

Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, A Product of Puritanism or a Reaction Against It: A 21st-Century Critical Perspective

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Abstract

The paper examines 'The Scarlet Letter' to determine whether Hawthorne critiques Puritan society's stringent regulations or supports it in its genuine sense. The article first determines whether Hawthorne agrees with the Puritan concept of sin by examining his perspective on sin. We examined varied past studies using survey method to carry out a descriptive analysis of the author's justification for Hester's belief that she is a sinner for the Puritans. Moreover, Hawthorne psychologically analyzes the struggle that exists in the thoughts of the characters as sinners that provokes an endless debate but remains unsolved. Besides, the study explores Hawthorne's views on Puritanism, which raises a question for academics who are unsure of just how Hawthorne opposes the quintessence of the Puritan way of life. We find that the readers get confused by Hawthorne's devotion to the novel as they read it and wonder if he was both a Puritanism product and a reaction against it; however, the study finds that Hawthorne was a blend of both of them. The study ends with broader implications about how Hester's personality influences women's lives in contemporary society in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Puritan, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester, American literature

1. Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850, is one of the best novels of American literature. The novel has several interpretations that make Hawthorne an accomplished writer in several ways. He shared a propensity for examining the shadowy corners of the human psyche with his contemporaries Thomas Hardy and Edgar Allan Poe (Sharma, 2022). *The Scarlet Letter* emphasizes human fallibility and how mistakes in judgment can cause even good people to fall into vice and self-destruction. The novel has undergone extensive research, examinations, and evaluations, and this has been the focus of contemporary critical debate among writers of the twenty-first century. Lanlan (2011) in *The Scarlet Letter* deals with women's status and the dark society at that time, and the tragedy of love, and Zivic (2014) discusses the hypothetical questions raised by the Puritan Community. Walsh (2009), one of a few researchers who focused on the religious aspect, claimed that the Bible provides Hawthorne with numerous resources for both his artistic and moral concerns, while Richardson (2014) asserts that Hawthorne reflects the strict religious traditions of the Puritans in his book. Similarly, Hariyanti & Nurhayati (2017) explored the possibility that literature as an alternative means to do comparative studies of certain religious aspects from different religions and focused on the name and the significance of the name of Pearl in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* which alludes to the Bible. Miah (2020) carried out a sartrean interpretation of novel to reveal the characters' metamorphosis from being-in-itself to being-for-itself, and Khan, et.al. (2021) examined how human beings struggle for existence in society from the existential perspective in the novel. Altschuler (2020) argues for and begins to uncover a hidden disability history of US literature and culture; however, Zakaria, et. al. (2020) shed light on Puritan hegemony, and Sharma (2022) underscored the symbolic aspects used in the novel.

These studies provide the right opportunity to think about a variety of essential questions, such as whether Hawthorne truly depicted Puritans or was a misrepresenter, an embolic or demonstrated sin as a contentious subject. Also, Bay (2005) pointed out that the most prevalent new ways of thinking about literature and the author's life were cultural studies paired with the in-depth psychological study. Despite the fact that the twenty-first century seems to herald in a fresh wave of critical evaluations, the novel and Hawthorne haven't been the subject of much new research. As a result, the paper tries to look at the author and novel from the viewpoints of the twenty-first century; specifically, the culture, rigid social norms, Hawthorne's perspective on the Puritan way of life, and dealing with the actions of the main characters in the book to find their implications on women's lives in modern times.

While trying to explore Hawthorne's views on Puritanism in the novel, we aim to determine whether Hawthorne critiques Puritan society's stringent regulations or supports it in its genuine sense and also to see if Hawthorne was both a Puritanism product and a reaction against it. Therefore, an approach to the subject matter taken in this article implicates an in-depth analysis of an unfavorable Puritan society, and delineation of Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*. Additionally, the paper also takes a step further: it regards *The Scarlet Letter* as a vivid description of an average lady Hester confronted with an overrefined society, considering the work even more as Hawthorne's ode to sincere love (Zivic, 2014); to examine the concepts of sin,

rejection, and atonement through his adultery inmate characters Dimmesdale and Hester. Along with this, a brief sketch of characters included herein connects Hawthorne's austere life and Puritan heritage with his literary work, and succeeding sections of this research paper deal with the future motives for the arousal of his American pioneer of American literature (Sharma, 2022).

