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**REVISITING THE CANON: EVOLUTION OF EVIL IN
AMERICAN GOTHIC SHORT FICTION**

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ÖZET

Tezli Yüksek Lisans

Revisiting the Canon: The Evolution of Evil in American Gothic

Short Fiction

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Edebiyat, başlangıcından itibaren, insanın karmaşık doğasını resmetmeyi amaçlamıştır. Buna ek olarak, kendi zamanını ve bu zamanı şekillendiren değer ve inançları eleştirmek de edebiyatın temel amaçlarından biridir. Özellikle 17. yüzyıldan itibaren insanın modernleşmesi ile birlikte bu amaçlar daha da ivme kazanmıştır. İlerleme arzusu ve akılcılığın popülerliği, akılcı düşüncenin zıttı olan dinin katılığı ile birleştiğinde gotiğin bir edebi akım olarak doğuşu için gerekli ortam olgunlaşmıştır. Bu bağlamda, gotik edebiyat, doğuşundan itibaren yarattığı tuhaf ve eksterm duygularla, yazıldığı döneme ait gerilimlerle beraber tarihin ve insan doğasının nispeten karanlık yönlerini ortaya çıkarmaya hizmet etmektedir. Amerikan gotik kurgusu Amerikan yazarlarının ülkelerinin siyasi veya kültürel ortamına alternatif bir yorum sunmasını sağlar. Bu edebi tür aynı zamanda yazarların insan ruhunun karanlık ve gizlenmiş kısımlarına ulaşarak bunları okuyucusuna yansıtmasına imkan verir. Bu yazarlar bazı evrensel elementlere ek olarak kendi kültürlerine has elementleri de kullanarak kabusvari bir Amerikan deneyimini aktarırlar. Bu yazarlar kurgularında geleneksel olay örgüleri ve algılamanın ötesinde başka bir gerçeklik sunarlar ve kötülüğe, doğru ve yanlış, insana ve dünyaya dair huşu uyandıran ve acıip imgeler, şüphe ve korkuyla süslenmiş hikayeler anlatırlar. Farklı konulara aynı yaklaşımı gösterme eğilimleri sebebi ile seçtiğim Gilman ve Hawthorne ise bizlere, hem kendi doğuştan gelen karmaşık ruhsal yapısı hem de insan psikolojisi ve davranışları üzerinde

büyük etkisi olan zamanın toplumsal yapısı tarafından deneyimleri şekillenen çaresiz bireyin hikayesini etkileyici bir biçimde anlatır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 1) Amerikan Gotiği, 2) Amerikan Gotik Kısa Kurgusu, 3) Psikoanaliz, 4) Charlotte Perkins Gilman 5) Nathaniel Hawthorne

ABSTRACT

Revisiting the Canon: The Evolution of Evil in American Gothic Short Fiction

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Literature, since its beginning, has aimed to portray man's complex nature. In addition to this, criticising its own era and the values and beliefs that shaped that era is one of the main motives of literature. Especially, since 17th century, along with "modernization" of man, these motives have gained acceleration. When the popularity of desire for progress and rationalism have merged with the dogmatic religion, which normally stands at the opposite of rational thinking, the necessary ground for the birth of gothic as a literary genre has become mature. In this respect, Gothic literature since its birth, have served to reveal comparatively darker aspects of history and human nature along with the tensions of the era it has been written through the bizarre and extreme emotions it creates. American Gothic fiction enables American writers to present an alternative criticism of their culture and history. This literary genre also allows them to reach and reflect dark and hidden parts of human psyche to its readers at the same time. These writers convey a nightmarish American experience through using the elements unique to their own culture in addition to some universal elements. These writers present another reality beyond the traditional plot and perceptions and tell stories about evil, good and bad, virtue, humankind and world embellished with awesome and eerie images, suspense and terror in their fiction. Gilman and Hawthorne, whom I have chosen for their tendency to different subjects with a similar approach, tell us the story of a desperate individual, whose experience is shaped by his/her complex inborn psychology as well as the social construction of the

era which also has a great influence on human psychology and behaviours, in a fascinating way.

Key Words: 1) Gothic Literature 2) American Gothic Short Fiction 3) Psychoanalysis 4) Charlotte Perkins Gilman 5) Nathaniel Hawthorne

CONTENTS

REVISITING THE CANON: EVOLUTION OF EVIL IN AMERICAN GOTHIC SHORT FICTION

YEMİN METNİ	ii
TUTANAK	iii
ÖZET	iv
ABSTRACT	v
CONTENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1

PART ONE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The Birth of Gothic Literature in Britain and Its Historical Background	4
1.2 Gothic Literature	8
1.3 American Gothic	13

PART TWO

AMERICAN GOTHIC SHORT FICTION

2.1 Female Gothic and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"	15
2.2 Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark"	31
2.3 Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"	45
CONCLUSION	56

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of American Gothic short fiction. It aims to analyse the sources and the masks of terror and the uncanny in American Gothic basically in short fiction of Hawthorne and Gilman. Its main agenda is to make their fiction more decipherable through using a historical context and some psychoanalytical elements. The writers of American gothic fiction, uses grotesque, ambiguity and bizarreness to present the contradictory and complex nature of human soul.

The first part is consisted of three chapters and it aims to provide a historical background and a general knowledge about Gothic literature. In order to understand protagonists' motives and resolve the complexity of their inner life, and to make sense out of a work of art, it is compulsory to have background information. Thus, the first and the second chapters provide introductory information about the birth of Gothic and its basic characteristics. Gothic literature can be briefly defined as a genre that is either absolutely dark or dark in its implications. It covers horror evoking contextual elements such as ruined, gloomy castles or mansions, extreme weather conditions, supernatural events, deliberate or accidental murders, confusing delusions, and omens. Through these elements, its plot and characters, it refers to a reality concerning the era in which the work is written and/or it informs the reader about the possible outcomes of such social constructions. Gothic, as a genre, is contradictory in its nature. Thusi it is open to several interpretations: it may display a very elaborate vocabulary even when it talks about a very simple or primitive event or it may just pass a significant event with a simple, short sentence. It may make use of supernaturalism or explained supernaturalism or both at the same time; it may put the occult and orthodox religion in the same story; it may serve as a political or social criticism, it may imply erotic connotations or it may deal with the subliminal and the innate nature of humankind. However, apart from its contradictory nature, almost all gothic works have something in common: uncanniness and the relation with extreme emotions, terror and confusion, and the feeling of suspense it creates.

The following chapter focuses on American Gothic, with its entrance to American literary scene with *Wieland or the Transformation* in 1798, and the changes it has gone through time. Although it does not reject the tradition or its basic sensibilities, American Gothic differs from British Gothic tradition as it prefers

to sprout in its own soil with its own concerns. It portrays a different American history, a more nightmarish one. It presents the terror of the psyche, disastrous results of social inequality and repression, religious tensions, class distinctions. Since the beginning of this specific genre in America, such motives have always been a part of this dark collection of fiction. Rather than settling in the ruined castle in a remote corner, the evil and the source of terror have settled in American wilderness, in the house and in the human psyche. Puritan mind and its imprints over the individual and over a shared social consciousness, problematics of the frontier mark the initiation of gothic in American literature. Following these factors, uncontrolled rationalism and unremitting, blind optimism, sexual or racial discrimination, the decaying American dream and its unkept promises have been the basic themes of American Gothic.

After providing the reader with historical background and general information about Gothic literature in general and American Gothic, part two focuses on individual works of literature of two fascinating American short fiction writers. This part aims to analyse their primary motives and their presentation of gothic. The main reason why Gilman and Hawthorne are chosen is the fact that these two writers, who have written their very names into the heart of American literature, are similar in their approaches but different in their presentations. Both writers invite their readers to have a walk in the labyrinths of human soul. Even though they have particularly different styles, both Gilman and Hawthorne present a world occupied by ambiguity, suspense, awe, and dream-like images and silhouettes. Gilman uses autobiographical elements in her fiction and tells the story of young, middle-class mother. Instead of defending the traditional idea of "sweet" homes and happy families, she emphasizes the deceptive and unseen truth in such belief. "The Yellow Wallpaper" reveals the secrets behind closed doors and iron bars of lovely summer mansion. In her own domestic setting, the narrator is imprisoned and silenced, not only by her husband and brother but also by the repressive patriarchal order, and its institutions. She is treated as a "half" person in society which causes her to "double" herself. The woman she sees behind the wallpaper serves as the representation of her imprisonment, and also as a liberating force. At the end of the story, she is freed by her imaginary self who leaves the mansion and begins to travel around it, in the fields. Yet, the narrator locks herself in her room and throws the key to her husband. Hawthorne uses elements unique to American history as well as this, he points at some universal motives of his era and the dynamics of human psyche, too.

He uses a laboratory as the microcosmos of a truly rationalist society in which people trust science and the ideal of progress heavily in "The Birth-Mark". In "Young Goodman Brown" he turns to his familial lineage and a Puritan village is his setting. Even though two stories are different in their settings, plots and character, both of them serve to present one common idea. When an obsessed or desperate man is subjected to act according to his inner motives rather than his reason or faith. He may seem absolutely rational or as a true believer, but everyone has his fears and sins. However, to get rid of such unpleasant feelings, humans develop some defenses and use them to protect themselves. In addition to his or her inborn psychological dynamics, the individual is also subjected to the institutions and values of an outer agent, the society. Hawthorne shows that social construction of the setting, along with inner motives, has a great influence on how individuals feel and act, and defend themselves against their inborn fears or desires and their possibly destructive results.

Consequently, this thesis, which includes two parts, aims to provide its reader with knowledge of Gothic literature and display basic anxieties of American culture and history in American Gothic short fiction. Moreover, it means to show the relation between individual's inner desires, fears, the ways used to get rid of them or to attain them and the construction and patterns of his or her society. I will use history and culture as a textual basis and the help of some psychoanalytical elements, especially Freudian school of psychoanalysis,

PART ONE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. The Birth of Gothic Literature in Britain and Its Historical Background

The word “gothic” originally comes from the certain Germanic tribes who attacked the Roman Empire between the 3rd and the 5th centuries A.D. and ended an age. From the western point of view, and history written from this perspective, Ancient Greece and Rome are the breeding ground of the civilisation and these attacks mentioned above are also considered as attacks on civilisation and those tribes are not civilized according to the same ideology. With this reason the word “Gothic” quickly becomes synonymous with barbarous and uncouth, it is used to define people who were violent, uncivilized and associated with awe, fear, terror. Later on it is used to refer to a specific form of architecture which originated in the 12th century and lasted for about four centuries. This style features the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, the flying buttress and buildings larger than life. It creates an optical illusion as if it could reach to the skies in order to appeal to the feelings, conveys a sense of fear of God, astonishment, bewilderment. In representation, classical style or Greco-Roman style is idealistic, controlled, organized, whereas the Gothic style is grotesque and exaggerated, even apocalyptic. Rather than seeking to portray the world or human in its real or idealistic form, it expresses the greatness and authority of God, a sense of mystery and spiritualism and divinity. It seeks to create a human experience filled with emotions, which is significantly important as this is the link between gothic as an architectural style and the gothic literature¹.

In literature, gothic is believed to have begun with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. The writer Horace Walpole who was obsessed with gothic architecture and is now largely remembered for his house Strawberry Hill, chose a gothic castle for his novel's setting. This small detail signifies the name of the genre. With its accomplishment Walpole becomes the forerunner of many writers including Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley,

¹ For further reading see Robert Branner, **Gothic Architecture: Great Ages of Architecture**, Studio Vista, London, 1968.

even Brontë Sisters. even the Brontë Sisters. *The Castle of Otranto* serves as the basis for early gothic, especially in Britain, it designates the basic elements, and formal and thematic characteristics which are used by a great many authors, so it can be said that it is a genre-defining work. People still think of those certain features when it comes to define gothic literature and gothic on screen. With Walpole, gothic literature becomes a new and original, even a radical genre and form of novel. However, by the end of the 18th century, it has already started to degenerate into a stereotypical form.

The first characteristic of early gothic derived from this specific work is its setting, the castle. Most of the writers of the genre copied or adopted this setting in their works, such as Ann Radcliffe in her works *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The second one is the *damsel in distress* or the pursued maiden, a young woman victimized by a villain or imprisoned or persecuted. In *The Castle of Otranto* it is Isabella, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* it is Emily, this is a stock character still very popular in many horror movies on screen. Another characteristic is the return of the past, in the book it becomes visible with an ancient prophecy, "The castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit"². Series of supernatural events and accidents are also among those characteristics. In the novel Conrad is crushed by a helmet that fell from the sky and that results in his death and his father Manfred's desire to marry Isabella, Conrad's fiance, to have an heir. Another one of these elements is truthlikeness or false documentation, in its initial 1764 edition its full name was *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story. Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto*. In the preface the writer claims that the book at hand was found in the house of a Catholic family, actually printed in Naples, Italy in 1329, but he did not know how sooner it had been written. He states that he thought it might have dated back to the dark ages of Christianity in Italy, southern Europe. This is not a random choice but a cleverly picked one, as Catholic, medieval Italy directly invokes darkness, otherness, superstitious faith in the minds of Protestant English readers. With its setting and style, *The Castle of Otranto* is a kind of salutation to ancient times and tradition.

² Horace Walpole, **The Castle of Otranto**, Oxford University Press, 3rd ed. 1766, http://books.google.com/books?id=WR4GAAAAQAAJ&dq=the+castle+of+otranto&lr=&source=gbs_navlinks_s. (24.04.2009), p. 3.

As stated above, gothic literature starts with a turn to the past in the 18th century in form and mode. Definitely, this is not a coincidence as the 18th century England set an appropriate ground for the birth of gothic literature and a fertile soil for it to sprout. Although the Enlightenment destroyed the belief in the sacredness and immunity of the king and the dogma of religion, it also created its own credo. It would not be wise to define it in one sentence as it contains many diverse ways of thinking and practices and to mark a single day for its beginning. Yet, it is not wrong to say it enabled people to think, question and change for a long span of time. It is motivated by the Cartesian thinking and Descartes' publication of *Discourse on Method*, The Glorious revolution of 1688, the Bill of Rights in 1689, Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principi Mathematica*. Events and works all of which signify the importance of reasoning, calculation, questioning, doubt in orthodoxal thinking and belief, and anticipate revolution, change, progress, faith in common man and human nature. It also marked the end of aristocracy and rise of a new class which is called middle class or bourgeois along with its new social codes, ethics, concerns. This fast growing class, wealthy but unsophisticated, were hungry for culture and refinement and new forms of entertainment, and this expectation called the rise of the novel in Britain as well as in the continental Europe.

Most of the Enlightenment thinkers offered reason as the ultimate way of understanding the world and governing it, in one way or another. Rationalism depended on the human mind and reason and suggested that the criteria of knowledge or truth is the human intellect. Rationalist thinkers believed in what Socrates put more than a millenium ago, rational thought is the only way for man to know himself first than to know the environment around him. According to this thought the rational part of human is the real self, the other part consisted of emotions, senses, intuitive or revelatory dreams might be illusionary, misleading or captious. Hence reasoning is the true way to know and to act, it is also necessary for moral development. Although he died in 1716, and not an 18th century philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz is among the thinkers who opened a way for enlightenment and held the key motivations of it. He believed that the principles of mathematics and nature were not substantially different but operated in the same way, and thus man, through using his mind and mere calculation, could *know* nature, and could conquer it. As both a man of science and a thinker who chose prime numbers as his basic mantra and perceived God as a mathematician, he suggested that all problems could be solved with a little help of calculation. For him

calculation was the sole way to rectify the human reason and to make it tangible, it could even work with human disputes and the numbers were the new tool of humankind to increase the power of mind³. On the other hand, Voltaire, a French writer and philosopher, and one of the early liberalists, declared that faith should be an act of reason, however people had a tendency to believe in “things that are merely astonishing and prodigious, and faith for the things and contradictory and impossible.”⁴ He concluded man’s reason had to be persuaded first, and demoted man to sole reason with saying “If my reason is not persuaded, I am not persuaded, I and my reason cannot be two possible different beings”⁵. Especially in Britain, empiricism, a branch of epistemology, suggested that evidence and experience were the only methods to understand or to know the world. Human could not trust his *a priori* judgements, sentiments or intuition. The individual is born with a mind of tabula rasa, a blank slate, but with a potential to fill it with knowledge. Only through experimentation he could be able to explain and know nature, and with that knowledge he could rule it. Empiricism’s most important contribution to the era was its teaching called the scientific method, a complimentary context of induction and deduction. It is a body of techniques relying on observation, experience and experimentation encouraging the scientific thinking in the quest of truth instead of medieval or clerical methods. Although rationalism is seen as the opposite of empiricism mostly, it is not compulsory that these two are mutually exclusive. Kant asserts in his *The Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 that experience is essentially necessary for knowledge, but also humans need reason to process, to analyse that experience in order to give it meaning⁶ or to reach a conclusion. Also Leibniz accepts in his 1714 dated work *The Monadology* that everyone was empiric in three-fourths of their actions or behaviours⁷; unlike epistemologists he means the man on the street mostly learns through experience and living. It is not surprising that while the common man learns, the protagonist of Gothic never learns, always repeats himself in a vicious circle of brutalism, terror, illusions, desire and effort.

³ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, **Philosophical Essays**, Hackett Publishing, Indiana, 1989.

⁴ Voltaire, **A Philosophical Dictionary Vol. 1**, Dugdale, 1843, http://books.google.com/books?id=kj81AAAAIAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s (11.06.2009), p. 473.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 474.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, ed. John Miller Dow Meiklejohn, **The Critique of Pure Reason**, Henry G. Bohn, 1855, http://books.google.com/books?id=DolA4SIN-OEC&dq=the+critique+of+pure+reason&lr=&source=gbs_navlinks_s (22.07.2009).

⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, **The Monadology**, Forgetton Books. 1714, http://books.google.com/books?id=9HLBmb-QA1MC&dq=monadology&source=gbs_navlinks_s (23.07.2009).

1.2. Gothic Literature

This era also witnessed growing political, social and religious tension as well as philosophical advancements. The Glorious Revolution, The Act of Settlement of 1701, the tension between the Whigs and the Tories, the House of Hanover and the House of Stuart made the political scene slippery. In addition to these, the dispute between the old established church and its descendants and the new Anglican Church, and the Jacobite fear created an environment of terror. The clash between the past and present, feudal economy and liberalism, country and court created a confusing mood for the common man and diversity of ideas. Whereas the rising trust in human mind and the power of man, rationalism, scientific thinking and secularism, and expansionism created an optimistic atmosphere and a glorified image of mankind. Among these changes and developments, rationalism, the very mode of The Era of Enlightenment, tendency towards secularism and the praise of human mind and finally the the bourgeois are fundamentally critical. They marked a no-return point in the history of politics and economy and as a natural consequence in social construction and signified the fall of the importance of imagination, emotions, sentiments and intuition, and even innate faith, and the need to dispose of them. Thus, as Kilgour stated

The emergence of the gothic in the eighteenth century has also been read as a sign of the resurrection of the need for the sacred and transcendent in a modern enlightened secular world which denies the existence of supernatural forces, or as the rebellion of the imagination against tyranny of reason.⁸

As well as the idea of glorified image of human mind, the anxieties of the eighteenth century spreaded over the continental Europe. As a result, just like Sade remarked, there arised a need for a new form or mode of literature which should call upon hell for aid and to be situated in the land of fantasies, rather than just being mere observation of the history. In his view the genre of Gothic was the unavoidable outcome of the tense atmosphere and radical changes of the era.⁹ In its interest in extreme and unbelievable states and actions, Gothic explores the past traumas on both psychological and sociological level, angst and guilt, the possible results of expansionism and imperialism, sinister desires of the human soul, aftereffects of

⁸ Maggie Kilgour, **The Rise of the Gothic Novel**, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 3.

⁹ Marie Mulvey-Roberts, ed. **A Handbook to Gothic Literature**, Macmillan, London, 1998, p. 204.

rationalism that banished the human imagination. With this respect Gothic “can be interpreted as a dark side of Enlightenment free thinking or the persistence of an increasingly excluded occultist tradition in western culture, one which paradoxically insisted on an acknowledgement of the continuing existence of magic, religious, and demonic forces within a more and more secular society.”¹⁰ In a way, it served to unearth a few truths and to reflect the fear.

Gothic literature demonstrates a departure from consensus reality and is a blend of two impulses that formulate literature: mimesis and fantasy. However, unlike realism it is closer to the realm of fantasy, “the desire to change the given and alter reality – out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience’s verbal defences”¹¹. It traces the unsaid and unseen, both in cultural and individual history of one’s own, which is buried, covered over, made invisible and absent, and abstracted. Needless to mention, it also reflects the binary conflicts and dualistic clashes of its own period, as Cornwell states:

At a spiritual level the supernatural vied with the natural, as mysticism challenged, and was again challenged by, materialism, or religion by science (and cult by pseudo-science). On all planes death would contend with life. On a socio-political, and an individual level, tyrant would rage against victim and victimisation would endanger vengeance; incarceration would oppose freedom and hierarchy would strive to control individuality; heritage or inheritance would be threatened by subversion or potentiation, authoritarianism by permissiveness, and, on sexual level in particular, repression would tilt against desire.¹²

The ‘original’ Gothic, referring to early works of Gothic, could also be interpreted as an attack on ignorance and superstitious, uncontrolled imaginative power of mankind if read from an Enlightenment point of view, as those works presented a series of accidental, brutal, terror evoking events which anticipated hazardous consequences. In addition to this they could also be interpreted as the praise of daylight with a poetics of darkness and sentiments. It also signifies the beauty of feudal mode.

¹⁰ Allan Lloyd Smith, **American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction**, Continuum, New York, 2004, p. 6.

¹¹ Katherine Hume, **Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature**, Methuen, New York, 1984, p. 20.

¹² Neil Cornwell, ed. David Punter, **A Companion to the Gothic**, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 28.

Hence, we can reach such a conclusion that, the Gothic genre, in its very nature, is hard to define, it is full of contradictions both in form and in motives. Kilgour argues that gothic form is like Frankenstein's monster "assembled out of bits and pieces of the past."¹³ As it both feeds on, and mixes old literary traditions such as English folklore, romance, ballads, writings of Spenser and Milton, The German tradition, Jacobian and Elizabethan tragedies, and the graveyard poets such as Thomas Parnell or Robert Blair and their gloomy meditations, and Renaissance ideas of melancholy. Gothic genre borrows from tradition both literally and metaphorically, it deconstructs a new writing and invents a new form of imagination. Mary Shelley describes invention as not creating something out of nowhere or out of a void but as out of chaos and gathering substances together and giving form to them, creating a combination never combined before. It may be ununified or it may consist of static moments, fragmented scenes, lacks continuity and coherence, just like Kilgour puts it:

At times the gothic seems hardly a unified narrative at all, but a series of framed conventions, static moments of extreme emotions –displayed by characters or in the landscape, and reproduced in the reader- which are tenuously strung together in order to be temporised both through and into narrative, but which do not form a coherent and continuous whole.¹⁴

Although, it offers an alternative reality, it insists on holding oxymoron faculties and sustains "an impossible unity, without progressing towards synthesis"¹⁵ and most of the time towards a conclusion, as a result, gothic genre is also blamed for being self-contradictory. Tompkins argues that gothic is weak in character depiction¹⁶ and Napier argues that weakness reveals that gothic is a superficial form of writing.¹⁷ However Ian Watt argues that "superficiality is due to the displacement of complexity from characters onto the reader's response to the situation presented as the gothic's main concern is not to depict character but to create a feeling or effect in its readers

¹³ Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *ibid.* 4

¹⁵ Rosemary Jackson, ***Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion***, Methuen, London, 1981, p. 21.

¹⁶ J. M. S. Tompkins, ***The Work of Mrs. Radcliffe and Its Influence on Later Writers***, Arno Press, New York, 1980

¹⁷ Elizabeth Napier, ***The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth Century-Literary Form***, Clarendon Press, London, 1987

by placing them in a state of thrilling suspense and uncertainty.”¹⁸ The writer aims “to wind up the feelings of his reader till they become for a moment identified with those of a ruder age.”¹⁹

The gothic genre encourages an insidious relation between the text and its reader, creates an identification with the fictive characters which can be dangerous to the reader. Ideally, reading is way to educate the emotions, however when it is not controlled by reason or when the sensations become overwhelming, it results in ill consequences, it fills its reader’s mind with extravagant ideas, detaches him/her from society and threatens its norms. This situation reveals the puzzling and self-contradictory nature of gothic, it focuses on the emotions and aims to create a feeling. However after it achieves its goal, it shows that uncontrolled emotions or excited sensations might be dangerous to both its fictive character(s) who displays series of awkward or fearful actions and its real reader(s) who also has the potential to act in the same way. Some critics like Howells and Keiley suggest that gothic fiction was written from confusion and this writing is the way of its writers to cope with their feelings and frustration²⁰. Another self-contradictory and puzzling fact about the nature of gothic is that it rebels against the norms in the beginning and it restores them at the end. It acts as retreat from social norms, subversion of order, it offers a change and an alternative reality, an escape, however it evokes such an immense fear or displays a cruel punishment that this desired change or escape begin to seem no more desirable at the end. Although gothic novels offer a satisfactory reading, an aesthetic pleasure, the endings are often less satisfactory because they reaffirm the moral and social codes. So, Kilgour describes gothic as an “eruption of unlicensed desire that is fully controlled by governing systems of limitation”²¹, and Punter agrees her, he states gothic is “not an escape from reality but a deconstruction and dismemberment of it”²²

Despite fact that Gothic in its nature contradictory and may seem puzzling from time to time, it, at least the early examples of Gothic literature, still holds some basic elements, some of which also stated in beginning of this part. The first of these

¹⁸ Ian Watt, “Time and Family in the Gothic Novel: The Castle of Otranto”, **Eighteenth Century Life**, vol. 10, no. 3, 1986, p. 165.

¹⁹ Kilgour, *The Rise* p. 7

²⁰ For further reading Robert Keiley, **The Romantic Novel in England**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1972 and Carol AnnHowells, **Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction**, Athlone Press, London, 1978

²¹ Kilgour, *The Rise*, p.8

²² David Punter, **The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day**, Longman, London, 1996, p. 220.

elements is the setting itself. Most of the time, the setting is a castle; it may be occupied or abandoned, often old and/or ruined, containing dark staircases, locked rooms, labyrinthines, often in a remote part of the town or city. The oldness of the castle serves as a reference to aristocracy and feudal beliefs, either as an implication of longing for a beautiful, though barbaric and unsophisticated age. Yet at the same time it represents more naive and uncalculated, past and presents the symbol of the decay in ancient beliefs and tyranny of aristocracy. The setting, structural landscape, is the juxtaposition of mental state of characters, a parallelism of their mental process, and correlative of real institutional power.²³ The second one is the connection with the past, it can be an ancient prophecy most of the time obscure and its meaning is revealed after a certain disastrous event; a local legend concerning the building, often comes true. These myths or prophecies represent the gothic's obsession with past, its fear of present, connection with the tradition, and its perception of time as an organic, whole unit which cannot be cut or delayed. The following one is portents and/or visions, in the form of illusion, hallucination, dream or revelation. They can act as a foreshadowing instrument, a warning or a reminder of coming disaster in the text. Outside the context, they signify the once believed mystical powers, ties with paganism, occultism, or the significance of intuitive and sentimental abilities. Supernatural, either explained supernatural or not, inexplicable events, such as ghosts, voices or whispers coming from an unknown source, doors or windows closing without an external effort, inanimate objects coming alive, untrue reflections of the self, and bizarre accidents change the fate of characters.

Damsel in distress or a persecuted heroine is also a conventional element of Gothic fiction. These women characters may be under the control of a tyrannical male, forced or commanded to do something they did not wish or victimized in other way. They are often presented as passive, frightened, fainting, sobbing, running away, weeping, alone, in need of protection, and paralyzed, most of the time they serve as the side characters in the story or novel. As Sedgwick argues these heroines of Gothic usually suffer from hysteria, while the heroes (or anti-heroes) are presented as paranoid subjects²⁴. Gothic writing has also created its own instruments to consummate the atmosphere of gloom, to decorate it and to heighten the emotions of both its characters and its reader. For instance the howling of the

²³ Cornwell, Punter (ed.) *A Companion*, p. 28.

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, **The Coherence of Gothic Conventions**, Routledge, London, 1986, p. VI.

creatures of the night, eerie sounds, rain, wind, or thunders, doors shut suddenly, sometimes locked with no human effort, doors or windows moving to and fro, sometimes going broken, and crazed laughters are some of the elements which enrich the Gothic effect. Also a set of vocabulary in order to serve the same purpose, words that evoke a sense of terror, horror, despair and invoke mystery or suspense, create uncanniness. Some examples for this kind of a vocabulary, all from *The Castle of Otranto*, are: haunted, infernal, lamen, miracle, agony, strangeness, vast, suddenly, breathless, enourmous, astonish, thunderstruck, amazement, sudden, melancholy, sorrow, shriek, terrified, grief, hopeless, panic, dreading, prophecy, furious, rage, wrathfully, miserable.

1.3. American Gothic

The main impulses that led to the birth and rise of American Gothic lies in the history of the end of 17th century, 18th and 19th centuries. Puritanism and its religious dogmas shaped the 17th century, destruction of the individual self and banishment of humain pleasures and desires, its strong influnce over the daily life of the new inhabitants of the north America established a new culture different from its British origins. The image of an all-seeing, judging, but not forgiving God, people as potential sinners, the doctrin of an omnipotent, merciless, vengeful, intolarent God, loss of the hope towards salvation preached by many, and ripped off the reason, tolerance and mercy from the human heart, and created self-questioning, paranoid, introverted, mission oriented, intolarent society. Apocalyptic sermons, witch trials, religious paranoias, obsession with salvation, heaven and hell, intolarance towards the stranger and the other marked a rather darker age of America, although these Puritan societies were also the initiators of an industrious, mobile American nation. In the 18th century, Americans witnessed an another overwhelming impact of religion on their culture and living, especially during the Great Awakening, a new revival of religious piety mostly based on the sermons of Tennent, Whitfield and Edwards. The aim of the these sermons was to conduct that the humankind was nothing but a corrupted species and people were to be crushed in the hands of an "angry God" with the terrifying images of awaiting hell.

The Great Awaking depended on the idea that human reason is weak and incapable of choosing the right thing and human soul is easy to tempt, thus the members of a society and good, religious people shoud only trust the Holy Bible and men of God. Its strategy was to wake up human emotions such as fear, especially of

God, astonishment, terror²⁵. However, to the ends of the 18th an atmosphere of optimism begun to spread as the country was finally independent of crown. Though American revolution was a traumatic experience in history, as it divided the public into two spheres of loyalists and patriots, it was also apparently the only way to obtain independence. The notions of declaration of Independence, 1776, guaranteed an independent nation, marked an end to the tyranny of Britain and its practices over America, endowed the citizens of America with inalienable rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. After these developments, the nation evolved into a new kind of religious understanding and practise. Rather than a deterministic theology and gloomy images of hell and an angry God, people embraced the faith of a forgiving, generous God, abandoned the idea that presented them as weak and easy to tempt, began to trust their reason and their potential. The wind of Manifest Destiny, the idea that will be evolved into "a city upon a hill" later on, blew all over the country and exhibited itself in expansionism, progressionism, going beyond the frontier. With the election of Andrew Jackson, the faith in common man and self made man increased. Equality and democracy became more attainable, agriculture developed and industry turned out to be great economic force, daily life of citizens reformed and improved with decreasing income, new technologies and labor. However, in this picture of advancement and progress and in this mood of optimism, there hidden something odd: the reality of slavery, the confinement of women, the dominance of Wasps and sovereignty of patriarchy, the unnamed class distinctions, the worsening situation of Indians²⁶.

In this controversial situation, questions arised. American Gothic writers saw the darker side of the picture and began to question Puritan legacy and blind faith, extereme rationalism They tried to warn people about the possible outcome of expansionism and rapid growth, slavery, patriarchy and social prejudices. They explored their very selves, humanity, with its craziest desires and uncontrollable anxieties hidden behind locked doors. In fact what they pictured was the distopia within the "utopia"²⁷. As Smith states "along with the utopian inspiration came profoundly pessimistic insights into the dangers of trusting society to the undisciplined rule of the majority, fear of fraction in democratic government, the rule

²⁵ Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, Carol Sheriff, David W. Blight, Howard Chudacoff, Fredrik Logevall, **A People & A nation: A History of the United States: to 1877**, vol. I, Cengage Learning Wadsworth, 2008, p. 101 -102.

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 107-131, 181-203, 261-315.

²⁷ Jean Baudrillard, **America**, Verso, London, 1986, p. 28.

of the mob and the danger of a collapse in the whole grand experiment.”²⁸ Thus, as Leslie Fiedler puts it, American fiction had no choice but to become “bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, non-realistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic – a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation.”²⁹ In this sense, Morgen argues American Gothic fiction, just like the painting entitled *American Gothic*, captures a fundamental paradox which is that “sometimes it is most palpable when most denied”³⁰.

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, the first serious, “literature for literature’s sake” rather than didactic purposes kind of literature coincided with British Gothic literature, this is also an important reason for American literature to begin in gothic mode. As Pette states in his introduction to *Wieland*,

American literature, strictly speaking, is old only as the republic. Before 1790 prose and poetry were by-products, the experimental off-shootings of pens that usually busy with “useful” matter. Of fiction there had been substantially none. Poetry had been for the most part of polemical or religious jiggings, or crude balladry, or, as one finds it in an amazing volume in the newspapers and the magazines of the later period, mere rhymed doggarel. The essay, chief literary form used in America even until the mid-nineteenth century, had been but a pamphleteering, a journalistic rapier often deadly in its dullness. Literature with literary purpose – “mere literature”- produced by a writer who wrote because he had literature in his soul and devoting his life to it, came not to America till the first decade of the republic, until well into those hectic fin de siècle years which were to bring into the world so many unheard things. And even then America produced but one such writer of literature: it was a generation before Washington Irving came as the second. The term “Father of American Literature” belongs unquestionably to Charles Brockden Brown.³¹

American Gothic begins with the publication of American novel, Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland, or the Transformation* in 1798. It is an epistolary novel, narrated by Clara Wieland as a series of letters. Clara, unlike British gothic heroines, is capable of giving account of her feelings and reason, she is a new heroine figure in

²⁸ Allan Lloyd Smith, in. David Punter (ed.), **A Companion to the Gothic**, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 110 – 111.

²⁹ Leslie Fiedler, **Love and Death in American Novel**, Dell Publishing, New York, 1966, p. 29.

³⁰ David Mogen, Scott P. Sanders, Joanna B. Karpinsky, **Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature**, Associated university Presses, Massachusetts, 1993, p. 13.

³¹ Charles Brockden Brown, in. Fred Lewis Pette (ed.), **Wieland or the Transformation Together with Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist**, Harvest, Florida, p. ix.

world of letters. The novel begins with the death of Wieland senior, the father, who emigrates to America to educate the heathen, when he arrives at the New Land, he buys a farm and aims to cultivate the land and establish fortune and forgets his prior purpose. Then, he succeeds, “the two great bourgeois desires” states Gross “have always been to become successful and to do good. This amalgam of profane and sacred impulses infuses all American life, from politics (millionaire peanut farmer Jimmy Carter “serves” America as her president) to show business”³²and revives his desire to educate the heathen. However all he gets is ridicule so he becomes a lonely religious enthusiast and builds himself a temple to worship in it, a bright replacement of Gothic castle, but one night he is consumed by fire during his worship. The family thought some supernatural agents were at work, after him his wife follows him to grave. The children convert their father’s temple in a summerhouse and begin to live there in tranquility, though Theodore, Wieland junior, becomes broody and melancholic, until he hears some uncanny voices that prompt him to do terrible actions, including the slaughter of his family and his own destruction. The voices triggered his religious mania and he thought he is doing the God’s will, motivated by religious delusion. After numerous chapters of uncanniness, suspense, unfortunate events, it is revealed that all responsibility of the disaster belongs to, Carwin, “a rationalist friend of the family who claims to have been trying to teach Wieland a lesson in religious credulaty, a lesson which has gone somewhat amiss”³³. The crimes of Wieland, whose visions are “joyous” and “elate”, who “conceives himself to have reached a loftier degree of virtue, than any other human being”³⁴, are a direct result of uncontrolled, unquestioned, hysterical religious feelings which may -though not necessarily- result in different kinds of disasters or calamities and possible dethronement of reason. He “deemed himself commissioned for this act by heaven; who regarded this career of horror as the last refinement of virtue.”³⁵ Punter argues

It is this dethronement of reason which is the main source of in Wieland; and it Brown’s peculiar contribution to the Gothic that manages to portray the machinations of superstition and delusion, not in distant castles or

³² Louis S. Gross, **Redefining American Gothic, from Wieland to Day of the Dead**, U.M.I. Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1989, p. 6.

³³ David Punter, **The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day**, Longman, London, 1996, p. 167

³⁴ Brown, p. 211- 212.

³⁵ Brown, p. 213.

remote countries [as in British Gothic] but in a contemporary and recognisable American world.³⁶

The characterization of Wieland junior is obviously a representation of Puritan fanaticism, which is a purely American feature, and a descendant of Puritan orthodoxy and its faith in a community of saints. On the other hand, Carwin is the symbol of extreme rationalism, what “like superstition, results in personal aggrandisement and loss of perspective: the pretension of standing outside the law is the same as the peretension of personally hearing the voice of God”³⁷. The word “transformation” in the title refers mostly to Clara. She, in the end, finds her personal identity shattered and her world, consisted of a family, a good brother, some close friends, a loving lover. Her world and identity destroyed in her own landscape by the hand of the beloved ones rather than an external agent, which points a form of domesticated Gothic, a truly American feature of Gothic, indeed.

In political context, *Wieland* tells the record of American mythology, in which America is represented as the New Eden and its fall, along with the loss of hope of salvation and perfection. The novel sets new reading of American history, as Smith puts it:

The Wieland's utopia has implicit parallels with the newly constituted United States: it is rationalist, based on Enlightenment principles, and significantly without recourse to external authority. The children have been “saved from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding schools” and left to their own for religious education. The dreadful collapse of this happy and independent society could suggest a pessimism about the future of self-government.³⁸

One step forward, Tompkins argues that the novel is a refutation of the Republican idealism. Besides, philosophically, it warns about possible dangers of religious fanaticism and extreme rationalism, and their destructive effects on an individual, and dreadful consequences. When it comes to “individual”, it serves as an attack on sensationalist psychology which insists that mind is the compilation or creation of reactions to sensations, so mentioned warnings gain another meaning in this context. In narrow terms, the novel asks such questions: what if the senses are

³⁶ Punter, *The Literature*, p. 168.

³⁷ *ibid*, p. 171.

³⁸ Smith, *A Companion*, p. 111 – 112.

untrustworthy? What if they are misinterpreted ? What if “devil could assume the guise of a saved person ? Then how could witches be distinguished from saints ?”³⁹ What happens when blind rationalism takes over ? What if the quest towards perfection –politically, psychologically, or spiritually- is both wrong and futile even from the beginning ?

In short, in addition to being the first real literary example of American literature, *Wieland* gains its significance for Americanizing the Gothic. First, by its development of setting, rather than the ruined castle or remote egzotic place, the events take place in a familiar environment. Second, through the domestication of Gothic, the threat is internal, it is in the family, in the house, in the self. Third, apart from its thematic detachment from the Old World, all the referances- political or historical- are American, though it still contains some philosophically universal elements. Just like *Castle of Otranto* for Britain, *Wieland* is the breeding text of American Gothic. After Brown, writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Washington Irving, Henry Ward Beecher, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ambrose Bierce, William Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor, Sherwood Anderson ask the crucial questions regarding their nation and time. They challenge its blind faith and perpetual optimism, portrayed a darker picture of America; sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, sometimes in a truly Gothic form, sometimes only by using Gothic elements, often through using extreme presentations and macabre images, events or characters, but always with a sentence that should be outspoken and a question that should be asked, plunge their characters in a fictive world of doubts, illusions, dellusions, dreams, tormentation, cruelty, bestiality, death, murder, suicide, mystery, uncanniness and terror.

³⁹ Emily Miller Budick, **Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition**, Yale University Press, Michigan, 1989, p. 30.

PART TWO

AMERICAN GOTHIC SHORT FICTION

2.1. Female Gothic and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Home is always, in its idealised description, thought to be the place where family members confide in love and respect, children grow in security, men and women unite in dignity, and a safe chamber where all members can find peace. However, in gothic tradition "The safe sphere of the home becomes an uncanny place of alienation"⁴⁰, especially for women. It becomes the cradle of delusions and nightmares full of traps and hollow pits, walls of once "sweet home" reflects crippled shadows and echoes voices coming from nowhere, windows begin to look like skulls, and every room hides a different kind of macabre images. In it, either a violent spirit is resurrected or a living spirit turns into a violent one. And finally, when its doors are closed, it becomes the prison of women, who are –already and in birth-conceived of rationality and common sense, and reason. In the beginning, the women in gothic works used to be dominantly victims chased and mostly caught by men or as monsters to devastate men. They were the pale, sick women laying on a bed whispering and murmuring, or lost, delusioned women in the castle, or the she-devils sucking the life out of man. The best examples from the earliest works are Stoker's Mina whose blood Dracula fed on, Walpole's Isabella trapped by Manfred, Wollstonecraft's Maria who was put into an asylum by her husband, and Jemima who was born as a bastard, served, raped and sent away. Obviously things were not different at all in American Gothic, Poe's entombed Madeline, Hawthorne's Georgiana. So we can say that "the perception of women's imperilled situation also created a further reach of Gothic, one written by women and conveying a sense of their own fears and oppression"⁴¹. Leaving the early examples of gothic behind, here are some questions at hand waiting to be asked about female gothic: are there any differences in modern gothic writings written by women? How do they portray woman? Do these writings explore the problems of women and do they offer any reconciliation or solution? If yes, what kind of an approach do they have? Do they leave the men aside?

⁴⁰ Kilgour, *The Rise* p. 299.

⁴¹ Allan Lloyd Smith, **American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction**, Continuum, New York, 2004, p. 58

Besides Louisa May Alcott, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Emma Dawson, Edith Wharton, and Shirley Jackson who make use of gothic elements and express their experiences as women, Charlotte Perkins Gilman states the issue of women clearly in a pretty modern gothic atmosphere in her earned famous story "The Yellow Wallpaper". This story is also particularly important because of its autobiographical elements. It can be said that with these genuine elements, in a way, she creates a "textual mother"⁴², a term coined by Becker, narrator is both writing her story and the story of its woman writer in a gothic form. This powerful story was written after Gilman gave birth to her baby daughter and experienced a severe bout of post-natal depression. She was forced to accept the rest cure, a method of psychological treatment including bed rest, isolation from social life, overfeeding and forbidding any kind of intellectual activity used by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell,

This wise man put me to the bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still good physique responded so promptly that he concluded there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with solemn advice to "live as domestic a life as far as possible", to "have but two hours' intellectual life a day," and "never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again" as long as I lived. This was in 1887. I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over.⁴³

After The New England Magazine published her story, it definitely attracted attention and received criticism. Due to the fact that people were not ready to understand the tale of mental and psychological degeneration in a young, middle-class mother and a married woman it is also claimed that a physician from Boston told the story was enough to drive someone mad. On the contrary, Gilman noted in her her article "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" "It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked."⁴⁴

The mood of the time this story was written was not at all different from the beginnings and middle of the nineteenth century. The middle class economy and bourgeois ideals were suggesting separate spheres for two sexes: mobile men who

⁴² Susanna Becker, **Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction**, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 67, 68, 76.

⁴³ Charlotte Perkins Gilman ed. Catherine Golden, **Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper: A Source Book and A Critical Edition**, Routledge, 2004, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Gilman, Golden (ed.) *A Critical*, p. 47.

could freely enter the domestic sphere and leave it, and domestic women at home, in a “a female realm of love and harmony which is opposed to a male commercial jungle of strife and conflict.”⁴⁵ Those women “the angels in the house” were supposed to have some basic virtues to be accepted by society which are piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity, “Put all them together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman. Without them, no matter whether there is fame, achievement, or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power.”⁴⁶ With *The Cult of True Womanhood*, women were expected to be submissive: submitted to their fathers, then their husbands and all the time to the Lord. Submission was thought to be the most feminine virtue of all, the passive women are the “responders” while “the men were the doers, the movers, the actors”⁴⁷. However, the virtues of a true “lady” imposed by the cult set up a dilemma “Woman must preserve her virtue until marriage and marriage was necessary for her happiness. Yet, marriage was, literally an end to innocence. She was told not to question this dilemma, but simply to accept it.”⁴⁸ In order to preserve her virtue to find a decent husband, when complimented a young, nice lady should “look gratified, and bow your [her] thanks, but [she must] remain silent.”⁴⁹ If she finds the compliment over-flattering she should “look gravely, and say or do nothing”⁵⁰, society “disapprove(s) of ladies going to charity-fairs in the evening”⁵¹ because “Ladies who are ladies, should only visit fancy-fairs in the day time”⁵², “She should scrupulously avoid it in every little thing that may involve him in expense on her account. And he will respect her the more”⁵³. In 1853, Eliza Leslie, writer of series books teaching women how to cook, how to behave, how to be a favorable lady in public gave advice to her own sex and she strictly said “no” to:

Biting your nails. Slipping a ring up and down your finger. Sitting cross-kneed, and jogging your feet. Drumming on the table with your knuckles; or, still worse, tinkering on a piano with your fore-finger only. Humming a tune before strangers. Singing as you go up and down stairs. Putting your arm round the neck of another young girl, or promenading the room

⁴⁵ Kilgour, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood”, *American Quarterly* 18, no 2, part 1, 1966, 151- 174, p. 152. http://k-12.pisd.edu/schools/pshs/soc_stu/apush/cult.pdf (29. 03. 2009)

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 159.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 158.

⁴⁹ Eliza Leslie, *The Behavior Book: A Manuel for Ladies*, Princeton University, 1854, p. 248.

http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=W3luAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false , (01. 04. 2009)

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 248.

⁵¹ *ibid*, 252.

⁵² *ibid*, 252.

⁵³ *ibid*, 255.

with arms encircling waists. Holding the hand of a friend all the time she sits beside you; or kissing and fondling her before company. Sitting too closely. Slapping a gentleman with your handkerchief; or tapping him with your fan. Allowing him to take a ring off your finger, to look at it. Permitting him to unclasp your bracelet, or, still worse, to inspect your brooch. When these ornaments are to be shown to another person, always take them off for the purpose. Pulling at your own ringlets, or your own ear-rings--or fingering your neck ribbon. Suffering a gentleman to touch your curls. Reading with a gentleman off the same book or newspaper.⁵⁴

Lydia Howard Sigourney, a socially approved poet of her time, states in her book *Letters to Young Ladies* that household chores were entrusted to women, and it was their natural duty to settle the things at home, serve, tidy up, clean and cook

A knowledge of domestic duties is beyond all price to a woman. Every one of our sex ought to know how to sew, and knit, and mend, and cook, and superintend a house. In every situation of life, high or low, this sort of knowledge is of great advantage. There is no necessity that the gaining of such information should interfere with intellectual acquirement.⁵⁵

Mrs. Lydia Child says that the absence of domestic education causes “vanity, extravagance, and idleness that are so fast growing”⁵⁶ upon the young ladies and when they find their “prince charming” and got married “they find themselves ignorant of the important domestic life, and its quiet pleasures.”⁵⁷ She also alleges a charge on women, implying that women who are not well capable of performing their domestic duties are also a danger to America as those women could not keep a husband satisfied, their children proper and well-behaved, and they are not economical. Since they are not normative and standard, they are a threat to their society. She encourages young girls to educate themselves about domestic duties to be favorable ladies and citizens. She writes they shall indulge in fine arts such as painting, piano playing, or drawing [all of which are the activities one can do at home during her leisure time] to be nice, delicate and sophisticated “enough” for a woman.

⁵⁴ Eliza Leslie, **The Behavior Book: A Manuel for Ladies**, Princeton University, 1854, p. 330-331. http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=W3luAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false, (01. 04. 2009)

⁵⁵ Mary H. Sigourney, **Letters to Young Ladies**, Thomas Ward and Co., 1834, p. 28. http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=fkYOAAAAQAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false, (01. 04. 2009)

⁵⁶ Lydia Child, **The American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated To Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy**, Samuel S. & William Wood, New York, 1841, p. 92. http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=D3AEAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false, (12. 02. 2009)

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 92.

Under these circumstances; women defined and idealised by men in artificial terms, and also trapped by the members of their own sex; by their mothers, aunts, the respected and approved elder females of their quarter, bound to the house, secluded, subordinated, and submissive in social, economical terms, as well as in front of the law, a world both socially and economically divided into parts where men speak out loud and women silenced, the *home* turns into a place more like a gothic prison where the woman lives as a *prisoner*, or at least as a *hostage*.

With “The Yellow Wallpaper” Charlotte Perkins Gilman portrays the true atmosphere of the prison-like houses, attitudes and methods of “victorious”, “powerful” men and true state of the mind and feelings of women imprisoned and secluded. While achieving her goal, she uses the very nature of comparatively modern American gothic: ambiguity, sarcasm, irony, she depicts the confusion of nineteenth century women by using both her protagonist’s voice and her “opposite”, men’s language,. Rather than traditionally frightening images of terror, she makes use of “strangeness in familiar” and “domestic terror” in its very own setting, “The house, not the castle” becomes the site of trauma; its terror deriving from the familiar inmates instead of external threat.”⁵⁸ The characters and their representations may seem to be traditional, even *cliché*, to the contemporary reader, however then they were far beyond traditional, at least in their presentation. The protagonist is a woman who is presumably in her twenties or thirties, probably white as the writer did not openly talk of race, but the protagonist’s language, her definition herself as “ordinary”, obviously not an adjective a black person would use easily and without second thoughts in those days. Her husband’s and brother’s occupations also suggest that she is, most probably a white middle class woman. The physician husband John, his sister Jannie and her physician brother make up the rest of the main characters, whom I intend to analyse in detail later on.

The setting is an old “colonial mansion”⁵⁹ which may be read as a reference to the old, traditional gothic mansions and is “a hereditary estate” which may refer to the idea of “son bearing his father’s sin”; an idea that is not fully agreed on, yet very popular in Gothic literature, and taking its roots from the Bible, Exodus 20:5 “for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children,

⁵⁸ Smith. *American Gothic*, p. 75.

⁵⁹ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ed. Joyce Carol Oates, “The Yellow Wallpaper”, **The Definitive Collection of Chilling American Fiction**, Plume, New York, 1996, 87 – 101, p. 87.

on the thirteenth, on the fourteenth”⁶⁰. However, here, it is daughter bearing her mother’s sin, sin of letting her father and her husband make her submissive and allowing them to treat her daughter in the same way without question and internalizing the mentality of patriarchy. She also writes “It makes me think of English places that you read about [considering the time most probably English romances and English Gothic], for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock”⁶¹ which also strengthens the just prior idea. The narrator writes about the house “I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity –but that would be asking too much of fate!”⁶², she also notes that she senses there was something queer about the house, it stayed too long untenanted and it was cheaper than one might have expected. As a result, it can be inferred from the information above, even from the very beginning “The narrator ironically acknowledges her awareness of the house’s conventionally gothic character.”⁶³ This knowledge creates a kind of irony functioning on two levels, first, despite the fact that she obviously knows about gothic tradition and indeed envisions this tradition as a romantic contrast to her situation “she fails to perceive how closely her situation parallels that of the classic gothic novel.”⁶⁴ Second is the ironic twist in the story “an impulsive wish is granted with dire consequences.”⁶⁵

In order to picture or to grasp the condition the narrator’s in, and her case, it is necessary to learn more about the other main characters. It would be wise to begin with the husband, John. In the story, he is described by the narrator as a man of common sense, reason and logic, narrator notes “John is practical to the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.”⁶⁶ He is the person who is primarily associated with masculine authority and patriarchy; and his being a physician both assures his status as the decisionmaker and enhances his authority as a husband. He controls roughly everything in the narrator’s life, dictates her what to do and what not to do, prescribes her a diet and medicine, regulates her activities and daily life. He holds a very typical male attitude towards

⁶⁰ “Do the Sons Bear the Sins of the Fathers or Not?”, <http://www.carm.org/bible-difficulties/genesis-deuteronomy/do-sons-bear-sins-fathers-or-not>, (25. 06. 2009)

⁶¹ Gilman, ed. Oates, p. 88.

⁶² *ibid*, p. 87.

⁶³ Dale Bailey, **American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction**, Popular Press, 1999, p. 29.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 29.

⁶⁵ *ibid*, 29.

⁶⁶ Gilman, ed. Oates, p. 87.

writing, “He denies her creative power and her need to create”⁶⁷, yet the narrator keeps writing in sly in spite of him. He denies her desire to write because he fears the outcome, “because ideology as a shared construct based upon collective assumptions, exists through language”⁶⁸, with his rules against writing, he tries to keep his wife silent. He fears that if she has a voice and a language of her own and if she learns to master it, she would gain a ground to stand, and space of her own where he could not control any more and he would be the one to lose from it. As a result, though he calls his wife “darling”, he closes his ears to the ideas, feelings and wishes of her, and begs her to be good which means she should obey him, be as he wants her to be and should not contemplate “foolish” and “fancy” thoughts. In his will, assuring everyone including the narrator herself that there is nothing much to matter with her, but just a temporary nervous breakdown, he is supported by the narrator’s brother who “is also a physician, and also of high standing”, and “he says the same thing.”⁶⁹ Both male characters refuse to accept there might really be something serious with the narrator, and don’t believe she is ill “John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him. Of course it is only nervousness”⁷⁰, yet still John imposes several regulations upon her considering her health, and the narrator wonders how she could be well if she is not ill and notes in her secret journal “that is one reason I do not get well faster.”⁷¹ Despite all the facts above, Gilman does not present John as a classic gothic villain. Instead of pointing at him as if he was a target to eliminate or destroy, she personifies the attitude of patriarchy towards the female in him, he serves as the embodiment and symbol of masculine authority, and unfolds the harms caused by this authority.

The protagonist is surrounded by the representatives of patriarchy, though there is also a woman, Jennie. Throughout the story she shows no resistance to John and she acts as a guardian of the patriarch and as the extension of the husband’s authority through keeping an eye over her most of the time, giving reports about her situation when John is not around. She makes her room turn into “a

⁶⁷ Hsing Ying Chi, **Artist and Attic: A Study of Poetic Space in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing**, University Press of America, 1999, p. 67.

⁶⁸ Alex Carl Bredahl, **New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon**, The University Of North Carolina Press, 1989, p. 22.

⁶⁹ Gilman, ed. Oates, p. 87.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 90.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 87.

symbol of patriarchal marriage”⁷² and in Foucauldian terms into an “ingenious cruel cage”, in which she is being peeked almost constantly. Yet she is a gentler taskmaster than John. She allows the narrator the isolation she desires by not being by her all the time, she notes “Jennie is good and she lets me alone when I want her to”⁷³, forgetting she uttered to herself “There’s sister on the stairs !”⁷⁴ and quitted writing. In John’s presence reader sees that Jennie is there to serve his needs, since John is a male and he has nothing to do with domestic chores. In the beginning she is portrayed as the typical female of her time, silent and submissive, as the “perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession”⁷⁵. Still she seems to have a vague awareness of the woman behind the wallpaper, an emblem of their entrapment and seclusion and is caught her hand on the wallpaper touching it “foreshadowing the narrator’s final act.”⁷⁶ Yet, when confronted she acts as if she was caught red-handed and moves back to her role either she is ignorant of her role or unwilling to abandon it, or frightened.

When the narrator and her husband get into the mansion, John chooses the best room for them, neglecting the wishes of his wife. Although she wants a room downstairs, opening to the garden, windows covered with roses, he chooses a room upstairs, which was a nursery first, than a playroom and gymnasium to serve as their bedroom at night and the narrator’s rest room during day time. It’s a room with barred windows, rings and things on the walls, and with a huge nailed bed. The wallpaper takes her attention quickly, she thinks of it as the worst paper she has seen in her life. A wallpaper with “sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin”, “lame curves committing suicide and destroying themselves in unheard contradictions”⁷⁷. In her condition, as she has nothing to do but rest, she soon begins to spend more time in the room, “I’m getting fond of this room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper”⁷⁸, and study the paper in her confinement as a solitary spectator.

I (believe-) and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we’ll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a

⁷²Gilman, Golden (ed.), *A Critical*, p. 12.

⁷³Gilman, Oates (ed.), *The Definitive*, p. 92.

⁷⁴ibid, p. 92.

⁷⁵ibid, p. 92

⁷⁶Bailey, p. 30.

⁷⁷Gilman, Oates (ed.), *The Definitive*, p. 89.

⁷⁸ibid, p. 93.

conclusion. I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else I ever heard of.⁷⁹

As a result of her observation she keeps doing all of the time, which is a very typical gothic motif, she starts to think that there is something behind the pattern “always the same shape, only very numerous.”⁸⁰ Eventually she ends in believing there is a woman “stooping down and creeping about.”⁸¹ At first she states she hates the figure and wishes that John would take her away, as if someone seeing him/herself first time in the mirror and not recognizing, and finding the reflection creepy. In this phase of rejection she still turns to her male counterpart for consolation. However at the night of same day, after John’s asleep, she gets up to touch and test the paper, and lays in her bed, next to John, “for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or seperately.”⁸²

At the end of a rejection phase and just after she believes that there is a woman behind the pattern, there comes a process of identification. First, the narrator starts to keep awake during the night to watch the developments but sleeps a good deal during the day because the figure is in fact quiet, most significantly it is subdued. The narrator, giving one of the first and most important clues of her identificaton with the figurine, notes “it is the *pattern* that keeps her so still.”⁸³ It is better to study the phase of identification in stages. As told before it starts with her believing that there is woman behind the pattern. In this fist stage, the narrator is quite discreet, she tells no one about her ideas, she assumes that if she tells her husband he would laugh and fears she would be taken away from it, she starts to be afraid of John, and absolutely determined that “nobody shall find it out but myself [herself].”⁸⁴ In the second stage, she discovers that the figurine is creeping, the narrator attributes an infant-like characteristic to the figurine just like herself. She is infantilized by social patterns, symbolically by her husband who laughs at her all the time as if she was a cute baby, doing funny talks and gestures. He controls her every action as if she was incapable of giving the right decisions for herself,

⁷⁹ Gilman, Oates (ed.), *The Definitive*, p. 93.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p. 94.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 94.

⁸² *ibid* p. 96.

⁸³ *ibid*, p. 96.

⁸⁴ Gilman, Oates (ed.), *The Definitive*, p. 97.

addresses her with the word “little” most of the time. After the process of identification is over, but not the phase, the number of women multiplies, just like she is not the only one subdued and imprisoned behind the *pattern*. The narrator questions the oneness of the image, and sometimes believes that there are a great many women behind the pattern. Then she notes that she sees her imaginary self, a “version(s) of herself, in her subjunction and threatened annihilation as a person”⁸⁵, getting out daytime, travelling in the garden, along the road. So the suppressed real is then capable of doing the things it normally can not via its imaginary gothic image.

With Julia Kristeva’s terms, the yellow paper serves as the “abject” in its description: old, filthy, sickly, penetrative, torn, faded, repellant yellow color, insidious, devious, smothering yellow smell, dwelling, confusing, meaningless, shapeless pattern. The narrator’s identification with the woman in the paper operates on two levels: the reason and the result. To begin with the reason, she identifies herself with the *abject* because just like herself, the abject, here the imaginary double is a “jettisoned object” and “radically excluded”⁸⁶ who “beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out.”⁸⁷ As a result of this identification, the narrator desires to set her imaginary self free of the pattern. She is persuaded that she achieves what she wishes and, as she is “discharged”, she, herself, acquires a characteristic of “abject”; because her “madness” just like abject is opposed to “I”⁸⁸ and disturbs identity, destroys order and threatens society. However, this is the narrator’s *jouissance*; she both reaches her painful pleasure “liberty” and yet, as she is somehow mad, her liberty is fictive and imaginary which means her disimprisonment is not real but an assumption. If we take this liberation for real, than her being mad makes it impossible for her to enjoy her liberty.

In Gilman’s feminist gothicism, the narrator seems to have two ways out: writing and madness. Just like Louise Mallard in “The Story of an Hour” in her room, the narrator of “The Yellow Wallpaper”, feels herself free in her solitude in her chamber upstairs. This place is where she feels “free” in spite of the eyes controlling her and, in this respect “Gilman- anticipates Virginia Woolf in calling attention to the importance of a woman having a “room of her own” both literally and

⁸⁵ Smith, *American Gothic*, p. 95.

⁸⁶ Julia Kristeva, “Powers of Horror”. In Kelly Oliver. **The Portable Kristeva**, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, p. 230.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 230.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 230. “ The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I”

metaphorically”⁸⁹. She is dragged into a new world of imagination where her assumptions are meaningless to the Father/superego. She creates a new language that conveys, as Kaplan quotes from Gilbert and Gubar, “a paradigmatic talk of female confinement and escape”, and tells a story “all literary women would tell if they could speak their speechless woe.”⁹⁰ As she is deprived of many joys she could enjoy and many rights she deserves, she defies all these prohibitions by writing in secret. In her journal the narrator employs a language which transfers feelings, rather than thoughts or calculations and focuses on senses, searches a way to transfer her passion to be seen, for communication and recognition, as Kaplan signifies. This, in a social construction divided into two: the ones who feel and sense and the ones who think and do, constitutes an irony. As, both the story itself and its writer’s story show that although to sense, to feel are supposed to be feminine characteristics, still, their limits are defined by the male.

Kilgour argues that social construction, construction because social norms are nothing but artifacts, deprives women of one essential attribute in human nature, the reason, she notes “Repressed through domestic imprisonment, denied the true limits and inwardness of reason, they are encouraged to indulge their feelings and sensibility.”⁹¹, and in many gothic novels female sensibility enflamed by domestic imprisonment and uncontrolled by reason turns out to be socially destructive, in addition to being self-destructive. Possibly because of these reasons, writing is not an appropriate profession for woman unless they write cook books or naive poetry. It is assumed that their works are not practical, not worth reading unless they are written in the male standards, and women may lose control of their senses while writing. If they insist on writing and feel in a way that is prohibited, they have no other chance but being labelled as “mad”, as in the story. However, this madness can be interpreted in two ways: first as a horrific defeat, loss of sanity and degeneration of self, secondly as a triumph,

more significant are the madwoman’s own imaginings and creations, mirages of health and freedom with which her writer endows her like a fairy godmother showering gold on a sleeping heroine. The woman from

⁸⁹ Gilman, Golden (ed.), *A Critical*, p. 37.

⁹⁰ Carla Kaplan, **The Erotics of Talk: Women’s Writing and Feminist Paradigms**. Oxford University Press US, 1996, p. 34.

⁹¹ Kilgour, p. 78.

behind the wallpaper creeps away, for instance, creeps far and fast on the long road, in broad daylight.⁹²

Or better with narrator's voice "'I've got out at last' said I, 'in spite of you and Jane. And I pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back'"⁹³

Gilman shows the rises and falls of her mind, portrays almost every step of her mental collapse. She offers her reader a fixed gaze, like of a watchtower's in a *panopticon*, yet she still manages to create very gothic sense of ambiguity. As a writer, she never lets her readers be really sure about what they read and how to interpret it; the changing the psychology of the protagonist can be interpreted as a mental formation and a psychological issue. However, it is also possible to view the story as a ghost story. In order to show this ambiguity in the story explicitly, I am going to take help from the text itself. First of all, there is only very little conversation in the story; the other speaker is always the husband, and he keeps repeating himself, and she says she spoke to Jannie but she goes on saying she left her alone most of the time. There is a new born baby of hers, yet she never caresses the baby, in fact she never touches many things in the house. She talks of guests but the reader never knows what they did or she never converses with guests. One of the most important things that contributes to this atmosphere of gothic ambiguity is that she does not leave the house, except for once, she writes "Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it –there's that smell [smell of the room]."⁹⁴ Still, the reader never witnesses this. In addition to these details, Smith argues that there is a reference to suicide. The narrator states that she has a hidden rope in her room, she makes remarks about tying the woman if she gets out and tries to escape "I forgot I couldn't reach far without anything to stand on! This bed will not move. I tried to lift or push it till I was lame."⁹⁵ She says that she needs something to stand on to tear off the paper, yet this is not very assuring, and at the end of the story John faints "right across her path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him everytime", Smith argues that creeping here may suggest hanging upon the rope mentioned before. Especially while describing the wallpaper, Gilman makes use of the gothic vocabulary in a very elaborate way. While she is giving information

⁹² Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, **The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and The Nineteenth-Century**, Yale university Press, 1984, p. 91.

⁹³ Gilman, Oates (ed.), *The Definitive*, p. 102.

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p. 98

⁹⁵ Gilman, Oates (ed.) *The Definitive*, p. 101.

about the paper she uses such words and phrases “repellant, strangely faded, sickly sulphur tint, outrageous, suicide, destroy, horrid, strange, vicious, broken neck, bulbous eyes, crawl, absurd, terror, unblinking eyes, delirium tremens, optic horror, grotesque, dwelling”. Another gothic element in the story is repetitions and obsession, in brief, the narrator’s communication with her husband and Jennie and their relation consists of repetitions: John asks if she is well and tells her she would be well if she tries and Jennie checks her out then leaves her alone. Her natural rights as a human being annihilated and being metaphorically chained to the house, the narrator is caught in a mechanically repetitive behavior, she is first obsessed with the paper and then the figure behind it, paying no attention to other things and to her own condition. Not only her habits and behaviour but also her vocabulary and writing style are also affected, this becomes obvious when she increases the use of the subject “I” and writes “I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round – round and round and round.”⁹⁶

In conclusion, Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a powerful example of American feminist gothic which makes use of gothic elements such as ambiguity, obsession, and the gothic vocabulary. It gives a new meaning to the concepts of the “house” and “domestic sphere” which have been idealised by patriarchy, and redefines them, uncovers the threat in the “familiar” and makes it visible. The story voices the dichotomy between “inside” and “outside”, “reason” and “sense” through the eyes of the repressed and imprisoned, displays the outcomes of dividedness. As Kaplan points out, it is the story of “women’s silence, blankness, or absence”⁹⁷ which “must be translated into visibility or audibility by a reader whose reading is also a rewriting.”⁹⁸

2.2. Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Birth-Mark”

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the most remarkable writers of American fiction, it is a widely accepted truth that his writings are beyond the age they are written in, and thus timeless. His fiction still commands our attention and is still being analysed in our day. The writer, who changed his name from Hathorne to Hawthore to liberate himself from the doings of the people under the same surname, born in

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 98.

⁹⁷ Kaplan, p. 35.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 35.

1804 in Salem, Massachusetts. Today the place is known for Salem Witch Trials of 1692 – 1693. The city he was born in definitely has a great influence on what and how Hawthorne wrote. His grandparent from his father's side was a judge in Salem Witch Trials. Although it can be said that two people never knew each other in real sense as grandfather Hawthorne died when the writer was four years old, the imprints of his era and his actions could easily be found in Hawthorne's fiction. Although in his mature years he worked at the Boston Custom House, then for the Port of Salem, he was always fond of writing and never quitted his desire to write. In 1828 he published *Fanshawe* and *Twice-told Stories* followed it nine years later, a collection of short stories including "The Gentle Boy", "The Minister's Black Veil", "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment", "The Hollow of the Three Hills", "The Haunted Mind". In 1842 he married to Sophia Peabody, a delicate artist and transcendentalist, and four years later *Mosses from an Old Mansion* was published, another short story collection including "The Birthmark", "Young Goodman Brown", "Rappaccini's Daughter". Then he published one of his most outstanding Works *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850. Next year he published *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance* came next, and six years after it he published *The Marble Faun*.

His works function as a cultural genealogy which serves to portray a rather dimmer age of New England and Puritanism in detail and in a picturesque approach. He is a romancer who searches the inner mysteries of human soul and a realist who evaluates the American experience. In addition to this, Hawthorne also deals with the universal maladies of human soul through using themes such as morality, battle between good and evil and their true nature, the difference between the appearance and reality behind the veil. At the same time he writes about his own community and its antecedents, he also speaks of an universal experience and writes about humanity. Like other gothic writers or writers of dark romanticism of his age his style is elaborate, sophisticated, his fiction filled with symbolism and allegories which also serves as a call to a renewed moral judgement.

Of all the Hawthorne's short stories "The Birthmark" and "Young Goodman Brown" are among the most outstanding ones and these stories are definitely the typical examples of Hawthorne's distinguished fiction. In very precise terms, "The Birthmark" is about a devoted scientist named Aylmer who is obsessed with a mark on his young wife's face and "Young Goodman Brown" tells the journey of a young man into the woods and what he perceives there. On broader level "The Birthmark"

examines the dark side of nineteenth century rationalism, scientific progress and their possible outcomes if they go askew. The latter story explores young man's complex psychology as an individual, man's relation with society, gives notice against simplistic judgements and confronts religious assumptions of Puritanism. Furthermore, apart from their historical basis these two stories probe mankind's psyche, investigates its darker halls, psychological processes of the unconsciousness and makes eruptions of the repressed visible. However, Gothic criticism and Hawthorne's writing ask for more of their readers and analysts.

Baldick and Mighall argues that Gothic criticism was initially mistaken as it presented Gothic as revolt against bourgeois and Enlightenment, than it disregarded the dependable historical grasp upon its object. Instead it has tended to present it as evocations of the fear, the repressed, the folded in the search of psychological depth. They note "Misconceiving Gothic fictions as examples of anti-realist 'fantasy' or dream writing, it has repeatedly overlooked their manifest temporal, geographical and ideological referents while constructing increasingly implausible models of their supposed latent fears, desires and 'revolutionary' impulses."⁹⁹ From this aspect it is inadequate to reduce Gothic literature, in this case Hawthorne's fiction, to numinous supernatural series of events. To affiliate it with high romantic poetry or just to note Gothic writers "employed abbots and convents, friars and cloisters, 'cowled monks with scapulars,' 'veiled nuns with rosaries,' because such properties were exotic, they were mysterious, and capable of the highest romantic treatment."¹⁰⁰ is rather inadequate. Besides it is not wise to perceive it as a collection of historical events or rather as an explosion of the unconsciousness. Instead of all these single based interpretations, Hawthorne's writing deserves and needs a multi-layered reading as "psychological preoccupations can [should] co-exist with more distinctly historical sights."¹⁰¹ Subliminal drives and spatial and chronic realities which means the outer realities of the self such as where and when the individual lives and what kind of a society he is part of work together during the process of maturation and individual development. Thus in order to analyse either a real person or a fictive character or a piece of literature, these two dynamics should be studied together. An interpretation solely

⁹⁹ Chris Baldick, Robert Mighall "Gothic Criticism". In David Punter (Ed.) **A Companion to the Gothic**, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 210.

¹⁰⁰ Montague Summers, **The Gothic Quest: A History of Gothic Novel**, Fortune Press, London, 1938, p.195.

¹⁰¹ Mighall, p. 212.

depends on psychoanalytical approach may fail as it has a tendency to construct “a new whole that bears little resemblance to the original and that leaves out stray parts.”¹⁰² At this point an interpreter turns to historiographical circumstances. In this respect both Aylmer and Brown are results of these two dynamics and while examining these characters neither digging a hole to look into their soul nor counting on history can be enough.

In “The Birthmark”, there are three characters: Aylmer, the husband, Georgiana, the wife and Aminadab, the servant. Aylmer is presented to the reader as “a man of science”¹⁰³ in the very first sentence of the tale, Georgiana is the “beautiful woman” and Aminadab is the unnamed “assistant.” However there is more to this precise definitions. These three characters, especially the first two of them, are stereotypical characters of Gothic fiction. Mad scientist whose intentions may be good but experiments are catastrophic. Submissive lady whose discomfort never revealed much and devoted. Finally, a common man who does not know much but still in touch with the true nature of things and gives the real message of the writer between lines. Here Aylmer is the main character as he is the one who sets events into course. This man of science is married to a pretty woman with a small red mark on her cheek which seems to be a flaw to him. In fact, he sees this small hand-shaped mark as something that could and should be removed. He asks to his wife, “Has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed ?”¹⁰⁴ Georgiana replies that people often see it as a charm, as if an angel or fairy touched her cheek at her birth-hour and most men would be glad to place their lips on this little hand. However Aylmer is not one of them, for him it is a shocking evidence of ‘earthly imperfection.’ It is a ‘Bloody Hand’ that destroys Georgiana’s perfection. It is a hideous stain that “would convert the Eve of Powers to a monster.”¹⁰⁵

All interaction and events take place in Aylmers labotuary, so the setting is a confined space. Characters have no existence outside of that isolated setting, the labotuary and boudoir, dominated by Aylmer. The laboratuary looks “remarkably like nineteenth-century factory.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Michelle A. Masse, “Psychoanalysis and Gothic”. In David Punter (Ed.) **A Companion to the Gothic**, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 233.

¹⁰³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Birth-Mark”. In **Moses from an Old Manse**, Morison Press, 2008, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁵ Hawthorne, p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ Jules Zanger, “Speaking of the Unspeakable: Hawthorne’s The Birth-Mark”. **Modern Philology**. Vol. 80, No.4, May, 1983, p. 367.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir.¹⁰⁷

The laboratory serves as a microcosmos and a “metaphorical arena”¹⁰⁸ for him who is playing God in his pursuit of absolute potency and perfection while trying to remove the red mark off Georgiana. The symbol of earthliness reminds him “his wife’s liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death”¹⁰⁹ and also his. Soon Aylmer starts to find this red mark frightful and horrible as it is constantly there telling him that they are both imperfect, even faulty human beings who are going to vanish. Even in his dreams he becomes preoccupied with his wife’s birth-mark, with his words “odious hand,”¹¹⁰ the touch of not angels but human mortality and incompetence. Zanger here notes that in fact the mark is the divine signature, it is the “mark of the Maker.”¹¹¹ While he was at sleep, he sees himself and Aminadab in his laboratory attempting to remove the stain off Georgiana. As Freud also points in his work *Interpretation of Dreams*,¹¹² Hawthorne notes “Truth often finds its way to the mind closemuffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception, during our waking moments.”¹¹³ At this point, he realizes he has no other choice but to erase the mark of earthliness and mortality, to correct “what Nature left imperfect.”¹¹⁴ The main motive behind his decision lies in the unconscious part of his mind, he could not bear the reality that he, like every other mortal beings, is going to disappear, sometimes even without a sign of his existence. Just like Heidegger points “Nothingness, in the form of death, which is my final nothingness, hangs over me

¹⁰⁷ Hawthorne, p. 63.

¹⁰⁸ Zanger, p. 365.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 50.

¹¹⁰ Hawthorne, p. 51.

¹¹¹ Zanger, p. 368.

¹¹² Sigmund Freud, **The Interpretation of Dreams**. New York: Avon Books, 1998.

¹¹³ Hawthorne, p. 52.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 53.

like a sword of Damocles at each moment of my life. I am filled with anxiety at times when I permit myself to be aware of this.” And goes on stating “If I take death into my life, acknowledge it, and face it squarely, I will free myself from the anxiety of death and pettiness of life.”¹¹⁵ Yet, it is impossible to get rid of that feeling and anxiety of death or fear of death. Thus, he needs to feel his power and disregard his incompetence and mortality, he urges to possess dominion over spirit and nature and becomes obsessed with little red hand. His constant hatred towards the mark passes to Georgiana, too. She becomes the general symbol of 19th century women suffering from the mentality of submission. Yet, she is not only a submissive wife. She turns into the sole ‘object’ of Aylmer existence and her subjectivity is absorbed by Aylmer’s obsession.

In Aylmer’s case his obsession is not the disease itself, but a symptom of something of more significance which can be named as fear of death. In broader sense death and treats everyone the same and there is no escape from it, thus in fact all efforts are futile. That man is no longer at the center of universe is actually a common experience of mankind. Freud believes that these kind of obsessions, phobias, momentary eruptions are just symptoms or projections of something deeper, not something “new or alien” he notes “but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it through repression.”¹¹⁶ About man’s vulnerable stand in universe, he asserts that humankind desires a world robbed of terror or uncanniness or any kind of existential discomfort he cannot deal. In order to preserve his position as a whole and mature individual and his mental stability, he processes different ways to conceal his fears or destructive drives.

In life, man’s priority is to maintain his self image, his psychological entity as a secure and rational being, but he lives in world of uncanniness, both external and internal. His mind is tempted by Id, basically by Eros and Thanatos, dangers coming from inside Id or ‘das Es’ is the selfish, childish, chaotic part of the psyche. It contains our basic drives and runs for excitement but lacks control and organization and it is completely illogical. Id is governed by two basic drives, Thanatos and Eros which is also called pain-pleasure principle. Thanatos is the death drive, it

¹¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, qtd in Z. T. Lavine, **From Socrates to Sartre: Philosophic Quest**, Bentom Book, 1984. P. 331-332.

¹¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” in Vincent B. Leitch (ed.), **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, Norton Company, 2001, p. 944.

symbolizes man's tendency to 'die' in order to get rid of his futile and meaningless struggle. Id represents itself through destruction, aggression, strong negative feelings such as hatred or envy, or in murder or rape. Whereas Eros is rather sexual, it seeks pleasure and fulfillment, and it represents itself in sexual acts, eating, buying with feelings of desire, passion, satisfaction¹¹⁷ However with the assistance of the Super-Ego, the Ego controls the desires of the Id and balances the mental state of man. There are also external threats such as the loss of a beloved, possibility of failure, and some other unfortunate events and finally death, the state of non-existence. Although as stated above man has a natural tendency to die, he fears it as much as he desires it. Because death is still unknown, a dark spot which is unexplored or unexplained. The only way to get rid of the fear of death is to know it and invite it to our daily life, make it an oart of our existence. As Freud argues, man should personalize the uncanny or frightening realities of nature, make them knowable, acceptable and apprehensible.

But if the elements have passions that rage as they do in our souls, if death itself is not something spontaneous but the violent act of an evil Will, if everywhere in nature there are Beings around us of a kind that we know in our society, then we can breath freely, can feel at home in the uncanny and can deal by psychical means with our senseless anxiety.¹¹⁸

However what Freud suggests here is useless when it comes to fear of death, as it is something that man cannot face and acknowledge. When there is existence or the Ego that means there is no death but only fear of death and anxiety, but when there is death and no existence, these two cannot exist at the same time. Gentile argues, like Freud,

Our conscious and unconscious mind is emotionally as well as intellectually constituted, we are never able to attain a level of rationalty that will secure us from a fear or anxiety that might abruptly unearth primitive and infantile beliefs. That is, no matter how empirically

¹¹⁷ Sigmund, Freud, "The Ego and The Id", in J. Strachey (ed.) **The Standart Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and The Id and Other Works**, Vintage Books, 2001.

¹¹⁸ Sigmund, Freud, "The Future of an Illusion". **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and OtherWorks**. Vintage Books, 2001.

enlightened one becomes, one is forever subject to potential eruptions of the uncanny into daily life.¹¹⁹

However, humankind still strives as he is not able to live with or cope with these fears and anxieties. So in his quest for maintainance of his 'humanity,' he operates different defense mechanisms, such as denial, distortion, projection, repression, rationalization, sublimation, rationalization or intellectualization, concepts developed by Sigmund Freud and improved by Anna Freud.¹²⁰ In Hawthorne's protagonist's case the most important ones are sublimation, repression and intellectualization.

Repression, in very precise terms, is pushing away the unwanted. It is the investment energy to block the inconvenient or disturbing thoughts, desires or fears which are potentially dangerous to the Ego or self. With repression all potentially dangerous and painful feelings are locked in the unconscious part of human mind, and are supposed to be stay there as for these kind of thoughts a natural resolution is almost impossible. What seperates repression from surpression is repression is totally an unconscious process whereas in surpression individual is aware of his disturbing ideas, at least vogueily and his attempt is deliberate. So diagnosing someone with repression is hard, yet repression often comes with other defense mechanisms and personality disorders, and it reveals itself with slip of tongues, in dreams and in other people's observations. When there is repression, the actual anxiety or trauma remains covered, but the emotion it causes shows itself in different acts and in language. In "The Birthmark" Aylmer never reveal his fear of death or openly admits it, but he keeps saying his aim is to achieve perfection or immortality and control the natural span of life. For instance he calls a gold-coloured liquid "the Elixir of Immortality,"¹²¹ He also states that he potion

is the most precious poison that ever was conducted in this world. By its aid, I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strenght of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midts of a breath. No king, on his guarded throne could keep his life, if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Kathy Justice Gentile, "An Analytic of The Uncanny", **Gothic Studies**, Vol. II, No: I, 2000 (May), pp. 23-38, p. 26.

¹²⁰ For further reading see Anna Freud, **The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense**, International Universities Press, 1967.

¹²¹ Hawthorne, p. 59.

¹²² *ibid*, 59.

About his protagonist, Hawthorne notes

His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession, and continual exemplification, of the short-comings of the composite man – the spirit burthened with clay and working in matter- and of the despair that assails the higher nature, at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part.¹²³

As stated above, repression as a defense mechanism never comes alone. In addition to repression, Aylmer also uses sublimation to maintain his position as stable and balanced human being. In *Civilization and Its Discontent*, Sigmund Freud argues that a reconciliation for the repressed desires, Id based urges and uncontrollable fears is not possible as they are against all social norms in cultural sense.¹²⁴ In psychological sense these repressed emotions and thoughts are also destructive for The Ego, the self, so they are locked in unconscious mind. Yet, there may be a reconciliation or a way out for some of them, only if they are disguised. This is where other types of defense mechanisms comes to the scene of real life. Some of these mechanism are considered as more 'noble' than the rest, because they are beneficial for community, and sublimation is among these noble ones. Sublimation in general sense means replacement of a hidden desire, forbidden thought, destructive fear with something of more use and benefit. His motive and his scientific way of acting are something to be more respected in Aylmer's case.

When the Ego needs to get rid of an improper feeling in an healthy way and it cannot, it seeks other ways to resolve the inner conflict which are rather pathological. In this case, the decisive agent is culture and society. It is not the individual but the realities of his time and construction of his sociological background are to choose in his name. An adult constantly strives against his uncivilized desires and irrational fears, and he also tries to conform to social norms. He is compelled to adapt an identity that society approves.

¹²³ *ibid*, 61.

¹²⁴ Sigmund Freud, **Civilization and Its Discontents**, Penguin Books, London.

The concept of individual freedom has always been restricted by social norms since the beginning of civilization. Social institutions such as school, religion, family or state and socially constructed concepts like culture have always objected the idea of personal liberty. Individual gives in his freedom to the hands of a collective body, in return gets security and protection. Like Freud argues, civilization, with its institutions and achievements, distinguishes us from our uncivilized ancestors or animals, protecting us against nature and regulates our relations.¹²⁵ However its basis is “replacement of power”¹²⁶ and renunciation depends on “suppression, repression or some other means.”¹²⁷ However, what is suppressed or repressed has an inevitable potential to surface. If an individual fails to continue to push back his latent desire or fear, it is his social and cultural environment that decides whether his outlet is acceptable or not. In Aylmer’s position, as stated before, his psychic mechanism is sublimation, and his outlet is science and his devotion to it.

Since the 18th century, basically with Industrial Revolution and The Enlightenment to our contemporary, modern world the idea of scientific progress has always met with great acceptance and admiration especially in Western societies. These new set of values and ideas submitted reason as the chief source of knowledge and authority. Science as its expansion in daily life has been proposed as the key of progress, and progress has been thought to be man’s real purpose. This is the basic reason why Aylmer has not gone mad in his struggle with his latent fears and desires. He never participates in the battle between self and society, with science as his sublimation agent in his side, he has already won that battle. In “The Birthmark”, Aylmer never experiences a punishment or even warning coming from outer agents. He is totally secure in his laboratory and confident when calling his assistant Aminadab “thou human machine.”¹²⁸ It is his inner conflicts that drags him to the position of a over-working, devoted scientist with assistance of the Superego and society. His narcissistic tendency is approved by the society, so for him there is no need to be delusional or to deny his outer reality as he is comfortable in it. In addition to reason and progress oriented society he lives in, his marriage with Georgiana also enables him to perform his sublimation and narcissistic behaviours.

¹²⁵ Freud, Civilization, p. 34.

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p. 41.

¹²⁷ *ibid*, p. 44.

¹²⁸ Hawthorne, p. 63.

Aylmer's narcissism and egoism become obvious especially when he tries to manipulate Georgiana. Adult narcissism, Freud notes, is "a secondary narcissism which is return of the original early infantile on."¹²⁹ It is the libidinal complement to egoism, whereas in egoism there is still an object but in narcissism the object is replaced with the subject, yet Freud argues both of them can co-exist at the same time. It is the withdrawal from object to self, an auto-libidinal regression. Elsa Ronningstam states that most narcissistic people are ambitious, charming, have high moral standards.¹³⁰ They pursue Icarian unattainable goals, like Aylmer's quest towards human perfection. When Aylmer watches his wife without alarm and feeling "confident of his science" and that "he could draw a magic circle around her,"¹³¹ he gives clues about his narcissism. Ronningstam states narcissistic personality is enclosed in a "glass bubble fantasy"¹³² that protects him like an invisible wall, in the story the laboratory meets this need. This type of "person's behaviour is motivated by the idea of being unique."¹³³ Aylmer is described as "a type of spiritual element"¹³⁴ with his intellectual face and figure who is greater than others, with his words than the "lofty creatures,"¹³⁵ with this description his feeling of grandiosity and uniqueness becomes more visible to the eye. Ronningstam reports that these people "act as if they are talking to themselves,"¹³⁶ yet "still actively involved by seeking admiration and by maintaining the illusion of self-sufficiency."¹³⁷ Aylmer hastily forgets the mortifying failures he has come across, and "in the intervals of his study and chemical experiment, he came to her, flushed and exhausted, but he seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art."¹³⁸ Narcissistic people often act in a superior way owing to their sense of grandiosity and uniqueness like when Aylmer makes remarks about a small vial, he says it contains "a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom."¹³⁹

¹²⁹ Sigmund Freud, **Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis**. In J. Strachey (Ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Vintage. 2001.

¹³⁰ Elsa Ronningstam, **Identifying and Understanding Narcissistic Personality**, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 9.

¹³¹ Hawthorne, p. 56.

¹³² Ronningstam, p. 9.

¹³³ *ibid*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Hawthorne, p. 56.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, p. 66.

¹³⁶ Ronningstam, p. 10.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p.10.

¹³⁸ Hawthorne, p. 58.

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p. 59.

Narcissistic people are also good at manipulating people according to their wishes which becomes visible in Aylmer's efforts to convince Georgiana that she needs an operation. Before he convinces her, Aylmer, because of his hatred towards the birth-mark, shudders so convulsively that Georgiana faints. After she gains her consciousness, she immediately covers the mark with her hands, so Aylmer says to assure her that she should not shrink from him and continues saying "I even rejoice in this single perfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."¹⁴⁰ Then he practices some light games, playful secrets dancing in front of her. She almost starts to believe that "her husband possessed away over the spiritual world."¹⁴¹

When it comes to Georgiana, she is not only the victim of her husband's manipulation but also her own defense mechanisms that she uses to defend her integrated self as an individual and her social position in a patriarchal society. In order to maintain her role as the submissive and all-loving wife, she formulates her actions and idealizes her husband. Idealization is a defensive mechanism that operates with a tendency to see external agents, other people totally good and flawless. With the help of this operation, the idealizing person feels secure, yet excessive idealization prohibits the realization of subject's desires and interests.¹⁴²

Some signs of idealization are being ecstatic, trance-like, almost religious feelings towards the person who is idealized, hypomanic tension and excitement and self stimulation.¹⁴³ When Georgiana first finds out her husband detests her birth-mark, she feels resented but not deeply upset, and blushes when saying the mark is often seen as charm, a part of her beauty with a smiling face. Yet, even from the beginning of the tale she gives signs of her growing admiration and idealization of her husband. After the conversation above she remarks that she was possibly simple enough to believe that the mark was a charm, implying Aylmer would know better. Initially, Aylmer addresses the birth-mark as the mark upon her cheek, then it becomes "earthly imperfection," "symbol of imperfection," with him Georgiana starts to call her mark "odious Hand," "fatal birthmark."¹⁴⁴ Starting to believe that Aylmer is

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 56.

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 56.

¹⁴² Henry Sussman, **Psyche and Text: The Sublimation and The Grandiose in Literature, Psychopathology, and Culture**, Suny Press, 1993, p. 52, 98

¹⁴³ Sussman, p. 66.

¹⁴⁴ Hawthorne, p. 50, 51, 52.

superior to her, she becomes more enthusiastic about the removal of the mark. In fact it is not Aylmer but Georgiana who asks “do we know that there is possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little Hand, which was laid upon me before I came into the world?”¹⁴⁵ To the end of their conversation, she says

Let the attempt be made, at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life –which this hateful mark makes the object of your horror and disgust– life is a burthen which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful Hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science! All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders! Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of my two small fingers? Is it beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?¹⁴⁶

Especially, this specific quotation from the tale reveals how much she has adapted her husband’s attitude towards the birthmark and internalized it, as she idealizes her husband as a man of great success, a person who knows the best about everything including her. She considers of everything Aylmer does with great happiness and believes they are magical. This part of the story, before the removal, is the part that the couple kept on each other the most. There is no conflict of ideas, no oppositions, only harmony between them.

With reaction formulation, which is short term coping operation and is the replacement of real feelings and thought with their opposites as the real one causes conflict and anxiety, she welcomes every single idea of Aylmer with acceptance. When she is warned by her significant other about reading in a sorcerer’s book, she replies saying that he has made her worship him more than ever. In his God complex, Aylmer returns if she likes to worship him, she can after their success. To the end, she begins to sound just like Aylmer, she wishes to remove the mark of mortality by defeating the mortality itself, “Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral achievement at which I stand.”¹⁴⁷ She submits her subjectivity to the hands of her husband. She states she shall take any draught or dose of poison he brings her, which deeply moves Aylmer that he confesses he starts to know the depth of Georgiana’s nature. She feels the only danger that could occur is their failure, rather than a deep scar on her cheek or even

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ Hawthorne, p. 66.

her death. She is ready to pay any cost to get rid of the mark, otherwise she thinks they both go mad because of it. She drinks the liquid from the goblet from the hands of Aylmer, resembling it to “water from a heavenly fountain.”¹⁴⁸ She closes her eyes and then falls asleep. Aylmer, on the other hand, intellectualized the process by taking detailed notes about Georgiana’s condition and physical appearance. However, suddenly and strangely he puts his lips onto her cheek, where the vanishing birth-mark is, a too late attempt for reconciliation. Then, immediately he turns back to his former condition, thinks the departure of the birth-mark is as awful as its presence.¹⁴⁹ When he observes its fading, he celebrates his success until he notices how pale Georgiana is. She uncloses her eyes, murmuring “My poor Aylmer,”¹⁵⁰ he opposes her, still living in his illusion of attaining the unattainable, and exclaims she is perfect. However, Georgiana when about to die unleashes her defense mechanisms as she has nothing to fear, explains Aylmer her true feelings. Despite his pure feelings and noble doings, his aim was lofty. She ends with saying he has “rejected the best that earth could offer”¹⁵¹ and dies. She loses her life with the symbol of imperfection. The mark that thought to be a symbol of their lofty desire of perfection and representative of Aylmer’s fear of death, thus earthliness, is also the symbol of being alive, a bond between an angel and mortal.

“The Birthmark” is a tale of man’s strife towards perfection and immortality. However the reality of nature asserts the other way and places death at the end of his life, proving all his efforts futile. This reality is type of reality that man can never reconcile and accept in a healthy and peaceful way. Thus, he represses his fear and anxiety, and tries to cope with it with some other means, called defense mechanisms such as repression, sublimation, intellectualization, idealization and reaction formation. Aylmer, a narcissistic scientist, becomes obsessed with his wife’s little birthmark as it constantly reminds him what he despises and as it unconsciously touches the repressed fear. In his desire to remove it off his wife Georgiana’s cheek, Georgiana, through idealization and reaction formation, attends him. With their extreme quest, alchemical science and catastrophic end, the story as also a gothic exploration of possible outcomes of such desire and latent fear. “The fear” notes K. Justice Gentile

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 66.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 69.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 69.

is not necessarily specific to an early event, but is rather primitive fear that our life is not our own, that free will is an illusion and our life has been mapped out by a higher power, that someone or something has been here before us and that we are strangers or interlopers, lost in alien terrain.¹⁵²

Here, it should be noted that with psychoanalysis examining the hidden or immature fears, anxieties and desires on one side, the effects of cultural formation and social construction should not be undermined. It is also the individual's socio-cultural environment that punishes or rewards humans according to their acts, not only the Superego.

In short, "The Birthmark", tells the story of an uncanny experiment that resulted in disaster against the principles of nature which is conducted by a (maybe sincere) narcissistic scientist because of his latent fear. It goes unpunished by society as it is performed under the noble name of reason, progress, and science, nothing against nineteenth century social norms. Just like Hawthorne writes "A person to be in possession of something as perfect as mortal man has right to demand; he tries to make it better and ruins it entirely. For instance, a noble mansion, and in his attempts to improve it, he causes it to fall to the ground."¹⁵³

2. 3. Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"

Hawthorne's another remarkable story "Young Goodman Brown", on the other hand, deals with the case from a different perspective. Whereas Aylmer never considers the consequences of his actions and is let free by both his Super-ego and social authority, young Brown changes completely and tortures himself believing he is sinful along with the rest of humanity. Although nobody dies throughout the story unlike "The Birthmark", "Young Goodman Brown" presents a darker and more pessimistic atmosphere for its reader. Briefly, it is about the journey of a young, good man, a newly-wed into the depth of a forest nearby his village and the complete change he has gone through there. Hawthorne, as descendent of Puritan ancestors, deals with Puritan imagination and proposes ironic situations in an imaginary world he explores, and pulls his reader into the same world. Smith states

¹⁵² Kathy Justice Gentile, "Anxious Supernaturalism: An Analytic of the Uncanny" in **Gothic Studies**, Vol. 2, No:1, May, 2000, p. 30.

¹⁵³ Hawthorne, In Zanger, p. 364.

that “Hawthorne’s ironic tone here is of a piece with his treatment of the Gothic more generally: The nightmares of the Puritan imagination are reencountered in a minor key, now as much in the mind as in the fictional reality.”¹⁵⁴ Apart from being imaginary projections of Puritan nightmare, Hawthorne’s fictive world is also insidiously realistic. Though it resists irrefutable interpretations, it certainly finds its match in the real world and in history. In his hands, Gothic uncanny hides itself behind trees, locks itself in old, inherited mansions, appears as shadowy figures; it is distorted, ambiguous and tricky. However, it is instinctively and uniquely connected to a larger unit of historical and psychological meaning. “Young Goodman Brown” also refuses a single interpretation or doctrinaire conclusion. Although, he becomes a completely new person when story ends, Brown still seems to be one-dimensional character. Thus the emphasis is on the process itself and on details. His psychology and inner state are reflected via the encounter and setting. As Samuel Scaville states

Literally, it is a folktale recreating the encounter with the Devil in the forest. Allegorically, it presents the circumstance and result of man’s saddening encounter with sin. Psychologically, it is suggestive of sexual fantasy, a young man’s night journey. Anagogically, it evokes the problem of evil, the stain of guilt that inheres in the condition of man.¹⁵⁵

Despite the fact that the story may be read as a presentation of a universal situation –man’s encounter with sin-, it is also possible to read it as a personal psychological case with in its own historical and psychological realm. It may have universal implication, but as Connolly writes it is “obviously a personal tragedy, those who treat it as such are right.”¹⁵⁶ There is no need to look deeper to find Puritanism and Calvinistic doctrine in story’s historical context, and sense of guilt dominating the main character’s psychology.

The story opens with a scene of threshold when Brown was getting ready to his journey into the forest. He is at the edge of the border of public/private spheres, rather than staying in the private sphere, home, or going to public sphere, the town, he directs to forest. Being in this no-man’s-land area, he finds out that divisions are

¹⁵⁴ Smith. *American Gothic*. P.71

¹⁵⁵ Samuel Scoville, “To Conceive of the Devil”, **The English Journal**, Vol. 58, No. 5 (May, 1969) p. 673-675, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/811466>, 05.11.2009.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas E. Connolly, “*Hawthorne’s Young Goodman Brown: An Attack on Puritanic Calvinism*”, **American Literature**, Vol. 28, No.3 (Nov., 1956), p. 370-375, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2922590>, 06.11.2009.

already blurred like his mental construction. His journey is both inward and downward. It is from day time to night time, from reality to delusion, from conscious to unconscious, from physical to psychical. The deeper he goes into the forest, the deeper he proceeds in his mind, and he loses his grip. "The magic forest" writes Zimmer

is always full of adventures. No one can enter it without losing his way. The forest has always been a place of initiation for there the demonic presences, the ancestral spirits, and the forces of nature reveal themselves [...] The forest is the antithesis of house and heart, village and boundary, where the household gods hold sway and where human laws and customs prevail [...] It holds the dark forbidden things –secrets, terrors, which threaten the protected life of the ordered world of common day.¹⁵⁷

For sure, Brown is no exception. In addition to these, in Brown's case, it is also full of allusion to a primitive mythology of early Puritanism which supposes that forest belongs to the heathen, it is unexplored and wild, thus uncivilized. So, there man could be seduced by Devil and his creatures, with other saying he could be confronted by his own demons. Hawthorne often uses Gothic patterns for atmospheric effects, as well as metaphorical and psychological purposes. He is strikingly illustrative in his fiction and frequently creates parallelism between the outer reality of the setting and the inner reality of his character:

The broad antithesis of day against night, the town against the forest, which signify in general a sharp dualism of Good and Evil, are supplemented by a color contrast of red-and-black at the witch meeting, by the swift transition of the forest scene from leaping flame to damp and chill, and by the consistent cleavage between outward decorum and inner corruption in the characters.¹⁵⁸

The forest, the reflection of Brown's psychology, becomes wilder, more crowded and more haunted as he loses his ability to think rationally. The reflective forest serves as the physical projection of man's psyche and that is what makes Hawthorne's fiction psychologically deep. The fact that they are a newly-wed couple and the

¹⁵⁷ Heinrich Zimmer, qtd. In Reginald Cook, "The Forest of Goodman Brown's Night: A Reading of Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*", **The New England Quarterly**, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep., 1970), p. 473-481. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/363309> , 19.11.2009.

¹⁵⁸ Richard H. Fogle, "Ambiguity and Clarity in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown", **The New England Quarterly**, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1945), pp. 448-465, p. 458. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/361062> , 06.11.2009.

journey takes place at night time, also Faith's pink ribbon's possible connotations suggest that the story is also about sexuality. The story may also be an allegory of man's sexual growth and his steps towards adulthood as young man. The absence of parents in the beginning is another fact that supports this kind of an interpretation. So, depending upon its historical context and leads, it can be said the story is a criticism of Puritan mind, strict yet hypocrite moral standards of a totally pious community. In addition to this, taking the sexual connotations, it is a story about man's sexuality. However, there is another meaning to the story which is definitely related to former two, still different from them. The journey to the forest at night time and what happens there and later on, in short the story of young Brown is the story of a guilty mind and an extraordinary and absorbing record of events.

Brown leaves his home alone and he steps into the gloomy forest alone. He dares to leave his pure wife alone at such night when Faith begs him not to go and leave her with her frightening thoughts and dreams. The reason hidden behind this is that the road must be taken and walked alone, and the confrontation must be done without her. He must be by himself and himself only because his errand is shameful. Brown knows that nothing good could come out at the end of his journey in his heart, yet he is still hopeful,

"What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! [. . .] as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no, no; 'twould kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling her skirts and follow her to heaven."¹⁵⁹

There is something that would remain ambiguous and secret even when he dies, yet obviously dark and sinful in his mind. He never tells Faith why he has to go and leave her and accuses her jokingly for asking him not to leave her,

My love and my Faith [. . .] of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs to be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married ?¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" In Joyce Carol Oates (ed.) **The Definitive Collection of Chilling American Fiction**, Plume, New York, 1996, pp. 52-64, p. 53.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 52.

Of all the words uttered by Brown, especially the two quotations above prove that Brown, even before leaving Faith back, has a motive in his mind. His journey and his experience in the forest is obviously not random. It is an arranged meeting, yet the real motive –Brown’s sin or guilt to be confronted- remains unknown to the reader. This correctness of this interpretation becomes significantly obvious when Brown fears that the devil might be his at his very elbow and then after he passes a crook of the road and realizes the devil as already waiting for him. “You are late, Goodman Brown” said he [the devil] “The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago.”¹⁶¹ Thus, it can be said that his journey is scheduled beforehand. His sin might be connected to a familial business as he sees his parents among Devil’s congregation, shockingly realizes that his family is among the sinners and fellows of Devil. It might be connected the his faith and religion as he sees almost every pious men and women in his town gathered at the witch meeting in the forest. It might be possibly related to his wife, his sexuality or marital (in)fidelity. Like Richard H.Fogle writes in his article “This device of multiple choice, or ambiguity, is the very essence of Hawthorne’s tale. Nowhere does he permit us a simple meaning, a merely single interpretation.”¹⁶² Whatever his sin is, his main motive is to achieve balance and psychological acquittal, however Brown’s sense of guilt leads him to a deadlock situation and delusion, and finally to despair and misery when the process spins out of his control.

Brown, having committed an unrevealed sin, accuses himself being sinful, and guilty. Albeit, he should not be labelled as a man without virtue or as an unethical person. Freud writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* “The more virtuous a person is, the more sterner and more distrustful in his conscience, so that the very people who have attained the highest degree of saintliness are in the end the ones who accuse themselves of being most sinful.”¹⁶³ The source to sense of guilt is not the Ego itself although it is the Ego’s responsibility to cleanse the disturbing and destructive stains it leaves on individual. The initiation point is not the Ego because the Ego delights in the activity or the object as long as it gives the Ego pleasure and joy. So, the source some other controlling agents; both inner and outer. Sense of guilt needs fear to occur; fear of punishment, fear of loss. According to Freud’s

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 53.

¹⁶² Fogle, p. 449.

¹⁶³ Freud, *Civilization*, p. 79-80.

structural theory of human psyche the inner agent of control and punishment is the Super-ego, and again as man is also a product of his social environment the outer agent is the society he lives in, so he pinpoints the source clearly. For primitive man, it is different he does not blame himself but his fetish, which might be a simple Totem or God just like infants do. However the situation is reverse for the civilized adult. Freud says:

We thus know of two origins of the sense of guilt: one is fear of authority; the other, which came later, is the fear of the super-ego. The former forces us to forgo the satisfaction of our drives; in addition to this, the latter insists on punishment, for the continuance of our forbidden desires cannot be hidden from the super-ego.¹⁶⁴

When an individual commits a crime, or sins, or happens to be the object of a misfortune, he immediately searches his soul, when he recognizes his guiltiness, deprives himself of the joy, and looks for penance through self-punishment.

Holland and Sherman write:

A literent brings to a literary work, just as to any external experience, a characteristic set of expectations, typically pairs of hopes and fears. We want the text to be the kind of world we know how to deal with. Therefore, as literents, we try to match from literary work our characteristic strategies for achieving pleasure and avoiding displeasure. We bring to bear our whole system of defenses and adaptations, including our skills, symbols, and values –the shorthand for all this is simply “defense”. We shape and change the text until, to the degree we need that certainty, it is the kind of setting in which we can gratify our wishes and defeat our fears.¹⁶⁵

Just like a literent reading a fictive text, Brown tries to re-create his reality to get rid of his sense of guilt and fear. For what he has done, his community would find him guilty. Thus he is guilty for his super-ego, too, as the code of the super-ego is socially shaped instead of being shaped individually. It is a natural part of human psyche but still unnatural as it is structured and postulated. So his “artificial” super-ego is what makes him different from Aylmer in “The Birth-Mark”, psychologically he is a more complicated case than him. What Aylmer tries to do is socially approved, his rational, perfectionist, progress oriented society orders him to correct,

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁵ Norman N. Holland, Leona F. Sherman, “Gothic Possibilities”, *New Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter, 1977), pp. 279-294, p. 280.

experiment, go forward. But for Brown, his pious society orders him to control himself, not to sin, and when he does he must accept his punishment no matter what. However, man, psychologically and most of the times instinctively, tends to protect his Ego. Thus, when he sins, and feels guilty because of social authority, he develops defense mechanisms. Individuals adjust inner defenses and expectations to outer realities in order to protect his self identity and integrity, or even sacrifices his integrity to discard his sense of guilt. In this respect, Brown alters his outer reality –at least for a while- and his understanding of social reality. Instead of being tortured by his conscience, he substitutes this feeling with the idea of natural and universal human corruption, which he does not know how to deal with, either. In this game of alternation, what he gives up enables him to survive as he grows up and lives on.¹⁶⁶

Freud argues that the meanings of the words *remorse*, *conscience*, *sense of guilt*, *need for punishment*, *super-ego* are not primarily important as they all apply to the same relationship which is the relationship between Eros and Thanatos. He says it is the ever-ending fight between them that causes anxiety, and sense of guilt is also a reflection of this anxiety. However, in a civilized society it is also multiplied by outer authorities and institutions such as family, church or school. This is why Brown both wants to enter the forest and at the same time feels remorse and promises to do that never again, and this explains his hesitations throughout the story.

Sense of guilt is the bribe given by the ego to the super-ego for the wishes and acts of the id, and it is the price paid by humanity for cultural progress. The institutionalized social conscious and civilization threaten the individual with the loss of love. Brown, believing that he is sinful, fears that he would lose his loved ones, especially Faith and he needs partners in crime as he cannot bear the burden alone. Discovery of sinfulness and guilt presumes a common guilt. So he takes refuge in projection and delusional projection.

The delusional projection is the losing the boundary between reality and fantasy. People try to maintain the border between the real and unreal all through their lives, keeping the ego as a whole is primarily significant in their mortal life, because the ego is what makes a person a civilized individual, it is the self.

¹⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in Vincent B. Leitch (ed.), **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, Norton Company, 2001.

However, even during the daily routine the borders blur sometimes, especially during the hard times or when opposed to extreme feelings of fear, despair or pain, the border becomes invisible. It changes the outer decorum, time and create an *other* for the self when necessary. In Brown's case, all three are relevant. The setting is not the usual forest any longer. Brown says "There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree."¹⁶⁷ It is a hostile and deceptive place where he cannot trust his senses, "This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light"¹⁶⁸,

Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of townspeople of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without wind.¹⁶⁹

In addition to dream-like setting, obscure atmosphere, and constant changes in Brown's perception, the unusual event he experienced in the forest shows how his brain works under the influence defense mechanism delusional projection.

"Too far! Too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept-"¹⁷⁰

Feeling guilty, Brown believes that he is the only sinful man among the men of his race. For his naivety, he thinks he brings shame to his family name as the other members of this name are truly pious and decent people. In his opinion, he is the only Brown to make such a mistake, to commit such a crime, and to take that path into the woods. So, his conscience burns with the flame of guilt. He feels alone, walking as a statue of sin. However, he needs to feel that he is not the only Brown to take that path. He needs to learn that there are other people of his race who had done the same thing before him. His requirement for psychological relief to get rid of

¹⁶⁷ Hawthorne, Young, p. 53.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 58.

¹⁷⁰ Hawthorne, Young, p. 54.

the disturbing sense of guilt forces him to create delusional visions of his parents and unreal information about his dead ancestors. Devil speaks:

Such company, thou wouldst say” observed the elder person, in interpreting his pause. “Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans: and that’s no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own heart, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip’s war. They were my good friends, both; and a many pleasant walk we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake.¹⁷¹

After Devil spoke these words, Brown becomes suspicious of his ancestors’ past, and finally Devil convinces Brown saying all these were state secrets but the information he gives in detail is absolutely true. Following this incident with devil, Browns begins to hear or see his fellows, neighbours from his town. First, Goody Cloyse, a good, exemplary dame who taught him his catechism. Second, Deacon Gookin and minister who also seem to be Devil’s acquaintances in sin. At this point, Brown still believes that Faith on his side, he could stand still against sinning again. However, “At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an atlar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their top aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting,”¹⁷² among good, old, pious people he sees his father and mother, too. Left nothing to stand by, he searches Faith among all those people, he finds her, they exchange looks, he wonders “What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw.”¹⁷³ He realises that not only he, but also all other people he knows are sinful and guilty. He feels that he shares his guiltiness with the rest of his men and humanity through projection and delusional projection; transferring his sense of guilt and sharing it with other in an unreal, fantasy forest.

