



University of Peshawar

Available on Gale & affiliated international databases



Journal of
**Humanities &
Social Sciences**

JHSS XXIII, No. 2, 2015 (August)

Analysis of Intertextual Correspondence in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and John Updike's *The Scarlet Letter Trilogy*

Mazhar Hayat^a, Saira Akhter^b, Saima Nazir^c

^a Government Postgraduate College, Samanabad, Faisalabad, Pakistan

^b Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

^c Government Degree College (W) Shahkot, Pakistan

Abstract

The twentieth century intellectual and historical processes like deconstruction and decolonization have repudiated centuries held myths of universality, originality and ahistoricity of the texts. The myth of originality of a text is replaced by the phenomenon of intertextual correspondence. A text is a composite picture of quotations which is not only inspired from previous texts but also transforms them. The communication between the author and the reader is always partnered by an intertextual relation between written words and their prior existence in past texts. In the past several years, the body of criticism on the intertextual correspondence between the writers has grown tremendously due to the renewed interest in classical stories/myths among contemporary writers. The present study is a study in intertextual mode which examines and evaluates intertextual correspondence between Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Scarlet Trilogy* by John Updike because it is widely perceived that Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is one of the major influences on Updike's *The Scarlet Letter Trilogy*. The conceptual framework of this research is Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. This study will focus upon the larger or more general influences of Hawthorne on Updike.

Introduction

The term 'intertextuality' was coined by the Bulgarian-French post-structuralist thinker and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in 1966. The term refers to the inter-relationship between texts. It points to the influence of a text in shaping the

meanings of another text thus challenging the assumptions of singularity, irrevocable unity and the unquestionable authority of the meanings. To elaborate it more, no text is original or free from influences. Even the original text is an imitation of an idea. A writer is a reader as well as a consumer. By reading the existing texts, he consumes the pre-existing texts because his predecessors have already consumed those texts before producing the existing ones. So, the texts are always contextualized. In the words of Kristeva (1980), “Any text is constructed as mosaic of quotation; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (p. 66). In the same way Bakhtin, who has significant influence on Kristeva, remarks, “The text lives only by coming into contact with another text (with context). Only at the point of this contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue” (1986, p. 162). The development of the entire Western philosophical system is indebted to the binary approach. Meanings exist in differences. “Differences appear among the elements or rather produce them, make them emerge as such and constitute the texts, the chains, and the systems of traces. These chains and systems cannot be outlined except in the fabric of this trace or imprint.” (Derrida, 1997, p. 65). This assertion of intertextual influence also aligns with theories of Barthes (1977) who wrote:

A text is ... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture... (The writer's) only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (p. 146)

Furthermore, readers are no longer passive recipients of meaning. They generate meanings of their own on the basis of their world view and can reverse the meanings encoded in the text by the author. So, linguistic and conceptual boundaries of the texts are reversible. Graham Allen (2006) says, “All texts are potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader's own presupposition, lacking in clear and defined boundary and always involved in the expression or repression of dialogic ‘voices’ which exist within society” (p. 209).

In the twentieth century, a number of writers including Faulkner, Lawrence, Bernard Malamud, Mann and Updike himself have employed the mythical method through which they have presented modern approximations of the past stories/myths. Sharing the common aim, these writers try to present to the reader an interesting contemporary story and at the same time to make in what James A. Schiff (1992) says, “feel the chosen analogy that has enriched his understanding of the primary material” (p. 12). Hawthorne through his sombre and carefully arranged prose examines the phenomenon of sin inherent in the mysterious yet

beautiful world of human beings in *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Scarlet Letter* is a nineteenth century romantic narrative. The physical setting of the work is seventeenth century puritanical Boston. The novel deals with the story of Hester Prynne who conceives a daughter through an illegitimate affair and struggles for a new life of dignity through repentance. The author explores the moral issues of legitimacy, sin and guilt from the perspective of his own society. Commenting on the contemporary relevance of the story of the past, Harold Bloom says, “Hawthorne ... tries to revive the past and examine it in the light of the present as though the past were able to answer the present’s allegations with its own voice” (Bloom, p. 20, 2011). Commenting on the dismal content of the work, Henry James observes:

The Scarlet Letter contains little enough of gaiety or hopefulness. It is densely dark, with a single spot of vivid colour in it; and it will live probably long remain the most consistently gloomy of English novels of the first order. (In Bloom, 2011, p. 16)

Based on adulterous love and divided selves, this classic novel has become a myth and John Updike ventures to update, expand and most significantly to satirize that myth in his *Scarlet Letter* trilogy. The three volumes in the trilogy including *A Month of Sundays* (1975), *Roger’s Version* (1986) and *S.* (1988) are engaged in a dialogue with *The Scarlet Letter* satirizing Hawthorne’s concept of sin. Presenting a conscious intertextual version of *The Scarlet Letter*, Updike has successfully tried to explore adultery as an American myth. In the same way, he has retold as well as contemporized Hawthorne in his twentieth century social milieu. The common point where both Hawthorne and Updike meet is the “inextricable unity of religion, sexual transgression and guilt” (Greiner, 1985, p. 50).

Methodology

The proposed research falls into the category of qualitative-cum-descriptive inquiry. The basis of this methodology is hermeneutics which means “interpretation” or finding meaning in the written words. Under the umbrella of hermeneutics, Kristeva’s model of intertextuality is used as the critical framework. The texts related to intertextuality of both the works, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and John Updike’s *The Scarlet Letter Trilogy*, is the source of research data. According to Kristeva, individual text is to be interpreted by considering the whole series of the texts as the context. First of all, the intertextual echoing is found and then in the light of these echoings, parallels are drawn between Hawthorne’s and Updike’s concept of sin. Kristeva’s theory is related to semiotics but at the same time it is suitable for study in literature.

Analysis and Discussion

The Scarlet Letter is a psychological and moral exploration of life. Hawthorne's depiction of religion, community, human relationships, discipline, sin and punishment is contextualised in his nineteenth century social milieu. The novel expresses the repercussions of sin not only on the individual but also in terms of the whole community. This classical work is resurrected with a new meaning and significance befitting the twentieth century milieu through the ingenious intertextual appropriation of John Updike. The major focus of the readers of Updike's *A Month of Sundays*, *Roger's Version* and *S.* is upon its close association with *The Scarlet Letter*. These novels, in one way or the other are tied up with Hawthorne's masterpiece as Updike introduces his trilogy as a contemporary version of *The Scarlet Letter* from the perspective of the three protagonists: Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale.

While exploring a conflict between spirit and matter, reason and instinct, the fear of damnation and the relationship between religion and sex, Updike is inspired to transform Hawthorne's concept of sin and the complex variables among sex, sin and salvation. Each novel in the trilogy centres on a character adopted from *The Scarlet Letter*. In *A Month of Sundays*, the reverend Thomas Marshfield, an illustrious but adulterous minister from Massachusetts is a contemporary version of Hawthorne's Dimmesdale. *Roger's Version* documents the story of Roger Lambert, a divinity school professor and a revengeful husband. *S.* is about Sarah Price Worth, a rebel against male-oriented society and Puritan heritage. She is the most satirical version of Hester Prynne. Moreover the voices and scenes covertly expressed in *The Scarlet Letter* (take for example sexuality between the adulterous lovers) are frankly presented in the trilogy. Most importantly Updike aims at subverting Hawthorne's traditional Christian notions by showing how his characters achieve redemption through negating God and the church. Adultery is something inevitable for his characters as Marshfield proclaims.

Starting from *A Month of Sundays*, subtle parallels can be drawn between Arthur Dimmesdale and Thomas Marshfield. Both are protestant ministers. Both are adulterous and have fabulous verbal skills. Much like Dimmesdale Marshfield uses veiled language speaking truthfully yet maintaining deception. For example he has had an adulterous affair with someone's wife in whose presence he failed to maintain erection. When her husband asks if he had any relationship with her Marshfield replies: "I swear, solemnly that I never – the word had to be exact – fucked your good wife" (Updike, 1975, p. 180).

Both the ministers use language as a tool to resolve the conflict between socially approved patterns of behaviour and passion for love and sensuous life. If Dimmesdale wavers between confession and deception, Marshfield sways between temptation and resistance for therapeutic writing. He resists the therapy which intends to reform him back to decent social conduct and vows to retain his adulterous soul which he determines “will not be forgotten, though all the forces of intuitional therapeutic be brought to bear upon me” (Updike, 1975, p. 7). This reminds us of Dimmesdale who also suggests sustaining sexual intensity. He says that heart must withhold “the secrets that may be buried” and when it will be released, it would be a tremendous relief for his tormented heart: “Such an outpouring, O, what a relief” (Hawthorne, 1850, pp. 131-132). Yet before his public confession at the scaffold, Dimmesdale goes on intensifying agony of his situation which according to Lawrence is an exercise of self flagellation: “He has a good time all by himself torturing his body, whipping it, piercing it with thorns, macerating himself, it’s a form of masturbation” (Lawrence, 1977, p. 96).

Both in *The Scarlet Letter* and *A Month of Sundays*, the voice represents a person’s sexuality. During Dimmesdale’s Election Sermon “an irresistible feeling” moves Hester to listen and bring the whole sermon to her ears:

This vocal organ was in itself a rich endowment; insomuch that a listener, comprehending nothing of the language in which the preacher spoke, might still have been swayed to and fro by the mere tone and cadence. Like all other music, it breathed passion and pathos, and emotions higher and tender, in a tongue native to human heart. (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 242-43)

Earlier in a scene when Dimmesdale returns from the forest after meeting Hester, he is moved by her physical charms and wants to express his pent up emotions through verbalization but he has to resist his temptations through writing Election Sermon “with such an impulsive flow of thought and emotion that he fancied himself inspired” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 225). Marshfield is even more conscious of the sexual potency of voice and language as he vividly remembers his mother’s voice:

I see that my mother’s singing voice was, for me, her sex, that her hoarseness I transferred in my childish innocence to her lower mouth, which was as I stood small beside her in the pew, at the level of my mouth: that I equate noise with vitality; that silence, chastity, and death fascinate me with one face; that Alicia’s power over the organ keyboards was part of her power over me. (Updike, 1975, p. 20)

As far as the personalities of Dimmesdale and Marshfield are concerned both are poles apart. We find Dimmesdale to be a highly serious and pious minister. On the other hand Marshfield is mocking and witty. His diary is filled with humorous details. If Dimmesdale tries to resist the erotic thoughts and feelings, Marshfield is anxious to tell everything even the size of male sexual organ. If Dimmesdale is burning in the fire of repentance and allows his soul to torture his body, Marshfield tries to reconcile body and soul with Post-Freudian desire to frankly express emotions. In fact, Updike has parodied Dimmesdale as his neurosis about sex seems illogical in the contemporary world because the attitude towards sex and sexuality has drastically changed since 1850 and nothing is taboo anymore.

Both Dimmesdale and Marshfield find release from imprisonment through sexual desire. After meeting Hester in the forest Dimmesdale finds himself feel like “a prison just escaped from the dungeon of his own heart” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 201). Marshfield too repeatedly describes himself as a “slave”, “prisoner” and a body “wrapped in chains”. He also finds ecstatic release in Alicia: “This angel had come and with a blazing word sashed the gray...walls of my prison” (Updike, 1975, p. 32).

Both Dimmesdale and Marshfield are eager to receive signs from God. Dimmesdale considers that the falling meteor is a divine communication with him. He is at once pessimistic and hopeful that God will punish him with heat lightening of the meteor for his hypocrisy. Marshfield too is anxious to seek tangible signs from God and in this search he scrutinizes everyday physical world:

It was....in the furniture I awoke among....the moldings of the doorways and the sashes of the windows....it was the carpets....that convinced me, that told me, God was and was here....someone invisible had cared to make these things. (Updike, 1975, p. 22)

Updike specifically focuses upon bridging the gulf between matter and spirit, body and soul which is instinctive tenet of Hawthorne’s belief and the comical nature of his characters aims at satirizing Hawthorne’s belief that matter and spirit or body and soul are perpetually at war. Dimmesdale often views his own face in a looking glass by the most powerful light which he can throw upon it. His failure to reconcile his interior and exterior image actually suggests Hawthorne’s belief. He thus typifies the constant introspection wherewith he indulges in self-affliction but cannot purify himself. Marshfield also finds himself strange in the mirror: “It no more fits my inner light than the shade of a bridge lamp fits its bulb” (Updike, 1975, p. 7). However his response varies in regard to the disparity between body

and soul. If Dimmesdale resorts to self-torture Marshfield mocks his condition and resorts to humour in order to heal himself.

Roger's Version, the second novel in Updike's trilogy, is about Roger Lambert, a divinity school professor and a contemporary version of Roger Chillingworth, the wronged but revengeful husband of Hester Prynne. "Like Hawthorne's Roger Chillingworth; Updike's Robert Lambert is a fictional version of the satanic principle of evil. Lambert exhibits the same sort of intellectual pride and coldness of heart that characterize Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*" (Novak & France, 2005, www.questia.com). Updike adopts the first name "Roger" from Hawthorne's physician and the last "Lambert" from the eighteenth-century German physician Johann Heinrich Lambert. From his point of view, *The Scarlet Letter* is a discourse on visualization as from Dimmesdale's point of view it is a discourse on verbalization. If Dimmesdale relies on his mouth, Chillingworth relies on his eyes and can see through the inner sanctuary of the soul. In his effort to know about Hester's fellow sinner and Pearl's father, he turns his attention towards Dimmesdale as "the very inmost soul of the latter seemed to be brought out before his eyes" (Hawthorne, 1850, p.140). He tortures Dimmesdale by seeking his inner vulnerabilities and revenge serves as the stimulus for his visual penetration of the soul of the minister.

Several cardinal scenes of the novel, including Chillingworth watching the bare bosom of the sleeping minister, three scaffold scenes and Dimmesdale watching the meteor, make the act of seeing as the central point. Fascinated by Hawthorne's particular interest in visualization, Updike also makes the act of seeing as the central metaphor in *Roger's Version*. Though conservative, plain and solemn on the surface, Roger is brilliant with his luminous vision. Much like Hawthorne's Chillingworth, his optical versatility proves his superiority over people around him as he can look into the very hearts and minds of the people.

Instead of being an active participant, Roger understands the world as an outsider spectator and in every scene of the novel we are told about the types of light: "gray autumnal light", "double-barreled light", "hospital light" and so on. Even the direction of light is mentioned: "behind me", "over head", "from underneath", "at my back" etc. Light often exposes some hidden features as the meteor in *The Scarlet Letter* "kindled up the sky" and made the sinister expression on Chillingworth's face "vivid". Visualization is used as a metaphor on various levels in *Roger's Version*. Roger has an obsession of visually following the movements of Dale Kohler who is equally interested in vision as he wants to literally see God on his computer screen. Here Updike recalls the importance of vision in *The Scarlet Letter* and the complexity of seeing things clearly. However, he takes liberties from

Hawthorne, and liberates vision from Christian morality and lets the reader to see accurately what Hawthorne merely hints at. If Hawthorne avoids the visual description of the moment of consummation between Dimmesdale and Hester, Lambert visually recreates the scene for self-stimulation. Visualization for him is a strong sexual stimulant.

Lambert vigorously endorses the importance of corporeality and desire for flesh and blood and condemns those “who make an outcry against the flesh ... who accuse it of being unclean infirm, guilty, burdensome, troublesome” (Updike, 1986, p.152). Updike uses vision to understand that matter and spirit work together. As Dale endeavours to bring God, the spirit, into his computer screen, Roger’s visual fantasies about his wife and Dale have a strong impact on his body: “I saw her close up, through Dale’s eyes... and I felt the sexual stir in my lap” (Updike, 1986, p.126).

Both Roger Lambert and Dale Kohler migrate to the sophisticated city of Boston much like Dimmesdale and Chillingworth who sailed West for the free shores of New England. Being young, tall and pale, Dale resembles Dimmesdale in appearance. On the other hand, Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* is described as “small in stature” and his literary counterpart Lambert is also very sensitive about his height and is jealous of the height and “waxy pallor” of Dale.

Much like Hawthorne’s scientists including Dr. Rappaccine of *Rappaccine’s Daughter* and Aylmer of *The Birth Mark*, Dale is anxious to push the limits of nature and empower himself through the application of knowledge:

And even though Dale initially appears to represent Lawrence’s version of a whole and unified self, one in which religion and science have become reconciled, his quest is excessive and self-important and like Hawthorne’s scientists, he is doomed to fail. (Schiff, 1992, p. 62)

Living vicariously through young Dale, Chillingworth is able to bear the monotonous existence. Updike shares with Hawthorne a sense of literature’s essential vicariousness. He knows:

...the need imaginative creation appeals to as the need (in Miles Coverdale’s words) ‘to live in other lives’: the need to remedy a felt life-deficiency not by living one’s own life fully but by appropriating life in stimulated or surrogate forms. (Brodhead, 1976, p.183)

Much like Chillingworth, Lambert becomes a parasite feeding upon the life of Dale Kohler. By sharing his “field of vision”, Lambert starts taking a fresh view of the things around him. Even his wife Esther seems physically and spiritually transformed seen through Dale’s eyes: “I saw her through his eyes, my little wife, her tense and tidy figure foreshortened even more from his angle than from mine (Updike, 1986, p.96).

Condemned by her community for being voluptuous and sinful, Esther plays the role of Hester. Being Roger’s, she is, like Hester, much younger than her husband. She works for a little pay at a day-care centre reminding us Hester who was known as Sister of Mercy. Parallels can also be drawn between Hester’s needle point and Esther’s “slashing angular, goby” paintings. Obsessive about maintaining one hundred pound weight, she is America’s idea of beauty and fitness thus continuing the evolution chartered by Hawthorne: “Through that chain of ancestry, every successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 50). However, if Hester is sensuous and gaining our respect; Esther is cynical and prone to disparaging remarks and yawning boredom. Actually, Updike avoids elevating Hester to the stature of early feminist saints. We do not find saints in Updike’s novel which being “Roger’s Version” brings into light the darker aspects of Hester’s personality.

Like Pearl, Verna’s Paula is in search of a father and calls Roger as “Da”. She is also an unplanned baby and a representative of illegitimate children in America. However, unlike Pearl who was a precious gift for her mother she is a burden for her immature mother who frequently calls her as “the little bitch”, “little shit face” and so on.

As far as *S.* the third novel in the trilogy is concerned, the allusions and similarities to *The Scarlet Letter* are numerous. Rebellious, tough, self-willed, defiant and hardnosed, Sarah Price Worth is the contemporary version and a literary descendent of Hester Prynne. Commenting on the rebellious and unconventional behaviour of Hester Prynne, Orestes Brownson (1850) observes that Hawthorne seems to excuse her for loving puritan minister while endorsing “The modern doctrine that represents the affections as fatal, and wholly withdrawn from voluntary control, and then allows us to plead them in justification of neglect of duty and breach of the most positive precepts of both the natural and the revealed law” (in Blooms, 2008, pp. 177-178). Dark haired and rich complexioned like Hester, she feels herself encaged and betrayed by patriarchal society and is in search of an alternative mode of living. Both Hester and Sarah dare create their identities themselves on new ethical grounds by revolting against the conventions

of male-oriented society. Hawthorne's description of Hester as roaming in "desert places" is literally taken by Updike who places Sarah in the Arizona desert.

Emergence from prison is a metaphor parallel to the image of rebirth, regeneration and shedding skins. Both Hester and Sarah emerge from the iron cells in which they are imprisoned. If Hester literally steps out of the gloomy Puritan prison, Sarah moves out of the symbolic cultural prison. Both are alone in their journey towards spiritual and societal resurrection. In the wilderness, both are successful in finding a spiritual father and lover, but are defeated by their respective communities. The reputation of both the female protagonists is ruined by scandals and both are forced to live in isolated cottages.

The Hawthornesque parallels are abundant in this novel. Dr. Charles, Sarah's husband, plays the Chillingworth figure. Although the "chilling" prefix is missing yet Charles has "chilly hands" and is a physician by profession. As Hester is attracted towards Dimmesdale because of his physical charms and spirituality Shri Arhat Mindadali attracts Sarah. Sarah's Pearl has much in common with Hester's Pearl. Pearl Worth is iron-willed and defiant to her mother's dominating hand as Hester's Pearl cannot be made "amenable to rules". Both Pearls leave America, go to Europe and marry nobility.

As far as the similarity between Dimmesdale and the Arhat is concerned, we find substantial intertextual links. Dimmesdale is hailed by the Puritan community as the most pious and noble man. He has physical and spiritual attractiveness and through his presence and eloquence he "conquers" women. The Arhat also attracts women especially Sarah despite having chubby stature and "substantial nose".

Charged with puns and witty allusions *S.* is the most successful novel in Updike's trilogy. Sarah's mania for Vitamin A, calling Alinga as Dearest A, and sharing "A frame" with her have much comic intertextual resonance. Instead of displaying letter A on her breast as a token of her sin, she hides a tape in her bra in order to record the actual moment of adultery. Actually Updike has attempted to revise our traditional understanding of *The Scarlet Letter*, particularly of Hester. If the persona of Hawthorne's Hester is marked by mysterious silence, Sarah's character is marked by aggressive volubility. She writes bitter letters to her relatives and friends openly telling them how she has seduced a number of both male and female lovers and how she has fattened her bank accounts misusing funds from the Ashram. In this way Updike has deromanticized and demystified Hester and comically challenged those feminist readers that confer sainthood upon her. Here, we are reminded of Lawrence for whom Hester is a "gentle devil" desiring to

revenge herself upon the male species for all their abusiveness and oppression” (Lawrence, 1977, p. 99).

Both Hester and Sarah are disillusioned with their marriages. As Hester was once “glowing with girlish beauty” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 58), but old Chillingworth “betrayed [her] budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with [his] decay” (p. 75). She did neither feel nor feigned any love in her forced marriage. This is her own way to resent the masculine authority but her revenge is masked as being a woman in patriarchal culture she could not announce open revenge. Sarah also feels betrayed by Charles’s adultery, emotional cruelty and his “antiseptic chill”. Considering herself the victim of betrayal and oppression she warns her daughter and mother of the dangers of male species and pulls them into a sisterhood. Here we are reminded of the role Hester assumes in the conclusion of *The Scarlet Letter*.

It is important to find a parallel between Sarah’s willing separation from Charles and Hester’s migration to the New World after leaving her husband Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. A townsman informs the reader about Chillingworth’s intention “to cross over and cast in his lot with us of the Massachusetts. To this purpose, he sent his wife before him, remaining himself to look after some necessary affairs” (Hawthorne, 1850, p. 62). This might be accepted as the reason why Hester arrives in America earlier than Chillingworth. However, alternative explanations can also be offered as we are dealing with a novel with so many secrets and doubts. Has Hester come to America on her own free will? Was it her idea to cross the Atlantic alone in an effort to escape Chillingworth? Updike makes us reconsider Hester’s early arrival in America through the character of Sarah. Was she rebellious? Was it her first attempt at abandoning the civilized society? Was it one of the signs of her failing marriage with Chillingworth?

On her arrival in the Arizona desert, Sarah finds herself in a community that is newly formed much like Hester’s community which is struggling to sustain against natural threats caused by climate and political threats from pre-existing communities. Sarah is morally and literally in a desert in which constructs of civilization and logic do not seem essential. In the ashram, the heart and mind is free of its social trappings offering every possible intellectual and spiritual freedom.

It is interesting to note that the type of utopian community nourished by the Arizona desert is different from that we find in *The Scarlet Letter*. The pilgrims in *The Scarlet Letter* walk around in “sad-coloured garments”. On the other hand, the pilgrims in the Ashram Arhat are dressed in “red and orange”. Instead of the frequent mention of cemetery and prison in *The Scarlet Letter*, Sarah tells us about

Ashram disco, the Ashram mall with electronic boutique and the Kali club. In fact, Updike is of the view that the present generation of America has become “soft” and comfortable. There is lack of conviction, intensity and commitment in this modern era and the ultimate result is failure of this utopian experiment.

