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Violence, Guilt and Punishment in Selected Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne
Násilí, vina a trest ve vybraných dílech Nathaniela Hawthorna

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí bakalářské práce (supervisor):
Pavla Veselá, PhD.

Zpracovala (author):
Marie Gemrichová
studijní obor (subject):
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(I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma).

V Praze dne

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Abstract

The BA thesis explores selected writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who addressed in his works many themes that range from nature through difficult relationships of characters and their communities to Biblical allusions. Some of the prominent themes which can be explored in his novels (such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Fanshawe*) are the themes of violence, guilt and punishment. These chosen themes serve as topics that are treated individually in each novel. Consequently the novels are compared.

The thesis first focuses on an exploration of the theme of violence, to which extent it appears in Hawthorne's novels, which characters are victims and transgressors, and where violence leads to. At the same time it explores the feeling of guilt of Hawthorne's characters, and whether guilt appears after a committed violent act, as well as the consequences that come in the form of the transgressors' punishment. Namely, I explore the relationship of Hester Prynne with Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth (*The Scarlet Letter*), the two original families of the Pyncheons and the Maules and the influence of the ancestors on their heirs (*The House of the Seven Gables*) and the actions of the mysterious "angler" compared to the deeds of the individuals around Harley College (*Fanshawe*). Why, in some novels, is the reader confronted with the character's feelings of guilt after instigating violence whereas in other works they are simply left out? Why does Hawthorne choose different ways of treating these themes?

The thesis finally questions the author's possible biases when assigning a punishment for his characters. Naturally through its course, it refers to several critical works, such as *Hawthorne* by Henry James or critical essays in *Studies in Classic American Literature* by D. H. Lawrence.

Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce zkoumá vybraná díla Nathaniela Hawthorna, který se ve svých dílech věnoval mnohým tématům sahajícím od přírody, přes složité vztahy postav a jejich komunit až po biblické aluze. Některá z významných námětů, která mohou být prozkoumána v jeho románech (např. *Šarlatové písmeno* [*The Scarlet Letter*], *Dům se sedmi štíty* [*The House of the Seven Gables*] a *Fanshawe*) jsou témata násilí, viny a trestu. Tyto vybrané motivy slouží jako témata, která jsou zpracována jednotlivě v každém románu. Posléze jsou romány porovnány.

Práce se nejprve zaměřuje na zkoumání tématu násilí, do jaké míry se objevuje v románech, které postavy jsou obětmi a viníky a k čemu dále násilí vede. Současně zkoumá pocit viny u Hawthornových postav a zda se u postav objevuje po vykonaném násilném aktu, stejně jako důsledky, které přicházejí v podobě trestu pro provinilce. Konkrétně se věnují vztahu Hester Prynne s Arthurem Dimmesdalem a Rogerem Chillingworthem (*Šarlatové písmeno*), původním dvěma rodinám Pyncheonů a Maulů a vlivu předků na jejich dědice (*Dům se sedmi štíty*) a skutkům tajemného „rybáře“ v porovnání s činy jednotlivců okolo Vysoké školy Harley (*Fanshawe*). Proč je v některých románech čtenář konfrontován s pocitem viny u postav po vykonání násilí, zatímco v jiných pracích jsou jednoduše vynechané? Proč Hawthorne volí různé způsoby zpracování těchto témat?

Na závěr práce zkoumá možnou zaujatost autora při přiřazování trestu pro své postavy. Práce se samozřejmě opírá o kritické zdroje, jako jsou *Hawthorne* od Henryho Jamese nebo kritické eseje ve sborníku *Studie z klasické americké literatury* (*Studies in Classic American Literature*) od D.H. Lawrence.

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1. Preface

My first encounter with the American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne happened, I am ashamed to admit, through a rather doubtful 1995 movie that was based upon his most famous novel, *The Scarlet Letter*. Being then obsessed (as every teenager is) with the actor; in this case with Gary Oldman who portrayed Arthur Dimmesdale, my perception of the character was different from what it is now and I remember not understanding why there was no happy end for the two lovers in the original. Disappointed, I therefore abandoned all Hawthorne's novels.

After finishing high school with no thorough knowledge I returned to the works of Hawthorne in the first year of my university studies through another fascination – this time with gothic stories. Although this fascination soon passed, I remained interested in the author and finally started to discover the rest of his novels as well. Therefore this thesis is the continuation of my fascination with Nathaniel Hawthorne using the theme most commonly associated with him and often found in gothic stories.

I have hopefully come a long way from my youthful obsession with an actor to a thorough study of at least some of Hawthorne's themes and some of his novels.

2. Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne with his novels and short stories belongs undoubtedly to the canon of the nineteenth century American literature. Many critics have delved through his published works to detect Hawthorne's themes, starting with his contemporary and friend Herman Melville, through his successor Henry James or D.H. Lawrence, until contemporary critics such as Hyatt Waggoner. Although the range of Hawthorne's themes is wide and it was naturally developing through the course of his career, critics generally agree that in his fiction, Hawthorne's focus remains mainly on "human evil."¹ He presented to his readers characters filled with dark histories, sometimes violent thoughts, and of course, guilt – a theme that any critic of Hawthorne is bound to notice.

This thesis follows in the tradition of previous critical works about Nathaniel Hawthorne and tries to present the theme of violence in selected characters, asking whether they experience guilt and whether they are punished for their actions. What violence can we find in these particular novels, what feelings are developed in both the characters who experience violent urges and characters who are affected by them, and why only some characters receive their punishment while others are spared by the author and the society they live in? Hawthorne's critics sometimes focus mainly on the idea of guilt and on the effect it has on the particular characters, however, with the connection to violence and to punishment the scope of my research is broadened.

My main focus will be on three of Hawthorne's novels – *Fanshawe* (1828), *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). The reason for these particular works is an attempt to compare books that are divided both by the time of their publishing as well as by the setting and the characters they introduce – therefore commenting on the author's themes and diverse settings throughout his career. Hawthorne's style and the treatment of his characters developed and the thesis focuses precisely on whether his portrayal and opinion of the three themes changed along with other subjects or whether he remained consistent and rigid in his treatment.

Fanshawe as Hawthorne's first published novel is separated from the following one by twenty two years. Hawthorne's style was to develop through short story writing until *The Scarlet Letter*, which focuses on a completely different subject. *The House of the Seven Gables* was on the other hand published only a year after Hawthorne's most famous and

¹ James Stamant, "Hawthorne's and Emerson's Differing Perspectives on Political Violence," *South Central Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (2012): 86-105, JSTOR, Web: 22 April 2014.

widely discussed novel, and the settings and historical bases are very similar – yet with several important differences. Although G. Harrison Orians connected the topic of guilt and punishment in Hawthorne mainly “with the grimness and gloom of Old Puritan communities,” they do not appear exclusively in the story of the embroidered letter A.² Puritan influence can be seen in *The House of the Seven Gables* as well and the characters in *Fanshawe* also experience the aforementioned feelings.

The main focus of the thesis is to possibly deepen the knowledge of Hawthorne’s themes and his treatment of his characters through a broader focus on his theme of guilt. I therefore focus on a theoretical analysis of the particular texts, concluded by a comparative approach when connecting the development of the motifs in the three novels. The thesis is divided into chapters accordingly with the three novels; in each I discuss the characters significant to the themes of the thesis within their distinctive communities, together with an introductory observation about the themes in general in order to specify the development of the thesis. During the analysis of each individual novel with its themes the thesis will then try to possibly detect the author’s aim and preference when portraying characters who experience violence, guilt and punishment.

2.1. Violence, Guilt and Punishment

Hyatt Waggoner in his essays concedes that when writing, Nathaniel Hawthorne was “unusually preoccupied not only with suffering, decay, and death, but with cruelty, guilt, and punishment.”³ Waggoner also focuses on Hawthorne’s preoccupation with descriptive passages and his deployment of the feelings of alienation which he himself suffered from. However, it is indeed the first set of themes, with guilt standing in the foreground, which represents the core of Hawthorne’s imagination and the themes which form the core of the thesis. Additionally, Waggoner observes that “guilt with all its causes, nature, and consequences, is [...] one of Hawthorne’s most frequent and impressively treated themes all through his best fiction.”⁴ This is indeed true; yet when discussing particular characters that appear in Hawthorne’s writing we will see that the causes, nature and consequences are very diverse.

² G. Harrison Orians, “Hawthorne and Puritan Punishments,” *College English*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (1952): 424-432, JSTOR, Web: 21 April 2014.

³ Hyatt H. Waggoner, “The New Hawthorne Notebook: Further Reflections on the Life and Work,” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1978): 218-226, JSTOR, Web: 21 April 2014. Emphasis added.

⁴ Waggoner, 220.

The simplest definition of violence establishes behavior that is intended as damaging to another person.⁵ However, the concept is far more complicated as Mary R. Jackman observes. She describes violence indeed to be an act “motivated by hostility and the willful intent to cause harm”; she then continues to explore the circumstances under which violence becomes to be accepted as a norm, what forms of violence we can be subjected to and what leads an individual to pursue it.⁶ Besides violence being of physical nature, both the act and the manifestation of it can also be psychological. The reason for the apparent interest in physical injuries is their visibility. However, Jackman argues that psychological violence can be much more consequential and “sometimes devastating for human welfare.”⁷ In addition, when perceiving a crime, we also have to question what authority claims that a violent crime has occurred and whether the victim had not been compliant. Moreover, although we mostly imagine violence as performed on another individual, self-inflicted violence is very common as well, which is particularly relevant for Hawthorne’s novels.

An aspect which becomes very important for literature and Hawthorne himself is the idea of authority. The question is not only who the agent of the crime is but also who judges the crime. For some transgressors, violence can be motivated by their good intentions and thus it becomes legitimized for them if they see themselves as the judges.⁸ Again, this is a concept important for the understanding of Hawthorne’s portrayal of violence. Moreover, violence judged by another individual can lead to the outcome of acceptance as well. The history of cultural violence shows that at one point certain violence can be “legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society.”⁹

When we are discussing the victim, it is crucial to understand that compliance can be a survival strategy and we cannot jump to easy conclusions.¹⁰ The judgment of a compliant victim in fact shows both the dynamics of a particular society and his or her actions can reveal the ethics of the individual. Moreover, we also cannot omit a situation when the transgressor and the victim are one and we are discussing self-inflicted violence. In this case, the aggressor appears to be an unknowingly compliant victim. Additionally, when observing violent characters, we are confronted with the question of nature and nurture; that is whether the

⁵ “Violence,” *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, New Edition. For Advanced Learners*, (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2009).

⁶ Mary R. Jackman, “Violence in Social Life,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28 (2002): 378-415, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

⁷ Jackman, 393.

⁸ Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1990): 291-305, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

⁹ Galtung, 292.

¹⁰ Jackman, 397.

character's violent tendencies are inherent or learnt; again, a continuous issue for many of Hawthorne's characters. Jackman finally adds that researchers have dealt with motivations and types of violence for a significant period of time, yet when it is done with a positive purpose, it can escape their (or in this case, the reader's) attention.¹¹ Together with this, it is important to realize that "the perpetrators, victims, and third-party observers whose lives are entangled in violent acts often perceive and interpret them quite differently."¹²

Turning now to a specifically American context, we may refer to David Brion Davis, who noted in his essay "Violence in American Literature" that the bibliography shows "a peculiar fascination with homicidal violence."¹³ However, his interest is mostly with the physical side of it and how violence can relate to American society, which is not my focus. Nonetheless, violence is undoubtedly a theme used in American literature and it can give a picture of its era. Hawthorne himself indeed lived in a violent time. At the end of his life he experienced the impact of the Civil War and moreover he witnessed the institution of the capital punishment in the 1840's as well as the struggle for the abolition of slavery.¹⁴

Hawthorne without doubt rejects the violent characters he portrays although at the beginning of his writing career he stays away from a realistic portrayal of violence and only later does he start with actual descriptions. In *The Scarlet Letter* we find no physical violence. Nonetheless he gives the ability to inflict violence on others to several of his characters because he understands violence to be a part of what makes humanity, "a continual presence in contemporary and future time."¹⁵ He saw that people were filled with violence and therefore he had to invent characters who would succumb to it and who would be influenced by violence. Hawthorne acknowledged "the existence and persistence of violence within the human condition and the human heart."¹⁶ Yet the thesis will show that he did not agree with it and usually did not forgive his violent characters.

With this in mind, the moral audience could assume the outcome of Hawthorne's novels to be guilt – a feeling of shame or sadness in the perpetrator.¹⁷ This emotion however does not present itself to all his characters who are 'guilty' of violence. Some individuals

¹¹ Jackman, 388.

¹² Jackman, 404.

¹³ Tatiana E. Knight, "A Critique of the Representation of Violence in American Literature" (2012), FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations, Paper 751 <<http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/751>>, Web: 20 May 2014.

¹⁴ Paul C. Jones, *Against the Gallows: Antebellum American Writers and the Movement to Abolish Capital Punishment* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011): 2.

¹⁵ Stamant, 86.

¹⁶ Stamant, 86.

¹⁷ "Guilt," Ibid.

indeed become ashamed of their ‘crimes’ while others never or rarely let themselves be taken with a wave of guilt and shame thus continuing in their actions.

In the eyes of others the experience of guilt is often evaluated as a moral good, while the failure to feel it is a “subject of censure and blame.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, guilt is again a wide concept and William Neblett presents a more elaborate definition – feeling sorry for doing something, which does not necessarily mean that what we have done was wrong; feeling angry at ourselves and experiencing desire to make amends.¹⁹ Importantly for the thesis, guilt arrives after a transgression, an act that has harmed an individual and this particular emotion should prevent the violator from committing further crimes.

Neblett in his research observes that guilt can be experienced for longer or shorter periods of time with different intensities. The emotion can also emerge by feeling guilty for a correct or incorrect action and it can be a motivation for both right and wrong conduct. Neblett mostly focuses on the problem of authentic guilt, which becomes one of Hawthorne’s main concerns as well. The critic observes that “morality demands an authentic attitude towards guilt” and that we have to question whether the individual is experiencing authentic moral feelings or whether his ‘guilty’ conscience appears only due to e.g. “having been caught.”²⁰ When discussing guilt we then also have to question the proportionality of the guilt, which for each individual can be different. Of course, the concept of guilt allows a prospect where guilt is never accepted or the individual is even unable to feel it.

