Materiality, Spirituality and History in Emerson's *Essays* and Hawthorne's the Scarlet Letter

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ABSTRACT: *This is a study of materiality, spirituality and history of nineteenth-century America as they are manifested in Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essays and Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letters. The ideas of the two writers on Art and the material and spiritual worlds are sometimes complementary, often hold divergent viewpoints. Moreover, both writers paid much attention to history and related it to their work. The two writers are transcendentalists, however, their diversity creates a fiery way of thinking of new literary and sociopolitical forms. The two writers enjoy certain pre-dispositions of the American Artist, five characteristics that figure their texts. They also explore the moral, social, political and historical significance of the American experience. In the end, though their artistic views were divergent and frequently contradictory, the philosophies of both artists were indispensable in fashion. Their views held multiple interpretations as a tribute to the original and unique nature of the artistic American soul in its attempt to articulate the complex truths of human nature.*

ملخص: هذه دراسة تبحث في مادية و روحانية وتاريخ أمريكا كما جاءت في كتاب (مقـالات) للكاتب رالف والدو إيميرسون، وفي رواية (الحرف القرمزي) للروائي ناثانيال هوثـورن. فـي بعض الأحيان تتطابق أفكار الكاتبين في عالم الأدب والمادة والروح ، وهي افكـار تحمـل فـي الغالب وجهات نظر متماثلة. والأهم أن الكاتبين أوليا إهتماماً للتاريخ في أعمالهما. كما أن كلاهما آمن بقوى غيبية هائلة ، وقد ولد هذا التنوع في كتاباتهما طريقة تفكير ملتهبة لإنتاج أنماطاً أدبيةً وأجتماعيةً وسياسية. ويتمتع الكاتبين بخمسة خصائص تميز بها الكتاب الأمريكيين فـي عـصر الرومانسية. لقد إكتشفا في كتابتهما الأهمية الأخلاقية والاجتماعية والسياسية والتاريخية للتجربـة الأمريكية. وبالرغم من أن وجهات نظرهما متنوعة ومتباينة أحياناً الا أن فلسفة كل منهما تعبـر عن وجهات نظر الكاتبين ذات المعان المتعددة. لقد ساهمت تلك الفلسفة في إحياء الطبيعة الأصلية والفريدة من نوعها للروح الفنية الأمريكية ووعملت على تجسيد الحقيقة المعقدة للطبيعة البشرية

Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), two outstanding American Renaissance writers, were among the prominent intellectuals and scholars who re-shaped the American thinking in the nineteenth-century. They were certainly the most exciting and probably the most talented members of their generation of writers who arrived at the American scene in the American renaissance time. No course of study in nineteenth-century American literature could afford to ignore them. Among other things, they introduced five values of the American society in the nineteenth-century. Their works enjoyed material and intellectual aspects at the same time. They occupied a central place in the American intellectual life for decades. Though the two scholars did not appear to have had exactly the same ideas, it is significant that they reached intellectual maturity. Thus it is interesting to read their work together so as to have a wider and a somewhat comprehensive scope of the intellectual thinking in the nineteenth-century America. Emerson is: "among America's foremost poets and essayists ... Emerson gave lectures throughout the United States and in Canada, England, Scotland, and France. ... Many of his lectures were reworked into essays – including the well known Self-Reliance, Experience, and Nature" (Tharpe, 201-2). Meantime, Hawthorne is: "one of America's greatest novelists. … Success came at last with publication of his novels *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of Seven Gables* (1852), and *The Blithdale Romance* (1852). … *The Marble Faun* (1860) " (Tharpe, 65)

The reality of the matter is that Emerson's *Essays* are twice born. Out of the journals came the lectures, and out of the lectures came the *Essays*. This is why his *Essays* impress one as being bobastical. They are all reworked as lectures.

Hawthorne's high position among the American novelists is attributable to three miens of his work. First, he has what is known as an "architectural" sense, a sense of the unity of structure. Secondly, his work reveals his profound moral nature and keen insight. Having inherited the moral development of the Puritan tradition, he is everywhere concerned with "original sin." Thirdly, he is a master of allegory and symbolism.

