

# Sensationalism in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne

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**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2023**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:397146>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-07-31**



**Sveučilište u Zadru**  
Universitas Studiorum  
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

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Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti  
(dvopredmetni)



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**Sensationalism in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2023.



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## 1. Introduction

In this thesis, I analyze sensationalism both as a literary critical term and in terms of its appearance and significance within the characters of Nathaniel Hawthorne's works. Sensationalism is a literary or dramatic phenomenon which became immensely popular within Victorian society – especially among women – during the mid-to-late 1800s. This phenomenon led to the popularity of the sensation novel among the audiences not only in America but also all over the world.

This form of literary expression was significant for writers of that period because they recognized that everything we perceive comes through our senses. They often depicted middle-class homes and family relationships as settings for secrets, sins, mysterious identities, and fear – themes that were highly popular and sought after by readers.

The main characteristics of all sensation novels were exciting plots with many unexpected turns. They were easy to read and understand. These novels evoked emotions such as lust, disgust, fear, and shock, while sidelining sentiments of sympathy and love. Such images and scenes were designed to arouse feelings and elicit strong reactions from readers.

This thesis analyzes Sensationalism in the American literature and its use and significance in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a well-known author appreciated all over the world. The aim of the research is, by means of studying and comparing the already existing relevant theoretical works, to present and explain the term “Sensationalism” and sensation novel, to analyze its use through characters in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and to understand the purpose of this type of literary expression. In this thesis, some of his famous works are analyzed: *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Minister's Black Veil* and *Young Goodman Brown*.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the effect Nathaniel Hawthorne had on sensation novels, precisely those among women. Hawthorne's famous sensation novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, revolves around the crime of adultery combined with false identity and the constant self-punishment of the characters, while the superfluous obsession with the sin is presented in other two works; *The Minister's Black Veil* and *Young Goodman Brown*.

In the initial chapter of the paper, Sensationalism in American literature and Sensationalism in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne will be discussed. It will be followed by an overview of the term "sensation novels", that is, "novels with a secret" characterized by exciting plots with many unexpected turns, surprises and shocking scenes. These novels were easy to read and understand.

Chapters three, four and five form the core of the paper, examining the key traits Hawthorne's mysterious sensation novels *The Scarlet Letter*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *The Minister's Black Veil* possess. Chapter six includes the comparison of the characters in said works.

The three novels are subsequently analysed in detail according to said research points and the final comparison and conclusion is laid out: themes of sin, adultery, occult and piety – everyday topics of Hawthorne's America – were precisely what made them sensational.

## 2. Sensationalism in American literature

Sensationalism is a particular literary or dramatic phenomenon which became very popular in America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially among women. This form of literary expression aimed to arouse strong curiosity, interest, or reactions, especially through exaggerated or lurid details.<sup>1</sup> Sensational fiction from this era largely comprised low-cost, mass-produced novels with enticing titles in bold lettering and melodramatic scenes that ranged from the sensational to the horrific.

The term “sensation novel” was first used by Dion Boucicault, an Irish-American playwright and actor, in his melodrama *The Colleen Bawn*, which drew middle-class audiences to the Adelphi Theatre in 1860. This term referred to fiction crafted to both surprise and shock. Boucicault's spectacular melodrama is replete with mystery, action, and intensified emotions (L. James 215).

Boucicault subverted the moral opposition of good against evil, by presenting his “hero,” Hardress, as influenced by his mother, who held a strong identity function over him. Boucicault divided the heroine figure between two women of contrasting appearance and character: the physically impulsive redhead, Anne Chute, and the dark-haired Eily, Hardress' good-hearted yet mysteriously shy wife. The climatic “sensation scene”, Eily's drowning in a vast sea cave, does not serve to present the final working out of justice as in traditional melodramas. Instead, it occurs in the middle of the narrative, to initiate and generate mystery (L. James 215).

This work is just one example among many others written in that period. A notable shared feature in this kind of novel was the depiction of middle-class homes and familial relationships that served as settings for sins, secrets, mysterious identities, and fear – themes

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/sensational>>



which were very popular and desired among readers. The main characteristics of all sensation novels were exciting plots with many unexpected twists, surprises, and shocking scenes. They were easy to read and understand but also allowed readers to easily identify with the characters.

Brantlinger explains that the best sensation novels are “novels with a secret”, or sometimes with several secrets, in which new narrative strategies were developed to tantalize the reader by withholding information rather than divulging it. Bigamy, adultery, and the problem of divorce law were much on the Victorians' minds in the 1860s (Brantlinger).

Matthiessen argues that „character, in any sense in which we can get at it, is action, and action is plot“ (qtd. in Gerber 57). From this quote, we can conclude that sensationalism arises more from the plot of the story than from its characters.

What is also interesting about sensational novels is the fact that, in the end, they are not mysterious at all, explains Brantlinger. He further argues that the insoluble becomes soluble, with guilt being shifted onto others, which is to say onto scapegoat characters whom we are glad to see punished. Meanwhile, the good characters, with whom we most strongly identify, get their satisfaction, and are rewarded in the end (Brantlinger).

The plots of sensation novels are typically structured around a recurrence of similar or identical situations, often manifested as dreams or omens that eventually find fulfillment, which is evident in the works analyzed in this paper. Brantlinger expands on this by suggesting that the structural explanation for this repetition of incidents emerges from the realization that mystery stories are necessarily two-fold. The first narrative concerns the past and the crime that has been committed, which is then unraveled in the second narrative that is set in the present and recounts the discovery of the crime's cause (Brantlinger).

The sensation novel reduces its action to mostly one event, or a few that were inevitable, as is the case in *The Scarlet Letter*, where the themes revolve around the crime of

adultery, combined with false identity and characters' constant self-punishment. A similar thematic focus on the overpowering obsession with sin can be observed in other two works: *The Minister's Black Veil* and *Young Goodman Brown*.

The sensation novel upended traditional male and female roles from times when men dominated women. In these novels, women were no longer neglected and oppressed; instead, they emerged as strong and vivid characters.

## 2.1. Sensationalism in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne stands as one of the main representatives among the many popular authors of American sensation novels. He was a descendant of Puritan immigrants,<sup>2</sup> born in Salem, Massachusetts, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1804. By his mid-teens, he had been reading eighteenth-century novelists and formed an ambition to be a writer himself (Baym 1247).