As mentioned, critics have always been fascinated by Hawthorne’s characters who experience (or do not experience) guilty feelings and by the steps the characters take to and from this emotion. While in some characters their acts lead to the feeling of guilt and acceptance of their violations, others remain unable to accept these upsetting acts and cannot find the journey Hawthorne allows other characters to find. The presentation of guilt for him is then twofold (similarly to the concept of violence where a character is either violent or not). While some are allowed to feel and acknowledge their guilt and thus take the journey of possible forgiveness, others’ guilt remains hidden and they suffer more. Both types of characters, however, can be subjected to punishment, the difference being in how severe the punishment is because the acceptance of guilt can already invoke a kind of self-punishment for the characters.²¹

¹⁸ William Neblett, “The Ethics of Guilt,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 71, No. 18 (1974): 652-663, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

¹⁹ Neblett, 661.

²⁰ Neblett, 653; Neblett, 653.

²¹ P. S. Greenspan, “Subjective Guilt and Responsibility,” *Mind, New Series*, Vol. 101, No. 402 (1992): 283-303, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

After the act of violence the readers and observers may expect punishment – a penalty for those transgressing some kind of law;²² the law being both the written one for the society they live in and Hawthorne’s own. This punishment, however, (although anticipated) is again suffered only by a small part of those guilty of a specific kind of violence. The penalty itself should be objective and its generation determines either “the guilt or innocence of the accused.”²³ Whether that individual admits his or her crime is not of importance. Punishment is an invention of men and therefore is not concerned directly with the workings of the accused’s conscience.²⁴

When discussing punishment, we have to again question it from several angles. The punishment that is instigated can be appropriate or unfit for the committed crime. An ideal punishment “relates to crime [and] must fit the crime.”²⁵ We also have to ask again who decides about the punishment. W. H. Townsend explains that as the concept is of human and society’s origin, it is the society or its representatives who decide. However, when we are observing any form of penalization in literature, the figure of the judge is also the author himself – he decides the fates of his characters based on his conscience and moral values. He can of course invent characters who will be submitted to punishment he does not agree with. In this case, he presumably sees the punishment decided by a society as insufficient and unproductive and takes the fate of his characters into his own hands.

In Hawthorne’s fiction we can precisely see the issue of law instituted by men which turns to be destructive for the characters’ development; that is not to say the decision is unjust. As has been pointed above, the author does not always agree with the decisions of the representatives of the society. Even though Orians connects Hawthorne’s punishment to his fascination with the Puritan heritage only, he rightfully remarks that the punishment is either “administered by the agents of the law” or it can present itself in “a subtler but more enduring [manner] which came from the searing thrusts of remorse and self-accusation or from a brooding sense of guilt which gripped its victim with a deadly and unrelenting hold;” this punishment is of the author’s origin.²⁶ Importantly, similarly to violence and guilt, not all of Hawthorne’s characters experience punishment. Some torture themselves with self-inflicted penalty; however, these characters are never truly honest to themselves.

²² “Punishment,” Ibid.

²³ W. H. Townsend, “The Punishment of Crime,” *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1920): 553-548, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

²⁴ Ellsworth Faris, “The Origin of Punishment,” *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1914): 54-67, JSTOR, Web: 20 May 2014.

²⁵ Townsend, 536.

²⁶ Orians, 424.

Regarding the novels, in *Fanshawe* the character of the angler, Butler, is compared with his adversaries Edward Walcott and the author's favorite, Fanshawe himself. There are characters who experience the aforementioned development, while others such as Hugh Crombie or Ellen remain in their, although diverse, rigid states. Butler is a character who performs the most obvious act of violence and although he realizes his guilt for a short moment, he soon forgets himself and is thus harshly punished. His friend and accomplice Crombie helps him with his scheme and although he never fully accepts his guilt (unlike Butler), his treatment is very mild. Edward Walcott, even though a heroic character, has his flaws and a violent disposition similar to Butler's and is treated differently as well. Fanshawe, on the other hand, is a non-violent individual, who is nonetheless subjected to the author's judgment.

In *The Scarlet Letter* the acts of Roger Chillingworth and his death are seen as a transgression different from that of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Although no physical violence occurs in this particular novel, it is important when discussing Hawthorne's treatment of these themes. Neither of the characters fully admits their violations and accepts guilt for their actions until the end of the narrative and only Hester is finally allowed progress and forgiveness. Both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale try to establish a form of self-punishment which proves insufficient. The community of Puritan Boston serves as an example of an instigator of unsuitable punishment and (as with the two male characters) of the rejection of one's own faults.

Finally, in *The House of the Seven Gables* the history of the Pyncheon family and their successor Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon are confronted with the Maule family as well as with the family's own demons. The original ancestors of the families – Colonel Pyncheon and Matthew Maule influence the development and the position of their successors. They pursue the idea of pride and righteousness against guilt and pass it onto their later generations. In the present, the struggle continues mainly between Jaffrey and Hepzibah and develops importantly into the inner struggles of Hepzibah, Clifford and even Holgrave.

To sum up, the thesis connects the themes of violence, guilt and punishment. I discuss the types of violence perpetrated by the characters in the three novels and show whether their acts lead to a feeling of remorse. Then I observe whether the violent actions are punished (either by the community or by the author) and whether there is a connection between the feeling of guilt and punishment; that is, whether a character is allowed a milder punishment

when guilt is accepted. I draw on the observation of P. S. Greenspan, according to whom the feeling of guilt can be a self-punishment in itself and can lead to peace.²⁷

My conviction is that the author remains in a state of bias in which he favors certain characters and allows them to progress, while persistently stepping on the fates of others, who are then forced to survive in their own kind of purgatory. Characters who Hawthorne sympathizes with and who are close to him can be forgiven, which results in a certain predictability for his characters and of his endings. It would seem that violent past or present should not give his characters any possible chance of progress in the present because “Hawthorne’s view of the future was connected to the past and the violence contained there.” However, it appears that it is exactly the importance of guilt and the approach the characters take to it which decides their fate.²⁸

²⁷ Greenspan, 288.

²⁸ Stamant, 93.

3. Fanshawe

3.1. Hawthorne's First Novel

Nathaniel Hawthorne began with writing already during his college years and *Fanshawe* stands as a proof. This short volume regarded until today as “merely a literary curiosity” is Hawthorne’s first novel (no matter how hard he tried to make it disappear right after its publication) which throws around many clichés of a fairy tale Gothic with fair heroes and scholars in a world torn between violence and knowledge.¹ Many critics pointed out that *Fanshawe* lacks any major depth because of Hawthorne’s immature character portrayal and the novel’s improbable plot;² however the author is able to prove and show his abilities to describe and draw allusions even at the very start of the narrative. A motto on the title page of the original publication is a quote from Robert Southey and Hawthorne invites the readers to join him in his world. Later in the novel the angler asks Ellen the very same: “Will thou go on with me?”³ Moreover, even in his first work we can observe the themes of possible violence with the outcomes of guilt and punishment.

Fanshawe gives the readers a story of an unlikely hero. The main character, whose name gives the novel its title, is a college student Fanshawe, who has an adversary in his colleague, Edward Walcott. Both young men are interested in Ellen Langton, a young girl who lives with the director of the college, Dr. Melmoth and his wife. Ellen’s father is a businessman who left Melmoth in charge of Ellen because of his travels and who appears only later in the novel. A mysterious stranger, the angler, appears in the town and persuades Ellen to leave with him presumably to help her father. However, we learn that the stranger has a feud with Langton and his real plan is to kidnap Ellen and by forcing marriage on her, to gain Langton’s fortune. As they leave, Fanshawe and Edward as well as Dr. Melmoth chase the angler and Ellen; however, it is Fanshawe who finds them and saves her. Importantly, there is no grand fight as the angler simply falls to his death in the mountains and Fanshawe and Ellen do not receive a happy end because Fanshawe decides to devote his life to his studies and being a fragile individual, he dies shortly afterwards.

Diverse characters with diverse goals appear in *Fanshawe*; yet only some of them truly experience the urge to perform an act of violence. The critic Carl Bode depreciated the

¹ Carl Bode, “Hawthorne’s Fanshawe: The Promising of Greatness,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1950): 235-242, JSTOR, Web: 22 April 2014.

² William Heath, “The Dream of Undying Fame: Hawthorne’s First Novel *Fanshawe*,” *Hawthorne in Salem*, Web: 20 April 2014.

³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “*Fanshawe*,” *Collected Novels: Fanshawe; The Scarlet Letter; The House of the Seven Gables; The Blithedale Romance; The Marble Faun* (New York: Library of America, 1983): 2.

novel in terms of its plot, noting precisely its simplicity while celebrating Hawthorne for his character analysis: “this is where the general charge of lack of literary merit that is usually levelled at *Fanshawe* may be qualified.”⁴ However, when looked at closely, even the characters are in much need of further development. Fanshawe is Hawthorne’s image of his ideal self – he prefers his studies and has a dream of becoming a great scholar similarly to Hawthorne, for whom the publication of the novel was to be a step on his grand journey. They both experience similar fears, as will be shown later. But even Fanshawe remains mostly static and because he returns back to his studies at the end with even a bigger vigor, we could argue his development process is retrograde. He “does not matter as an evolving personality.”⁵

Although Bode rightly points out that Hawthorne “predicts lines of change for the future” for his following novels, I cannot agree with his observations about character development as he connects this process mainly with Fanshawe.⁶ He remains static compared to other developed individuals such as Edward Walcott, the angler or even Hugh Crombie. And precisely these ‘active’ characters experience violence, guilt and punishment to a much larger degree. Although Fanshawe as a character needs to be explored for a better understanding of the other figures, they are those who represent Hawthorne’s *Fanshawe* as “the moral-Gothic [story], combining sex, violence, horror, symbolism, and philosophizing,” developed with a much greater skill later in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*.⁷

3.2. Characters and Their Themes

3.2.1. Fanshawe

Fanshawe is indeed Hawthorne’s ideal who appears in mutations in his later works (most evidently as Arthur Dimmesdale, although at this point Hawthorne no longer admires the scholar); however, his experience and encounter with the themes discussed in this thesis is minor compared to Hawthorne’s later characters. The author is more concerned with Fanshawe’s descriptions than with further development portraying him almost too grandly and wanting us to admire his zeal for studies. Fanshawe is faced with the idea of violence, yet his handling of it widely differs from those characters who experience “criminality, lust,

⁴ Bode, 238.

⁵ Robert Eugene Gross, “Hawthorne’s First Novel: The Future of a Style,” *PMLA*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (1963): 60-68, JSTOR, Web: 22 April 2014.

⁶ Bode, 240.

⁷ Gross, 60.

drunkenness, [...] and madness.”⁸ The main hero is in no way charismatic and in regard to punishment or forgiveness, his destiny is ambiguous.

Fanshawe, as a scholar should, refuses violence and his stance proves almost unbelievably more powerful than any violent act. He does not force Ellen to trust him saying “[he has] no right to advice [her];”⁹ he faces Butler in an eye-to-eye contest after meeting him for the first time and the fact that he does not do the very same when rescuing Ellen seems to be only because “the sheer power of his mesmeric eye but twice would be too much.”¹⁰ Although once he almost experiences a violent urge when he sees Butler talking to Ellen alone, his pride does not allow him to act up on it and his rage when seeing Ellen in Butler’s presence soon disappears unlike the violent urge experienced by his rival, Edward Walcott.¹¹

Fanshawe’s guilt therefore cannot come from a violent act and this emotion does not cross his mind to any great extent. Although he pursues Ellen at the beginning of the story, in their final conversation we learn that he believes they have no future together. Guilt towards Ellen appears momentarily in the final chapters, yet when connecting Fanshawe with Hawthorne, we cannot take it seriously. Frederick Crews indicated from Hawthorne’s early letters that the writer thought that marriage would destroy his dream of undying fame.¹² If we apply this to Fanshawe as well, he seems to be only concerned with himself. Therefore a grand idea of a dying man refusing to force Ellen to marry him because it would be a crime and he would feel guilty partially dissipates.

Even at their farewell he is more concerned with his fate, not allowing himself to “mourn over its event.”¹³ We thus have to question the purpose of his death. We learn that Ellen’s mild nature is able to form an opposite to Edward’s wild one. Would she be able to form an opposite to Fanshawe’s scholarly nature? In this case, Fanshawe’s egocentric refusal of her proposal would prove to be a punishment for him. Still, the portrayal of a scholar dying at a young age is likely presented as a grand image Hawthorne imagined for himself and almost as a reward.

When portraying Arthur in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne depicts the scholar differently and his death has a clearer purpose, as will be later explored in the thesis. However, Fanshawe is “one of the voluntarily withdrawn characters who escape authorial

⁸ Gross, 60.

⁹ *Fanshawe*, 33.

¹⁰ Bode, 242.

¹¹ *Fanshawe*, 32-33.

¹² Frederick Crews, *Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne’s Psychological Themes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970): 162.

¹³ *Fanshawe*, 113.

censure.”¹⁴ His death can be seen as his liberation, not a punishment for a character, who is seen by its author with sorrow and acceptance, although Fanshawe “commits an act of the kind which Hawthorne was to condemn time and again in his later works.”¹⁵ Fanshawe’s death proves that Hawthorne is unable to separate himself from the character and imparts his dreams unto him. Unlike later figures with whom he has no mercy, Fanshawe stands as an exception on an imaginary pedestal and “becomes, in consequence, a vague abstraction.”¹⁶

3.2.2. Walcott, Ellen and Dr. Melmoth

Edward Walcott forms an opposite to the scholarly Fanshawe in the novel as a typical student with “many youthful follies, sometimes, perhaps, approaching near to vices.”¹⁷ Although Hawthorne sees himself more in Fanshawe, Henry James remarked that during his college years he was actually much closer to Walcott, not merely due to his playing cards and receiving fines for them.¹⁸ Indeed Hawthorne proves this in his somewhat mild treatment of Walcott. Edward is by the end of the story the one who takes care of the heroine, even though both he and Fanshawe pursued her during her flight.¹⁹ As a character who partially succumbs to his violent urges, Walcott forms a counterpart to Fanshawe as well.