The novel demonstrates Hawthorne's comprehension of Puritan thought, ideology, societal ideals, and society. Li (2006) argued that the Puritan community cannot comprehend the human heart and instead assesses the inner conscience of men based solely on their outward behavior. The fact that Hawthorne emphasized Puritan and religious ideals over thoughtful, logical, and hard-headed interactions is significant but not less so. In contrast to the clash of ideas, values, individuality, liberty, and modernism as it is depicted in the novel, the characters of Hester, Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl are the outcome of unethical societal norms becoming fully integrated into American life. Hawthorne examined the concepts of sin, rejection, and atonement through his adultery inmate characters Dimmesdale and Hester. Pearl was born as a result of a romantic act that was socially undesirable in American culture. Besides, she, their daughter, represents the effects of guilt and shame. Hester's unwavering courage, optimistic outlook on life, and firm convictions prevent her from publicly confessing her guilt. Zivic (2014) reveals that Hester may, therefore, arouse the sympathy of a liberal reader while simultaneously being scandalous to a Puritanized one. Conversely, the novel also depicts Dimmesdale fighting to subsist in two distinct situations, which added to his pessimism, hesitation, and lack of confidence. This struggle affected his bodily, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Meticulous planning and research into credible sources enable us to present yet another perspective on Hawthorne and his novel. We often strongly disagree with the notion that *The Scarlet Letter* is just a historical novel that addresses an unforgivable sin when discussing a topic to advance Hawthorne's scholarship. This article seeks to introduce and facilitate current and novel readers to Hawthorne, as this notion might still be found in specific critiques in the recent author's publications. Our goal is to show how Hawthorne's puritanical viewpoint and his ideas as a critique of his society are interrelated. This paper, therefore, may raise legitimate concerns by emphasizing the various characters' actions and giving academics a clear understanding of Hawthorne and his novel from the perspective of the twenty-first century.

The present paper is a literary evaluation of accredited creation, as the author honestly acknowledges that Hawthorne novels are dominated by a protagonist who enlists other characters to follow the path of action and carry out the desired tasks. Although this idea of analyzing Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* does call for a logical framework, it prioritizes the apparent autonomy of examining each character's actions, circumstances, and surroundings over the other events. Therefore, this paper attempts to identify and respond to the crucial question of whether or not Hawthorne is a product of Puritanism or a reaction against it. Moreover, it makes a sincere effort to develop a convincing response, results in a literal conclusion, and produces some unthought analytical fireworks.

A few scholars agree that Hawthorne's writing has little relevance to the circumstance we are in today (Bay, 2005; Li, 2006; Yamin, 2010). The idea of what makes Hawthorne's works a flare for or reaction against Puritan constraints has changed throughout the more than 170 years between *The Scarlet Letter* and the present article. This is achieved by departing from traditional interpretations of the novel and the Puritan school of thought. Alike, the author makes a seminal attempt to present the facts given in the novel and has no intention of misconstruing, reconstructing, or inventing new information or ideas. The research and critical evaluation of the last fifty years has revealed that *The Scarlet Letter* is not one romantic fiction but many different fictions. The novel, as well as a few connected scholarly works, depicts the Puritan, theological, social, and political issues portrayed in *The Scarlet Letter*. Navasky (2020), in reaction to Doctorow's creative representations of historical content, quoted a 'novel that contains concern for our society is seen to be unusual, called *The Scarlet Letter* is a political novel'. The author here highlights the "varied interpretations within the one domain," which includes these.

The study intends to attain the following objectives:

1. To determine whether Hawthorne critiques Puritan society's stringent regulations or supports it in its genuine sense.
2. To explore Hawthorne's views on Puritanism, which raises a question for academics that are unsure of just how Hawthorne opposes the quintessence of the Puritan way of life.
3. To analyze if Hawthorne was both a Puritanism product and a reaction against it.
4. Its broader implications about how Hester's personality influences women's lives in contemporary society in the twenty-first century.