Devil, on the other hand, serves as his double. He utters the words he wants to hear, shows the visions he wants to see, makes him believe he already believes. According to Freud with a required amount of energy which especially comes out

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁷² Hawthorne, Young, p. 60.

¹⁷³ *ibid*, p. 62.

when the Ego feels stressed or as a result of variable anxieties, man is capable of gaining access to his unconscious. However, when the repressed or suppressed knowledge or feeling, or desire comes out of its cage, it also has the capacity to destroy self. Thus, like in Brown's case, man alters himself with another unreal "self", the double to fulfill his desire, or to punish the self in unbelievable ways. Devil, as the double figure, reveals itself in a quest for fulfillment and punishment at the same time. Firstly, in the forest and during the delusional congregation, he shows Brown he wishes to see. In make-believe game, Brown's needs, Devil makes and Brown believes. The primitive Devil is an antithetical but still complementary part of Brown. It is represented as the uncanny mask to self that offers resolution. While Brown symbolizes the naivety and goodness at the beginning of the story, and Devil as his counterpart is absolute evil. However, when the story ends Brown believes that he is purely evil along with humanity. His awareness goes to extreme, makes him desperate and faithless. His scepticism is not about religion but rather existential and psychological. His loss of hope towards humanity leads him to live a gloomy life. He is a "victim of a corrosive soul-torturing suspicion of general human guilt."¹⁷⁴ That is why no hopeful verse was carved upon his tombstone.

In conclusion, Nathaniel Hawthorne's fascinating story "Young Goodman Brown" tells the story of a youngman called Brown and his journey into the heart of darkness. There he encounters with Devil, his dead parents, his fellow townsmen, and his young wife Faith. When the story begins, he reveals that his meeting with Devil is an arranged one and admits that he committed a sin. Feeling sinful in a Puritan society is one of the main reasons for soul search and a strong sense of guilt. Although Puritanism imposes a Calvinistic idea of being sinful by birth, it also encourages people to lead a purely pious and sin-free life which puts a heavy burden on people's shoulder. Brown in his quest for a balance and state of mind free from guilt uses some defense mechanisms such as projection and delusional projection. This is the reason why he sees people who are normally impossible to be committing sin. He shares his guilty feelings with these people to alleviate himself. Devil serves as his double figure, and helps him to achieve what he psychologically needs. However, he becomes victim of extremity, like Aylmer and loses all his hope of purification and becomes wholly desperate. Rather telling man's awareness of sin and a young man's man initiation to adulthood, Hawthorne warns his reader about the

¹⁷⁴ Cook, p. 481.

consequences of dogmatic ethics and perversive religious mania. At the same time, he supposes that it is normal that we, as humans, are doomed to make mistakes and sin, yet the main mistake is expecting ourselves to be absolutely pure. If man fails in recognizing this reality, he is left with two choices; either to torture himself with his sense of guilt or to lose hope in himself along with the rest of his kind.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I want to show how the individual's actions and reactions are often connected to his or her social environment, and how this relation is presented in American Gothic short fiction. It is absolutely true that all humans have innate, psychological motives which are sometimes repressed, suppressed or marginalized. As Freud states human psyche consists of the Id, the Ego and the Super-ego that is made up of rational or irrational fears, revealed or secret desires, order and chaos, rewards and punishments. Man-made institutions always try to bury the irrational, the frightful, the lustful deep and leave them there. If such motives are somehow managed to reveal themselves, the individual is punished by society, just like the Ego is punished by the Super-ego which actually is the reflection of social authority on human soul. Yet, it is also impossible to repress our desires, and fears, and anxieties to the end of time, so they conceal their true nature and come out hiding behind different masks. Psychological defense mechanisms work in many different ways proper to the repressed desire, the buried fear or the hidden trauma. Finally, the result of the psychological defense is unseen by the society, the individual is labelled as unstable or just temporarily ill. The second option is, it is approved by the society and the individual goes unpunished. Lastly, the individual is convicted guilty by the Super-ego and social authority, he or she goes delusional, punishes himself or punished by society. Thus, it is impossible to analyse an individual work of literature and a character by disregarding his or her social environment and the contract between them. Human's unconscious impulses and psychological mechanisms are bound to his or her setting and time and unique to the individual as much as they are shared globally.

Gothic literature has always dealt with outer realities such as class distinctions or social changes since its beginning. It involves some certain elements since the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. These elements cover the choice of setting as an old building, a maiden in distress, shadowy figures, unexpected accidents, eerie sounds, a reference to the past either personal or social. It makes use of cliches, stereotypes, simple plots as well as an elaborate language and vocabulary. In fact these elements and characteristics are surprising as the birth of Gothic as a literary genre has been into a world of conflict, change, clash and ambiguity. The century it has emerged and become mature has witnessed

the sublimation of the reason against senses and emotions, the fall of aristocracy and the birth of middle class, political and religious conflicts, and these all have created an atmosphere of literal ambiguity and doubt.

On the other side of the ocean, in America, Gothic has been shaped again. America promised her newcomers religious freedom, a class-free, democratic environment, equality, intellectual progress, a vast and rich land, prosperity; a brighter future. On the other hand, this new country also offered slavery, sexual discrimination, poverty, wilderness inhabited by American Indians, inequality. America as "the city upon a hill" or as the materialized utopia was not all true. Man is not perfect, he is also evil as much as he is good, but not because of the Original Sin, only because he naturally is. Wilderness is not the Puritan wilderness filled with demonic spirits, but just a bunch of trees that sometimes looks horrifying at night. Women want freedom not because they are witches or crazy, but because freedom is their right as much as men. Black people, Indians or even black cats are not threat, it is white, middle class men's fear of them and their potential that make them look frightening or threatening. Old buildings, summer mansions, churches do not host real ghosts. It is the darker truth of the national history, and hidden or repressed parts of personal history hiding in such places. American Gothic writers saw the the distopia within the utopia and presented it in every possible way. American Gothic is about the repressed, hidden, denied, and it explores their return in extremity. It employs domestic households and/or the city, Puritan wilderness, shadowy figures, delusions and madness, imprisoned female, racial tension, religious dogmas, mad scientists. These elements are not simple imitations of the castle, underground labyrinths, remote settings in Scotland or Italy. They are the true representatives of American culture. The illustration of the atmosphere is filled with shadows, ambiguity, color contrasts, rich decoration, frihgtening images, and the impression created is frequently awesome. The setting and the atmosphere often serve to represent the protagonist's psychological condition and state of mind.

An important woman writer in American literature, Charlotte Perkins Gilman tells the story of a possibly white, middle class American woman as wife and mother in her gothic short story "The Yellow Wallpaper". Female Gothic conveys a sense of imprisonment and oppression and presents a quest for personal freedom. The division of social spheres in a middle class society results in the degradation and idealization of woman as well as her marginalization. It emphasizes the idea that if

the woman is not the “angel” man wants her to be she must be a femme fatale, or mad. The maiden must wait for her “prince charming”, be a mother to “his” children, otherwise she must accept to be a “spinster”. The opposition between sexes results in fatal influences on female personality. When the female is secluded, subordinated and forced to be submissive, the house turns into a gothic prison where female characters hear eerie voices, communicate with imaginary figures, or psychologically split. In “The Yellow Wallpaper”, Gilman criticizes the repressive attitude of society toward women, and presents the real atmosphere in those prison-like houses. She uses the narrator’s journal and her delusional female counterpart as a coping strategy in a patriarchal society. Through her journal she speaks out her inner world and organizes it, she conveys her feelings as the “angel” in the house. Gilman uses autobiographical elements which make her story vivid and powerful as she is also a mother and wife. The husband, John, is the main representative of patriarchy in the story. He brings her to a summer mansion she does not choose, selects the room –a room with bars on its window- she is going to spend her days, leaves his sister to watch over the narrator. He infantilizes her when she tries to speak to him, insists that she is only a little bit ill, and keeps saying she could recover if she listens to him. He denies her desire to write. In fact he fears the liberating force of writing and thinking, that is also why he wants her to sleep a lot without questioning anything. The husband deprives her of reason, just like the patriarchal system deprives women of the same essential attribute. What is ironic here is, she is forced to indulge in senses and emotions that causes John to question her sanity and ability to act as a mature person. In her cell, she tries to set a female figure behind the filthy wallpaper. She identifies with her, and becomes obsessed with the imaginary woman. In her repetitive efforts to save her, she begins to lose her sanity more and more every moment. She locks herself in and throws the key to her husband. At the end of the story the narrator becomes free with the help of the woman behind the yellow wall paper. Even though she is insane, she does what she has never done before, and shocks her husband by crawling on the ground of her room. In short, Gilman transforms her own experiences as a wife and mother and illuminates the dichotomy between two sexes, two spheres –domestic and public- , sense and reason. She rewrites the story of the imprisoned and repressed female from a different point of view. She forges a way for female language. In her presentation, the ideal home turns into a gothic prison, happy mother becomes a delusional woman, the breadwinner of the house is seen both as a judge and a

prison guardian. Lost or saved, aware or not, the narrator is a freed from all limitations of society at the end, and her gothic experience has ended for a while.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction shows us that reading a work of literature needs both psychological preoccupation and historical sight. Only historical knowledge and a reading that depends on this knowledge might miss the emotional and psychological depth of the character. It might be shallow and overtly systematic and might leave the essence of humanity –the conflict within the self- out. However, using only psychological or psychoanalytical approach might fail to create a whole and leave the analyst with bits and pieces. Thus, man's psychological dynamics should be studied within a historical context.

"The Birthmark" is about a scientist, Aylmer, and his strive for perfection. He aims to remove a small, red mark on his wife's cheek. He never thinks that his efforts are futile as man is not meant to be perfect, and convinces his wife Georgiana for the operation. He calls the mark different names such as the hideous stain, earthly imperfection, bloody hand. In fact, the real motive for his actions are his fears. He fears the earthly, the death, the idea that he is going to die and vanish some day and the earth is going to go on its rotation. He feels so helpless, alone and powerless. For him, like the rest of humanity, death is still unexplored, unknown, it is a frightening and threatening dark spot. So, he plays the God, tries to control his destiny, his wife's fate, and achieve perfection. He desires to dominate the spirit and the nature. His repressed fear reveals itself in his obsession with the red mark. In order to conceal his fear, to prevent it from taking control he uses some defenses. Psychological defenses are used when the self, the ego feels threatened as a result of an innate fear or desire, or a trauma. In this respect, Aylmer uses "repression" and "sublimation". Repression means pushing away the disturbing, unpleasant anxieties, fears or destructive desires unconsciously. It is not a conscious and deliberate process. The dangerous and pain-giving feelings are locked in the unconscious part of the human psyche. Yet, its reflections could be found in individual's daily life. In "The Birthmark" Aylmer avoids talking about death or the emptiness of a mortal man's life. However, his obsession with the mark, and perfection, and his talks about mortality and gaining power to control the nature reveal his fear. He is a narcissistic figure in his glass bubble fantasy and in his microcosmic laboratory. He is ambitious, follows an Icarian pursuit and good at manipulating Georgiana, He uses sublimation to make his aim and effort look

positive, beneficial for society, and rational. In his society that gives credit for rational thinking and scientific progress, his experimentations do not look awkward. So, he is not punished for his desires and fears. He never participates in the battle between the self and the society, with science as his sublimation agent on his side, he has already won this battle. Georgiana is the symbol for traditional submissive wife. However, she is not only the victim of her husband, but also she is the victim of her own defense mechanism, "idealization". It means perceiving another person in better way than he or she actually is. Her role as the submissive female leaves her no space except for her chamber and Aylmer's laboratory. She is not courageous enough to fight against her husband's wish and nor confident enough to leave him. She idealizes Aylmer to feel secure and protected. She disregards her own interests and desires in favor of Aylmer's as a consequence of excessive idealization. Her admiration toward Aylmer grows stronger constantly until the moment she is on the edge between life and death. It is only at that point, when she is about to lose her life and identity, and has nothing to protect or balance, she reveals the truth. She tells her husband he rejected the best that nature offered them. In short, Hawthorne tells the story of an uncanny experiment which results in catastrophe. His aim and effort might be sincere, yet futile as he fights against the nature and limitations of mortality. However, he is not punished because he represses fear, and make his desire derived from that fear look sublime in society, and finally he intellectualizes the result of the disastrous experiment rather than feeling grief or devastated.

Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" is a story about a young, newly wed man, and his journey into the wilderness at a night time. His confusing and weird experience there changes him completely, at the end of the story the naive young man turns into a desperate and hopeless person. His journey to the forest and his meeting with Devil is prearranged, he goes there to confront his personal demons, to cast away them. He aims to come back to his pretty wife, Faith, and stay with her forever. However, he knows that he has sinned and feels guilt. His Puritan society and its ideals of piety, purity and its dogmatic laws of belief stimulate his sense of guilt more. This feeling eats him up alive. Thus, in order to protect his "self" and integrity he uses some psychological dynamics. He uses projection and delusional projection to get rid of his unpleasant feelings. The forest he shares with Devil becomes more terrifying and wilder as he loses his rationality and sanity. The forest serves as the reflection of his inner world. He projects his sense of guilt onto his fellow villagers, his parents and even Faith. He tries to normalize his and sense of

guilt through projecting them onto other people, and sharing the same sinful nature. He employs delusional projection to balance the fatal influence of sense of guilt on his psyche. He witnesses a witch meeting conducted by Devil, and his townsmen are members of Devil's congregation. Furthermore, his mother and father who attend the same meeting are already dead. Unlike Aylmer, he knows he is going to be punished by his society because his unrevealed sin and hidden desire is not approved by social institutions. The order of civilization commands him to hide, to bury the unapproved motive that society finds destructive. He is also punished by his Super-ego which is an extension of social authority. The fact that he committed himself guilty does not change in spite of his psychological defense mechanism and his efforts to defend himself against punishment and to balance his inner dynamics. He ends in self-punishment and self-torture. His awareness does not bring him wisdom and hope. He fails to recognize evil is a part of human nature. At the end of the story he believes human nature is utterly evil, lacking any good deeds. He lives long life, probably as a hopeless and suspicious man who spends his time with soul search and self-torture. He dies on a gloomy day as his life has been, and he is buried without any hopeful verse on his tombstone.

Consequently, every individual represses or suppresses some of his or her inner motives. These could be irrational fears, secret desires, socially prohibited wishes, or childhood traumas. However, the repressed and the buried have their ways to come out, either in an open or a discreet way which creates the essence of the Gothic. Thus, in order to protect our social positions as civilized human beings and our psychological integrity and balance, we use some psychological defenses. The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" cannot find a way out of her restricted environment and repressive patriarchal order, so her imagination helps her to be free. She identifies herself with a crawling female figure behind the pattern of the wallpaper and saves her behind the pattern and liberates her. Although she is mad, she feels saved and liberated, she goes beyond the pattern of patriarchy. Aylmer in "The Birthmark" fears death and despises his powerlessness, mortality and imperfection. He represses his unpleasant feelings and destructive fear through sublimation. His science helps him to be a "great" man in a rational and progress oriented society. In his Icarian strive for perfection, he sacrifices his wife. Brown, a young and good man, goes into a dark forest to tame his demons. However, his sense of guilt grows bigger and bigger as a result of his Puritan background and his Super-ego that depends on the same background as it is formed by social laws. He

tries to project his guilt onto other people to get rid of it, but ends in self-destruction and believing man is completely evil. In short, it is impossible to analyse a work of literature and understand a character using only historical information or psychological elements. Employing history as the textual background, and analyzing character's psychological motives and dynamics according to such background allows the analyst and the reader to comprehend the deepness of his or her psyche.

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