EMERSON, HAWTHORNE AND THE EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY:

Emerson and Hawthorne fashioned work that reformed and redefined the role of the American artist as spinner of a "seamless nature" and the

American system. Of course, other European thoughts and ideas influenced those Boston philosophers. They were transcendentalists and like the early transcendentalists, they introduced different interpretations of the term transcendentalism. It is worth noting that the term transcendentalism comes from Latin. It means, to go beyond the limit; to rise above and to climb over. According to Martin Gray transcendentalism: "Describes modes of thought which emphasis the intuitive and the mystical powers of the mind, and the possibility of some higher world or realm of existence beyond the world of senses" (Gray, 293).

The transcendental theory came chiefly from a group of European philosophers. The main source was the Germans including Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), Johan Goethe (1749-1832), August Schlegel (1767-1845), John Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Moreover, there were the philosophical writings of the French author Madame de Stäel (1766-1817), the Swedish philosopher and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), the Cambridge Platonists [1] and other lass known transcendentalists of the late eighteenth-century.

In 1833 Emerson traveled to England. His favorable opportunity was when he met with some great English writers and poets who influenced him most. There, he met with Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle,[2] and there he learnt about the European philosophy of transcendentalism and some religious books of the Orient. Emerson and Hawthorne learnt about the German philosophy of transcendentalism through the English Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth an d Coleridge.[3] On the other hand, the narrative and technique of Edmund Spencer's *Faerie Queene* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* influenced Hawthorne especially when he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*.

Moreover, for both writers Nature as symbol was the kind of "Romanticism" that New England had lived with since its founding. It is not the concern of this paper to deal with those influences on Emerson and Hawthorne, thus I mention it only in passing.

EMERSON, HAWTHORN AND MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL CONCEPTS:

In the great tradition of the nineteenth-century, materialism and spiritualism were the leading contenders of the American literature. They were enwrapped with history. Naturalism is part of the materialism; it is sufficiently broad and tenuous to comprise all varieties of materialism. Materialism was supported by naturalism for it has its own continuous

development. This situation does not mean that spiritualism disappeared from the scene, but rather it reappears in form dissimilar to the earlier ones.

Both materiality and spirituality are fused in Emerson's *Essays* and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, yet when a correspondence is set up between the two writers, we notice that like the artistic medium with which both men work, their ideas on art and the material and spiritual worlds are sometimes complementary. However, they often hold divergent viewpoints, and contrasting threads emerge. Their diversity creates a fiery way of thinking and outfitting the American soul, and causing the emergence of new literary and sociopolitical forms.

There are certain predisposition and tendencies of the American Artist, characteristics that figure in the texts of both Emerson and Hawthorne. Although the order of priority and nomenclature may differ, five basic concerns habitually serve as the necessity of the writings of both men. They are:

I. The ambivalence between isolation-communion.

II. The necessity of solitude.

III. The powerful role of the artist.

IV. The significance of the symbol in the literary and contemporary worlds.

V. The consciousness of the America’s European past and its influence on the present.

From a critical point of view, it is still that the five values advocated by each writer were considered by many of their contemporaries to be too impractical to deserve serious attention. But on my part, I respect the way with which both men create their subjects, in addition to the freedom they allow each other and their personae to articulate their beliefs. Certainly Emerson and Hawthorne's similar and opposing viewpoints have fashioned a literary heritage that is as "luxurious" as Hester Prynne's scarlet letter and as poetic and scholarly as Emerson's "human form." Following is an elaboration of those five values:

I. The Ambivalence between Isolation-Communion:

The concept of community life has usually figured primarily as an unstated ideal. It qualifies and balances the concept of individual freedom and prevents it from degenerating into an attitude of selfishness and irresponsibility. Kaul further maintains that a common theme of the

American imagination has been the problem of reconciling individual freedom with "a mode of social life to which the individual can give his allegiance without danger of impairing his moral, spiritual, or psychological integrity" (Kaul, 8).

Although the concepts hold different meanings for Emerson and Hawthorne, society, the individual, and community form the main points of this triadic theme in the Emersonian and Hawthornian view. In the nineteenth-century, the products of individualism – selfishness, distrust, crass materialism – were thought by some not only to undermine and falsify social relations but also to abstract from them all humanness so that the people became isolated and withdrawn from the community. In "Society and Solitude" Emerson claims that "insular and pathetically solitary are all the people we know!" (Emerson, 390).