2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive study design with a component of qualitative analysis because the implementation includes data, analysis, and interpretation of the meaning and data obtained. A survey research method is used to collect information from current events and to confirm the veracity of the facts. This method enables us to analyze, discuss, and identify problems as well as gain support for ongoing research. In addition, it can also evaluate and compare things people do in dealing with similar situations or problems. A survey of various edited books, past research, theoretical viewpoints, recently published journal articles, and resources on Hawthorne and his novel *The Scarlet Letter*, and related works is used as an analytical knife to collect, measure, and analyze data. Also, the researcher critically examined the literature on Hawthorne's ability to see things from several angles and his perspectives on sin, attitude towards puritanism, a critic of the puritan way of life, or of their theology of sin and predestination and universal drives to make the novel entertaining. He, however, also looked into other studies on a number of related issues that the novel or drama raises and that are carefully discussed further.

3. Discussion

The main issues we consider from a range of angles after analyzing the studies on Hawthorne's perspective on sin and related concerns in the novel are enumerated as follows.

3.1 Hawthorne's Perspective on 'Sin'

With the qualitative descriptive analysis, it seems that Hawthorne treats the subject of sin evasively in the novel since he emphasizes its effects more than its causes, which is seen to go against Puritan principles. He seems to investigate, clarify, and ease the enduring suffering of a mind at odds. Hawthorne realized his duty and obligation to expose how the Puritans had suppressed and destroyed human nature (Lanlan, 2011). The issue of sin baffles us the most while we understand the novel's nuances. Besides, we want to know about sin, the adultery Hester and Arthur committed, or a breach of the sanctity of a human heart. While reading the novel, we are immediately brought back to Hawthorne's "home feeling" (Harding: 1990, p.9, henceforth, referred to as SL) and conviction that his family was blamed, which may give the impression that he is attempting to downplay the issue of sin in *The Scarlet Letter*. He may discover that Arthur, Hester, and Chillingworth's transgressions are "mere assumptions" and is horrified to witness "the slow, relentless fires of subsequent remorse and revenge sear them all" (Spiller, 1948, p.426). However, we cannot be convinced that Arthur, Hester, and Roger's misdeeds are mere conjectures.

Scholars have undertaken several studies with various interpretations of *The Scarlet Letter* (Bay, 2005; Hariyanti & Nurhayati, 2017; Lanlan, 2011; Li, 2006; Littlefield & Sara, 2015; Mussies, 2018; Roggenkamp, 2018; Sharma, 2022; Splendora, 2013; Woameno, 2018; Yamin, 2010; Zivic, 2014) and a few of them (Li, 2006; Richardson, 2014; Sharma, 2022) subscribe to the classic Puritan view of predestination sin and could think that *The Scarlet Letter* is driven mostly by sin. Hawthorne asserts that sin not only corrupts the body and the mind but also affects the soul. He emphasizes the reality that everyone is born into sin and only a few select individuals are predestined to be saved by God's grace. He cites Arthur Dimmesdale as an example who commits the sin of passion, endures unbearable self-torture throughout his life, and ultimately appears to be relieved when he confesses his guilt just before dying on the scaffold. Conversely, another group of scholars thinks that pain is an essential component of education and human development and the issue of sin is not as confusing. They believe that sin is the source of all wisdom, power, knowledge, and spiritual fulfillment. Walcutt (1965:72) mentioned, "Hester and Dimmesdale not only expiate their sins but through them achieve wisdom, self-knowledge, spiritual power - in short, greatness, which repays their suffering." The characters come to understand sin through suffering and loneliness. Hester betrays her spouse and suffers the consequences. She finally attains the status of a saint to reassure the poor and oppressed women that a new truth would be revealed later, in Heaven's own time (SL: 204), when the world should have been ready for it. This is done to reinforce the idea of shared happiness, which forms the cornerstone of the full man and woman mutual relationship. Although Hester does not achieve her dream, Li (2004) contends that her new female image with the feminist consciousness will inspire women in the present to pursue the high ideal.