Edward is first described as a young man with vices, however, they are “not such as to create any very serious apprehensions respecting his future welfare.”²⁰ Writing the novel at a young age, Hawthorne forgives Edward (as well as Crombie and to a certain extent Butler) their youthful follies. Being a young man, moreover a man of money, Hawthorne portrays Edward’s actions as something to be expected. As Hawthorne himself experienced these years, he cannot truly condemn Edward for being young and immature. However, these immature follies develop after he meets the angler and Walcott’s actions grow much dimmer. He first fights with thoughts of violence realizing “his rather hasty temper, that might have manifested itself violently.”²¹ He later succumbs to his urges, but his failure is not complete.

Walcott’s violent tendencies become overt after the inn scene where he sees Ellen with Butler. He becomes aggressive “upsetting the table, and breaking the bottles and glasses.”²²

¹⁴ Arne Axelsson, *The Links in the Chain: Isolation and Interdependence in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Fictional Characters* (Uppsala, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974): 33

¹⁵ Axelsson, 34.

¹⁶ G. Harrison Orians, “Scott and Hawthorne’s Fanshawe,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1938): 388-394, JSTOR, Web: 26 April 2014.

¹⁷ *Fanshawe*, 14.

¹⁸ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (London: MacMillan, 1883): 21.

¹⁹ Axelsson, 34.

²⁰ *Fanshawe*, 14.

²¹ *Fanshawe*, 49.

²² *Fanshawe*, 60.

He becomes violent not only towards the angler, trying to actually hurt him in a pistol match; he also turns against Fanshawe who tries to protect Ellen's dignity. Although Crombie persuades him to abandon the match pursuit and Edward seemingly calms down, in the morning he is easily influenced by the cleaning lady, who he thinks is withholding information – here Edward turns aggressive by “seizing the affrighted bed-maker forcibly by the arm.”²³ In his anger, he does not see that he lets other people manipulate him. His rationality is gone which shows only his immaturity, not a reason for punishment. Although acts of an immature youth, Walcott's presumed predisposition for violence quickly develops and later culminates in the town with the seaman where he again promises to hurt him, disregarding any laws. However, no actual physical violence is ever performed by Edward.

Walcott's acceptance of violence forms an opposite to Ellen's and Dr. Melmoth's approach. From the first encounter with the angler Ellen turns away from aggressiveness and although Butler does not physically hurt her, she “[shrinks] back, [...] from the free bearing of the man.”²⁴ Ellen unfortunately turns out to be partially a hypocrite. Although she does not pursue physical violence herself, she is willing to accept it were it to come from the hands of God – if he were to punish Butler. Importantly, she does not agree with Butler's violence, but she agrees to follow him on his trip. She is thus to a certain extent a compliant victim. However, this is only at first, when she agrees to leave because of her pride. Later it is because of fear. Similar compliance appears in the case of Dr. Melmoth, whose approach is very much the same – he turns away from violence and faces Ellen's abduction by “sheer impracticalness and unfamiliarity with the way of the world.”²⁵ Yet he joins Edward in his pursuit of kidnapped Ellen and imagines himself to be a grand knight. This perception later disintegrates because of impracticality.

Edward until very late in the story does not succumb to any feeling of guilt due to his actions. Hawthorne remarks that his intention to repent would be “praiseworthy and prudent;” however, Edward comes to no such realization and Hawthorne does not expect him to. Even when pursuing Ellen he still thinks her errant.²⁶ His quest with Dr. Melmoth turns into a farce in which they imagine themselves to be grand knights; yet no guilt appears. Finally, when Ellen is rescued and safe, he succumbs to guilt, however his self- portrait of a “banished man”

²³ *Fanshawe*, 72.

²⁴ *Fanshawe*, 26.

²⁵ Axelsson, 36.

²⁶ *Fanshawe*, 75.

comes from the fact he did not save her, not from his proneness to violence.²⁷ Just like Fanshawe, Edward is a young man more concerned with himself.

The theme of guilt remains undeveloped in the novel regarding not only Fanshawe and Edward but also regarding Ellen. She experiences guilt marginally when caught in the inn, yet the guilt later turns into a wrong sense of duty when she leaves Dr. Melmoth's house with Butler. She follows him as "her reputation is now marred," wrongly in her eyes.²⁸ She convinces herself that she has no reason to feel guilty and "Hawthorne supplies her with a certain share of pride, which he does not condemn in this first romance."²⁹ Ellen is still very far from later female characters; Hester as well as Hepzibah indeed fall into a pit of guilt for several reasons and their characters are developed to a much larger degree.

Finally, as no violence actually takes place (disregarding a table and some dishes) and Edward is presented as a character easily manipulated by others, Hawthorne has not much to punish him for – all his actions happen on a whim. He is closest to a conventional hero and as one, Edward marries Ellen. Unfortunately, his portrayal is one-sided. He is presented only through his vices and his sudden bursts of violence, which he nevertheless does not carry out and although as a conventional hero we might like him, "throughout most of the book [he] is a wax figure."³⁰ Regarding the observed themes, these characters of *Fanshawe* remain undeveloped – Fanshawe stands out mostly as an ideal scholar, Edward as a young man with few vices, Ellen as a fairy-tale heroine and Dr. Melmoth as a man out of touch with the world.³¹ They all experience guilt to a lesser extent and any acts of violence are mostly disconnected from it.

3.2.3. Hugh Crombie

The idea of violence and punishment is also problematic in the character of Hugh Crombie, the inn owner. It is very hard to say into which category of characters (heroes or villains) he belongs. His introduction is fairly long for the actual importance he has in the novel; he presents a character common in the genre of a fairy-tale. He is a "tavern-haunter and vagrant" turned an honorable man with plump cheeks and cheerful eyes – or so it seems.³² Arne Axelsson rightly describes him as a "good villain" and a "clown" without whom the

²⁷ *Fanshawe*, 110.

²⁸ Gross, 65.

²⁹ Axelsson, 161.

³⁰ Bode, 241.

³¹ Axelsson, 126.

³² *Fanshawe*, 36.

other residents of the town could not get by.³³ He comes back after travels to care for his father, although the narrator advises us not to inquire from whence he receives the funds to do so. (This seems almost an error of the author; as we know, Crombie is an inn owner.) His reasons for marrying the widow and acquiring the inn are questionable as well. After Butler's arrival we learn that Crombie's past is not as ideal as he would like others to think. Many of his actions are disputable and Hugh is simply neither good nor bad.

We learn that Crombie's fate had been predicted in "gallows and an end before he should arrive at middle age," that his actions from a young age were filled with "imitation of vices and follies."³⁴ Not being exactly violent, he is no angel who himself admits that there is little hope for him. Although in the beginning Hugh is shocked by his 'friend's' plans for Ellen, what is important is that he helps him and admits that "this small sin [...] would add but a trifle to the sum of [his],"³⁵ conceding to his shadowy past. However, it seems that one violent villain and one almost violent hero is enough for the story and no matter how many indications the readers receive regarding Hugh's actions in the past, no specifics are given. The narrator already decided for him to be a 'good', comic character and thus he does not pursue any further sins of Crombie.

For helping Butler Hugh is partially a compliant violator and because he lets himself be influenced by Butler, he is a compliant victim. Unlike Ellen, Crombie experiences some feelings of guilt, which are manifested in actions. When Walcott agrees to a gun fight with Butler he is right there to stop them (the simplest explanation however being he does not want a fight inside his establishment). He supplies Walcott and Fanshawe with horses for their pursuit of Ellen at which point he is unfortunately "dwarfed to a harmless, timorous aid."³⁶ As the story grows dimmer, the need for a comic character diminishes. However, we know it was him who actually supplied Butler with the best horse and moreover gave Walcott a false description of the escaping villain. Is he then simply trying to escape a possible punishment for helping a fugitive? The one moment where he really repents is when he guiltily refuses money from Butler as he is leaving the inn. But mostly, his attempts to help the heroes are mere attempts to help himself. Additionally, the fact that the violent conduct was 'only' cooperative diminishes his need for guilt.

As a comic element in the story Hugh Crombie is never punished; he dies an 'honest' man. Although presumably violent in his youth, he is prosperous and the idea of violence or

³³ Axelsson, 127.

³⁴ *Fanshawe*, 35.

³⁵ *Fanshawe*, 46.

³⁶ Orians, 391.

violation of law is not developed. Carl Bode points out that Crombie had changed after returning home and marrying the widow; but this is simply not true, otherwise Butler could have never succeeded to the extent he did.³⁷ Crombie's only punishment in the end seems to have arrived before any of the actions take place – in having “a superficial command of many arts and occupations instead of being perfect in a single one” and not gaining his real potential.³⁸

3.2.4. Butler

The real villain of *Fanshawe* is of course Butler, first known as the angler. The knowledge of only his last name (which is moreover revealed later in the novel) points to his mysteriousness and strange past. We learn of his history, unlike of Hugh's, indirectly through rumors much later and it appears as if his past were not important for the first introductions. Although critics admitted that Butler's actions are partially caused by his disposition and Mr. Langton's inability in “relating to fellow men,” “his greed is a motivation strong enough to explain his villainy.”³⁹ Although friends, Crombie's and Butler's pasts and similar dispositions are treated differently in the present – Hugh as a comic character never engages in actions the villain has to. Whereas Crombie is not punished for his actions and his guilt remains largely a joke, Butler, even though simply falling “into certain youthful indiscretions” as well, because he is a “wicked yet unfortunate man,” receives his punishment.⁴⁰

The narrator tries to persuade us that Butler's past should not influence our opinion of him and his only present actions prove his violent nature. When meeting Fanshawe in Dr. Melmoth's garden, he tries to force him into a fight, although in Fanshawe's case, Butler's attempt to “bend [him] to [his] will” does not work.⁴¹ He experiences an urge for vengeance twice in the story – first his goal is partially a revenge for Mr. Langton's mercilessness and later he promises Ellen retaliation if she leaves the cave – thus he can be seen as a very simple image of Roger Chillingworth. As Chillingworth on the scaffold, once in the cave, Butler's actions turn almost to madness. He imagines himself to be “the injured one.”⁴² Unlike other characters that wallow in their urges for violence never committed, Butler stands as a villain who is not afraid to reduce himself to his aggression. Importantly, his violence remains mostly psychological and he never physically hurts anyone else.

³⁷ Bode, 241.

³⁸ Axelsson, 127.

³⁹ Axelsson 68; Axelsson 62.

⁴⁰ *Fanshawe*, 109; Bode, 239.

⁴¹ *Fanshawe*, 32.

⁴² *Fanshawe*, 99.

In these violent urges, Butler has one great power – the ability to manipulate others and recognize similar behaviors. He is able to persuade Hugh Crombie into helping him with his quest, no matter if Hugh is struggling with it. Butler is also capable of recognizing violence in Walcott and he brings out Edward’s violent character almost fully during their encounter in Hand and Bottle tavern. In these characters he encourages violence; moreover he also has the ability to induce guilt, specifically in Ellen. He imparts guilt about her father when asking Ellen whether she would “do aught for his welfare.”⁴³ Later he destroys one feeling of guilt (for leaving Dr. Melmoth) but he substitutes it with another one by making Ellen feel guilty when asking: “Do you repent so soon?”⁴⁴

His development of guilt as well as violence and punishment makes him the most mature character predicting Hawthorne’s later much complicated figures. Butler’s guilt arrives once he and Ellen stop by his mother’s house. Although he does not come close to her “[conquering] the impulse that drew him thither,” he “[becomes] acquainted with all [his] guilt and misery.”⁴⁵ The guilt arriving because of his mother’s death however pushes him into the continuation of his pursuit to marry Ellen. Here, the guilt is a catalyst for the realization of his wrongdoings but it does not lead to repentance. Butler realizes his wickedness but “the misery he had brought upon his parent [does] not produce in him a resolution to do wrong no more. The sudden consciousness of accumulated guilt [makes] him desperate,” continuing in his quest.⁴⁶

Butler continues to push Ellen into guilt as if trying to get rid of his own. The cave even mirrors his own consciousness when he presents it to her as “lonely as guilt could wish.”⁴⁷ At this point, he fully grasps the concept of the feeling. Whether he follows in his plan or not does not matter. In the final moments of his life he cannot accept the “lingering and miserable death [of his mother], that she received at [his] hands,” and keeps integrity in his original goal.⁴⁸ D. H. Lawrence commented on Hawthorne’s characters the following: “If you want to do a thing, you’ve either got to believe, sincerely, that it’s your nature to do this thing – or else you’ve got to let it alone.”⁴⁹ And Butler is able to do this precise thing believing his violence to be inherent. He then accepts his punishment and death “with all the passions of hell alive in his heart.”⁵⁰

⁴³ Fanshawe, 31.

⁴⁴ Fanshawe, 45.

⁴⁵ Fanshawe, 94.

⁴⁶ Fanshawe, 94.

⁴⁷ Fanshawe, 99.

⁴⁸ Fanshawe, 100.

⁴⁹ D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1976): 108-109.

⁵⁰ Fanshawe, 107.

3.3. Community's and Narrator's Biases

The community the characters inhabit (represented by the college and two towns) supposedly has laws of its own and is prepared to punish a violation. The laws however do not guarantee prevention. The college where Fanshawe and Walcott study is on the one hand “favorable to moral, if not literary habits of its students,” however, there is a “catalogue of crimes provided against by the laws of Harley College,” hinting that some misdemeanors happen and have to be punished.⁵¹ There are indeed vices that have “drawn down, even from that paternal government, a weighty retribution.”⁵² The representative of those laws is Dr. Melmoth, a meek man unable to sustain them. Although he is forced to stop the merrymaking of Walcott and his friends when he finds them at the inn by ‘a sense of duty,’ he is not really able to do it. Moreover, the laws of the college have no weight in the real world. Fanshawe and Edward, as students of the school, are not in any way punished for having left the school, pursuing a villain or seemingly assisting in his death.

Although in the town there supposedly are laws keeping the society together, they are never mentioned and just like the college, the town does not prevent the inhabitants from committing crimes. Most of the minor characters pursue some violent action. Fanshawe encounters Butler's aunt who first thinks whether she'll be “bettered by [helping him]” and when he sets down the gorge she does not wish for his return remarking the steps “are leading [him] whence [he] will not return.”⁵³ When Walcott, Dr. Melmoth and Mr. Langton arrive in the second town, the people there are filled with “public's vulgar curiosity,” instead of fear and consideration of help for the search party.⁵⁴ Edward at one point even tries to take the law in his own hands during his encounter with the seaman and the stranger even asks him whether “[he means] to take the law with [him],” as if it was common.⁵⁵ There appears no one to uphold the laws of the community, if there are any. Moreover the residents represent “life in a stayed motion;” there is no development for them and Butler's final punishment cannot be and is not instigated by them.⁵⁶ The society is unable to influence the “irreversible and inexorable mad triumph of the villain.”⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Fanshawe*, 48.