As on so many questions, Emerson's position on question of isolation and social relatedness is fascinating chiefly because of its dialectical manner of arguing both sides of the case. As Joel Porte states, transcendentalism was for Emerson simply not "a known and fixed element." Moreover, Hawthorne found it "maddeningly indescribable" to affix certitude to any Emersonian belief. Porte suggests that Emerson's remark – "I am not the man you take me for" – in his March 1, 1842 letter to his wife Linda, might be used as a kind of Emersonian motto, suggesting the difficulty of defining Emerson's position: "his true self would always be elusive, perhaps even to Emerson." (Porte, 5) Yet as R. A. Yoder states, Emerson reminds us that, as an American Scholar, he faced both ways, "toward American independence but surely away from literary and critical insularity." (Yoder, 12) Emerson's dialectic, therefore, as "maddeningly indescribable" and seemingly inconclusive as it may appear, is prophetic and argues for a global view of reality.

II. The Necessity of Solitude:

Emerson seems to champion the self-reliant and solitary individual. In "Society and Solitude" he speaks of the "necessity of isolation which genius feels," (Emerson, 399) and goes on to say that there is a "tragic necessity ... irresistibly driving each adult soul as with whips into the desert, and making our warm covenants sentimental and momentary" (Emerson, 399).

Moreover, Emerson insists on the meaning of solitude, particularly for the Scholar, and says: "He must embrace solitude as a bride ... go cherish your soul; expel companions, set your habits to a life of solitude." Then Emerson says: "A man must be clothed with society, or we shall feel a

certain bareness and poverty, as of a displaced and unfurnished member" (Emerson, 391).

Thus, while the practical-minded American citizens were advocating and benefiting from their freedom, the two artists Emerson and Hawthorne were bemoaning the loss of moral and social values and paralleled its development. The decisive factor for them was the moral regeneration of the individual, now that Americans were no longer the victims of old institutions but, rather, the creators of new ones. Kaul believes that Emerson's answer in "New England Reformers" was simple: "Let into it the new and renewing principle of love." For, as he had said in "Man the Reformer": "We must be lovers, and at once the impossible becomes possible" (Emerson, 34).

The compulsive attitude of either conforming to or reforming the existing society belonged to Europe. Yet the American social situation, as Hawthorne saw it, offered a third possibility: to withdraw from the scene and form a new community. Kaul advocates that idea by saying: "Concerned with the basic fact of human relationship, which alone can provide a foundation for social organization, he [Hawthorne] was a visionary rather than a reformer" (Kaul, 67). In this context, it is worth mentioning that Kaul's view is no longer an accepted view as it always shows the danger of futility of withdrawal.

III. The Powerful Role of the Artist:

Hawthorne accepts the Christian account of man's fallen nature. If men recognize their common sinfulness and their common weakness before God, they should also acknowledge their essential brotherhood and fellowship, and thus not do violence to the many ties that bind them to the family and the civil community. He agrees with Emerson that what alienates man from man is the result of too much "church spirit." Through such characters as Roger Chillingworth, Hawthorne demonstrates the difference between ethical righteousness and self-righteousness; furthermore, he analyzes the calamitous effects of fanatical zeal, coldness of heart, ruthless ambition, and jealousy, all of which lead inevitably to a warping of the character's moral personality.

Individual freedom, according to Emerson and Hawthorne, could be used as a "moral shield" against a corrupt social order, but by itself it was not sufficient. The principle of individualism could become egocentric and self-serving unless it was related to the responsibilities of a larger social life. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne demonstrates how Hester's individual

freedom, in all its moral and psychological complexity, acquires positive meaning only when defined within the needs of the family and the civil community.

