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Adultery and Redemption in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* (1940)

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Abstract

The relationship between priests and younger women from their audience has been turbulent for centuries. Our protagonists, here, are two priests who fathered two daughters out of the wedlock; thereafter, their self-torture commences. This paper examines the relationship between adultery and redemption through a comparative analysis of two priests: Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* and the whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*.

But many questions arise here, such as: what is the benefit of confession when the priests love the daughters who are born of their crimes? How can the illegitimate daughters drive the priests to repent in public? Why do the two authors resort to fiction as the best genre to convey their messages? This paper offers possible answers to these questions by examining the following: first, the reasons behind the choice of novels; second, the biography of each author and the reception of his novel; third, Puritanism and Catholicism as denominations of the Christian religion; fourth, the dissent of the authors from faith; finally, the wilderness in each novel—for example, the brook in *The Scarlet Letter* and the rural villages in *The Power and the Glory*—and its influence on the protagonists. Through a comparative study of the similarities and differences, the paper investigates plot lines, themes, significance of names, biblical allusion, the confession, and the redemption of the two priests.

Keywords: Catholicism, Greene, Hawthorne, Puritanism, redemption,

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> He [the whiskey priest] admits, 'I don't know how to repent.' That was true: he had lost the faculty. He couldn't say to himself that he wished his sin had never existed because the sin seemed to him now so unimportant and he loved the fruit of it.
>
> (Greene, 1990, p. 128)

If Graham Greene's Roman Catholic priest has expressed his own dilemma of committing sin and then falling in love with the fruit of it, Nathaniel Hawthorne's minister Arthur Dimmesdale precedes him nearly a century earlier in echoing the same paradox before the Puritans at the scaffold. Dimmesdale pleads:

> If she [Hester] bring (sic) the child to heaven, the child also will bring its parents thither! Herein is the sinful mother happier than the sinful father. For Hester Prynne's sake, then, and no less for the poor child's sake, let us leave them as Providence hath seen fit to place them!
>
> (Hawthorne, 2006, p.106)*

Out of the minister's numerous attempts to downplay Hester's sin, he succeeds partially to save his daughter Pearl from the jaws of Puritan rigidity in his community. Likewise, the whiskey priest, whose reputation has been besmirched all along the villages of Mexico, embarks upon a self-sacrificial journey lest his daughter fall victim to communists. He cries: "O God Give me any kind of death—without contrition, in a state of sin—only save this child" (*PG*, 1990, p. 82). Both priests have left their women suffering under the yoke of strict religious rules of their communities. Against all odds, these women bring up their daughters to believe in their dignity and self-worthiness. Hence, the daughters participate effectively in granting absolution to their fathers.

This paper examines the relationship between adultery and redemption through a comparative analysis of two priests: Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* and the whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*. Both priests father daughters out of wedlock; thereafter, their self-torture commences. The paper considers how the daughters—"the product[s] of sin" (*SL*, 2006, p. 87)—participate in the process of transforming the guilt-ridden priests into caring and tending fathers. In the aftermath of their affairs, the two priests have undergone a profound spiritual experience which transforms them from adulterers into holy men. Moreover, the paper proposes that Puritan and Catholic societies have an important influence on the redemption of the two priests as well as the reconstruction of the daughters' characters.

Both Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* have attracted the attention of critics for a long time. Many scholars have focused on the concept of sin and how a priest can descend from a demigod position in his society to a lustful tramp. This concept has become unfashionable in the modern world because its language "has

* Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* will hereafter be cited as (*SL*) and Greene's *The Power and the Glory* as (*PG*).

become somewhat ineffectual in terms of its ethical and religious meanings. There is a lack of vitality and freshness and resonance with reality" (Connolly, *2002*, p. vi). Even more, the theme of adultery is almost a fade-out in the rapidly changing ethics of the western world, as Carol Iannone (1988) asserts: "with our lively, all encompassing sense of absolute moral freedom, ours is an age in which *The Scarlet Letter* not only could not be written, but almost cannot be read as Hawthorne wrote it" (56). But the Bible absolutely denounces adultery to the extent that it equates those who do not avert their gaze with adulterers, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (James, Mat. 5:28, New International Version). So, pious people should lower their gaze, otherwise they would commit adultery. Therefore, adultery remains a major disgrace regardless of how much time passes and world changes; indeed, it is the mortal sin that "precipitates the sinner into a state of wrath, death, and condemnation, so that, if he should die in this state, and without repentance, he would be eternally condemned" (Cooper, 2006, p.118).

But a host of deeper questions arise here. Among the most notable are: what is the benefit of confession when the priests love the daughters who are born of their crimes? How can the illegitimate daughters drive the priests to repent in public? Why do the two authors resort to fiction as the best genre to convey their messages? This paper offers possible answers to these questions by examining the following: first, the reasons behind the choice of novels; second, the biography of each author and the reception of his novel; third, Puritanism and Catholicism as denominations of the Christian religion; fourth, the dissent of the authors from faith; finally, the wilderness in each novel—for example, the brook in *The Scarlet Letter* and the rural villages in *The Power and the Glory*—and its influence on the protagonists. Further, I will compare the two narratives, focusing on similarities and differences between the two novels under examination, shedding light on the plot lines, themes, significance of names, biblical allusion, the confession, and the redemption of the two priests.

