

The Penguin



English Library

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

**THE SCARLET LETTER
AND SELECTED TALES**



The Penguin



English Library

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

**THE SCARLET LETTER
AND SELECTED TALES**



The Penguin English



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE SCARLET LETTER AND SELECTED TALES

EDITED BY THOMAS E. CONNOLLY

'He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humor, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity,' wrote Poe of Hawthorne, whose novel, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), is generally regarded as the first great work of American fiction. It is the story of a 'fallen woman' – fallen, that is, in the eyes of the Calvinist-Puritan society of Boston – and of her daughter and the unacknowledged father. Hawthorne fiercely attacks this society for its persecution of those who have broken none of Nature's laws, yet sympathizes with it enough to be able to regard his 'romance' as 'a tale of human frailty and sorrow'. Of the 'family' he writes with warmth and understanding and on them lavishes the artistic charms that so delighted Henry James.

Puritanism, which fascinated Hawthorne, is also the special concern of the other tales in this volume: they have been selected to show how variously he treated the subject.

The cover shows a detail from a portrait of Anne Pollard, 1721, by an unknown artist, in the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. (photo George M. Cushing)

The portrait of Nathaniel Hawthorne inside the front cover is taken from a photograph by Brady in the Mansell Collection

United Kingdom 80p
Australia \$2.25 (recommended)
Canada \$2.50

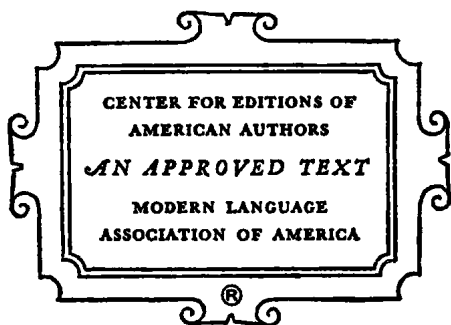
F
Lit
IS
04

PENGUIN ENGLISH LIBRARY

THE SCARLET LETTER
AND SELECTED TALES

Thomas Connolly is Professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is the editor of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*, James Joyce's *Scribbledehobble: The Ur-Workbook for Finnegans Wake*, and author of *Joyce's Portrait: Criticisms and Critiques*, and *Swinnburne's Theory of Poetry*.

*The text of THE SCARLET LETTER
is that of the Centenary Edition
of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne
a publication of the
Ohio State University Center for Textual Studies
and the Ohio State University Press.*



Nathaniel Hawthorne

THE SCARLET LETTER
AND SELECTED TALES

Edited
with an Introduction by
Thomas E. Connolly



PENGUIN BOOKS

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England
Penguin Books, 625 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022, U.S.A.
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

Published in Penguin English Library 1970
Reprinted 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1978

Introduction and notes copyright © Penguin Books, 1970
The text of *The Scarlet Letter* is copyright © 1962 by the
Ohio State University Press
All rights reserved

Made and printed in Great Britain
by Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd,
Bungay, Suffolk
Set in Linotype Georgian

Except in the United States of America,
this book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of
binding or cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed
on the subsequent purchaser

INTRODUCTION

SOMETIME between 1630 and 1633 William Hathorne (1607–81) sailed from England to Naumkeag (later named Salem) in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Though he had been brought up as a strict Anglican, he was converted to Puritanism at about the age of twenty-one. He had already experienced Conversion to Grace before he left England.

After settling in Dorchester in the new colony William Hathorne became a freeman when he was twenty-seven and about the same time (c. 1634) he married. At the end of 1636 he left Dorchester for Salem, where he arrived just in time to vote in favour of banishing Roger Williams from the colony for his heretical views. He became an assistant magistrate while John Endecott was chief magistrate of Essex County, and for many years was the most zealous judge in the colony, considering that his Maker had placed him on this earth for the sole purpose of seeing that his neighbours lived righteous, God-fearing lives. The biographer Vernon Loggins states that by 1644:

he was becoming the most dreaded personage in Essex County.... The faithful magistrate manifested no concern over his notoriety, and all the while grew more exacting in his determination to compel the people to live godly lives.

The coming of the Quakers to the Massachusetts Bay Colony was viewed by William Hathorne as a particularly dreadful blight, and he persecuted them vigorously and relentlessly. He ordered the constables to arrest Friends who met in private homes; he ordered them to be flogged and banished when arrested; he fined sea captains who transported Quakers to the colony; ultimately, he exerted a great influence on the General Court in Boston, which, about 1658 or 1659, sentenced two Quakers, William Robinson and Marmaduke Stephenson, to be hanged.

This was William Hathorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne's

first American ancestor, his great-great-great-grandfather.

William Hathorne's fourth son, John Hathorne (1641-1717) was also a magistrate, as fanatical in his own way as was his father, but instead of persecuting Quakers (he married the daughter of one) he specialized in witches. After the Andros régime in New England was toppled as a result of the 'Glorious Revolution' in England, John Hathorne became one of the advisors to the new Governor, Sir William Phipps. On 1 March 1692 Tituba, a West Indian slave of the Rev. Samuel Parris, minister of the church in Salem Village, was arrested and charged with witchcraft along with Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Magistrates John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin rode to Salem Village (a few miles from Salem) and conducted the initial hearings. A few days later the two judges sent the three women to Boston prison to await trial for witchcraft. Thus began a hysterical spasm of religious frenzy and Puritanical fanaticism that swept through Essex County and resulted in the hanging of nineteen men and women and the pressing to death of eighty-year-old Giles Cory, who refused to plead either guilty or not guilty to the charge of witchcraft. It took three days to kill the old man.

To try the accused witches and warlocks, Governor Sir William Phipps appointed, under an old English law, a court of oyer and terminer. Though John Hathorne was one of the eight judges named to assist Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton, the chief magistrate, he apparently never sat as a member of the court. He has sometimes been incorrectly described by historians and critics as a very active member of that court, the one most ardent in seeking death sentences. The charge is not true. John Hathorne spent several months conducting preliminary hearings for about one hundred accused persons. He sent most of them to jail to await trial. He sat on his horse and watched most of the convicted witches die, but he did not actually sentence them to death. This was Hawthorne's great-great-grandfather.

Hawthorne was extremely sensitive about the fanatical

INTRODUCTION

roles played by his paternal ancestors in the early days of New England. A deep family guilt settled upon him, and this guilt undoubtedly prompted him to critical attacks in his literary works on the rigours of Puritanism. In 'The Custom House' (that follows), he publicly confesses that shame and guilt.

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination, as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor, – who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace, – a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many. His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. So deep a stain, indeed, that his old dry bones, in the Charter Street burial-ground, must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust! I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them – as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist – may be now and henceforth removed.

On the maternal side of his family was a scandal to match the ancestral paternal acts of hatred and persecution.

INTRODUCTION

Nicholas Manning arrived in Salem from Dartmouth in 1662 and about a year later he married Elizabeth Gray, a widow some years his senior. Late in 1679 he brought his widowed mother, two brothers, and two sisters to America. During the following year, Elizabeth Manning appeared before a magistrate and pressed a charge of incest against her husband and his two sisters, unmarried Anstiss Manning and her younger sister, Margaret Manning Palfray. Nicholas Manning fled to the wilderness to avoid trial. His sisters were arrested and tried at Ipswich. Five other women joined Elizabeth Manning in testifying against the sisters. Each was found guilty and sentenced to either a severe whipping on the naked back or a £5 fine. In addition they were sentenced to appear at the village church on the following lecture day with signs bearing the word INCEST pinned to their caps. They escaped the whipping by producing the £10, but they suffered the shame of the long exposure to the hostile stares of the congregation, Puritan lectures or sermons being timed by the hour glass. The legend of incest stayed with the family through several generations. The great granddaughter of Thomas Manning, brother of those charged with incest, was Elizabeth Clarke Manning, Hawthorne's mother.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the second child and only son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Clarke Manning Hathorne, was born on 4 July 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts. His father, like his grandfather before his father, was a sea captain. Many of the other families that settled early in Salem—the Derbys, the Crowninshields, the Forresters—had become wealthy through trade and commerce. Important as William Hathorne and his son John had been in the early settlement, they were far more interested in building God's State than in amassing personal fortunes. Their descendants showed a similar scorn for fortune building, and many took to the sea. When Hawthorne's father died of yellow fever in Surinam, Dutch Guiana, he left an estate of only a few hundred dollars after his funeral expenses had been met. Hawthorne was four years old at the time of his