Hawthorne's works probe into human nature, especially its darker side. He called his writing "romance", which he defined as a method of showing "the depths of our common nature". To Hawthorne, romance meant confronting reality, rather than avoiding it. He often explored themes of morality, sin, and redemption, which were always presented through various symbols. Hawthorne's symbolism was an essential tool in addressing topics that were too radical to be publicly addressed in the nineteenth century. Through symbols, he subtly

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<sup>2</sup> Puritans were religious groups in England that immigrated to the New World in the 17th century. Puritans thought the national religion, Anglicanism, displayed too much similarity to Catholicism, the dominant European religion, which England renounced in 1534. The church needed to "purify" itself through reforms, advocated the Puritans. <<http://peopleof.oureverydaylife.com/led-puritans-pilgrims-settle-north-america-8197.html>>

expressed his own beliefs, achieving a unique form of allegory by placing characters in unusual situations.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Analysis of *The Scarlet Letter*

*The Scarlet Letter* is one of the most famous works written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It is a romance with an interesting, sensational plot. It consists of 24 numbered chapters, whose plot is set in Boston in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are four main characters: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl, who is predominantly presented as a symbol throughout the novel.

As Dauber argues, *The Scarlet Letter* is America's first masterwork of fiction. It is "the great American novel" – a work by an American about America – that critics had sought from the beginning of the century, a recognition that Hawthorne's contemporaries also shared.

Ernest Sandeen argues that *The Scarlet Letter* has been interpreted as a story of sins and sinners. Through the characters of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl, the novel illuminates the consequences of the sin of adultery. Furthermore, the novel is seen as a love story, that is, as a tragedy of grand passion rather than a tale of sin (qtd. in Gerber 111).

According to Turner, *The Scarlet Letter* depicts scenes from the lives of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale – scenes that illustrate the characters changes, yet are interconnected by only tenuous links (Turner 106). They are the protagonists and primary drivers of the story's action, with whom we empathize from the beginning. Their lives seem very real and, because of that feeling, we can identify with them.

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<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americannovel/timeline/hawthorne.html>>

Martin explains that Hawthorne's three pivotal scaffold scenes appear at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of *The Scarlet Letter*. These scenes are also the central scenes of the story which provide deep insights into the characters. Martin further notes that each scaffold scene brings the major characters and forces of the story together in moments of moral, emotional, and psychological tension, and, most importantly, each scene dramatically underscores the significance of the scarlet letter (Martin 111, 112).

These scaffold scenes and actions around them are the most sensational moments in the story because of their dramatic, surprising, and shocking twists that evoke strong feelings in readers.

The story begins "in medias res"; the crime has already been committed and the characters grapple with its consequences in the present. The protagonist, Hester Prynne, is imprisoned on charges of adultery. She gives birth to a child, the result of an affair with a lover whose identity she refuses to reveal. Hester's mysterious nature and strong will to protect her lover's identity make the story more sensational and dramatic. Although she is brave and determined to keep a secret, she is unfortunate because she cannot hide her sin, unlike her concealed accomplice.

*The Scarlet Letter* is a very interesting story, brimming with drama, actions and reactions of its characters. It arouses all our senses and evokes the feelings we are not even aware of.

The story is set in 17th-century Boston, a Puritan settlement, where people had to obey the law and every crime had to be punished. Joseph Schwartz argues that, in the Puritan way of life, religion and law were almost identical. The law was severe, and it was enforced rigorously (qtd. in Gerber 42, 43). This means that there were few important society leaders and everything they considered a crime had to be punished. Such is the case with Hester. Her

sin of adultery and her secrecy are deemed criminal, so “her punishment and suffering are treated as inevitable,” indicates Matthiessen (qtd. in Donohue 306).

The magistrates, who retrieve the punishments, take Hester from prison to the marketplace to expose her in front of the community on the scaffold of the pillory. Here, the dramatic action unfolds, and elements of sensationalism are presented. The protagonist is dragged into the light of day, left to the mercy and scorn of the community. The readers are now drawn into the story and all their senses are fully engaged. They begin to develop feelings for Hester and sympathize with her misery. Their strong empathy stems from the fact that her portrayal is very genuine, so they can identify with her and imagine how miserable she feels on the scaffold, especially because she believes that she did not do anything wrong.

Van Doren notes that the readers constantly feel a close connection to her, being completely convinced of her humanity in both heart and mind (Van Doren 151). The setting seems very real, so it is easy to imagine her situation and sympathize with her during these challenging moments.

What also evokes a surge of emotions is the opening scene on the scaffold, featuring Hester holding her three-month-old child, Pearl. The name “Pearl” conjures associations with the notion of purity, leading to the conclusion that the narrator’s intent was to make readers infer that the child symbolizes innocence and purity, even though she was conceived in what the community deems a sin. Hester’s punishment is to wear a scarlet letter “A” on her chest, the token of adultery. She must wear it every day so it reminds her of the sin she committed. But she is a strong woman and she even embroiders the letter with gold thread and wears it proudly despite its intended ignominy.

Turner says that the color of the letter and the embroidery with which Hester has decorated it suggest the richness of her nature and her mind’s independence (Turner 127).

The drama continues, as the magistrates tell Reverend Dimmesdale to convince her to reveal the identity of the child's father.

“What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him – yea, compel him, as it were – to add hypocrisy to sin? Heaven hath granted thee an open ignominy, that thereby thou mayest work out an open triumph over the evil within thee, and the sorrow without” (Levin 68).

Drawing from this quote, it is evident that Dimmesdale's actions are steeped in hypocrisy, which is “the greatest crime in the eyes of middle-class readers,” according to Kreger. These words deeply resonate with readers, so they see that he is truly suffering. He probably harbors a secret wish for Hester to reveal his identity because he is too weak to confess. As a Reverend, he is highly appreciated in the community and those circumstances make it difficult for him to admit his sin. Although he is a hypocrite and a coward, readers might still understand his reaction and feel compassion for him.

The weak-willed Dimmesdale is contrasted with his determined partner in crime throughout the entire novel.

In this scaffold scene, Hester's husband also appears, heightening the reader's tension. This is an unexpected and interesting turn. Of course, to make the story more dramatic and sensational, he hides his identity and introduces himself as a physician, Roger Chillingworth. Only Hester knows who he is. He tries to find out the name of her lover because he craves revenge and wants to expose her lover to the world, as evidenced by the following quote: “His fame, his position, his life, will be in my hands. Beware!” (Levin 77).

Gerber argues that Chillingworth vows to claim Hester's lover for himself, as visible in the previous quote. To achieve this, he must conceal his identity and establish a false relationship with the community (Gerber 109).

Roger Chillingworth is a cold man, hungry for revenge, because his pride is hurt and he would be humiliated if people found out that he is her deceived husband. The author named him Chillingworth, which can be instantly associated with feelings of coldness and repulsion. He is portrayed as a mean character, evoking little sympathy from readers; instead, he is very repugnant and malicious.

Wagenknecht notes that Chillingworth is a wronged man who has been warped out of a normal course of development by his wife's infidelity and his own self-dedication to a hideous revenge (28).

The minister hides his sin, and Chillingworth hides his identity. This concealment affords a constant drama, as Fogle concluded (111). The characters constantly hide secrets, they are mysterious and speak with hidden meanings, which is very intriguing and diverting for the reader.