The romantic readers of *The Scarlet Letter* get the impression that neither Hester nor Arthur does anything egregiously wrong; nevertheless, the Puritan society is guilty of imposing, what Grewal (2005) says, the "red hot brand of Puritan punishment" upon them. And "the tension," says Stewert (1958) "is tautly drawn between the Puritan (or Christian) respect for law and conscience and the Romantic insistence upon the supremacy of the private impulse." While Hester may be tormented by conscience, Arthur never is. Hawthorne did not appear to blame Hester or Arthur because their love "had a consecration of its own" (SL: 152) and had never brought them harm. However, Lanlan (2011) brings out that what Hester has done manifests her challenge to the whole dismal severity of the Puritanical code of law. Hawthorne is perhaps giving the romantic perspective the proper weight and the romantic readers and scholars feel that sin is merely a byproduct of society's infliction of shame consciousness on people's brains.

The third group of scholars (Bay, 2005; Dani, 1997; Splendora, 2013; Woameno, 2018) who approach literature from a psychological perspective are convinced by Levin (1967:11) who claimed: "Hawthorne, like his ancestors, was preoccupied with the normal life, with questions of responsibility and motivation, and with the moral and psychological effects of sin or misfortune." They define sin as anything that disturbs the balance of the mind. They can also sense Arthur's internal conflict as he struggles to confess his guilt despite having a strong desire to do so. The internal struggle can result in perpetual self-punishment on the physical and mental levels.

The Puritan, Romantic, and psychological interpretations of *The Scarlet Letter* are rejected by the group of scholars who consider that "sin in *The Scarlet Letter* is a violation of only that which the sinner thinks he violates. To one character, adultery is a transgression against God's law, to another no more than a violation of the natural order of things" (Walcutt, 105). This set of scholars believes that each character's definition of sin is different. Hester believes that she is simply "false to herself and her own nature" and that she does not sin against God or the community. Zivic (2014) found a perfect description of the cruel Puritan world, a profound love between Hester and Arthur that still exists in this ambiance, and tolerance is the elements that ascertain that in the case of *The Scarlet Letter* his "household fire of a grand intellect" still burns. Moreover, Arthur acknowledges his sin of not making a confession. Roger has never had the impulse to do something wrong. Hawthorne views his sin as the deliberate surrender of his intellect to the spirit of his revenge.

The preceding explanation suggests that "there is almost always in Hawthorne a profound contrast between the sin actually committed and the guilt that the protagonists perceive they have committed" (Kaul, 1966: 2). For instance, Arthur, not Hawthorne, believes that the adultery sin is the most significant aspect of *The Scarlet Letter*. Doren (1949) observes: "sin for him, for Hester, and for the people who punish her is equally a solemn fact, a problem for which there is no solution in life." The issue of sin offers plenty of room for incessant

discourse. To get more insights and a remedy to this issue, we should look into Hawthorne's attitude toward Puritanism to perceive his personality, his belief in the Puritan way of life, or their theology of Sin and Predestination.

3.2 Hawthorne's Attitude towards Puritanism: a Critic of the Puritan Way of Life or of their Theology of Sin and Predestination

The aforementioned explanation confirms Hawthorne's tight ties to his Puritan ancestors. He, therefore, created a tale called *The Scarlet Letter* that foregrounds both their flaws and their virtues. While he was aware of their viewpoints and valued their merits, he was daunted by their oppressive rules and regulations. Hawthorne's attitude towards Puritanism is problematic. It is not clear whether Hawthorne was a critic of the Puritan way of life or of their theology of Sin and Predestination. The author is baffled by the complexity of the issue, Hawthorne's praise of the Puritan way of life or denounce it as merciless and vicious, and Hawthorne's stance on Puritanism. The succeeding analysis of the novel will address these significant concerns.