In her book *Religion and Sexuality in American Literature*, Ann-Janne Morey (1992) documents numerous examples of priests who engage in sexual relationships with women in the nineteenth-century fiction. Morey asserts how the fiction documents two kinds of priests: one is sexless like Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, and the other is virile such as Rev. Joseph Bellamy Stoker in *The Guardian Angel* who is depicted as a "hen hawk among the chickens" (Holmes, 1867, p. 8). In *The Leatherwood God*, the protagonist Jospeh Dylk is described as a "Stallion of a man" (Howells, 1976, p. 8). Springing from this discourse, I excluded narratives about adulterers and adulteresses out of the context of the priesthood and church. My selection is narrowed to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Greene's *The Power and the Glory* despite the fact that they are almost a century apart and one is set in the Puritanical America and the other in the communist Mexico. However, the two novels converge on one theme: an adulterous priest who has fathered a girl out of the wedlock. In the aftermath of his affair, the priest is well-aware of his guilt and has no intention to repeat the sexual act. Despite the death of the two priests by the end of the novels, the notion that their lustful experiences are deeply regretted and that adultery is not beyond redemption is another important element behind my choice of the two works. In addition, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Greene's *The Power and the Glory* are chosen because the adulteresses—Hester and Maria— are not concubines of the priests: they have already repented of their sins, and they are waiting for the redemption of their priests. Both are courageous women who stand by their priests throughout their journeys.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) along with Herman Melville, Henry James, and Mark Twain are the most celebrated nineteenth-century American novelists. Hawthorne grew up in Salem, Massachusetts—well known for its Salem's witchcraft trial which is depicted in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953). In 1692, Salem witnessed a horrible massacre where twenty people from Salem village were executed for practicing witchcraft on their neighbors. By that time, Puritans believed that Satan would "impersonate individuals without their permission" (Person, 2007, p. 18). In his formative years, Hawthorne is influenced by a number of Puritanical books such as John Winthrop's *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649* (1825–26), Caleb H. Snow's *A History of Boston* (1825), and Joseph Felt's *The Annals of Salem from Its First Settlement* (1827).

In contrast, Graham Greene (1904-1991) was born and bred into the religious traditions of the Catholic Church. He converted to Catholicism in 1926 under the influence of Vivien Daryell-Browning, who later became his wife, and Cardinal John Henry Newman. In his book *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, Mark Bosco, S.J. (2005) states that "his true loyalty was to Vivien first and only secondly to the Church. But what began as an intellectual conversion for personal reasons became, after his experience of the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, an emotional conversion too" (16). Hence, Greene dedicates *The Power and the Glory* to investigate this troublesome persecution of the Catholics under the tyranny of the dictator Tomás Garrido Canabal. His major novels *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1947) and *The End of the Affair* (1951) present Catholicism as the solution against sin, evil and doubt. Greene was influenced by Catholic writers like Evelyn Waugh and Muriel Spark and the American Thomas Merton and Falnnery O'Connor.

However both writers are under the influence of different Christian denominations, their writings correlate largely with similar literary inclinations. Both challenge their personal faith and the dogmatic religious training they once underwent in their formative years. For example, Hawthorne's novels such as *The Gentle Boy* (1832), *Alice Doane's Appeal* (1835), *Young Goodman Brown* (1835) are a revolt against Puritanical legacy. In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), he criticizes the concept of devil impersonation in his delineation of the inevitable transformation of Arthur Dimmesdale despite the existence of the Blackman in the forest. Hawthorne uses language in a perfect way to describe the terror of the Blackman and the self-torture experience of his minister Arthur Dimmesdale. Thus, Hawthorne is considered a pioneer in creating "psychological fiction before the field of psychology developed" (Baym, 1986, p. 2). Similarly, Greene is famous for his Catholic novels such *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) in which Greene "shows the evil of a dogmatic fanaticism within the Catholic Church" (Gordon, 1997, p. 47). The Catholic themes in his novels prove that God's faith will prevail finally through negation. This tendency is known in his writings as "via negativa" which is "both a theological approach and a set of literary techniques (Hodgkins, 2006, p.53). "Via negativa" means that the knowledge about God is obtained through negation or through the path of sin. This style has influenced numerous writers after Greene such as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. In *The Power and the Glory*, one is brought face to face with the contradictions of the whiskey priest who, despite his drunkenness and cowardice, sets off a redemptive journey to reach absolution that finally got him killed.