As Johnson notes, Hester Prynne has been presented as an American heroine – self-punishing, separating the private from the public and suffering in silence. She is depicted as a strong and wise woman, which is also sensational in the eyes of the readers, who were familiar with the fact that, at that time, women were oppressed and were not allowed to stand up and speak for themselves, and yet, Hester does that despite her sin. This was especially sensational and interesting to the female audience of that era.

Another sensational action is the attempt by the community leaders to take Pearl away. Pearl is Hester's scarlet letter in another form, as can be seen from the following quote: "It was the scarlet letter in another form, the scarlet letter endowed with life" (Levin 101).

Pearl is a pure symbol, a living emblem of her mother's sin, a human embodiment of the Scarlet Letter, notes Fogle. He continues by asserting that her mission is to keep Hester's adultery always in her mind, to prevent her from attempting to escape its moral consequences (Fogle 114).

According to Ragussis, “with Pearl as the letter, Hawthorne chooses to show us the most painful way in which the self depends upon another – namely, through the child who carries her own meaning conceived as another’s.” Furthermore, the child’s identity is conceived in relation to another: she symbolizes a letter, serving as a clue to fully understanding another’s identity. The “A” stands for Adultery, but also for “Arthur”, since the first two letters of “adultery” are the father’s initials.

Martin observes that the community has pinned the initial of Hester’s lover to her breast and then wondered for seven years who he might be (Martin 122).

Person notes that in the scene at the Governor’s hall Hester actively tries to reshape her relationship with the Puritan community. She breaks her silence and speaks on her own behalf. He also explains that because of Hester’s marginal status, the magistrates ignore her pleas, and because her speech is powerless, she must quickly change her strategy and rely on Dimmesdale’s influence.

Hester asks Dimmesdale to speak for her, as can be seen from the following quotes: “Thou knowest – for thou hast sympathies which these men lack! – thou knowest what is in my heart, and what are a mother’s rights, and how much the stronger they are, when that mother has but her child and the scarlet letter!” (Levin 112).

These words are aimed at him, although the others do not know it. Because of the fear that Hester would reveal him, he says that she should keep her child with her. On the one hand, he would be glad if she revealed him, but on the other hand, he is afraid of the community’s reaction. He knows that he has broken God’s law and that he needs to repent for his sin, but he does not have enough courage to face the community and confess. Another reason for not confessing is probably the fact that he actually has not repented for his sin and that is why he suffers and torments himself.



Another thing that makes the plot more intriguing is the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Chillingworth is trying to help Dimmesdale who suffers from emotional sickness, but he, in fact, knows that Dimmesdale is hiding a secret and yearns to find it out.

As Matthiessen argues, the physician's native power in reading the human soul, when unsupported by any moral sympathies, leaves him open to degradation, step by step, from a man into a fiend (qtd. in Gerber 58).

Dimmesdale feels as if he is haunted by Satan, maybe sent in the form of Roger Chillingworth.

Baym explains that Dimmesdale is sincerely horrified by his deed, and embarks on a long journey of self-torture and punishment; but he does not confess. She continues by saying that these inner torments, bodied forth most horrifyingly in Chillingworth, are Dimmesdale's strategy that keeps him from confessing. His belief that he is being punished enables him to keep his guilt a secret by pacifying his sense of justice (Baym).

Furthermore, Baym argues that he is terrified by the social consequences of his confession. One who leans so heavily on the social structure would be almost certainly destroyed if he were cast out of it, like Hester has been. For someone who largely defines himself by the image reflected back from the observing eyes around him, the loss of social standing implies a loss of identity. However, confession would signify something more: a final and irrevocable surrender to the sense of guilt (Baym).

Roger Chillingworth is digging into the soul and heart of Dimmesdale. He says to him that his bad appearance is because of something on his heart, a burden or a secret. Chillingworth suspects his connection to Hester.

"He hath done a wild thing ere now, this pious Master Dimmesdale, in the hot passion of his heart" (Levin 136).

Dimmesdale hates himself because he knows he is a hypocrite.

“The minister well knew – subtle, but remorseful hypocrite that he was! - the light in which his vague confession would be viewed” (Levin 143).

Fogle calls Dimmesdale, a “remorseful hypocrite” forced to live a perpetual lie in society. He says that the character’s considerable talent for self-torture is amplified by both the situation and the relentless efforts of Chillingworth (qtd. in Gerber 66).

The story’s second dramatic scene unfolds once again on the scaffold, but this time at night with Dimmesdale acting as the initiator. It appears he finds some form of relief in coming there, especially at night, when all secrets could be revealed without fear that someone would find out. He feels as though the entire universe is looking at the scarlet letter imprinted on the flesh of his chest, over his heart.

“And thus, while standing on the scaffold, in this vain show of expiation, Mr. Dimmesdale was overcome with a great horror of mind, as if the universe were gazing at a scarlet token on his naked breast, right over his heart” (Levin 147).

As Crews argues, the problem is not Dimmesdale’s libidinous nature, but its weakness when faced with his tyrannous self-accusations and his persistent desire to be holy. This binds him with Chillingworth and Hester in mutual secrecy. It serves as a study in the unconscious interdependence of people who feed on each other’s incompleteness in a society that encourages them to dissemble and consume themselves in secrecy (qtd. in Gerber 95).

He then screams, craving to be discovered, but he does that in the middle of the night and when everyone is asleep so they think they are just dreaming.

Hester and Pearl are passing by, they are on Governor Winthrop’s deathbed. They all stand together on the scaffold, holding their hands, the most touching scene that can be vividly imagined.

“And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two” (Levin 153).

Turner explains that Dimmesdale’s holding his hand over his heart to indicate suffering and guilt is so natural as a representation that the idea comes across without calling attention to the means (127).

Dimmesdale looks up at the sky and, amid the meteoric light, he sees the letter A because he is feeling guilty.

“We impute it, therefore, solely to the disease in his own eye and heart, that the minister, looking upward the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter, - the letter A, marked out in lines of dull red light” (Levin 154).

At that moment, Roger Chillingworth approaches the scaffold, but is not discreet as usual so they see him. He cannot hide his rage and hunger for revenge.

“To his feature, as to all other objects, the meteoric light imparted a new expression; or it might well be that the physician was not careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim” (Levin 155).

We see the narrator’s intent to make us wonder how deep Roger’s hate for Dimmesdale is, what he can do to him. There is a constant tense atmosphere, and the readers wonder what is going to happen next. They are aware that it is just a matter of time before an unexpected twist happens. Roger’s pride has been hurt, and he has to get even. He has been slowly destroying his victim and patiently waiting for the right moment to inflict his last, triumphant shot and destroy him completely.

The plot moves to Hester and Dimmesdale standing on the scaffold. They both confess to a crime.

“His nerve seemed absolutely destroyed. His moral force was abased into more than childish weakness” (Levin 158).