Hawthorne's devotion to Puritan doctrine is a deeply ingrained and well-known reality that permeates all facets of American life as it is shown via the perspectives of the novel's characters (Zakaria, et. al 2020). Hester was forced to seek refuge in the forest because people in Puritan society uphold the integrity of their philosophy and won't acknowledge her as a legitimate citizen. Littlefield & Sara (2015) believed that Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* explores Puritan patriarchal condemnation of the adultery of Hester which led to the birth of her daughter, Pearl. Further, Hawthorne describes how his recollection of the "grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor" (SL: 9) haunts him and gives him "a sort of home-feeling with the past" (ibid) at the "Custom House." When he claims that "strong traits of their nature have interwoven themselves with mine," (10) he seems to inherit certain attributes from the "stern and black-browed Puritans." (ibid) In addition, he appears to share their conviction that sin is ingrained in human nature and begs Heaven for forgiveness for their cruelties: "At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sake and pray that any curse incurred... maybe now and henceforth be removed." (ibid) Hawthorne is delighted when he describes his Puritan forefathers as significant and responsible men. He portrays their snide comment that he is a writer in a way that makes you feel nostalgic: "What is he?" murmurs one gray ghost of my forebears to another. "A writer of story books! What kind of business in life - what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, may that be? Why the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" (ibid)

The novel offers a scathing, even contemptuous, picture of Puritanism. Hawthorne portrays Puritan society as dull, stifling, cruel, and closed-minded, victimizing Hester unfairly. Hester never gave a damn about the Puritans' beliefs about sin or the weight of collective guilt; instead, she followed her heart, which rendered her guilty of adultery. Besides, Hawthorne exemplifies the growth of Hester's internal voice of ethical resistance to patriarchal injustices (Mussies, 2018). Hawthorne agrees with the Puritans that sin was a result of evil, despite their strict and ruthless regulations, but he disagrees that sin doomed a person for all time. He acknowledges that sin had "an educative effect" (Mills, 1948).

Hawthorne seems to be practically in love with the Puritan community as he describes it with such exactitude and attention to detail. He begins *The Scarlet Letter* with a thorough and in-depth account of the Puritan gathering before the prison door: "A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of the wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes." (SL: 39) He begins with this straightforward assertion before going into great detail regarding some of the Puritan traits. The Puritans were "a people amongst whom religion and law were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful." (41) Although they were harsh in their treatment of anyone who defied their moral standards, Hawthorne seems to symbolize their 'cold' compassion for a transgressor with a morally dubious worldview. Hawthorne firmly believes that Puritan laws were stringent and severe in order to punish "a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child." (ibid)

Hester meets Arthur in the forest where and throws away her scarlet letter and removes her hat. Nature sympathizes with her, but her daughter Pearl won't approach her until she wears the symbol of her guilt. Hawthorne seems to be defending the standards of the Puritan society here by employing Pearl as his spokesperson. Hawthorne seems to accept everything about them: the order and holiness of their religion, the seriousness with which their laws are followed, the simplicity of their manner of life, and most importantly, their ambition to reach "the high mountain peak of faith and sanctity." (112) He sounds poetic when he says that during events like the Procession, the music of the Puritans, which was "played with no great skill," (184) gives the spectacle of life "a higher or more heroic air to the scene of life." (ibid) He appears to depict the silence with magnificence and then, the breaking of the Puritans "in a strange, deep voice of awe and wonder" (199) which serves as its expression in the murmur that clumped heavily after Arthur's death of "triumphant ignominy" (ibid) on the scaffold. Despite all, Lanlan (2011) believes that Hawthorne was unable to shake off the shackles of Puritan doctrine completely.

In another passage, Hawthorne seems to reflect ironically earnestly on the Puritans' refusal to be fair, generous, and nice to a sinner. He presents them as lacking the Christian virtues of compassion, mercy, and love. Their harshness and their narrowness are exemplified by the story of Hester's "frailty and sorrow." (40) Her exotic beauty, womanly elegance, and dignity, as well as the "fertility and gorgeousness of her fancy," (44) seem to be overshadowed by their moral values. Her only transgression, if there really was one, was letting the hurricane of passion sweep her off her feet which Puritans consider adultery as a nefarious sin (Woameno, 2018). She was immediately plunged into a moral crisis as a result of the Puritans' punishment.