⁵² *Fanshawe*, 10.

⁵³ *Fanshawe*, 106.

⁵⁴ Gross, 66.

⁵⁵ *Fanshawe*, 86.

⁵⁶ Gross, 66.

⁵⁷ Gross, 67.

“A proof of how little the world of observation lay open to Hawthorne,” *Fanshawe* is mostly filled with simple characters described by a narrator who is afraid of violence.⁵⁸ In *Fanshawe*, as in later novels, the narration merely dances around the concept as not to touch it directly. In the beginning we learn that Fanshawe will die by the end of the novel when Hawthorne exclaims: “I fear we shall follow him to grave, ere long,” seemingly because a surprise death would be too violent.⁵⁹ Butler also simply falls to his death and the scene is deprived of any great descriptions. Fanshawe moreover stands too good to be true, he is:

This Nature’s nobleman [who] is clearly the author’s narcissistic self-portrait as well as foreshadowing of such alter-ego fictional heroes to come as Dimmesdale [...]. The problem here is a lack of ironic distance: we are expected to empathize uncritically with this doomed, secretly ambitious, man of genius.⁶⁰

As much as Hawthorne would like to see himself in Fanshawe, Henry James pointed out that he was “a fair scholar, but not a brilliant one.”⁶¹ Walcott and Fanshawe remain as two sides of him; his dream of undying fame and his dream of being a hero.⁶² Importantly, it appears that right from the beginning Hawthorne has decided into which category each character belongs and even if they do shameful deeds through the course of the narrative, their final fate remains unchanged.

3.4. Fanshawe and Later Novels

Many themes in *Fanshawe* remained merely touched. Although violence is considered with repugnance, the novel is indeed “a primer of Hawthorne’s style.”⁶³ The idea that violent acts can lead to guilt and punishment is developed only in several characters but as the plot and the growth of those participants in the novel is not great, it is no wonder. Fanshawe, although the first image of Dimmesdale and partially of Clifford in *The House of the Seven Gables*, is too perfect to experience Arthur’s inner turmoil. His character can allow no violence or guilt and the punishment comes in the form of death – being freed from the society. He remains simple; nonetheless he delivers what would later become one of

⁵⁸ James, 23.

⁵⁹ *Fanshawe*, 17.

⁶⁰ Heath, web.

⁶¹ James, 21.

⁶² Crews, 162.

⁶³ Gross, 60.

Hawthorne's major themes: "a man [...] cut off from man," an attitude which in later works turns into a sin.⁶⁴

Fanshawe's opposite, Walcott – a possible predecessor for Holgrave, actually experiences violence; and it is (as later Holgrave's and Holgrave's family's will be) forgiven. Hawthorne decided that he is a positive character and as such he cannot really be punished. We can observe his character later also in the form of Donatello in *The Marble Faun*. Donatello is however much more complex, he is "a character blissfully immature, awakening to manhood through the accidental, the almost unconscious, commission of a crime," something which Edward only hints at.⁶⁵ The same is true for Hugh Crombie who, although being guilty of violent acts in the past and in the present, cannot succumb to any great penalty due to his being a comic character.

Dr. Melmoth and Ellen are left too blank to fully experience any of the themes discussed in this thesis. Dr. Melmoth's only surrender to violence happens on his journey with Walcott to save Ellen which is really only a laughable Don Quixotian moment. Ellen, although a precursor for Hester and female characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*, never achieves their level as she never admits any guilt for her actions and her punishment arrives merely in her 'being forced' to marry Walcott and trying to keep him from his vices. Butler then truly stands out as the most developed and most realistic character. In one way, he resembles Miriam's tormentor in *The Marble Faun* not only due to their descriptions as "the angler" and "the model" but also through their being "satanic, depraved, of uncertain identity and obscure history."⁶⁶ In his seeking revenge he also resembles Roger Chillingworth as well as Judge Pyncheon. He represents a truly advanced character who through his violent actions and his realization has a chance to repent (which he does not take) and is clearly punished by the end.

⁶⁴ Bode, 238.

⁶⁵ Henry James, *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957): 184.

⁶⁶ Gross, 67.

4. The Scarlet Letter

4.1. Hawthorne's Masterpiece

The Scarlet Letter, published in 1850, many years after Hawthorne's first novel, truly gained popularity for its author. Although Henry James remarked that the book is missing details or deep research into the setting of the story, it is nevertheless far away from Hawthorne's first attempt at composing a longer and consistent body of writing.¹ *The Scarlet Letter* forms an opposite to *Fanshawe*, the fairy tale, as it is "densely dark [...] and will probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order."² In some respect Hawthorne's treatment of my themes in his masterpiece differs (as I will show in this chapter) from his first novel and his following work but in many ways he remains rigid in his handling of his characters. Moreover, *The Scarlet Letter* will form a bridge between the other two selected novels.

Butler and Hugh Crombie in *Fanshawe* were possessors of "an evil taint, in consequence of a crime committed twenty or forty years ago" and were still experiencing the outcomes many years later.³ Unlike the first novel, *The Scarlet Letter*'s actions take place only in a few years' span. However, the consideration of the outcomes of the character's conduct is much greater. Frederick Crews observed in his psychological study of Hawthorne that the author takes time to psychologically describe even the less important characters while his main focus remains on the trio of Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth, who indeed will be in the center of my focus as well.⁴ These characters form the core of the moral message in the novel and it is possible to observe in their acts traits of violence, as well as the feeling of guilt and punishment.

Hawthorne's introduction "The Custom House" gives the readers an idea of a system which imparts laws onto the society, a concept that he mostly omitted in his first novel. We learn that Hawthorne's ancestors themselves were men of law and because he did not agree with their actions (they took part in the witch trials), we have to question what approach he will take to the punishment for his characters and whether the characters are to be punished indeed by law or differently. When the narrator dreams of his ancestors, he imagines himself

¹ James points out specifically the lack of Hawthorne's research into the language of the period. Henry James, *Hawthorne* (London: MacMillan, 1883): 113.

² James, 109.

³ R. W. B. Lewis, "The Return into Time: Hawthorne," *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1966): 76.

⁴ Frederick Crews, *Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970): 17.

being called merely “a writer of books!” Will he be too lenient with his characters? While he describes one of his colleagues in the custom house, he celebrates the man’s integrity. He points out that his ‘law’ did not come from men but from his nature; therefore we truly have to ask if the punishment inflicted upon the characters in *The Scarlet Letter* will truly be based upon the community’s law. Moreover Hawthorne lets himself be easily influenced and distracted in his introductory chapter. When discovering the embroidered letter, he is suddenly overtaken by his own unexplainable feeling of guilt. Yet the easy manipulation and influence should be a trait a man of law strives against.

The theme of guilt is Hawthorne’s major one and nowhere is it as prominent as in *The Scarlet Letter*. Not only his characters but also his coworkers at the custom house are guilty of “evil and corrupt practices.”⁵ Hawthorne himself feels shame for his ancestors and later pleads guilty for the simple shortening of his coworkers’ descriptions. In reference to *Fanshawe*, he moreover pursues the feeling of guilt as something recognizable in others (as Butler was able to do) and he himself experiences a sensation of “burning heat” while discovering the manuscript and the embroidered letter.⁶

Already proving in *Fanshawe*, for Hawthorne the concept of violence is complicated and not be treated lightly. The characters who appear in this novel inherit traits of those of *Fanshawe*. Mark Van Doren, one of Hawthorne’s critics, observed: “The persons of the tale were long since types for him [...]. The broken law, the hidden guilt, the hunger for confession, the studious, cold heart that watches and does not feel – no one of these was new.”⁷ However, we will have to see whether their handling of the themes will develop as it has in the first novel.

Continuing his ideas from the first novel *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne portrays his distaste for physical violence, the source of which he does not completely understand. Hugh Crombie’s and Butler’s pasts, although violent, are described as their predisposition. Hawthorne did not seem to understand what forced men to violence or aggressiveness previously and when describing some kind of moral detriment of the individuals in the custom house, he excuses himself for not having the space to hint at the causes. He is struggling with the concept. His image of the Democrats is that they are ‘nice’ because they win and it is okay for them to strike (or use violence), as long as it is for good intentions.⁸ What is nonetheless

⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “*The Scarlet Letter*,” *Collected Novels: Fanshawe; The Scarlet Letter; The House of the Seven Gables; The Blithedale Romance; The Marble Faun* (New York: Library of America, 1983): 141.

⁶ *The Scarlet Letter*, 155.

⁷ Mark Van Doren, “The Scarlet Letter”, *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1966): 130.

⁸ *The Scarlet Letter*, 163.

important is that he indeed portrays violence (no matter if he does not understand man's intention) in several forms in this novel.

Importantly, the story of *The Scarlet Letter* is not simply a tale of the husband, the wife and the lover. It is also the story of Pearl. But her character will not be considered to the same depth. For the most part of the narrative she has a symbolic role. She may be represented as a symbol of Hester's violent urges and Arthur's hypocrisy, which do not manifest themselves. However, Pearl does not act upon the examined urges (she only manages to destroy some flowers) and until the end, she serves merely as a reminder for the lovers of their own deeds. Only after the final scaffold scene does she change into a real character with the help of her two 'fathers.' Pearl indeed experiences simple physical violent urges but like Hawthorne's colleague at the custom house, she is not bound by the society's law and has no need to experience guilt for her actions or receive punishment. Therefore my focus remains on the principle three characters: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth.

4.2. Characters and Their Themes

4.2.1. Hester Prynne

When we are introduced to Hester Prynne in the city of Boston, the reason for her imprisonment and her violent action has already taken place. The narrator does not elaborate on her actions in retrospect, presumably not taking them as important as her present behavior (just as the narrator in *Fanshawe* did not deem it important to elaborate upon the history of Hugh Crombie and Butler). "What little remnants there are of an intercourse," they prove to be only a part of what Hester experiences now; it forms only a part of who she is and how the narrator treats her.⁹ Moreover, the narrator does not seem to fully understand Hester and he describes her inner feelings during the first scene as undergoing "perchance."¹⁰ Importantly, she stands apart from the community in Boston.¹¹ Although the town would like to see her as a sinner, she is portrayed grandly stepping out of the gate. Hester Prynne turns out to be

⁹ Arne Axelsson, *The Links in the Chain: Isolation and Interdependence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fictional Characters* (Uppsala, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974): 77.

¹⁰ *The Scarlet Letter*, 173.

¹¹ Erika M. Kreger, "'Depravity Dressed up in a Fascinating Garb': Sentimental Motifs and the Seduced Hero(ine) in *The Scarlet Letter*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (1999): 308-335, JSTOR, Web: 15 May 2014.

(through the narrator's treatment) "both an adultress *and* a victim of Puritan intolerance, at once an object of censure and sympathy."¹²

Hester's first and most obvious act of violation is indeed her adultery and she is punished for it by the society's laws. In regard to the principles of Boston, this is her only deed. In the present time, she only inflicts violence upon herself. Because of her nervous state upon seeing her husband, she almost "perpetrate[s] violence on herself, or [does] some half-frenzied mischief to the poor babe" during her stay in prison.¹³ Not only that, she also expects violence from Chillingworth who comes to see her and just like Ellen in *Fanshawe*, she shrinks back from him even though he does not bring about any physical violence on her. Interestingly enough, when it comes to violence, she is able to perceive the urge in Chillingworth. On the other hand, during her sparse encounters with Dimmesdale, she cannot admit that he would be able of any violating act or any following guilt. When they meet in the forest she persuades him that he has "deeply and sorely repented," no matter how much that statement is false.¹⁴ By her blindness and lying to herself, she inflicts psychological violence upon herself.

When Hester agrees to keep Roger's secret, she is moreover agreeing with his acts of violence and has an unconscious hand in Chillingworth's pursuit of Dimmesdale. Throughout the novel, she thus may seem to be torn between keeping allegiance to the two men. However, her actions prove that she remains faithful to Arthur and all her actions stem from it. As William H. Nolte pointed out, her main crime is simply her love for Arthur and her inability to "[consider] her illicit love for Dimmesdale as a sin."¹⁵ Because of her feelings, she is unable to understand the violence in his deeds (which as discussed below, will turn out to be the only reason for her punishment) and she remains "willing at any moment to renew her liaison with [him]."¹⁶ It appears that not their initial crime but Hester's blind pursuit of it later is her transgression.

Hester's approach to guilt is also very specific and while Nolte continues in his consideration of her acts, he remarks that the readers can learn as much about themselves as about Hester when reading the story.¹⁷ As has been pointed out already, although we might expect a repenting woman stepping from the prison, Hawthorne does not give us one and

¹² Zelda Bronstein, "The Parabolic Ploys of the *Scarlet Letter*," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1987): 193-210, JSTOR, Web: 15 May 2014.

¹³ *The Scarlet Letter*, 185.

¹⁴ *The Scarlet Letter*, 284.

¹⁵ William H. Nolte, "Hawthorne's Dimmesdale: A Small Man Gone Wrong," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1965): 168-186, JSTOR, Web: 17 May, 2014.

¹⁶ Nolte, 172.

¹⁷ Nolte, 170.

Hester becomes one of the female characters “who receive sympathetic and compassionate treatment by the author despite their pride,” similarly to Hepzibah or her ancestor Alice Pyncheon later.¹⁸ Hester is first presented as a woman with pride stepping out of the prison “as if by her own free will.”¹⁹ She is described as a young woman, powerful enough to withstand the community’s gaze. The Boston people stare at “how her beauty [shines] out, and [makes] a halo of the misfortunate and ignominy in which she [is] enveloped.”²⁰ Yet Hester’s view of herself is very different.