From this quote, it is evident how overwhelming his guilt is; he is both emotionally and physically destroyed. Readers pity him and sympathize with him. While they wish for him to confess and stand alongside Hester, they also understand how hard it must be to publicly confess because he would bear terrible consequences and would probably be rejected by the community.

Another important scene is the one in which Roger Chillingworth and Hester are talking about her adultery. He has suspected for a long time that Pearl is Dimmesdale’s child. At one point, he says he would hang him on the gallows to satisfy his thirst for revenge.

“My finger, pointed at this man, would have hurled him from his pulpit into a dungeon, - thence, peradventure, to the gallows” (Levin 170).

These words are terrifying and disturbing. From this quote, Chillingworth’s inner state is apparent. He is mad and injured. He constantly thinks about revenge, that goal has become his sole focus and he is passionately devoted to it. At one point, he decides to torture Dimmesdale because he knows the truth and wants Dimmesdale to become insane, to snap out of sorrow and misery, as evident in the following quote: “I have exhausted on him. That he now breathes, and creeps about on earth, is owing all to me!” (Levin 170).

Waggoner argues that due to Chillingworth’s injured pride and inhuman curiosity, he dedicates himself to prying into the minister’s heart. Any goodness he once had, which was always negative and defined merely by the absence of overt evil, disappears. Pride takes over his previously cold heart, driving him to seek revenge. His intellectual curiosity remains only as a rationalization, a “good” reason that serves to distract from his true motives. Waggoner concludes that Chillingworth becomes a moral monster who feeds on another’s torment, completely detached from the sources of life and goodness (Waggoner 150).

This statement can be confirmed by the following quote: “A mortal man, with once a human heart, has become a fiend for his especial torment!” (Levin 171).

Roger Chillingworth blames Hester for their fate and for the man he has become because of her sin.

“Peradventure, hadst thou met earlier with a better love than mine, this evil had not been. I pity thee, for the good that has been wasted in thy nature” (Levin 172).

Van Doren argues that these are terrible words, for they express a fear we have had, the fear that this magnificent woman has lived for nothing more than a few days of love, followed by dreary years of, indeed, less than nothing. He continues by saying that Hawthorne knew how to instill this fear in us – it could only resonate if we also loved her – but he also knew how to make Chillingworth’s words untrue (Van Doren 152).

As she has many times before, Pearl asks her mother what the letter A means and why Mr. Dimmesdale holds his hand over heart.

“What does the letter mean, mother? - and why dost thou wear it? - and why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?” (Levin 179).

Fogle explains that Pearl’s childish questions are fiendishly apt; in both speech and action, she consistently aligns with her symbolic function; both her dress and appearance relate to the letter (qtd. in Gerber 66).

Ragussis concludes that Pearl (the child) and Chillingworth (the enemy) play a similar role. Both seek to expose Dimmesdale’s secret: they ask him leading questions, frighten and riddle him (Ragussis).

One day, Hester decides to meet Dimmesdale. She and Pearl go to the forest where no one can see them. Pearl starts asking questions as usual. She is curious who the Black Man is. She hears that he gave that token to Hester.

Then they see Dimmesdale approaching them. Hester asks him to stop and talk to her. He is miserable, asking himself how he can redeem other souls if he is a sinner. He is aware that he has been living a lie for the past seven years. He has been lying to himself and the whole community. He has been torturing himself because it felt easier, but he has slowly been destroying both his soul and body, because the secret has been eating him alive, as is evident from the following quote: “I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgement seat. Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret!” (Levin 191).

We can agree with Crews, who argues that we can understand the nature of Dimmesdale’s illness by defining his state of mind for the past seven years. It is, of course, his concealed act of adultery that lies at the bottom of his self-torment. The plain meaning of this outburst is that Dimmesdale has never overcome the libidinal urge that led to his sin. He further explains that his „penance,” including self-flagellation and the more refined torment of submitting to Chillingworth’s influence, has failed to purify him because it has not been accompanied by the feeling of penitence, a resolution to not sin again (qtd. in Gerber 96).

In addition, Dimmesdale’s remorse, on the other hand, is tied to the continual reimagining of the sin in fantasy, leading to a persistent renewal of the need for self-punishment (qtd. in Gerber 97).

Hester sees clearly how Chillingworth has affected him, destroying his soul and mind and making him miserable and weak.

“She doubted not, that the continual presence of Roger Chillingworth, - the secret poison of his malignity, infecting all the air about him...” (Levin 192).

Male considers Chillingworth a leech, draining his patient of nerve, will, and physical energy. But, as the whole book demonstrates, he is also the healer (Male 96).

When Hester tells Dimmesdale that Chillingworth is her husband, he is crushed but he forgives her at the end. She says that he cannot live with him anymore, because he would do something terrible if he found out the secret.

“That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart” (Levin 194).

Martin concludes that Chillingworth is the worst sinner of all; he has violated in cold blood the sanctity of a human heart, which is the greatest sin of all Hawthorne's antagonists. He uses his skill as a physician to keep Dimmesdale alive so that he can continue to punish him spiritually and psychologically (Martin 125).

Chillingworth wreaks terrible revenge upon Dimmesdale: seven years of consummate torture; seven years of willful, malicious, treacherous vengeance, according to Martin (125).

Hester and Dimmesdale start talking about leaving Boston together. Hester says to him that it would be better to leave sin where it happened. This part is quite interesting and sensational because Hester's proposal to escape is unexpected and surprising.

“Leave this wreck and ruin here where it hath happened... Exchange this false life of thine for a true one” (Levin 196, 197).

He says that he should die here, that Chillingworth has made him miserable.

“I must die here. There is not the strength or courage left me to venture into the wide, strange, difficult world, alone!” (Levin 197).

From this quote, one can see that Dimmesdale is defeated, he has reached the bottom, his self-torment and Chillingworth have destroyed him completely. The reader sympathizes with him and feels sorry for him, because he has, in fact, been a good man.

Martin explains that Dimmesdale suffers worlds of penance. However, since he is not willing to sacrifice his public image, it is penance without penitence. He continues by

explaining that he knows that the morality of this colony requires sin and iniquity to be exposed in broad daylight and that here, confession is a public matter (Martin 124, 125).

Dimmesdale tells Hester that he cannot live without her anymore. He finally feels relieved and alive again.

“I seem to have flung myself – sick, sin - stained, and sorrow – blackened – down upon these forest – leaves, and to have risen up all made anew, and with new powers to glorify Him that hath been merciful!” (Levin 200).

After their meeting, Dimmesdale decides to end his career on the Election Sermon Day, in four days. He is no longer the same man after their meeting. The Election Sermon Day arrives and everyone is at the marketplace. This is the third dramatic scene on the scaffold and readers eagerly wait to see what happens next.