Both Puritanism and Catholicism are strict Christian denominations. Puritanism encompasses wide interpretations of reformed Protestantism and Calvinism. It is originated as an "insult launched at nonconformist clergy within the newly reformed Elizabethan Church (Coffey, 2008, p. I). Set against the papal authority, Puritanism is originated in the Church of England and branched off into North America or what is known as New England. Hawthorne was a member of the society of New England which derived its ethical principles from the seventeenth-century Puritanism. The theme of adulterous clergyman in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* provoked a Puritan controversy. In his review *"The Scarlet Letter" and Other Writings,*" Reverend Arthur Cleveland Coxe criticized the novel for its erotic theme and asked about the motive behind selecting such a theme. He expressed his concern that the novel might "signal a trend in the American publishing" that would allow a "running under tide of filth" (as cited in Person, 2005, p. 67).

Catholicism belongs to the influential Roman Catholic Church whose roots go back to the first millennium. Catholics pay homage to the Bishop of Rome and they usually criticize reformation of the church by both the Protestants and the Calvinists. The relationship between Catholics and Puritans is turbulent, as Catholics regard "Puritanism as the most evil expression of Reformation heresy. Catholics frequently pointed to Puritans as savage persecutors of Catholicism who, out of mere malice, took it upon themselves to oppress and torment the adherents of true religion" (Questier, 2006, p. 61).

Greene invokes images of grace and doubt in his novels. For him, doubt is "honored above any religious pharisaism or political party line" (Bosco, 2005, p. 27). Therefore, Greene's *The Power and the Glory* has been criticized by many critics because they claim that Greene "conceives of God in terms that either confuse the Father with the Son or force the term "God" to mean only the Creator at the expense" (Bosco, 2005, p. 27). For example, Jae Suck Choi notes that Greene turns God into a scapegoat, a title usually reserved for Jesus; whereas, Cates Baldridge claims that Greene rarely thinks of Christ.

In an answer to the question: why do the two authors resort to fiction as the best genre to convey their messages? Nancy Armstrong (2005) asserts in her book *How the Novel Think*: *The Limits of British Individualism from 1719–1900* that the modern secular morality does not emanate from the Bible or the religious institutions, but rather from works of fiction that introduce "a whole world of possibilities without which, I believe, a modern secular state ruled chiefly by ideology could not have emerged when and how it did (29). It is evident that fiction is able to encompass a wide array of schools and techniques that enable it to venture into new experimental arenas that other genres are still lagging behind.

The two novels are similar in a number of ways, especially in terms of plot lines as well as themes such as sin, guilt, escape, redemption, and re-assimilation. With regard to the daughters and mothers, there is a resemblance of the daughters' names and an obvious analogy between the audacious roles of their mothers who sacrifice their happiness in a bid to save their children.

In the plot lines, there is an obvious similarity between biographical histories of each priest. They both revolve around renegade priests and faithful, relentless women who remain committed

to their illegitimate children. In her article "*The Scarlet Letter* of the law: Hawthorne and criminal justice," Laura Hanft Korobkin (1997) asserts how Dimmesdale lives in religious society controlled mainly by a small group of "powerful men, accountable apparently to none but themselves and their God" (p. 194). And this clique of powerful men are excluding the townspeople who "may mutter, but they must also unhesitatingly obey." (Korobkin, 1997, p. 195). In this restrictive community, Hester Prynne gives birth to a child out of the wedlock. Surprisingly, Hester remains determined and withholds the name of her daughter's father despite the relentless efforts by the governor and his retinue to deter her. Consequently, Hester is brought to the town's scaffold where she is publicly stigmatized. To avoid the constant surveillance of the Puritans, she moves out of town into the woods to live alone with her daughter, Pearl, making her living by working as a seamstress. As the story unfolds, we realize how Pearl has become a naughty girl who rebels against the reality of the notorious scarlet letter. Up until the last chapter of the novel, the love affair between Hester and the young minister Arthur Dimmesdale is kept secret. Finally, the little Pearl has a great effect in transforming the disenchanted priest from a shameful adulterer to a free soul by forcing him to confess his guilt openly and recognizing her as his legitimate daughter.

If we consider the possibility that Puritanism is the foe in *The Scarlet Letter*, Catholicism is definitely the savior in *The Power and the Glory*. Not only does faith drive the whiskey priest to sacrifice his own soul in defense of Catholicism, but it also drives him to repent for having an illegitimate child.

In the rural district of Tabasco, Mexico, where a totalitarian regime persecutes Catholics and eradicates any signs of religion, only two priests are left alive: Padre José and the whiskey priest—as the townspeople used to call him by that name because he is a drunkard. The former renounces his religion and gets married, thus saving his life on earth and heaven; meanwhile, the latter remains in the country and defies the government by preaching Christianity to the poor villagers, and thus becoming the only voice of the church in that rural community. There is yet another underlying cause behind his determination to tour the poor villages: the priest has fathered a girl and her memory haunts him wherever he goes. Finally, he finds her in terrible conditions in one of the towns he visits; he loves the girl, but he cannot stay with her lest the police pick him as a scapegoat and shoot him before the masses. As Greene contends:

> The old man was muttering and the priest's thoughts went back to Brigitta. The knowledge of the world lay in her like the dark inexplicable spot in an X-ray photograph; he longed—with a breathless feeling in the breast—to save her, but he knew the surgeon's decision—the ill was incurable.
>
> (*PG*, 1990, p. 127)

In his long run from the police, he gets weary and desperately tries to find a church where he can confess his own sins, adultery among them, and thus experience absolution. Upon reaching the border between Mexico and the United States, however, and after a tip-off from the mestizo, the whiskey priest retreats in order to help a criminal on the verge of death. Confident that the story is full of flaws and that the mestizo is his Judas, he goes on to rescue the man even though he knows that he may be captured and shot. And, as it turns out, this is what exactly happens.