The cherished ideal of motherhood appeared to be unimportant to the Puritans. Their world was only becoming darker as a result of this wonderful woman (Hester) and the child (Pearl) she had given birth to. "Had there been a Papist," writes Hawthorne, "he might have seen

in this beautiful woman ... an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity.” (46) When Hester first encountered Dimmesdale in the forest, she was uplifted, joyful, and thrilled. She discards the scarlet letter and takes off her hat so she can radiate a halo of beauty. Moreover, Hawthorne praises her beauty and says: “Her sex, her youth and the whole richness of her beauty came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves, with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour.” (158) Hester, in the author’s opinion, wastes a great lot of beauty, riches, and experience. She also exhibits some noble qualities in hiding the name of her lover and enduring her pathos and punishment on her own. Hawthorne appears to be a spectator calmly observing the drama of “human frailty and sorrow,” (40) rather than a supporter or critic of Puritanism.

The Scarlet Letter is a complex work that stirs a variety of emotions in its readers as opposed to one where some issues are cleanly resolved while others remain unresolved. Hawthorne demonstrates the true essence of a great work of art by describing the complexity and mystery of life without providing a solution. Although Hawthorne is both a product of and a response to Puritanism, the evidence and justification offered above convince us that he qualifies as one of the greatest artists of all time.

3.3 What the *Scarlet Letter* Holds for the Twenty-first Century

The novel portrayed the critical issues through the characters who suffered from the robust Puritan notions. However, the novel underscores the vitality of positivity, constructiveness, and hope in the actions of its protagonist character Hester Prynne who refused, rejected, and survived first with humiliation and later graceful with her strong traits (Mussies, 2018; Littlefield & Sara, 2015). Moving from nineteenth-century notions to twenty-first-century notions and perceptions, we confirm that there is a tremendous transformation and transition in the attitudinal, cognitive skills, knowledge, and lifestyle diversity of people, especially women.

The majority of the aforementioned studies have focused on psychological, physical, sociological, cultural, and religious aspects and have painted a bleak, dismal, and rigid portrait of Hawthorne’s world (Bay, 2005; Hariyanti & Nurhayati, 2017; Lanlan, 2011; Li, 2006; Littlefield & Sara, 2015; Mussies, 2018; Richardson, 2014; Roggenkamp, 2018; Sharma, 2022; Splendor, 2013; Woameno, 2018; Yamin, 2010; Zivic, 2014). People strongly adhere to Puritan doctrine, which shows no compassion for sinners. The novel portrayed the critical issues through the characters who suffered from the robust Puritan notions. However, the novel underscores the vitality of positivity, constructiveness, and hope in the actions of its protagonist character Hester Prynne who refused, rejected, and survived humiliation and later graceful with her strong traits which coincide with the findings of Khan, et.al (2021), Miah (2020) and Zayed (2023). Therefore, Hester’s strengths reflecting the glory of human nature made her eligible to become a model for Puritan morality (Lanlan, 2011).

People’s attitudes, cognitive capacities, knowledge, and lifestyle diversity have seen a substantial transformation from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, particularly among women. They seem to be becoming worse as societies consolidate, modernize, become more aware of, and politicize lifestyle groups, particularly in urban regions. High levels of educational achievement, economic empowerment, and cooperation lead to a strong feeling of shared values and traditions, intercultural pride, and social cohesiveness. The mainstream has successfully amalgamated various cultural groupings of people, which has led to the emergence of free forms of literature, philosophy, and expression (Sharma, 2017). Because many ethnic groups have successfully blended into society today, there are now free forms of literature, as well as freedom of thinking, expression, and choice. In addition, it has become a part of everyday life and living literature, or it has been incorporated into the new canon.