On the meaning of oppression and alienation Sally Robinson comments: "Oppression and alienation are figured primarily in individualist rather than in social terms" (Robinson, 13). The isolation that Hawthorne writes about is not merely a matter of physical solitude but of moral alienation, of solitude in the midst of men. Just as in Emerson, the tension between society and solitude lies near the center of all Hawthorne's art. For Hawthorne, the existence of the individual has no meaning apart from the ties that bind him to other human beings. He shared something with what Kaul terms "The land-of-promise hope, together with a great deal of doubt whether and lands of promise are to be ever discovered anywhere – unless it be in the altered hearts of men" (Kaul, 159).

To the Emersonian and Transcendental argument on the infinitude of the private man, Hawthorne and the Puritans seem to answer that individual existence can acquire meaning only within the larger life of the community. The meaningful community life could be based only upon genuine emotion, upon such feeling as love and compassion. Kaul quotes Hawthorne's conviction that touch creates us, – then we begin to be, – thereby we are beings of reality and inheritors of eternity (Kaul, 159).

Hawthorne's message is the main agent in the spiritual as well as the material attitudes. In both sections of *The Scarlet Letter*, the subject matter does not change the alienation of the individual from the false code of the Puritans. Both the market place and *The Scarlet Letter* clarify Hawthorne's attitude. In this confrontation Hawthorne immediately shows his alienation from his contemporaries – from both the transcendentalist who discounts sin and the materialists who remain on the subhuman standard – and allows his longing to terminate that alienation.

Hawthorne's firm belief in the solidarity of human communion causes him to be critical of its absence or denial. The most terrible part, the truly inhumane aspect of Hester's fate is not that she is punished publicly but that her punishment takes the form of isolation from the rest of the community. Even while she is standing in the center of the market-place, the letter A has the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself (Kaul, 134). Her isolation is inflected upon her rather than being willfully sought by her, yet it does not wrap her moral personality. She is an isolated but not an alienated character. She takes these "instructors in eloquence and wisdom," as Emerson terms hardships, as "pearls and rubies" that fashion her solitary character. This

doctrine of "meliorism" (defined by Joel Porte as the basis of eighteenth-century optimism) is also found in Emerson's statement that "It was good, it is too good, that all works." As Emerson writes in his essay "Compensation": “Every faculty which is a receiver of pleasure has an equal penalty put on its abuse. … For everything you have missed, you have gained something else, and for everything you gain, you lose something”(Emerson, 169). Emerson's belief is that evil is good in disguise; the Essay ends with the clear assertion that “the compensations of calamity are made apparent to the understanding ... after long intervals of time. A fever, a mutilation, a cruel disappointment, a loss of wealth, a loss of friends, seems the moment unpaid loss, and unpayable” (Emerson, 185).

With the great influence of Alexander Pope, I found a comparable thought in his *An Essay on Man*. The following verses explain those thoughts:

God sends not ill; if rightly understood,

[For] partial ill is universal Good. ...

So that, rather than happiness, Hester acquires the gift of understanding through pain, suffering, and solitude. What Hawthorne’s characters through their descent into what F. O. Matthiesen terms "the caverns of the heart" (Matthiesen, 653) is the general bond of suffering. It makes him profoundly conscious that the moments of greatest human import are those of moral crisis, for then men and women enter most nearly into eternal nature even as they are made aware of their limitations.

The Scarlet Letter is a profound comment on the breakdown of human relationships in society. The force of individualism, which exerts itself in many spheres of life, is, at a certain moment of time, its special glory and the cause of alienating man from man. It reveals the beginnings of a disintegration in the individual psyche: a tendency for the life of the body, mind, and soul to fall apart, somewhat like the broken and isolated lives of Hester, Chillingworth, and Dimmesdale. Hawthorne deliberately fashions a vision devoid of the wholeness of life that Emerson took for his theme in "The American Scholar." In fact, “The American Scholar” constitutes the various attitudes of transcendentalism. The accusation against the fruitless Orthodoxy turns against the subordination of American writers to Europe and ends as a penetrating inspection of the spiritual foundations and moral involvement of the new democracy. Meanwhile Emerson’s pattern is presented to the life for a young nation. Its appeals assure the divine call to throw off some custom and tradition and also it is a call to go forward to the expression of a new civilization. In its emphasis on the fundamental value of the individual, it is a unique strength of democracy. It exerts an idealism

that is greatly needed in an expanding economy, where opportunities become mere opportunism, and the aspiration to get on obscures the moral necessity for rising spiritual attitudes. Therefore, transcendentalism represents the centrality of Man who can be viewed as a representative of Nature and that Man is the master of himself and the master of Nature as well. To study the relationship between Man and Nature, Emerson poses the following question: "What is Nature to scholar?" But he finds out that there is never a beginning, there is never an end to the inexplicable continuity of this relationship, and what is always on the scene is a circular power returning into itself.