Another striking resemblance between the two novels is the affinity between the characters' names. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter*, the daughter's name is Pearl, but when Mr. Wilson forgets the name, he calls her many other names: "Who art thou, and what Pearl?—Ruby, rather—or Coral—or Red Rose, at the very least?" (*SL*, 2006, p. 101). Coral, here, is a reminiscent of her namesake in *The Power and the Glory* who hides the priest in her parents' big barn and ignores her mom as she "couldn't trust her" (*PG*, 1990, p. 37). Coral does this herself and helps the priest until he finally gets away from the lieutenant. Having made this help, she turns to be a link, proving the analogy between the two novels: the whiskey priest has a daughter named Brigitta, which is the same name of the little boy whom the whiskey priest baptizes while drunk and Juan tells her mother that it is "a good saint's name" (*PG*, 1990, p.28). At the same time, it is also related to Saint Brigit of Sweden who lived in the fourteenth century, and used to have visions, as Bridget Morris (2006) notes in the abstract of the book *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden:*

> St. Birgitta of Sweden (1303-1373, canonized 1391) was one of the most charismatic and influential female visionaries of the later Middle Ages. Altogether, she received some 700 revelations, dealing with subjects ranging from meditations on the human condition, domestic affairs in Sweden, and ecclesiastical matters in Rome, to revelations in praise of the Incarnation and devotion to the Virgin. (i)

Semantically, the name 'Brigitta' connotes a connection or a link, suggesting that the girl functions as a bridge between different cultures.

In addition to the aforementioned nomenclatural analogy, the role of women in the two novels is clearly analogous. They show a sort of independence in their lives and in bringing up their fatherless daughters. For instance, Hester works in sewing clothes to the well-off Puritan ladies of Boston to become financially independent. Further, she devotes the rest of her time sewing clothes for the poor—creating a social position among the puritan community not just as a woman seeking to earn a living but also as a communal philanthropist. In much the same way, Maria lives like any ordinary villager in town; working the land and raising her children. But she differs from Hester: she has little education, and that is why she regards herself as different, as when she claims:

> I know things, I went to school. I'm not like these others—ignorant. I know you're a bad priest. That time we were together—that wasn't all you have done…do you think that god wants you to stay and die—a whisky priest like you? (*PG*, 1990, p. 79)

Empowered by her education, Maria censures the whiskey priest for his lewd behavior and drunkenness. She is a sinner, but she redeems herself by devoting her life only to her daughter. Further, she and Hester suppress their sexual desire and remain faithful to their runaway priests and to their children. Their influence is omnipresent and that makes them direct foils to their priests who are always viewed as cowards and dependents. Accordingly, Hester remains silent refusing to speak the name of the father of her child; Maria provides an excellent cover for the whiskey priest when he comes to visit her. She saves the priest from being captured by asking him to "bite this…She had a small raw onion in her hand" (*PG*, 1990, p. 72-3). Moreover, she rescues him by saying that he is her husband which quells suspicions of him being a priest.

Most of the action of the novel takes place in Boston—a city in Massachusetts where John Winthrop established the first Puritan settlement in the beginning of the seventeenth century. In his article "Remembering John Winthrop-Hawthorne's Suggestion," Matthew S. Holland (2007) elaborates on the important role of John Winthrop as one of the leading Puritans who come to America. Holland writes:

> During this period, he settled Boston and skillfully held together the sprawling frontier settlements of Massachusetts in the face of harsh winters, economic downturns, unpredictable patterns of migration, divisive political and theological disputes, and a smattering of conflicts with foreign powers and native populations. (6)

The Protestants of the British church revolted the inability of their churches to force reformation in the society, and rather they pushed to "purify their national church by eliminating every shred of Catholic influence" (Wertenbarker, 1947, p. 89). Dissenting from Catholicism has significant ramifications for the Puritans, they headed towards extremism in interpreting the Bible.

