

Nathaniel Hawthorn started writing The Scarlet Letter in 1847 and it was published in 1850. The Scarlet Letter is recognize by many "critics as being one of the greatest of American novels."1 Hawthorn created his own individual style of "romance," a style of writing. His own individual style of writing is now called "Hawthorn's Theory of Romance". His "theory of Romance" is emphasized in The Scarlet Letter in many different ways. The techniques Hawthorn used in The Scarlet Letter are basically from his "theory of Romance." Hawthorn uses his "theory of Romance" in many different ways in The Scarlet Letter.

Hawthorn being a Romantic writer incorporates many characteristics of Romanticism and also includes his "theory of Romance" in the novel. Some romanticism ideas he incorporates are those of heroic characters which would include Hester Prynne "It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself."2 A heroic character is "bigger than those found in ordinary life" and also is strong, brave, noble, risky and powerful. Another characteristic he includes is the writing of mysterious events such as the adultery of Hester, the birth of Pearl and the return of her husband Roger Chillingworth.

The uses of the "theory of Romance" by Hawthorn follows an order. The order is initiated by Hawthorn looking for to write on a serious topic. The topic is the adultery of Hester, Pearls birth, the revenge by Chillingworth and the hypocrisy of Dimmesdale. Then he chooses the setting of his characters "On the outskirts of town, within the verge of the peninsula, but not in close vicinity to any other habitation, there was a small thatched cottage."3 The small cottage is Hester's home which is isolated from society. This is a characteristic of a heroic character which is Hester.

His next step is to choose characters who have lived in real life and to associate them with fictitious characters. The fictitious characters being Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingworth, Reverend Dimmesdale and Pearl. The real life character being Governor Bellingham. "Here, to witness the scene which we are describing, sat Governor Bellingham himself, with four seargents about his chair."4 Richard Bellingham was Governor of the Massachusetts Colony in 1641,1654,1665-1672. Another real life character was that of Reverend John Wilson. "The voice which had called her attention was that of the reverend and famous John Wilson, the eldest clergyman of Boston."5 John Wilson was one of the first settlers in 1630 and became a leading Puritan minister. Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, Pearl, Reverend Wilson, and Governor Wilson all associate with one another, two of them being real life characters and four of them fictitious characters.

After having chosen his characters and settings, now he must describe them as being a "strange mixture of the real and the unreal." Hawthorn starts out by describing the main character which is Hester. "The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale."<sup>6</sup> His describing her with having a perfect figure. Hawthorn then describes Chillingworth "..., at the first instant of perceiving that thin visage, and the slight deformity of the figure, ... ." <sup>7</sup> He describes Chillingworth with a deformity on his shoulder. Chillingworth has special characteristic that makes him unreal. That characteristic are his eyes "..., he felt her pulse, looked into her eyes, -a gaze that made her heart shrink and shudder."<sup>8</sup> Chillingworth's power is with his eyes.

Hawthorn follows his descriptions of Reverend Dimmesdale. "..., half frightened look,- as of a being who felt himself quite astray and at a loss in the pathway of human existence."<sup>9</sup> Dimmesdale also has an unreal side to his character and real side too. That unreal side is that of Dimmesdale's voice. "The young pastor's voice was tremulously sweet, rich, deep, and broken."<sup>10</sup> His voice was so powerful that when he spoke before the crowd in Hester's trial everyone thought that Hester would confess the guilty name. "So powerful seemed the minister's appeal that the people could not believe but that Hester Prynne would speak out the guilty name."<sup>11</sup> The description of Pearl is the next description that Hawthorn describes. Pearl has no friends and is very evil to her mother and mostly to everyone "She could recognize her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of her temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom."<sup>12</sup> The characteristic that makes her unreal is her wilderness and the tendency not to obey what Hester tells her to do "..., that Hester could not help questioning, at such moments, whether Pearl were a human child."<sup>13</sup>

Hawthorn's final step in his "theory of Romance" is what he calls "atmospherical medium." "Atmospherical medium" is the ability to manipulate the light in the scenery to illuminate the shadows in the scenery. An example of this is when Hester is let out of jail for her trial. "Open a passage; and, I promise ye, Mistress Prynne shall be set where man, woman, and child may have a fair sight of her brave apparel, from this time till an hour past meridian."<sup>14</sup> The quote is saying that after an hour past noon the crowd will be able to see Hester. During noon the light is very bright and Hester is seen by everybody. Another example is the stories people would tell about her "..., tinged in an earthly dye-pot but was red-hot with infernal fire, and could be seen glowing all night, whenever Hester Prynne walked abroad in the night-time."<sup>15</sup> The quote is saying that whenever Hester would walk at night the scarlet letter would be bright red and it would be the focus of everyone.

In conclusion, Hawthorn uses his "theory of Romance" in many ways. His theory follows an order. First to write on something serious, then to write about the scenery and to choose real life characters and fictitious characters. The theory then follows Hawthorn describing the characters being real and unreal. And finally his most important technique of his theory. That technique is his "atmospherical medium" which is the ability to manipulate the light in the scenery to illuminate the shadows in the scenery. His theory is what makes him such an important figure in literature in the whole world. "It is because of his mastery of that form of fiction known as the "romance" ..."<sup>16</sup>

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