IV. The Significance of the Symbol and Contemporary Worlds:

Like the Emersonian artist, Hawthorne's Hester sets out, at least for herself, Pearl, and Dimmesdale, to repair the decay of things in a non-conforming manner. The project of Hawthorne's retrieving his imaginative art, a project with which he invests "The Custom House," is likewise conceived as running counter to the inevitable course of history. If the Puritans turned life into petrified forms or "hollow abstractions," the artist Hawthorne and Hester set out to return petrified forms to imaginative life and artistic form.

The attempt to dissolve the dissonance created by harsh Puritanical structure required equally powerful metaphors and symbols to mirror the ambiguous artistic habit of the American soul. What Hawthorne achieved in his art, men can achieve in their lives since Hawthorne's world view fulfills Emerson's definition of a Scholar/Artist as one who provides others with the richest opportunities for examining their own minds.

Henry Nash Smith maintains that, for Hawthorne, the truth to be communicated by literature was not a truth about the outer universe but what he called "the truth of human heart." (Smith, 21) Although Emerson seems not to have recognized it, Hawthorne's goal in fiction corresponded precisely to Emerson's description of the symbolic process as he stated in his "Nature" essay. On this situation Feidleson comments: "That which was unconscious truth becomes, when interpreted and defined in an object, a part of the domain of knowledge, – a new weapon in the magazine of power." (Feidleson, 45)

Like Emerson, Hawthorne frequently used natural facts to express truths that had become conscious in the minds of his personae and his readers. Emerson's theory of language, particularly his belief, stated in "Nature", is particularly activated by Hawthorne, that "all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols." (Hawthorne, 45) So the "marriage" of the

facts in natural history to human history engenders a full life whereby the artist as analogist “is placed in the center of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him.” (Hawthorne, 46)

Hester and Dimmesdale portray this belief in the scaffold scene, and other characters' associations with the natural world also inform its symbolic value. Hawthorne uses the natural fact of "the withered grass" under Chillingworth's evil and Hester's recognition of it, facts that have not been so fully brought to consciousness before. As a result, Hester acquires knowledge both of her own heart and of Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale and plans their flight to Europe. This decision, in turn, leads to the outburst of erotic energy during her interview with Dimmesdale in the forest. Thus, Hawthorne's use of natural facts illustrates Emerson's principle that: “The use of the outer creation [is] to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation.” (Marx, 42). Moreover, for Emerson, Porte adds: “The theory of nature was a strategy of self-justification, which his neighbors could understand.” (Porte, 19)

Hawthorne's sub-titled his novel *The Scarlet Letter: An American Romance*; in it he worked within a highly self-conscious, experimental, fictional tradition that exploited and investigated the analogous transcendentalist experience of which it was a part. According to Bell, in Hawthorne's view, "romance is fundamentally an integrative mode." (Bell, 8) While writing romance, Hawthorne also wrote about romance, but a romance whose domain is "balanced, controlled, serious, moral, and conservative." (Bell, 10) He transfigures the scarlet letter, which Hester wears into an emblem of her individuality. Hester’s natural and creative spirit has endowed this emblem with an ambiguous meaning, one, which habitually forms and informs her life. She is Emerson's "Poet" whose creative spirit communicates itself to many natural objects and characters while retaining its unique and independent form.