Indeed, this principle was heavily underlined in Hawthorne's wonderful depiction of place that appears crystal clear in the description of the minister's study. The old books besieged Dimmesdale from every place, illustrating the biblical stories of ancient adulterers and adulteresses and the suffering they had endured throughout all their lives. Hawthorne writes:

> The walls were hung around with tapestry, said to be from the Gobelin looms, and, at all events, representing the Scriptural story of David and Bathsheba, and Nathan the Prophet, in colors; still unfaded, but which made the fair woman of the scene almost as grimly picturesque as the woe-denouncing seer. Here the pale clergyman piled up his library, rich with parchment-bound folios of the Fathers, and the role of Rabbis, and monkish erudition, of which the Protestant divines, even while they vilified and decried that class of writers, were yet constrained to avail themselves.
>
> (*SL*, 2006, p. 116)

The Old Testament influences the Puritans' view on adultery; Dimmesdale is obsessed with the story of David and Bathsheba where the beautiful maiden Bathsheba seduces Prophet David to marry her after the demise of her husband:

> And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.
> (James: 2 Sam. 11:2, New International Version)

Bathsheba has an extramarital affair with Prophet David: their child dies and that is regarded as God's retribution. Stemming from this direct affinity, the whole novel is an allusion to the Old Testament's story of Bathsheba, and equally, this point is addressed in *The Power and the Glory* in which the title of the novel is taken from a famous prayer "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen" (James: 1 Cor 16:10, New International Version). If we look at the two narratives from the perspective of religious allusion, the ancient theological trope of the identification of redemption and sin has been realized. Fully aware of the demise of the child in the story of David and Bathsheba, both priests attempt to reverse their fortunes by confessing their sins in public and admitting their fatherhood of their children. But the old

Puritan books hold Dimmesdale back from confessing his sins. Despite the attempts of Chillingworth and others to convince Dimmesdale to get married and have children, he is disinclined to take this step and rejects "all suggestions of this kind, as if priestly celibacy were one of his articles of church-discipline" (*SL*, 2006, p.115-6).

This is not the case for the whiskey priest though. He is caught between a rock and a hard place. Were he to get married, he would be defrocked from the church. Even more, if he had disclosed that he had a child out of the wedlock; his reputation would have been marred among the poor Catholic peasants who always regard him as a pious leader. And that is exactly what happens to his counterpart Padre José whose decision to renounce Catholicism and get married is a curse rather than a blessing: he gradually loses his self-image and falls under self-deprecating pressures. Greene asserts:

> He stood outside himself and wondered whether he was even fit for hell. He was just a fat old impotent man mocked and taunted between the sheets. But then he remembered the gift he had been given which nobody could take away. That was what made him worthy of damnation—the power he still had of turning the water into the flesh and blood of God. He was a sacrilege. Whenever he went, whatever he did, he defiled god. (*PG*, 1990, p. 29)

Not every priest is able to confront the communist regime in Mexico—a few fight and get killed. Many just blend with the herd in getting out of the Christianity cloak before the Red Shirts kill them, and Padre Jose is no exception. Greene's *The Power and the Glory* depicts the historical period of Garrido Canabal's reign of terror in Mexico who succeeded in closing all the state churches and mandating all priests to marry and renounce their religious duties (Malcolm, 1998, p.9). Greene himself travelled to Tabasco region during his writing of his novel *The Lawless Road* and witnessed how this despotic ruler had turned the Christian schools to "almost military-like institutions of discipline where children were indoctrinated scientifically and learned the virtues of reason, agricultural technique, and physical exercises (Krauze, 2006, p. 4). But the character of Garrido Canabal does not occupy much space in the novel; instead Greene uses the character as a metaphor of the treacherous insiders who are corrupting the moral fabric of the Mexican society, and also as a constant reminder of how the communists loathe Catholicism.

Escaping from the inferno of the pangs of conscience, the priests move to the wilderness in order to meet with their daughters and minimize the difficulties they are encountering. Hester and Dimmesdale decide to move to the forest, out of the restrictive presence of their Puritan society. Their meeting, which is prolonged for a long time, finally offers them the opportunity to set everything straight in their relationship. Not only is the forest chosen for being a hidden sanctuary, but also for its openness and freedom. Hawthorne writes:

> Partly that she dreaded the secret or undisguised interference of the Old Roger Chillingworth, and partly that her conscious heart imputed suspicion where none could have been felt, and partly that both the minister and she would need the whole wide world to breathe in, while they talked together—for all these reasons Hester never thought of meeting him in any narrower privacy than beneath the open sky. (*SL*, 2006, p. 182)

Between 1642 and 1649, Salem was still a small settlement, bordered on three sides by a forest. Thus, the forest turns out to be the right place for Dimmesdale to rethink in his future, and for the two lovers to rekindle their love and passion. But this time, love is platonic, and sex is totally out

of their minds. Had there been any desire still left in their bosoms, they would have repeated the sexual affair once they met again. But neither Hester nor the priest wishes to repeat the act because the catastrophe of the scarlet letter has purified their souls from the earthly desires.

Unlike Dimmesdale, the whiskey priest is not forced to retreat into a rural space; instead, he willingly exiles himself to rural villages, preferring to go south "in the actual track of the police," (*PG*, 1990, p. 83) where the danger lies rather than heading north. Choosing the rural villages as his exile, he passes his time preaching patience and catechism to the poor peasants of Tabasco. The priest hopes that he will be worthy of salvation by saving the needy people of Tabasco. He hopes that God will reward him by saving his daughter.