Conversely, the complexities do exist in society; however, are subsidized or eliminated by education and awareness. *The Scarlet Letter* brings a lot to tackle such critical issues. For instance, Hester’s life characterizing positive features may bring perceptible changes in suppressed classes who hardly dare to speak against atrocities. Therefore, Hester becomes the voice of distinctly American and other cultures, the influx of millions of similar-believe-in-free ideology women, and against the continuing insistence by Puritan-like restrictions on a discrete Hester-American consciousness. Additionally, Hester does not fall but becomes a miniature of a resistant, - a “Feminist Angel”, a strong woman looking forward to the equality between men and women; however, owing to her human weakness and the prejudice of the Puritan society, she cannot become a thorough feminist (Yamin, 2010). Thus, the evolution of new definitions in *The Scarlet Letter* is also attested to by the rebirth of contemporary American cultures, the reconstruction of American literature, modern world works of literature, and phenomena of a self-reliant and repulsive nature. These features make Hawthorne a writer of excellence as Roggenkamp (2018) mentioned Hawthorne as an undeniably important literary figure in American literature.

This makes it clear how difficult it will be for academics like Hester and Arthur to reconstruct and reinterpret the novel in light of contemporary American and modern works of literature. Nonetheless, several academics concur that Hawthorne’s writing is not particularly pertinent to the situation we are in today (Bay, 2005; Li, 2006; Yamin, 2010). Therefore, for improved and fair living conditions in society, should it be a study with the proper depiction of all characteristics or a comprehensive context with endless space? One thing is made evident by this study, and that is the consensus that no one should be excluded from the rebuilt society because of their acts, gender, area, or status. We must also keep in mind that the issues that the characters in the novel are the same as those that exist in other societies; however, society’s traditional, cultural, and ethical values should be respected and taken into account before any form of selfishness. We must, therefore, acknowledge that the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the novel are in progress, but there is still more to be done. Moreover, Hawthorne’s offer in 1850 is not less radical, but more socially forward-looking (Splendor, 2013).

4. Conclusion

The given discussion on *The Scarlet Letter* has made a seminal attempt to determine whether Hawthorne critiques Puritan society’s stringent regulations or supports it in its genuine sense. The paper dives deep into the novel to explore Hawthorne’s views on Puritanism

to see his stand on it. Hawthorne makes an effort to psychologically analyze the struggle in the thoughts of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth who consider Puritans as sinners. The amply given shreds of evidence certify that Hawthorne mostly agrees with the Puritan concept of sin and justified Hester's belief that she is a sinner from the viewpoint of the Puritans. Additionally, we found Hawthorne's devotion to the novel as we read it and felt that he was both a Puritanism product and a reaction against it.

Hester's magnetic personality, unflappable bravery, and unwavering devotion to life enable her to publicly deny her guilt, reject the idea of predestination, and become her own rescuer. She sets an example by giving advice and supporting societally oppressed women. Hester achieves autonomy on her own terms. Besides, she makes of her intellect and free thinking the authority that dictates her actions (Zayed, 2023). Hester, in the process, could transcend cultural expectations to attain self-realization and self-fulfillment and make a positive contribution to society. Hester's persona, optimism, and contribution to society could influence women's lives in contemporary society in the twenty-first century. The explanation hopefully settles or helps minimize endless debate on some issues that remained unsettled till now. Furthermore, the accomplishment of the aforementioned objectives by the study is not wholly novel, but it will add to the body of knowledge currently available on the topic. The majority of objections to the paper stated objectives and its consolidation into well-known American literature have been answered, which has made way for a more sober discussion.

5. Implications of the Findings

The novel's physical, psychological, political, social, and theological elements have been the subject of earlier research of a similar nature; the current study, however, emphasizes Hawthorne's viewpoint on the strict laws of Puritan society and how it treats those who defy them. The personality of Hester, as described here, will have an impact on how women live in modern society in the twenty-first century. We hope that the finding of the study will advance readers' and scholars' knowledge of Hawthorne's perspective on Puritan society, sin, and novel while motivating them to pursue additional, related research on other authors and books to investigate how they suggest them in twenty-first-century perspectives. The author believes that all scholars should be overly concerned with social, political, societal, religious, and cultural issues for the time being at least and should spend more time on textual and modern literary studies. McClain (2022) expect didactic literature will solve several existing problems that remain possible and achievable for the rest of the coming in 21st century. This brings about a perceptible shift in people's perceptions of society and brings about equality, justice, peace, happiness, and a good life.

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