At one point, a mariner approaches Hester and says that Roger Chillingworth has secured them a cabin on a ship departing from Boston. This startles and shocks her, and presumably, the readers as well. She realizes that Chillingworth has found out about their plan to leave Boston. She sees Roger standing in one corner and looking at her with a malicious smile.

Dimmesdale marches down the marketplace and comes to the scaffold to Hester and Pearl. He is ready to tell the truth and stretches his arms to them. Roger sees that and quickly approaches Dimmesdale to stop his intention.

“Mad man, hold! What is your purpose? Wave back that woman! Cast off this child! All shall be well! Do not blacken your fame, and perish in dishonor! I can yet save you! Would you bring infamy to your sacred profession?” (Levin 250).

Fogle argues that Chillingworth, posing as a physician, becomes a kind of attendant fiend to Dimmesdale, racking the minister’s soul with constant anguish. His attempt at the end to prevent Dimmesdale from reaching the redemptive scaffold is both reasonable and



fiendlike, although he is a devil struggling to reclaim an escaping soul. With the physician, the culminating irony is that, in his quest to damn Dimmesdale, he himself falls into damnation. In addition, Fogle notes the captivating dynamic between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale: “it’s characterized by Chillingworth’s near-absolute knowledge and power over a defenseless victim, a fascination which is heightened by the minister’s awareness of an encroaching evil close which he cannot identify “(112).

Mr. Dimmesdale says that he does not have control over him anymore and cannot affect his decision.

“Ha, tempter! Methinks thou art too late. Thy power is not what it was! Whit God's help, I shall escape thee now!” (Levin 250).

Dimmesdale begins his touching confession: “Hester Prynne, in the name of Him, so terrible and so merciful, who gives me grace, at this last moment, to do what – for my own heavy sin and miserable agony – I withheld myself from doing seven years ago, come hither now, and twine thy strength about me!” (Levin 251).

Gerber explains that when Dimmesdale finally confesses his act of adultery, he should consider it a violation of God’s laws. When we first see Dimmesdale, we see a man already conscious of having sinned against his Lord. The resulting estrangement has already made its mark upon him (Gerber 109).

The crowd is in a tumult. Dimmesdale has shown the letter A, imprinted in the flesh on his chest.

“With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed” (Levin 253).

Roger miserably repeats several times: “Thou hast escaped me!” (Levin 253).

Dimmesdale falls on the scaffold and says: “May God forgive thee. Thou, too, hast deeply sinned” (Levin 253).

Martin argues that with no Dimmesdale, there could be no Chillingworth; the avenger requires the victim to make him what he is, just as the victim requires the avenger (Martin 125).

Van Doren concludes that Dimmesdale is redeemed in our eyes only because his suffering makes him beautiful and because Hester continues to love him (154).

In the end, Pearl kisses her dying father, and this is the end of the dramatic and tense action.

Crews argues that Pearl, who has hitherto been a „messenger of anguish” to her mother, is emotionally transformed as she kisses Dimmesdale on the scaffold. He continues by saying that the great scene of grief, in which the wild infant plays a role, evoking all of her emotions; and as her tears fall on her father’s cheek, they serve as a pledge that she will grow up amid human joy and sorrow, not constantly at odds with the world, but fully participating in it as a woman (qtd. in Gerber 103).

Fogle argues that the author’s sympathy with Hester and Dimmesdale is clear enough, but he allows them only to escape the irrevocable spiritual ruin that befalls Chillingworth. Even in the carefully staged scene of Dimmesdale’s death, where every impulse of both the author and the reader demands complete forgiveness, Hawthorne refuses to grant it (107).

A multitude of people witness these scenes, but everyone has their own version of the event. Hester and Pearl move from Boston, but later Hester returns with the letter “A” still on her bosom. After many years, Hester dies and she is buried near Dimmesdale, where “on a field, sable, the letter A, gules” (Levin 262).

Fogle explains that Dimmesdale, despite his considerable intellect, is predominantly a heart character, and it is through the heart that sin has assailed him, in a burst of passion which overpowered both religion and reason. He continues by saying that the demoniac Chillingworth is of the head, a cold experimenter and thinker. It is fully representative of

Hawthorne's general emphasis that Chillingworth's spiritual ruin is complete. In addition, he explains that Hester Prynne is a combination of head and heart, with a preponderance of heart. Her original sin is of passion, but its consequences expose her to the danger of absolute mental isolation. The centrifugal urge of the intellect is counteracted inside her by her duty towards her daughter Pearl, the product of sin, and by her latent love for Dimmesdale. Fogle concludes that Pearl herself is a creature of nature, which is made human by Dimmesdale's confession and death (108).

Walcutt argues that readers love the characters who sin from the heart, such as Hester; they sometimes respect or pity those possessed by pride, as is the case with Dimmesdale; but they hate or despise Chillingworth. Furthermore, he concludes that the book is a tragedy, for sin is ubiquitous and the reader would not see the downfall of other sinners as complacent self-righteousness (qtd. in Gerber 72).

Sandeen concludes that Hawthorne's masterpiece may remain a haunted book, but it will be haunted by a mystery which we can identify as the mystery of erotic passion. He continues by saying that the lovers' passion is at its most interesting phase when the story starts, instead of being over, except for its consequences, as is tacitly assumed in the conventional approach (qtd. in Gerber 111).

#### 4. Analysis of *Young Goodman Brown*

*Young Goodman Brown* is a short story about good and evil. The protagonist is Goodman Brown who, for some reason, starts believing that everyone is evil, which is intimidating and shocking for both him and the reader. As a result of that state, he becomes a

distrustful and desperate young man who loses his faith in his wife and other people he has misjudged.

According to McKeithan, the theme of the story has been expressed in various ways: the reality of sin, the pervasiveness of evil, the secret sin and hypocrisy present in everyone, the hypocrisy of Puritanism, the consequences of doubt or disbelief, the devastating effects of moral skepticism, and the demoralizing realization that all men are sinners and hypocrites.

Fogle argues that *Young Goodman Brown* is generally thought to be one of Hawthorne's more challenging tales, because of the conclusion's ambiguity. Its hero, a naïve young man who accepts both society in general and his fellowmen as individuals at their own valuation, is drugin one terrible night presented with the vision of human Evil (qtd. in Donohue 207).

Fogle continues by saying that these ambiguities are intentional, an integral part of his purpose. Hawthorne wishes to propose not simply that man is primarily evil, but that there is a gnawing doubt lest this should indeed be true (qtd. in Donohue 208).

McKeithan argues that Goodman Brown is an everyman of average intelligence who strives to live a good life. He is a normal man leading a normal life with his beloved wife until he starts his journey. That one night changes his life and reflection. Whether it is reality or just a dream, it affects his further perception of life and humankind.

