letter A for the rest of her life. On the scaffold, she is forced to reveal her partner in crime by the leaders of the state and the church. The Reverend Mr. John Wilson calls upon Hester's clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale to plead with Hester that she reveals her partner in crime. Looking straight into Hester's eyes and in a voice tremulously sweet, rich, deep, and broken; Dimmesdale demands her to say her partner in crime. Hester refuses to mention the father of her child, though Mr. Wilson demands harsher to her.

Having finished on the scaffold, Hester must go back in the prison cell, but she is in nervous frenzy, and her child is writhing in convulsions of pain. Then the jailer brings to the cell a physician called as Roger Chillingworth. In the prison, Chillingworth asks Hester to say her partner in crime, but she refuses it. Then Chillingworth asks her that she will keep his identity as her real husband. Hester promises him, but without her knowing, Chillingworth has suggested that the father of her child is Dimmesdale.

In short, Hester's punishment in the prison is ended, then she chooses to move into a small thatched

cottage on the outskirts of Boston. She must support herself and her child through her skill as a seamstress. She is a social outcast, and she is patient in facing her society abuse. Cause of her sin of adultery, Hester has to wear letter A on her breast as a token of her crime. On the other hand, because of her adultery sin, her child will be kept on by the Government. She is considered not able to teach her child into Puritanism way.

However, Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale gets an inner sickness because of his guilty feeling in his heart. Every time, he is tortured by his guilty feeling, and he always tries to struggle to confess his sin to his adherents, but he gets difficulty to do it. Governor Bellingham and Dimmesdale's adherents suggest that he must be kept on by the physician, Chillingworth. Based on Roger Chillingworth's suggestion, then Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth live in the same house to make easy for Chillingworth to take care of him. For Chillingworth, actually he just wants to prove his judgement that Dimmesdale is his wife's partner in adultery.

Hearing about Dimmesdale and Chillingworth live in one house, Hester is worried toward Dimmesdale's condition. She wants to meet him to say who actually Chillingworth is. One day she hears that Dimmesdale will go out to other place passing the forest, then she waits

for him. In the forest, she reveals Chillingworth's identity, as her real husband. Dimmesdale is disappointed and hopeless in facing his life. He says that Hester's condition about her sin is better than his. He feels the sin in his heart is more sick and deep than hers. Hester gives spirit to his life, and invites him to go abroad with their child, Pearl. They will go out after the Election Sermon procession.

On Election Sermon processing, Dimmesdale delivers his sermon well, then he feels weaker than before. He calls Hester and Pearl to help him appear on the scaffold. The three of them side by side on the scaffold. It is a surprise, Dimmesdale reveals his sin of adultery with Hester Prynne to the public. He wants to say the truth about his sin to all people. He says that God will meet the three of them hereafter. And now he feels getting a peace in his heart after fighting for seven years to confess his sin. He thanks God cause he can do confession in front of the public. Then he dies.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS