

***The Scarlet Letter* and 'The Spectacle of the Scaffold.'**

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[(essay date 1997) *In the following excerpt, Roberts suggests that Hawthorne's novel, written in the nineteenth century but set in the seventeenth, contrasts two models of discipline and punishment: the public spectacle of the earlier period is illustrated by Hester's punishment, while the inner torment associated with Hawthorne's time is represented by Dimmesdale's suffering and death.*]

The phrase, "the spectacle of the scaffold," comes from Foucault (it is the title of one of the chapters in *Discipline and Punish*), but it could serve equally well as a chapter title for Hawthorne's ***The Scarlet Letter***. The two books, while very different, share a common obsession: the connections between vision and power. Each can be seen as an investigation of the question, What does looking have to do with punishment? Foucault's demonstration of the pervasive connection in Western culture between vision, power, and punishment is considered one of his great achievements.<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne's novel, published in 1850, engages many of the same issues.

Rereading Hawthorne through the lens of Foucault helps to isolate and focus some of the crucial issues in this novel about punishment and display, but ***The Scarlet Letter*** brings a term to the discussion that Foucault omits: gender. I would like to investigate the way that *this* mark of difference works among the other economies of discipline, punishment, and visibility in the novel.

The chapter on *Clarissa* showed how the figure of the heroine was in many respects an empty vessel, able to move others while she herself remained arrested or caught. The result was that the subjectivity of *Clarissa* became defined through her victimization. Her "trial" at the hands of Lovelace revealed or created pain and suffering in the place that desire might have been. Her desire, therefore, could only be represented as masochistic. Hester Prynne is another heroine who takes on the role of martyr, serving as little more than a magnet for our sympathetic attachment.

Both books are concerned with the development of sympathy; both go to great pains to construct the ties which bind us to our heroine. In *Clarissa*, sympathy--tempered with judgment--becomes a means of knowledge, a way to be moved without appearing to succumb to the political and erotic dangers of theatricality. In ***The Scarlet Letter*** sympathy is more dangerous and more painful, in part, because it is so deeply entwined with guilt.

As readers our identification and sympathy with Hester are routed primarily through Reverend Dimmesdale, her partner in adultery. The novel becomes the story of his deep identification not so much with Hester herself as with her guilt and its emblem, the letter A. For this is an identification not based on a desire to *be* Hester or to suffer as she does (indeed, the argument could be made that Dimmesdale already suffers as much as or more than the heroine), but a desire for the *public mark* of her pain.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault tells us that between the middle of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries, sweeping changes occurred in the method and style of punishment in Europe. One of the most significant of these was "the disappearance of punishment as spectacle" (8), and "a slackening of the hold on the body" (10). Whereas earlier punishment depended upon prolonged, public physical torture

and punishment, the newer, more "humane" methods bypassed the body: "One no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself" (11). That which one tried to reach, though sometimes styled "the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations" was most frequently referred to as the "soul" (16). "At the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment. The age of sobriety had begun" (14). Hawthorne wrote and published his novel in this age of sobriety, but its setting is the earlier age of spectacle. As we will see, this doubled time frame allowed Hawthorne to explore the contradictions and the exclusions of each age. It is in the character of Dimmesdale that these contradictions are played out. Lacking Hester's *public* mark of shame, he is subjected to even greater *private* agonies of the soul.

In one sense Dimmesdale already has a mark of his own (festering on or within his chest), but it is Hester's public display of her mark which both horrifies and attracts him. Unwilling to put himself on display as Hester has been forced to do, Dimmesdale remains repressed and guilty. The sympathy constructed for us in this novel is thus a guilty one. Hawthorne's is a world of repression and guilty secrets, secrets which are held to the breast and only reluctantly revealed. One of those guilty secrets would appear to be a hidden and shameful identification with the female victim.

Such identification has two primary effects. The first is an initial sense of freedom or release. The female victim is held so that the hero and thus we, the readers, can be free. Clarissa is put on trial, arrested so that we might be moved. Hester is kept silent on the scaffold so that Dimmesdale might be free to preach from the pulpit and win praise and fame. Ralph gets a new sense of life and health from watching Isabel choose her fate. Poulet, in "The Phenomenology of Reading," wrote of being energized by the sight of the books on display, being roused to active heroism by the plight of "their immobility." As readers we participate in this energizing process; we too get roused to full subjectivity through the male appreciation of and connection to the female victims. There is, however, a second effect. This is the increasing sense of limitation felt by those characters (male and female alike), a diminution of their powers upon feeling the full impact of the heroine's fate. We are chastened by her pain. ***The Scarlet Letter*** is notable for the degree to which it is centred almost entirely on the *second* effect. Freedom is imagined, conceived, and constructed only to be almost immediately bound, controlled, and disciplined. Sympathy grants us very little freedom in this novel; instead it acts as a form of discipline. It both attracts and repels, holding us in check.

If *Clarissa* is a study of the heroine as victim in the making, then ***The Scarlet Letter*** is a study of response to the victim already made. Our gaze is directed away from the heroine herself and onto the mark that signifies her shame and her punishment.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that this mark carries two messages. The first refers to the wearer; it tells us that she is guilty of a sexual transgression. The mark constructs her as deviant/defiant and thus as a figure of interest. The second message refers not to the wearer, but to the political realm in which she lives. This message informs us that she has met and been judged by authority and power. Much like the seal on an official document or the signature of a dignitary, it is authority's seal branded onto authority's subject. Its message is "the triumph of the law."<sup>3</sup> Thus the dual message of the mark on Hester's breast reminds us both of her deviance/defiance and of the triumph of the law. It marks the conjunction of two realms: the private, the sexual, and the feminine on one hand and the public, the official, and the masculine on the other. Hester is marked as female and as criminal. This doubled identity makes her a powerful and troubling figure. The mark she wears on her breast proclaims not just the exposure and punishment of her deviance and defiance, but their very possibility. Such a conjunction, or indeed collision, of meanings grants the symbol a seemingly magnetic power over those who encounter it.

To explore the operation of this power, I turn to a scene at the end of the novel, in chapter 22, in which Hester Prynne stands amid a holiday crowd. In some respects, this scene is reminiscent of Lovelace's imagined trial scene in *Clarissa*, when he saw himself as the centre of attention at a public trial, much like Hester. But he imagined that event as a thrilling spectacle, filled with movement, tension, and excitement.

Here a kind of stasis is imposed upon the scene; spectators and spectacle alike are held frozen in their places. There is tension, but no movement. The excitement, if there is any, transfixes rather than enlivens.