There are indeed some guilty feelings in Hester after she leaves the prison. However, I do not think that she truly succumbs to her guilt which would send her on a journey to repentance. The society’s punishment does not prevent her from continuing in her pursuit of a love affair. Hester does not accept guilt for this act because it appears that she would return to Dimmesdale at any moment. Although she seems to be haunted by guilt when perceiving the wild nature of her daughter or when later encountering other people in the community, the act itself and her love for Arthur are accepted without hesitation. Because of love, moreover, Chillingworth cannot make her feel guilty for her deed when he is persuading her to tell him the name of her lover.

Hester seems to be also rather egocentric in her ‘suffering.’ When Chillingworth accepts his own part in the affair, she does not agree. Interestingly, when Hester decides to leave with Dimmesdale, she not only demonstrates courage that appears in other Hawthorne’s female characters, she also tries to leave her lonely guilt behind (again her love being stronger) and no guilt comes from her attempt to escape the community and their punishment.²¹ This variation is also the reason why her punishment arrives during the story in different forms – for the acts she never acknowledged.

Hester’s primary punishment comes of course from the community she lives in and in the first scene we see a portrayal in which she is the sinner set against the hostile community.²² The intended punishment, the letter, however changes its purpose in Hester’s hand. The narrator turns the punishment around and the letter begins to signify not adultery but ‘angel’ or more realistically ‘able’, a basic trait inherent to Hester. She turns this punishment into taking care of Pearl who becomes the scarlet letter in “another form;” “she never [battles] with the public, but [submits] uncomplainingly to its worst usage” presumably

¹⁸ Axelsson, 18.

¹⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, 344.

²⁰ *The Scarlet Letter*, 171.

²¹ Van Doren, 133.

²² R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth-Century* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1968): 112.

because she does not see her act as they do.²³ Hester also accepts this punishment without reservation as it keeps her connected to Dimmesdale. On the one hand, Hester becomes an outcast yet she remains a part of the community through her needle-work and charity. Through her kindness towards others, the community also begins to forgive her as the story progresses. “The world’s law [becomes] not law for her mind,” proving that the community’s punishment is a minor one, and Hester has to be punished differently.

In a way, her acceptance of the letter and her charity are punishments inflicted upon by herself; the narrator comments that she is indeed “taking upon herself” all her deeds.²⁴ As her violation becomes apparent to the society (unlike Dimmesdale’s) we might argue that it is easier to deal with (an argument adopted by Arthur). Her decision to remain in Boston and to take upon herself the hate of the community may also support her acceptance of the punishment; however, I would argue it merely points out to her love for Dimmesdale and her inability to let him go. She feels that there “[lays] a responsibility upon her in reference to the clergyman,” although in reality that cannot be true. Although she grows by the end of the novel, throughout most of the narrative she accepts her punishment without any objection because of her young love.²⁵

In her idealism, she still imagines that there exists a future for her and the minister. And I would argue that this is a self-inflicted violation and punishment throughout the novel. This realization first comes in the forest when she throws away the embroidered letter and Pearl gives her a chance to change her mind, which she does not act on (only putting the letter back on to leave Pearl in peace). She does not realize that Arthur will not change and although she handles her guilt better than him, her naivety proves to be her ruin.²⁶ Throughout the narrative, she accepts punishment from the community which later forgives her. The author is of course aware of the fact that Boston’s punishment has no real meaning for Hester and has another punishment ready. Until the very end she is bound to Boston because of Dimmesdale and when her punishment from its laws seems to have taken its course, she keeps on punishing herself because of him. After Arthur’s death she returns to the city where “had been her sin; [...] her sorrow” and arrives to live truly in penitence. Only at the end is her reform complete.²⁷ “Unlike the feeble Dimmesdale, [...] Hester has the strength to leave the dark

²³ *The Scarlet Letter*, 259.

²⁴ *The Scarlet Letter*, 257.

²⁵ Nolte, 177.

²⁶ Crews, 143.

²⁷ *The Scarlet Letter*, 345.

maze and finish the difficult, instructive journey.”²⁸ Her death, unlike Arthur’s and Roger’s, is liberating.

4.2.2. Arthur Dimmesdale

Dimmesdale presents possibly the most complicated character in the novel. Although a minister who should have a notion of sin and violence, he remains oblivious to the real nature of his actions throughout the narrative and rightly describes himself as “looking pure as new-fallen snow, while [his heart is] all speckled and spotted with iniquity of which [he] cannot get rid [himself].”²⁹ Dimmesdale undoubtedly suffers the most throughout the novel; that, however, cannot redeem him because his suffering is mostly self-inflicted. In his scholarly ways and his decision to leave Hester, he resembles Fanshawe; however, Hawthorne is in no way as lenient as he was with his first portrayed scholar. Although we learn that he is an authority in the Puritan Boston, he is merely a “very young, very talented, and very unstable” man.³⁰

Just as Hester, Dimmesdale’s obvious crime is the adulterous act, yet he commits much worse deeds (even if not in his own eyes). Arthur never admits their connection and William Nolte, who is one of Arthur’s harshest critics, points out that Dimmesdale uses Hester’s love for his own good; he believes she will not betray him.³¹ Moreover, he believes that as her suffering is public, she suffers less pointing out that she has “the freedom of a broken law.”³² Nolte argues that Dimmesdale only wallows in self-pity and considers how happy Hester is while wearing her mark in public. His psychological violence against Hester never becomes a source for guilty feelings, one of the reasons why Arthur cannot be redeemed.

As a minister, Arthur also violates the laws he should uphold. Although readers and Hawthorne know his true self, the people of Boston are blind to Arthur’s indiscretions and still see him as a saint. He violates their trust. Importantly, Arthur’s violation against the community is also in the twisted perception that his sin has taken him closer to other transgressors in the world; he imagines himself having “sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind.”³³ The logic is understandable; however, it cannot be seen as a legitimate reason to remain in office because he only lies to the people around him. Thinking

²⁸ Kreger, 331.

²⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, 235.

³⁰ Bronstein, 196.

³¹ Nolte, 173.

³² *The Scarlet Letter*, 235.

³³ *The Scarlet Letter*, 243.

himself to be a better minister, who understands crime, “he convinces his parishioners of falsehood rather than the truth.”³⁴ The fact that the society cannot recognize the guilt in Arthur just like they cannot recognize the revenge in Roger only proves that this is no ideal community, yet it in no way redeems Arthur’s decision.

Dimmesdale’s largest infringement is his self-inflicted violence. He imagines himself to be a martyr who suffers in secret and it becomes an obsession for him. Arthur continues to lie to himself and in the end he seems more like a coward who cannot admit his actions. Pearl in several scenes tries to persuade him that the recognition from the public would turn into a progress towards real redemption. Yet, Arthur does not want one and we know it does not take place (as the community in the end is unable to accept their minister to be a sinner). Arthur keeps on suffering in secret and he accepts guilt only for the wrong reasons as he cannot truly accept the guilt for adultery when it brought him such an understanding of his parishioners. His violation increases over time. Finally he loses all judgment of himself and others.

Although Arthur accepts guilt for his sin with Hester in so much as it can move him forward, he does not accept any other guilty feelings. Their encounter has been merely “a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even purpose,”³⁵ his attempt at self-inflicted punishment and his self-deception are much worse. Arthur is trying to gain penance on his own, which cannot happen as he goes against his own principles as a minister. Even at the end Arthur tries “to put a cheat upon himself by making the avowal of a guilty conscience, but [gains] only one other sin, and a self-acknowledged shame.”³⁶ As a religious fanatic, he imagines himself to be guilty (or at least in his own eyes) for his initial sin, but not for the deception of himself, Hester and others. Erica Kreger rightfully brought attention to the fact that he merely adds other transgressions with “repeated errors in judgment.”³⁷

Dimmesdale also deceives himself in delivering his final sermon. At this point we might be fooled to think that he finally realizes his actions when he returns “feeble and pale [...] amid all his triumph,” however he still merely tries to save himself before God and does not care about anyone but himself. He tries to repress what he sees as a sin before the Almighty by giving one last grand speech. And as Frederick Crews interestingly pointed out, all it took for redemption was for him to “acknowledge that his libidinous wishes [were] really his.”³⁸ Even Chillingworth’s revenge can be at least partially justified when compared

³⁴ Kreger, 322.

³⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, 293.

³⁶ Nolte, 176.

³⁷ Kreger, 324.

³⁸ Crews, 139.

to Dimmesdale's hypocrisy.³⁹ Appropriate punishment for Arthur would have to arrive from the society or from God (in this respect, however, we would have to follow Dimmesdale's story even beyond the grave). However, he takes the path of a self-inflicted penalty, not realizing how pathetic he is.

His punishment therefore arrives in his inability to recognize Chillingworth and also in his inability to admit the loss of his integrity until the very end. In that confession, it is difficult to give him credit because it comes out only as "an act designed to win him immortal life."⁴⁰ The fact that the people who witness the final scene on the scaffold do not accept their minister to be a sinner proves that his death does not bring him any redemption. To sum up, Dimmesdale is indeed far from the ideal scholar, Fanshawe. Although some critics took side with Dimmesdale's suffering, saying it made him redeemable, I have to agree with Nolte when he says that his suffering is largely only "masochistic."⁴¹ The minister is not a heroic character; I would see him if not as a villain, then definitely not as a redeemable figure. The only actual redeeming quality would be his role in the transformation of Pearl when she takes her position in the society.

4.2.3. Roger Chillingworth

Roger Chillingworth's role in *The Scarlet Letter* is a very specific one because he works both as a character and a symbol for Hester's and Arthur's transformation. Chillingworth's actions have an actual impact on the plot and without him and his influence on Dimmesdale, the plot could not continue.⁴² Unlike Hester and Arthur who experience most of the actions of the plot in oblivion of their real violence and guilt, Chillingworth is the one "who understands himself, and is willing to accept that self with both its good and evil."⁴³ Although Arne Axelsson described him simply as a man trying to reconnect with "what should have been his family," he is a manipulator and his manipulations, which are reminiscent of Butler's handling of other characters in *Fanshawe*, influence both his wife and her lover. As a more advanced character of Hawthorne he experiences guilt and punishment for his violating actions much more elaborately.⁴⁴

From his first appearance in the novel Chillingworth's goal is clear – to find Hester's lover and avenge himself. However, to give him points, he never resorts to physical violence

³⁹ Nolte, 169.

⁴⁰ Nolte, 185.

⁴¹ Nolte, 185.

⁴² Henry James, *The House of Fiction* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957): 180.

⁴³ Nolte, 170.

⁴⁴ Axelsson, 64.

against either of them. No matter if Hester expects him to in the prison cell. Moreover he promises only to find the man and not to “interfere with Heaven’s own method of retribution” (and considering Dimmesdale’s end, this indeed happens) or to actually take the law in his hands, although later he breaks this ‘promise’ and once his conscience recognizes Dimmesdale, he attaches himself to Dimmesdale like a “leech.”⁴⁵ Just like Arthur, he does not let the world see his true self even at the end. From his first decision not to stand next to Hester on her “pedestal of shame,” he takes a different approach – one of revenge, a violent act.⁴⁶ Although a physician, like a parasite he hangs onto Arthur and indeed enforces psychological violence on him. Chillingworth admits to Hester that without him Arthur would have died within two years and he is only prolonging his misery.

Chillingworth might imagine himself to extort a just and appropriate punishment from Arthur, however, as his features change and he becomes darker and uglier, his act becomes more prominent as an act of mere revenge; although because of the circumstances it is arguable that at least the original goal could have been justifiable.⁴⁷ He breaks the promise to Hester only to find the errant man and breaks the laws of the community. The people of Boston assume him to be a doctor and expect him to be “attempting to do good [for Arthur].”⁴⁸ Yet in his relentless pursuit he turns out to be the real villain who imagines himself to be a judge because of his past as a “pure and upright man.”⁴⁹

The most prominent guilt, the one he accepts first, is for his past with Hester. Even before they meet in the prison he admits that “so learned a man [...] should have learned this too in his books.”⁵⁰ He realizes that his marriage with Hester was only his attempt to diminish his own loneliness not caring for her feelings; he admits to being partly responsible for her fall (he too has been given some of Fanshawe’s traits).⁵¹ Later he also advises that Hester’s letter should be taken of. However, this act comes more from the realization that the community’s punishment is not serving its purpose. It is important to recognize that he never fools himself into thinking that Hester would be pure and innocent.

Chillingworth indeed admits his fault and guilt for his past actions, however, in the present he becomes more doubtful and his declaration is never public. The fact that he does not join Hester upon his arrival in Boston seems to indicate he is a mere coward (like Arthur),

⁴⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, 189.

⁴⁶ *The Scarlet Letter*, 223.

⁴⁷ Nolte, 168.

⁴⁸ *The Scarlet Letter*, 217.

⁴⁹ *The Scarlet Letter*, 231.

⁵⁰ *The Scarlet Letter*, 177.

⁵¹ Axelsson, 63.

who does not want to acknowledge himself – he is not joining Hester in guilt. By promising that Hester’s lover “will be known,” he makes the readers’ focus turn to Dimmesdale.⁵² Although he is aware of his own position, unlike Arthur, the two characters in a way resemble each other in not being able to face the public. Chillingworth’s guilt in the past can be redeemed; yet his present actions cannot while he continues his chase.

The problem with Chillingworth’s position is that we might consider him mainly as a symbol. He arrives as “out of the sky or starting from the nether earth” having “an aspect of mystery, which was easily heightened to the miraculous.”⁵³ He develops throughout the story just as Arthur’s hidden guilt progresses, changing into something ugly; the narrator comments on him having the faculty of “transforming himself into a devil.”⁵⁴ As a symbol he is recognized by Hester and not by Arthur, who is unaware of his real crimes until the end. Just like Butler previously, Chillingworth has an insight into other people and their guilty consciences. Moreover, similarly to Butler, without Roger’s actions the plot would not continue, which points more to his position of a real character, not a mere symbol.

Roger’s handling of punishment is again complicated – he himself represents a kind of penalty. He takes the penalty for Arthur into his hands and similarly to Butler, the laws of the community cannot stop him. Because Roger is aware of his own act throughout the story, it seems that (similarly to Hester) his obsession with Dimmesdale becomes his own punishment. He is unable to let go and in the end he has no other choice besides dying with him. His punishment is also the failure to actually impart what he thought would be an appropriate penalty for Arthur; he exclaims “Thou hast escaped me.”⁵⁵ Although Chillingworth might not realize it, Arthur succumbs to God’s/author’s punishment that he first intended. Both men’s actions continue to be a punishment for the other throughout the novel and it kills them both as well – thus Chillingworth’s arrival and his death define the limits of the narrative.⁵⁶ Together with Arthur, he also defines Pearl’s progress from a mere symbol into a real person by imparting his wealth and for some readers it vindicates his actions.