In the wilderness, Arthur Dimmesdale is surprised to see Pearl completely unresponsive and rather provocative in all her demeanor. In a voice full of reproach, Hester warns her, "Leap across the brook, naughty child, and run hither! Else, I must come to thee" (*SL*, 2006, p. 196). Surprisingly, all her feelings break loose once her mother demands that she greet the priest.

> She accompanied this wild outbreak with piercing shrieks, which the woods reverberated on all sides; so that, alone as she was in her childish and unreasonable wrath, it seemed as if a hidden multitude were lending her their sympathy and encouragement. (*SL*, 2006, p. 196)

It is clear now that Pearl will not compromise with the priest as his sin of hiding his fatherhood has cost the young girl too much: she has lost her father's affection and protection. In a similar way, after the whiskey priest comes to Maria's town, Brigitta refuses his constant attempts to reconcile with her. She is frustrated, as she is the only one in town left fatherless. Greene writes:

> He moved towards her with infinite caution, as if she were an animal who disturbed him. He felt weak with longing. He said, "My dear, why me…?
> She said furiously, 'They laugh at me.'
> 'Because of me?'
> She said, 'Everyone else has a father…who works'.
> (*PG*, 1990, p. 81)

These qualities of being imp, mischievous and impudent do not exist in the daughters' peers simply because calamities had hardened and burnt them away. Therefore, leaving the two daughters without any help or support has brought a touch of nervousness to their behavior. Pearl is so nervous and stubborn most of the time, whereas Brigitta is sad and aloof.

Building on this, Pearl's meeting with the minister turns to be silent where they "exchanged no words" (Maclean, 1990, p. 55), Pearl just uses her body language and facial gestures of winking and nodding. Likewise, Brigitta's dialogue with her father is so concise and depends mainly on her arresting eyes: "The child stared up at the lieutenant and then turned her knowing eyes upon the priest" (*PG*, 1990, p. 76). This indirect contact between the priests and their daughters reveal the ingenuity of Hawthorne and Greene in turning the daughters to supernatural beings. In her article "The Character of Flame: The Function of Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*," Anne Marie McNamara (1990) suggests that Pearl has undergone transformation from a physical presence into a spiritual one:

> The spirit child communicates her disapproval in another way, one exquisitely appropriate to Dimmesdale's sensibility--through a silent, indirect, subjective language. In the entire scene at the brook side, she does not speak to him with her human voice at all. She addresses him indirectly through her persistent rejection of his advances and through actions ostensibly directed towards her mother. (69)

Torn between his own illusions and the repulsion of his own daughter, Dimmesdale realizes that Pearl, "the elf child," has something "preternatural" to her:

> "I have a strange fancy," observed the sensitive minister, "that this brook is the boundary between two worlds, and that thou canst never meet thy Pearl again. Or is she an elfish spirit, who, as the legends of our childhood taught us, is forbidden to cross a running stream? (*SL*, 2006, p. 195)

The brook is nothing but a gate between two worlds: Earth and hell, as Randal Stewart (1933) suggests when he claims that the meeting in the wilderness between Dimmesdale, Hester, and Pearl is "a meeting of souls in hell, souls frozen in the eternal state of a decisive earthly choice" (196). Thus, Pearl transforms into a spirit who has a "preternatural" presence, whereas Brigitta turns into a nightmare, haunting the whiskey priest wherever he goes.

The Power and the Glory is interspersed with episodes of the priest in different places and completely in anguish for leaving his daughter alone. For instance, upon hearing the word "bastard" in the crowded cell, all the pain and agony come up in his mind as if the word "brought his own child nearer" (*PG*, 1990, p. 124). In the same cell, where the priest discloses his true identity to realize how crucial his situation will be as the place might be brimming with "inevitable Judas," his thoughts go back to Brigitta, and wonders how the girl could live on near that rubbish-dump (*PG*, 1990, p.127). Even after his departure from the despicable cell to the luxurious house of Mr. Lehr, he ponders that he, himself, "had no right to such luxury" while his daughter is suffering alone (*PG*, 1990, p. 164). Exhausted, narcotized with brandy, and in police custody, the whiskey priest remembers his child, "coming out of the glare: the sullen unhappy knowledgeable face" (*PG*, 1990, p. 208).

Thus, all the attempts of the priests to get close to their daughters are met with a cruel rebuff. There is only one way of reconciliation, which is through the public confession of their sins. As Pearl lays down her conditions on the minister:

> "Doth he love us?" said Pearl, looking up, with acute intelligence into her mother's face. "Will he go back with us, hand in hand, we three together, into the town?"
>
> "And will he always keep his hand over his heart?" inquired Pearl. (*SL*, 2006, p. 198)

Pearl's pre-reconciliation demands are clear and non-negotiable: public confession and bearing the whole responsibility of what he had done to her mother and her. On the other hand, Brigitta seems helpless and sad most of the time: she does not ask the whiskey priest for anything. Yet, the whiskey priest asserts that little Pearl is protected by god's angels more than any other power in the world, as he notes, "the president up the capital goes guarded by men with guns—but my child, you have all the angels of heaven" (*PG*, 1990, p. 82). The fear of the girls' unknown future is a considerable concern for the priests. Dimmesdale begs Hester to take care of Pearl, despite the girl's cold-hearted welcome to him.