Although the narrator tells us that her own townspeople had become accustomed to the letter she wore upon her breast, visitors had never seen anything like it: "These, after exhausting other modes of amusement, now thronged about Hester Prynne with rude and boorish intrusiveness. Unscrupulous as it was, however, it could not bring them nearer than a circuit of several yards. At that distance they accordingly stood, fixed there by the centrifugal force of the repugnance which the mystic symbol inspired" (166). Something about the symbol exerts a powerful force. The "unscrupulous ... boorish intrusiveness" which impels the crowd to surround Hester is physically checked by a counter-motion, "repugnance," a force which keeps spectators at a prescribed distance. There are twin forces at work--that which attracts and that which repels--which seem to "fix" *both* spectators and spectacle. Clarissa, unable to move herself, was at least able to move others. Here, spectator and spectacle alike are held and arrested by the symbol Hester must wear.

That Hester should be "fixed" by the mark on her breast is perhaps to be expected. We saw how Clarissa was repeatedly described as ensnared, arrested, and held. What is surprising is the degree to which the "A" controls the spectators as well. The letter seems to exert a kind of magnetic repulsion, a negative sympathy which pushes people away: "As was usually the case wherever Hester stood, a small, vacant area--a sort of magic circle--had formed itself about her, into which though the people were elbowing one another at a little distance, none ventured, or felt disposed to intrude. It was a forcible type of the moral solitude in which the scarlet letter enveloped its fated wearer" (158). The A, symbol of woman's deviance and the law's triumph, encloses Hester in solitude. It arrests and immobilizes not only the wearer, but also those she encounters.

Something of the same sort of dance of attraction and repulsion is enacted in "The Custom House." There, the narrator, recounting his first discovery of the scarlet letter in an attic, comments on its fascination for him. He describes it as "the object that most drew my attention" (24), and continues: "It strangely interested me. My eyes fastened themselves upon the old scarlet letter, and would not be turned aside. Certainly there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation, and which, as it were, streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my mind" (25). He dwells on the mysteriously magnetic properties of the faded piece of cloth, registered by a sense other than intellect. A meaning too subtle for the mind to grasp "stream[s] forth" and calls him.

It appears, however, that to respond to this call can be dangerous. The narrator places the letter on his own breast, and is scorched: "It seemed to me, then, that I experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat; and as if the letter were not of red cloth, but red-hot iron. I shuddered and involuntarily let it fall upon the floor" (25). Like the spectators in chapter 22, he is drawn toward the letter only to be almost physically pushed back. The mark of guilt and suffering has the power to reach and affect us over centuries, beyond and through fiction.

By trying to wear the scarlet letter himself, the narrator of "The Custom House" seems to be both describing and enacting the process of identification in *The Scarlet Letter*. Both his desire to put the scarlet letter on and the pain it causes him prefigure Dimmesdale's cross-gender identification. Such desire and pain also figure centrally in the reader's response. Our identification is built from the same elements: attraction and repulsion, desire and pain.

These scenes--the one, narrated in an intimate way by the author, the story of his own "identification," and the other, from a more distant narratorial perspective describing the public's encounter with the letter--serve as two accounts of the process of identification in this novel, two models of the process to be undertaken by the reader. The narrator's interaction with the letter is immediate and direct. He feels irresistibly drawn toward the faded A, picks it up, places it on his chest, gets burned, and drops it. The scene in chapter 22, while retaining the same dynamic of attraction and repulsion, is structured differently. In the first place, that scene is public rather than private. Furthermore, in contrast to the narrator of "The Custom House," who encounters

only the symbol of the crime, the spectators are faced with a real woman.

Our own identification in the novel is also built out of two conflicting forces, our guilty *identification* with the spectators who surround her and our sense of our own *difference* from (and superiority toward) them. They serve as foils, as models we should *not* emulate. What they are doing is portrayed as both uncivilized (they are sailors with "sunburnt and desperado-looking faces") and barbaric or even inhuman (they are Indians with "snake-like black eyes") (166). These spectators, unlike us, are encountering Hester and the letter for the first time. Their very "strangeness" is underscored. They are unfamiliar with Hester and her mark. They appear at the end of the novel when the readers, like Hester's own townspeople, may have become inured to the symbol and its punishing effects and may have developed sympathy for its wearer. The newcomers' reaction, therefore, serves all the more as a contrast to our own. We join the narrator in his condemnation of their activity because we, like him, are privy to her feelings and thoughts. We learn, for example, that their scrutiny "tormented" Hester (167), "subject[ing] [her] to another trial" (166). Our own place is constructed by showing our similarity with, *and* difference from the spectators. *Like* them, we are drawn forward and then repelled. *Unlike* them, we are granted some knowledge of what Hester is feeling, for we have encountered her before. (This knowledge makes us judges of her judges, critics of her critics.) We judge the spectators on the evidence we are given of Hester's emotional state (knowledge they cannot share). Our evidence is that "the burning letter ... was thus made to sear her breast more painfully than at any time since the first day she put it on" (167).

These spectators, presented as persecutors and judges, re-enact the scene at the beginning of the novel in which part of Hester's punishment is to stand on the scaffold and face her community. Hester, facing the newcomers, must re-enact that moment of shame and exposure. Display becomes, once again, a form of punishment. The process shows us how curiosity (in this case that of the strangers), which to a large extent mirrors our own as readers, however innocent in intent, can be savage and can hurt. The knowledge of Hester's pain increases our sympathy, but it is a sympathy based on guilt because we recognize our identification with the spectators and seek to differentiate ourselves from them. This sympathy is a reaction against the spectators' overt, and our own covert, savage curiosity, and is used as a force to neutralize or override punishing judgment. Constructed in equal measure out of identification with those who stare fixedly at the mystic symbol and a sense of our own difference from them, our sympathy is guilty from the start.

Traditionally, sympathy has been viewed as an antidote to judgment, a means of nullifying its cruel effects. It is represented as all that a viewer, author, or reader can offer a heroine/victim. But if sympathy can only come *after* judgment, if it *depends* upon pain and suffering for its existence, then the relationship between punishment and sympathy is neither so simple nor so innocent as it might seem.<sup>4</sup> There is a deeper attachment to scenes of punishment, guilt, and pain than the sentimental and traditional view of sympathy will admit. Richard Brodhead has noted: "***The Scarlet Letter*** is known as the great novel of seventeenth-century Puritanism. But ... the striking fact about ***The Scarlet Letter*** is that it is almost exclusively the Puritan disciplinary system--its prison house, stocks, scaffold, and penal letters, not its practice of piety or its habit of trade--that Hawthorne concerns himself with" (77) Brodhead's implication is that Hawthorne's obsession with discipline and punishment has been overlooked--or misread. Much has been written about Hawthorne's interest in the concept of sympathy,<sup>5</sup> but his use of sympathy and discipline as forces which counteract and compensate for each other has not been explored.

Thinking of our sympathy as a contrast to the "boorish" and "unscrupulous" curiosity of the spectators in Chapter 22 is the conventional approach.<sup>6</sup> We think of ourselves as superior to them, more enlightened. Often associated with this sense of superiority and enlightenment is a further sense of liberation and freedom, but the sympathy we are taught in ***The Scarlet Letter*** does not so much liberate as bind and pain. This novel, like all the others considered in this book, can be viewed as a "school of sympathy." Unlike the others, however, the lesson in sympathy offered in this novel becomes a lesson in discipline, restraint, and pain as well.

That lesson is begun in "The Custom-House." Here Hawthorne begins to construct his reader by beginning the lessons on sympathy and restraint. At first his view seems to be expansive: "When he casts his leaves forth upon the wind, the author addresses, not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates and lifemates" (4). This, so far, is perfectly clear. We are flattered to hear that we belong to a small but select group ("the few who will understand him"), and we are no doubt pleased to dissociate ourselves from the non-discriminating multitude. That which follows, however, is less straightforward and less reassuring:

Some authors, indeed, do far more than this, and indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy; as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature, and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it. It is scarcely decorous, however, to speak all, even where we speak impersonally. But--as thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed, unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience--it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to our talk; and then, a native reserve being thawed by this genial consciousness, we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself, but still keep the inmost Me behind its veil. To this extent and within these limits, an author, methinks, may be autobiographical, without violating either the reader's rights or his own.(4-5)

I have quoted this passage at length to give its dilatory and evasive flavour in full. Its winding circumlocutions are difficult to trace because each time a position seems to be taken, it is almost as quickly reversed. Hawthorne initially sketches a portrait of a fulfilling relationship between author and reader only to claim that *he* will not be like those authors who say too much. That, after all, would be "scarcely decorous." While it may be "pardonable," he claims, to view the reader as a friend, he is careful to limit the relationship by stating, "Not the closest friend." Coyly he protests that he wants to "keep the inmost Me behind its veil." Only "to this extent and within these limits," he claims, can his enterprise be acceptable.

Each time, a possibility is created, whether it be finding "the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy," completing "the circle of his existence," or addressing his "closest friend," that possibility is as quickly discounted. Hawthorne sets a "limit" on it or dismisses it altogether. The specter of perfect sympathy is raised and then snatched away. Desire is expressed and then reined in. Each time, a stern hand of control is placed on the relationship between author and reader. Decorum and the law are partners in the establishment of limits, the transgression of which would be a violation of "the reader's rights or his own."<sup>7</sup>

The effect of such evasion and control is not, however, entirely negative. The repression or the banishment of that which is "scarcely decorous," and that which may *not* "be pardonable" is incomplete. The effect instead is the creation of a kind of productive confusion. By describing what *might* be and then dismissing it, Hawthorne ensures that the ghost of that presence is evoked, lingers, and never disappears. An author is imagined who "indulges" in "confidential depths of revelation," only to be dismissed. The perfect reader is called forward and then instructed to keep at a distance. This invocation and subsequent negation, assertion followed by denial, becomes one of the distinguishing moves in ***The Scarlet Letter***. By describing the kind of relationship author and reader are *not* going to have, Hawthorne merely banishes that relationship to a kind of spectral limbo, a sphere from which it can and will return. This is surprising because Hawthorne, of all authors, should know that ghosts haunt, and that the repressed returns.

Perhaps the reason that sympathy has to be rigidly controlled is that its very existence is so important to Hawthorne. This is an anxiety that he seems to have shared with Adam Smith. As David Marshall writes of Smith, "The theater of sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is based on the simultaneous necessity of spectators and fear of spectators; the ultimate threat in the world that Smith represents is the prospect of

spectators who would deny sympathy" (*Figure of Theater* 191).

"Spectators who would deny sympathy": many passages in *The Scarlet Letter* can be read as dramatizations of this fear. At both the beginning and the end of the novel, for example, Hester is surrounded by unsympathetic crowds. The narrator's comment on the crowd awaiting Hester's release outside the prison door is that "Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders at the scaffold" (37). The narrator in "The Custom House" who decides to "keep the inmost Me behind its veil" seems to be worried about a similar sort of exposure. In both cases the fear and anxiety echo Smith's: "According to Smith, the exposure we fear ... is exposure before the eyes of those who can not or will not enter into our suffering, imagine our place and point of view--at the moment we are most in need of sympathy." (Marshall, *The Figure of Theater* 185). This situation, a lone figure facing a crowd, hoping for sympathy and almost certain not to find it, is that of both Hester on the scaffold and the author, Hawthorne, with his novel. Both are putting themselves on display; both hope for an understanding response.

We can be fairly certain that Hawthorne both read and was influenced by Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.<sup>8</sup> His vision of sympathy certainly seems similar in many respects. Of Hester's first sojourn on the scaffold he writes: "There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature ... more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame" (41). "It was," he continues, "almost intolerable to be borne" (42). He describes her walk to the scaffold in this way: "Haughty as her demeanor was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon" (40). The fact that Hester is a woman surely intensifies our sense of agony, that that which is considered private and domestic, the young mother with her newborn, should be exposed to the public view.

When Lovelace imagined his own walk from jail to courtroom, he saw it as a sort of triumphant procession or wedding march with himself as a hero to adoring female fans. Hawthorne imagines it differently. He dwells on the horror of having to be exposed to the public eye. This would be a horror that Clarissa Harlowe shared, but Clarissa never lived long enough to have to experience what it might mean to be continually in the public eye. *The Scarlet Letter*, by contrast, is an extended study of life lived after the mark of punishment and shame has been imposed. We were told that to be "the subject of public talk" must "hurt" Clarissa. A defining feature of her virtue was her desire to "slide through life unnoted." If to be the subject of public talk must hurt, then *The Scarlet Letter* is an examination of just how much, and in what ways, that hurt hurts.

While the threat of exposure in Hawthorne's novel is certainly terrifying and pervasive (signaled by its images of "intolerable" suffering and "trampled hearts"), there remains, nonetheless, a giddy sense of thrill in exposure--even a secret longing to be seen. How else could one take the stage in Puritan New England? How else could one get such riveted attention from the crowd? Even a preacher might not expect quite such an attentive audience. The desire to be seen and noticed would still, in Hawthorne's nineteenth-century Massachusetts, carry something of the same stigma it carried for the Puritans.<sup>9</sup>

Foucault described the nineteenth century as the "age of sobriety in punishment." Writing from within that era, Hawthorne is looking back to a time that was both more repressive and more spectacular than his own. One can no longer perform or conduct "the spectacle of the scaffold" in public. The work of punishment must instead be played out privately, within one's own breast.

It was the expression of just such a desire to be seen and admired that made Lovelace's fantasy of becoming a criminal-hero so scandalous. In *Clarissa* such a desire could be openly expressed by Lovelace and censured in the text, but in *The Scarlet Letter* the desire is never given voice directly. Instead, it is a longing that that can only be "heard" or "read" in the evasions, negations and denials of the text. The reader's ear must be sympathetically tuned in order to catch it. The epistolary style of *Clarissa* makes eavesdroppers or voyeurs of all its readers. The revelation of secrets in *The Scarlet Letter*, on the other hand, must be more

carefully and artfully arranged. To speak too openly would be to reveal too much. Only when our hearts are properly attuned are we allowed to look, or even *able* to see. It is sympathy which allows us to see and to hear.

In both novels the desire to appear as a spectacle, particularly as a spectacle of punishment, involves a kind of cross-gender identification. By imagining himself as hero/victim, Lovelace seeks for himself a place similar to that which Clarissa enjoys in the novel--star attraction, star victim. Dimmesdale's longing to show himself is coded along the same lines. He also wants to be in Hester's place. In each case a male author presents a female heroine who is pushed into the limelight against her will. In each case, in order for male characters (Lovelace and Dimmesdale) to imagine themselves as similarly beheld, they have to imagine themselves as female. To identify with the female is to identify with the victim. To identify with the victim is to identify with the one on display, the spectacle.<sup>10</sup> Female, victim, spectacle: the terms merge until they are nearly indistinguishable.

It is perhaps the entangled nature of these prohibitions and desires that makes the expression of the desire to be seen so complicated, and practically unspeakable. One can only approach it, can only arrange to be displayed, cautiously and circuitously. In a letter to his wife before their marriage, Hawthorne wrote: "I am glad to think that God sees through my heart ... and so may any mortal, who is capable of full sympathy and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there."<sup>11</sup> Like Adam Smith, Hawthorne expresses concern about being exposed to one who might withhold sympathy. Only someone capable of *full* sympathy is worthy to come into Hawthorne's depths. That person must find his or her own way; the author will not help by providing a display. This is the type of sympathy the novel attempts to teach its readers: to become "worthy" enough to find our way into the depth's of Hawthorne's novel and Hawthorne's heart. Sympathy provides us a way to see and to be seen, but in Hawthorne's world, it must be carefully regulated. Read in this way, the novel becomes little more than the construction of a safe environment for display--a place where guilty secrets and "inmost Me[s]" can be revealed but not reviled. The female, displayed against her will, is the vehicle through which the male may enjoy the same fantasy.

Gordon Hutner, who provides this reference to Hawthorne's letter, sees in it a "call for a special intuition" (or sympathy) on the part of both wife and ideal reader that is particularly Romantic. He explains: "For Hawthorne, sympathy imparts a Romantic ideal of communication; it predicates an understanding that passes beyond words" (8). While the influence of Romanticism on Hawthorne is undeniable,<sup>12</sup> we have to be more specific. With what eye, after all, are we seeing in ***The Scarlet Letter***? Does our own gaze not encompass *both* the gaze of the Puritans of Massachusetts *and* the gaze of the nineteenth-century narrator? Hawthorne certainly employs Romantic concepts of sympathy, but he always does so in counterpoint--setting them off against earlier and sometimes contradictory notions. Why is ***The Scarlet Letter*** set two hundred years prior to its time of writing if not to exploit the double vision such retrospection provides?

Hawthorne mixes seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century uses of the term sympathy to interesting effect. But before examining this blending in particular, it might be beneficial to give a swift overview of Hawthorne's use of retrospection in general.

*Clarissa* is renowned for the immediacy of its epistolary style, its "writing to the moment." ***The Scarlet Letter*** by contrast always looks to the past, to what has already occurred. This is true in several senses. First, the "crime" committed by Hester and Dimmesdale is well over by the time the story begins. Furthermore Hester, unlike her sister heroine, Clarissa, has already been judged and her punishment begun before the book opens. This sense of events being "over," finished, in the past and yet still spilling into the present, has come to be seen as something of a hallmark of Hawthorne's fiction. The past is always *in* Hawthorne's present, or at the very least, is never far behind.

The most obvious use of retrospection in ***The Scarlet Letter*** is its seventeenth-century setting. The span of

two hundred years between the doing and the telling allows Hawthorne to create what I call a "stereo-scopic" gaze, a way of looking in two directions at once. What this means is that he can adopt either a pre-enlightenment perspective (typical of the Puritan community he portrays) or a post-enlightenment "modern" perspective, which sees some elements of that society as barbarous or inhumane.<sup>13</sup> The narration alternates between a seventeenth-century mode of seeing and a seemingly more "natural" nineteenth-century mode. Each viewpoint unsettles, undercuts, and de-naturalizes the other.

By maintaining *both* perspectives, by alternating from one to another, Hawthorne provides himself with the means of "having it both ways." He can be condescending and derisive about the ways of his forefathers and never lose his own obsession with those ways. He can censure and judge the events of Puritan Massachusetts while at the same time maintaining the ability to experience them through fiction. In *Clarissa* we could play the roles of victim *and* executioner, could experience the life of both prisoner *and* judge. Hawthorne's double vision allows us the same latitude. We can join the "rude and boorish" throng which surrounds Hester in chapter 22, and we can judge them from afar.

Hawthorne's double gaze also allows him to incorporate two distinctive views of punishment. Foucault tells us that somewhere between the beginning of the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth, "the entire economy of punishment was redistributed" (*Discipline* 7). Public executions disappeared, marking "both the decline of the spectacle" and "a slackening hold on the body" (10). "One no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself" (11). What was it that was sought. The answer says Foucault "is simple, almost obvious ... it must be the soul" (16). Hawthorne's stereo-scopic gaze allows him to utilize the tension in the contradiction between these two methods of punishment in order to create his own spectacle. Dimmesdale's drama centres around his double anguish, the pain of both soul and body (his putative festering sore on his chest). Hawthorne is thus able to create a new nineteenth-century spectacle, one that reaches for the soul without abandoning or "slackening" its hold on the body.

The play of one time period against the other serves as another form of discipline, a discipline that acts, however, as a productive force. This is the by-now-familiar strategy of invocation and denial. When, for example, a light appears in the sky, the narrator half-earnestly and half-scornfully reports that "nothing was more common, in those days, than to interpret all meteoric appearances, and other natural phenomena ... as so many revelations from a supernatural source" (106). The earlier science is half mocked, but never entirely discredited. It is allowed to remain so as to add a note of mystery and darkness to the "modern" commonsensical view of natural phenomena. The effect of allowing the two views to rest side by side, neither wholly submitting to the other, is that neither is obliterated and neither is triumphant. Each is disciplined (that is, reined in and controlled) by the other. The result is the same sort of productive confusion that we saw in Hawthorne's construction of the reader in his introduction. Powerful images and powerful emotions are evoked only to be denied or repressed. A suggestion is made only to be withdrawn. To assert and to contradict like this is to allow oneself license to say the unsayable.<sup>14</sup>

Hawthorne uses the same ambivalence and double vision in his construction of sympathy. By the mid-nineteenth century, when Hawthorne was writing *The Scarlet Letter*, the term had gone through a number of varied and sometimes contradictory meanings. Hawthorne calls on and uses several of these, some contemporary, and others anachronistic. James Rodgers explains the use of the term during the eighteenth century: "The three main uses of sympathy ... were as: (1) an occult force, spurned by mechanistic science; (2) a useful physiological concept, revived by the mechanists and taken over by their opponents; and (3) a social mechanism or sentiment important to moral philosophy" (134). The first of these usages, the basis of alchemy, would be used to explain how two apparently different substances seek each other out. The second concept concerned the nature of the relationship between various organs of the body and even between body and soul or body and spirit. The third usage was that expounded by Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) in which sympathy is posited as a type of moral "glue" which can bind a society of isolated

individuals together.<sup>15</sup> Hawthorne employed all these concepts in *The Scarlet Letter*.

For Hawthorne the nineteenth-century meaning of sympathy, while still retaining some of its previous connotations, took on a decidedly Romantic cast. Thus, while retaining its social sense as an agency which could transcend individuals' isolation and help bind them together, sympathy began to be seen as primarily an aesthetic force.<sup>16</sup> In other words, poetry and art, or more precisely the vision of the *poet* or *artist*, were considered to be the primary means of exerting and experiencing sympathy. Sympathy came to mean a projective identification, a method of achieving imaginary or artistic union. M. H. Abrams explains that Coleridge used the eighteenth-century notion of the term "to explain how a poet is able to annul space ... and become ... the personality he [sic] contemplates" (245). It is this Romantic sense of the word sympathy which Hawthorne seems to be conjuring when he says that only a mortal "capable of full sympathy" is "worthy to come into my depths." The reader, it seems, must have the gifts of a great poet to be able to merge with the author and read correctly.<sup>17</sup> This Romantic concept of sympathy is central to an understanding of *The Scarlet Letter*.

However, by setting his novel in the seventeenth century, Hawthorne gave himself license to work with the earlier meanings and connotations of sympathy as well. Just as in "The Custom House" he constructed his reader by evoking and then denying a possibility of sympathetic communion, so he similarly plays the two uses of sympathy off against each other in the main narrative. The result, as in the custom house passage, is a productive confusion. Through the use of what I call his stereo-scopic vision, allowing him to see two ways at once, Hawthorne was able to employ early and contemporary meanings of sympathy in such a way that the meanings intertwine, enrich and subvert each other.<sup>18</sup>

It is in the portrait of Chillingworth that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific uses of sympathy are primarily exploited. Early in the novel, Chillingworth says that he will use the same alchemical methods which he had used in the old country to seek Hester's adulterous partner in the new, and will employ the same principle of sympathy: "I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him" (54). Sympathy is to be used as a tool to reveal and subject the other.

Hawthorne's stereo-scopic vision allows him to discredit Chillingworth in two ways simultaneously. The first is by identifying him with the pseudo-science of alchemy and thereby implying that his science is out of date, mere hocus-pocus or black magic.<sup>19</sup> The second reference is more contemporary. These portrayals of Chillingworth expose the dangers or discomforts of what we now recognize as modern-day police or psychiatric surveillance. What is chilling about Chillingworth is his diabolic thoroughness and efficiency, his ability to see right to the centre of his prey. In Chillingworth are united the "black arts" of pre-enlightenment magic and the supervisory and disciplining gaze of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. What is so effective and so frightening about the panopticon and the disciplinary society which it embodies, according to Foucault, is the way that while remaining invisible itself, "it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (*Discipline and Punish*, 187). Chillingworth imposes just such a state on Dimmesdale.

Chillingworth's deployment of sympathy is described thus: "Few secrets can escape an investigator, who has opportunity and license to undertake such a quest, and skill to follow it up. A man burdened with a secret should especially avoid the intimacy of his physician. If the latter possess native sagacity, and ... intuition; if he show no intrusive egotism ... if he have the power ... to bring his mind into such affinity with his patient's ... then, at some inevitable moment, will the soul of the sufferer be dissolved ... bringing all its mysteries into the daylight" (86). There is no chance of keeping the "inmost Me behind a veil" from a man, from a gaze, like this one. What is especially pernicious is the physician's "native sagacity," his "intuition," and his ability "to bring his mind into ... affinity with his patient's."

The ability to think and feel like his patient, to (in Henry James' phrase) "get into the skin of" the other,<sup>20</sup> is

perhaps what Stephen Greenblatt had in mind when he claimed that empathy could be used as a tool for exploitation or colonization. Empathy, he writes, implies "the ruthless displacement and absorption of the other" (236). This is what scares Dimmesdale so about his "friend." It is Chillingworth's capacity for sympathy that makes him so dangerous. His is a sympathy that is used like a spotlight or a police searchlight to reveal and to destroy.<sup>21</sup> It has been noted that Chillingworth serves here as a prototype of the modern psychiatrist.<sup>22</sup> He is also, I would suggest, a prototype of the modern police detective. It is the dark, intrusive, and sadistic underside of sympathy which is being explored here.