4.3. Hawthorne’s Puritan Community and Their Blindness

Critics of Hawthorne usually point to the fact that his Puritan community of Boston resembles the author’s projection of his contemporary society more than anything else. For

⁵² *The Scarlet Letter*, 179.

⁵³ *The Scarlet Letter*, 225.

⁵⁴ *The Scarlet Letter*, 265.

⁵⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, 337.

⁵⁶ Nolte, 169.

my thesis this point is not relevant, yet it is important to recognize that the community is not filled with only “piety, reverence, reliability, dignity [or] sobriety.”⁵⁷ Just as later in *The House of the Seven Gables* the community forms an opposite to isolated individuals. Hawthorne’s Boston is in no way a utopian city and its founders, recognizing the presiding evil in men, had built a prison and a cemetery. Moreover, the beadle who brings Hester to the scaffold is a “personage [prefiguring] and [representing] in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law.”⁵⁸ Although the law of the city punishes Hester, their punishment proves to be irrelevant. Moreover, initially the community shows “little deference to official authority.”⁵⁹

The women in the almost mob scene in the beginning resemble Butler’s aunt in *Fanshawe* as they have no problem with imposing imagined violence on others. With the exception of the youngest one, they are asking for a more severe punishment for Hester, including a “hot iron on [her] forehead” or even a death sentence.⁶⁰ Although we find ourselves in the New World, men are still evil; they are depicted with much acrimony and animosity.⁶¹ Violence, in this novel’s case mainly psychological, becomes a symbol – it is not an overt trait in mankind but an ever present one nonetheless. In their hatred towards Hester, however, the inhabitants of Boston are oblivious of Arthur (even though they partially notice both his and Chillingworth’s change through the narrative). They do not even seem to care and no one in the town wakes up when Arthur is shrieking on the scaffold. We have to question their perception of both Dimmesdale and Chillingworth as they are unable to see the violations and guilt in those characters. Moreover, Arthur proves to be one of them as he cannot recognize Chillingworth’s pursuit either.

The community is the obvious instigator of punishment in Hester’s case and through the novel, the inhabitants of Boston observe her penance and become an audience for all three main protagonists.⁶² Although they remain blind, there exists a character in their society, who seems to understand all three protagonists and who, although described as a sinner, remains unpunished – Mistress Hibbins. She is clearly portrayed as a witch, yet Hawthorne treats her only in a minor way as if afraid to remind us of his ancestors who took part in the witch trials. Hibbins walks through the city only to draw attention to the ‘real’ struggles of the

⁵⁷ Bronstein, 195.

⁵⁸ *The Scarlet Letter*, 169.

⁵⁹ Bronstein, 195.

⁶⁰ *The Scarlet Letter*, 170.

⁶¹ Nolte, 174.

⁶² Nolte, 173.

protagonists.⁶³ She is an exception in Boston – unfortunately, an exception to the rule of blindness of everyone else.

No one in the city has her abilities yet Hawthorne does not spend much time with her. He spends far more time with his other protagonists, the treatment of whom is more detailed and opinionated. Dimmesdale is treated more harshly than Hawthorne’s previous scholar. He is a person of “weakness, self-pity, cowardice, hypocrisy, masochism and egotistic humility.”⁶⁴ Together with Hester and Chillingworth, his character is clearly developed into greater depth. The manipulative Butler’s fleeting urge of violence is developed in Chillingworth, who does act upon it. Finally Hester is far from the fairy-tale-like Ellen and retains mainly her pride. She is a woman who experiences the fall, denial and finally repentance. And although she and her husband have their faults, they are much closer to Hawthorne’s final declaration “Be true,”⁶⁵ than the Puritan scholar.

⁶³ Axelsson, 151.

⁶⁴ Nolte, 172.

⁶⁵ *The Scarlet Letter*, 344.

5. The House of the Seven Gables

5.1. Hawthorne's Romance

Nathaniel Hawthorne's following novel *The House of the Seven Gables* was published only a year after *The Scarlet Letter* and it indeed retains many of the previous work's characteristics. Both books follow the fates of individuals in the Puritan-American community. In the later romance the characters remain mostly isolated as well. Additionally, they are developed into an extended family feud. The continuation from *The Scarlet Letter* also appears in Hawthorne's elaborate critique of the characters who take part in the romance. The author retains the usage of "figures rather than characters"; therefore just as *The Scarlet Letter* developed and slightly altered the characters appearing in *Fanshawe* and gave greater insight into their thinking and actions, *The House of the Seven Gables* uses previously invented general types who encounter or perform acts of violence, and who experience guilt and punishment.¹

The narrator in the book, just as in the previous romance, initiates his tale by a preface. Although less elaborate than "The Custom House," it gives a great insight into the narrator's technique. Not only does he admit that his themes and characters are purely of his "own choosing or creation" because he is creating a romance rather than a novel,² he also gives away the moral of the story. This publication elaborates the idea of violence treated in *The Scarlet Letter* 'merely' as a psychological and imaginative entity. Unlike *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables* offers both physical and psychological forces with added supernatural phenomena.

As mentioned, the individuals who appear in the previous works are now treated together as two extended families and their actions are more interconnected. The narrator questions the notion that "the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones" by which he continues his exploration of nature and nurture in the development of a character (already explored in *Fanshawe*).³ He also adds his perception of physical possession calling real estate "the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests."⁴ Just like Butler, who was driven by his need for possession, the individuals here are manipulated by

¹ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (London: Macmillan, 1883): 125.

² Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The House of the Seven Gables," *Collected Novels: Fanshawe; The Scarlet Letter; The House of the Seven Gables; The Blithedale Romance; The Marble Faun* (New York: Library of America, 1983): 361.

³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 363.

⁴ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 579.

their greed. However, their commitment to guilt is more complex just as Butler's experience was. *The House of the Seven Gables* also offers diverse endings for the characters.

In "The Custom House" the narrator gives a highly-developed origin of the story of the scarlet letter. Although this does not happen in the preface to the later romance, critics have pointed out that Hawthorne was inspired by a real murder trial which took place in 1830s and that Judge Pyncheon had a basis in a real man of law.⁵ Hawthorne thus continues in his critique of his contemporary society through his image of the Puritan life; a life "in which nothing beautiful had developed."⁶ This romance with its themes, type characters and Puritan background therefore follows the author's previous books and is in its way a continuation both of *Fanshawe* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

5.2. The Pyncheon Family

Both through the history of the Pyncheon and the Maule family the romance questions whether and to what extent it is possible to break from the past.⁷ Although the Pyncheons stand out as the villains of the romance, the history of the Maules is in no way black and white. Nonetheless it is the Pyncheon family which receives larger attention in the first few chapters. We learn that starting with the colonel, the Pyncheons had no problem with inflicting physical violence on others through their position, namely on the Maules whom they tried to obliterate together with their name. Although the Colonel tries to justify his actions as a quest against witchcraft, his interest becomes clear with the construction of the mansion and shows that what Hawthorne concerns himself with is the American political system through the exploration of the idea of property and by giving the villain role to a judge.⁸ He also criticizes the community of the town that idly stands, haunted by prejudices.

Just as in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne employs the history of his ancestors who took part in the witch hunts. The question for both the Pyncheons and the Hawthornes is then whether this stain of their forefathers was ineradicable; in the end it appears to be only for some characters in the novel.⁹ The crimes of the Pyncheon ancestors are indeed great. The narrator shows his disdain for the Colonel's actions when he mockingly praises his

⁵ Brook Thomas, *Cross-examinations of Law and Literature: Cooper, Hawthorne, Stowe, and Melville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 57; 63.

⁶ F. O. Matthiessen, "The House of the Seven Gables," *Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1966): 114.

⁷ Brook Thomas, "The House of the Seven Gables: Reading the Romance of America," *PMLA*, Vol. 97, No. 2 (1982): 195-211, JSTOR, Web: 27 May 2014.

⁸ Thomas, *Cross-examinations*, 45.

⁹ Frederick Crews, *Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970): 38.

“indiscrimination with which [he] persecuted [...] people of all ranks.”¹⁰ His obsession with property which forced him to violent actions now lingers in the family and turns the family members against each other. This is shown by Jaffrey’s monetary oppression of both his cousins Hepzibah and Clifford – the drive for control and property only changed its foundation.¹¹ The present day does not allow the Judge what the Colonel had no trouble doing, therefore he has to change his focus.

This violence against their own seems actually to be transformed from previous works where Hawthorne portrays characters who perform violence against themselves. This angle is however not lost in *The House of the Seven Gables*; most members of the family live in “an absurd delusion of family importance.”¹² Even the Colonel’s first act of building the house is an attempt to establish a lineage and combat death – he and his successors keep on lying to themselves in this respect.¹³ As mentioned, it appears that starting with Colonel Pyncheon it is the nature of the family to persecute others while pursuing their greed and to be filled with the self-delusion of their magnitude. An imagined looking glass shows their features as filled with sin after the Colonel “originally incurred the family curse.”¹⁴ And although in the present time the original acts of the ancestors and the violent action against the Maules are no longer perceived as a crime by the community and thus do not give any basis for the continuation of this violence against them, it is now in the Pyncheon ‘nature’ to follow in the original footsteps.¹⁵

Although the Pyncheons are obviously culpable of many deeds, guilt for any of those actions arrives only for a few individuals. It could be argued that hiring Matthew Maule’s son Thomas for the building of the house was a decision based on guilty conscience; but the narrator never states so explicitly. Hawthorne tries to differentiate himself from them (and presumably from his own ancestors) and imagines them as being “troubled with doubts as to their moral right to hold [the estate].”¹⁶ However, this hope is soon demolished as the members of the family, without realizing it, “commit anew the great guilt of [their] ancestor, and incur all its original responsibilities.”¹⁷ Hepzibah and Clifford (together with Phoebe who, however, is not truly a part of the Pyncheon line) do not follow in the family’s actions and

¹⁰ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 365.

¹¹ Matthiessen, 145.

¹² *The House of the Seven Gables*, 375.

¹³ Thomas, “Romance of America,” 202.

¹⁴ Arne Axelsson, *The Links in the Chain: Isolation and Interdependence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fictional Characters* (Uppsala, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974): 61.

¹⁵ Thomas, “Romance of America,” 202.

¹⁶ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 375.

¹⁷ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 376.

thus cannot experience this type of guilt as they break free from the cycle. On the other hand, Jaffrey does not change and he remains blind about his importance. Besides Jaffrey's uncle, who tries to return the property to the Maules, no real guilt developed for any of the previous Pyncheons, which is also a reason for their damnation.

The most obvious punishment for the Pyncheons of course arrives in the form of the curse which prevents the Colonel from his dream of defeating death. The mansion proves to have the opposite purpose and does not provide a foundation for a truly grand family lineage.¹⁸ And although uncle Pyncheon tries to break free of the 'curse', the narrator does not allow for it and his death only enables the curse to continue to haunt the family members – most prominently of course the Judge.¹⁹ Jaffrey, the man of law – a rational individual – becomes haunted by his family greed. Thus it appears that the actual curse is not Maule's malediction "God will give him blood to drink!" but the family's inability to break free of the Colonel's first material intentions.

5.2.1. Alice Pyncheon

Besides the story of the original ancestor, only Alice and Gervayse Pyncheon's tale is highlighted in the history of the Pyncheon lineage. The father proves to be a true successor who is driven by the grand idea of a family fortune and "barter[s] [Alice] away for a greedy purpose of his own."²⁰ Although he seems to be filled with guilt once he sees Alice under the influence of Matthew Maule Jr., the narrator does not truly allow him repentance as even in this state Gervayse blames Alice's fate on Maule and not on his greed. Alice however seems to be guilty only of having an arrogant approach. Still she is the one who suffers and becomes "Maule's slave."²¹ She realizes she is guilty of being prideful and by her death she loses her condescending attitude. Her punishment is much graver than her father's in regards to their actions – her death is a symbolic punishment for Gervayse. This episode's importance arises due to the narrator's treatment of the Maule family. Although Matthew is responsible for Alice's death and he woefully follows her funeral procession, he receives no punishment because the Maule family are established as the victims for the narrator and form an opposite to the greedy Pyncheons. Yet even they inherit their ancestor's characteristics and cannot start

¹⁸ Thomas, *Cross-examinations*, 46.

¹⁹ Axelsson, 50.

²⁰ Crews, 181.

²¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 535.

truly anew.²² Interestingly, this story is narrated by Holgrave, a descendant of the Maules and it hints that he will experience a change in perception of the two family histories.

5.3. The Maule Family

The account the narrator gives on the Maules is very sparse and they remain an enigma for both the readers and the community in the romance. No individual is able to step into the circle “round about the Maules.”²³ However, they are an always present entity and although Colonel Pyncheon tries to wreck their lineage, they are tied to him and his successors as well as to the house.²⁴ Matthew Maule’s first possible act of violence would be his witchcraft if looked at through the eyes of the society. He is even portrayed as being in his grave for the ‘crime’ of witchcraft but this is only the perception of the community, not the narrator.

He is in no way a crazy wizard; even his imagined ghost is very pragmatic about his demands. The death of the Colonel with “the marks of fingers on his throat, and the print of a bloody hand on his plaited ruff” could be also taken as an act of vengeance from either Maule’s ghost or Maule’s son; however, this is never proven and the Pyncheon family seems to be merely a victim of a genetic disease.²⁵ These two violent acts are therefore only imagined. So far, the Maules are still the innocent victims. However, because they impart the curse, because they actually have the power over the Pyncheons and have the knowledge of the whereabouts of the Indian deed that could grant the fortune to the Pyncheons, “their status as victims has to be reevaluated.”²⁶

Moreover, Matthew Maule pursues an act of violent vengeance when cursing the Pyncheon family. His successor Matthew Jr. destroys Alice and “[wrecks] a low, ungenerous scorn upon her.”²⁷ Although he tries to appear above things, it becomes obvious he is susceptible to Alice’s scornful look and the readers are in no doubt of Matthew’s villainy.²⁸ They are not so different from the Pyncheons after all; nonetheless they are not the deprived Pyncheons. Matthew Maule and Holgrave present a sexual possibility for Alice and Phoebe, respectively. They are connected to nature rather than society and the narrator favors them. By their act of vengeance, unfortunately, they join the fallen family in a repetition of history.