Daniel G. Hoffman acknowledges that Hawthorne "undermines the dogmatic monism of allegory itself" (Hoffman, 147) by allowing for a variety of ways to interpret this ambiguous symbol. Emerson and Hawthorne's symbolism speak in consonance with this self-realizing language, not of words, but of things in a speech so devoid of artificiality that, as Feidelson puts it, "while manifesting the mind, it would lose itself in nature"(Feidelson, 118). F. O. Matthiesson confirms that the treatment of symbolism as something which suggests more than what it denotes, is shared by Emerson and Hawthorne. (Matthieson, 58) Both artists allow their readers to find the correspondences between external events and inner significance and to choose among the values which their symbols suggest, thereby inviting freedom to issue forth from the reader as well as from the

literary creations.

V. The Consciousness of the America's European Past and its Influence on the Present:

In an attempt to further explore the moral and social significance of the American experience, Hawthorne uses such literary devices as imagery, exaggerated and vivid description, and unique and memorable characters. Separation from the community may be voluntary or forced, physical or moral, complete or partial, brought about by one's alienation from society or society's rejection of the individual, Hawthorne treated it sympathetically. In *The Scarlet Letter*, particularly, Hawthorne fashions the context that for Hester not to withdraw from the Boston community would be to compromise her integrity. She, therefore, partially withdraws from the society that has falsified the very premises upon which social relationships are built in one manner of speaking. But it also continues to integrate with the society on a limited basis. She fashions works of art for the wealthier Puritans and she makes rough clothing for the poor. Kaul believes that "The search for a truer community life is as much a part of what she represents as were her earlier repudiations of society. The one fact complements the other in the total picture." (Kaul, 154) Even though Hawthorne supports Hester's search for a vital community, however, he, like Emerson, looks at the matter of isolation-communion dialectically. Although Hester willfully isolates herself from the community, Hawthorne maintains that the elements of savagery and hostility engendered from this division should serve to draw the people together in mutual fellowship rather than turn them away from, or against, each other. The elements of pride, hypocrisy, and coldness of heart – "all that obstructs the flow of human sympathy." (Kaul, 159) – constitute "sin" for Hawthorne. In his view, "sin" is cloaked in a social rather than a spiritual habit.

EMERSON, HAWTHORNE, AND HISTORY

In his *Essays*, Emerson paid great attention to history. For example, in his two essays "Representative Man" and "The American Scholar" Emerson expressed his deep respect for many figures whom he viewed as influential philosophers, writers and politicians. Those figures included Plato, Swedengorg, Montagine, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Goethe. Also, Emerson's essay on "History" was, in fact, planned all along as the crucial first essay. An understanding of one's relation to history was, for Emerson, a

necessary first step to self-reliance in the life of a Scholar/Artist. The main purpose of the essay on history was to undercut the ordinary, overly respectful, useful approach and, as Hawthorne also attempted, to persuade his readers to acquire historical insight rather than historical details, and "to trust myth and biography instead of chronological accounts of battles and leaders." (Richardson, 76).

Oftentimes Hawthorne's characters find themselves struggling against the bondage of their past history. Hawthorne agrees with the Emersonian view of the past as inclusive of the Academic past of all humanity, the European past of America, and the New England past of his own society, but his own attitude toward the past is more complex and paradoxical than that of Emerson. Hawthorne conceives it at times as "a source of wisdom and balance in human affairs and attitudes, and at other times, as a dead and ghostly weight upon the present which living men must exorcise at some inevitable sacrifice, if life is to advance into a fresh and better future." (Hawthorne, 143)

On the other hand, Hawthorne's remarkable artistic penetration makes the two sides of the isolation-communion theme act themselves out in a mutual critique: new social ideals challenge history and history in its turn tests the new ideals. As Kaul testifies, what comes into being when two contradictory emotions are made to confront each other and are required to have a relationship with each other is ... quite properly called an idea. It is feasible that ideas generate in the position of ideals. Many Emersonian and Hawthornian ideas, simultaneously divergent and corresponding, create and support a reservoir of moral energy and a sphere of ideas and action.

For Emerson, it was myth that gave historical data its comprehensive and usable form. He believed that through myth, the individual is able to see himself in history. Only when the individual achieves this perspective on history is he freed from subservience to the past, to see the past as an extended present, and "to understand the identity of human character in all ages" (Emerson, 79). Emerson's notion of myth was indispensable to his vision of the past, and his vision of the past was indispensable to his dialectic view of the individual in society and as solitary artist. Richardson believes that Emerson's achievement in endorsing the myth structure lies in his understanding of myth as "a process, which leads the individual to fresh ways of thinking about history, about change, and about great men" (Richardson, 75). In his essay "Nature," Emerson complains the American time in the following words: "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. ... Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? ... Let us demand our own works and laws and worship" (Emerson, 7).

