

Out of the Wedlock: The Illegitimate Children as Beloved Sins in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, A Comparative Study

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Abstract

What is the benefit of confession when you loved the result of your crime? And this time, the crime is not an easy one, and the perpetrators are not ordinary people. The crime is adultery or "the mortal sin," that lives and flourishes reminding the perpetrators, who are priests, 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.

*Both Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* treat the same theme of an illegitimate daughter greatly loved and pursued by a tormented-conscience priest. While showing deep sorrow for fathering a girl out of the wedlock, the priest finds solace in loving her. Paradoxically, the illegitimate daughter will participate in the process of transformation of the guilt-laden priest and thus turned to be a beloved sin. But a host of deeper questions arise here. Among the most celebrated are: what is the benefit of confession when the priests love the results of their crimes? How could the illegitimate daughters drive the priests to repent in public? The answers to these questions form the nucleus of my research paper. In addition, identifying possible similarities and differences between the two novels is within the scope of the study. A final recapitulation will be made to sum up the major points and observations.*

*Both Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* have occupied the imagination of critics for a long time. Barrels of ink have been spilt focusing on the problem of priesthood and how could a priest be degenerated from a demigod position in his society to an earthly lustful tramp. The theme of adultery a theme that is almost faded now in the rapidly-changing ethics of the modern world becomes the focus of many critics' attention, not to mention how lengthily they discussed the causes, the influences, and the results. Little attention has been given to the role of the two illegitimate daughters in the big transforming of their fathers from sinners to born-again Christians. The research paper attempts to solve the dilemma that Greene's Roman Catholic priest expressed in *The Power and the Glory* and Hawthorne had nearly a century earlier posed in relation to Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*.*

He (the whiskey priest) said, '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. (Power 128)

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

Arthur Dimmesdale: "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!" (Scarlet 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 rigidity in his community. Likewise, the whisky priest, whose reputation has been besmirched all along the villages of Mexico, sets off a self-sacrificial journey lest his daughter falls victim to the communists, "O God Give me any kind of death_ without contrition, in a state of sin_ only save this child" (Power 82).

Both Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* have occupied the imagination of critics for a long time. Barrels of ink have been spilt focusing on the problem of priesthood and how a priest could be degenerated from a demigod position in his society to an earthly lustful tramp. The theme of adultery-- a theme that is almost faded now in the rapidly-changing ethics of the western world--becomes the focus of many critics' attention, not to mention how lengthily they discussed the causes, the influences, and the results. However, adultery remains a major disgrace whatever time passes and the world changes, it is the mortal sin that "produces a macula, or stain in the soul, and a person who dies in a state of mortal sin, i.e. without having repented, has thereby chosen or merited eternal

separation from God in Hell” (Catholic Encyclopedia Online 2006, 4). Even more shocking to know is that the perpetrators of adultery are priests who engage in illegitimate affairs with two poor women living in very barren and strict communities. As a result, two innocent girls were born, stigmatized in their own societies as “product of sin” (Scarlet 85). While showing deep sorrow for fathering daughters out of the wedlock, the priests find solace in loving their daughters. Paradoxically, the daughters participate basically in the process of the transformation of the guilt-laden priests and thus turn their sins to be beloved ones.

But a host of deeper questions arise here. Among the most celebrated are: what is the benefit of confession when the priests love the results of their crimes? How could the illegitimate daughters drive the priests to repent in public? The answers to these questions form the nucleus of my research paper. In addition, identifying possible similarities and differences between the two novels is within the scope of the study.

The two novels converge on a host of similarities that the study attempts to prove, and they are many, e.g. in the plot line, the two novels follow the same pattern: sin, guilt, escape, redemption, and return. With regards to the daughters and mothers, there is a resemblance of the daughters’ names and an obvious analogy between the audacious role of their mothers whose years of staying alone along with depression seem to have taken a heavy toll on their beauty. In addition, the restrictive communities (the Puritan and the Catholic) the two daughters lived in, and the places they have been through (the brook and the rural villages) will be investigated, shedding light on their importance to the transformation of the two priests. The spectators of the two daughters’ journey of anguish form a great affinity between the novels where most of them are children. Eventually, a final recapitulation will be made to sum up the major points and observations.

In the plot line, there is an obvious similarity between the story of each priest. In a parallel way, it revolves around a runaway priest and an allegiant wife

who stays with her illegitimate child no matter that all cards are stacked against her. For instance, in *The Scarlet Letter*--where the religious fervor of the conservative Puritan society in the seventeenth century was at its peak--Hester Prynne, a wife of man who had been lost in the sea, gives birth to a child out of the wedlock. Surprisingly to all people in town, Hester remains adamant to confess the name of her daughter's father despite the relentless efforts by the governor and his retinue to stress her. Due to her unflinching determination to hide the name of her secret lover, Hester is brought to the town's scaffold where she is publicly stigmatized. She moves out of town to live alone with her daughter, Pearl, away from the curiosity of the Puritans, making her living by working as a seamstress. Hawthorne unfolds the naughty nature of Pearl who refuses her present and rebels against the reality of the notorious scarlet letter. Later, it transpired that Hester had an affair with the town's most respected young minister. The reader, however, does not know that Dimmesdale is the father of the daughter except by the very end of the novel, and none of the priest's community knows his guilt until the last scene of the novel. The little girl Pearl has a great effect in transforming the disenchanted priest to a free soul through forcing him to confess his guilt openly and recognizing her as a legitimate daughter.

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

In the rural district of Tabasco, Mexico, where a totalitarian regime persecutes Catholics and fights religiosity as a concept, only two priests were left alive. One of them, Padre José, renounces his religion and gets married, thus saving his life from being shot and turned to be a fallen angel. The other one remains in the country and defies the government by preaching Christianity to the poor villagers. Despite being alcoholic, coward and sinner, he represents the only voice of the church in the whole rural region. Opting for achieving self-sacrificial martyrdom, he stays in the country rather than fleeing and saving

his life. There is another underlying cause behind his determination to tour the poor villages, the priest had fathered a girl and the nagging memory of the orphan girl still haunts him wherever he goes. Bearing in mind that he may find her in one of the towns he frequented, he finally finds his daughter and his woman in terrible conditions and in dire need of him. The girl means the world to him but he cannot stay with her, as the police will revenge from the town's villagers by picking a villager to be a scapegoat and shooting him before the masses.

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. (Power 127)

In his long run from the police, he gets wearily and tries desperately to find a church where he can confess his own sins, including his mortal sin (the adultery) and thus winning absolution. Upon reaching the border between Mexico and the United States, he is about to attain his goals, yet he decides to retreat in order to help a criminal on the verge of death according to a tip from the mestizo. Confident that the story is full of flaws and that the mestizo is his Judas, he goes on to rescue the man though he knows that he will be captured and shot and that is what exactly happens.

Another striking resemblance between the two novels is the 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:

Mr. Wilson: Who art thou, and what Pearl?_ Ruby, rather_ or Coral _or Red Rose, at the very least? (*Scarlet* 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" (*Power*, 37). Coral does this herself and helps the priest until he finally gets away from the lieutenant, proving that young girls have a great

influence on the priest's upcoming life choices. Having made this help, she turns to be a link, proving the nomenclatural analogy between the two novels. Meanwhile, names, by themselves, carry a resemblance for the whisky priest has a daughter named Brigitta, which is the same name of the little boy whom the whisky priest baptizes while drunk and Juan tells her mother that it is "a good saint's name" (Power 28). At the same time, The Columbia Encyclopedia Online asserts that it is also related to Saint Brigit of Sweden who lived in the fourteenth century, and was:

known by having visions since she was a little child. This gift along with her marriage to a pious religious man Ulf Gudmarson helped her to write a book titled *Celestial Revelation*. After husband's death she founded the Bridgettines Order which was dedicated to spreading culture and literature in Scandinavia.

(2006, 3)

Linguistically, Brigitta connotes to a bridge, which denotes to the girl being a bridge between many cultures.

In addition to the aforementioned nomenclatural analogy, the accidental similarities and symbols between the two novels abound. The role of women in the two novels is clearly analogous. The two women 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 and that is how she becomes financially independent. Furthermore, she devotes the rest of the time to sew 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 society philanthropist.

In much the same vein, Maria lives like any ordinary villager in town, she works in the land, raising up her child but there is something different here. Maria has little education, and that is why she regards herself as different.

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? (Power 79)

By the standards of education in Mexico at that time, Maria is an educated woman. It is education, therefore, which opens up her eyes to everything around her, including the misdeeds of the whisky priest, and that is what puts her off from him. In fact, the sex drive is put on hold in the two women's psyche, however, that does not prevent them from being loyal to the runaway fathers. Hester remains silent refusing to confide the name of the father of her child, Maria provides an excellent cover for the whisky priest when he comes to visit her. She saves the priest from being captured by letting him bite an onion in order to remove the smell of brandy which he has been drinking. She rushes to rescue him by saying that he is her husband and that will definitely eradicate any suspicions of him being a priest.

She said, 'Let me smell your breath. O God, anyone can tell...wine...what would we be doing with wine?'

...

The woman was pulling at him inside the hut. She said, 'Bite this. Quick. There's no time...' ...She had a small raw onion in her hand. 'Bite this' (Power 72-3)

Both women proved their self-worthiness in defiance of all the oddities they have been through. However, they lacked the wherewithal to support their daughters; they rose from the ashes as productive and independent. Their influence is omnipresent, and that makes them direct foils to their partners who are always seen as cowards, dependents and rather protected by the wide umbrellas of religion in their societies.

Speaking of religion, the religious umbrella is evident in *The Scarlet Letter*, for most of the action of the novel took place in Boston--a city very near Massachusetts where John Winthrop established the first Puritan settlement in the beginning of the seventeenth century. (World University Encyclopedia, 1967, 4156). 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, 1974, p. 89).

Dissenting from Catholicism has its consequences, for the Puritans headed to 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 been through all their lives.

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. (Scarlet 116)

Because the Puritans focused on the banned rather than the allowed in their religious studies, the young minister is no exception to pile up books which recount the horrible fate of the old sinners. The story of David and Bathsheba was engraved in the young minister’s mind, and it was a significant proof of how much the Puritans were influenced by the Old Testament stories about adultery. The story revolves around the beautiful maiden Bathsheba who had seduced Prophet David to marry her after the demise of her husband, even more she had an adulterous affair with him

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. (2 Sam. 11:2)

Consequently, her child died and that was regarded as retribution of God. Stemming from this direct affinity, the whole novel is an allusion to the Old

Testament 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, for ever and ever, Amen” (1 Cor 16:10)

These old books wasted the opportunity of Dimmesdale to confess his sin as they raised the Puritan taboos, which are setbacks to any transformation or redemption process. Disinclined to change the view of the Puritans and descend from a demigod position to an ordinary man, he refuses to get married, however, Chillingworth and many others encourage him to take this step.

It was held to be the best possible measure for the young clergyman’s welfare; unless indeed, as often urged by such as felt authorized to do so, he had selected some one of the many blooming damsels, spiritually devoted to him, to become his devoted wife. This latter step, however, there was no present prospect that Arthur Dimmesdale would be prevailed upon to take; he rejected all suggestions of the kind, as if priestly celibacy were one of his articles of church-discipline. (Scarlet 115-6)

But for the whisky priest, this was not the case, for he could not get married otherwise he would be out of the church. Disclosing that he has a child, not to mention being an illegitimate one, would have marred his reputation among the poor Catholic peasants who regard him as a pious leader, even more it might have disturbed his self-image as a defender of religion or a Christ figure. And that is exactly what happened to his counterpart Padre José whose decision to renounce Catholicism and get married is a curse rather than a blessing, for he gradually loses his self-image and falls under self-deprecating pressures.

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. (Power 29)

Not every priest was able to confront the communist regime in Mexico, a few fought and killed, many just blend with the herd in getting out of the Christianity cloak before they got killed by the Red Shirts, and Padre José was no exception. Greene's *The Power and the Glory* delineates the historical period of Garrido Canabal's reign of terror in Mexico who succeeded in closing all churches of the state and obliging all the priests to marry and give up their duties. 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. He was struck by the posters that he saw in the schools: a woman crucified while a monk kissed her feet, a drunken priest sipping wine during the Eucharist. (Krauze 2002, 4)

However, the character of Garrido Canabal does not occupy much space in the novel, it was used by Greene as a metaphor of the treacherous insiders who were eating at the fabric of the Mexican society, and a constant reminder of back-stabbing strategy that was adopted by the communists.

Escaping from the inferno of the pangs of conscience, the priests move to the wilderness in order to meet with their daughters and lessen the difficulties they are encountering. Hester and Dimmesdale opt towards the forest out of the restrictive presence of that official Puritan society. Their meeting has been prolonged for a long time, and now they will set everything straight in their relationship. Not only is the forest chosen as an asylum, but also for its openness and freedom.

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. (Scarlet 182)

At that time, Boston was still a small settlement bordered on three sides by the forest. Thus, the forest turns 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 each other. On the contrary, neither the women nor the priests wanted to repeat the act.

Unlike Dimmesdale, the whisky priest is not forced to go to the rural places, he opts for the rural villages willingly, preferring to go south where the danger lies rather than heading north, “He was travelling in the actual track of the police” (Power 83). Choosing the rural villages as his exile, he passes the time preaching patience and catechism to the poor peasants in Tabasco. Hopefully, the priest views his journey as a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel where salvation could be reached only through saving other needy persons, and he is sure that God will reward him by saving and protecting his daughter.

In the wilderness, Arthur Dimmesdale is surprised to see Pearl completely unresponsive and rather provocative in all her actions, despite being reproached by Hester: “Leap across the brook, naughty child, and run hither! Else, I must come to thee” (Scarlet 196). All her feelings break loose once her mother puts pressure on her to 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. (Scarlet 196)

It is clear now that Pearl will not compromise with the priest as his sin of hiding his fatherhood costs the young girl much in losing her father’s affection and protection. In a parallel way, and after the whisky priest comes in to the

town of Maria, Brigitta refuses the constant attempts of the priest to get to know her. She is filled with frustration, as she is the only one in town left with no father.

She said, 'You...you...'

'Me?'

'You are the matter.'

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'.

(Power 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 and they "exchanged no word" (Macleane **1990, 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" (Power 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 the article "The Character of Flame: The Function of Pearl in The Scarlet Letter," as Anne Marie McNamara suggests is that Pearl transforms its physical presence to 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. (1990 69)

Torn between his own illusions and the repulsion of his own daughter, Dimmesdale realizes that Pearl “the elf child” has something “preternatural” (Scarlet 196) 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?” (Scarlet.195)

The brook is nothing but a gate between two worlds: the earth and hell as it is asserted in the opinion of Randal Stewart when he mentions 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 is transformed into a spirit who has a “preternatural” presence, whereas Brigitta turns to be a nightmare or an ominous reverie to the whisky priest whenever he encounters hardships he remembers the young Brigitta. 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” (Power 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” (Power, 127)--his thoughts go back to Brigitta, and wonders how the girl could live on near that rubbish-dump. 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” (Power 164) while his daughter is suffering alone. Exhausted, narcotized with brandy and in police custody, he remembered his child, “coming out of the glare: the sullen unhappy knowledgeable face” (Power 208).

Neither Pearl nor Brigitta accepts the father's kiss, as any physical contact is not welcomed either from mothers or even daughters. There is only one way of reconciliation which is through 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. (Scarlet, p. 198)

Pearl's pre-reconciliation demands are clear and non-negotiable: public confession and bearing the whole responsibility of what he has done to her mother and her, otherwise the *raison d'être* of Arthur Dimmesdale dissolves. On the other hand, Brigitta seems helpless and sad most of the time. She does not ask the whisky priest for anything. Thus, the whisky priest words come as if the girl is already guarded and she does not need extra protection, “The president up the capital goes guarded by men with guns _but my child, you have all the angels of heaven” (Power 82).

The fear of the girls' unknown future is a common denominator in the priests, for Dimmesdale begs Hester to take care of Pearl, even with 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!” (Scarlet 196)

Like a thermometer of emotion, Pearl is frightened from that rustic place and keeps asking about the Black Man. Because the girl is so smart, she is able to connect the incidents with one another, for she is infatuated with a common superstition of the period--the superstition of the Black Man. In her conversation with her mother, Pearl denotes:

How he haunts the forest, and carries a book with him_ a big, heavy book, with iron clasps; and how this ugly Black Man offers his book and iron pen to everybody that meets him here among the trees; and they are to write their names with their own blood. And then he sets his mark on their bosoms! Didst thou meet the Black Man, mother? (Scarlet 172)

In Pearl's vision, the scarlet letter 'A' is the token of the devil, as it is made of flame. Thus, she immediately feels the burden of the scarlet letter on her mother and its connection to the Black Man whose character continues to exist de jure, to the extent that Dimmesdale, himself, lays the responsibility of his sins on the Black Man referring to Roger Chillingworth.

May God forgive us both! We are not, Hester, the worst sinner in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated in cold blood, the sanctity of the human heart. Thou and I, Hester never did so! (Scarlet 182)

And the same happens with the whiskey priest, for he finds an exit to his constant sins, by interpreting beauty as something beyond the understanding of ordinary people, making it easy for him to lay down his sins on a strange concept. As he is caught carrying liquor and with no money to pay the fine, the whiskey priest enters in a crowded cell_ exactly like "the world, overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love" (Power 124). In that weird place, people are drowned in darkness and their voices, like the inner voices of the priest's mind discussing the case of the mortal sin from different angles, are coming from everywhere.

Just close to the priest, protected by the darkness of the room lies a couple making loud cries of indecent pleasure. The priest engages nonchalantly in a discussion about sin, redemption and priesthood and soon he discloses his own identity. A woman asks him to say an Act of Contrition for her, and it happens that this woman is furious from the people having sex in the prison. The priest defends how there is a beauty even in sin.

‘Such a lot of beauty. Saints talk about the beauty of suffering. Well, we are not saints, you and I. Suffering to us is just ugly. Stench and crowding and pain. That is beautiful in that corner_ to them. It needs a lot of learning to see things with a saint’s eye; a saint gets a subtle taste for beauty and can look down on poor ignorant palates like theirs. But we can’t afford to.’
(Power.132)

Consequently, Roger Chillingworth or the Black Man of Dimmesdale turns to be a pretext by whom Dimmesdale claims that his situation is much better. Overall, both priests are wrong for degrading their sins and blaming the people who do not see beauty in sin.

By the end, both priests die--one from the self-torture he inflicted upon himself and 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 relish the basic pleasures of life. Consequently, confession is the only panacea for all their problems as Mark Van Doren expresses how Hawthorne stresses the inevitability of Dimmesdale’s confession:

Hester, whose solitary thought takes her far beyond the confines of the code, is nevertheless respectful of the strength in it that could kill her were she not even stronger. She understands it because Hawthorne does; because at the same time that he recoils from the Puritan view of sin he honors its capacity to be a view at all. 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... He(Dimmesdale) is redeemed for us only because his suffering makes him beautiful and because Hester continues to love him. (1966, 132-33)

On the same ground, Hugh N. Maclean 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” (1990, p. 60). The moment of confession was not that bitter as immediately after Dimmesdale confessed his sin, he was rewarded by Pearl “who kissed his lips. A Spell was broken” (Scarlet 238). With regard to the fact that Arthur Dimmesdale was not able to mount the scaffold before he called

upon Hester and Pearl to come and give him support, “He turned toward the scaffold, and stretched forth his arms. “Hester,” said he. “Come hither! Come, my little Pearl!” (Scarlet 235).

Knowing that he had breached the divine order of God to no avail, “The law we broke” (Scarlet 239), his death, while Hester and Pearl were nearby, came as an evidence that he would not have rested in peace without completing his last wish: confession.

If the whisky priest did not confess his sin before the peasants of Maria’s villages, he did it many times, and for the slightest reasons, through the many villages he had waded. His love for his daughter overwhelmed him and superceded any sorts of love that he once boasted. As of a result, the whisky priest failed to come to terms with one of the pre-conditions of sainthood: which is to turn the other cheek and love your enemy.

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. He began to weep; it was if he had to watch her from the shore drown slowly because he had forgotten how to swim... For those were all in danger too. He prayed, “God help them,” but in the moment of prayer he switched back to his child beside the rubbish-dump, and he knew it was for her only that he prayed. (Power 207-8)

His success is evident, though, in the attestation of another child to the victory of the whisky priest_ the young Juan, a representative of the new Catholic generation, who was once touched and influenced by the suffering of the whisky priest. The child gives a refuge to another runaway priest from the claws of the communist regime.

If you would let me come in,’ the man said with an odd frightened smile, and suddenly lowering his voice he said to the boy, ‘I am a priest.’
‘You?’ the boy exclaimed.

‘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. (Power 222)

With a scrutinized look at the two novels, 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 the two novels. If we look at what exactly happens to the priests before going to the wilderness, we wonder, for instance, why Dimmesdale’s transformation is at snail’s pace. On the other hand, the whiskey priest’s movement 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, as Jane Hastings Silver (1965, ix-xvi) refers in his introduction, to “offset the intensity of *The Scarlet Letter*” and includes an account of his own background.

Prolonging *The Scarlet Letter* was in the mind of Hawthorne, as Jane Hastings Silver (1965, p. ix-xvi) refers in his introduction to the deliberate intention of Hawthorne to “offset the intensity of *The Scarlet Letter* and includes an account of his own background”. Apart from this fact, the slow transformation of the minister can be explained through the concept of God’s retribution in Puritanism and Catholicism. In the Puritan’s point of view, God’s retribution is seen in the inner conflict or the psychological forces clamouring inside the minister’s mind, therefore, the retribution is not corporeal but a subconscious one that is reflected in psychosomatic ailments, and this is shown clearly in Dimmesdale’s illness and his hand that is always on his heart. In *The Power and The Glory*, God’s retribution is not in the inner conflict per se but rather in the physical torture and the seedy conditions he encounters wherever he goes. Eventually, Catholic punishment guarantees that the more pain you endure, the happier you will become.

At the same time, the physical torture of Catholicism is apparent from a different angle. *The Power and The Glory* has plenty of seediness, squalor,

ugliness, spiritual emptiness and a big sense of failure among human beings. Since the beginning of the novel till its end, the whisky 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 uglified the atonement path of the whisky 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 **1966**, 132). Pearl is playing near the magnificent brook in a wild-yet-verdant forest and the pretty and the spontaneous Pearl is in the far opposite of the poor and morally crippled little Brigitta.

Due to the different conditions the priests live in, Dimmesdale is a sinner inside a Puritan restrictive society, however, the society, at least, acknowledges God, and against all odds, its moral atmosphere 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 clutch at except God.

Feeling guilty makes Dimmesdale semi-paralyzed throughout the novel until Pearl, the dynamic girl, pushes him to act. Meanwhile, the communist regime of Mexico in 1930s was atheist and it abolished religion totally, dismantled churches and outlawed priests. Subsequently, the outlawed 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 an atheist 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 revenge. He falls in an abyss of despair at the same time turns his hostility towards himself.

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 Brigitta appears to the whisky priest many times, as mentioned before, or through the celestial insights, in *The Scarlet Letter*, that come to Dimmesdale in two different occasions (McNamara 1990, 68). First, when Hester appeals to Dimmesdale to convince the Puritan officials not to take her child away from her, Dimmesdale decides that Hester must keep the child due to strange emotions that captured his heart.

He looked now more careworn and emaciated than as we described him at the scene of Hester's public ignominy; and whether it were his failing health, or whatever the cause might be, his large dark eyes had a world of pain in their troubled and melancholy depths. (*Scarlet* 104)

In the second time, the "celestial nature" (*Scarlet* 234) of the minister shows up when "the sun, but little its meridian, shone down upon the clergyman, and gave a distinctness to his figure, as he stood out from all the earth" (*Scarlet* 237).

To sum up, the priests' ultimate sin is the mortal sin that lives and flourishes, reminding 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 himself from any worldly thoughts. And the whisky priest explores the barren land of Mexico at the time of Garrido Canabal, the dictator, to baptize children and preach wisdom to the ruthless peasants. As the priests move further 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 whisky priest or by confession in the case of Dimmesdale.

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Since October 10th, 2004, I have been working as a lecturer in the English Dept. Faculty of Al-Alsun. My job entails teaching both American and British literature. In addition, I have been two times in the United States of America, the first time in 2000, I was at Delaware University, where I attended 'Teacher Training Initiative' course. The Second time was in 2002/2003, I got the International Fulbright Award to study at Duke University, NC for one academic year to complete my doctoral dissertation. My mentor was Prof. John Clum, whom I am truly indebted because of his invaluable comments and fascinating teaching.

Aside from my academic teaching in the Faculty of Al-Alsun, Al-Minia, University, I have a first hand experience in the private education. I have worked for one academic year at Misr University for Science and Technology (MUST), teaching various classes such as: Writing II; Trans 121 (from Arabic to English); Trans 221 Specialized; and Interpretation II, Introduction to Literature, and American Drama. MUST is one of the most prestigious universities that adopts the credit-hour system. And it gratifies me to be a protégé of Prof. Mohsen Abu Saeda, the Head of the English Dept., and the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Must University.