Such intrusive burrowings prompt Dimmesdale, when he learns of Chillingworth's true identity, to exclaim, "O Hester Prynne, thou little, little knowest all the horror of this thing! And the shame!--the indelicacy!--the horrible ugliness of this exposure of a sick and guilty heart to the very eye that would gloat over it!" (132). Such an exclamation rings with the familiar tones of Adam Smith, who saw in sympathy a type of shield against just such exposure.<sup>23</sup> Hester tries to assure Dimmesdale that he can *escape* Chillingworth's punishing gaze: "Is there not shade enough in all this boundless forest to hide thy heart from the gaze of Roger Chillingworth?" she asks (134). Foucault would answer Hester's question in the negative. "Disciplinary power," he writes, "is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it *leaves no zone of shade*" (*Discipline and Punish*, 177, emphasis my own). The text would seem to agree; there is no escape. The characters must continue to exist, at the very least, in the glare and the gaze of the novel and its readers.

The sympathy Chillingworth deploys is represented for us, the readers, so that we might both use it and despise it. We use it because we need it in order to see with Chillingworth into the guilty heart of Dimmesdale. We use it, but are also instructed to hate and reject it. As in several other cases noted above, readers are presented with characters whose responses we are to emulate as well as characters whose responses we are meant to reject.<sup>24</sup>

What is particularly significant about the Chillingworth-Dimmesdale relationship is its centrality in the novel. I mentioned in the introduction that in all four novels discussed in the main body of this study, the story of the bonds between the men surrounding the heroine threatens to become the central narrative, eclipsing our view of her. Nowhere is this more true than in ***The Scarlet Letter***. Dimmesdale is in many respects more suffering heroine than Hester Prynne herself.

The novel does attempt to envision or create another less sinister type of sympathy than that practiced by Chillingworth, one which would allow knowledge of others without any violation of their "rights." It is questionable, however, whether this sympathy ultimately produces effects any more liberating or positive than those created by Chillingworth, or whether it merely serves to implicate the sympathiser in the same position of pain as he or she who suffers.

The "real" or "good" sympathy in ***The Scarlet Letter*** is almost always portrayed as a nonvisual and nonrational experience: "When an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed" (88). Chillingworth is the only active looker in this novel and his cold scientific gaze is repeatedly censured by the text. There seems to be something about visual observation that, for Hawthorne, disrupts or obviates the occurrence of real sympathy. Instead he accords primacy to the aural. That which enters the ear seems to be somehow purer, to have a better chance of bypassing the eyes and mind and reaching the heart directly.

Part of the reason the aural seems to succeed is that it transcends both the intellect and, ironically, language itself.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly evident in the effect of Dimmesdale's sermons: "The young pastor's voice was tremulously sweet, rich, deep, and broken. The feeling that it so evidently manifested, rather than the direct purport of the words, caused it to vibrate within all hearts, and brought the listeners into one accord of

sympathy" (49). It is the *feeling*, not the meaning of the words, which brings the listeners into sympathy. Their response is below or beyond reason: "The people knew not the power that moved them thus" (98).

In his last sermon, only Hester can detect the actual reason for, or source of, the minister's passion. (Here sympathy is being routed through the female for the male--yet another role reversal in a novel which is full of them.) Once again, the meaning is beyond anything that language can express: "Hester Prynne listened with such intentness, and sympathized so intimately, that the sermon had throughout a meaning for her, entirely apart from its indistinguishable words" (164). Hester, standing outside the church, does not know what the minister is saying inside, but it does not matter. Because she has sympathetic knowledge of his guilt, she is able to hear what it is that he is saying without distinguishing a single word. The passion of his suffering is so great that others, even if they do not know the explicit source of his anguish, can also begin to detect it: "Still, if the auditor listened intently, and for the purpose, he could detect the same cry of pain" (165). That cry is described as a "loud or low expression of anguish,--the whisper, or the shriek ... of suffering humanity, that touched a sensibility in every bosom" (164).<sup>26</sup> True or "full" sympathy, it appears, must not or cannot be represented either visually or through language. Sympathy, in these passages, operates as if by magic. In this sense, it retains some of its pre-nineteenth-century associations with alchemy and with a mystery at once scientific and nonrational.<sup>27</sup> It operates as an unseen force that can be best apprehended through the suspension of vision and of language. Furthermore, it can only be caught or "heard" by someone able to sympathize with guilt.

The sympathy for which the minister's speech asks is readily accorded because it requires no effort. It is a kind of spontaneous "elective affinity." Granted automatically, with no effort or will on the part of the sympathizer, it responds to guilt. Only the guilty, like Hester, can properly hear the underlying message of Dimmesdale's sermon, the "cry of pain" which lurks beneath his prophecy of a great future for the republic.

We can get an idea of how such a transaction of guilty sympathy or sympathetic guilt might work by what we learn of Hester's situation. Her sense of her own guilt heightens her awareness of the guilt of others: "It now and then appeared to Hester ... that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts" (61). Once guilty, like young Goodman Brown, one sees guilt everywhere. This recognition serves to both connect and to separate: the scarlet letter "had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself" (62).

Thus, the reader is involved in a kind of moral catch-22: "No human sympathy could reach her save it were sinful like herself." Any reader who wants to move into a closer relationship with Hester is, as it were, stopped at the gate. This is a club for sinners only. To sympathize with Hester is to acknowledge one's own guilt. Only by acknowledging our guilt can we sympathize.

Pearl, like her mother, is often presented as being in a sphere by herself, as being isolated from the rest of society. The sympathy which the text, the reader, and the author are expected to extend to Hester, Pearl is expected to produce for herself: "She [Pearl] wanted--what some people want through life--a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanize and make her capable of sympathy" (126). This statement would seem to imply that grief is what "humanizes" us, is the catalyst that allows to feel the proper kind of sympathy. This sympathy, unlike the utilitarian sympathy practised by Chillingworth which objectifies and separates, actually draws people together and unites them through their pain.

In *Clarissa* only Lovelace ever dared to make a similar wish. He occasionally expressed the hope that Clarissa would feel pain, so that she might come down from her lofty sphere and exist on his plane. In that novel his assertion that Clarissa might "need" or "want" a little pain was presented as a cruel and sadistic wish. (His rape can be read as the manifestation of this wish.) Here the wish is overt: "She wanted ... a grief," and it is granted: "Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant

bore a part, had developed all her sympathies" (173). Pearl is amply rewarded for her induction into the world of grief and pain. She inherits a fortune, moves to Europe, and marries royalty.

Just as Pearl has to feel pain before she can experience sympathy and be human, so we, the readers, have to feel pain and acknowledge our own guilt in order to know and apprehend the characters' suffering. When Hester first appears, in chapter 2, the narrator comments that "there was something exquisitely painful in it" (39). The proximity of the words "exquisite" and "painful" produces a disquieting effect, as if by learning to appreciate the aesthetics of suffering, one could become a connoisseur of pain. Sympathy may only be gained through guilt, but there appear to be some aesthetic rewards.