American transcendentalists, including Emerson and Hawthorne, view the seventeenth century as a main starting point towards understanding the nineteenth century. For example, John Milton was a good example for the American Romantics to understand the seventeenth century thought. The society of the seventeenth century was, for Hawthorne, the logical starting point for understanding his own nineteenth century world. As well as the other Romantic writers, Hawthorne's nostalgia to the past made him understand the seventeenth century social life and flourished religious thought; such an understanding helped Hawthorne drew upon those social and religious thought. According to his artistic vision, the seventeenth century was decisive in fostering the American attitudes, character types, and ideals, which the nineteenth century assumed. Hawthorne explored the seventeenth century for clues helpful to an understanding of the past, the present, and the future. Charles Feidleson, Jr. posits that Hawthorne turned to American history, the history of alienation, as the basis of his deception of isolation, solitude, and communion. He said: "What isolates had in common, their magnetic chain, was precisely the spiritual history of their isolation. Hawthorne became the historian of the historically disinterested" (Feildleson, 48).

Much of the power of *The Scarlet Letter* stems from Hawthorne's perception and exploitation of the parallels between the course of romance and the course of history – of the shared tension between inspiration and expression, sentiments and words. There is in the novel some fulfillment of Hester's spirit, some realization of her entire self, which it was worth losing herself to find. As R. W. B. Lewis affirms that "Deeper than the 'reign of horror' on the soul's surface there is a place of perfect beauty. That was the substance of Hawthorne's guess about experience" (Lewis, 116).

Hawthorne, however, was skeptical of this "revolutionary spirit." R. W. B. Lewis asserts that in Hawthorne's fiction this type of situation frequently led to some historical moment. It is a moment of critical choice and "most of Hawthorne's heroes and heroines eventually have to confront it" (Lewis, 173). Hester exhorts Dimmesdale in the forest by saying: "Begin anew! (Hawthorne, 135) ... Let us not look back. The past is gone! Wherefore should we linger upon it now? See! With this symbol, I undo it all, and make it as it had never been!" (Hawthorne, 137). Hester then throws the scarlet letter "a distance among the withered leaves." But she is soon compelled by Pearl to reassume the letter, her ambiguous and artistic habit, the identity imposed upon her by Puritan Boston. "An evil deed," Hawthorne writes at the close of the forest scene, "invests itself with the character of doom." The false "vestments" of habit and social distinction, in Hawthorne's view, are not so easily renounced. Emerson declares that

"Genius is the activity which repairs the decay of things" But such decay, as Hawthorne read America's history, had stemmed in the first place from what Michael Davitt Bell terms "the eruption of revolutionary genius" (Bell, 137).

Bell points out that Emerson spoke repeatedly of history as a process of petrifaction (Bell, 173). Although Hawthorne's did not share Emerson's faith in the possibility of revolutionary renewal, he understood very well the compulsion, both for the individual and for the culture, to displace the truth of experience into the order of "unconscious self-deception" (Emerson, 193). His sense of historical process itself, therefore, is not so far removed from that of Emerson. The scarlet letter is imposed on Hawthorne the writer/artist as much as it is on Hester, yet, out of the negative world that he inherits and occasionally assimilates, he fashions_an image of positive human endeavor and an enterprising spirit. Hawthorne; sympathies point in two directions: the decadent and transcendentalist view of the Custom House world reappears simultaneous with the activist and futurist he aspires to be. While he was deeply preoccupied with both the beginnings of civilization in the New World and the possibilities of a new civilization, Hawthorne, unlike his ancestors in New England, did not regard the two as identical. When compared to Emerson, this "man of good sense," as Kaul terms, Hawthorne had little faith in "quixotic demonstrations of this sort as Emerson himself."(Kaul, 145) Feidelson, also maintains that Hawthorne does not succumb to chronological determinism, the past that always threatens to come upon him as a doom and fixate him in an empty present (Feidleson, 45). Rather, he turns this around, as Hester does, conceiving of it as an enduring past that contains the present, just as the scarlet letter is "present" beneath the dead records and ambiguous world of the Custom House. Like Emerson, Hawthorne believed that any serious understanding of the past would have to re- animate what seemed dead, regarding as present and unfinished what one had previously thought of as past and done. Total understanding would require nothing less than "fitting" the habit of the past into one's "wardrobe" or soul. Feidleson supports the view that Hawthorne converts his solitude into "self-pursuit, an active state, which is identical with his pursuit of the 'deep meaning' of the scarlet letter (Feidleson, 45). Hawthorne's mission is to: "actively appropriate the universe of discourse now open to him and thereby to 'interpret' the reality of consciousness that 'stream[s] forth' from the mystic symbol," (Hawthorne, 46) and his imagery, according to Leo Marx is "to expose the pastoral ideal to the pressure of change or, in a word, to history" (Marx, 24).