> "I pray you, answered the minister," "If thou hast any means of pacifying the child, do it forthwith! Save it were the cankered wrath of any witch, like Mistress Hibbons," added he, attempting to smile, "I know nothing that I would not sooner encounter than this passion in a child. In Pearl's young beauty, as in the wrinkled witch, it has a preternatural effect. Pacify her, if thou lovest me!" (*SL*, 2006, p. 196)

But the pacification needs Dimmesdale to confess his guilt publicly. Consequently, he will reconcile with Hester and Pearl and he will prove that he lives up to the moral principles which he always been professing loudly and emphatically.

In Pearl's vision, the scarlet letter 'A' is the token of the devil, as it is made of flame. Throughout the novel, the letter A, which Hester wears on her chest, becomes a symbol of her strength rather than her weakness. Letter A is more than just a symbol of adultery it casts her and her daughter out of the society to the wilderness. Further, it defines who Hester is and who she is becoming. Stigmatized by wearing it in public, Hester does not want Dimmesdale to endure her experience lest he be shunned by his community.

By the end, both priests die: one from the self-torture he inflicts upon himself; the other from being shot dead by the communists. Both are conscious of what they had done, and the haunting sense of guilt will never leave them to enjoy the pleasures of life. However the two priests and their partners are stifled by a mutual sense of guilt, this sense constitutes the only bond that unites them together. In her review of Peter Brooks' *Troubling Confessions*: *Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature*, Austin Sarat (2000) explains that Brooks contends that guilt constitutes, along with broad cultural pressures, a bond that unites the priests with their partners. Austin writes:

> Brooks argues that confession requires a relationship: between writer and readers, penitent and priest, patient and analyst, suspect and interrogator. Each of these relationships are (sic) characterized by dependency, subjection, fear, and desires to appease and please. (122)

Despite being born out of the wedlock, Pearl and Brigitta are the real support of these relationships which guarantee the transformation of the priests and the acknowledgment of the two daughters. Consequently, confession, which is the pillar of redemption in Christian theology, is the only panacea for all their problems. Mark Van Doren (1966) expresses how Hawthorne stresses the inevitability of Dimmesdale's confession:

> Sin for him, for Hester, and for the people who punish her is equally a solemn fact, a problem for which there is no solution in life. There was no other solution for his story, given Hester's strength, Dimmesdale's weakness, and Chillingworth's perversion, than the one he (Hawthorne) found. (132-3)

On the same ground, Hugh N. Maclean (1990) concurs that "the very weakening of Dimmesdale's fibre is a subtle part of God's plan, for only in this way can man receive grace" (60). The moment of confession is not that bitter as immediately after Dimmesdale confesses his sin, he is rewarded by Pearl "who kissed his lips. A spell was broken" (*SL*, 2006, p. 238). Before, Dimmesdale was not able to mount the scaffold, and he called upon Pearl "Come hither! Come, my little Pearl!" (*SL*, 2006, p. 235). Knowing that he has breached the divine order of God to no avail, he cries: "The law we broke" (*SL*, 2006, p. 239). His death, while Hester and Pearl are nearby, comes as evidence that he would not have died without completing his last wish: confession.

If the whiskey priest does not confess his sin before the peasants of Maria's villages, he has already done it many times through the many villages he has been through. His love for his daughter overwhelms him and supersedes any sorts of love that he once boasts. As a result, the whiskey priest fails to come to terms with one of the pre-conditions of sainthood, which is to turn the other cheek and love your enemy. Greene explains:

> As the liquid touched his tongue he remembered his child, coming in and out of the glare: the sullen unhappy knowledgeable face. He said, 'Oh God, help her. Damn me, I deserve it, but let her live for ever.' This was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world: all the fear and the wish to save concentrated unjustly on the one child. (*PG*, 1990, p. 207-8)

The young Juan, who is once touched and influenced by the suffering of the whiskey priest, is a representative of the new Catholic generation; he gives a refuge to another runaway priest from the claws of the communist regime. Greene writes:

> 'Yes,' he said gently, 'My name is Father_' But the boy had already swung the door open and put his lips to his hand before the other could give himself a name. (*PG*, 1990, p. 222)

So, the young Juan is a disciple of the whiskey priest who is so resolute to continue the path of resistance against the communists.