The character of Hester has puzzled generations of readers. She seems in many ways to be the embodiment of bold and passionate womanhood. What, then, are we to make of the ending of the novel in which Hester voluntarily returns to the colony in order to resume her life of submission and penance: "She had returned, therefore, and resumed,--of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it" (177). She takes up the letter again, this time for good. Once, earlier on in the forest, she had flung her letter and her cap aside in the name of freedom, only to be forced to reluctantly put them back on. There she had done it with "a sense of inevitable doom upon her" (143), and we were told that "Hester next gathered up the heavy tresses of her hair, and confined them beneath her cap. As if there were a withering spell in the sad letter, her beauty, the warmth and richness of her womanhood, departed, like fading sunshine; and a gray shadow seemed to fall across her" (143).

Why would an act that spelled "doom" and the sacrifice of warmth and beauty in the middle of the novel become, by the end, an act of heroism? Sacvan Bercovitch sees *The Scarlet Letter* as itself performing the same function as the letter and the cap in the forest scene. All work "to rein in," to control and to discipline. He writes that, like the letter and the cap, Hawthorne's novel functions precisely to rein in what "becomes possible" ("A-Morality" 19).

Bercovitch continues by musing on the statement in the middle of the novel that "the scarlet letter had not done its office," that Hester was not yet sufficiently inwardly chastened: "The scarlet letter had not done 'its office': the entire novel asks us to interpret this in the affirmative, and by the end *compels* us to, as a grim necessity. It is as though Hawthorne had to overcompensate for the enormous radical potential inherent in his characters and symbols; had to find some moral absolute ... powerful enough to recall all those unleashed energies of will, eros, and language back into the culture from which they arose and, in his view, to which they belonged" ("A-Morality" 21). A "grim necessity" forces Hester to put her cap and letter back on in the forest, and later to return to Massachusetts and resume the letter and her life of isolation. Who insists on this penance that "not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed"? The narrator tells us that she did it "of her own free will." But in a novel where freedom is ever and always reined in and put under a strict hand of control, we must ask what kind of free will this could be. It is a self-imposed, internalised discipline and punishment, a punishment and a discipline which the whole novel has taught us how to bear.<sup>28</sup> Bercovitch sees the novel "as a story of socialization, where the point of socialization is not to conform, but to consent. Anyone can submit; the socialized believe. It is not enough to have the letter imposed; you have to do it yourself ("A-Politics" 630).

The novel, then, would teach us not just sympathy but discipline, control, and denial as well. I have tried to show how these two seemingly contrasting impulses are intertwined in *The Scarlet Letter*. The novel, Bercovitch argues, teaches us how to seek and want this discipline for ourselves. In that sense it teaches us a form of masochism, teaches us to desire pain. It effects this, at least in part, through the construction of Dimmesdale's own desires.

What does a woman want? asked Freud. The answer in *Clarissa*--at least according to Lovelace--was that she wants to be raped. In this novel the more appropriate question might be, "What does Dimmesdale want?" and at least one answer would be that he wants what Hester has. He wants what she is wearing, and will go

through extraordinary pain to get it. The whole story can be read as an account of Dimmesdale's struggle to get on the scaffold with Hester, to take her place. What I would suggest is that this great desire expressed (and repressed) by Dimmesdale to *take* Hester's place serves ultimately and paradoxically to keep her *in* her place. The position of shame, penance and humiliation is glorified through man's desire for it. Because a man desires it, because it brings attention, the *display* of pain, if not the actual pain itself, becomes desirable. The desire of another, the recognition of another, teaches us that pain brings attention and even a kind of love. The position of pain and display is once again marked as feminine.

Dimmesdale wants to be in two places at once. He wants to, or feels that he should, show God and society that his place is with Hester on the scaffold, but his status and career keep him from it. His awareness of his own hypocrisy ironically makes him a better speaker and a better minister. Just as the letter A gives Hester sympathetic knowledge of the guilty secrets of others, so Dimmesdale's sympathy for Hester and his unconfessed sin grant him almost hypnotic powers of persuasion and eloquence: "But this very burden it was, that gave his sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind; so that his heart vibrated in unison with theirs, and received their pain into itself, and sent its own throb of pain through a thousand other hearts, in gushes of sad, persuasive eloquence. Oftenest persuasive, but sometimes terrible! The people knew not the power that moved them thus" (98). Suffering and guilt make good art. This much is standard Romantic doctrine. What I would like to suggest is that good art might also depend in this case upon a secret attachment to the victimization of woman, a longing to see her punished and to feel that punishment oneself.

Some recent criticism has focused on Hawthorne's gender-related anxiety of authorship. It has been suggested that Hawthorne, whom many of his friends claimed had "womanly" attributes,<sup>29</sup> worried that his chosen profession of writer was unmanly. This might help to explain his famous diatribe against female writers: "What a strange propensity it is in these scribbling women to make a show of their hearts, as well as their heads, upon your counter, for anybody to pry into that chooses."<sup>30</sup> Hawthorne's disgust and outrage stem from two sources. The first is the indecent exposure demonstrated in these writings. He dislikes their cheap, even promiscuous, availability, "for anybody to pry into that chooses."<sup>31</sup> The second is connected to the first. The desire to show oneself is considered a feminine trait (one that has to be continually opposed by the equally "feminine" trait of modesty). (In this sense Hawthorne reveals his kinship with earlier writers like Rousseau who associated acting and display with prostitution and femininity.) To keep things stoically "close to the chest" is the masculine way of doing things. Seen in this light, Dimmesdale's doomed attempt to hide his identification with Hester becomes a (doomed) attempt at masculinity.

Not only is the female considered to be the more expressive of the sexes; she is also the more decorated. It is the female who sports the finery and ribbons; the male adopts plainer dress. In this sense, Hester's embroidery of the letter is a feminization of it, made all the more striking in that it exists in the dull plain world of (masculine) Puritan dress: "It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy" (39). The mark that Hester wears, therefore, comes to symbolize not only her own deviance/defiance versus the triumph of the law, but her sex as well. She is the sex which displays, the sex which shows. In wanting the mark of punishment on his breast, Dimmesdale wants not just the mark of guilt, but the mark of femininity as well.

Hester's position can thus be described as no more "full," no more "important" than Clarissa's. Each functions as a vessel through which identifications can be routed. The route of identification for the reader of ***The Scarlet Letter*** is as circuitous as ever. We feel through a male who wants to feel for, or "feel as," the heroine. Our attachment to Hester is built from a complex knot of sympathy, fear and guilt, its threads so intertwined as to be nearly indistinguishable.