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that, though the artistic views of Emerson and Hawthorne were divergent and frequently contradictory, the philosophies of both artists were indispensable in fashioning a consciousness that transcended the Puritanical and traditional structures of their nineteenth century culture. Their philosophies, also, imprint patterns for subsequent American literary and sociopolitical forms. Their views multiple interpretations, and it is a tribute to the original and unique nature of the artistic American soul in its attempt to articulate the complex truths of human experience. As was true in Emerson and Hawthorne's time, the American literature and American public conduct also suggest that exposure to experience is certain to have disturbing and revolutionary consequences. The hopeful and ironic artists of a century ago willingly risked this sentiment: Emerson because he could imagine nothing harmful happening to those pursuing the "revolutionary" path of self-reliance; Hawthorne because of this passionate conviction that the disturbances of experience were indispensable for moral maturity. Both men fulfilled Emerson's hope that the artist looks "on the world with new eyes" and offer this "organic" vision of the soul to the individual in community. The attempt to dissolve the dissonance created by harsh Puritanical structure required equally powerful metaphors and symbols to mirror the ambiguous artistic habit of the American soul. What Hawthorne achieved in his art, men can achieve in their lives since Hawthorne's world view fulfills Emerson's definition of a Scholar/Artist as one who provides others with the richest opportunities for examining their own minds.

The Artist as discoverer of reality, as myth-maker, as interpreter of the living metaphors by which language establishes the links between the worlds of sense and of spirit, works out the conflict inherent in the traditions in a way that is influenced by his own experience, back-ground, and personal beliefs. For Emerson and Hawthorne, the superfluities of everyday life are stripped away in nature, and men regain contact with the essentials and the truth. Hawthorne's definition of romance art finds expression in the supporting and opposing correspondences between him and Emerson. Art, and romance art, in particular, becomes the place were the actual and the imaginary may meet and as Hawthorne states in "The Custom House," that "each imbue itself with the nature of the other." Emerson, however, could not recognize this aspect of Hawthorne's prose, perhaps because of his hostility to the novel as a genre. The works of both artists could not have been accomplished without being laid on solid historical background, and wrapped in myth and history.

NOTES

1- The Cambridge Platonists were a group of late 17th century English scholars and philosophers. They were centered at Cambridge University. Their philosophy centered on reviving some Platonic, neo-Platonic and mystical conceptions and ideas vs. the mechanical philosophy of Hobbes. Like the other philosophies of their time, they had a theological background, but of their main concerns were the relationship between man's soul and God; they believed that reason and faith are compatible. In their mystic ideas they paid much attention to the importance of reason believing that reason and faith differ only in terms of their degrees. The main Cambridge Platonists philosopher was Benjamin Whichcote.

2- For more details on influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge on Emerson see Leslie Nathan Broughton, ed. *Wordsworth and Reed: The Poet's Correspondence with his American Editor, 1836-50* Ithaca, N.Y. & London, 1933, and also David Simpson. "Wordsworth in America" in *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition.* Eds. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

3- For more details on the Romantics and their relationship to European transcendental philosophy see John Beer, ed. *Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*. Intro. By L. C. Knights. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1975

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