Goodman Brown becomes cynical because of his sin and because he sees evil even where it does not exist, McKeithan concludes. This is not a story of a person's disillusionment when they discover that many supposedly religious and virtuous people are, in fact, sinful; it is a story of a man whose sin leads him to think that all other people are sinful. McKeithan adds that Brown eventually comes to judge others according to himself: he thinks they are sinful and hypocritical because he is himself sinful and hypocritical. He does not judge them accurately: he misjudges them. The minister of Salem village, Deacon Gookin, Goody

Cloyse, and Faith are all good in spite of what Goodman Brown eventually thinks of them (McKeithan).

Goodman Brown starts having some sinful thoughts and that is probably the reason why he wants to go on a journey. He wants to clear his thoughts and be at peace with himself. He has been married for three months and he has probably fantasized about other women and wanted to indulge his fancy, which can be concluded from the following quote: “She's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven” (Levin 340).

From this quote, one can conclude that he is curious and, having perverse thoughts, he wants to restrain himself and be faithful until he dies. But, on his journey, whether real or imagined, people he considered good and loyal are presented as evil and wicked. That cognition stirs his world and he realizes that everyone is evil and sinful.

Fogle notes that Goodman Brown, whose nature is simple and pious, is shattered when the foundational pillars of his beliefs vanish (qtd. in Donohue 212).

Male argues that in *Young Goodman Brown* we read about a representable young man who is baffled and benumbed by the ambiguity of good and evil he discovers in his Faith (71). Furthermore, he says that Young Goodman Brown, whose name indicates his kinship with Goody Cloyse and Deacon Gookin, that is, his role as everyman, seems destined to spend a night in the forest, just as his wife's pink ribbons seem to be part of her (Male 77).

According to Hurley, his “visions” are the product of suspicion and distrust, not the Devil's wiles. Goodman Brown's dying hour is gloomy because the evil in his own heart overflows; he sees a world darkened by the dreariness of sin (Hurley). When he dies, “they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom” (Levin 353).

Hurley continues by saying that the corruption of his mind and heart is complete; Goodman Brown sees evil wherever he looks because he wants to see it (Hurley). This can be

confirmed by the following quotes, when Goodman Brown sees a pink ribbon, similar to Faith's, falling from the sky, and he instantly believes it is hers.

“My faith is gone! There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil, for to thee is this world given” (Levin 347).

Male concludes that Young Goodman Brown is overwhelmed by the vision of evil (80). This can be confirmed by the following quotes:

“The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man” (Levin 348).

After his journey, he is a changed man, distrustful and disappointed in all humankind. He loses his faith in good and sees only evil around him. This thinking turns him into a sad and isolated man, and the readers pity him.

According to Turner, *Young Goodman Brown* employs indirection and vagueness from beginning to end. The title Goodman, the equivalent of Mister, suggests that something like Everyman is intended in the title character, and his wife's name, Faith, announces her to be allegorical.

Turner continues that a witch meeting, moreover, attended by everyone in the community, high and low, is a statement that sin is universal. Furthermore, he reminds us that the last paragraph of the story, connected to earlier elements, pushes the readers to decide for themselves whether Brown actually goes to the meeting or only dreams about it, whether Faith is lost literally or metaphorically, and what it was that makes Brown “a sad, darkly, meditative man,” awareness of guilt on his own part, awareness of guilt in others, belief that guilt is universal, or acceptance of the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity (Turner 131, 132).

Fogle concludes that the most pervasive of the contrasts in *Young Goodman Brown* is the consistent discrepancy between appearance and reality, which helps to produce the heavy atmosphere of doubt and shadow (26, 27).

“Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting? Be it so if you will; but alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown” (Levin 353).

From this quote, we can conclude that the author wants to include the readers in the story and make them wonder if all of it is true or just a dream. Goodman Brown eventually becomes startled and frightened with his knowledge and the picture he gets of humankind. The good thing about his journey is that he overcomes his perverse thoughts and takes religion more seriously, but the bad thing is that, from that night on, he starts seeing evil everywhere and in everyone.

According to Fogle, the exact parallel between the earlier and the later situation serves to dramatize intensely the change which the real or fancied happenings of the night have brought about in Goodman Brown (qtd. in Donohue 215, 216).

Fogle explains Day and the Town are clearly emblematic of Good, of the seemly outward appearance of human convention and society. Night and the Forest, symbols of doubt and wandering, are the domains of the Evil One, where the dark subterranean forces of the human spirit riot uncontrolled. Also, according to Fogle, the contrast of the red color of fire and blood and the black color of night and forest at the witch-meeting is of different importance. Red represents Sin or Evil, plain, and unequivocal; black represents the doubt in the reality of either Evil or Good that tortures Goodman Brown (Fogle 26).

“Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race” (Levin 351, 352).

Martin concludes that readers, since Melville's time, have agreed that *Young Goodman Brown* is one of Hawthorne's most profound tales. In the manner of its concern with guilt and evil, it exemplifies what Melville called the "power of blackness" in Hawthorne's work. The thrust of the narrative is toward a climactic vision of universal evil, which leaves in its aftermath a stern legacy of distrust (Martin 89).

### 5. Analysis of *The Minister's Black Veil*

According to Fogle, Hawthorne's characteristic fusion of simplicity on the surface, with layers of complexity beneath is perhaps nowhere more fully in evidence than in *The Minister's Black Veil*, a brief, highly typical, and thoroughly successful story. It is subtitled "A Parable".<sup>4</sup> An apparently blameless minister inexplicably dons a black veil and wears it throughout his lifetime, despite of many well-meant pleas to cast it off. On his deathbed, he reveals its secret and justifies himself (Fogle).

*The Minister's Black Veil* is a short story about sin in general. The protagonist is Mr. Hooper who dons a black veil and wears it until his death. He decides to show how every human has sinned and that we need to repent for our sins, not hide them. Mr. Hooper becomes disappointed in people because they are hiding their sins and pretending, but are still asking Mr. Hooper on their deathbeds to repent their sins.

The moral is impressive, even terrible; but viewed simply as a proposition it is not difficult to grasp, however it may wind and reverberate within the deeps of the imagination, Fogle concludes. He continues by saying that the veil is a clear symbol of a secret sin, and its

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<sup>4</sup> A short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson.  
<<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/parable>>



projection into solid actuality has the effect of isolating the minister from the society, an isolation that perhaps mirrors, to some extent, the innate self-isolation felt by every individual (Fogle).

Fogle argues that his preoccupation with sin has blunted his perceptions of normal good, which lies as ready to his hand as evil. In rejecting the love of his fiancée, Elizabeth, he casts away a gift of inestimable value to satisfy a wild obsession.

According to Fogle, Elizabeth is a normal and well-ordered mind, and Mr. Hooper is the type of abnormal who has lost the power of seeing life steadily and as a whole. The “calm energy” of her character, her “direct simplicity”, contrasts with the “gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy” of the minister, whom her good counsel fails to persuade, and with his infatuated love of mystification. Hawthorne inherited the psychology, but not the theology nor the morality of his Puritan forebears; and Elizabeth is far more likely to represent his ideal than is the gloomy and sin-crazed Hooper (Fogle).