INTRODUCTION

father's death. Nathaniel Hathorne's widow and three children became dependent on others and returned to her father's home to live.

The family shifted from Salem to Raymond, Maine, for several years and then moved back to Salem. After a period of private tutoring Hawthorne entered Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, in 1821. In his youth he had become a voracious reader of literature; at Bowdoin he began to write. It is possible that he began his first novel, *Fanshawe*, at college. After his graduation in 1825 he returned to Salem and began his literary career. Although he published *Fanshawe* anonymously and at his own expense in 1828, he immediately regretted it and tried very hard to suppress the novel. His literary career was slow in starting. He was unable to find a publisher for his first collection of stories, *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, and in frustrated anger he burned the manuscript. Finally, in 1832, he anonymously published 'The Gentle Boy' in an annual gift book, *The Token*. For six months in 1836, Hawthorne edited the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge* in a desperate effort to earn some money. During these years of intensive reading and writing Hawthorne, ironically, was earning the reputation in Salem of shiftlessness. To the outside world he seemed to be an idler who was doing nothing to support himself. In 1837, unknown to Hawthorne, his friend Horatio Bridge gave a publisher \$250 as a guarantee to publish *Twice-Told Tales*. It received some good reviews, among them one written by Longfellow in the *American Review*. The book sold one thousand copies in the first year. In 1838 Hawthorne fell in love with Sophia Peabody, the semi-invalided daughter of Dr Nathaniel Peabody. Shortly thereafter he became financially more stable. Through the influence of friends in the Democratic Party, he was appointed measurer of salt and coal in the Boston Custom House at a salary of \$1500 a year. He retained this position for two years and resigned in January 1841.

Hawthorne never wholly subscribed to Transcendentalism, though he was friendly with the Transcendental liter-

ary group. He did however invest \$1000 of his savings and join Brook Farm. He hoped, through membership of this group, to be able to support a wife, but he was bitterly disappointed. As the months passed on the farm he became disillusioned with the community and with the harshness of his labours. He found shovelling manure scarcely conducive to Transcendental thoughts. He abandoned Brook Farm in November 1841, his investment having yielded only the materials on which to base *The Blithedale Romance*.

Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody at the home of her parents in Boston on 9 July 1842. He was thirty-eight and his bride was thirty-one. They immediately took up residence in the Old Manse at Concord where their first child was born in 1844. Royalties for his book (*Twice-Told Tales* had been expanded to two volumes in 1842) were scant, and the Hawthornes were plagued with poverty. By October 1845 they faced the humiliating prospect of returning to his mother's house in Salem because of their straitened circumstances. In 1846 *Mosses from an Old Manse* was published. If his income was not improving in the mid forties, at least his literary reputation was slowly growing. Finally, as a result of the tireless efforts of his friends and many months of delay and political bickering, Hawthorne was appointed, on 3 April 1846, Surveyor for the District of Salem and Beverly and Inspector of Revenue for the Port of Salem. His salary was \$1200 a year. For a brief time he was financially secure, but he was dismissed from this position on 8 June 1849 after the Whigs were successful in electing Zachary Taylor to the presidency. Once more Hawthorne was out of a job but this time he had a wife and two children to support.