By examining the two novels, we can see that the differences are few but significant. For instance, the pace of action in the two novels is different, and this is an apparent divergence between them. If we look at what exactly happens to the priests before going to the wilderness, we wonder, for instance, why Dimmesdale's redemption is at snail's pace. On the other hand, the whiskey priest's redemption is like a roller-coaster ride of flight and pursuit, capture and escape, repeated over and over again. In fact, Hawthorne prolongs his novel by adding "The Custom House" chapter which is intended to "offset the intensity of *The Scarlet Letter*" and includes an account of his own background (Silver, 1965, p. XVI). But apart from these differences, the slow redemption of the minister can be explained through the concept of God's retribution in Puritanism and Catholicism. In the Puritanical point of view, God's retribution is manifested in the inner conflict or the psychological forces clamoring inside the minister's mind; therefore, retribution is not corporeal but a subconscious one that is reflected in psychosomatic ailments, and this is shown clearly in Dimmesdale's illness as well as on his hand that is always on his heart. In *The Power and the Glory*, God's retribution does not occur in the inner conflict per se

but rather in the physical torture and the seedy conditions the whiskey priest encounters wherever he goes. Eventually, Catholic punishment guarantees that the more pain you endure, the happier you will be.

On an entirely different note, the place is seedy in *The Power and the Glory*; on the contrary, it is beautiful in *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Power and the Glory* has plenty of seediness, squalor, ugliness, spiritual emptiness and a significant sense of failure among human beings. Up until the end, the whiskey priest passes through several sordid scenes and places in which vultures, mosquitoes, and beetles are the only inhabitants. Even his daughter the poor Brigitta is left alone near a rubbish-dump. If Greene has tarnished the image of redemption of the whiskey priest, Hawthorne has done quite the opposite, for he beautifies the places his protagonists have been through "His Puritan world is in its own way beautiful" (Doren, 1996, p. 132). Pearl is playing near the magnificent brook in a wild-yet-verdant forest and she is not like the poor little Brigitta: she is definitely at the opposite end of the scale.

Due to the different conditions, in which the priests live, Dimmesdale is a sinner inside a Puritan restrictive society; however, his society at least, safeguards the rights of the individuals and spreads moral views and social integration in an affluent American community. Thus, in the Puritans' point of view, religion is intrinsic; nevertheless, it is pervasive in the Catholic community of Tabasco, where the masses have nothing to believe in except God.

Feeling guilty makes Dimmesdale semi-paralyzed throughout the novel until Pearl pushes him to act. Meanwhile, the communist regime of Mexico in 1930s is atheistic: it abolishes religion totally, dismantles churches, and outlaws priests. Subsequently, the whiskey priest is caught in the middle between outside forces like communism and from within by his persistent dependence on alcohol and the nagging pain of having an illegitimate child who has to live alone in this godless community.

Another striking difference is that the whiskey priest knows well who his enemies are: the lieutenant who pursues him like a hound; and the hungry mestizo or the Judas whom he recognizes immediately as his betrayer and his death. However, what the whiskey priest may be unaware of is that these enemies may be the messengers of God to him in order to test his metal. Meanwhile, part of Dimmesdale's frustration and masochism goes to the fact that he faces no obvious enemy; for instance, he does not know that the doctor who has come to cure him is really Hester's absent husband, who is determined to take revenge on him. At the same time, he falls in an abyss of despair making himself his own worst enemy.

Technically, the novels correspond to the theme of endeared illegitimate daughters through the stream of consciousness technique in *The Power and the Glory*, in which the apparition of Brigitta appears before the whiskey priest many times. In parallel, Pearl appears before Dimmesdale through the celestial insights (McNamara, 1990, p.68). When Hester appeals to Dimmesdale to convince the Puritan officials not to take her child away from her, Dimmesdale backs her and decides that Hester must keep the child. Dimmesdale pleads: "This child of its father's guilt and its mother's shame has come from the hand of God, to work in many ways upon her heart, who pleads so earnestly and with such bitterness of spirit the right to keep her" (*SL*, 2006, p. 104).

The priests' ultimate sin is the mortal sin that reminds them of how they have to judge themselves. But instead of judging themselves on the principles of justice, they fall under the spell of self-flagellation by the memories of their illegitimate daughters. Seeking redemption and rebirth, they have to pass a self-awakening experience in which they head towards the wilderness. Dimmesdale seeks the appalling forest that has been more horrifying by the existence of mistress Hibbons, the black witch, to protect him from any worldly thoughts. At the time of the dictator Garrido Canabal, the whiskey priest tours the barren land of Mexico to baptize children and preach wisdom to the ruthless peasants. Dimmesdale needs to act covertly in his society and does his best to hide his own sin, whereas the whiskey priest tours the villages and speak openly against communism. Dimmesdale is fighting a war within and without, but the whiskey priest thinks that he is fighting the devil or the communism. The objective of Dimmesdale is a reformation of the society's rigid rules and conditions; meanwhile, the whiskey priest seeks to overthrow the society and embolden the enemies of communism. Yet, their female partners are different: Hester is waiting for the result of the inner conflict within the priest's psyche; whereas, Maria supports the whiskey priest and provides a hideout for him.

As the priests go farther in their journeys, they come to find out their true identities, reconcile their differences, and gradually return again to their urban origins to sacrifice and redeem their sins either by sacrificial death in the case of the whiskey priest or by confession in the case of Dimmesdale. Consequently, they transform themselves into caring and tending fathers, ones who love their illegitimate daughters unconditionally and without shame or remorse.

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