## Notes

1. I am referring here to the concept of the "gaze" as a controlling and regulating force. See *Discipline and*

*Punish and The Birth of the Clinic*. On the intellectual context out of which Foucault was working, see Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes*. In chapter 2 I noted the way that thinkers such as Rousseau and Diderot worried about "theatricality," or what we might now call the "politics of the gaze."

2. There is a very real sense in which Hester disappears behind her mark. Pearl mockingly points this out when she shows her mother her distorted reflection in the armour at the governor's mansion. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (New York: Norton, 1988), 73. All subsequent references in the text will refer to this edition.

3. The phrase is Foucault's; *Discipline and Punish*, 49.

4. David Marshall suggests "that our sympathy--and the pleasure we seem to take in it--depend on the violence and suffering inflicted on those who appear as spectacles before us," *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, 48.

5. See, for example, Hunt, "*The Scarlet Letter: Hawthorne's Theory of Moral Sentiments*"; Hutner, *Secrets and Sympathy*; Male, "Hawthorne and the Concept of Sympathy"; and Michael, "History and Romance, Sympathy and Uncertainty."

6. A recent formulation of this traditional view is made by Janis B. Stout in "The Fallen Woman and the Conflicted Author: Hawthorne and Hardy." She writes, "When the character of the fallen woman is seriously and imaginatively treated, sympathy with her plight becomes a means of questioning not only the correctness of society's moral judgments of her, but the judgmental mentality itself" (234). For Stout, sympathy solves the problem, undoes the damage which society has inflicted.

7. See Dryden, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Poetics of Enchantment*: "Quite clearly, what [Hawthorne] seeks in the prefaces is both to attract and confuse his reader ... His veil at once conceals and entices the reader to imagine the features behind it" (125). Hutner also notes that "the dominant strategy of the preface is obfuscation rather than confession" (22), and comments on the "studied evasiveness of his style" (5-6).

8. In a footnote on page 88, Hunt writes, "We know that [Hawthorne] borrowed a copy of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* from the Salem Athenaeum when he was in his early twenties." Male makes a similar assertion in footnote 4 on page 139.

9. The stigma remains today. "Don't make a spectacle of yourself," we warn children, particularly little girls. On being given such a warning, Mary Russo writes, "Making a spectacle of oneself seemed a specifically feminine danger." "Female Grotesques," 219.

10. See chapter 2 above for Rousseau and Diderot's views on women as spectacle.

11. This letter is quoted in Hunter, *Secrets and Sympathy* (7). The idea of having a heart that anyone may see through is reminiscent of Rousseau's desire for transparency with concomitant echoes of Bentham and panopticism; see chapter 2 above.

12. Leon Chai writes that "the American Renaissance is in one sense the final phase of Romanticism," *Romantic Foundations*, 6.

13. For the way Hawthorne uses this double gaze to connect Hester to witchcraft, see "Seduced by Witches: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in the Context of New England Witchcraft Fictions."

14. This might account for the numerous snippets of "gossip" in the book. The narrator includes voices that are not his own, and from which he appears to want to distance himself, so as to allow the supernatural or the scandalous to be expressed: "It was whispered by those who peered after her that the scarlet letter threw

a lurid gleam along the passage-way of the interior" (50). Also see the allegations against Chillingworth (88).

15. Goethe's *Elective Affinities* is a good example of the eighteenth century's fascination with both the social and the chemical properties of sympathy, as expressed in marriage and sexual attraction.

16. This is not to say that the aesthetic sense was alien to the eighteenth century. See Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy* (3).

17. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the Romantic position of reader as poet or artist with active imaginative and sympathetic capabilities would be traditionally a male position. Paradoxically, if we are to take this image further, Hawthorne, by inviting that reader to "come into my depths" would appear to be taking a passive and stereotypically female position.

18. See Male, 139.

19. The sense that this "science" is not just old-fashioned but evil is underscored by the speculation on page 88 about Chillingworth's involvement with one Doctor Forman, alchemist and astrologer, in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury.

20. See chapter 4.

21. Although Dimmesdale may feel as if Chillingworth is exposing him to the light, Hawthorne describes Chillingworth as working in the dark, as a miner or a gravedigger or a thief: "He groped along as stealthily, with as cautious a tread, and as wary an outlook, as a thief" (89).

22. Male writes that Chillingworth "anticipates the technique of modern psychiatry" (147).

23. Clarissa's innocent transparency empowered her. Anyone, she said, was free to look into her heart. See chapter 2 above. Dimmesdale and Hawthorne are less at ease. They seek to arrange their revelations carefully.

24. In *Clarissa* such characters included the staring women who observe Clarissa's judicial appearance at Hampstead, and the "vulgar street swarmers" at Lovelace's imagined trial. See chapter 2 above. In *The Scarlet Letter*, it is the strangers who crowd around Hester in chapter 22 that we seek to differentiate ourselves from.

25. In this respect, Hawthorne reveals once more his Romantic heritage. Abrams reminds us that for the Romantics, music replaced painting as the art with which literature was most often compared. Music was valued for its seemingly non-mimetic qualities (*The Mirror and the Lamp* 91-4).

26. In *The Blithedale Romance* the snooping narrator, Coverdale, overhears Zenobia: "And then I heard her utter a helpless sort of moan; a sound which, struggling out of the heart of a person of her pride and strength, affected me more than if she had made the wood dolorously vocal with a thousand shrieks and wails" (104). As in *The Scarlet Letter*, the medium by which emotion is communicated and recognized is sound not sight.

27. Male reminds us that "The significance which *sympathy* took on during this period seems to have stemmed from two important and interdependent developments; the striking discoveries in electricity and magnetism" (139).

28. As Foucault puts it, "Everyone must see punishment not only as natural, but in his own interest" (*Discipline and Punish*, 109).

29. See Carton, "A Daughter of the Puritans"; Herbert, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Una Hawthorne, and *The*

*Scarlet Letter*"; and Leverenz, "Mrs Hawthorne's Headache".

30. Quoted in Carton, 210.

31. Hawthorne may not have been unique in his reaction. See, for example, Catherine Gallagher who argues against accounts such as Gilbert and Gubar's which see authorship as an exclusively male-defined activity. She argues that, on the contrary, writing was considered "degradingly female" and that since the Greek classical period there has been an "association of writing with femaleness in general and prostitution in particular." ("George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question," 40).

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