²² Thomas, “Romance of America,” 205.

²³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 381.

²⁴ Crews, 178.

²⁵ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 373.

²⁶ Thomas, “Romance of America,” 202.

²⁷ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 536.

²⁸ Axelsson, 62.

Finally Holgrave, unlike his ancestors, is able to restrain himself and does not pursue his hold over the young girl nor does he pursue further vengeance against the Pyncheons.

Both Matthew and Holgrave (unlike the Pyncheons) also experience guilt for their actions. As both of them are actually minor characters, their feelings are not developed into any large degree. Importantly, the Maule family has to be punished because of their violent actions. Although the guilt is fleeting and although Hawthorne clearly affiliates with Matthew Maule and his lineage, he is a realist and does not disregard their crimes. Through the curse their fate becomes tied with the mansion; they are unable to let go – a prospect which represents their punishment. Even Holgrave in the present day takes lodging in the house.

5.4. Characters and Their Themes

5.4.1. Jaffrey Pyncheon

Disregarding Colonel Pyncheon, Judge Jaffrey is the obvious villain of the romance. Although we know his full name, no one calls him by it and the Judge thus creates an ominous presence for the rest of the characters. He is a partial continuation of Arthur Dimmesdale and the magistrates of *The Scarlet Letter*. Here, as in the previous book, the larger part of violence rests in the hands of a man of law. Through Holgrave's daguerreotypes we learn of this true nature that he tries to hide – Pyncheon is a stern man, although he has “taken upon himself to mitigate the harsh effect by a look of exceeding good-humor and benevolence.”²⁹ Just as the men of law in the previous romance, the readers learn that there is a difference between the public and the private man.³⁰ From his disagreement with Hepzibah we understand that he is not only the villain but that he also forms an opposite to Hepzibah's modern venture with his idea of great fortune through which he is a symbol of the family's dominant trait.

As with his predecessors, Jaffrey Pyncheon's crimes seem first quite obvious, however, their true nature is more complicated. He appears to be guilty of physically killing his uncle and similarly to Gervayse Pyncheon (they are after the very same document) he “makes a ‘child’ – the childlike Clifford – pay for his own criminality.”³¹ His influence on Clifford is however deeper and more psychological. Even Holgrave notices that the Judge has caused Clifford to be in ruins, although he does not understand his intentions in following the pursuit. Hepzibah as well sees Jaffrey as the person who continues to haunt her brother. Clifford himself then is the victim of Jaffrey's violent nature; he becomes flustered even when

²⁹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 457.

³⁰ Thomas, *Cross-examinations*, 76.

³¹ Crews, 181.

Jaffrey makes fun of him because of “still blowing soap-bubbles.”³² To show how far Jaffrey’s violent character has developed, the narrator shows him trying to influence Hepzibah and make her feel guilty about her bitterness against himself (as Butler attempts in *Fanshawe*); however, unlike Ellen, Hepzibah is a stronger character and cannot be thus affected.

The Judge unfortunately does not admit any guilt for his actions. Although the narrator imagines him being filled with constantly renewed guilt, it is only his fancy. Interestingly, the narrator pursues the notion that his youthful indiscretion should not affect how we view the individual in his adult life (similarly to Hugh Crombie and Butler in *Fanshawe*). It is not the original act he should feel guilty for. He indeed describes Jaffrey as having a “miserable soul,” yet he asks the readers whether we should judge him based on “one necessary deed, and that half-forgotten act.”³³ The fact that he does not give an answer to his question may be only a game with his readers; Jaffrey’s behavior in the present, his continuing hunt of Clifford, his false idea of family heritage gives the readers enough to condemn Jaffrey in the present.

Similarly to Arthur Dimmesdale, Jaffrey’s continual pursuit of his wrongs without the realization of any actual wrong-doing is his sentence. As mentioned, Jaffrey keeps on lying to himself about his deeds (just like Arthur). The fact that he “hardly found it necessary to swear to anything false” during Clifford’s trial elevates his conscience.³⁴ It also makes him a “full-blown hypocrite, a large-based, full-nurtured Pharisee” who merely tries to entertain an idea of his benevolence around himself.³⁵ He is thus sentenced to follow in his family’s curse and in the false idea of power and greed. The fact that he realizes that he can present a different side of him to the public makes it even worse as Jaffrey loses himself in the perception that he is performing good and Clifford is released only so he can continue in his ‘rightful’ pursuit.

The punishment for the Judge’s crimes is, in very simple terms, his death. He succumbs to the original Maule’s curse interpreted by his cousin Hepzibah: “God is looking at you, Jaffrey Pyncheon!”³⁶ He is a demonstration of a repetitive pattern as he follows his Puritan ancestor.³⁷ However, the narrator does not let him simply die in the chair, he fully elaborates on his death and even when the last breath leaves Jaffrey, the narrator has no

³² *The House of the Seven Gables*, 503.

³³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 553; *The House of the Seven Gables*, 554.

³⁴ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 623.

³⁵ James, 128.

³⁶ Nina Baym, “The Heroine of “The House of the Seven Gables”; Or, Who Killed Jaffrey Pyncheon?” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (2004): 607-618, JSTOR, Web: 27 May 2014.

³⁷ Leo B. Levy, “Picturesque Style in The House of the Seven Gables,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1966): 147-160, JSTOR, Web: 27 May 2014.

problem to kick him further; Jaffrey presents for him “an absurd figure.”³⁸ He becomes a non-functional incubus that cannot scare others anymore. Jaffrey is mocked because he cannot meet his appointments set for the day. The narrator has no mercy with him and takes sides with the Maules. By his death Jaffrey loses all his imagined importance as his death happens by no real intention and is only approached by the “morbidly scornful narrator.”³⁹

Jaffrey Pyncheon is indeed like an escaped copy of the Colonel whose portrait remains a prominent symbol throughout the romance. Both are a haunting presence for the residents of the house.⁴⁰ In his actions and his death, he is treated with even less sympathy than the previous villain, Roger Chillingworth, and again shows Hawthorne’s development in portraying negative individuals and in having less and less remorse for their wrongdoings.⁴¹ Whereas Chillingworth realizes his wrongs and his negative actions, Jaffrey wallows in his self-importance until the end. Similarly to previous villains, Jaffrey is one of the most developed characters in *The House of the Seven Gables* and his actions together with his death give the possibility for the Pyncheon family to break free from their curse.

5.4.2. Hepzibah Pyncheon

Jaffrey’s female cousin forms an opposite to him from her first introduction. While the Judge’s identity is hidden during the first few chapters, Hepzibah’s identity is given. At the beginning she steps out of her room – just as Hester left the prison cell.⁴² The critic Nina Baym indeed thinks of Hepzibah as a continuation of Hester Prynne, a self-supporting woman, developed to a greater degree. However, her development by the end of the novel is more promising and her encounter with violence is in many ways different. Hepzibah imagines herself to be surrounded by “bloody-minded villain [...] watching behind the elm tree;” she senses “a flood of evil.”⁴³ This violence is only in her imagination, in reality she is haunted by Jaffrey. She is the one character who really challenges him and that is why Nina Baym pursues the opinion that Hepzibah is the unlikely hero of the romance even though she does not fight any real violence.⁴⁴ The judge remains more of a strange presence, not directly threatening.

³⁸ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 571.

³⁹ Crews, 177.

⁴⁰ Susan S. Williams, “The Aspiring Purpose of an Ambitious Demagogue: Portraiture and The House of the Seven Gables,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1994): 221-244, JSTOR, Web: 27 May 2014.

⁴¹ Crews, 175.

⁴² Baym, 609.

⁴³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 391.

⁴⁴ Baym, 608.

Hepzibah herself is a non-violent character. Her only negative emotion is her disdain for Phoebe's origin, but even during her contemplations she is not aggressive. This strain between the Pyncheon origin and the positive characterization of Phoebe is where the tension arrives for Hepzibah. She is torn between following the family traits of false sense of pride and power, and the modern world represented by Holgrave and Phoebe. In the beginning she feels guilt for opening the store and asks God for forgiveness – something very atypical for a Pyncheon. The narrator here indicates his support for her and hints that God will forgive her. The shop might “prove her ruin,” but only to the extent that it will allow her to leave the family heritage and curse behind.⁴⁵ At first she feels sorry for Phoebe and celebrates the inherited characteristics of the family, but by the end she lets go of this guilt and breaks free from her learned ways.⁴⁶

For the Hepzibah we encounter in the first chapter, the impossibility to stay a true ‘Pyncheon’ may seem as a punishment. Hepzibah's act of defiance and her establishing the contact with the outside world is at first a fall for her. Yet, as the hero who ‘defeats’ Jaffrey and changes the fate of the Pyncheon line, she receives no punishment. She remains tied to Clifford in isolation, yet this matriarchal position is a reward for her.⁴⁷ Unlike Hester, who does not fully forget her ideal vision of life with Dimmesdale, Hepzibah lets go of her past completely and can focus on taking care of the ‘child’.⁴⁸

5.4.3. Clifford Pyncheon

Unlike Hepzibah who is described in great depth, her brother remains distanced and enigmatic; Henry James rightly observed he was “vague and unemphasised.”⁴⁹ When Phoebe first meets him in the house, he is indeed almost a ghost; he “[seems] to waver and glimmer.”⁵⁰ And although he returns released from prison after supposedly killing his uncle, he walks with “indescribable grace, such as no practiced art of external manners could have attained.”⁵¹ Clifford is described as an innocent child that looks in wonder at the new world which came about while he was locked away. As an innocent figure, he suffers violence from others and his ‘crime’ is only a perception of the community pursued by the Judge. Jaffrey causes the death of Clifford's spirit; interestingly, by the end, Clifford's presence in the house

⁴⁵ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 405.

⁴⁶ Axelsson, 47.

⁴⁷ Baym, 617.

⁴⁸ Baym, 615.

⁴⁹ James, 127.

⁵⁰ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 447.

⁵¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 447.

causes Jaffrey's death and creates balance.⁵² Yet Clifford cannot be truly taken accountable for a 'violent' action.

In his innocence he may only be guilty of negligence towards his sister but even the narrator concludes that Clifford "[owes] her nothing."⁵³ He has nothing to prove, his artistic soul does not allow him to feel guilt and the narrator agrees. He is truly a child that has no burden and does not know shame. However, upon seeing Jaffrey's corpse, the reality hits him and with guilty conscience he tries to flee from the scene and goes slightly mad. Yet even this guilt is allowed only fleetingly. Clifford's original punishment was of course for a crime he did not commit and there is nothing Clifford should be punished for. Unfortunately, neither this innocent character is given a happy ending. Clifford himself recognizes that it is too late for his happiness because his soul is crushed. His reunion with the real world ends with a rejection, and he and Hepzibah can only spend the rest of their days in isolation.⁵⁴

5.4.4. Holgrave and Phoebe

The two young people who actually experience romance receive a very small part in the book; still, their roles are important for the plot. Holgrave, a descendant of the Maules (as we learn later in the novel), is seen by others as practicing some form of dark arts which turns out to be a misconception. His art is realistically observing the rest of the characters.⁵⁵ He is wrongly perceived by others while he sees into the heart of Jaffrey Pyncheon, just like his ancestors were able to recognize the intentions of elder Pyncheons, and describes him accurately as a man "sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and, withal, cold as ice."⁵⁶ Although the close family of the Judge recognizes the real Jaffrey as well, for the large community he is a perfect representative and it is possible to observe a continuing theme from *The Scarlet Letter*, where society was unable to fully discern both Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Unfortunately, Holgrave does not receive enough time and as an observer, he is mostly distant from the plot.⁵⁷

The image of Holgrave that Phoebe first gives the readers is that of a "lawless person."⁵⁸ Yet Holgrave never commits any crime. Of course as a Maule, he is tempted to take rule over Phoebe's mind during his tale but he does not violate Phoebe's trust. Firstly,

⁵² Crews, 177.

⁵³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 451.

⁵⁴ Axelsson, 111.

⁵⁵ Levy, 160.

⁵⁶ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 437.

⁵⁷ Byam, 608.

⁵⁸ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 431.

even if he did, it seems the narrator would forgive him as this urge is in his disposition. More importantly, however, the Maules' mesmeric powers are dependent on the Pyncheons' continuing bad conscience.⁵⁹ As Phoebe is guilty of neither, Holgrave is not fully capable of controlling her and he stops himself. The only violation which he performs is against himself and it happens by the end when he leaves his ideals and vision during which he tried to "expose the false foundations of the present system" and settles down with Phoebe.⁶⁰

Holgrave therefore does not need to experience guilt. He "[forbids] himself to twine that one link" with Phoebe.⁶¹ He shows almost a non-Maule self-restraint and having his own law, he lives by it until the end without the need to feel guilty.⁶² Similarly to Clifford, he is not bound by the society and lives partially in isolation. Ultimately his violation of his own ideals serves as his punishment and "his early faith [is] modified by inevitable experience."⁶³ Having not been arrogant in his early ideas he is allowed to leave them and the narrator does not feel the need to punish him. Brook Thomas adds that by accepting Pyncheon inheritance and planting a family with Phoebe in the Pyncheon house, Holgrave will be additionally punished by inheriting the Pyncheon curse and problems, yet the romance does not give this indication.⁶⁴

Importantly, Holgrave is a contrast to the rusted Pyncheons and while Hepzibah and Clifford for a long time wallow in their misery, he is able to objectively observe actions around him.⁶⁵ While the Judge continues in his ancestors' horrible deeds, Holgrave joins the rest of the characters, who break free out of the cycle. The narrator has high hopes for him and Holgrave is definitely closest to the author himself with his power of description. Showing his narrative skills to Phoebe, he even successfully "makes a literary work out of the Pyncheons," helping in allowing their history to rest.⁶⁶

Phoebe, although she accuses Holgrave of being distant and inactive, does not receive much space herself. On the one hand she is as innocent as Clifford, yet she has the ability to discern the true character of both Clifford and Jaffrey. And while it seems that she is used by Hepzibah to do much of the work around the house, this ability is what finally establishes Phoebe as the head of the family, taking care of Hepzibah and Clifford, and turning Holgrave's focus. The readers indeed have to trust her ability to believe the ending of the

⁵⁹ Crews, 178.