Conclusion

There is no denying that the American society has passed through cultural transformation since the time of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. The society is also secularized and sexuality no longer remains a taboo. There is a general agreement among critics that Hawthorne has presented this process of cultural transformation and secularization in *The Scarlet Letter*. In the words of Thrailkill Jane F. (2006),

Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* dramatises the movement from a theological framework, in which the world is saturated with significance and there is a presumptive correspondence between emblem and meaning, body and spirit, to a secular perspective in which questions of epistemology and interpretation become central. (www.questia.com)

However, Updike has demonstrated that despite these social and intellectual transformations, the core issues of the age of Hawthorne continue to persist. Women are still struggling against patriarchal dominance. The sin of adultery does persist in the society. The conflict between individual and society, the matter and spirit has intensified. There is the craving to abandon the past and to renew the individual self as well as the world. The American individual characters are still self-imprisoned, anxious and divided. Both Hawthorne and Updike interrogate moral authority and demonstrate a conflict present in America between individual impulse and social laws and the split between body and soul. Hawthorne nevertheless affirms the code of morality no matter if his characters are tragically ruined in the process. In this respect, Hawthorne is conditioned by the ethical and theological conventions of his age. Whereas, Updike affirms individual impulse and domestic adventure which according to him have faith-providing and life-enhancing properties. For living in a less oppressive moment in American history, Updike is more interested in investigating the more sordid and ignoble impulses of human behaviour rather than social dilemmas.

Updike updates Hawthorne’s romance into his own brand of realism. In this regard we find a fresh perspective on human behavior in American society in particular and the whole world in general. Retention reigns supreme in Hawthorne’s world in which much is left unsaid and passions are repressed. Agitated by his Puritan

ancestors, he is forced by his puritanical psyche to show his contempt for immorality and instinct. He demonstrates his disapproval of the immoral and the instinctive through the tragic fate of his characters. Whereas Updike, with his comic frankness and a post-Freudian desire to emote, grants Hawthorne's characters an opportunity to act and speak openly and present their own "version".

To conclude, the analysis establishes profound similarities and intertextual correspondence between the works of the two writers. However, this intertextual correspondence is not a mere repetition of the past rather it is a transformation of the pre-existing text and intellectual heritage according to the current moral, cultural and intellectual milieu. Furthermore, the analysis subscribes to Bakhtin and Kristeva's belief that texts can not be isolated from the larger cultural and social textuality from where they are constructed. They are also completely connected to the ongoing socio-cultural processes. The analysis will motivate and encourage the reader/researcher not only to apply this insight to other texts but also to draw their own meaning from the same text because ideas are not presented as finished they are always in a state of production.

References

- Allen, G. (2006). *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech, genre and other literary essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-music-text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bloom, H. (2011). *Bloom's guides: Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Infobased Publishing Press.
- Brodhead, R. H. (1976). *Hawthorne, Melville, and the novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brownson, O. (1850). The Scarlet Letter. In Harold Bloom (Ed.), *Bloom's classic critical views: Nathaniel Hawthorne* (pp. 174-180, 2008). New York: Infobased Publishing Press.
- Derrida, J. (1997). *Of grammatology*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Greiner, D. J. (1985). *Adultery in the American novel: Updike, James and Hawthorne*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Hawthorne, N. (1850). *The Scarlet Letter*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic approach to literature and art*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lawrence, D. H. (1977). *Studies in Classic American Literature*. New York: Penguin.
- Novak & Frank, G. (2005). The satanic personality in Updike's Roger's Version. Retrieved on 20-06-2014 from <http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-140305007/the-satanic-personality-in-updike-s-roger-s-version>
- Schiff, J. A. (1992). *Updike's Version: Rewriting The Scarlet Letter*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Thraillkill, J. F. (2006). The Scarlet Letter romantic medicine. Retrieved on 21-06-2014 from <http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-148719335/the-scarlet-letter-romantic-medicine>
- Updike, J. (1975). *A Month of Sundays*. New York: Knopf.
- Updike, J. (1986). *Roger's version*. New York: Knopf.
- Updike, J. (1988). *S*. New York: Knopf.