To present forcibly the tragic isolation of one man, Hawthorne is obliged to consider society as a solid group arrayed against his hero, ignoring for the time being the fact that this hero is Everyman, explains Fogle.

“If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough, and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?” (Levin 278).

From this quote, one can see Hooper’s opinion on everyone. He tries to show them that it is in human nature to make mistakes and sins, but he wants to teach them that they need to repent their sins and stop pretending that they are infallible. He uses his black veil to remind them that every time they look at him, they are sinful and hypocrites. They all have sins but are pointing fingers at Mr. Hooper and wondering what sin he has committed to cover his face. They isolate him from society just because he wears that black crape around his face.

That black veil is horrific for them because deep down they know they are sinners, and that black veil is a constant reminder of that.

In addition, Fogle notes that having chosen the symbol of the black veil, and invented an action for it, he refrains from pushing the reader to a single dogmatic conclusion. The minister himself believes the veil to be an emblem of the secret sin that poisons the souls of all mankind, but we are not compelled to accept his reading of the matter (Fogle).

Today, it is generally interpreted as a parable of human isolation, argues Santangelo. The critics claim that the minister is justified initially in his vision of universal sin. This realization ruins his life and sets a bad example, because he cuts himself off from normal human correspondence in isolation. The black veil has a dual function. Firstly, it makes him see the world as black, only in one color, and secondly, it traps him within himself. He is an egotist who sees a black life and cuts himself off from natural human feelings. He dies unreconciled with the world, and ironically, through his own egotism, he is a parable of the hidden sin he wishes to expose (Santangelo).

The black veil is the symbol of alienation, according to Santangelo. With it, he affirms that all men are sinful and in their sin are separated from each other (Santangelo).

Furthermore, he says that the veil forces Father Hooper to see the world from a different perspective. The black veil forces him to see everything in darkness, certainly a single vision. But Father Hooper, always with a sad smile, sees the world as black because that is the way it is, not in hate or contempt, but black as a necessary condition of mankind which he understands and wishes to alleviate (Santangelo).

“There is an hour to come, when all of us shall cast outside our veils” (Levin 277).

From this quote, we see Mr. Hooper’s conclusion that death is inevitable for everyone and that we all are going to behoove for our sins on our deathbeds. He points to the fact that everyone wears a mask behind which they hide their true face, and that’s why Mr. Hooper

puts on his black veil to make them wonder if they are good enough. These lines seem scary and shocking and force readers to think about their lives and deeds.

The black veil gives him a different vision of the world but does not turn him into a demonic, isolated, bitter malcontent. The isolation is meant to be creative in Hooper, not negative: it represents an attempt to establish a self that is honest, that has a wholesome and true relationship with the human moral condition, and acts as an example for others of what they could be (Santangelo).

Martin argues that the focus of the tale is on the veil, not on the minister. Along with the parishioners and the minister himself, the reader must ponder the central fact of the veil (Martin 81).

He continues by saying that it is the veil which immediately hides Mr. Hooper's eyes from the world and presents that world as a darkened space. It is something which hangs between Mr. Hooper and the world (Martin 82).

According to Martin, the relation between Hawthorne's dominant metaphor and his central symbol becomes clear: to achieve his symbol, Hawthorne has, simply but significantly, literalized a metaphor; he has presented a physical, observable piece of crape as a visible emblem of the human condition. The symbol at once embodies and takes its meaning from the metaphor of the black veil (Martin 83).

Martin says that there is no evidence whatsoever in the story that Mr. Hooper is guilty of any secret sin; to get caught up in such a guessing game is to deflect one's attention from the veil to the minister. For the burden of the tale is that no one can show his true face to the world. Thus, as a human being, Mr. Hooper hides iniquity that, for all we know, is neither greater nor lesser than that of any other man (83).

This can be confirmed by the following quotes: “Why do you tremble at me alone. Tremble also at each other! / “I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black veil!”(Levin 283).

From these quotes, one can see the raw reality and hypocrisy in every man. Everyone, indeed, sees others’ mistakes and sins, but not their own. People always hide their sins and present themselves in a better light, and when it comes to others, they judge them instantly and isolate from society if they reveal their real face and say the cruel truth that nobody wants to see or hear.

Martin concludes that the consequence of him wearing the veil is both to isolate Mr. Hooper from humanity and to make him “a very efficient clergyman” (83).

## 6. Comparison of the characters

*The Scarlet Letter*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *Minister’s Black Veil* are some of the best Nathaniel Hawthorne’s works. There are few similarities among them. Firstly, they are all about sin and its consequences, and secondly, they are interesting to read because their plots are full of unexpected turns, surprising and shocking actions that provoke strong feelings in readers.

According to Gerber, they are all about sin: the unpardonable sin, hidden sin, physical manifestations of moral or spiritual disease, a physical symbol indicating a past sin, the sense of isolation following sin. As these would indicate, Hawthorne is, first of all, a moralist and the story is an exploration of human morality (Gerber 9).

The characters in *The Scarlet Letter*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *Minister’s Black Veil* are presented through certain actions with unexpected turns and endings. They all

provoke different reactions and feelings in readers. Hester is a character presented as a strong and vivid woman which bears with her sin with pride and courage. She believes she has not done anything wrong because she was forced to marry Chillingworth and fell in love in Dimmesdale with whom she has a child. She is a positive character that we support and feel compassion for. Although she is eventually rejected by the society, she remains strong and stern.

Dimmesdale is a character who is a true believer and preacher of God's word, and, when he commits adultery, he knows that he has broken God's law and that he needs to repent for his sin. However, it is hard for him to confess his sin publicly because he knows they will outcast him, so he opts for self-torment to feel better. Readers pity the characters like him because he is, in fact, a normal man with normal human needs.

Chillingworth is a cruel and evil man whose pride has made him that way. His pride is hurt so he becomes obsessed with revenge, which makes him cold and repulsive in the readers' eyes, so they do not feel any compassion for him. His revenge eventually leads him to self-destruction.

Young Goodman Brown is characterized as a good man, representing everyone. He is a young and curious person with natural human needs for which he thinks are wrong, so he wants to cleanse his mind of perverse thoughts and doubts. However, for some reason, he has convinced himself that humankind is sinful and evil, even his loved ones. He misjudges everyone and considers them hypocrites. On the other hand, he neglects the fact that he is sinful too. These thoughts change him completely and isolate him from the society. The readers can identify with him so they can understand his doubts and fears.

Mr. Hooper is a good man who wants to teach his parishioners that every man is sinful and that they cannot misjudge people. He covers his face with a black veil to remind them that they all have sins they hide but prefer looking at others' sins and mistakes instead of dealing

with their own, hidden behind their masks. The readers can understand his intentions to influence humankind to become better and to deal with their own problems and sins.