The Scarlet Letter was written during this period of anguish and trial. It was Hawthorne's first major work and was to become a classic – some critics say one of the finest novels – of American literature. Certainly nothing its equal, or near its equal, had appeared in the years before 1850. Literary fame had finally reached Nathaniel Hawthorne. Since 1850, critics have repeatedly proclaimed its greatness. Its symbolism has been probed by countless interpreters. Its

INTRODUCTION

moral implications – and Hawthorne, one of the earliest symbolistic-moralistic writers, had very self-consciously hinted at its moral implications – have been wrung out by hundreds of commentators. Despite conflicting critical views and opposing interpretations, all critics agree that the work, flawed though it is, is a masterpiece.

From the opening pages of the novel Hawthorne, in his narrative voice, launches his attack on and condemnation of Calvinistic-Puritanism. In his effort to make an acceptable and admirable heroine out of a 'fallen woman' in the middle of the nineteenth century, Hawthorne sets her over against her accusers and describes those accusers in such harsh terms that even a 'fallen woman' appears worthy of sympathy by contrast:

Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants, separated from them by a series of six or seven generations; . . . The women, who were now standing about the prison-door, stood within less than half a century of the period when the man-like Elizabeth had been the not altogether unsuitable representative of the sex. They were her countrywomen; and the beef and ale of their native land, with a moral diet not a whit more refined, entered largely into their composition. The bright morning sun, therefore, shone on broad shoulders and well-developed busts, and on round and ruddy cheeks, that had ripened in the far-off island, . . .

Earlier, in the first brief chapter, Hawthorne sets up a symbolic contrast that is to continue throughout the novel and that underlines this contrast of Hester Prynne with her Calvinistic towns-women. In terms of flower imagery, Hawthorne sets up this conflict between the law of nature and man-made law. He begins his description of the setting of the first scene by a heavy emphasis on the need for any society to set apart first a burial ground and then a jail to accommodate the ultimate and immediate results of man's depravity as a result of his fall from grace.

Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of

INTRODUCTION

the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-peru, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison. But, on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, – or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison-door, – we shall not take upon us to determine.

In case the reader should miss the clear contrast between the laws of nature (which Hester did not violate) and the laws of man (which she did violate), Hawthorne is very anxious to associate this natural, sympathetic rosebush with the victim of Puritanical prejudice and hatred, Anne Hutchinson. As we shall see later, he does the same thing with the maypole of Merry Mount and the Puritan whipping post in the short story 'The Maypole at Merry Mount'.

The novel, then, begins with a contrast between what is natural and is good and what violates man's conventions and is bad. And this very contrast is evident in the emblematic letter *A* that Hester is doomed to wear on her breast as a mark that she violated the laws of the colony just as others were branded on their foreheads with the letter *D* if they were guilty of drunkenness and the letter *T* if they had been caught in thievery. But that which society would make into a stigma of shame, Hester converts into a thing of beauty, just as she converts the living symbol of the letter *A*, Pearl, into a thing of beauty by her elegant dress.

On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread,

A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

THE text of *The Scarlet Letter* is that of the Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, published by the Ohio State University Center for Textual Studies and the Ohio State University Press.

The texts of the short stories included in this volume are as follows: 'Young Goodman Brown' is reprinted from the original magazine edition as it appeared in the *New England Magazine* for April 1835. The text for 'The Gray Champion', 'The Maypole at Merry Mount', 'The Minister's Black Veil', and 'The Gentle Boy' are taken from the first edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, 1837, the first collected edition of Hawthorne's stories. Punctuation has been slightly modernized.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I AM grateful to Professor Jerome Mazzaro for critical suggestions in the course of assembling this edition and to Mrs Hilda Ludwig for patient and skilful assistance in developing the typescript.

*Facsimile of the title page of the
first edition (1850)*