⁶⁰ Thomas, "Romance of America," 202.

⁶¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 537.

⁶² Crews, 187.

⁶³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 509.

⁶⁴ Thomas, "Romance of America," 203.

⁶⁵ James, 129.

⁶⁶ Crews, 191.

romance.⁶⁷ Like others, she goes through a maturing process and her union with Holgrave presents an early indication for Miriam and Donatello in *The Marble Faun*.⁶⁸

However, Phoebe is neither the main protagonist nor the heroine. She is too simple in her loving everything around her and in her law-abiding tendencies. She even has the ability to cleanse the house filled with past violence “by her sweet breath and happy thoughts.”⁶⁹ Her only aggressiveness appears in her ability to make deals in the shop. Unlike other characters, she is not a full Pyncheon (nor does she retain the family’s trait as Hepzibah does) and therefore she is not haunted or forced by the family’s curse into pride and hunger for power. In her simplicity, she therefore does not experience any guilt. There is of course nothing to be guilty of – even her opinion of ‘violent’ Holgrave at first is only an example of her innocent thinking and Frederick Crews adds that her contemplating is “unhindered by any brooding over the meaning of things.”⁷⁰ Phoebe then receives no punishment and as the only character in the novel, experiences her own happy ending.

5.5. The Society and the Narrator

Unlike *Fanshawe* and *The Scarlet Letter*, where the community that the characters live in played a large part in the plot and influenced the characters’ actions, *The House of the Seven Gables* discusses the Pyncheons and the Maules mostly in isolation. There are several scenes where the two families clash with the public (e.g. in the beginning when the Colonel throws a big celebration or when Clifford and Hepzibah flee on a train), yet it is in no way to the extent as in the previous books. The shop is a connection to the outside world only for Phoebe, who herself is not really a part of the house. Nonetheless, same as in *Fanshawe*, the town here is fascinated by violence. Moreover, violence is actually described in great detail. While Butler is simply noted to have fallen, we learn that Colonel Pyncheon had “blood on his ruff, and that his hoary beard was saturated with it.”⁷¹ The narrator even exaggerates these anxieties regarding violence and describes eating a gingerbread man as a homicide. Unlike *The Scarlet Letter*, people in this anonymous town in New England are obsessed with witchcraft and superstition (this being a gothic romance). Moreover the narrator points out that “man’s death often seems to give people a truer idea of his character” and hints that after

⁶⁷ Thomas, “Romance of America,” 206

⁶⁸ Axelsson, 164.

⁶⁹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 419.

⁷⁰ Crews, 185.

⁷¹ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 371.

Jaffrey's death the society turned away from him unlike in the case of Arthur Dimmesdale, who remained celebrated even after his death.⁷²

The House of the Seven Gables also presents two communities – one of the Colonel and one of the Judge Pyncheon. They are similar and are very effortful in establishing their public image. Upon the Colonel's great celebration, the people seem angrier that he does not greet them at the door than they were when he was actually building the house. Similarly, after the Judge's death two men conclude that it is wrong "to be the first to speak of such a thing," indicating that once they are not the first to speak, their appearance is kept.⁷³ Clifford during the train ride tries to present an idea of a modern society which treats even criminals with dignity; however, we cannot take him seriously as he thinks he is fleeing his own crime and moreover he seems to slowly lose his mind. Both the communities of the Colonel and the Judge are thus obsessed with violence and public image. An exception in the contemporary town is the character of Uncle Venner. He stands on the border between being a part of the family and the surrounding society. He is "an original, a natural moralist, a philosopher."⁷⁴ Importantly, as a philosopher, he stands out before Holgrave (and later Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*) because he does not exclude himself from humanity and does not observe the surrounding world as Holgrave does with his cold stare.⁷⁵

The narrator in this romance takes a larger part than in Hawthorne's previous works. He makes stops in the narrative progress and appeals to his characters.⁷⁶ The ghosts that supposedly appear after Jaffrey dies are only his imagination and "must by no means be considered as forming an actual portion of our story."⁷⁷ Although he is angry at presenting Hepzibah at first because she is not some young, beautiful girl, he feels for her. Nina Baym argues that he even kills Jaffrey on her behalf.⁷⁸ Similarly, Phoebe receives compassion from the author as does Holgrave when is not forced to follow in his ancestors' footsteps. The villains, the Colonel and the Judge, are only ridiculed on their death beds. The narrator prolongs Jaffrey's death scene and mocks him for not fulfilling his public role.

By the end it becomes clear that the narrator does not let the Pyncheons remain in their dominant position and that the new generation that arrives is closer to the Maules. Here he again shows his bias. The Maules are never truly punished nor experience guilt to any large

⁷² *The House of the Seven Gables*, 621.

⁷³ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 607.

⁷⁴ James, 48.

⁷⁵ Axelsson, 166.

⁷⁶ Williams, 224.

⁷⁷ *The House of the Seven Gables*, 594.

⁷⁸ Baym, 615.

degree; the narrator does not force them to. Hepzibah becomes the Maule and the mole which undermines the roots of the family. She invites Holgrave into the household, she pursues her economic venture and takes a stand against the typical representative of the Pyncheon family, Jaffrey. Yet we have to question their happy ending. Both Hepzibah and Clifford remain somewhat in isolation, Holgrave loses his ideals. The marriage of Phoebe and Holgrave is mentioned very briefly. Moreover, they gain their happiness through the Pyncheon fortune, an entity which previously had a dehumanizing role.⁷⁹ F. O. Matthiessen in his essay however points out that for Hawthorne, a democratic society held a promise regarding economic wealth. Unlike previously, wealth would not have the influence it had before and would not serve the negative purpose.⁸⁰ The new Pyncheons are freed from repeating the ancestors' mistakes. Hepzibah (who together with Alice Pyncheon and her brother is the final character mentioned) fights throughout the narrative her guilt for not keeping the family's traditions but by the end she lets go.

The last chapter is called "goodbye" and it is indeed a farewell. The Pyncheons represented by Clifford, Hepzibah and partially Phoebe part with their Pyncheon past and let go off their ancestor's violent history. Similarly to *The Scarlet Letter*, no actual physical violence is present in the romance as Colonel's and Judge's deaths reveal themselves to be a hereditary disease. Real violent acts stay within the realm of self-inflicted psychological abuse; most characters keep on lying to themselves about their virtue and importance. The representatives of the Pyncheon family receive a punishment yet there is never a real realization of their guilt. With the exception of Hepzibah, who reaches this state of realization, they remain blind. Through the different treatment of the Pyncheons and the Maules the author's preference for the second family becomes apparent. Although they are guilty of similarly despicable crimes and only Holgrave, the last Maule, comes to this realization, no harsh punishment from the author arrives.

⁷⁹ Thomas, *Cross-examinations*, 87.

⁸⁰ Matthiessen, 150.

6. Conclusion

The three selected novels by Nathaniel Hawthorne clearly show the author's development as a novelist as well as the development of his treatment of the three motifs – violence, guilt and punishment. Although in many ways, the approach in each of the novels is similar, there are differences that need to be taken into account. Hawthorne approaches violence hesitantly and in the lack of description of actual physical violence we can indicate his distaste for it. He nonetheless recognizes that there are several types of violence, as well as guilt and punishment. He recognizes that violence can be interpersonal as well as self-inflicted. He understands that only some characters are capable of inflicting violence on others, while most characters have no problem to inflict violence on themselves. In his portrayals of the communities he also describes situations when a certain type of violence has become acceptable.

Hawthorne portrays several characters whose violent actions lead to feelings of guilt and who repent their actions. Again, however, he understands that the concept of guilt is more complicated and each individual is bound to experience it differently. Therefore his characters experience both constant and fleeting guilt; they are overtaken by guilt for the right action (the action they should not feel guilty for) as well as for deeds that would be otherwise forgiven. In connection to violence, some characters come to accept their violent deeds and repent, while many remain oblivious. Finally, after an act of violence a character that understands his or her wrongs, as well as the one who does not admit his or her fault, can expect punishment, which may or may not arrive.

Again Hawthorne understands that the concept of punishment is intricate; moreover he comprehends that the punishment the characters may expect depends on his portrayal of the communities. He is aware that if he chooses to set his characters in an unlawful environment they cannot expect their punishment to come from this exact community and therefore the penalty must come from above – from the author. In this respect then it is possible to detect a certain bias of the author when he decides the fates of his characters. He shows an inkling of support mainly towards his female characters who can expect a sympathetic treatment. On the other hand, stemming from his contempt for his ancestors, Hawthorne very plainly describes his disdain for certain personages of law who can expect nothing from him but a harsh handling.

In *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne's first novel, we can clearly observe the beginning of Hawthorne's style as well as the start of his career because the characters most of all resemble

certain types – a scholar, a hero, a villain, a comedian and a fair heroine. Although Butler dies in a presumably violent manner, no physical violence is described with the exception of some discarded furniture in the previous scenes. Hawthorne stays away from actual descriptions of violence. Moreover, guilt is present only fleetingly and only for some of the characters. The novel is under the shadow of the main character Fanshawe, an image of the author himself. He is an ideal scholar who hangs onto his studies, does not succumb to violence and tends to be too perfect – indeed an ideal portrait that Hawthorne possibly imagined for himself.

Through Fanshawe's final decision to adhere to his studies and his subsequent death it is possible to either celebrate him or condemn him. I do believe the author leaves both options open. On the one hand, we can see Fanshawe who died for his ideals, yet on the other hand, it is possible to describe him as someone disconnected from reality; as someone who experiences guilt for incorrect actions, for whom studies are self-inflicted violence and for whom death therefore comes as a punishment. The idea of punishment for the scholar who is unable to come to terms with his own actions will later appear in *The Scarlet Letter* where there is no doubt that the author does not take the side with the character at all.

Through the characters of Butler and Hugh Crombie, Hawthorne also engages in a topic that will later appear in both his subsequent novels. Although Butler and Crombie are guilty of misdemeanors in their pasts, the author asks the audience not to judge them based on those actions. Only the deeds those characters commit in the present are to be the basis for their sentence. Interestingly, the character of Hugh Crombie proves to be a stock character. As he adds a comic touch for the short novel and serves as a type of a clown, he is treated as such and he is not punished for his aid to Butler. Butler on the other hand is more complex. He, as the only individual, experiences guilt to the full extent; however, the guilt leads to desperation and the continuation of his violent actions and Butler is punished by death.

In the following novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne disregards physical violence completely and lets his characters inflict force in psychological ways; moreover he focuses on self-inflicted violence. Hester Prynne lets herself be influenced by both her husband and her love for Arthur Dimmesdale. It is indeed this naivety of the nature of their love affair that proves to be her biggest crime and does not allow Hester to accept guilt for her actions until the end of the novel. However, unlike both Roger Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, she comes to the realization of her actual crimes and her punishment (her inability to accept the truth and the symbol of the scarlet letter) has already passed and does not hold power over her. She is 'spared' by the compassionate author.

Roger Chillingworth of course imparts the largest portion of interpersonal violence when he tries to hunt down the minister. Although there are arguments that can redeem his actions, his rage towards Arthur turns his actions into an act of plain revenge. Moreover, even though he tries to bring Dimmesdale to justice, he himself is unable to show his true face to the people of Boston and lies to himself as well. Although he accepts the guilt for the act of revenge, the fact that he has continued in his actions becomes the reason for his punishment. Similarly, Arthur's act of adultery is not the main reason for the contempt for the minister. The main reasons are his subsequent actions, particularly his wrong belief about his understanding of fellow sinners and his inability to understand Hester's love. We only have to decide whether he reaches a realization of his crimes in the final scaffold scene or if he simply tries to save himself – something which seems unacceptable for the author. Interestingly, in the final scene and in the community's inability to see Arthur for who he was, it is possible to see the traces of the following novel, where again a man of law's public and private faces are very different and the majority of the community is unable to distinguish them.

In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne then continues his exploration of the themes developed in the previous novels. Both the Maule and the Pyncheon families seem to be bound by the deeds of their ancestors and it appears that the author is asking whether the actions of our ancestors define who we are. Because some of the characters, with Hepzibah at the forefront, manage to escape the house both literally and figuratively at the end of the romance, Hawthorne seems to be inclined not to believe this predisposition. He also continues to develop the theme of self-inflicted violence, here most importantly in the characters of the Colonel and the Judge who both lie to themselves about their importance and have no problem to inflict both physical and psychological violence in consequence, even on their own family. Although it is possible to encounter both concepts of violence, Hawthorne again stays away from lengthy descriptions of the former. When we finally encounter a descriptive scene of physical violence (the death of the Colonel), it is only so we can later learn that no actual violence has taken place.

The theme of guilt is again interestingly developed. The Pyncheons, in their grand idea about their own importance, never accept guilt for their actions until Hepzibah. She on the other hand fights guilt for actually being able to let go off the Pyncheon heritage and joining the world of commerce. In this particular novel, Hawthorne again shows his bias and his compassion, not only towards Hepzibah but also towards the whole Maule family. Although they too are guilty of violent actions (as in the case of Matthew Maule Jr. and Alice Pyncheon), they receive milder treatment. Moreover, in the character of Holgrave, the last

Maule, they only receive punishment similar to Hepzibah's. Holgrave leaves his heritage behind as well and he joins the remaining Pyncheon family.

Overall, Hawthorne's main interest stays in the realm of psychological violence and the possible guilt that can arrive with it. He is interested mostly in characters that inflict violence on themselves due to self-deception. Following *Fanshawe*, where we can detect a sense of support and leniency for some of the characters, he shows mercy just for Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, to again show his preferences to several characters in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Together with the concept of self-inflicted violence and deception, he also shows interest in guilt that arrives for the actions it should have arrived for. Several times, we encounter characters who experience a fleeting moment of guilt, only to learn that this emotion stems again from self-deception.

Hawthorne understands that no matter which society the characters find themselves in, the law will never punish all violations that they have committed and he, as the author, has to step in and decide the fates of his characters. Although his punishment for the deeds of self-deception arrives mostly through death sentence, he is able to invent different punishments for their minor crimes and very playfully is able to connect these concepts. Many characters find themselves in the state of punishment which arrives in the form of continuation of their self-torture throughout the course of the narrative. However, the endings of the novels clearly mark the ends of their respective sufferings.

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