Turner argues that Young Goodman Brown and Arthur Dimmesdale suffer the consequences of guilt through the operation of human, psychological forces. The Reverend Mr. Hooper looks about him and, on every face, sees a black veil. It is his observation and his belief that all are liable to sin. His representation of the idea to his parishioners is greatly facilitated by the fact that it is common among them and that the use of emblems such as the veil is congenial to their minds (Turner 64).

Certain parallels can be drawn between the characters of Mr. Hooper and Goodman Brown, Walsh argues. Both are essentially good men, and both are mistaken in their belief in the all-pervasiveness of evil, but the difference is that the Goodman Brown is overwhelmed by his diabolic vision, whereas Mr. Hooper is perhaps saved by his strong celestial aspirations (Walsh).

Hoeltje argues that the Reverend, Mr. Hooper, reflecting the piety of his day, wears his black veil as a symbol of the secret sin which he feels mysteriously enveloping him and all his fellow men. He says that Young Goodman Brown, who has yielded himself wholly to a belief in the total depravity of man, is convinced that he has seen, in the nighttime and before a blazing forest altar of the Prince of Darkness, his most honored friends and even his beloved wife, Faith, all joined in a communion of their evil nature, all revealed in the basic wickedness of this dark world (Hoeltje 119, 120).

Young Goodman Brown illustrates impressively the effects of sin or the knowledge of sin on Brown, although it leaves ambiguous the exact nature of the sin involved, Turner notes. The Reverend, Mr. Hooper, wears his black veil as a token of universal sin and, consequently,

suffers ostracism<sup>5</sup> and isolation, even though he presumably has no particular sin of his own (Turner 55).

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<sup>5</sup> Exclusion, by general consent, from social acceptance, privileges, friendship, etc.

<<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/ostracism?s=t>>

## 7. Conclusion

By analyzing *The Scarlet Letter*, *Young Goodman Brown* and *Minister's Black Veil*, one can understand why they are most often considered as Hawthorne's best works. The nature of his themes and the quality of work have ensured his position among the best and the most influential sensationalist writers of his time.

The sensation novel reduces its action to mostly one event, or a few that are inevitable, as is the case in *The Scarlet Letter*, in which the crime of adultery is combined with false identity and constant self-punishment, or the superfluous obsession with sin in other two works: *The Minister's Black Veil* and *Young Goodman Brown*.

All three works analyzed in this paper discuss the concept of sin: the unpardonable sin, hidden sin, physical manifestations of moral or spiritual disease, a physical symbol indicating a past sin or the sense of isolation following the act of sin.

*The Scarlet Letter* has been interpreted as a story of sins and sinners. Through Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl, readers can see the sin of adultery and its consequences. *The Scarlet Letter* makes it clear why it is considered one of the representative novels of its genre – it is full of drama, twists and turns, actions, and reactions that evoke various emotions in readers. The story deals with secrets, shady characters and personal revelations conveyed through hidden meanings and symbolism.

*Young Goodman Brown* is a short story about good and evil. In accordance with the genre's framework, the story follows a young man who descends into misanthropy and faithlessness, including his most beloved ones. The story relies heavily upon the sensationalist themes, personal discoveries, doubt, guilt and the shock of realization.

*The Minister's Black Veil* is a short story about sin in general. The moral of the story is impressive, even terrible, and makes the reader wonder about his life.



Considering the themes and the relevant social circumstances of his time, one can conclude that Hawthorne's works owe their success not only to their literary merit, but also to their historical and social framework. Themes of sin, adultery, occult, and piousness – everyday topics of Hawthorne's America – are precisely what makes them sensational; the readers can absorb sensational topics because they can understand the setting which is similar to their everyday lives.

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## 9. Sensationalism in the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Summary and key words

The best sensation novels are “novels with a secret”, or sometimes with several secrets, in which new narrative strategies are developed to tantalize the reader by withholding information rather than divulging it.

The sensation novel reduces its action to mostly one event, or a few events that are inevitable, as is the case in *The Scarlet Letter*, in which the crime of adultery is combined with false identity and constant characters’ self-punishment, or the superfluous obsession with sin, as is the case in other two works: *The Minister’s Black Veil* and *Young Goodman Brown*.

*The Scarlet Letter* has been interpreted as a story of sins and sinners. Through Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl, readers can see the sin of adultery and its consequences.

*Young Goodman Brown* is a short story about good and evil. The protagonist is Goodman Brown who, for some reason, starts to think that everyone is evil. As a result, he becomes a distrustful and desperate young man who has lost his faith in other people that he has misjudged.

*The Minister’s Black Veil* is a brief, highly typical, and thoroughly successful story, subtitled “A Parable”. An apparently blameless minister inexplicably dons a black veil and wears it forever, despite many well-meant pleas to cast it off. On his deathbed, he reveals its secret and justifies himself.

Key words: Sensationalism, Nathaniel Hawthorne, sensation novel, exciting plots.

## 10. Senzacionalizam u djelima Nathaniela Hawthornea: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Najbolje novele senzacije su „novele s tajnom“, ili, ponekad, s nekoliko tajni, u kojima su razvijene nove strategije pisanja kojima se čitatelji muče zadržavanjem informacija umjesto njihovim otkrivanjem.

Novela senzacije ima skraćenu radnju. Većinom se radi o jednom događaju ili nekoliko njih, koji su neizbježni, kao što je slučaj u *The Scarlet Letter* (*Grimizno slovo*), gdje je zločin preljuba u kombinaciji s pogrešnim identitetom, a likovi se neprestano samokažnjavaju ili su opsjednuti grijehom, kao što je riječ u druga dva djela: *The Minister's Black Veil* i *Young Goodman Brown*.

*The Scarlet Letter* je priča o grijehu i grešnicima. Kroz Hester, Dimmesdalea i Pearl, vidljiv je grijeh preljuba, zajedno s njegovim posljedicama.

*Young Goodman Brown* kratka je priča o dobru i zlu. Protagonist je Goodman Brown koji je, iz nekog razloga, počeo vjerovati da su svi zli. Kao posljedica takvog stanja, postao je nepovjerljiv i očajan mladi čovjek koji je izgubio vjeru u druge ljude koje je pogrešno prosudio.

*The Minister's Black Veil* kratka je, tipična i nadasve uspješna priča, s podnaslovom „Kratka priča o moralu“. Naizgled bezgrešan svećenik bez objašnjenja stavi crni veo i nosi ga do kraja života, unatoč brojnim dobronamjernim molbama da ga skine. Na smrtnoj postelji otkriva svoju tajnu i time se opravda.

Ključne riječi: senzacionalizam, Nathaniel Hawthorne, romani senzacije, uzbuđljive radnje.